ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION ACADEMIC PROGRESSION IN NURSING: THE 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGE

BACKGROUND

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health, recommended that 80 percent of the nursing workforce be prepared at the baccalaureate level or higher by 2020. The IOM committee made this recommendation after reviewing evidence linking a better educated workforce to effectively meeting the demands of an evolving health care system and the changing needs of complex patient care. Currently, only about 50 percent of the 3.1 million nurses have a baccalaureate degree or higher. Increasing this number to 80 percent by 2020 creating a more diverse workforce are ambitious goals. Meeting the 80 percent goal by 2020 will require implementing key strategies—such as more efficient educational pathways, instituting employer preference for hiring BSN nurses, and advancing public policies that support a more educated workforce.

Many of the competencies required for the nurse of the future are reflected in BSN or higher curricula. These competencies include: (1) a higher level of judgment and critical thinking skills; (2) care coordination; (3) population-based care; (4) interprofessional collaboration; (5) quality improvement; (6) leadership; (7) evidence-based practice; and 8) elementary research skills. In addition, a larger pool of BSN graduates is needed to establish a robust pipeline to fill faculty and advanced practice nursing roles, where there are currently severe shortages.

THE PROGRAM

This program will support up to nine Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action State Action Coalitions (eligible ACs) that have been accepted by the Center to Champion Nursing in America (CCNA) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to participate in the Campaign for Action. Each grant will fund the development of a robust statewide or regional plan to achieve an 80 percent BSN level or higher nursing workforce by 2020. For these purposes “regional” refers to areas across state lines that are supported by a state wide or multistate action plan or plans that coordinate efforts for specific geographic areas in very large states or very densely populated areas where there are a very high number of colleges and universities per square mile. Eligible ACs must demonstrate significant commitment from key stakeholders including high-level decision-makers from community colleges, universities, and health care employers. To apply, an eligible AC must select one of its member 501(c)(3) organizations to receive and administer grant funds and establish agreements with other members as required to achieve the project goals.
Successful ACs will receive support, over a two-year period, to implement and evaluate one or more of the following promising practices to increase the number of nurses with a BSN degree or higher:

1. competency-based curricula;
2. shared statewide or regional curriculum;
3. RN to MSN programs with a BSN exit potential; and
4. community colleges offering the BSN.

The plan should also address accelerated delivery mechanisms such as online education, employer “on-site” education, simulation, and shared faculty.

Since it is important to address both education and practice incentives, we expect applicant ACs to include measures to increase favorable employer practices, including both financial and professional incentives. Incentives might include flexible work hours and tuition benefits/waivers; pay differentials; preferential hiring policies and/or requirements for AD-prepared nurses to obtain a BSN within a specific time period.

The core of this program is focused on preparing nurses at the BSN level or higher. Plans and implementation should, however, also address the need to diversify the workforce and ensure that nurses have the competencies required to provide high-quality, safe care to individuals and populations.

Grantees will be expected to satisfy measurable benchmarks within the two-year grant period, such as demonstration of: (1) a solid strategic plan with a sustainable infrastructure of diverse partners and strong in-kind support; (2) successful implementation of chosen strategies; and (3) favorable policy changes by academic and employer partners. ACs may be eligible to apply for a second round of funding depending on their success in meeting and exceeding the benchmarks they have identified and achieved during this two-year period.

As part of their continued role as State Action Coalitions of the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, grantees will continue to participate in the national/regional learning collaborative on education transformation coordinated by CCNA. This will ensure continued learning among all states working on education progression.

TOTAL AWARDS
Up to nine grants of up to $300,000 each over two years will be awarded to eligible Action Coalitions. ACs receiving awards may be eligible to apply for a second round of funding depending on their success in meeting and exceeding the benchmarks they have identified and achieved during this two-year period.
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicant organizations must:

• be a current member of a Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action Coalition. Each Action Coalition may only have one designated organization serving as the grantee. Applicant must submit letters of support indicating that they have been designated to represent their Action Coalition.

• be either a public entity or nonprofit organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is classified as other than a private foundation under section 509(a) of the Code.

• have a history of effectively engaging and collaborating with other entities such as consumer groups, government officials, payers, policy-makers, providers, education institutions and other relevant organizations.

• demonstrate significant in-kind funding.

• provide a plan that includes a collaborative of community colleges, universities or colleges, and major employers.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be assessed on the following components:

• Demonstrated capacity and existing infrastructure necessary to achieve success in moving toward the 80 percent BSN or higher goal. Examples may include secured funds to support this goal or existing implementation of one or more academic or employer strategies.

• Presenting clear goals and a feasible plan to achieve a significant increase in BSN or higher prepared nurses over an eight year period. The plan should include a specific timeline, targets, and strategies to attain targets; and specific measures for evaluating progress.

