**Consumer Advocacy for Transformation: Full Proposal Phase**

June 19, 2017

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*This document will be updated as new questions are asked.*

*Last updated: June 19, 2017*

\*\*Indicates questions added in the full proposal phase

**Program**

**What is the goal of the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation Program?**

The Consumer Advocacy for Transformation program aims to develop and insert an organized, influential and permanent consumer voice in state and local health system changes. The program will increase the capacity of consumer organizations to advocate for strategies to use health care financing improvements, delivery system reforms, and investments in community health as tools to address problems with the current health system, as well as maintaining coverage for vulnerable populations. This vision is in keeping with a Culture of Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s efforts to transform health and health care systems.

**The Call for Proposals (CFP) includes “preserving access to health coverage” as a potential area of focus for the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation projects. Can projects focus solely on issues related to health care access and coverage? Would a Medicaid expansion campaign fall under the Call for Proposals?**

Projects that focus solely on increasing access and coverage, without including attention to how care is delivered, paid for or integrated with other services probably would not be competitive. We know that many efforts to expand Medicaid will happen through state waivers or different kinds of non-traditional arrangements that do get into larger issues related to transforming the health system. If the goal is only Medicaid expansion and increasing the number of people covered, while this is an important issue for RWJF and Community Catalyst, this is not the focus of this program. If the Medicaid expansion campaign is tied to different kinds of arrangements and payment methods, that does become much more in scope of this program and a useful place to target a project. Furthermore, if you are in a state considering Medicaid expansion based on benefit design, cost sharing, payment arrangements, etc., and it is important to insert a consumer voice into these discussions, that would fall within the scope of the CFP.

**Can funded projects focus on issues outside of medical care? For example, can projects include a focus on other social determinants that contribute to health?**

We definitely see the importance and are interested in projects that include the coordination and collaboration of a particular health care realm and initiatives that are connected to the social determinants of health (i.e. housing, food insecurity, etc.). If a project only looked at areas outside of the health care system, it would not be a great fit for this program. What we are looking to see is the connection between health care and non-medical or non-health care sectors.

**Is there any additional guidance we can offer around project focus?**

In terms of focus, there is not one answer. Reviewers will look at the overall goal of a project, population focus, scope, etc. in the context of specific environments (political, policy, geographic, stakeholder). In some cases, a project might be narrowly focused, while in others, they might require more comprehensive approaches. The more important consideration is how the project contributes to the overarching goal of the CFP. Very targeted projects that only address a limited number of people and that do not have the potential for impact on a broader health system environment will likely not be competitive. Furthermore, we are not looking to support direct service programs but rather systems or policy change. It will not serve an organization to have an overly ambitious agenda that realistically could not be achieved given the budget and time constraints of the program. Projects focused on one issue with a very limited impact on the overall efficiency, quality and affordability of the health system are not likely to be considered. What is important is finding the balance among what is realistic given the time, budget and environments applicants are working with.

**Is the primary goal to build a consumer voice in health system transformation issues?**

RWJF and Community Catalyst believe that there needs to be a sustained consumer voice in health system transformation efforts. For the purposes of this program, we are looking for a plan for achieving policy or systems change that can happen in the two-year grant period. While we do hope and want to see that these kinds of awards can support the ongoing infrastructure that supports and sustains the consumer voice in health policy and system change discussions, we do expect to see some sort of tangible policy or systems change outcomes as a result of this grant.

**Can grant funds be used to support coalition building?**

We expect to see the time and funds under this program used to ensure that coalitions and people who will be affected by health policy and systems changes are effective and engage. Some of this requires infrastructure and capacity building, but our overarching goal is to influence health policy and system change. Projects focused solely on building capacity, infrastructure and coalitions will not be competitive.

**Can grant funds be used to begin to identify policy or systems change priorities?**

The CFP asks that specific policy or systems-change goals be identified as part of the proposal. There is likely to be a need to balance specific goals, the priorities of a coalition, and a changing policy landscape. Successful proposals will have identified specific policy or systems-change goals, even if there is an acknowledgement that these goals may change with a changing environment.

**What do you mean by *permanent consumer voice*?**

RWJF and Community Catalyst share the view that the people most affected by a policy should be involved in shaping that policy. There are two ways that CAT supports a permanent consumer voice. The first is that by supporting coalitions to work on a specific policy or systems issue, we are strengthening the advocacy infrastructure in an area that will last beyond the grant period. Second, some of the policies or systems changes may focus on ways that a permanent consumer voice can be embedded in health and health policy systems.

