

2019 Call for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: September 24, 2019



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Community Power

Increasing Understanding of Base-Building Methods

BACKGROUND

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is working to build a Culture of Health where everyone in America has a fair and just opportunity to live the healthiest life possible. One important aspect of our Culture of Health vision is to advance health equity and [remove obstacles to health, including powerlessness](#). “Base-building,” defined as strategies used by grassroots-led organizations to build collective strength, advances this goal by enabling communities to exercise influence over systemic factors that affect community conditions. This call for proposals (CFP) seeks to support collaborations between grassroots-led organizations and researchers. The collaborations can help enhance the field’s understanding of the range of methods applied in base-building efforts that result in changes to community-level social, economic, and physical conditions that we know influence health and equity.

We know that health is influenced by the community conditions where a person lives, learns, works, and plays, and by the level of engagement individuals have in their community. In our work to support and invest in achieving a Culture of Health, RWJF recognizes that both residents and institutional leaders in communities are important to driving policy and systems change that address the root causes of inequities and poor health. The connection between community-led strategies, place, and health is strongly illustrated in the [National Academy of Medicine’s report *Communities in Action, Pathways to Health Equity*](#).

To date, there is limited systematic information to understand if and how base-building efforts can influence community conditions at scale. Base-building organizations include a wide ecosystem of groups, networks, and individuals who, together, are advancing a range of strategies to address systems changes that improve community conditions. These grassroots-led organizations include those who are affected by health, social, and economic inequities. These important organizations allow residents, workers, and other constituencies to come together, develop a collective vision for their communities, and create and execute strategies and tactics to advocate for that vision.

This call for proposals is part of RWJF’s new program [Lead Local: Exploring Community-Driven Change and the Power of Collective Action](#), a collaborative that brings together local grassroots community power-building efforts, researchers, and leaders in the fields of community organizing, advocacy, public health, and science. The collaborative seeks to learn how grassroots community power-building efforts are advancing change in neighborhood conditions that improve health, equity, and well-being.

Lead Local aims to: identify innovations in community power-building that advance systems change in communities toward a Culture of Health; understand and assess how grassroots community-led efforts can catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities (with an emphasis on low-income and communities of color); determine how community power helps shift mindsets about what it takes to improve the conditions for health, well-being, and equity and about the value of such improvements; assess and understand how community power can accelerate implementation of policies and practices (with an emphasis on small and midsize cities); and develop a long-term

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research agenda connecting community power and health, including the best definitions of power and methods to measure community power. Lead Local research grantees include [Dr. Manuel Pastor](#) at the [Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California](#), [Dr. Hahrie Han](#) at the [Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University](#), and [Dr. Paul Speer](#) at the Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

PURPOSE

This CFP will support research projects to build an understanding of the range of methods applied in innovative and effective community base-building that result in changes to community-level social, economic, and physical conditions that we know influence health and equity. We are seeking to fund research projects designed to retrospectively examine various methods resulting in innovative and effective community base-building. Base-building is a set of strategies and activities used by residents, workers, consumers, and other constituencies to build collective strength and power to address a variety of inequitable conditions in communities. Base-building has been utilized for generations by grassroots-led organizations to build power specifically in historically excluded or underrepresented populations.

We are seeking research proposals whose project teams will participate alongside other field and research experts in the RWJF Lead Local program, which is exploring the question: *How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities?* We are aware that community base-building methods vary across geographic areas and across racial, ethnic, and other demographic groups. We seek to understand community-identified innovations that lead to meaningful and effective community base-building. The proposed research projects are not intended to build understanding of methodologies applied to other critical approaches to achieve systems change, including policy advocacy, coalition-building, communications, or organizational development.

We know that base-building takes place in a variety of ways across the country, each with unique characteristics based on specific conditions related to the constituencies, geographies, or issues.¹ For the purposes of this CFP, we have identified three categories that characterize common base-building methodologies: processes, infrastructure, and relationships. In the chart below there are examples of common activities associated with each of the three base-building methodology categories.

