
Policies for Action

Policy and Law Research to Build a Culture of Health

Public Policy Research to Advance Racial Equity and Racial Justice

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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I. About Policies for Action and this Funding Opportunity

What is Policies for Action?

Policies for Action (P4A) was created in 2015 as one of four signature research programs of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). P4A solicits, funds, supports and disseminates transdisciplinary research to help develop the evidence base on policies, laws, system interventions, and community dynamics that can promote the goals of RWJF's vision of a [Culture of Health](#). P4A is overseen by the [national coordinating center \(NCC\)](#) at the Urban Institute.

This year, P4A is issuing a call for proposals (CFP) seeking research to build the evidence base on how national, state, and local policies can help advance racial equity and justice in the United States.

How does Policies for Action fund research?

Policies for Action currently funds [four research hubs](#) and [eighteen grantee](#) teams. The collaboration among these institutions brings expertise and experience in conducting research that matters at the local, state, and national policy levels, and exemplifies our aim of supporting cross-sector and transdisciplinary research.

The four research hubs conduct research within specific issue areas, such as housing, education, criminal justice, health insurance expansion, and the impact of work-family policies on health and well-being. They also provide strategic support for the program and its grantees.

P4A also funds investigator-initiated research, and supports [eighteen grantee](#) teams, each focusing on a single research project. You can learn more about the grantees and their projects [here](#).

II. Areas of Interest

Are there specific questions, areas, or policies we should address in our proposal?

We are interested in learning about the effectiveness of national, state, county, and local public policies aimed at advancing racial equity and justice in the United States.

We encourage but do not require that the proposed research examine the impact of policy changes on health and well-being outcomes. See the Call for Proposals for a list of example research questions illustrating appropriate topics that will fill existing research gaps.

Are research projects that have policy implications but do not examine a policy considered for this CFP?

The research must have a central focus on evaluating the impact or implementation of one or more public policies. We will not fund research that can only inform policy development.

Examples of research questions that have a central focus on evaluating the impact or implementation of one or more public policies:

1. Did XX program to provide down payments for first time homebuyers increase homeownership and reduce the racial wealth gap in XX area?
2. Did the universal pre-k program in XX city result in more or less educational segregation by race?

Examples of research questions that can only inform policy development:

1. To what extent does the racial wealth gap exist and does it vary across different populations and places?
2. To what extent are early childhood care settings segregated?

See our current grantee project descriptions on the [P4A website](#) for further examples.

Is RWJF interested in policies addressing COVID-19 for this CFP?

Yes, RWJF is interested in proposals investigating national, state, and local policy responses to COVID-19. Other criteria still apply to these proposals. (A research question considered in scope could be, "What is the impact of policies that have been put in place to promote racial equity in addressing the consequences

of the coronavirus pandemic in health care, housing, or education, including access to technology for remotely accessing health care and education?”)

Can a proposal focus on state-wide policies?

Yes, proposals focusing on state-wide policies are within scope.

Can more than one policy or more than one city be included in the project?

Yes, proposals may focus on more than one policy and/or multiple cities, or states. There is no preference over focusing on one policy versus multiple policies or one location versus multiple locations.

Is RWJF receptive to research on policies/outcomes in other countries?

This CFP only focuses on domestic policies.

III. Eligibility

What types of projects are eligible?

We believe collaborative, cross-sector research designs are best suited to inform policy action. We encourage applicants to propose interdisciplinary research teams as appropriate.

The program seeks to fund studies that can be conducted expeditiously, given the maximum duration of 24 months, using valid and appropriate research designs and analytic strategies. Though not required, we encourage proposals that pair government and for-profit/nonprofit actors with researchers. We are also interested in funding projects that incorporate participatory approaches to research and that use evaluation as a tool for advancing equity by applying principles of [equitable evaluation](#). Methods and designs that have been successful in the past vary and include natural experiments; implementation research; microsimulation studies; randomized controlled trials; linkages and analyses of existing data sources; mixed-methods analyses; and qualitative research. Various data sources can be proposed to be analyzed, such as social service and other public records; restricted-access survey or administrative data; social media data; and marketing data. Given that it can take a long time to gain access to restricted data, preference will be given to investigators who already have access to any restricted-use data proposed, as well as data that can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Investigators may also propose research that would serve as a continuation or supplement to other existing programs or research studies.

