2016 Call for Applications

Application Deadline: April 19, 2016

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH LEADERS PROGRAM

Interdisciplinary Research Leaders is a groundbreaking program supporting teams of researchers and community leaders to:

- Bridge the gap between the pressing needs of communities and health research and policy efforts;
- Collaborate in new ways to create a healthier, more equitable future; and,
- Develop leadership skills to advance a Culture of Health, enabling all people to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come.

Participants will become the next generations of leaders, collaborating across sectors to upend the status quo, address health disparities, and take bold steps to achieve greater equity in communities across the country.

BACKGROUND

In 2013 and 2014, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) conducted a strategic review and thorough analysis of all of our areas of work. After careful assessment, RWJF Trustees and leadership agreed that the current and evolving landscape in health and health care demands different and new approaches to the challenges we face (e.g., widening health disparities; poor value for high health care expenditures; expanding populations of underserved communities; and more).

The Foundation has embraced a new vision: to build a national Culture of Health to enable all in our diverse society to lead healthier lives, now and for generations to come. RWJF believes health should be a fundamental and guiding social value—and that America should become a nation in which promoting health is as important as treating illness. Together with our grantees and collaborators, we strive to bring about meaningful, lasting change. For more information about how RWJF is framing a Culture of Health, please visit *cultureofhealth.org*.

This new direction means changing the way we work, and the work we do. Recognizing the critical role that leaders play in advancing a Culture of Health and social change, RWJF is committed to continuing our investments in developing human capital and aligning them more closely to the Foundation's new strategic vision. Building on decades of success in our scholars and fellows programs, four new leadership programs will deploy creative and new approaches to develop networks of leaders who become engaged champions and are well-positioned to move the nation toward a Culture of Health. The new programs also will tap a rich network of alumni from prior RWJF human capital programs as mentors, technical assistance providers, and valuable advisers. The four programs aim to: connect people

across sectors as well as disciplines; capitalize on technology to promote networking and mentoring; and reach and support more individuals. We anticipate that participation in these programs will lead to enriching and lifelong partnerships with other participants and the Foundation as we work together to build and strengthen healthy practices. *Interdisciplinary Research Leaders* participants may have the opportunity for mentorship with Health Policy Research Scholars during the course of their program and we believe all alumni of these new programs will serve as valuable role models and mentors to future participants as well.

In creating the *Interdisciplinary Research Leaders* program, we recognized the need for a network of research and community-oriented leaders who can produce community-engaged, policy-relevant, action-oriented research, and whose work is relevant to organizations and policymakers who are driving social change that builds a Culture of Health.

RWJF has a long-standing commitment to research aimed at filling gaps in knowledge and building evidence-based approaches to the most pressing issues affecting the nation's health. The Foundation is also dedicated to providing opportunities for researchers and community leaders to further develop their careers and ultimately be leaders in the field of health. The leaders in this program will transcend disciplines; involve community members; work collaboratively to build the case for a Culture of Health with strong qualitative and quantitative research skills; have the ability to produce and translate timely research results to inform policy change; and hone the ability to educate policymakers and the general public using creative dissemination approaches. This program will harvest lessons learned from our current scholar programs to build a community of research leaders who are connected to the mission of the Foundation and who can help us advance our nation toward a Culture of Health.

THE PROGRAM

This call for applications seeks teams of researchers and community members who are committed to working together to produce community-relevant, action-oriented research to improve health and well-being.

Program Goals

The broad goal of the *Interdisciplinary Research Leaders* (IRL) program is to produce diverse interdisciplinary leaders who conduct and apply high-quality, community-engaged, action-oriented, equity-focused, health research in order to drive improvements in the health of communities. Accordingly, the program will recruit and select a diverse cohort of mid-career researchers and community members to become IRL program fellows. Each cohort of fellows will participate in a three-year program. During this time, fellows will receive leadership training, the opportunity for cutting-edge research method exploration, mentoring, networking opportunities, and fellowship and research funds, so that they may better effect change and become the next generation of leaders in population health and health equity research.

