

2020 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: April 29, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Policies for Action: Research on Housing Policies That Promote Equity

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 housing policies, laws, and regulations can play in promoting neighborhood conditions that positively shape health and well-being.

Where you live matters a great deal to your health and well-being, and that of your family. Not everyone has the same chance to live in a safe neighborhood with great schools, healthy food options, public libraries, community centers, parks and trails, transportation hubs, and access to employment centers. [Housing](#)—often the single largest expense in a family's budget—and neighborhood conditions shape lifelong health trajectories and are especially important to understanding the poorer health outcomes experienced by lower-income groups and communities of color who are often priced out or locked out of more affluent, opportunity-rich communities.

Lower-income people and people of color are also much more likely to be rent burdened; experience long commutes; displacement from gentrification; evictions; and homelessness in the United States—the results of a long history of inequitable policies that continues today. These policies have systematically and purposefully excluded African-Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders, and others from equal access to inclusive housing and community supports and opportunities for economic mobility.

Policy innovations at the state, county, and city levels are attempting to address the long-standing issues of housing affordability and stability and to reduce exclusionary barriers that keep low-income residents and people of color from accessing opportunity-rich neighborhoods. Examples include rent regulations and shallow subsidies to increase affordability, eviction protections to increase stability, and inclusionary zoning or policies that help preserve or generate new units of mixed-income housing. Policymakers are asking how public policies can increase affordable and stable housing, reduce displacement, and create more equitable and inclusive communities.

THE PROGRAM

For this call for proposals (CFP), the Policies for Action (P4A) research program is accepting proposals investigating the effectiveness of state, county, and city public policies aimed at increasing housing affordability and stability, addressing racial segregation and isolation from opportunity, and increasing access to opportunity-rich neighborhoods and place-based resources. We are particularly interested in understanding how such policies affect racial equity in housing and neighborhood conditions. Given the extensive evidence that already links housing affordability, stability, and neighborhood quality to health, **we do not require that the proposed research examine the impact of policy changes on individuals' health outcomes. The research must, however, centrally focus**

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on evaluation of impact or implementation of one or more public policies. We will not fund research that can only inform policy development.

We are especially interested in proposals that can shed light on policies being implemented in small- and medium-sized cities, which we define as having populations between 50,000 and 500,000. We are also interested in proposals that can inform policies in different types of housing markets, economic conditions, and geographic locations. **Though important, the focus of this CFP is not on policies related to homelessness or people currently unhoused.**

The program will fund studies that can be conducted expeditiously, given the maximum duration of 24 months, using valid research designs and analytic strategies. Though not required, we encourage proposals that pair government and for-profit/nonprofit housing actors with researchers. Policies for Action is also interested in funding projects that incorporate participatory approaches to research and that use evaluation as a tool for advancing equity by applying principles of [equitable evaluation](#). RWJF believes that applying principles of equitable evaluation will help leverage evaluation as a driver of health equity and build a cadre of researchers with diverse backgrounds and expertise who can illuminate the historical and cultural contexts that may be important for understanding and addressing inequities.

Methods and designs that have been successful in the past vary and include natural experiments; implementation research; microsimulation studies; randomized controlled trials; linkages and analyses of existing data sources; mixed-methods analyses; and qualitative research. Various data sources can be proposed to be analyzed, such as social service and other public records; restricted-access survey or administrative data; social media data; and marketing data. Given that it can take a long time to gain access to restricted data, preference will be given to investigators who already have access to any restricted-use data proposed, as well as data that can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity. Investigators may also propose research that would serve as a continuation or supplement to other existing programs or research studies.

We offer the following research questions to illustrate appropriate topics that will fill in existing research gaps. **This list is not exhaustive**, and applicants are encouraged to submit proposals on other related topics and questions.

- To what extent does rent regulation increase affordability, stability, and access to resource-rich neighborhoods, especially for low-income communities and people of color?
- What types of eviction protection policies are being tried, how are they being implemented, and how effective are they, especially for low-income communities and people of color?
- What are the experiences and outcomes for both low-income and market-rate residents in mixed-income housing and how are they integrated into the development and community?
- What state or local policies effectively ensure that housing choice voucher recipients successfully find rental units in low-poverty neighborhoods? Do mobility counseling programs work? Are source of income discrimination laws effective? What policies effectively increase landlord participation? Are these policies sufficient to overcome voucher and racial discrimination in the housing market?
- Do states' tax credit programs for renters reduce housing cost burdens for low-income communities and people of color? Are the effects large enough to ensure access to high-opportunity neighborhoods for low-income renters? What is the impact of other rental subsidy programs and how effective are they at promoting affordability and stability?
- What types of inclusionary zoning policies are most effective at increasing affordable housing units for low-income people and people of color in opportunity-rich neighborhoods, and under what circumstances are they

Racial equity is defined as “both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live. As a process, we apply racial equity when those impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved with the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact our lives.”