What types of organizations are eligible to apply?

As stated in the call for proposals, awards will be made to organizations, not to individuals. Eligible organizations include academic institutions; public entities; private nonprofit organizations; state and local government agencies; and for-profit organizations.

What types of investigators should apply?

We welcome applications from all investigators, and the following are especially encouraged to apply:

- Interdisciplinary teams, especially government and for-profit/nonprofit actors paired with researchers
- Researchers who are from groups that are underrepresented in policy research and/or who are affiliated with institutions that serve underrepresented groups, such as historically black colleges and universities; academic institutions serving primarily Latino students such as the Hispanic Centers of Excellence; tribal colleges; and other similar institutions.

- First time applicants to RWJF

Can a principal investigator or co-principal investigator be listed on more than one application?

A principal investigator or co-principal investigator can only be listed on one application.

What types of credentials are required to be a principal investigator?

There are no specific education requirements to be a Principal Investigator on a proposal. You must, however, be able to demonstrate that the research team has the expertise to conduct the proposed project.

May a proposal list multiple principal investigators?

Yes, there may be up to two Principal Investigators for a proposed research project. Both must be eligible to serve as Principal Investigators, according to the rules presented in the Call for Proposals. One must be called the "Principal Investigator" and the other must be called the "Co-Principal Investigator." The PIs are not required to be at the same institution or organization.

Only two CVs/biosketches may be submitted with the letter of intent, but if invited to the full proposal stage, applicants may provide CVs/biosketches for additional key team members.

Do eligibility requirements for applicant organizations also apply to partners?

No, but if a subcontract or partner relationship is crucial to a project's success, it can sometimes raise issues that require additional financial and/or legal due diligence.

Can an organization be listed as a partner on more than one proposal?

Yes, partners can be listed on more than one letter of intent, as long as each letter of intent submitted is for a distinct project.

May a US-based organization subcontract with an international organization?

The primary applicant must be from an eligible organization (see above) based in the United States or its territories, and the results of the proposed study must further the Foundation's mission of improving the health and wellbeing of all in America. It is acceptable for investigators to be non-U.S. citizens, as long as the organization receiving the grant award is based in the United States. While applicants may submit proposals that include a proposed subcontract relationship with an organization that is based outside of the United States or its territories, such proposals will be subject to heightened scrutiny and a preference will be given to proposals that do not involve the payment of grant funds to organizations based outside of the United States or its territories.

Can an organization submit more than one letter of intent (LOI) to this call for proposals?

Yes. Each letter of intent, or LOI submitted must be for a distinct project.

May I apply for this opportunity even if I am already funded by RWJF, have been an RWJF grantee in the past, or am also currently applying for other RWJF funding?

Applicants who have been RWJF grantees OR who currently have other active RWJF grants, **are** eligible to apply.

Applicants who are current Principal Investigators or co-Principal Investigators of P4A grants OR who have finished their P4A funding within the past two years **are not** eligible to apply. (If your P4A grant was extended, the end of the extension period is considered the end of the award.) This does not prevent other researchers at the home institution of a P4A grantee from applying.

Applicants may submit proposals that are being considered by other RWJF programs.

If I am not chosen for this funding opportunity, will I still be eligible for other RWJF grant opportunities?

Yes, interested applicants may apply for other RWJF grants in the future. You must submit to other opportunities in which you are interested; proposals declined by P4A will not be automatically considered by other programs.

How should I know whether to apply for this CFP or another opportunity?