Proposed research projects should document and analyze the methodologies and activities described below. Applicants are expected to include research in each of the methodology categories below and may also address additional base-building methodologies and activities not included in the table below.

Base-Building Categories

Category of Base-Building Methodology	Base-Building Activities
Processes (methods used to identify and recruit constituencies, and methods used to design leadership development programs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• identifying vision or structural change goals;• identifying the target constituency or neighborhood;• determining outreach methods (online/social media; door-to-door; one-on-one meetings; canvass; intake model, etc.);• determining data collection methods (online, pledge form, memberships, etc.);• planning recruitment activities (informational meetings, special gathering, one-on-one meetings, etc.);

¹ Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito, Rhonda Ortiz, Rachel Rosner. *Transactions, Transformations, Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements*. October 2011.

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Category of Base-Building Methodology	Base-Building Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">designing leadership development programs and activities.
Infrastructure (building systems and structures that support base-building processes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">committee building;developing tracking systems for members and leaders;developing messages;developing accountability structures and systems;creating leadership development trainings and curricula;creating the system(s) of evaluation.
Relationships (depth, breadth, and activation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">tracking indicators such as number and characteristics of people contacted who become involved with organization;determining indicators pointing to the nature of conversations and nature of interactions resulting in relationship and community-building;developing metrics, such as the conversion rate between people expressing an interest in joining an organization versus those who become part of that organization;tracking the number of people who get involved and get activated, those who engage in an action or a meeting;tracking number of people who become increasingly more involved and take ownership of activities and events in an organization;creating methods and measures of changing social cohesion and social capital;determining shifts in social networks (determining if and how new relationships are vertical and/or horizontal)

All projects must include a collaboration between a grassroots-led organization(s) and a researcher(s) with the anticipated grant recipient to be a grassroots-led organization(s). RWJF expects to award grants ranging from \$200,000 to \$250,000 each. A total amount of \$1,000,000 is available for this CFP. Projects ideally will be 18 months in duration with the potential to extend to 24 months if needed.

PROPOSAL ELEMENTS

Below is a list of **elements** that we expect applicants to address in proposals:

1. Project Focus: Describe the selected focus for the research project including:
 - Historical context of the base-building organization and community efforts
 - Geographic or place-based focus
 - Retrospective time frame of the project and rationale
 - Assets of the grassroots-led organization(s) and the researchers who will be integral to carrying out this research project
2. Description of Constituency(ies) and Engagement: Describe who makes up the base that is the focus of the proposed research project:

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- What makes up the wider population within which your organization works?
 - Who and how many constituents and/or “members” make up your base?
 - What is the composition of the base (e.g., all volunteers)?
 - What is the type of base-building organization (e.g., a faith-based institution or a worker organization)?
 - How does your organization define membership or leadership?
 - How often does your organization convene the base?
 - How often do the constituents and/or “members” participate in running and leading meetings?
 - What is the racial and economic makeup of the constituents and/or “members” leadership committee(s)?
 - How many issues or geographic committees or chapters exist in your organization?
 - What is the means of outreach: What are your primary means of recruiting, engaging, or informing your base of constituents and/or “members” and how often do you engage in those practices?
3. Research Plan: Describe the research design and plan of work to characterize the methods applied across the three categories and activities:
- General description of the research design—an explanation for how the proposed plan will address the purpose of this CFP—to retrospectively examine methods resulting in innovative and effective community base-building.
 - Specific approaches to determine and analyze the methodologies and activities (see table on pages 2–3) and any additional base-building methodologies and activities not included in the table. Describe activities to be utilized in each category.
 - Detailed plan of work delineating steps and key activities to carry out the proposed research, with clear benchmarks associated with the timeline named.
 - Proposed plan to synthesize the learning in a final report for broad distribution for the field.
 - Description of your vision for success for this research project and the impact this project will have on your constituency or base.
4. Collaboration: Describe the collaboration between grassroots-led organization(s) and researcher(s) including:
- Roles and responsibilities related to the management and execution of the research project.
 - Past collaborative work and/or what spurred the collaboration for this research project.
 - Activities or agreements that will ensure success of the collaboration (e.g., MOUs, letters of agreement).
 - Alignment of the research project to a longer-term program or plan for the grassroots-led organization(s) and/or researcher(s).
5. Anticipated Challenges: Describe potential challenges and risks associated with the proposed research project—externally within the broader landscape, as well as possible internal capacity issues—and how you propose to address and/or mitigate the challenges and risks.