• Feasibility of the Action Coalition’s plan to implement at least one promising practice related to education progression (supply) and at least one employer strategy related to increasing the number of BSNs (demand). Education progression strategies include the creation or expansion of practices such as: (1) competency-based curricula; (2) shared statewide or regional curriculum; (3) RN to MSN programs with a BSN exit potential; and (4) community colleges offering the BSN. Specific accelerated delivery mechanisms such as online education, employer “on-site” education, simulation and shared faculty should be described. Employer strategies focus on implementing BSN preference policies such as: 1) explicit hiring policies; 2) requirement for AD nurses to obtain a BSN within a specified number of years; and 3) incentives such as flexible work hours and/or tuition benefits to obtain a BSN.

• Presence of clear efforts to work with education programs in the state or region. These efforts should encourage specific curricular elements to prepare the nurse of the future and attract diverse students from historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
• Capacity of the Action Coalition to build and evaluate their plan based on existing state-level data that can provide a baseline measure as well as measures of success. A minimum of the following data elements should be included:

  — number of RNs in the state or region who are prepared at each educational level, followed by a realistic plan for increasing capacity based on two, four and eight year projections for each educational level;
  
  — number of AD nurses who are enrolled in or have completed a BSN program (or higher);
  
  — graduation rates of AD nurses from BSN programs;
  
  — number of health care employers with BSN preference policies;
  
  — number of nurses working in each employer organization; and
  
  — number of nurses that have been admitted to and completed a BSN or higher program within each employer organization.

• Demonstrated significant commitment by key stakeholders including high level decision-makers from community colleges, universities and health care employers. Additional stakeholders such as policy-makers, non-health care businesses, consumer organizations and others also are desirable.

• Plan to ensure that curricula are creating the “nurse of the future,” including competencies in leadership, cultural competence/diversity, interprofessional collaboration, and quality and safety needed to practice effectively in a highly complex health care environment.

• Plan to share and disseminate findings at least quarterly with regional and national AC colleagues.

• Amount and type of in-kind funding support provided by AC members.

** The intent of this initiative will be to gather evidence around each of the four models listed in the program section, thus final grantee selection will consist of at least two states implementing each one of the program strategies.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Evaluation
An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF will conduct an evaluation of the program. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, grantees will be required to participate in the evaluation. Grantee participation includes assisting with necessary data collection to accomplish the evaluation objectives.

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. We may ask project directors to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on their grants. At the close of each grant, (the lead agency) is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.
Monitoring
RWJF monitors the grantees’ efforts and careful stewardship of grant funds to assure accountability. Grantees will be required to submit periodic narrative and financial reports to RWJF; and meet quarterly with the CCNA Regional Action Coalition Education Coordinator to discuss progress and best practices and share these findings with other action coalitions.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS
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. In keeping with RWJF policy, 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, for lobbying, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

HOW TO APPLY
Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. You will receive an email invitation with a link to the RWJF online proposal system and additional instructions. To begin your proposal, select the link in the email and follow the instructions.

Proposals must include a proposal narrative that does not exceed 20 pages, a budget and budget narrative. Budgets must include funds for travel to one national or regional meeting per year for up to two team members. Appendices must include: (1) curriculum vitae/s and/or resumes for the project director and staff; (2) letters of commitment from state action coalition leads and members; and (3) statement of in-kind support provided by AC members.

Interested applicants are encouraged to participate in an optional informational Web conference scheduled for March 29, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. ET. You must register in advance click here.

For more information on the program and proposal requirements please contact:
Catherine Malone, MBA, program associate
Email: nep@rwjf.org

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals/applications submitted.

This program has a national advisory committee that makes recommendations about grants to Foundation staff. RWJF will make all final grant decisions.
2012 Request for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: May 14, 2012

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program will be provided by the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) in collaboration with other members of the Nursing Tri Council. The Tri Council members include: the American Organization of Nurse Executives which serves as the national program office (NPO); the National League for Nursing (NLN); American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN); and the American Nurses Association (ANA). The NPO and CCNA will collaborate with grantees to provide optimal synergies and support.

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN, senior adviser for nursing and director, Campaign for Action
- David Krol, MD, MPH, FAAP, team director and senior program officer
- Christine Phares, grants administrator

TIMETABLE

MARCH 29, 2012 (2:00-3:00 P.M. EST)

Applicant Informational Web conference. Registration is required.

MAY 14, 2012 (3 P.M. ET)

Deadline for receipt of proposals.

JUNE 14, 2012

Notification to finalists.

AUGUST 15, 2012

Start of grants.

*All proposals must be submitted only through the RWJF Online system. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online submission requirements well before the final submission deadline. Program staff may not be available to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline. In fairness to all applicants, the program will not accept late proposals.
2012 Request for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: May 14, 2012

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change.

For 40 years we’ve brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, we expect to make a difference in your lifetime.

For more information visit www.rwjf.org.

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at http://my.rwjf.org.

Route 1 and College Road East
PO Box 2316
Princeton, NJ 08543-2316