

# 2017 Call for Proposals

*Proposal Deadline: May 16, 2017*



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## **NEW CONNECTIONS: INCREASING DIVERSITY OF RWJF PROGRAMMING**

*New Connections* supports a network of early career researchers from underrepresented and historically disadvantaged backgrounds to:

- Engage in career development activities that enhance their research capacity;
- Work to build the case for a Culture of Health with strong qualitative and quantitative research skills;
- Produce and translate timely research results; and
- Collaborate with other researchers from diverse fields to create a healthier, more equitable future for all people.

This program is designed to expand the diversity of perspectives that inform Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) programming and introduces new researchers from across disciplines to the Foundation. *New Connections* participants will become the next generation of research 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

As a country, we face critical challenges—challenges that demand new and different solutions, challenges that require us all to work together more than ever before. Babies born just two subway stops apart have life expectancies that vary widely. As a nation, we spend more for our health care than any other developed nation, yet the quality of our health care doesn't reflect that investment. Our population is increasingly diverse, yet inequities in health care and health persist.

That's why the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is committed to working and collaborating with all to build a 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.

The Foundation recognizes that we need a new kind of leader to build a Culture of Health. We need leaders who will be able to meet the challenges before us—leaders who refuse to be siloed, leaders who refuse to do things the way they have always been done, leaders from all walks of life who reflect the marvelous diversity of our nation. We have been investing in leadership from the Foundation's earliest days, and our current programs are built on the solid foundation laid by those programs. *New Connections*

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is part of a broader spectrum of leadership programs that RWJF offers to leaders across sectors at varying stages of their careers. These programs include:

- *Clinical Scholars* supports interdisciplinary teams of clinically active professionals to address a challenging health issue in their community.
- *Culture of Health Leaders* is designed to train and support individuals working in every field and profession to collaborate in order to advance a Culture of Health.
- *Interdisciplinary Research Leaders* supports teams of researchers and community partners to come together to use the power of applied research to strengthen communities.
- *Harold Amos Faculty Development Program* is designed to increase the number of faculty from historically disadvantaged backgrounds who can achieve senior rank in academic medicine, dentistry, or nursing.
- *Health Policy Research Scholars* is designed for first- or second-year, full-time doctoral students from underrepresented populations and/or disadvantaged backgrounds who want to apply their research to build healthier, more equitable communities and diversify the field of future leaders.
- *Summer Health Professions Education Program* is a free summer enrichment program focused on improving access to information and resources for college students interested in the health professions.
- *State Health Leadership Initiative* aims to accelerate the leadership development of new state/territorial health officials as policymakers, administrators, and advocates for the health of the public.

These programs aim to equip leaders with the skills they need to create and sustain a Culture of Health; they aim to connect people across sectors as well as disciplines, capitalize on technology to promote collaboration and mentoring, and reach and support more people. We believe 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. We also believe alumni of these new programs will serve as valuable role models and mentors to future participants.

Our goal is to help build the next generations of leaders—leaders who will collaborate across sectors to upend the status quo and take bold steps to achieve greater equity in communities across the country.

### THE PROGRAM

#### *Program Goals*

*New Connections: Increasing Diversity of RWJF Programming* is celebrating its 11th year; over the history of the program, it has supported research grants and career development opportunities for a network of more than 920 researchers from diverse, underrepresented and historically disadvantaged backgrounds. *New Connections* is a career development program for early career researchers, providing support to grantees and other individuals who are part of a network of eligible researchers. Through grantmaking, mentorship, career development and networking, *New Connections* enhances the research capacity of its grantees and network members. The researchers in this program come from multiple disciplines (health, social sciences, business, urban planning, architecture and engineering); work to build

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the case for a Culture of Health with strong qualitative and quantitative research skills; and produce and translate timely research results.

### *Program Activities*

*New Connections* invites investigators—researchers from historically disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds who have received their doctorate within the last 10 years—to submit proposals for research that will contribute to building a Culture of Health. Preference is given to applicants with full-time appointments at colleges and universities. Eligible scholars include individuals from groups that have been historically underrepresented in research disciplines, as well as those from low-income communities or who are first-generation college graduates (i.e., the first person in one’s family to receive a two- or four-year college degree).

