

2018 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: June 7, 2018

Full Proposal Deadline: August 30, 2018



POLICIES FOR ACTION: POLICY AND LAW RESEARCH TO BUILD A CULTURE OF HEALTH

BACKGROUND

[Policies for Action: Policy and Law Research to Build a Culture of Health](#) (P4A) is a signature research program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). For more than 40 years, RWJF has worked with others to address the major health and health care issues of our time. From its inception, RWJF's work has been driven by a continuous cycle of research, evaluation, and learning. RWJF's commitment to advancing a bold research agenda helps bring evidence to bear on some of the most complex health and policy issues facing America.

RWJF's vision of a Culture of Health is rooted in our collective belief that everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to live the healthiest, most prosperous life possible. Dedicated efforts to improve health can positively impact everyone, and can be especially beneficial for people with limited means or those who have been marginalized in the past. Visit www.cultureofhealth.org to learn more about the Culture of Health vision and explore the four Action Areas for driving measurable, sustainable progress and improving the health and well-being of all people.

As part of this broad vision, RWJF recognizes the significant role that policies, laws, and regulations can play in promoting interventions, programs, systems, and community dynamics that affect health. Policy changes and their effects may also be key drivers in achieving health equity. Our country has an urgent need to understand and mitigate longstanding health inequalities, and spread policies and laws that can ensure all Americans can attain and preserve good health and well-being.

PURPOSE

Policies for Action was created to help build the evidence base for policies that can help build a Culture of Health. We are interested in learning how national, state or local policies can promote lifelong health and health equity for individuals, families, and communities; as well as what enabling factors promote the adoption and spread of good policies.

Scholars and other experts from any field can help us understand how policies influence, both positively and negatively, the many potential drivers of population health, well-being, and equity.

We welcome proposals that will investigate public and private policies from a range of political ideologies and perspectives. By *policies*, we mean not just laws and regulations at the local, state, and federal level, but also private sector practices, such as those affecting workplaces, neighborhood and community development, and family stability. Both public and private sector policies and practices can

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significantly impact a person’s health. These policies and practices might be related to: health care; public health; education and training; housing and community development; civil rights; transportation and planning; labor and employment; taxes and spending.

As in previous calls for proposals, P4A is interested in submissions on a wide range of policies that can influence health and health equity. Past successful proposals have investigated the health-related impacts of housing vouchers and other forms of assistance, sick-pay mandates, universal pre-kindergarten programs, local partnerships to combat opioid use, federal food assistance programs, paid family leave policies, and more. Applicants are encouraged to visit the [Policies for Action website](#) to explore more examples of previously and currently funded projects.

Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. This requires removing obstacles to health, such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences—including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

P4A is also interested in research that examines existing policies and potential policy changes that are meant to support low-resourced communities, including: the design, funding, administration, and operation of public assistance programs (e.g., Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program); the eligibility criteria, uptake, and participation dynamics of these programs; interactions with other programs and activities; and characteristics of clients and providers.

Our nation is entering a period of innovation, experimentation, and questioning existing structures and policy redesign—especially at the state and local levels. New approaches and natural experiments in nearly all sectors are unfolding across the country. We encourage researchers from all backgrounds and fields to take advantage of this evolving policy landscape to help shed light on the health-related effects of these changes at the local, state, and national levels. We welcome proposals that will investigate public policies across a range of political ideologies and perspectives.

This year, we have also set aside dedicated funds to support new research on the health equity effects of state pre-emption. Pre-emption is a legal doctrine that stipulates that a higher level of government may limit or eliminate the power of a lower level of government to regulate a certain issue or in a certain domain. In the case of state pre-emption, state governments may limit or eliminate local lawmaking authorities. (A subsequent section provides more information on this set-aside.)

Collaborative, innovative research designs are best suited to inform policy action, innovation, or change. We strongly encourage applicants to propose cross-sector and interdisciplinary research teams. The program seeks to fund studies that can be conducted expeditiously using valid research designs and analytic strategies. The research approach and methods employed may be drawn from outside those commonly used in health or policy research. Methods and designs that have been successful vary and include—but are not limited to—natural experiments, implementation research, micro-simulation studies, randomized controlled trials, linkages and analyses of existing data sources, mixed methods analyses, community-based participatory research (CBPR), and qualitative research. New sources of data

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can also be proposed and mined (e.g., health and social service records; other public records; restricted-access survey or administrative data; social media data; or marketing data). Given that it can take a long time to gain access to restricted data, preferences will be given to researchers who already have access. Investigators may also consider proposing research that would serve as a continuation or supplement to other existing programs or research studies.