Another central goal of the IRL program is to foster and support new interdisciplinary action-oriented research collaborations that will help build the evidence base for effective community interventions to

improve health for all. Accordingly, IRL program fellows will apply and be selected as part of a team of three people: two researchers and one community member. For this program's purposes, "researchers" are those with a professional record of conducting high-quality research; "community members" are those associated with community organizations who do not conduct research as a major component of their professional role. We expect that many applicant researchers will have earned a PhD or related degree, but this is not necessary provided the applicant can demonstrate a strong record of research; diverse fields of study are welcome. Researchers from historically underrepresented groups and disadvantaged backgrounds and those from low-income communities are strongly encouraged to apply.

Program Activities

We anticipate supporting up to 20 three-person teams for a total of up to 60 fellows per annual funding cycle. Each cohort of the IRL program will work within designated topic areas related to the social determinants of health. Future cohorts will focus on different topics, which will be developed and released over time.

The duration of each IRL cohort is three years. Fellows should anticipate spending up to one day per week in program-related activities. The first six months will focus on refining the research plan and gaining program approval to conduct the proposed research project. The subsequent two years will focus on executing the research project. The final six months will focus on dissemination and action. Training, mentoring, meetings, and networking curriculum will run throughout the three-year period.

Over the three-year duration of the program, grantee teams are expected to participate in regular online learning activities, networking and collaborative opportunities, and occasional (e.g., two to three times per year) in-person meetings. They are also expected to develop a detailed funding proposal for the team's specific research project, execute the research project, and actively disseminate its findings. This inaugural year of the program will be a prototype year. Specific program details may change in future years.

<u>Learning objectives for researchers include:</u>

- Change leadership for the promotion of health equity and social justice;
- Enhanced capacity to understand constraints to action, such as structural racism, in both the historical and contemporary contexts;
- Understanding of the policy process and how best to communicate to inform policy;
- Understanding and application of theories of knowledge transfer and exchange and what conditions promote use of research evidence in policy decisions;
- Mastery of principles of ethical community-based partnerships and processes for creating and maintaining effective and just collaborations; and,
- New and/or enhanced competencies in a variety of rigorous qualitative and quantitative research methodologies useful for identifying causal relationships critical to making change.

Learning objectives for community partners include many of the above, but also:

- How to effectively set and execute an action-oriented research agenda beneficial to community members and health equity goals;
- How to partner with researchers aiming to answer critical community-oriented questions;
- How to ensure ethical research and community standards remain a priority; and,
- How to find, understand, and interpret research findings so as to leverage the same for action.

Research projects should focus on issues for which there is clear potential for action and change. Accordingly, projects, qualitative or quantitative, should be methodologically rigorous and properly scaled for a two-year study time frame and budget constraints.

Research conducted by IRL teams should draw from multiple scientific and social scientific disciplines. Research designs may be case studies; evaluations of interventions; experiments; financial, economic or cost-effectiveness studies; health impact assessments; legal analyses; natural experiments; policy analyses; existing data analyses; qualitative/ethnographic investigations or other action-oriented designs.

IRL teams must focus their research and associated action activities on one of the two topic areas defined here. Topics areas will change with each cohort, but any given cohort of teams will focus on just one of two topics for the entirety of their fellowship. For the first IRL cohort, the two topic areas are:

1. Early childhood and health
2. Housing, community development, and health

Early Childhood and Health

The early childhood period is a sensitive period for health and well-being throughout the life course. We seek research projects that focus on improving social, emotional, and developmental health and well-being in early childhood, and on reducing gaps in early childhood outcomes between more- and less-advantaged populations. We are interested in a variety of aspects of well-being, including, but not limited to, social and emotional development, school readiness, and access to early childhood services.

Examples of projects related to these strategic areas that teams might pursue during the program are:

- Research on adverse early childhood experiences/trauma and influence on later health or social outcomes;
- Research on the connections between trauma and adversity and weight status;
- Evaluation of early childhood education programs on health and social outcomes;
- Development and application of a novel approach to measuring childhood resiliency; and,

- Studying the effect of early childhood programs on school readiness in disadvantaged populations.

Housing, Community Development, and Health

Housing and community development are among the multiple determinants of health. Affordable housing, economic development, as well as community building and engagement, strengthens communities and improves health. By incorporating health principles into the design, building, and maintenance of affordable housing and other community assets, the field further influences health. Housing and community development also serve as platforms for services and activities that enhance the well-being of community members. We seek research projects that span the varied ways that housing and community development efforts influence health and well-being.

