

# 2018 Call for Proposals

*Proposal Deadline: April 26, 2018 (3 p.m. ET)*



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## **EVIDENCE FOR ACTION: INVESTIGATOR-INITIATED RESEARCH TO BUILD A CULTURE OF HEALTH—MATCHING SERVICE**

### BACKGROUND

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's vision of building a [Culture of Health](#) is driven by the belief that we will make true progress when we work together toward a shared goal of better health. The Foundation knows that to achieve this goal, we must work with new partners from diverse sectors, disciplines, and backgrounds. That is why we are investing in efforts to support new research grantees from organizations and institutions that are underrepresented in the Foundation's grantmaking portfolio, especially those who are closely connected to work happening in communities.

As a country, we face critical health challenges that demand new and different solutions. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has long been committed 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 believes that rigorous, objective evidence about what works to improve the nation's health and equity is critical for building a Culture of Health. Yet, too often there is a void between the people who are developing innovative solutions in their communities and those who have the skills and expertise to evaluate the impacts of these interventions.

Evidence for Action (E4A), an RWJF national program, funds research that expands the evidence base needed to build a Culture of Health. E4A's mission is to support rigorously designed research on the impact of specific interventions on population health, well-being, and equity. For more information about E4A research funding requirements and examples of the types of projects that have been funded by E4A, please visit the [For Applicants](#) and [Grantee](#) pages of our website.

The lack of connection between community innovators and researchers has been apparent in a number of the applications received through E4A. We have reviewed more than 1,200 letters of intent (LOIs) since the program's launch in June 2015. We have found that organizations working in and with communities often submit LOIs that address important issues, but lack sufficient rigor in their research design to be able to provide convincing evidence of their intervention's impact on population health. One way to build research capacity in the field is to facilitate relationships between these organizations and skilled researchers. We are now seeking a grantee to oversee a team of people who can facilitate such partnerships.

### PURPOSE

The goal of this effort is to catalyze research partnerships that result in rigorously designed studies that could be funded by E4A, another RWJF program, or other funding source. We are particularly interested in matching organizations that do not have a track record of RWJF funding. To achieve this goal, E4A

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will support a “matching team” overseen by a grantee organization that meets the eligibility criteria noted below. The grantee’s primary role will be to link organizations working in and with communities with strong research partners to rigorously evaluate the health impacts of program or policy interventions. Organizations working in and with communities may include health care providers, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and social service or government agencies, which have the infrastructure to implement initiatives but limited research capacity for scientifically rigorous evaluation of their impact.

## TOTAL AWARDS

We anticipate awarding one \$700,000 grant for an initial 24-month period. Of this \$700,000, the awardee is expected to regrant a *minimum* of \$200,000 to referred organizations for the purposes of seed funding to help facilitate partnership development. Applicants must demonstrate prior experience and sufficient internal controls with respect to the anticipated regranting.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. Applications from individuals will not be accepted. Preference will be given to applicants that are based at institutes of higher education, public entities, or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Other types of nonprofit and for-profit organizations are eligible to apply.

## 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 organizations that 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

The awardee will be selected based on the strength of the applicant’s proposed matching team’s fit with the characteristics described in the “Matching Team Characteristics” section. Additional criteria pertaining to the characteristics and qualification of researchers to be matched with referred applicants are described in the application instructions for the proposal narrative template. Taking all criteria into consideration, preference will be given to applicants (including their proposed matching team members) who do not have a significant history of receiving funding from RWJF.

## MATCHING TEAM CHARACTERISTICS

The matching team proposed by an applicant should be comprised of a team of people who, among them, have:

- Advanced understanding of rigorous research design (including evaluations of social interventions, and an understanding of the complexities of conducting field-based research and of challenges to causal inference).

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- Appreciation of the practical and logistical nuances of project implementation in community settings.
- Track record of collaborating with a variety of organizations working in and with communities.
- Strong understanding of population health, health equity, and social determinants, and familiarity with RWJF's Culture of Health [Action Framework](#) (although the team need not be exclusively focused on health).
- Established connections to a robust network of skilled researchers from across the United States and territories who are diverse in subject matter knowledge, methodological expertise, and community experience, and who represent a broad range of research institutions both within and outside of the academic setting.

Our experience suggests that all of these characteristics may not readily be present in a single organization; for this reason, we strongly encourage applicants to include in their proposed matching team individuals with complementary qualifications from other organizations to partner together in carrying out this work.

