

2025 FAQs

Program-specific FAQs about the Exploring Equitable Futures Call for Proposals (CFP)

I've read the Exploring Equitable Futures call for proposals and I'm ready to apply. How do I apply?

Proposals must be submitted via the RWJF online system. To apply, go to www.rwjf.org/cfp/Ideas and click the “apply online” button located on the left side to access the brief proposal application. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at my.rwjf.org before you begin the application process.

When does the Exploring Equitable Futures call for proposals close?

The Emerging Equitable Futures Ideas CFP will close annually on or about October 15 and reopen on or about February 1 in the next year. This downtime lets us focus on closing the year and preparing to start the new year with renewed energy. Please note, applications submitted at different times in the year have equal chances for funding. Additionally, there is no need to rush to submit your idea before this annual deadline: The CFP will reopen again in the new year. Projects selected for funding may be funded in the year they are submitted or the following year.

Can I see a preview of a blank Exploring Equitable Futures call for proposal application?

Yes. You can preview a sample of the brief proposal application under Exploring Equitable Futures CFP Resources at www.rwjf.org/cfp/Ideas.

What is a “brief proposal application”? What are the requirements for a “brief” application?

There are two phases in this competitive proposal process:

- Phase 1: Brief Proposal: Applicants must submit a brief proposal with a project description and summary and include a preliminary budget.
- Phase 2: Full Proposal: Selected Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information.

This CFP calls for a brief proposal application as a first step.

At this brief proposal application stage, you are submitting an idea, an estimated budget, and a project timeframe. The call for proposals and brief proposal application have important guiding questions for you to consider to ensure we get the information we need from applicants to evaluate all brief proposals fairly.

If your brief proposal moves forward in the review process to phase 2, you will be asked to submit a full proposal application which will require additional detailed information about your organization, your project's goals and activities, as well as a detailed budget and budget narrative. (Find more about phase 2 and the review process in FAQs below.)

Are there activities that are not eligible for funding through this CFP?

Many submitted applications that do not result in funding focus on ideas that are already widely practiced—rather than new and unconventional ideas--and thus not a good fit for this funding opportunity.

As described in the call for proposals, other activities this CFP does not fund include, but are not limited to:

- Direct healthcare delivery or services, such as hospital or clinic charity care
- Direct services that work to meet basic needs, such as food or goods distribution
- Clinical interventions, including app-based interventions and diagnostic apps
- Clinical trials
- Theoretical research, or purely lab-based activities that are not linked to impact in systems or practical applications
- Sustaining or expanding existing programs such as extracurricular activities, recreational activities, community educational programs, medical pathways programs, and others
- Transportation services for healthcare clinics, hospitals, or other programs
- Capital projects, such as the renovation or purchasing of a facility or building

Can I request feedback before or after submitting my application?

Given the volume of applications we receive and review, we are not able to provide individual critiques of proposals submitted. We hope that the guidance in the Exploring Equitable Futures CFP and in the brief proposal application found on www.rwjf.org/cfp/Ideas, and in this set of FAQs conveys what we are looking for in applications. If you have additional specific questions, please submit them to ideasforthefuture@rwjf.org.

When can we expect to hear the status of a submitted Brief Proposal Application?

You will receive an automatic notification that we received your brief proposal application upon submission. Depending on the volume of proposals received at any given time, applicants can expect to learn whether their brief proposal has been accepted for further consideration or turned down as early as one month and no later than six months. (Find more about the brief proposal review process and timing in FAQs below.)

Do you only make grants to non-profits? Or do you make grants to for-profit companies or other non-501c3 organizations?

We recognize that new and unconventional ideas can come from anywhere and that we'll need to work across sectors to create a more equitable future. We welcome cutting-edge ideas from everyone, and an organization's legal status will not bar a proposal from receiving a fair review.

