

2019 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: October 2, 2019 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: January 2, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Advancing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Policy and Law Research: Call for Proposals for Early Career Investigators

BACKGROUND

For more than 45 years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (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 the United States today.

RWJF's vision of a Culture of Health is rooted in our collective belief that everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to be healthier. As part of this broad vision, RWJF recognizes the role that policies, laws, and regulations can play in promoting interventions, programs, systems, and community dynamics that positively shape health and well-being. As the nation becomes more diverse, equity and inclusion are even more essential to this vision. Along with many other organizations and foundations, RWJF is working to identify how to build the core values of equity, diversity, and inclusion into all of our grantmaking.

THE PROGRAM

This year, **Policies for Action (P4A)**, a signature research program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is issuing a special call for proposals (CFP) to advance health equity by actively seeking new and diverse perspectives from the policy research field. This opportunity is designed to support researchers from multiple disciplines to better understand and find solutions that will promote health equity and foster action on policies and laws that ensure all people in America can attain and preserve good health and well-being.

This opportunity will support **early career researchers from underrepresented and historically disadvantaged backgrounds**¹ to:

- Engage in career development activities and mentorship that will enhance their research capacity;
- Develop a research project that examines existing policies or policy changes that can influence population health, well-being, and equity;
- Produce and translate timely research results; and
- Collaborate with other researchers to create a healthier, more equitable future for all people in America.

P4A will provide support and training for up to **six investigators**. Two of these six will be researchers located in and conducting research within the state of New Jersey.

¹ See "Eligibility Criteria" below.

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Research Proposals

We are interested in learning how policies can promote lifelong health and health equity for individuals, families, and communities. We also want to better understand the various factors that promote the adoption and spread of policies that benefit all people in America. We welcome applicants from any field to submit proposals for research.

Proposals should investigate policies across a range of possible **sectors, political ideologies, and perspectives**. By *policies*, we mean laws and regulations at the federal, state, and local levels, but also private-sector practices, such as those affecting families and children, workplaces, neighborhood conditions, and community development. (A list of currently funded projects can be found [here](#).)

While we welcome all policy research ideas, we will prioritize those that inform one or more of RWJF's focus areas:

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: Communities should all be surrounded by conditions that enable us to live the healthiest life possible, such as access to healthy food, quality schools, stable housing, good jobs with fair pay, and safe places to exercise and play. Unfortunately, many communities lack these basic necessities. Making progress requires us to make positive changes to community environments; advance policies and systems aimed at preventing illness; identify root causes of health disparities; and address the social determinants of health. [Learn more here](#).

HEALTH SYSTEMS: Having high-quality, easily navigable health and health care systems that work seamlessly with other sectors—such as community and social services—is essential to achieving health equity. Making progress requires improving outcomes and lowering costs; strengthening rural and safety-net delivery systems; cultivating effective cross-sector partnerships; and ensuring access to health insurance coverage and high-value care. [Learn more here](#).

HEALTHY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: All children need nurturing environments to grow up healthy, and all families must have the opportunity to provide such environments for their children. Access to nutritional foods, energetic play, and positive social and emotional environments are critical to healthy childhood development. Many children across our nation lack some or all of these basic needs, which affects their health at every stage of life. [Learn more here](#).

We believe collaborative, cross-sector research designs are best suited to inform policy action. We encourage applicants to propose interdisciplinary research teams as appropriate.

Studies will need to be completed within a **two-year** time frame. Research methods and designs that have been successful include, but are not limited to, natural experiments, implementation research, micro-simulation studies, linkages and analyses of existing data sources, mixed-methods analyses, community-based participatory research (CBPR), and qualitative research. New sources of data can also be proposed and analyzed. Preference will be given to researchers who have ready access to these datasets.