**The Call for Proposals mentions that projects should have a positive impact on access to health coverage and improvements in health care cost and quality for a substantial number of consumers. Are there certain consumer populations that should be prioritized? Is anyone a consumer?**

The program aims to focus on improving health and health care for traditionally vulnerable populations that are currently not well-served by the health care system due to factors such as race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability status, geography, environment and so forth. Proposals may address changes that would affect a broader population, but those proposals should also emphasize how more vulnerable populations will benefit.

**Is this funding to supplement existing efforts or to begin a new program?**

The funding can be used to build off of existing efforts to transform the health system or to pivot to new work on a health system transformation initiative.

**Is this a new grant program or a continuation of past programs?**

Organizations that have worked with RWJF or Community Catalyst may be familiar with other programs that had similar goals to the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation program (i.e. The Value Advocacy Project or the Consumer Voices for Coverage Program), and while this project builds on lessons learned and experiences from those programs, Consumer Advocacy for Transformation is a new program. We are not renewing Value Advocacy Project grants, and there are no advantages or disadvantages to coalitions or groups that were funded under the Value Advocacy Project or other RWJF or Community Catalyst initiatives.

**How is the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation program different from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Health Data for Action and the Systems for Action Call for Proposals?**

Several initiatives the foundation supports draw on similar themes, so there are other CFPs that touch on issues similar to those addressed in the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation CFP. Health Data for Action and Systems for Action are both focused on research in a way that CAT is not. More information on Health Data for Action and Systems for Action can be found [here](http://www.academyhealth.org/events/2017-05/webinar-health-data-action) and [here](http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/funding-opportunities/2017/systems-for-action--systems-and-services-research-to-build-a-cul.html), respectively.

**The Call for Proposals states that the project can support state-based or local advocacy efforts. What do you mean by local?**

The project may aim to address local policy or systems change at the state region, county, or multi-city levels. Local projects are projects that may not affect an entire state. These can be projects that focus on city or county policies or the practices of health systems. The project should be sustainable, scalable and/or replicable so that there is potential for impact beyond local policy and local systems.

**The Call for Proposals mentions the System of Advocacy framework and the key capacities and activities required for effective advocacy. Do we have to work on all the capacities?**

Developing and strengthening capacities in all key areas (policy analysis, communications, non-lobbying grassroots organizing, coalition building, stakeholder alliance building, fundraising, campaign development, and evaluation) is a major element of the program; we understand that at times one capacity may take precedent over another, but it is our hope that consumer advocacy coalitions will use this opportunity to develop capacity across all areas. Strong proposals will incorporate all the capacities in the initial project plan.

**Can grant funds under this program be used for advocacy?**

Yes, this is an advocacy grant program, so we expect that organizations will use these grant funds to support their advocacy efforts. Lobbying, whether grassroots or direct, cannot be supported with RWJF funding. Furthermore, technical assistance provided by Community Catalyst cannot be utilized for lobbying. There is a good possibility that some of the policy goals grantees might pursue may require lobbying, so there is an expectation that grantees will have other non-RWJF funds available and identified in case lobbying is necessary to pursue policy change and will have to provide a budget that shows these expenses and the availability of other funds to support them. If applicants are not familiar with the specific definition of lobbying versus advocacy, please review the following resources to learn more:

* [***Advocacy and Lobbying Rules for Private Foundations***](http://learnfoundationlaw.org/advocacy-and-lobbying-rules-for-private-foundations/). The legal staff at the Packard Foundation, Gates Foundation, Hewlett Foundation, and Moore Foundation developed this free, first-of-its-kind resource, which covers the basic legal rules around which staff are allowed to fund and engage in at a private foundation. It takes less than an hour to complete and features “Maya,” a new program officer that leads participants through the course. Participants can also return to the training at any time for a refresher and click on the individual modules to refer back to specific topics

[***Bolder Advocacy***](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org/)**.** The Alliance for Justice’s Bolder Advocacy initiative is a comprehensive approach to training and equipping nonprofits and foundations to be effective in their work by better understanding the laws and regulations governing organizations engaging in advocacy.

**Does the applicant organization need to be part of an existing coalition working on these issues?**

No, but strong proposals will demonstrate collaboration with key partners and allies and should include a plan for building or maintaining a coalition focused on health system transformation.

**What support, other than funding, will funded applicants receive from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Community Catalyst?**

In addition to the financial support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the funded applicants will receive technical assistance from Community Catalyst to address health system transformation issues. Assistance is provided through a [System of Advocacy framework](http://www.communitycatalyst.org/work) and integrates support across key capacities and activities to engage in effective advocacy.

