

2019 Call for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: June 6, 2019 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Forward Promise: Partnering with Systems to Disrupt Dehumanization

BACKGROUND

Every child deserves the opportunity to lead the healthiest life possible. And every family deserves the opportunity to raise healthy kids—no matter where they live, where they are from, or how much money they make. Factors such as race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status should not influence the types of care and service that families receive from systems intended to support a healthy society. Unfortunately, this is often the case. For people of color in particular, the barriers that limit the health of families are historical and systemic, and have had intergenerational affects within families and communities. These barriers of racism and discrimination are responsible for the grave disparities in health outcomes seen among people of color nationwide, and especially in marginalized communities. Addressing these barriers is the critical first step to ensuring equitable health outcomes for people of color across the United States.

Through a range of programs, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is working to help identify and address the root causes of America's health disparities—because everyone deserves a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. Since 2011, RWJF has worked—through a broad set of investments collectively called Forward Promise—to expand and promote the health and well-being of boys and young men of color (BYMOC). In 2016, the Forward Promise national program office was launched with the specific goal of supporting BYMOC to heal, grow, and thrive by investing in direct service programs and policy reform efforts that address racialized trauma as a root cause of negative health outcomes among BYMOC and in the communities where they live. Forward Promise has identified dehumanization in all its forms as the force creating racialized trauma for BYMOC and their communities. Dehumanization is the process by which an individual or group's full humanity is denied. Disrupting dehumanization unlocks the door to healing, restoration, and the removal of this barrier to optimal health and well-being for BYMOC.

Over the last two years, Forward Promise has supported direct service providers in communities across the nation that provide culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and healing-centered approaches to address the trauma experienced by BYMOC. We have found these programs to be some of the boldest, effective, and critical for improving the health and well-being of BYMOC and their villages. Our resources have helped to expand and strengthen their programs.

However, direct service alone is not sufficient to disrupt the cycles of dehumanization that impact communities and people of color and produce transformative health improvements or generate population-based change (Porter et al. 2017). This work also requires a strategy to fundamentally change the policies in systems that impact the lives of BYMOC daily. We have seen how dehumanization can show up in the practices and policies of health providers; youth-serving organizations; and systems such as juvenile justice, child welfare, education, and housing. Unrecognized and unaddressed, it can lead to further traumatization for BYMOC, lead to distrust, and further discourage them from wanting to interact with these institutions that, in theory, were designed to help or serve.

To support the efforts of youth-serving systems to effectively serve BYMOC, the Forward Promise: Partnering with Systems to Disrupt Dehumanization initiative seeks to strengthen the partnerships between community-based organizations that ground their programs in culturally responsive methods and models, and systems partners to help them:

- Interrogate assumptions about BYMOC and their communities.
- Deepen knowledge about use of culturally responsive methods and models in addressing health of BYMOC.
- Amend the system's ways of working with BYMOC to improve services, participation, and outcomes.
- Test new service approaches and systems policies with BYMOC population.

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- Identify ways of making these new approaches sustainable.

THE PROGRAM

Forward Promise aims to disrupt the cycle of dehumanization that is occurring in the lives of BYMOC and threatens to derail their life success by creating pathways to healing, growing, and thriving. Through this program, Forward Promise aims to seed new approaches by youth-serving systems to address health and trauma that are grounded in the lived experiences and cultural values, norms, and traditions of BYMOC, and the knowledge of community organizations who work with BYMOC every day. Learnings from the Partnering with Systems to Disrupt Dehumanization grantees may be useful in advancing a greater understanding of what it means for BYMOC to heal, grow, and thrive, and provide concrete examples of the role that culturally responsive youth-serving systems play in the health of BYMOC.

Through this solicitation, Partnering with Systems to Disrupt Dehumanization will support up to seven organizations to partner with a local or regional youth-serving system to increase the understanding of issues faced by BYMOC in these systems and the historical role of dehumanization by systems; uplift the current disparities that exist in the public system; deepen knowledge of culturally responsive approaches as effective strategies for addressing trauma and promoting healing; devise a plan for working together to test approaches; and identify sustainable opportunities to change the way these systems do business and approach their work with BYMOC.

Up to seven organizations will receive a grant of up to and including \$150,000 in total over an 18-month period to support the planning, implementation, and evaluation of partnership efforts between community-based organizations and youth-serving systems such as juvenile justice, child welfare, education, housing, and health provision within their communities. Lead applicants can come from any members of the partnership; however, preference will be given to those that are community-based organizations. From our previous work, we have found they are uniquely positioned to help systems understand and mitigate the impact of trauma on BYMOC, with many already partnering to provide services to improve outcomes for BYMOC. As such, we seek to support existing partnerships at varying stages of their development, with younger partnerships primarily focusing their efforts on strengthening and formalizing the partnerships, while more mature ones may already be ready to pilot and evaluate new approaches to better serve BYMOC.

Partnering with Systems to Disrupt Dehumanization grantees will undertake this work in two phases:

Planning Phase. The first six months of the grants will be dedicated to planning activities that strengthen the partnership between community-based organizations and systems that are focused on learning and strategizing. During this period, partnership activities will focus on identifying, collecting, and understanding data that provide a landscape about the experiences of BYMOC and the efficacy of the youth-serving system; understanding the role of culture in addressing issues raised in the data; identifying an idea to try; and setting benchmarks and processes for accountability within the partnership. A key focus of these planning activities will be to ensure the partnership has adequate staffing, appropriate resource sharing, regular meetings, and is intentional about receiving and incorporating input from BYMOC.