Examples of projects related to these strategic areas that teams might pursue during the program are:

- Process evaluation of a program to build civic engagement and volunteerism in a rural community;
- Research on access to affordable housing and health;
- Case studies of successful and less-successful community mobilization for policy change to promote healthier neighborhoods; and,
- Studies of best practices in delivery of housing support services.

These research project examples are provided for illustrative purposes only. Teams in the IRL program may choose to pursue other research projects beyond those listed here as examples.

The IRL program will support these activities by: supporting an IRL fellow's time, providing the infrastructure for electronic collaboration, providing teams with expert mentoring to ensure success, and providing grant funds specifically for each team's research project.

TOTAL AWARDS

Total awards will be up to $350,000 per team for the duration of the three-year fellowship program. This amount includes both annual stipends for all three participants and a research project award.

- The first component of the award is a stipend 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, including completing the program curriculum, national meetings, and dissemination activities, and will be paid to the sponsoring institution(s) as described below.
- The second award will be for a specific research project that each team will carry out. The team will apply for the research project grant after the fellowship begins and, at that time, will select the organization that will receive and manage the research project grant. We anticipate that the total two-year budget, including indirect costs/overhead for the project will be, on average, $100,000, but

anticipate a range of needs from $25,000 to $125,000 maximum (including indirect expenses/overhead). The research component of the IRL will support research activities only; it is not intended to support program development or implementation. Research grant funds can be used to: cover additional effort as needed; purchase data or supplies; cover support staff; collect data; or pay for travel necessary for the project's execution.

- Travel expenses for all required program meetings and trainings will be paid directly by the national leadership program center or RWJF.

Payment of Awards

All participant stipends will be paid to an organization identified by the participant ("sponsoring institution"). Sponsoring institutions will typically be the participant's employer, but non-employer sponsoring institutions are permitted. In the event a participant does not have a sponsoring institution, the Foundation may be able to match a participant with an appropriate institution. The participant should expect that an indirect fee of up to 12 percent of the stipend amount may be assessed if an appropriate institution is provided.

The sponsoring institution must be an organization based in the United States or its territories and willing to receive the funds from RWJF. Sponsoring institutions should have the administrative and financial capacity and experience to accept the award and to be able to distribute funds consistent with the permitted use of funds described herein, and within the approved budget. The sponsoring institution will be responsible for signing a Letter of Agreement with RWJF and submitting annual financial and narrative reports to the Foundation.

The Foundation strongly encourages sponsoring institutions to waive indirect/overhead charges. If indirect/overhead charges must be applied, they may not exceed 12 percent of the total stipend and will thus result in a reduction of the funds available to support the participant's participation in program activities.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicants must apply to the IRL program as a team. Each team must be comprised of three individuals: two researchers and one community partner. Researchers are people with a terminal degree in their field (e.g., PhD) or extensive research or evaluation experience. The third individual must be a non-researcher "community partner." 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.

- Researchers from diverse disciplinary and demographic backgrounds are encouraged to apply. The IRL program especially encourages researchers from fields that traditionally do not study health, or researchers who do not have prior direct experience in health research, to apply. Researchers may hold academic appointments or positions in applied research firms or community organizations. Researchers on each team should come from different disciplinary and/or methodological

backgrounds. Research partners on an IRL team do not need to be located in the same geographical area, but a plan for maintaining team cohesion is a necessary component of the application and selection process.

- Community partners may work in a variety of organizational settings, as long as their experience and expertise is germane to the proposed research project. The program uses a broad and inclusive definition of community partners; they may be a community organizers, educators, leaders, local government workers, or any of a wide range of people working in the nonprofit and private sectors, whether health care-related or not.
- IRL teams are expected to be fully collaborative, meaning researchers and community partners must share a cohesive vision and demonstrate an ability to work together equitably to achieve program goals. Each team must thoroughly describe their experience and plan for establishing and/or maintaining an effective, equitable collaboration.
- Each team must designate one member as the lead contact for the fellowship application process and project funding support. Upon approval by the national leadership program center and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, grant funding for the 24-month research project will be awarded to the sponsoring institution of one designated lead team member. Project grants must be awarded to an organization based in the United States or its territories that is either a public entity or nonprofit organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Applications from prospective IRL teams must relate to one of the program topics to be considered for the first cohort of the IRL program, as noted above. Future cohorts will feature different topics and will be announced as appropriate.
- Applicants must be U.S. citizens, permanent residents, or individuals granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") status by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the time of application.
- Individual candidates for receipt of award funds must not be receiving support from other research fellowships/traineeships at the time they begin the program.
- Government employees who are not considered government officials[1] under Section 4946 of the Internal Revenue Code are eligible to apply.