**Does a successful application require a research framework? Will applications be awarded based on the potential contribution to advancing research on consumer advocacy?**

A successful application does not require a research framework, but we hope to be able to draw lessons learned and best practices from the grantees’ experiences around effective consumer advocacy strategies in the health system transformations space.

**What evaluation activities are required as part of this grant program?**

RWJF and NPO staff will monitor the grantees’ efforts and provide careful stewardship of grant funds to ensure accountability. Grantees are expected to meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports, as well as periodic information needed for overall project performance monitoring and management. Project directors are expected to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on their grants. At the close of each grant, the grantee is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination. The Foundation may also engage external evaluators to assess program impact. Grantees will be expected to cooperate with external evaluations. Furthermore, grantees will be expected to develop a workplan that includes project outcomes and measures of success and may receive evaluation support to review and refine evaluation metrics.

**\*\*How is a project outcome defined, and how is it different from a measure of success?**

Project goals indicate what you hope to influence within the project period that will help you achieve your policy or systems change goal(s). Good outcomes are the following: specific (not combining multiple ideas together); measureable (increased, # of, % new); achievable (realistic and attainable); relevant (related to the goals, meaningful); time-bound (tied to your time frame). Measures of success should provide meaningful, useful information and indicators that allow you to assess whether or not you are achieving your desired outcomes. For example, if your desired outcome is an increased number of consumers meaningfully engaged in an advisory board, your measures of success might indicate what the desired number of consumers serving on that board is or how you are able to qualify “meaningful engagement” on the board.

**Given the term-limited nature of this opportunity, how heavily will you be weighing sustainability planning in the proposal review process?**

Strong proposals will incorporate fundraising and organizational sustainability efforts into the project plan. Community Catalyst will also offer technical assistance and support on fundraising and building organizational sustainability throughout the project period, so proposal should also note how organizations might be able to leverage this support. Furthermore, as applicants think about policy or systems changes that might be addressed, they should consider how sustainable the changes are long-term.

**Is there an intention to continue funding similar projects beyond the two years of this initial program?**

While RWJF may launch programs that are similar to the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation program or that build off the program, we do not anticipate grant renewals beyond the two-year project period for this particular program.

**How does this work fit into the arc of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s work?**

This program brings together a lot of the work that has traditionally been in RWJF’s areas of coverage, quality, equality, and addressing health care disparities, as well as work focused on the public health system. As the policy environment has changed, these issues are more and more connected. The idea behind the *Transforming Health and Health Systems* work and the Consumer Advocacy for Transformation work is to support projects that touch on multiple aspects of what forms a well-integrated, high quality health system where people have access to not only health care but also to highly coordinated and integrated care.

**How will the uncertainty of the political environment at the state and federal levels affect this Call for Proposals process?**

Proposals should reflect the best assessment of your state’s local circumstances, politics and opportunities, and identify where there might be federal risk or threat to the pursuit of your project goals. If changes in the political environment affect funded projects, Community Catalyst will work with organizations to adapt your project’s goals and activities to reflect what changes may come.

**Will there be balance in terms of political climate or geography in the awards?**

Our goal for selecting grantees is that there will be balance across several areas (geographic diversity, types of organizations, types of projects, diversity in the target populations). We are working with a National Advisory Committee throughout the selection process who have diverse backgrounds and who will help us make decisions about the grantees to ensure we achieve the balance we are looking for. We are looking for a range of projects, but the most important consideration is that your project proposal makes sense for your political climate. We understand that there are different realities in different areas across the country, so being honest, clear and thoughtful about that is what is important in this case.

**Whom should I contact with questions about the program?**

Please contact Community Catalyst at [CAT@communitycatalyst.org](mailto:CAT@communitycatalyst.org) with any questions about the program. Community Catalyst will periodically update the Frequently Asked Questions document with answers to additional questions we may receive.

**Application Process**

**\*\*How much can the brief proposal evolve, particularly as the rapidly changing policy landscape evolves?**

We recognize that things are changing quickly. As a result, there is some flexibility that allows for adjustments in terms of strategies, activities and deliverables in the full proposal, but the proposal cannot describe a completely different project. If there are differences between the brief and full proposal, please be sure to describe those changes and reasons for those changes.

**\*\*To what degree should applicants highlight changes or the potential for change due to the shifting policy environment?**

Proposals should acknowledge potential changes, but a lot of details are not necessary at this point. Proposals should acknowledge how organizations would react to certain changes in the policy landscape.

