

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Interdisciplinary Research Leaders (IRL) Program *Updated August 2022 for the Cohort 7 CFA*

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### GENERAL

#### **Q: Can you share some qualities that you are looking for in IRL team members?**

A: Our successful IRL Teams have these top two qualities: 1) The capacity and desire to become a research leader advancing population health and eliminating structural racism, 2) A compelling vision for how research and community partners will work together collaboratively and be accountable to and engage with the community, and 3) The demonstrated ability to conduct a feasible, properly-scaled, credibly-implemented and community-engaged research project that has the strong potential to inform policy or other actions at the local, state, and/or national level.

#### **Q: What are the specific learning objectives of the IRL program?**

A: Learning objectives for all team members include:

- Increase expertise in interdisciplinary research
- Engage in team leadership for the promotion of health equity
- Understand how to use leadership and network skills to drive change in academic and community settings
- Facilitate compelling, action-oriented research that improves health and advances health equity goals in all manner of communities
- Increase understanding of how structural racism and other “isms” constrain health and opportunity, in both the historical and contemporary contexts
- Enhance skills to ensure that ethical research and community standards are equal priorities
- Build skills for the dissemination of research findings to improve community health
- Understand the process to effectively communicate health research evidence to inform policy and change

Additional learning objectives directed for the community partner include:

- Develop skills for partnering with researchers to answer critical community-oriented questions
- Develop skills to lead, guide, and utilize research for action and improvement in community health

Additional learning objectives directed for the research partner include:

- Develop skills and understanding to create equitable partnerships with community members and leaders
- Develop skills to create research that is responsive to community concerns

**Q: The Call for Applications references RWJF's Policy on Open Access. Where can I find more information?**

A: The policy and frequently asked questions on the policy can be found at <https://www.rwjf.org/en/about-rwjf/our-policies/policy-for-open-access.html>

### COMMUNITY PARTNER

**Q: What are the requirements for the community partner?**

A: Community partner:

- May work in a variety of organizational settings, as long as their experience and expertise are relevant to the proposed research project;
- Have authentic engagement with the community involved in the research project;
- Have a strong interest in learning about and using credible research for action;
- Provide guidance for their organization in research activities;
- Can work in any area including community organizing, education, health care, local government or any range of nonprofit and private sectors, whether health care-related or not.

**Q: For the community partner, do you have a preference for the type of organization or sector in which they work?**

A: Community partners may work in a variety of organizational settings, as long as their experience and expertise are relevant to the proposed research project. These areas can include (but are not limited to) community organizing, education, health care, local government, or any range of nonprofit and private sectors, whether healthcare-related or not.

For the purposes of this program, community partners are deeply engaged with the community of interest. Individuals must have the potential to take action on the issue themselves or have relationships with entities that can take action.

**Q: Are there additional supports for the community partner's organization?**

A: Community partners in Cohort 7 will be eligible to work with an organization to apply for mini-grants from the National Program Center. These grants are available to provide financial support for the community partner's employer, sponsoring institution, or another community organization directly involved in the research. These funds are intended to help build the research capacity and infrastructure within the community partner's organization. For example, these funds can be used to support other staff and personnel at the community organization to help advance the IRL research project so the burden of work doesn't fall exclusively on the community partner. This opportunity will generally be limited to Section 501(c)(3) public charities and government entities.

## RESEARCHER PARTNER

### **Q: What are the requirements for the research partners?**

A: Research partners:

- May hold academic appointments or positions in applied research firms or community organizations;
- Should be three or more years beyond their terminal degree graduation date;
- The two research partners should come from different disciplinary backgrounds or scientific perspectives; we are particularly interested in novel interdisciplinary partnerships (e.g., engineering and anthropology).

### **Q: Can you define mid-career researcher?**

A: We don't have a set definition for mid-career. Generally speaking, a researcher would be considered mid-career if they are more than three years out from their PhD (or another terminal degree) or have extensive (e.g., 10+ years) rigorous research or evaluation experience. Importantly, the determination of mid-career need not be based on rank. We want team members who are skilled and experienced in doing research and past the initial phase of their career, but not at the end. Community and Researchers leaders who are interested in being included as team members should describe their status as mid-career in the application materials.