Mentorship

As part of the submission process, applicants must identify two institutional mentors. The “career” mentor should be a senior leader in the grantee’s university or research institution who will advise the grantee on career development. The “research” mentor should be a senior researcher with similar or complementary research interests. This mentor will guide the grantee in designing research projects and developing appropriate research skills. **Salary support for two weeks of time for each of these mentors should be included in the applicant’s budget.**

Grantees will have a unique opportunity to interact with a group of highly regarded RWJF experts and leaders, P4A grantees, Research Hub leaders, alumni, and members of the program’s national advisory committee (NAC). In addition to the mentors mentioned previously, the P4A national coordinating center (NCC) will work with each grantee to find a suitable “national” mentor based on the grantee’s career development needs, and scholarship and research

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interests. Throughout the program, these mentors will provide expertise and national perspective on the grantee's research and career development.

Program Participation

In addition, each applicant will:

- Work with RWJF program officers, the NCC, 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 NCC, including webinars, blogs, podcasts, research meetings, and policy briefings.
- Publish P4A data and findings in open access peer-reviewed journals or budget funds to cover the cost of making the publications open access (typically \$2,000–\$5,000 per manuscript). This ensures P4A research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience.
- Attend RWJF's annual *Sharing Knowledge to Build a Culture of Health* conference during each year the grant is active. Applicants must include funds to cover the travel and hotel costs for this conference in their budget (approximately \$1,800 each year).

TOTAL AWARDS

- Grants of up to \$250,000 each will be awarded through this program.
- A total of up to six grants will be awarded.
- Grants will be up to 24 months in duration.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The individual applicant 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 underrepresented in research disciplines, first-generation college graduates, people from low-income communities, and individuals with a 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.
- Be a junior faculty member in an accredited school with an academic position that could lead to tenure (usually at the instructor or assistant level) or in a similar position in a nonacademic research institution. Preference is given to applicants with full-time appointments.
- Have completed a doctoral degree within the last 10 years.
- Identify one senior leader at the applicant's university or research institution to serve as a career mentor for career planning and to provide access to organizations, programs, and colleagues helpful to the applicant's work as a grantee.

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- Identify one senior researcher with similar or complementary research interests to serve as a research mentor.
- Have a home institution (defined below) that agrees to administer and receive the grant. The home institution must be an accredited academic institution or nonacademic research institution. Applicants from any universities classified among the R2-M3 by the *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Have never served as a project director or principal investigator on a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Individuals who have been awarded RWJF grants to support predoctoral training are eligible to apply. *See FAQs for further clarification.*
- Provide evidence of research skills (research fellowship or equivalent training or experience).
- 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. As federal policy or laws change, we may need to consider adjustments in eligibility and grant terms.
- Not be receiving support from other research fellowships/traineeships at the time they begin the program (i.e., NIH K award or equivalent). Investigators are not prevented from applying to other fellowships/traineeships while participating in the program. Because they have already demonstrated research expertise, former or current principal investigators on an NIH R01 research project or the equivalent are not eligible to apply.
- Federal, state, tribal and local government employees who are considered government officials under Section 4946 of the Internal Revenue Code are eligible to apply.²
- Additionally, individual candidates for receipt of award funds cannot be related by blood or marriage to any Officer³ or Trustee of RWJF, or be a descendant of its founder, Robert Wood Johnson.

WHAT IS A HOME INSTITUTION?

A home institution is an organization the participant selects to receive the grant funds. Typically, the home institution is the individual’s employer. A home institution must possess the administrative and financial capacity and experience to accept the award and be:

- Based in the United States or its territories;
- An accredited academic institution or nonacademic research institution;
- Willing to receive the funds from RWJF; and

² For these purposes, a government official is defined as any person who holds one of the following:

- (a) An elective public office in the executive or legislative branch of the Government of the United States.
- (b) An office in the executive or judicial branch of the Government of the United States, appointment to which was made by the President.
- (c) 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.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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.
- (f) A position as personal or executive assistant or secretary to any of the foregoing or a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board.