That said, the vast majority of RWJF's funding is to nonprofit organizations and public agencies. Historically, less than one percent of RWJF funding has been to for-profit organizations, and always in instances where the institution was best suited to do the work, and the institution was able to demonstrate a charitable purpose for the project. In such instances, RWJF will ask for grantee to adhere to additional reporting and financial requirements.

I am outside of the continental U.S. and having trouble accessing the application. What can I do?

If you are having trouble accessing the application, please refresh your cookies/cache and/or try another browser. If you are not within the continental United States, there may be a firewall (security system) blocking your access. Please contact ideasforthefuture@rwjf.org for further assistance.

Can I apply to receive a grant as an individual? Or does my work need to be associated with an organization?

You can apply for funding using the brief proposal application as an individual. However, if your brief proposal moves forward to Phase Two and we invite you to submit a full proposal application, you will need to work with a fiscal sponsor at that time in order for your project to be considered for a grant. If needed, we will help connect you with a fiscal sponsor who can receive a grant to support you to do your work.

Are there other circumstances under which the Ideas for an Equitable Future team would require the use of a fiscal sponsor?

If your brief proposal moves forward to phase 2 and we request a full proposal application, RWJF will conduct a financial and legal review to determine whether we are able to make a grant to your organization. If there are financial or legal reasons that prevent us from being able to make a grant to your organization, we can help you connect with a fiscal sponsor who can receive a grant to support you to do your work, if that support is needed.

What is your Indirect Cost Rate?

Our allowable indirect cost rate varies by type of organization. You can find information on the RWJF indirect cost policy [here](#).

What is the budget cap for projects funded through the Exploring Equitable Futures CFP?

There is no set award amount. You should request the amount of funding you will need to complete your proposed project—including direct and indirect costs-- for the entire duration of your grant. In 2023, grants awarded by RWJF's Ideas for an Equitable Future team, including those awarded through this CFP, were generally between \$250,000-500,000. If your proposal is selected for consideration, development discussions may result in changes upwards or downwards in the requested grant amount. At this brief proposal stage, we will be evaluating the idea, not the budget.

What is the average duration for projects funded through the Exploring Equitable Futures CFP?

We do not have a hard cap on the duration of projects. Our average grant length is 2-3 years, and our average award amount is \$350K. Many grants are under two years. However, you should request the amount of time you think you and your team will need to accomplish your project goals. There are no advantages to being done “quicker.”

If we are seeking funding from several sources, including RWJF, how should our application reflect that consideration?

If you are requesting funding from RWJF for a portion of your total project cost, the amount you request in your brief proposal application should reflect the total amount you are requesting from RWJF. The application form will allow you to note the total project cost in your proposal, which may include other funding sources.

My team/organization has more than one idea. Can we submit more than one application for funding through the Exploring Equitable Future call for proposals?

If your specific project team is working on more than one idea **OR** if there are multiple groups at your organization interested in submitting brief proposals, please feel free to submit more than one application. Please note that each application should represent a unique project. If an application has been turned down, we do not encourage you to submit a revised application.

My application was turned down, can we reapply?

It is *technically* possible for an applicant to reapply for funding if their proposal is turned down. However, we do not recommend applicants reapply for funding with the same project. If the originally submitted project has been revised significantly, we encourage applicants to review in detail the full funding opportunity including the CFP and FAQs to assess whether the revised project is truly a better fit. You may also apply with a new project.

How many applications does the Ideas for an Equitable Future team receive through this open CFP each year?

For the past five years, the Ideas for an Equitable Future team has received between 600 and 1000 proposals through its CFP each year. The vast majority of these proposals are turned down because they either do not meet basic eligibility criteria for funding or are not aligned with the stated goals of the CFP. We hope that recent revisions to our Call for Proposals will make it easier for people who are interested in applying to understand which kinds of projects are competitive for this funding opportunity and which are not. (see “Eligibility Criteria” and “Selection Criteria” sections in the CFP)

How many grants does the Ideas for an Equitable Future team make through this open CFP each year?