### **Q: Do the researchers have to be employed at an academic institution?**

A: No, researchers do not need to be employed at an academic institution. Researchers may hold appointments or positions in applied research firms or community organizations. We encourage you to browse through our [website](#) to get a sense of our IRL fellows, teams, and their research projects. For applications to the IRL program, it is important that the institution or organization where the researchers are employed must have the capacity to support the proposed research and fellowship participation.

### **Q: Do you have to have a PhD to be included on an application as a research partner?**

A: A PhD or related degree is not required for the IRL program, although many researchers in the IRL program have earned a PhD or related degree. Each research applicant should state their relevant experience in the application. We select teams who demonstrate a strong record of excellence in research or evaluation. Researchers from diverse disciplinary and demographic backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.

### **Q: How do you gauge demonstrated expertise in research?**

A: We assess the research experience of the team as a collective. This includes the team having some past experience working on the theme in the application. For some, teams can show a clear record of quality peer-reviewed publications. For others, white-paper reports, policy briefs, community reports, a model policy language, Op-Eds, public advocacy documents, books, or other documents that illustrate past experience with action-oriented research.

### **Q: Can the researchers be from the same organization/institution?**

A: Yes, the two researchers can be from the same organization/institution.

**Q: If I am currently a doctoral student or in a post-doc position, can I be included on an application as a research partner?**

A: No. Doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows are not considered mid-career researchers. In addition, persons on NIH or NSF training fellowships (e.g., K awards) are ineligible for this program. You must have completed any such program before the start of the IRL program.

**Q: What if I do not have prior experience in health research?**

A: We encourage researchers who do not have prior experience in health research to apply.

### TEAM

**Q: Does the team need to show a record of working together, or can it be a newly formed team?**

A: No. Newly formed teams are eligible to apply. All teams should describe a plan for maintaining team cohesion. Shared leadership among the fellows in a team is a component of the application and selection process. More specifically, each team must thoroughly describe their experience and plan for establishing and/or maintaining an effective, equitable collaboration. Team members do not need to be located in the same geographical area or have a long history of collaborating together.

**Q: May I apply for IRL on more than one team?**

A: No. For Cohort 7, you may only apply to be part of one team.

**Q: How do program withdrawals and team member replacements work?**

A: Grantees are expected to maintain the same IRL team throughout the full three-year program. Unforeseen circumstances may arise where a team member is unable to complete the IRL program. Adding or replacing a team member is not possible. If these conditions arise, the National Program Center and RWJF will work with the grantee on possible solutions.

**Q: If by November 1, 2022, I will have graduated from a different RWJF leadership program or another RWJF grant program, am I eligible to apply for IRL?**

A: Yes. You are eligible to apply to be part of an IRL Cohort 7 team if by November 1, 2022, you are not a current/active grantee in any of the following RWJF programs: Culture of Health Leaders, Clinical Scholars, Health Policy Research Scholars, Harold Amos Faculty Development Program or Health Policy Fellows. Participation in other RWJF research or program grants are allowed and encouraged to apply.

IRL Alumni may not apply to be in IRL Cohort 7.

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

**Q: Can you give us a sample research project for your current teams or alumni teams?**

A: Check out the IRL website to learn more about our [current teams](#) and [alumni teams](#) and their research projects.

**Q: What are the different research themes/topic areas for previous IRL cohorts?**

A: The themes for the previous IRL cohorts are:

- Early childhood and health (Cohort 1)
- Housing, community development, and health (Cohort 1)
- Youth development approaches to prevent violence and promote health (Cohort 2)
- Individual and community resilience and health (Cohort 2)
- Solutions for better health care delivery in rural America (Cohort 3)
- Addressing Social and Economic Determinants to Prevent Chronic Conditions and to Promote Health, Wellbeing and Equity in Rural America (Cohort 3)
- Community development and health (Cohort 4)
- Clinical practice, social services, and health (Cohort 4)
- Community environment and health (Cohort 5)
- Families and child health (Cohort 5)
- Structural Racism in health care (Cohort 6)
- Structural racism and community health and wellbeing (Cohort 6)

**Q: What is the topic area for the 2022 IRL CFA (Cohort 7)?**

A: The focus of the 2022 IRL call for applications is structural racism and health. The aim for the new IRL cohort, beginning in November 2022, is to generate high-quality, community-engaged research useful for dismantling structural racism and improving health and health equity.