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6. **Expected Impact:** Describe how your proposed project will fill gaps and advance understanding around base-building to improve health equity in communities all across the country. Describe the potential of the project to influence thinking and practice beyond the immediate project organization and/or community(ies).

This CFP is part of RWJF's program Lead Local: Exploring Community-Driven Change and the Power of Collective Action. RWJF will periodically convene all grantees and partners within the Lead Local program to share, learn together, and coordinate where appropriate. All organizations and teams funded through this CFP will be required to: (a) engage with other Lead Local grantees and researchers in collectively learning; (b) engage with Lead Local researchers as project advisers; (c) participate in Lead Local convenings during their grant period (up to three during the grant period) as directed by RWJF and/or the Lead Local project director; and (d) contribute to the collective learning and associated communication products between and among CFP grantees and Lead Local researchers. All CFP proposals and budgets must include travel expenses for up to three project staff to attend three Lead Local convenings.

TOTAL AWARDS

- RWJF expects to award grants ranging from \$200,000 to \$250,000 each. A total amount of \$1,000,000 is available for this CFP.
- Projects ideally will be 18 months in duration with the potential to extend to 24 months if needed.
- This call for proposals (CFP) seeks to support collaborations between grassroots-led organizations and researchers to build the field's understanding of the range of methods applied in base-building efforts that result in changes to community-level social, economic, and physical conditions that we know influence health and equity. For the purposes of this CFP, we have identified three categories that characterize common base-building methodologies: processes, infrastructure, and relationships (see table on pages 2–3). Applicants are expected to include research in each of the methodology categories and may also address additional base-building methodologies and activities not included in the table.
- Funded collaborations are encouraged to leverage resources from other sources to support research, engagement, and dissemination activities.
- The proposed budget should be appropriate to the scope of work.
- Grants will begin in December 2019.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- We encourage proposals from applicants who represent a wide range of organizations and disciplines—both within and outside the public health sector.
- Applicants may include nonprofit organizations and nongovernmental organizations as members of the proposed collaboration between grassroots-led organization(s) and researcher(s).
- 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. RWJF may require additional documentation.

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- Awards will be made to organizations, not individuals.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.
- Building a Culture of Health means integrating health into all aspects of society, so we encourage applicants that represent, or have authentic relationships and/or collaborations with low-income communities and communities of color hardest hit by health inequities.
- This CFP will support projects that include collaborations between grassroots-led organization(s) and researcher(s). Therefore, applicants must be a grassroots-led organization (nonprofit, resident-led, faith-based, etc.).

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

A team of external and internal reviewers will evaluate all proposals. We seek to fund projects that together showcase a variety of community base-building methodologies. The review process will consider the applicant's responses to the proposal elements described above as well as the degree to which the applicant organization(s) meet the following selection criteria:

- **Vision for the proposed research and alignment with the CFP purpose and focus.**
 - The proposal narrative suggests that the applicant's work will meaningfully contribute to the field's understanding of the range of innovative and effective community base-building methods being applied across the country that result in changes to community-level social, economic, and physical conditions that we know influence health and equity.
 - The potential of the project to influence thinking and practice beyond the immediate project organization(s) and/or community(ies), addressing gaps and advancing understanding around base-building to improve health equity or the determinants of health through well substantiated research.
 - Proposal articulates how the methodologies to be examined have had an impact(s) on their constituency or base.