**\*\*Given the changing climate/landscape and the length of the grant period, are applicants allowed to front-load the funds to the first year of the project?**

The goal of the grant lasting over a two-year period should be clear. We understand that first year activities may be clearer than second-year activities, and will allow for some flexibility. However, the project should have well-defined goals that span over a two-year period and should not be overly reactive.

**\*\*Certain parts of the project may extend past the two-year mark or may not be finalized within two-years. Is this okay?**

Yes. Proposals should describe longer-term outcomes or goals. However, the proposals should describe what interim policy or systems change outcomes will be accomplished within the two-year project period.

**\*\*What is the expectation around listing/describing the leadership team and broader coalition partners?**

Proposals should **definitely** include information about partners who would potentially receive funding as part of this project, including what their specific roles are and what they are responsible for, in terms of activities and deliverables. Other partners who are connected to the project and play a role in achieving the project’s overall goals, but are not receiving funding directly from this grant, should also be described in the proposal. Strong proposals will also describe the broader coalition of partners, allies and stakeholders to demonstrate broad-based support for your proposed efforts and to describe coalition dynamics and the overall advocacy landscape as it relates to your proposed efforts. Applicants should fill out the “Key Leadership Team and Organization” document to describe key partners, funded and unfunded, who will play a key part in the leadership and direction of the project. The “Key Leadership Team and Organization” form should reflect involvement with the project, and may include organizations that will not be funded through the project. Please note that this document does not need to list every partner that is connected to the project. Please prioritize the organization described as you see fit.

**\*\*Is there a requirement to submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for partners that are named in the proposal?**

No, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation does not require an MOU at this stage. However, you must fill out a subcontract form for any partners that will be receiving funding directly from this grant.

**\*\*Whom should letters of support come from?**

Letters of support are optional. They can come from a variety of sources, including coalition partners, stakeholders, institutional members, etc. who are collaborating as part of the leadership team on the proposed project. Letters should address specific plans for providing support for the proposed project during the grant period and should comment on the applicant organization’s capacity to implement and manage the project.

**\*\*What kind of evidence from other states, in terms of project strategies, should applicants be looking at?**

It is not necessary to look at what other states are doing if it is not relevant to the proposed project. However, to the extent possible we would like projects to be applicable in other places. Applicants should point out what themes or trends the project addresses that may have been present in other states or may show up in other states in the future. If applicable, the full proposal can highlight examples in other places.

**Will there be an opportunity for Community Catalyst or RWJF staff to provide guidance or feedback on a draft of the proposal?**

The Consumer Advocacy for Transformation program will use a competitive selection process. In order to ensure that the selection process is as fair as possible, we are not able to provide specific guidance or feedback to potential applicants during the full proposal phase of the application process. We are able to answer more general questions about the Call for Proposals process and the overall Consumer Advocacy for Transformation program. These rules apply to all potential applicants, including those who currently fall within the network of advocacy organizations that Community Catalyst works with.

**What is the process for applying for this funding opportunity?**

There are two stages in the competitive proposal process: (1) applicants submit a brief proposal outlining the potential project; and *if invited* (2) select applicants will then submit a full proposal detailing specific project activities, staffing, line-item budget, budget narrative, and other documentation including up to three letters of support from key partner organizations.

**\*\*How will applicants be notified about whether or not they are selected as finalists?**

Applicants will be notified by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation via email on *July 28, 2017* about their advancement as finalists.

**Who will select applicants for the next stage of the proposal?**

Community Catalyst staff, RWJF staff and a National Advisory Committee are responsible for reviewing brief proposals and selecting applicants for the next stage of the proposal process. Final decisions about funding reside with RWJF.

**\*\*Can multiple organizations from one state submit a full proposal, and what are the criteria for reviewing two proposals from the same state?**

Yes. We will accept multiple proposals from a state, and it is possible that more than one project will be funded in a state if the goals and activities are different. . However, we will not fund two projects from a state with the same or similar goals.

**\*\*Applicants are presented with a list of strategies on how to plan their narrative and frame the proposed project. Is it necessary to organize the project plan under the strategy headings, or can the proposal be formatted in a different way?**

Projects do not have to fit a particular format, however, strong proposals will describe activities and outcomes under each of the strategies/capacity areas listed in the narrative instructions.

**My organization is currently receiving funding, or has received funding in the past, from Community Catalyst or RWJF for another project focused on health system transformation. Does this disqualify my organization from this funding opportunity?**

No, having current or past funding for another project focused on health system transformation does not disqualify organizations from this funding opportunity. We encourage organizations with current or past funding for this area of work to outline how this grant can build upon and enhance past or current work rather than duplicate efforts.