**Q: How detailed does our research project description need to be at the time of application (e.g., number of surveys/focus groups, sample size, etc.)?**

A: A more detailed research project description in the application provides reviewers with a clearer understanding of your proposed work and impact. We are interested in projects that yield credible and transparent information that is useful for action. Building on prior research is expected but the importance of the proposed research must be demonstrated.

**Q: What if the research ideally involves more than a single community partner? Is it possible to involve an additional community partner as part of the team?**

A: No. IRL funded teams are limited to one community partner and two research partners. For your research, funded IRL teams typically collaborate with contractors, consultants, or engage other community members to complete their work. These collaborations are often included as part of the budget for the proposed research project.

**Q: What does the 'Revised Research Proposal' entail?**

A: All teams accepted into IRL will successfully submit a Revised Research Proposal in March 2023 that provides additional details about their proposed research and workplan. The first four months of IRL is focused on each team refining their research proposal with time for review and assistance from members of the IRL Research Team. Funds for the research project will not be released until submission and approval of the revised research proposal, approximately six months after the grant start date of November 1, 2022.

**Q: Is program evaluation eligible for funding under this call?**

A: Yes. An intervention evaluation is an example of an acceptable research design for an IRL application.

## FUNDING/SUPPORT/AWARD

### **Q: What is the total amount of the IRL award/grant and are there different components?**

A: Total awards will be up to \$395,000 per team for the duration of the three-year fellowship program. This amount includes annual fellow support for all three participants, a one-time team research project award, and annual mini grants for the community partner's organization.

The first component of the award is fellow support of \$25,000 per fellow for each year of the three-year program. These funds are meant to support time for participation in the IRL program. These funds will be paid directly to each team member's sponsoring organization. In most cases, an individual's sponsoring organization is their employer.

The second component of the award is for the team research project. We anticipate that the total 2.5-year research project budget, including indirect costs/overhead, will be \$125,000. Each team will select an organization/institution (in almost all cases, this will be one of the team member's employers) that will receive and manage the team research project grant. The recipient organization must be based in the U.S. or its territories.

The third component of the award is the annual mini grants for the community partner's organization. Each year, community partners are eligible to apply for up to \$15,000 to offset expenses related to IRL.

### **Q: What is the time commitment for fellows in this program?**

A: The time commitment for the program is estimated to be one day per week – approximately 20% FTE – for three years. To support the fellows' time to participate in the program, the grantee organization will receive financial support of \$25,000 per team member for each year of the three-year program. It is the expectation of the program that the Fellows will fully participate in all program activities.

### **Q: Is there guidance regarding indirect cost rates for RWJF grants/awards?**

A: Yes. For the fellow support portion, an optional administrative fee of \$1,000 per year, \$3,000 in total, may be provided to cover the sponsoring organization's administrative costs of managing the grant will be available. No other indirect costs will be allowed. For the research project, RWJF's Indirect Cost Rate Policy will apply and can be found [here](#).

### **Q: Is there funding to assist the team members in attending the in-person meetings?**

A: Yes. All travel expenses for all required program meetings will be paid directly by the IRL National Program Center or RWJF. This will not be charged to the team research budget or fellow support funds.

### **Q: Will you fund programs in the same city/county?**

A: Yes. It is possible that we would fund more than one team in the same city or county.



## SELECTION

### **Q: Will applications be scored and reviewer comments provided to applicants?**

A: Applications will undergo a rigorous, multi-stage review process. Per RWJF policy, reviewers' comments will not be provided to applicants. While we can't provide applicant teams with specific reviewer information, we can share some of the qualities of applications that were selected to be part of the program.

## PREVIOUS IRL APPLICANTS

### **Q: What if I have applied before?**

A: If you were not successful in being selected for the IRL program, you are eligible to apply again. If you have previously been part of an IRL funded team, you are not eligible to apply.

### **Q: If I apply again, should I apply with the same team or project?**

A: Each year, IRL has a specific theme that applicants are requested to address in their proposal. Please make sure any new application has a focus that is aligned with the theme for the cohort to which you are applying.

If you or members of your team apply after not being selected, you will want to consider revising your application in scope, focus, or team composition for a new application.

All members of the team must not have previously been selected with a previous IRL team.