



Robert Wood Johnson  
Foundation

# 2021 RWJF Culture of Health Prize

Call for Applications from Communities

Application Open:

July 13, 2020 through October 15, 2020 at 3 p.m. ET







Sitka, Alaska; Copyright 2019 Brian Adams



Sitka, Alaska; Copyright 2019 Brian Adams



Gonzales, Calif.; Copyright 2019 Josh Kohanek

## Past Winners

### 2020 and 2021 winners

To be announced in fall 2021.

### 2019 winners

Broward County, FL  
Gonzales, CA  
Greenville County, SC  
Lake County, CO  
Sitka, AK

### 2018 winners

Cicero, IL  
Eatonville, FL  
Klamath County, OR  
San Antonio, TX

### 2017 winners

Algoma, WI  
Allen County, KS  
Chelsea, MA  
Garrett County, MD  
Richmond, VA  
San Pablo, CA  
Seneca Nation of Indians (NY)  
Vicksburg, MS

### 2016 winners

24:1 Community, MO  
Columbia Gorge Region, OR/WA  
Louisville, KY  
Manchester, NH

Miami-Dade County, FL  
Santa Monica, CA  
Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe (WA)

### 2015 winners

Bridgeport, CT  
Bronx, NY  
Everett, MA  
Kansas City, MO  
Lawrence, MA  
Menominee Nation (WI)  
Spartanburg County, SC  
Waaswaaganing Anishinaabeg  
(Lac du Flambeau Tribe) (WI)

### 2014 winners

Brownsville, TX  
Buncombe County, NC  
Durham County, NC  
Spokane County, WA  
Taos Pueblo (NM)  
Williamson, WV

### 2013 winners

Cambridge, MA  
Fall River, MA  
Manistique, MI  
Minneapolis, MN  
New Orleans, LA  
Santa Cruz County, CA

# The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize

**The RWJF Culture of Health Prize honors and elevates U.S. communities working at the forefront of advancing health, opportunity, and equity for all.**

A Culture of Health recognizes that where we live – such as our access to affordable homes, quality schools, good jobs, and reliable transportation – affects how long and how well we live. People in communities throughout the country are working together in new ways so that everyone can live their healthiest life possible, regardless of who they are or how much money they make. The coronavirus pandemic, ongoing racial injustices, and growing inequity across the nation underscore the importance of community conditions and collective efforts for all residents to have a fair and just opportunity for health. A Culture of Health is happening in diverse places – in cities, counties, tribes, regions and rural towns – representing a myriad of environmental, economic, and social strengths and challenges. Though each place's journey looks different, communities' actions all show us what a Culture of Health can look like.

The RWJF Culture of Health Prize (the Prize) elevates the compelling stories of places where residents are working together to transform education, jobs, transportation, housing, and more so better health flourishes for all.

In this ninth round of the annual Prize competitive selection process, up to 10 winning communities will receive:

- **A \$25,000 prize.**
- **Communications funds to help share their story.** Communities will have the opportunity to determine the communications tools that will support their work best.
- **Strategic guidance and training from communications professionals.** Communities will receive support and resources to aid in the national and local promotion of their stories and training to improve media skills.
- **National and local promotion.** Stories will be shared to inspire others' efforts, such as outreach to media, policymakers, and networks of organizations.
- **Opportunities to expand networks.** Winners will have opportunities to connect with other national and local leaders working to build a Culture of Health such as past Prize-winning communities.

This Call for Applications seeks communities that exemplify the six Prize criteria (described on pages 6 and 7). These criteria illustrate what we believe are important aspects of what it takes for communities to build a Culture of Health.

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***"We made a big commitment to the Prize competition because we're committed to this work. We want to be a part of the network. We want to learn and contribute. We're not in it for the glory, not for the money, but for the long haul."***

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– Prize-winning community leader

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# What Should Communities Know Before Applying?

**Through the RWJF Culture of Health Prize application process, a community comes together to reflect on, learn from, and share their stories of collaboration, action, and results.**

To be competitive, it is imperative that Prize applicants showcase the breadth of work and collaboration happening across the entire community and across sectors. There are three phases of the selection process (see pages 8-10), and this community-wide approach should be reflected throughout each phase.