**How many projects will be funded?**

Up to eight projects will be funded across the country (24-month grants up to $275,000).

**Who should I contact with questions about the application process?**

Please contact Community Catalyst at [CAT@communitycatalyst.org](mailto:CAT@communitycatalyst.org) with any questions about the program.

**Eligibility**

**Can individuals submit a proposal?**

No. Only organizations that meet the organizational requirements may submit a proposal.

**Are coalitions eligible to apply?**

Only one organization can be the official applicant and grantee. However, we encourage collaboration among coalitions and encourage applicants to describe coalition efforts to coordinate and collaborate on this project.

**Are national organizations eligible to apply?**

National or regional organizations with state or local chapters are eligible to apply, but projects should focus on state-specific or local policy or systems change goals. Similarly, there may be cases when a national group without local chapters is part of a state-led coalition. Reviewers will assess each individual state’s system of advocacy and how the applicant is addressing a given state’s political circumstances.

**What are the organizational requirements to submit a proposal?**

The applicant organization must:

* Be a statewide or regional (state region, county-level, multi-city) consumer advocacy organization with a documented track record of successful advocacy in health policy;
* Operate as a non-profit organization that is recognized as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code and classified as other than a private foundation or non-functionally integrated Type 3 supporting organization;
* Have sufficient unrestricted funds to engage in any lobbying related to the project’s policy goals;
* Have experience in complying with the lobbying restrictions that apply to Section 501(c)(3) organizations under the Internal Revenue Code;
* Have a state-level or local (state region, county-level, or multi-city) policy or system change agenda;
* Have a history of engaging and collaborating with other consumer groups and key health care stakeholders, such as delivery system leaders, business groups, government officials, labor, payers and providers;

**Please clarify what it means to be an eligible consumer advocacy organization.**

A consumer advocacy organization is an organization whose primary mission is to build a strong consumer voice and influence decision making to make the health care system more responsive and accountable to all who need services, particularly those who are poorly served or left out of the current health care system.  We seek organizations whose mission and work focus on advocacy and whose key constituents/stakeholders are health care consumers. Competitive organizations should be able to document a record of successful advocacy in health policy. Organizations can also be multi-issue (including health issues), and do not need to be focused solely on health.

**Can an organization apply through a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor?**

Public charity fiscal sponsors are eligible to apply, so long as the fiscal sponsor certifies that it has legal responsibility and oversight of the program and provides a certification to that effect. Successful applications will be provided a copy of this certification.

**Is an organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code eligible to apply for this grant?**

No. Eligible organizations should be either a public entity or nonprofit organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is not a private foundation or nonfunctionally integrated Type III supporting organization.

**Can an organization apply to become a consumer advocacy organization to be eligible for this grant opportunity?**

Given the two-year period of this project, we are looking for organizations that are already established consumer advocacy organizations. While building advocacy infrastructure in a state is key and important, the overall focus of the grant funding should be focused on policy and systems change. While the funding and technical assistance can be used to build and enhance advocacy skills, competitive organizations should have some policy/advocacy experience. In some cases, organizations that have an important role to play may want to join with a more established health care consumer advocacy organization in a coalition.

**Do applicants need to be existing Community Catalyst partners, or are new organizations eligible to apply?**

Applicants do not need to be existing Community Catalyst partners. We encourage new organizations that meet the eligibility requirements to apply.

**Budget and Use of Funds**

**\*\*What can grant funds be used for?**

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project. Grant funds may *not* be used to subsidize individuals for the costs of their health care, to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

Note: Please remember to budget for up to two staff members to attend a Community Catalyst convening this fall and next fall.

*RWJF funds may not be used for lobbying activities*; applicants must specify plans in their proposals for complying with the lobbying restriction. If applicants are invited to submit a full proposal, budgets and budget narratives should identify all activities outlined in the proposal, including activities that will be supported by the RWJF grant and those that will be supported by non-RWJF funds. If the overall goals of a project is likely to involve lobbying activities that are funded by non-RWJF funds, then we will ask you to submit an additional budget that provides details on lobbying expenses and the availability of non-RWJF funds to cover them.

**Does this grant require a match?**

The program does not include a match requirement, though we hope the funded projects are sustainable beyond the two-year project period. Community Catalyst is committed to providing support to grantee organizations around fundraising and resource/organizational development. If your project requires legislative policy change, it will be expected that lobbying efforts may be needed in order to be successful. As a result, if you have any legislative policy goals in your project, you will need to demonstrate that you have funds that can be used for that purpose to ensure RWJF funds are not used for lobbying. We will ask you to fill out a special budget for this purpose.