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- The proposal makes clear what the research is not addressing in assessing base-building methodologies.
- **Quality and feasibility of the proposed research design.**
 - The proposal clearly describes the research questions of interest and how they will be answered.
 - The proposal is specific and clear about approach to analysis of the base-building methodologies and activities (see table on pages 2–3) and any additional base-building methodologies and activities not included in the table.
 - The proposal clarifies the time frame to be retrospectively examined through the proposed research project.
 - The proposed research methods are well-matched to the CFP purpose and research questions, and the design is feasible within constituency, grassroots organization(s), engagement and collaboration with the researcher(s), time frame, and resource allocation.
- **Focus, qualifications, and experience of applicant organization(s), researcher(s), and key personnel.**
 - The grassroots-led organization(s) clearly demonstrate that base-building work is a primary strategy or activity in meeting their mission and a significant portion of their focus and work.
 - The applicants provide evidence of strength of collaboration between grassroots-led organization(s) and researcher(s). While the project director is not required to hold an advanced degree, the proposed research director or lead and the other research personnel must demonstrate the experience necessary to conduct the research successfully.
 - Members of the team should demonstrate expertise in base-building and related academic disciplines relevant to the focus of the project and proposed research methods. Collaborations among grassroots-led community organization(s) and researcher(s) are encouraged to enhance the overall qualifications of the proposed team that includes individuals with deep knowledge of the populations of the proposed project.
- **Appropriateness of the proposed budget and management structure for the project.**
 - The proposed budget appears reasonable to accomplish the plan of work.
 - The applicant describes a management structure for the collaboration between the grassroots-led organization(s) and researcher(s) and for the execution of the research that is both feasible and efficient.

EVALUATION

The purpose of evaluation at RWJF is learning rather than accountability. An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF, Harder + Company Community Research, is conducting an evaluation of the program. RWJF intends for this project to contribute to the RWJF program Lead Local: Exploring Community-Driven Change and the Power of Collective Action. 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

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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. We may ask project directors, research leads and other key staff 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 (PD) of the proposal may be contacted after the submission 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 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.

OPEN ACCESS

In order to ensure RWJF-supported research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, grantees who publish findings in peer-reviewed publications must do so in open access journals and/or must include funds in their budgets to cover the cost of making the resulting publications open access (typically \$2,000–\$5,000 per manuscript).

HOW TO APPLY

All proposal details and instructions are available via the RWJF online application system. **Applicants should not begin drafting their proposals until they have familiarized themselves with the detailed instructions and formatting requirements displayed in the online application system.** Proposals must include the following elements:

1. A proposal narrative (maximum 10 pages, 12-point font, single-spaced). The proposal narrative should address the following items:
 - The Proposal Elements starting on page 3 of this CFP.

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- A description of the qualifications of your proposed project director, research lead, and key staff, including alignment with program requirements, leadership, and management experiences as well as a synopsis of relevant past work.
- 2. A budget and budget narrative that includes the budget for up to 18 months with the possibility of extending it to 24 months, beginning December 2019.
- 3. Supporting documentation, including a timeline/workplan and CV/resume/biosketch for the proposed project director, research lead, and key staff. (The resumes do not count toward the 10-page proposal narrative maximum and should be uploaded in the “Supporting Documents” section of the proposal.) For collaborative proposals, a letter of support from any confirmed key partner organization is required.
- 4. Optional appendix with material in support of your proposal.

All proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/power_cbb 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. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online proposal 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.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

Please direct inquiries to:

Email: LeadLocalCFP@rwjf.org

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Aditi Vaidya, MPH, *senior program officer*
- Octawia Wojcik, *senior program officer*
- Ashley Crawford Starck, MPH, *program associate*
- Christine Phares, *program financial analyst*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **September 9, 2019 (1–2 p.m. ET)**
Optional informational applicant webinar. Registration is required at this [link](#).
- **September 24, 2019 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of proposals.

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- **Late October 2019**
Finalists notified.
- **December 15, 2019**
Grant(s) begin.

Late Submissions

RWJF will accept only those 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.

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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