For this round of funding, *New Connections* will provide support and training for up to 20 investigators (up to 18 *New Connections* researchers and up to two *Policies for Action* researchers). *New Connections* is particularly interested in funding research that moves the nation toward achieving health equity. Proposed research topics must align with the drivers of the Culture of Health Action Framework, which sets a national agenda to improve health, well-being, and equity. The Action Framework consists of four action areas for achieving improvements in health and well-being for all Americans. These action areas include: (1) making health a shared value; (2) fostering cross-sector collaboration; (3) creating healthier, more equitable communities; and (4) strengthening integration of health services and systems. Each action area includes three unique drivers highlighting real world activities, practices, policies, and methods that foster health promotion, improvement, and well-being. Proposed research topics must address one of the four action areas and one or more of the associated drivers, with competitive proposals describing the alignment between the research topic, action area and the identified corresponding drivers; and how these will be attended to through the proposed project. For more information about a Culture of Health and the Action Framework, please visit [www.cultureofhealth.org](http://www.cultureofhealth.org). Go to [Culture of Health Action Framework](#) for a one-page overview, including its measures and drivers. For more information on research topics of interest for this program, please go to [www.rwjf-newconnections.org](http://www.rwjf-newconnections.org) and click on “Research Topics” for more detail.

Applicants may also submit proposals specifically for the *New Connections-Policies for Action* collaborative opportunity. Proposals submitted for [Policies for Action: Policy and Law Research to Build a Culture of Health \(P4A\)](#) should inform the significant gaps in knowledge regarding what policies can serve as levers to improve population health and well-being and achieve greater levels of health equity. Visit [Policies for Action](#) to learn more about the program’s research priorities.

Investigators will address the drivers for a Culture of Health as outlined in this call for proposals and/or research questions on the [program website](#) in their proposals. The program’s expectation is that each submission propose the most appropriate, innovative, and rigorous methodology. Approaches must involve using secondary data analysis, systematic review and meta-analysis. Given the scale of the anticipated projects and timelines, original data collection is strongly discouraged. Applicants are responsible for identifying and acquiring the dataset(s) they propose using in the course of their study. Applicants are encouraged to have a plan for alternate publicly available databases to help supplement necessary data for project completion if any issues arise with acquiring proposed datasets. Among other sources, existing datasets funded by RWJF can be found at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research Health and Medical Care Archive (ICPSR).

Applicants must select a mentor for the project who will provide his/her in-kind support. We require investigators to include in their budgets attendance at one *New Connections* event during the course of their award. This can be attendance at an annual meeting (usually held in June) or the annual Research and Coaching Clinic (usually held in November). Additionally, applicants should budget to attend a new grantee orientation meeting (held in September) at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in Princeton,

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N.J. The new grantee orientation occurs at the outset of the award and provides an opportunity to engage with national program office and foundation staff. Investigator applicants may include travel expenses to present and disseminate their research at up to two key national meetings in their budgets, but they may need to solicit additional funds from their home institution to cover these costs.

We encourage applicants to participate in a web conference for more detailed information about the application process. Please see page 8 for more details about the applicant web conference.

## TOTAL AWARDS

- Grants of up to \$50,000 each will be awarded through this program.
- A total of up to 20 grants will be awarded.
  - Of the 20 grants awarded in this funding round, up to two grants will be designated for *New Connections-Policies for Action* awards.
- Grants will be 12 months in duration.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicants must have completed a doctoral degree within the last 10 years (obtained by September 1, 2007 or later).
- Applicants must be early-career scholars, such as a post-doc or assistant professor.
- Applicants must be from a group that has historically been disadvantaged or underrepresented in research disciplines. The term “historically disadvantaged” refers to the challenges facing individuals because of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or similar factors. Eligible individuals include—but are not limited to—individuals from ethnic and racial groups historically underrepresented in research disciplines, first-generation college graduates, people from low-income communities, and individuals with a learning or physical disability. These examples are intended to be illustrative, not exclusive. Applicants who do not fall within one of these categories but who believe they are from a historically disadvantaged or underrepresented background will have an opportunity to describe their individual circumstances as part of the online application process.
- Applicants’ home institutions must agree to administer and receive the grant.
- Applicants must never have received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- Applicants must provide evidence of research skills (research fellowship or equivalent training or experience).
- Applicants must be committed to the goals and mission of *New Connections*, RWJF and a Culture of Health.
- The applicant’s home institution must be based in the United States or its territories. Home institutions should have the administrative and financial capacity and experience to accept the award and to be able to distribute funds in a manner consistent with the permitted use of funds described in