In 2024, we made 8 grants to fund applications received through our open CFP. This means we funded ~1% of the applications we received. While this is a competitive CFP, it’s worth noting that one reason the award rate is so low is that we receive many applications that either do not meet basic eligibility criteria for funding or are not aligned with the stated goals of the CFP. There is no cap on the number of grants made through this call for proposals. For more information on grants that have been awarded by the Ideas for an Equitable Future team, please visit our [grants explorer](#).

Who reviews my Brief Proposal Application?

All brief proposal applications that meet our eligibility requirements are reviewed by 3-5 RWJF staff who are members of the Ideas for an Equitable Future team. Occasionally we ask for additional brief proposal reviews from people not employed by RWJF if we think additional expertise is needed to understand whether or not an idea is truly novel.

What is the review process for this call for proposals?

Here’s an overview of how the review process works for the **Exploring Equitable Futures** call for proposals.

There are two phases in this competitive proposal process:

- Phase 1: Brief Proposal: Applicants must submit a brief proposal with a project description and summary and include a preliminary budget.
- Phase 2: Full Proposal: Select Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information.

Your submitted brief proposal application goes through an eligibility screening and up to two rounds of reviews before a decision is made to either turndown, request more information, or invite you to submit a full proposal. The time it will take for you to receive an update varies depending on the complexity of the project and the time of year it was submitted (e.g. near the holidays).

Eligibility screening of Brief Proposal: At this stage, an RWJF staff member will determine whether your brief proposal meets the eligibility criteria for funding and falls within the broad scope of the **Exploring Equitable Futures** call for proposals’ purpose to seed new and unconventional ideas that could radically advance the health equity for generations to

come. If your brief proposal does not meet these criteria, you will receive notice of turndown via email from myrwjf@rwjf.org.

First review of Brief Proposal: At this stage, your eligible brief proposal is reviewed by 3-5 RWJF Ideas for an Equitable Future team members. If your brief proposal is not selected to move to the second review, you will receive notice of turndown via email from myrwjf@rwjf.org.

Second review of Brief Proposal: At this stage, your brief proposal is discussed at an Ideas for an Equitable Future team meeting. If the team decides to move your brief proposal into development, one of two next steps will occur: (1) a program officer will contact you to request additional information, or (2) you will be invited to submit a full proposal for consideration. If your brief proposal will not move to either of those two next steps, you will receive notice of turndown via email from myrwjf@rwjf.org.

Requests for additional information after second review of Brief Proposal: If this stage applies to you, a program officer will contact you to discuss your brief proposal either via email or through a scheduled call. The program officer will ask you to talk through your idea in more detail, ask questions that emerged during the review process, and discuss next steps. After this conversation, the team will determine whether to invite a full proposal. If your brief proposal will not move forward, you will receive notice of turndown via email from myrwjf@rwjf.org.

Full Proposal Stage

If this stage applies to you, you will receive an email inviting you to submit a full proposal application for consideration through the RWJF online system. A full proposal application requires detailed information about your organization, your project's goals and activities, as well as a detailed budget and budget narrative.

Once you submit your full proposal, it will be reviewed by RWJF staff members and up to three people outside of RWJF. External reviewers may be experts in the field of study the proposed work pertains to and/or experts in health equity. Your full proposal will also be reviewed by RWJF's legal and finance teams. After these reviews, we may have additional questions or conversations with you. Once all reviews are completed, the Ideas for an Equitable Future team director decides whether to recommend funding to RWJF senior leadership.

I have a question you didn't answer. Where can I ask it?

If you have a question that is not answered in these FAQs or in [RWJF's general FAQs about applying for a grant](#), please feel free to email us at ideasforthefuture@rwjf.org. If you have already applied to the **Exploring Equitable Future** call for proposals, please be sure to include your applicant ID, the name of the applicant organization, the project director, and the applicant organization's contact information in your communication. Given the volume of applications we receive and review, we are not able to provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.