To learn more about current and upcoming RWJF funding opportunities, and whether they might be of interest to you or your organization, visit the Foundation's [Funding Opportunities](#) page. You can also use RWJF's new [Program Finder](#) tool to identify programs that may align with your interests and goals. For other upcoming funding opportunities that may be of interest to your organization please visit RWJF's [Funding Opportunities](#) page.

IV. Funding

How much funding is available per grant?

There is not an explicit range for allowable budget requests. You should request the amount of funding you will need to complete your proposed research project and to translate and disseminate the results. The size of the budget will be weighed in relation to the importance and likely contribution of the proposed research, with higher budgets subject to greater scrutiny. Typically, grants are funded at \$250,000 each. The duration of awards will be up to 24 months.

What are allowable uses of grant funding?

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, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities. RWJF budget preparation guidelines are available [here](#).

How should I estimate my budget?

A detailed budget is not necessary at the LOI stage (with the November 24, 2020 deadline) of the application process but will be required of applicants invited to the full proposal stage.

You should request the amount of funding you will need to complete your proposed research project. In the case of multi-year proposals, budget requests should reflect the entire grant period (up to 24 months), as opposed to an annual amount. When entering the budget request at the LOI stage, round up to the nearest hundred as opposed to estimating to the exact dollar amount.

Does the maximum award include indirect costs?

Yes, a budget request should include all direct and indirect costs.

What are the direct and indirect rates?

Indirect costs are general overhead and administration expenses that support the entire operations of a grantee. While these costs may not be directly attributable to a project or program, they are real and necessary to operate as an organization. Examples are administrative costs such as human resources, finance, accounting, information technology, and legal, including salaries, benefits, and facilities expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, supplies, and equipment.)

The indirect costs proposed in the grant budget is calculated as the sum of the budget for personnel, other direct costs, and consultants/contractors (i.e., direct costs) times the Foundation's indirect cost rate for the grantee's organization type.

See RWJF's policy for more information.

| Indirect Cost Rate | Grantee Organization Type |
|---------------------------|---|
| 12% | U.S. colleges/universities and hospital or health systems |
| 20% | Nonprofit organizations |
| 0% | For-profit organizations and government entities |

What is open access?

Open access is the free, immediate, online availability of research articles. RWJF views open access as a mechanism for ensuring that anyone can access and use results, and translate research to actions that improve population health, well-being, and equity.

To ensure RWJF-supported research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, grantees who publish findings in peer-reviewed publications must do so in open access journals and/or must include funds in their budgets to cover the cost of making the resulting publications open access (typically \$2,000 - \$5,000 per manuscript). For more information on RWJF's policy on open access, [click here](#).

Is there continuation funding after the award ends?

No, continuation funding will not be provided after the award ends.

V. Crafting and Submitting the Letter of Intent and Full Proposal

What elements should a successful letter of intent include?

All applicants must submit a LOI of no more than two pages that describes the project and includes the amount of funds requested. The LOI should include: a brief plan for the proposed project, outlining a clear research question; proposed data/methods; and communications plans.

What is the application process?

There are two stages in the application process:

- ▾ Letter of intent (due November 24, 2020, by 3 p.m. ET)
- ▾ Full proposal (if invited, due April 7, 2021 by 3 p.m. ET)

How do I submit my LOI?

Applicants must submit a LOI through the RWJF Online System. Visit <http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a4> and use the Apply Online link.

If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at MyRWJF at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the application process.

Are there formatting requirements for the LOI?

Yes. Please refer to the templates in the online application system. All LOI narratives should be no more than two pages, single-spaced, with Arial 11-point font.

Does the two-page limit for the LOI project narrative need to include any references?

References are not required in the LOI narrative, but if provided, they must fit in the two-page limit. In the full proposal stage, references can be submitted as an appendix, not counting against the full proposal narrative limit.

Should the LOI address dissemination of the final research?