### PROCESS & ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE MATCHING SERVICE

The organization selected through this call for proposals (CFP) will work with potential E4A grantees as follows: During the LOI application review stage, E4A staff will identify applications from organizations working in and with communities that: (1) address an important problem in achieving a Culture of Health; (2) propose an innovative and feasible solution; (3) pose a viable research question that presents an opportunity for hypothesis testing; (4) have the infrastructure and/or capacity to participate in the research process; but (5) lack an adequate research plan and could benefit from collaboration with a skilled researcher. Applicants who meet these criteria and express interest will be referred to the awardee under this CFP—the matching service organization—to be matched with a qualified and interested researcher.

The matching team will be responsible for two primary functions:

- 1) To identify a set of researchers interested in partnering with organizations working in and with communities to conduct rigorous evaluations of program or policy interventions. We encourage the matching team to build on an existing group or network of researchers. The team will maintain and expand relationships with a broad range of diverse researchers. The desired qualifications for researchers are described in detail in the application instructions for the proposal narrative.
- 2) To assess the needs of the referred applicants; determine the appropriate researcher(s); present information about potential partners to each party; affirm interest in collaboration; and help initiate a working relationship. Please note that while it is acceptable for some of the matched researchers to be housed within the organizations affiliated with members of the matching team, we prefer that the majority of researchers be drawn from a broad range of external partners.

Because all applicants referred by E4A to matching organizations for review by the matching team will have been screened and selected based on the content of their LOIs and their expressed interest in being matched, we expect that all referrals will result in matches with appropriate researchers.

We consider a successful match to be one in which the referred applicant is paired with an appropriate research partner, and both parties jointly agree upon or establish an outcome for the proposed project. Our

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goal is that most partnerships will result in the submission of a new application to E4A (or other RWJF funding source).

## ONGOING LEARNING, ADAPTATION, AND IMPROVEMENT

Due to the pilot nature of this award, E4A expects to maintain close, regular and ongoing communication with the matching service organization and the matching team to monitor progress, discuss challenges, and make mid-course adjustments as needed. The awardee under this CFP will also be expected to submit annual reports describing progress, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement.

The awardee and matching team should also be adaptive and should develop a plan for engaging in continuous quality improvement throughout the duration of service. Specific outcome and process metrics that the awardee organization should track during the grant period are described in the application instructions for the proposal narrative.

Over the 24-month period of the award, the awardee will be expected to have achieved the following objectives:

- Facilitated connections between all applicants referred by E4A and qualified researchers, with each partnership resulting in a mutually satisfactory outcome;
- Expanded their existing network of researchers as needed to achieve diversity in social experience, scientific discipline, methodological expertise, institutional affiliation, and geographical region of the country;
- Developed a summary of lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations for RWJF about ways in which to improve and expand the matching program in the future.

## EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Grantees will be expected to meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports. 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 this work.

## 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.

## USE OF FUNDS

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

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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

The application consists of a proposal narrative, budget narrative, timeline/work plan, and team members' information.

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted electronically via the RWJF online system. Visit [www.rwjf.org/cfp/e4a-match](http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/e4a-match) and use the Apply Online link, and select "Matching Service Call for Proposals." If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the application process. You will receive an email invitation with a link to the RWJF online system and additional instructions. To begin your proposal, select the link in the email and follow the instructions.

All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with 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.

### *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.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

The deadline to submit is **April 26, 2018 at 3 p.m. ET.**

### PROGRAM DIRECTION

The Evidence for Action national program office (NPO) is housed at the Center for Health and Community at the University of California, San Francisco, and provides direction and overall assistance for the program:

Evidence for Action: Investigator-Initiated Research to Build a Culture of Health

Center for Health and Community

University of California, San Francisco

3333 California St., Ste. 465

San Francisco, CA 94118

Phone: (415) 502-3490

Email: [evidenceforaction@ucsf.edu](mailto:evidenceforaction@ucsf.edu)

Website: [www.evidenceforaction.org](http://www.evidenceforaction.org)

Please direct questions about the program, selection criteria, or application content to the NPO staff.

Email is the preferred method of contact.

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Responsible staff members at the national program office are:

- Nancy Adler, PhD, *director*
- David Vlahov, RN, PhD, *co-director*
- Maria Glymour, ScD, MS, *associate director*
- Laura Gottlieb, MD, MPH, *associate director*
- Erin Hagan, PhD, MBA, *deputy director*
- May Lynn Tan, DrPH, MHS, *research and policy specialist*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Claire Gibbons, PhD, *senior program officer*
- Alonzo Plough, PhD, *vice president*

### KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- *March 12, 2018 (2 p.m. ET)*  
Optional applicant webinar. [Registration](#) is required.
- *April 26, 2018 (3 p.m. ET)*  
Deadline for receipt of proposals.
- *May 18 & 23, 2018*  
Finalist interviews.
- *June 1, 2018*  
Finalists notified.

### 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](http://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).

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