Source:

www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/our-work/what-is-racial-equity/

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most effective? To what extent do successful inclusionary zoning policies reduce racial gaps in access to these neighborhoods?

- How are states and cities addressing exclusionary zoning, and do these approaches effectively increase affordable housing supply for people of color?
- What aspects of Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Allocation Plans are associated with the construction of affordable housing in opportunity-rich neighborhoods?
- What types of affordable housing subsidies targeted at developers have successfully maintained or created affordable housing both generally and in opportunity-rich neighborhoods? Do these policies increase racial equity?
- How is the Rental Assistance Demonstration working in localities, and to what extent has it assured that subsidized housing remains affordable and subsidized over time?
- What targeted policies have been most effective at creating and preserving dedicated affordable housing in opportunity-rich areas? Do these policies increase racial equity?

We support research that generates actionable evidence and information about how, and how well, housing policies work. We would like research findings to guide legislators; public agencies; public policy advocates; grassroots organizers; housing, community development, and financing practitioners; and other stakeholders developing and implementing housing policies to create equitable communities. 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 (NCC) at 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, dissemination, and translation activities organized by RWJF and the NCC, including research-in-progress webinars, blog posts, podcasts, research meetings, and policy briefings; and
- Attend RWJF's annual 4Action conference each year the grant is active.

TOTAL AWARDS

- Approximately \$2 million will be awarded through this CFP.
- Each grant awarded will be up to \$250,000 for up to 24 months.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Eligible applicant organizations include academic institutions; public entities; private nonprofit organizations; state and local government agencies; and for-profit organizations. All organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. Applicants also may represent partnerships between service providers or practitioners and researchers.
- We strongly encourage applications that include researchers who are from groups that are underrepresented in policy research and/or who are affiliated with institutions that serve underrepresented groups, such as historically

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black colleges and universities; academic institutions serving primarily Latino students such as the Hispanic Centers of Excellence; tribal colleges; and other similar institutions.

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 P4A NCC, P4A's national advisory committee, and other housing policy expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF leadership.

Letters of intent will be evaluated based on:

- policy relevance of the question(s) to be addressed;
- their alignment with topics described in this solicitation;
- the strength and feasibility of the research design;
- the importance of the potential contribution to improving racial equity in housing and housing-related outcomes;
- capacity to translate research into action; and
- experience working with people and organizations from the housing, community development, or community organizing sectors.

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

- the study's research aims, hypothesis, and rationale;
- the proposed methodology and data sources;
- alignment with principles of equitable evaluation. Applicants should demonstrate that they intend to implement approaches that reflect the principles of equitable evaluation whenever possible, including approaches to defining research questions and conducting research.
- the expected results or outcomes (clearly stated, measurable, and achievable within the proposed time frame);

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- the approach to dissemination, communication, and translation of research findings to policymakers, practitioners, or other key audiences that may benefit from your research;
- research qualifications and experience of the investigator(s) and appropriateness of disciplines and perspectives represented, including nontraditional partners; 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 grantee is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

The principal investigator of the proposal may be contacted after the submission 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, 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

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a-housing 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:

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Phase 1: Letter 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. Letters of intent will be reviewed by staff at RWJF, the NCC, and external experts. The letter of intent should include: a brief plan for the proposed project, outlining a clear research question; proposed data/methods; communications plans; and
- a personal statement from each principal investigator on the project, which should include a description of how the investigator's background, professional, or personal experiences have guided their interest in the proposed research.

Phase 2: Full Proposals

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, detailed communication plan and additional information. This program's national advisory committee makes recommendations about grants to Foundation staff, and RWJF will make all final grant decisions.

Please direct inquiries to:

Policies for Action National Coordinating Center

Urban Institute

Phone: (202) 261-5300

Email: policies4action@urban.org

Website: www.policiesforaction.org

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 does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

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

500 L'Enfant Plaza SW

Washington, D.C. 20024

Phone: (202) 261-5300

Email: policies4action@urban.org

Website: www.policiesforaction.org

Responsible staff members at the national program office are:

- Lisa Dubay, PhD, *co-director*
- Laudan Aron, MA, *co-director*

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- Katie Deming, MS, *deputy director*
- Jillian West, MA, *senior 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*
- Mateusz Szalda, CPA, *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

- **March 30, 2020 (2 p.m. ET)**
Optional applicant webinar. Registration is required [through this link](#).
- **April 29, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of letters of intent.*
- **August 19, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.*
- **Late September 2020**
Notification of finalists.
- **December 1, 2020**
Grants begin.

*All letters of intent and proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a-housing 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. In fairness to all applicants, late submissions will not be accepted.

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Late Submissions

RWJF will accept only those letters of intent and 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.

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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