

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
Interdisciplinary Research Leaders (IRL) Program  
Version 12/18/2019**

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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 three qualities: 1) The capacity and desire to become a research leader advancing population health and health equity at the local and national levels; 2) A compelling vision for how research and community partners will work together collaboratively and be accountable to the community, and 3) Credible and transparent research with a strong potential to inform policy or action at the local and/or national level, properly scaled, and not too ambitious.

**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>.

**RESEARCHERS**

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

A: We are looking for applicants who are mid-career, rather than junior career or late career. While we don't have a set definition for "mid-career," generally speaking, a researcher would be considered "mid-career" if they are more than five years out from their PhD (or other terminal degree) or have extensive (eg, 8+ 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. Researchers and community leaders who are interested in being included as team members are invited to make their case for their mid-career status in the application materials. We focus on "mid-career" because these individuals are in a unique position where they have gained the skills and experience to lead but also have time to implement their learning and influence their peers and organizations as they continue to work formally for significant time beyond the IRL program.

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

A: No, researchers do not need to be based at an academic institution. Researchers may hold academic 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 fellow, teams, and their research projects. All that really matters is that the research is credible and transparent (some use the term "rigorous") wherever it is conducted.

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

A: While we expect that many researchers listed as team members will have earned a PhD or related degree, this is not necessary provided the applicant can demonstrate that the researcher has a strong record of excellence in research or evaluation. With that said, researchers from diverse disciplinary and demographic backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.

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

A: We take a holistic approach. For some, it will be a clear record of quality peer-reviewed publications. For others, white-paper reports or research-based policy briefs. Overall, there is no one metric. Applicants and team members must make their case. Again, we are interested in researchers interested in creating credible and transparent evidence for action.

**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 fellowship.

### COMMUNITY PARTNER

**Q: For the community partner, do you have a preference of whether the partner is a staff member or a constituent/volunteer member?**

A: The community partner may be either a staff member or a constituent/volunteer member. For the purposes of this program, community partners are individuals with close ties to a community of interest. Individuals must have the potential to take action on the issue themselves or have relationships with entities that can take action. We aim to help develop community partners as research leaders, too. So while not professional researchers, community partners should be interested in using, compelling, and helping to execute credible and transparent research for action.

### TEAM

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

A: Research partners on an IRL team do not need to be located in the same geographical area or have a long history of collaborating together, but a plan for maintaining team cohesion is a necessary 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.

**Q: Is each individual only allowed to be part of one IRL application, or can an individual be on more than one team, as long as the focus of each individual application is different?**

A: You can only apply to be part of one IRL Team. In other words, you can only be listed on one applicant organization’s application as a team member.

**Q: Can I be listed as a team member or apply for more than one RWJF leadership program?**

A: Yes, you can apply for or be listed as a team member on more than one leadership program application. But, you can only get into one program. Each potential applicant or team member should think about each of the four RWJF leadership development programs and decide which is best suited for his/her interests. We recommend putting most of your energy into the program you think is the best fit for you. If you do decide to apply or be listed as a team member for more than one program, you must fill out a separate application for each one. For more information on RWJF leadership development programs, please visit <http://www.rwjf.org/changeleaders>.

### 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. Please note that the research themes/topic areas for IRL Cohort 1 are 1) Early childhood and health, and 2) Housing, community development, and health. Cohort 2 themes/topic areas are 1) Youth development approaches to prevent violence and promote health, and 2) Community and individual resilience and health. Cohort 3 themes/topics areas are 1) Solutions for better health care delivery in rural America, and 2) Addressing the social and economic determinants to prevent chronic conditions and to promote health, well-being, and equity in rural America. Cohort 4 themes/topic areas are 1) Community development and health, and 2) Clinical practice, social services, and health.

**Q: What are the two themes/topic areas for the 2020 IRL CFA?**

A: IRL applicant teams must focus their research and associated action activities on one of two topic areas, or themes. For the fifth IRL cohort (beginning September 2020), the two topic areas are:

1. Community Environment and Health
2. Families and Child Health

**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: In general, the more detailed your research project description is in the application, the better. We are interested in projects that yield credible and transparent information that is useful for action. It follows that research should be novel, at least to the local issue. 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 additional community partners?**

A: For this IRL call for applications, the team is limited to one community partner team member. However, you can include contracts and consultants in the research project budget to engage the services of additional community partners if the project calls for it.

**Q: What does the ‘Revised Research Proposal’ entail?**

A: It is our expectation that all teams accepted into the program successfully submit a Revised Research Proposal in January 2021. The first 3-4 months of the program will be spent refining the research proposal and teams will have input and assistance from the Interdisciplinary Research Leaders national program center and mentors to help them accomplish this goal. Funds for the research project will not be released until submission and approval of a full revised research proposal, approximately six months after the grant start date of 9/15/2020.

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

A: Yes, an evaluation of an intervention is one example of an evaluation-specific research design that can be proposed and detailed in the application.

## FUNDING/SUPPORT/AWARD

**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 leadership program center or RWJF. This will not come out of your grant budget or your 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 grantee in the same city or county.

**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. Note that this expectation is honest: the program expects Fellows to fully participate in all program activities.

## 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 organizations with specific reviewer information, we can share some of the qualities of applications that were selected to be part of the program.

## FUTURE IRL CFA

**Q: Will there be a 2021 IRL Call for Applications?**

A: The 2021 IRL Call for Applications will be made in early 2021. We encourage you to subscribe on the [IRL website](#) to receive future funding alerts, and follow us on Twitter at @IRLeaders.