Communities should understand they are applying for a prize and not a grant. The Prize recognizes work that has already been accomplished so there is no required workplan, budget, or reporting.

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*“Almost three years out from winning and the Prize continues its deep and tangible impacts in our community.”*

– Prize-winning community leader

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## Who Is Eligible to Apply?

**The RWJF Culture of Health Prize honors U.S. communities. Submissions representing the work of a single organization or initiative will not be considered.**

To be eligible to apply for a Prize, a community must be a *geographically defined jurisdiction* within the United States\* that falls into one of the following categories:

- County, parish, borough, city, town, village, or other municipality with a publicly elected governing body
- Federally recognized tribe or a state-designated Indian reservation
- Native Hawaiian organization serving and representing the interests of Native Hawaiians in Hawaii
- Region defined as geographically contiguous municipalities, counties, and/or reservations

*\*Communities within U.S. territories are welcome to apply. Communities in places that may have unique governance structures (such as U.S. territories, Alaska, and Hawaii) should contact the Prize program with eligibility questions well in advance of the application deadline.*

Neighborhoods and states are *not* eligible to apply.

Applicants representing the work of a single organization are *not* eligible to apply.

Except for previous Prize-winning communities and 2020 finalists, all past applicants are eligible to reapply for 2021.





Communities will be asked to select two contact people for their application, preferably from two different organizations or entities to demonstrate a collaborative application. The type of organization with which the contacts are affiliated will be requested, such as:

- Business
- Community coalition, grassroots, advocacy, or resident group
- Hospital or health care organization
- Local foundation
- Government agency or department
- School
- Non-profit community-based organization
- Community development organization

Each applicant community will be required to designate a local U.S. governmental entity or tax-exempt public charity operating in its community to accept the \$25,000 prize on the community's behalf, should they win. Community partners can decide together how to use the funds to benefit the community; budget reports on Prize expenditures are not required.

## What Are Reviewers Looking For?

**The RWJF Culture of Health Prize celebrates *what* communities have done as well as *how* they have done it.**

There is no single path forward to building a Culture of Health. Each community has distinct strengths, challenges, and approaches to change. Solutions are wide-ranging, and everyone has a role to play. However, there are characteristics shared by communities that are successfully making change happen and sustaining their work in a way that's benefiting everyone. These characteristics are reflected in the criteria for the RWJF Culture of Health Prize. Reviewers use the six Prize criteria as the lens to evaluate all submissions throughout the process, with a particular focus on the first three criteria in Phase I.

# RWJF Culture of Health Prize Criteria

## Phase I Applications Should Emphasize the First Three Criteria

1

### **Defining health in the broadest possible terms ...**

... means using comprehensive strategies to address the many things that contribute to health, opportunity, and equity in our communities. This criterion includes ways communities are acting across multiple areas that influence health, such as but not limited to the factors in the County Health Rankings model (page 12): health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment. Communities are also encouraged to show how they respond to their local challenges and build on the strengths of their community. Given the importance of social and economic factors in influencing health outcomes, strategies addressing education, employment, income, family and social support, community safety, and housing are considered crucial elements to achieving a Culture of Health.

2

### **Committing to sustainable systems changes and policy-oriented long-term solutions ...**

... means making thoughtful, data-informed decisions that include a strategic mix of policy, programmatic, and systems changes designed to last. This criterion involves communities taking a strategic approach to problem-solving that recognizes the value of evidence and the promise of innovation. Communities are encouraged to demonstrate how residents, leaders, and organizations are collectively identifying priorities, addressing causes of problems, and taking coordinated action to implement solutions that have staying power.

3

### **Creating conditions that give everyone a fair and just opportunity to reach their best possible health ...**

... means intentionally working to identify, reduce, and ultimately eliminate barriers that limit opportunity, in collaboration with those who are most directly impacted by local challenges. This criterion includes ways that communities value diverse perspectives and foster a sense of security, belonging, and trust among all residents. Communities are encouraged to demonstrate: 1) specific actions to remove obstacles to better health and increase the ability of residents who have been historically excluded from opportunities to fully participate in problem solving; and 2) examples of shared power and leadership with residents traditionally absent from decision-making processes.