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this call for applications. The home institution will be responsible for signing a letter of agreement with RWJF and submitting annual financial and narrative reports to the Foundation.

- Individual candidates for receipt of award funds must be U.S. citizens or 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 and must not be receiving support from other research fellowships/traineeships at the time they begin the program.
- Federal, state, tribal and local government employees who are not considered government officials under Section 4946 of the Internal Revenue Code<sup>1</sup> are eligible to apply.
- Additionally, individual candidates for receipt of award funds cannot be related by blood or marriage to any Officer\*\*\* or Trustee of RWJF, or be a descendant of its founder, Robert Wood Johnson.

\*\* Applicants who are permanent residents and not green card holders should contact the National Program Office before applying to determine whether they can satisfy the program’s eligibility and documentation requirements.

\*\*\* The Officers are the Chairman of the Board of Trustees; President and CEO; Chief of Staff; Executive Vice President; General Counsel; Secretary; Assistant Secretary; Treasurer; and Assistant Treasurer of the Foundation.

## 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 proposals 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

A committee consisting of RWJF staff, *New Connections* program staff from Equal Measure, and members of the *New Connections* Technical Advisory Committee will review all proposals. The following factors will be used in the selection process:

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<sup>1</sup> 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 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, tribe, 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.

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- Evidence of alignment between applicant's career goals and interests and *New Connections* program goals and career development opportunities. The applicant should demonstrate that participation in the *New Connections* program will impact his or her career.
- Uniqueness of the applicant's personal and professional experiences. We seek investigator applicants from across disciplines (health, social sciences, business, urban planning, engineering, architecture, etc.) who strive to develop new ways to contribute to building a Culture of Health and achieve health equity.
- Significance and relevance of the applicant's previous research experience and interests to the proposed project. If the applicant is proposing a project that reflects a shift from his or her prior research agenda, the applicant should explain how that shift will advance his or her career.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience with the proposed research methodologies (e.g., secondary data analysis, systematic review). Applicants need not be content experts, but should have the expertise to lead a project with sufficient methodological understanding to produce new knowledge for RWJF.
- Demonstrated progress toward a peer-reviewed publication track record.
- Relevance of the research project to RWJF's vision for building a Culture of Health and Action Framework action areas and drivers to improve health, well-being, and equity.
- Strength of the research design and methodology proposed, including the literature review, project aims, research questions, conceptual model, proposed dataset(s) for secondary analysis or protocols for systematic reviews, and data analysis plan.
- Feasibility and clarity of a work plan that demonstrates a timeline for completing the research project, deliverables and career development activities during the one-year grant period.
- Preference is given to applicants with full-time appointments at colleges and universities.

### EVALUATION

The 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 project to contribute to national efforts to build a Culture of Health. Therefore, the program will publicly release results from this evaluation. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, grantees must participate in the evaluation. Grantee participation includes assisting with necessary data collection to accomplish the evaluation objectives.

### 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.

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## APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

To help us measure the effectiveness of RWJF grantmaking and improve the grant application experience, we will survey the Principal Investigator listed in proposals submitted under this call for proposals. Shortly after the proposal deadline, the Principal Investigator 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](mailto:applicantfeedback@rwjf.org).

## USE OF GRANT FUNDS

All grant funds will be paid to the individual's home institution. Home institutions must be based in the United States or its territories and be willing to receive the funds from RWJF.

Grant funds may be used to cover the costs associated with completing the research project (e.g., investigator's salary, consultant fees, data collection, and analysis and other direct project expenses) and travel for career development. In keeping with RWJF policy, grant funds may *not* be used 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.