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[1]For these purposes, a government official is defined as any person who holds one of the following:

1. An elective public office in the executive or legislative branch of the Government of the United States.
2. An office in the executive or judicial branch of the Government of the United States, appointment to which was made by the President.
3. A position in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States—(A) which is listed in schedule C of rule VI of the Civil Service Rules; or (B) the compensation for

- Individual candidates for receipt of award funds cannot be related by blood or marriage to any Officer[2] or Trustee of RWJF, or be a descendant of its founder, Robert Wood Johnson.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Consistent with RWJF values, this program embraces diversity and inclusion across multiple dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age and socioeconomic status. We strongly encourage applications in support of individual candidates who will help us expand the perspectives and experiences we bring to our work. We believe that the more we include diverse perspectives and experiences in our work, the more successful we will be as we strive together to build a Culture of Health, enabling all in our diverse society to lead healthier lives, now, and for generations to come.

SELECTION CRITERIA

RWJF, with the input of the IRL national leadership program center and national advisory committee, will select the teams for the IRL program. The selection criteria will include:

- Individual research and community partners, and the team as a whole, meet the eligibility criteria described above.
- Research and community partners with the capacity and desire to become leaders in advancing population health and health equity at local and national levels.
- A compelling vision for how the research and community partners will work together collaboratively, without any team member serving in a subordinate role, and be accountable to the community.

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which is equal to or greater than the lowest rate of basic pay for the Senior Executive Service under section 5382 of title 5, United States Code.
4. A position under the House of Representatives or the Senate of the United States held by an individual receiving gross compensation at an annual rate of $15,000 or more.
5. An elective or appointive public office in the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the government of a State, possession of the United States, or political subdivision or other area of any of the foregoing, or of the District of Columbia, held by an individual receiving gross compensation at an annual rate of $20,000 or more, and a significant part of whose activities include "the independent performance of policymaking functions.
6. A position as personal or executive assistant or secretary to any of the foregoing or
7. A member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board.

[2]The Officers are the Chairman of the Board of Trustees; President and CEO; Executive Vice President, Chief of Staff; General Counsel; Secretary; Assistant Secretary; Treasurer; and Assistant Treasurer of the Foundation.

- A preliminary research proposal for a project that fits within one of the two topics for IRL cohort 1 (early childhood and health; and housing, community development, and health) and has strong potential to inform policy or action at the local and/or national level.
- A research project that is feasible to execute within the time frame and budget of the IRL program.
- Researcher partners with demonstrated expertise in their respective disciplines.
- Community partners with demonstrated investment and expertise in the proposed research topic.
- Diversity across teams in terms of geographic location, disciplinary background, research and leadership experience, and community partners. The racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the populations proposed to be studied will also be considered.
- Potential of the team to contribute to the broader vision of building a Culture of Health.

Selection Process

A committee made up of representatives from the national leadership program center, the national advisory committee (NAC) and RWJF staff members, will review each application based on the criteria set forth in the call for applications. Semifinalists will be invited for interviews (online when possible), and must participate in the interviews to be eligible for selection. Semifinalists will also be required to provide additional information, including a form completed by each individual's sponsoring institution documenting that the organization is willing to fulfill the requirements as a sponsoring institution and, if the individual is employed full-time by another organization, a form completed by the individual's employer acknowledging the employee's potential participation in the program ("Supplemental Application"). After the semifinalist interviews are completed, the NAC and the national leadership program center will make recommendations to RWJF, and RWJF will make the final decisions.

Each selected IRL team will have three months after the start of the program to develop and submit a final research plan and budget. This research plan will also be reviewed by an advisory committee.

EVALUATION

The main purpose of evaluation at RWJF is learning rather than accountability. An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF will conduct an evaluation of the program. RWJF intends for this initiative to contribute to national efforts to promote a Culture of Health. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, fellows must participate in the evaluation, which may include assisting with necessary data collection to accomplish the evaluation objectives.