We support research that generates actionable evidence and information about how, and how well, laws and policies work—the data and information that can guide legislators, public agencies, advocates, and other stakeholders concerned with developing and implementing policies for community and population health, and rescind policies that are not effective. In addition to carrying out the proposed research activities, each applicant funded under the P4A program will:

- Work with RWJF program officers, the P4A national coordinating center (the Urban Institute), and other P4A investigators to identify and leverage potential synergies across research projects and to disseminate results broadly.
- Actively participate in research collaboration and translation activities organized by RWJF and the national coordinating center (NCC), including research-in-progress webinars, blogs, podcasts, research meetings, and policy briefings.
- In order to ensure P4A research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, grantees who publish P4A data and findings in peer-reviewed publications must do so in open access journals or must include funds in their budgets to cover the cost of making the resulting publications open-access (typically \$3,000-\$5,000 per manuscript).
- Investigators are expected to attend RWJF’s annual Sharing Knowledge to Build a Culture of Health conference during each year the grant is active.

Set-Aside Funds for Pre-Emption-Focused Research

Dovetailing with the focus described above, this call for proposals (CFP) has set aside funds for supporting new research on the health equity effects of state pre-emption. We are particularly interested in forms of pre-emption that set a maximum regulatory standard that localities cannot exceed or that eliminate local lawmaking authority altogether in a particular domain. Priority policy areas include: obesity prevention; paid sick and/or family leave; minimum wage; affordable housing; and local tax and expenditure limitations.

As part of this CFP, we are interested in funding research that will investigate the relationship between state pre-emption and health equity. To help tease out these impacts of state pre-emption, this call for proposals will award approximately \$450,000 total across two to three projects addressing these issues. The following themes may be particularly ripe for study:

- How does state pre-emption affect policy adoption and spread?

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- Do the effects of state pre-emption on policy enactment accrue differentially by individual or community level characteristics? How might pre-emption contribute to or reduce health and social disparities?

*Studying the area of pre-emption will inform and support one of RWJF's [focus areas](#) in **Healthy Communities**. While we have included questions related to pre-emption, we are interested in other policy areas that can promote our work to advance Healthy Communities. The Healthy Communities work is defined as follows: To achieve a Culture of Health, society must create the conditions that allow communities and their residents to reach their best possible well-being. Making progress requires us to: define health in the broadest possible terms; commit to systems changes and policy-oriented long-term solutions; cultivate a shared and deeply held belief in the importance of equal opportunity for health; harness the collective power of leaders, partners, and community members; make the most of available resources; and measure progress and share results. Progress requires focus on disadvantaged communities and the most disadvantaged populations.*

In addition to policy and law research to support our work to promote Healthy Communities, proposals that would support the other areas of RWJF's programming are also welcome. The other areas are described as follows:

- **Transforming Health and Health Care Systems:** To achieve a Culture of Health, health and health care systems must make fundamental changes that produce measurably better outcomes for all. These changes include strengthening individual systems—health care, public health, and social services—and helping systems work together successfully. Making progress requires fostering the conditions within states and communities that improve outcomes and lower costs; strengthening rural and safety-net delivery systems; cultivating effective partnerships among health care, public health, and other sectors; and ensuring access to health insurance coverage and high-value care.
- **Healthy Children, Healthy Weight:** To achieve a Culture of Health, all children and their families must have an equitable opportunity to attain optimal physical, social, and emotional development and well-being. Ensuring that all children get off to the right start is essential to their health and well-being in the long term. All children must have nurturing environments to grow up healthy, and all families must have the opportunity to provide such environments for their children.

We welcome proposals that will investigate policies across a range of sectors, political ideologies and perspectives. However, proposals should describe how they address and inform RWJF's work (one or more focus areas), as described above.

TOTAL AWARDS

- Approximately \$2 million will be awarded through this CFP, which includes approximately \$1,550,000 total for the general CFP, and \$450,000 set aside for pre-emption-focused proposals.

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- For the general CFP, typical grants will be capped at \$250,000 (in total direct and indirect costs) for a maximum funding period of 24 months. Projects that exceed the recommended budget range must provide strong justification for the proposed budget (not to exceed \$350,000).
- For the set-aside for pre-emption research, up to three grants will be funded up to \$150,000 each.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Preference will be given to applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are not private foundations or Type III supporting organizations. The Foundation may require additional documentation.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.
- Awards will be made to organizations, not to individuals.
- We welcome applications from all investigators. The following are especially encouraged to apply:
 - Interdisciplinary or cross-sector research teams;
 - Researchers from diverse backgrounds or with diverse life experiences;
 - Investigators from a wide range of disciplines, including, but not limited to architecture; business; communications; community planning; economics; education; epidemiology; health policy; law; medicine (including practitioners); political science; psychology; public policy; public administration; public health; social work; sociology; urban planning and systems engineering; and
 - First-time applicants to RWJF.

OUR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITMENT

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is committed to building a Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. Achieving this goal requires focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. To that end, we are committed to fostering diverse perspectives. We recognize that individuals' perspectives are shaped by a host of factors, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, familial status, education, religion, legal status, military service, political affiliation, geography, and other personal and professional experiences.

