

2020 Call for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: August 26, 2020 (3 p.m. Eastern Time)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Evidence for Action: Approaches to Advance Gender Equity From Around the Globe

BACKGROUND

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)'s vision for a [Culture of Health](#) is one in which good health and well-being flourish for all, and everyone in America has a fair and just opportunity to make choices that support their health. This includes the ability to obtain a high-quality education, earn a living wage, meet basic needs while feeling safe in their surroundings, and living without fear of stigma, discrimination, or harassment. Gender equity, or the fair treatment and allocation of resources to all people regardless of gender, is an important component of a Culture of Health. Through this special call for proposals (CFP), RWJF's [Evidence for Action](#) (E4A) program and [Global Ideas for U.S. Solutions](#) team seek to learn from programs, policies, and practices ("interventions") that have been implemented in other countries to address gender equity, and to understand the extent to which these approaches may be adapted for U.S. populations.

While progress has been made toward improving gender equity in the United States, prevalent gender-based norms, expectations, and practices create economic and social disadvantages that are particularly harmful for girls and women—including both cis- and transgender women—and can also impact other groups based on their gender or sexual identities. RWJF's approach to gender equity focuses on ensuring that people of all gender identities have access to the opportunities and resources they need to stay healthy.

Gender-based expectations in education and the workplace can create biases that systematically steer women and girls toward lower-paying jobs and unpaid caregiving or curtail their career advancement opportunities. Almost two-thirds of minimum-wage earners are women,¹ and gender-based wage inequality is found across all industries and income levels. Women are more likely than men to live in poverty; with higher rates of poverty among women of color, single women raising children,² and those who are transgender.³ Because low economic status constrains access to key determinants of health—such as housing, education, and healthy food—these gender-related social disparities have serious health implications, especially for women and the children and families who depend on them.

These harmful social norms and concurrent economic stressors contribute to gender-based health disparities. For example, mental health problems such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or eating disorders affect 1 in 5 women each year.⁴ Women are much more likely than men to be exposed to intimate partner violence.⁵ Almost 40 percent of transgender people report experiencing extreme psychological distress in the previous month (compared to 5% of the U.S. population).³ Gender-related health issues are also compounded by race; for example, not only does the United States have the highest rate of maternal mortality in the developed world, black mothers in the United States are at 2–3 times higher risk than white mothers, due to factors related to institutional racism and access to care.⁶

Achieving gender equity to improve population health and well-being in the United States requires a sustained, multipronged approach that addresses not only the immediate social conditions leading to poor health outcomes, but also the systems, norms, and values that foster such conditions.⁷ Progress can be made toward this overarching vision through strategies that focus on changing one or more of these factors, and by building

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on the experiences from nations and communities around the world that have approached gender equity in different ways.

PURPOSE

The goal of this funding opportunity is to translate and adapt knowledge from around the world to the United States on approaches that can improve health or the determinants of health by improving gender equity. In the United States, determinants of health relate to personal safety, economic opportunity, education access (post-secondary or beyond), supportive workplace and social environments, and protection from bias and discrimination for vulnerable groups. We are especially interested in understanding how to change systems, norms, and practices—such as patriarchy and heterosexism^a—that systematically disfavor women, girls, and other groups based on gender or sexual identity. Specifically, we seek to learn from initiatives underway outside the United States whose effectiveness is supported or suggested by empirical evidence and that have the potential to be adapted and implemented in the United States. Some examples of approaches of interest are those that aim to:

- Achieve pay equity;
- Provide supports in the workplace or other social environments for pregnant women, parents and families;
- Counteract cultural stereotypes or expectations that bias women and girls toward low-wage careers or health-damaging jobs or roles;
- Address norms, practices, and resources in ways that reduce gender-based violence, aggression, or harassment;
- Modify social expectations that promote risky behaviors or contribute to poor mental health;
- Build on frameworks about gender, power, and health from groups around the world who have unique traditions and practices related to gender norms and roles;
- Create opportunities for gender minorities to make decisions that affect their lives and communities, and to emerge as leaders in government and other positions of influence; or
- Apply nonbinary interpretations of gender in policymaking, resource allocation, or service provision.