MONITORING

RWJF, with the assistance of the national leadership program center, monitors the participant's efforts and stewardship of funds to assure accountability. Sponsoring institutions, in conjunction with participants, will be required to submit annual narrative and financial reports. Submission of required reports and the individual's satisfactory participation and progress toward the program's goals are prerequisites to receiving funding after the initial program year.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

To help us measure the effectiveness of RWJF grantmaking and improve the grant application experience, we will survey the lead person listed in proposals submitted under this CFA. Shortly after the proposal deadline, the lead applicant will be contacted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI), an independent research firm, and asked to complete a brief, online survey about the proposal process and applicant characteristics. This voluntary questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Responses provided to PSRAI will not impact the funding decision for the proposals in any way.

PSRAI will protect the confidentiality of the responses. RWJF will not receive any data that links a name with the survey responses.

If you have any questions about the survey or the use of the data, feel free to email *applicantfeedback@rwjf.org*.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Stipends will be made directly to the sponsoring institution of each participating fellow. The stipends are meant to support the fellows' time to participate in the IRL program fellowship, and may be applied to base salary support, fringe benefits, and associated indirect/overhead charges up to 12 percent. The Foundation strongly encourages sponsoring institutions to waive indirect/overhead charges. If indirect/overhead charges must be applied, they will result in a reduction of the funds available to support the participant's participation in program activities.

Research 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 deemed 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.

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HOW TO APPLY

Each team will submit one application. Applications for this solicitation must be submitted through the RWJF online system. Visit *www.rwjf.org/cfp/irl* and click on the *Apply Online* link for this solicitation. 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. Applicants must follow the instructions and **use the templates** provided in the RWJF online system.

All parts of the application must be submitted through the RWJF online system. 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 able 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.

There are two phases in this funding process:

*Phase 1: Fellowship Program Applications from Teams (**due April 19, 2016**)*

Each team of three must submit one combined application with short individual essays, a collaborative statement for the team, a preliminary research description, and biographical sketches. Limited optional appendices may also be submitted.

*Phase 2: Research Grant Funding Proposals From Teams (if invited, **due December 8, 2016**)*

Teams admitted into the program will then be invited to submit a full proposal of up to 10 pages accompanied by a budget worksheet, budget narrative, and additional supporting documents due approximately three months after the start of the fellowship. Teams will develop their full research proposals in the initial months of the fellowship program, with support and input from program leadership, mentors, and consultants.

We encourage interested applicants to participate in an optional applicant webinar scheduled for March 16, 2016. You must register in advance at *https://cc.readytalk.com/r/59xcxjq0cqp7&eom*. The webinar will be recorded and made available to those who are not able to participate.

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by the University of Minnesota, which, along with its partners, serves as the national leadership program center and is located at:

Interdisciplinary Research Leaders
University of Minnesota School of Public Health
1300 South 2nd Street, Suite 300
Minneapolis, MN 55454
Phone: (844) 210-9072
Email: *ResearchLeaders@umn.edu*
Website: *http://interdisciplinaryresearch-leaders.org/*

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Responsible staff members at the national leadership program center are:

- J. Michael Oakes, PhD, *professor, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, program director*
- Jan Malcolm, *vice president, Public Affairs and Philanthropy, Allina Health, co-program director*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Nancy Wieler Fishman, MPH, *senior program officer*
- Catherine Malone, DBA, MBA, *program officer*
- Maddalena Moreira, *program financial analyst*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

February 25, 2016 (1-2 p.m. ET)

Webinar for potential applicants of all four leadership programs.

March 16, 2016 (3–4 p.m. ET)

Informational webinar for prospective *Interdisciplinary Research Leaders* applicants.

April 19, 2016 (3 p.m. ET)

Deadline for receipt of fellowship applications from teams.

May 23–June 24, 2016

Semifinalist interviews.

June 24, 2016

Deadline for receipt of semifinalist supplemental applications.

Mid -July 2016

Finalist teams notified of acceptance into fellowship program.

September 1, 2016

Fellowships begin. Stipend funding initiated for program fellows.

September 26–28, 2016

Fall Institute, Princeton, NJ.

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November 16-18, 2016

Interdisciplinary Research Leaders Program Meeting, Minneapolis, Minn.

December 8, 2016

Invited research proposals from teams submitted.

March 1, 2017

Research grant funding initiated for teams.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit *www.rwjf.org*. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at *www.rwjf.org/twitter* or on Facebook at *www.rwjf.org/facebook*.

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at *www.rwjf.org/funding.*

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