We know that the presence of diverse perspectives alone is not sufficient. Therefore, we also are committed to creating inclusive environments where all individuals are encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences. We believe that only through valuing our differences and similarities, and remaining vigilant in advancing equity, will we be able to maintain an equitable workplace and actively pursue equity in all aspects of our work. We commit to being continuous learners and working alongside others to cultivate equity, diversity, and inclusion.

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SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, leaders of the P4A national coordinating center 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.

Letters of intent will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Policy relevance of the question(s) to be addressed;
- Alignment with topics described in this solicitation and the Culture of Health Action Framework;
- Importance of the potential contribution to our collective vision of population health, well-being, and equity and how to achieve the intended outcome;
- Capacity to translate research into action; and
- Feasibility.

In addition to the above, *full proposals* will be evaluated on the basis of:

- The study's research aims and hypothesis, theoretical framework, conceptual model or rationale;
- The proposed methodology and data sources;
- The expected results or outcomes (clearly stated, measurable, and achievable within the allotted time frame);
- Approach to dissemination, communication, and translation of research findings to policymakers and practitioners (if needed, the P4A national coordinating center can support research teams with limited experience or capacity in this area);
- Research qualifications and experience of the investigator(s) and appropriateness of disciplines and perspectives represented, including nontraditional partners;
- Use of available funds within individual proposals and across the set of funded proposals; and
- Proposed budget and project time line.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF will conduct an evaluation of the program. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, we require grantees to participate in the evaluation.

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.

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As part of the proposal process, finalists will be asked to disclose any financial arrangements (e.g., fees, funding, employment, stock holdings) or relationships that might call into question the credibility or perceived credibility of the findings, mirroring the types of disclosure requested by the field's leading journals.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

For selected programs, the project director (PD) of the proposal will be contacted after the deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The PD will be 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 SSRS will not impact the funding decision for your proposal in any way. SSRS will protect the confidentiality of your responses. RWJF will not receive any data that links your name with your survey responses. The information received will help us measure the effectiveness of RWJF grantmaking and improve the grant proposal experience.

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, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

HOW TO APPLY

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted electronically via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a3 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.

There are two phases in the competitive proposal process:

Phase 1: Letter of Intent:

Applicants must submit a letter of intent that describes the project and includes a preliminary budget. Letters of intent will be reviewed by staff at RWJF, the NCC, and external experts.

Phase 2: Full Proposals (if invited):

Selected Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal of no more than 10 pages accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information. This program has a national 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.

Please direct inquiries to:

Policies for Action National Coordinating Center

Urban Institute

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Phone: 202-261-5300

Email: Policies4Action@urban.org

All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online submission requirements well before the submission deadline. Staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline.

Late Submissions

RWJF will accept only those proposals that are completed/submitted at the time of the deadline. Because one of our Guiding Principles is to treat everyone with fairness and respect, RWJF's deadline policy applies to all applicants. Applicants are expected to notify the program administrator immediately after experiencing difficulty with the online proposal system that may interfere with a timely submission. To do so, click on the "Contact Us" link found in the "Resources" area on the left side of most screens within the online proposal site. We encourage you to submit your proposal in advance of the deadline so that any unforeseen difficulties, e.g., technical problems, may be addressed well before the deadline.

Guidelines and information, including a list of frequently asked questions are available on the P4A website at www.policiesforaction.org.

An informational applicant webinar will be held on May 16, 2018 at 3 p.m. ET. It will provide an overview of the CFP and offer an opportunity for potential applicants to ask questions about the program and grantmaking process; please [register](#) ahead of time. The slides and recording from the webinar will be archived and available for review on the Policies for Action website.

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by the Urban Institute, which serves as the national coordinating center located at:

Policies for Action

Urban Institute

2100 M Street N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20037

Phone: (202) 261-5300

Email: Policies4Action@urban.org

Website: www.policiesforaction.org

Responsible staff members at the national coordinating center are:

- Lisa Dubay, PhD, *co-director*
- Laudan Aron, MA, *co-director*
- Katie Deming, MS, *deputy director*
- Rebecca Peters, MPH, *project manager*
- Jillian West, MA, *communications manager*

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- Joshua Smith, BA, *program manager*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Kerry Anne McGeary, PhD, *senior program officer*
- Mona Shah, PhD, *program officer*
- Priya Gandhi, MSHCPM, *research associate*
- Brian Quinn, PhD, *associate vice president*
- Alonzo Plough, PhD, *vice president and chief science officer*
- Beth Toner, RN, MJ, MSN, *senior communications officer*
- Sofia Kounelias, *senior program financial analyst*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

May 16, 2018 (3 p.m. ET)

Optional applicant informational webinar. [Registration](#) is required.

June 7, 2018 (3 p.m. ET)

Deadline for receipt of letters of intent.

Late July 2018

Notification to letter of intent applicants, including invitations to submit full proposals.

August 30, 2018 (3 p.m. ET)

Deadline for receipt of invited full proposals.

Mid-October 2018

Notification to full proposal applicants, including invitation to finalists to proceed with grant initiation.

December 15, 2018

Grants initiated.

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 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/manage-your-subscriptions.html.

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