Applicants should strive for efficient and appropriate use of funds as reflected in the proposed budget. The majority of funding should be used for the investigator's salary, travel, trainings and costs associated with full participation in the *New Connections* program. Applicants must demonstrate a minimum 25 percent full-time equivalent commitment for 12 months of funding. Time cannot be apportioned differently in the summer. By the end of grant, each grantee must submit at least two manuscripts for publication. Grantees are also encouraged to propose and develop mechanisms for sharing knowledge gained with RWJF, such as presentations or webinars, and where applicable, relevant audiences in the field.

## HOW TO APPLY

The application process consists of submission of a full proposal. Elements of the full proposal include: (1) applicant's research and professional background; (2) personal statement; (3) professional statement (that details the applicant's research goals and future research agenda); (4) identification of a project mentor; (5) proposal narrative (see detailed description below); (6) detailed budget and budget narrative; (7) letters of support; and, (8) applicant's curriculum vitae.

Applicants must submit proposal narratives of up to eight pages that provide an in-depth description of the research project. Narratives include: (1) project overview; (2) project relevance to a Culture of Health and Action Framework drivers; (3) research design and methodology; (4) the applicant's related research experience; (5) description and accessibility of the proposed dataset; (6) products and deliverables that will be developed; and (7) a work plan with timelines for both the research project and professional development activities.

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Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit [www.rwjf.org/cfp/nci-11jr](http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/nci-11jr) and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the proposal process.

### *Optional Applicant Web Conference*

We highly encourage prospective applicants to participate in the optional web conference. This web conference will provide an overview of the program, assist applicants with the proposal process, and offer an opportunity for applicants to ask questions. The webinar is scheduled for **April 6, 2017 from 1–2 p.m. ET**. Registration is required to participate; applicants can [register here](#) for the web conference.

This program has a technical advisory committee that makes recommendations about grants to Foundation staff. RWJF will make all final grant decisions.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

The deadline for receipt of full proposals is **May 16, 2017 at 3 p.m. ET**. We will notify finalists of their status by **July 10, 2017**.

The *New Connections* national program office will be the first point of contact for applicants. *New Connections* will facilitate applicant communication with staff at RWJF.

Please direct inquiries to:

Chantias Ford, MEd, *research associate*

Phone: (215) 732-2200 ext. 279

Email: [info@rwjf-newconnections.org](mailto:info@rwjf-newconnections.org)

### PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by Equal Measure, which serves as the national program office, located at:

#### **Equal Measure**

1528 Walnut Street, Suite 805

Philadelphia, PA 19102

Phone: (215) 732-2200 ext. 276

Fax: (215) 732-8123

Email: [info@rwjf-newconnections.org](mailto:info@rwjf-newconnections.org)

Website: [www.rwjf-newconnections.org](http://www.rwjf-newconnections.org)

Responsible staff members at the national program office are:

- Renee Byng Yancey, MS, *director*
- Lisa Aponte-Soto, PhD, MHA, *deputy director*
- Tia Burroughs, MSS, MLSP, *program manager*
- Chantias Ford, MEd, *research associate*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

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- Catherine Malone, DBA, MBA, *program officer*
- Andrea Daitz, MA, *program associate*
- Kaytura Felix, MD, *director*
- Maddalena Moreira, *program financial analyst*
- Beth Toner, *senior communications officer*

## KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

*April 6, 2017 (1 p.m. ET)*

Optional applicant web conference. Registration is required. [Visit here](#) for complete details and to register.

*May 16, 2017 (3 p.m. ET)*

Deadline for receipt of full proposals.\*

*July 10, 2017*

Finalist notification of funding recommendations.

*September 1, 2017*

Grants initiated.

*September 2017 (exact date TBD)*

New Grantee Orientation. Attendance is required.

\*All proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit [www.rwjf.org/cfp/nci-11jr](http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/nci-11jr) and use the Apply Online link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the application process. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with the online submission requirements well before the final submission deadline. Staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline. In fairness to all applicants, late submissions will not be accepted.

## 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 working with others to build a national Culture of Health, enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at [www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html](http://www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html).

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