Implementation Phase. The remaining 12 months of the grants will be dedicated to activities geared toward service delivery, program evaluation and long-term sustainability efforts. During this period, partnership activities will also focus on developing a deeper understanding of ways public resources can be used to sustain the work, which don't require legislative change (such as identifying and accessing cost savings); disseminating results; mapping the policy environment; and identifying opportunities for further change both within and beyond the partnership community.

Technical Assistance. In addition to using grant funds to support ongoing partnership planning and activities, grantees will also participate as a cohort in a broader technical assistance program that may include individual and group learning activities with the Forward Promise national program office and its partners. This technical assistance may include additional topics such as (but not limited to) understanding and disrupting cycles of dehumanization, and tracking systems change and advocacy efforts. The national program office will also offer support relevant to each phase of the initiative.

TOTAL AWARDS

- Up to seven awards will be made through this initiative.
- Grants up to and including \$150,000 each will be awarded.

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- Grant duration will be 18 months.
- Grants will begin on October 15, 2019.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

RWJF seeks applications from organizations and/or institutions engaged in existing partnerships between community-based organizations and youth-serving systems that are actively trying to improve access to, and the quality of, services that support BYMOC to heal from trauma and attain overall health and well-being. Applicants should have evidence that their programs are improving outcomes for BYMOC.

- Awards will be made to organizations, not to individuals.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.
- 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.
- While each collaborating organization must be described in detail in the proposal, only one organization may represent the collaboration and be the lead contact in the application process. This lead applicant may be either a community-based organization partner, or a systems partner, but preference will be given to applications from community-based organizations.
- Applicant organizations that serve both young men and women will be considered, but they must demonstrate an explicit emphasis on improving outcomes for BYMOC. Additionally, preference will be given to organizations whose programs are made up of at least 50 percent male participants.
- The applicant must have the administrative and financial capacity (i.e., proper governance, sufficient staffing and strong policies, procedures and internal controls) to manage an award of the size being requested and may be asked to provide financial and other information to support this capability as part of the review and selection process.

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.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, leaders of the Forward Promise national program office, the program's national advisory committee, and other expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF staff and leadership.

In addition to the criteria below, projects will be selected with the intention of funding a diverse group of grantees based on several criteria such as location (e.g., region of the country, urban/rural), characteristics of the community being served, and types of stakeholders involved in the project.

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All proposals will be screened for eligibility and then reviewed using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated ability of the partnership to deliver quality services, including a rationale for how their programs and practices affect outcomes for BYMOC.
- Strength of partnership between community-based organizations and systems partners, as demonstrated by a track record of previous collaborations and/or memoranda of understanding.
- Capacity and experience in authentically engaging BYMOC in program design, program delivery, and advocacy efforts.
- Degree to which trauma experienced by BYMOC is being addressed at a systemic or structural level.
- The capacity of the partnership to use intersectional approaches to promote the health and well-being of BYMOC that examines characteristics such as (but not limited to), race, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and place.
- Potential of the project to influence policy or practice beyond the immediate project community.
- A clear articulation of how RWJF funds will advance the work of the partnership.

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 grantee is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

The project director of the proposal may be contacted after the submission deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The project director 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 the responses. RWJF will not receive any data that links your name with your survey responses.

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 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.

Applicants should also include travel costs in their budgets for two people to participate in up to two annual grantee meetings, using the Foundation's travel estimate of \$1,300 per person for a two-night/two-day trip where air travel is required.

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HOW TO APPLY

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted electronically via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/fwp4 and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at my.rwjf.org before you begin the proposal process.

Applicants must submit a full proposal of no more than 10 pages accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional required information. Applicants who submit full proposals may be selected to participate in site visits with the proposal review committee.

Applicants should not begin to draft their proposal until they have familiarized themselves with the detailed instructions and formatting requirements available in the online application system.

Site Visits:

RWJF will conduct an in-person site visit with each finalist applicant, who will be selected when we complete the proposal review process. At that time, finalists will receive more information about the site visits.

Please direct inquiries to:

Forward Promise
Phone: (215) 573-8558
Email: info@forwardpromise.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.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

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. If an applicant experiences a problem with the online application system that may prevent them from submitting on time, please notify the program administrator immediately. 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.

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by the University of Pennsylvania, which serves as the national program office co-located at:

University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education
Racial Empowerment Collaborative
3720 Walnut St., Room B-20
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (215) 573-8558

The Moriah Group
1750 Nick Davis Rd.
Harvest, AL 35749
Phone: (256) 241-6750

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Email: info@forwardpromise.org

Website: www.forwardpromise.org

Responsible staff members at the national program office are:

- Howard Stevenson, PhD, *director*
- Rhonda Bryant, EdD, *deputy director*
- Erik Estrada, MPA, *senior program associate*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Dwayne Proctor, PhD, *senior adviser to the president*
- Jennifer Ng'andu, BS, *managing director—program*
- Jan Mihalow, PhD, *senior program financial analyst*

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

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **May 10, 2019**
Applications open for proposals.
- **May 22, 2019 (3 p.m. ET)**
Optional applicant webinar. Registration is required [through this link](#).
- **June 6, 2019 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.*
- **July 22, 2019**
Applicants notified of plans for a site visit.
- **July and August 2019**
Site visits to semifinalists.
- **September 2019**
Finalists notified.
- **October 15, 2019**
Start of grants.

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REFERENCES

Porter L, Martin K, Anda R. 2017. "Culture Matters: Direct Service Programs Cannot Solve Widespread, Complex, Intergenerational Social Problems. Culture Can." *Academic Pediatrics* 17(7):22–23.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

For more than 45 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working alongside others to build a national Culture of Health that provides everyone in America a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. 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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