These examples are not meant to be prescriptive or exclusionary, but rather aim to describe approaches that align with the program's intent.

Awards will be made through this CFP to study relevant gender equity initiatives and to assess how effectively they may be adapted to a U.S. setting. Types of research that may accomplish these objectives include studies that:

- Quantify policy effects across countries or regions, with attention to characteristics of the population, context, or factors that modify the impact of the intervention;
- Identify and articulate the key components of effective interventions in a home country setting, such as the theory of change; causal mechanism(s); assumptions, facilitators and barriers to effectiveness; and other relevant outcomes related to implementation;

^a Heterosexism is discrimination against non-heterosexual people.

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- Conduct comparative case studies or scoping studies assessing a specific intervention approach across multiple settings; or
- Assess the feasibility of adapting specific interventions to particular U.S. contexts, with attention to needed modifications, infrastructure, and stakeholder involvement.

Studies may be conducted as standalone projects or as supplements to existing evaluations of gender equity interventions currently in progress outside the United States.

Gender equity barriers in the United States may have different root causes from those in other countries. For example, wage inequities in the United States are less a result of obstacles to the entry of girls into the education system (which is a key issue in some other countries), and more directly related to systematic bias within the education system itself, gendered social expectations, and discriminatory workplace practices. The solutions we seek in this CFP should address root causes operating in the U.S. context.

The United States is a geographically expansive country with a diverse, heterogeneous population. Within the United States, subgroups are differentially impacted by gender issues, depending on regional, state, and local politics and culture. Thus, the country where a solution might originate may differ overall from the U.S. demographic or socioeconomic landscape, but applicants should describe how the conditions and underlying mechanisms that enable a solution to work in a home country setting could feasibly transfer to a community or population in the United States to improve gender equity. We welcome applications from countries in all geographic regions, categories of income, and levels of economic development. We encourage proposals that focus on local, indigenous and traditional approaches to gender equity.

TOTAL AWARDS

- Up to \$1M USD will be awarded.
- Individual awards will be between \$100,000–\$250,000 USD each.
- The duration of awards will be up to 30 months.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicants may be based almost anywhere in the world; ^b however, we will only fund proposals that demonstrate clear applicability to the United States.
- Research projects should reflect collaborations between U.S- and non-U.S.-based organizations, based on pre-existing relationships that demonstrate a durable and productive partnership. Projects that do not reflect a collaboration between U.S. and non-U.S.-based organizations will not be considered.
- Although collaboration is required, only one organization may serve as the lead applicant. We prefer that those with firsthand knowledge of or experience with the intervention in their home country setting lead this work; thus, we welcome organizations based outside the United States to serve as the lead applicant. However, we

^b U.S. laws and regulations (e.g., U.S. Department of Treasury Office of Financial Assets Control Sanctions Programs) [limit funding](#) in certain countries.

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recognize that certain factors related to the logistics of administering the grant or the nature of the study may necessitate a U.S.-based partner to serve as the lead. Therefore, we will consider lead applicants both within and outside of the United States. All applicant teams must justify how the lead organization was determined.

- Awards will be made to organizations, not individuals. Eligible organizations include academic institutions, public entities, private nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and for-profit organizations that have a demonstrated history of administering grant awards and managing project funds.
- Projects must reflect meaningful representation from the intervention's developers or administrators, participants, or other stakeholders who have direct experience with and/or contextual knowledge of the intervention.
- Studies may be conducted in any language, but proposals and deliverables must be submitted in English and all grant administration will be conducted in English.