Policies for Action is interested in “actionable” research that can be used to impact a Culture of Health. To that end, we’re interested in understanding how your team will work to actively disseminate your research for audiences who may use it. However, that does not need to be a focus in the LOI narrative. Full proposal applicants will be asked to address this.

Who should I contact with questions regarding my LOI?

You may contact the national coordinating center via email at policies4action@urban.org. Please note that in fairness to all applicants, we cannot give feedback on specific research ideas or proposals.

What percentage of Full Proposal invitations typically get funded?

We anticipate that between 1-in-3 and 1-in-4 proposals invited to the full proposal stage will be funded.

VI. Selection Process

Who will review my LOI?

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, leaders of the P4A national coordinating center (NCC) at the Urban Institute, the program's national advisory committee, and other expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF staff and leadership.

How will my LOI be evaluated?

LOIs will be evaluated on the basis of:

- ▾ Eligibility in accordance with the eligibility criteria listed in the CFP;
- ▾ Focus on racial equity and intersectional justice
- ▾ Alignment with topics described in this solicitation;
- ▾ The strength and feasibility of the research design;
- ▾ Capacity to translate research into policy action; and
- ▾ How community engagement is incorporated into the research plan

How will I know if I have been selected to move on to the full proposal phase?

Applicants will be notified in early February, 2021 regarding whether they have been invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due April 7, 2021.

What is the anticipated start date for the award?

Grants will begin on August 15, 2021

Will we receive specific comments on our proposal after a decision is made?

RWJF policy prevents us from providing detailed proactive feedback; however, applicants are welcome to contact the NCC with specific questions about the status of their proposal.

VII. Glossary

The definitions for structural racism, racial equity, and racial justice are provided below for your reference. Applicants may use their own preferred definitions for purposes of this CFP.

Structural Racism

Structural Racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.

Source: Aspen Institute

Racial Equity

Racial equity refers to what a genuinely non-racist society would look like. In a racially equitable society, the distribution of society’s benefits and burdens would not be skewed by race. In other words, racial equity would be a reality in which a person is no more or less likely to experience society’s benefits or burdens just because of the color of their skin. This is in contrast to the current state of affairs in which a person of color is more likely to live in poverty, be imprisoned, drop out of high school, be unemployed and experience poor health outcomes like diabetes, heart disease, depression and other potentially fatal diseases. Racial equity holds society to a higher standard. It demands that we pay attention not just to individual-level discrimination, but to overall social outcomes.

Source: Aspen Institute

Racial Justice

Racial justice is defined as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

The systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.

SOURCE:

Race Forward, "[Race Reporting Guide](#)"

Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment Report, Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity and Applied Research Center, 2009.

Community Engagement

A process of inclusive participation that supports mutual respect of values, strategies and actions for authentic partnership of people affiliated with or self-identified by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of the community of focus.

Source: Community engagement in research: frameworks for education and peer review.

Scientific rigor

The NIH has defined scientific rigor as “the strict application of the scientific method to ensure unbiased and well-controlled experimental design, methodology, analysis, interpretation and reporting of results”

Source: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/reproducibility/index.htm>

Equitable evaluation

Equitable evaluation aligns equitable practices with an equity approach and uses evaluation as a tool for advancing equity. RWJF believes that applying principles of equitable evaluation will help leverage evaluation as a driver of health equity and build a cadre of researchers with diverse backgrounds and expertise who can illuminate the historical and cultural contexts that may be important for understanding and addressing inequities. The following aspects should be considered when applying equitable evaluation to your research:

- Diversity of teams moving beyond cultural to disciplines, beliefs, and lived experiences

- Cultural appropriateness and validity of methods
- Ability of the design to reveal structural and systems-level drivers of inequity (present-day and historically)
- Degree to which communities have the power to shape and own how evaluation happens

Source: *Equitable Evaluation Initiative*

Thank you!

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