³ The Officers are the Chair of the Board of Trustees; President and CEO; Chief of Staff; Executive Vice President; General Counsel; Secretary; Assistant Secretary; Treasurer; Assistant Treasurer; and Chief Investment Officer of the Foundation.

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- Able to distribute funds in a manner that is consistent with RWJF policies (described in “Use of Grant Funds”).

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

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, national coordinating center staff at the Urban Institute, the program’s national advisory committee, and other expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF. RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

Letters of intent will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Eligibility in accordance with the above criteria;
- Merit of the candidate’s research proposal in terms of clarity, methods, and innovation;
- Policy relevance to the question(s) to be addressed;
- Alignment with topics described in this solicitation;
- Importance of the potential contribution to our collective vision of population health, well-being, and equity and how to achieve the intended outcome;
- Feasibility of the research proposed; and
- Evidence of the availability and commitment of qualified mentors.

Additionally, the full proposals will be evaluated on the basis of:

- 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, systemic review). Applicants do not have to be content experts, but should have the expertise to lead a project with sufficient methodological understanding to produce new knowledge for RWJF;

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- Demonstrated progress toward a peer-reviewed publication track record;
- Strength of the research design and methodology proposed; and
- Approach to dissemination and communication of research findings to policymakers and practitioners.

APPLICANTS ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO REQUEST MENTOR FEEDBACK BEFORE SUBMITTING THE FULL PROPOSAL.

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).

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF conducts regular evaluations of Policies for Action. 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.

In addition, the national coordinating center requires bimonthly progress reports and quarterly mentor effectiveness evaluations.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

For selected programs, the principal investigator of the proposal may be contacted after the deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The principal investigator 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, mentor support, 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. Investigators are encouraged to budget for career development and research trainings and workshops. In keeping with RWJF policy, grant funds may *not* be used to subsidize individuals for the costs of their

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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/p4a-dej 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.

There are two phases in the competitive proposal process:

Phase 1: Letters of Intent

Applicants must submit a letter of intent of no more than two pages that describes the project, and includes the amount of funds requested. The letter of intent should include:

1. Brief plan for the two funded years, outlining a clear research question, description of the proposed dataset, and description of methods;
2. Letters of support from mentors;
3. Curriculum vitae for the applicant; and
4. Curriculum vitae for each mentor.

Applicants will also be required to answer questions related to eligibility.

Phase 2: Full Proposals (if invited)

Selected Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal of no more than 10 pages that provides an in-depth description of the research project accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information. The full proposal should include:

1. Personal statement including a description of how the applicant’s background has influenced the research; as well as the applicant’s research goals and future research agenda;
2. Proposal narrative (*see detailed description below*); and
3. Detailed budget and budget narrative. Proposal narratives should include: (1) project overview; (2) research design and methodology; (3) the applicant’s related research experience; (4) description and accessibility of the proposed dataset; (5) anticipated products and deliverables, as well as plans for dissemination.

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Please direct all inquiries to:

Policies for Action National Coordinating Center
Urban Institute
Phone: (202) 261-5300
Email: policies4action@urban.org

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

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

Policies for Action

Urban Institute
500 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024
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*
- Jillian West, MA, *communications manager*
- Joshua Smith, BA, *program manager*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Mona Shah, PhD, *senior program officer*
- Priya Gandhi, MSHCPM, *research associate*
- Brian Quinn, PhD, *associate vice president*
- Alonzo Plough, PhD, *vice president and chief science officer*
- Isabelle Gerard, MPHP, *communications officer*
- Sofia Kounelias, *senior program financial analyst*

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KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **September 4, 2019 (2:30 p.m. ET)**
Optional applicant informational webinar. Registration is *required*.
- **October 2, 2019 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of letters of intent.
- **January 2, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.
- **Mid-February 2020**
Notification to full proposal applicants, including invitation to finalists to proceed with grant initiation.
- **April 1, 2020**
Grants initiated.

Late Submissions

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.

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.

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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