SELECTION CRITERIA

- **Strength of the existing evidence**—the effectiveness of the intervention or approach must be supported by research that demonstrates a beneficial impact of the intervention on health and gender equity outcomes.
- **Relevance to improving gender equity**—interventions must address overt or underlying causes of inequity, with an emphasis on improving social and structural determinants of health, as opposed to requiring individual behavior modification in the absence of larger systems changes.
- **Plausibility**—a plausible argument should be made for the impact of the intervention on improved health outcomes. The theory of change or causal mechanism through which the intervention is presumed to work in the home country setting should be clear, along with a strong rationale for how these would operate in a U.S. setting.
- **Actionability**—findings from the proposed research should provide guidance to key end users in the United States (policymakers, practitioners, program implementers) and inform public discourse and decision-making using appropriate products (policy briefs, protocols, implementation plans).
- **Rigor of proposed study design**—studies must include a clear research question, present a feasible plan for data access or collection, analysis, and dissemination, and/or use an appropriate framework that guides implementation or adaptation.
- **Qualifications of research team**—project teams should have a track record of successful and productive collaboration, as demonstrated by a history of previous partnership; work and resources should be equitably distributed across collaborating organizations; teams should include key stakeholders (e.g., practitioners, program implementers, members of impacted communities) to guide the research questions and approach.

GRANTEE EXPECTATIONS

E4A highly values peer learning as well as dissemination of research to inform action. The following are expectations of all E4A-funded grantees:

- Participation in peer networking activities with other E4A and RWJF grantees (typically via virtual or online interaction), and at least one in-person learning exchange event.

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- Pre-registration of study—including research questions, hypotheses, main variables, and analysis plan—on Open Science Framework (OSF) at the start of the grant period.
- Periodic progress checks with E4A national program office (NPO) staff.
- Development and implementation of a plan to share findings with stakeholders beyond the research community, when findings are available and as other timely opportunities arise.

OUR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITMENT

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is committed to building a Culture of Health that provides everyone in the United States 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.

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 awardee is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination. Grants to organizations outside of the United States will be recommended for an award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Global Ideas Fund, a donor-advised fund of [Charities Aid Foundation of America \(CAF America\)](#) and will be expected to meet CAF America's reporting requirements.

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.

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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.

Information on budgeting is available in the FAQs on the E4A website and the Budget Preparation Guidelines in the application system.

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 electronically via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/e4a-global 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.

This is a single stage competitive proposal process consisting of a full proposal of no more than 10 pages accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information.

Please direct inquiries to:

The Evidence for Action National Program Office

Phone: (415) 502-3490

Email: evidenceforaction@ucsf.edu

Website: www.evidenceforaction.org

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.

This program has a national advisory committee that makes recommendations about grants to Foundation staff. All funding decisions for grants to U.S. organizations are made by RWJF. Grants to organizations outside of the United States will be recommended for an award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Global Ideas Fund, a donor-advised fund of Charities Aid Foundation of America (CAF America).

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PROGRAM DIRECTION

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

Evidence for Action

Center for Health and Community
University of California, San Francisco
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Email: evidenceforaction@ucsf.edu
Website: www.evidenceforaction.org

Responsible NPO staff members:

- Nancy Adler, PhD, *director*
- David Vlahov, RN, PhD, *co-director*
- Maria Glymour, ScD, MS, *associate director*
- Laura Gottlieb, MD, MPH, *associate director*
- Erin Hagan, PhD, MBA, *deputy director*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Claire Gibbons, PhD, *senior program officer*
- Alonzo Plough, PhD, MPH, *vice president*, Research-Evaluation-Learning Unit and Chief Science Officer
- Sharleen Rajput, *program financial analyst*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **June 23, 2020 [11 a.m. Eastern Time (UTC -4)]**
Optional applicant webinar. Registration is required through this link.
<https://cc.readytalk.com/registration/#/?meeting=28rzrndk46v&campaign=el7t269lcezt>
- **August 26, 2020 (3 p.m. Eastern Time)**
Deadline for submission of full proposals.
- **November 2020**
Successful applicants notified.
- **Early 2021**
Grant start date.

All proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/e4a-global and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the proposal process. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with

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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.

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 well before the deadline so that any unforeseen difficulties, e.g., technical problems, may be addressed in advance.

REFERENCES

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7. Manandhar M, Hawkes S, Buse K, Nosrati E, Magar V. Gender, Health and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *Bull World Health Organ*. 2018;96(9):644-653. doi:10.2471/BLT.18.211607

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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