# 4

## **Maximizing the collective power of leaders, partners, and community members ...**

... means that individuals and organizations across sectors and disciplines are all working together to provide everyone with the opportunity for better health. This criterion includes efforts to build diverse and robust partnerships across business, government, residents, and nonprofit organizations, and fostering inclusive civic engagement and leadership capacity among all community members. Communities are encouraged to demonstrate how they are: 1) inspiring people to take action to support change for better health; 2) developing methods for buy-in, decision-making, and coordinated action; 3) building a shared sense of accountability; and 4) continuously communicating about community improvement efforts.

# 5

## **Securing and making the most of available resources ...**

... means adopting an enterprising spirit toward community improvement. This criterion includes efforts to critically examine existing and potential resources to maximize value, with a focus on leveraging existing assets; making equitable decisions about how to invest resources; and cultivating a strong belief that everyone in the community can be a force to improve the community so that all people can live their healthiest lives possible. Communities are encouraged to demonstrate how they are creatively approaching the generation, allocation, and alignment of diverse financial and non-financial resources to improve the community's health and well-being.

# 6

## **Measuring and sharing progress and results ...**

... means beginning with the destination in mind and a commitment to measuring the quality and impact of coordinated efforts. This criterion includes collective efforts to: 1) establish shared goals across sectors and partners; 2) agree on definitions of success, with attention to reducing disparities; 3) identify measurable indicators of progress; and 4) continuously use data to improve processes, track outcomes, and change course when necessary. Communities are encouraged to demonstrate how they are developing systems for collecting and sharing information, determining impacts across efforts, and communicating and celebrating successes when goals are achieved.

## Key Dates and Deadlines

### Phase I

**October 15, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)**

Phase I Applications (for all applicant communities) due.

### Phase II

**November 13, 2020**

Invitations extended to select applicant communities to submit Phase II Applications.

**December 21, 2020 (3 p.m. ET)**

Phase II Applications (for invited communities) due.

### Phase III

**February 16, 2021**

Invitations extended to finalist communities to participate in the Site Visit Phase.

**Spring 2021**

Site visits with finalist communities.

### Recognition Phase

**Fall 2021**

National announcement of winners and celebration event.

## The RWJF Culture of Health Prize application has three distinct phases:

### Phase I Application

**For Phase I, keeping in mind that health is broadly defined (as outlined in Criterion 1 on page 6), applicant communities are asked to submit an essay up to five single-spaced pages in length to:**

1. Introduce their community by describing:
  - Key community demographics, historical and cultural context, characteristics, strengths, and challenges, including who in the community is most affected by poor health outcomes and what root causes are driving community health conditions;
  - How the community's health improvement journey began and what catalyzed collective action (such as an event, opportunity, or decision)
2. Showcase four accomplishments—specific policies, programs, or strategies—that best reflect the community's response to identified community needs and progress toward better health for all, and describe how accomplishments relate to the first three Prize criteria. Additional guidance is available through the online application system.

### Phase I Frequently Asked Questions

Applicant communities are strongly encouraged to fully review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) located on the Prize website for important details about applying for the RWJF Culture of Health Prize. Key questions include:

#### • Who should submit the application?

***The Prize recognizes whole communities. Successful applicants think and act beyond their own individual organizations and initiatives.*** The application should reflect the work of the whole community, not only one organization or initiative. Community members should select two people, preferably from two different organizations or entities, to serve as contacts on the application.

#### • We are having a hard time deciding on just four accomplishments to feature. What do you suggest?

There is no one best way to determine which accomplishments to feature in your application, but we encourage community members to collaborate on these decisions and keep the six Prize criteria top of mind during your deliberations. ***An accomplishment may be an individual policy, program, or strategy, or an integrated or closely related collection of policies, programs, or strategies.*** Taken together, your four accomplishments should reflect work that goes beyond any single intervention and showcases progress toward better health, opportunity, and equity. Applicants should describe how each accomplishment relates to identified community challenges and how it may impact historically excluded populations or geographic areas in the community. Communities that move to Phase II will have the opportunity to showcase



additional information about their accomplishments and how they are meeting all six Prize criteria. See the next question to understand expectations related to featuring a COVID-19-related accomplishment.

- **Are communities expected to feature a COVID-19 related accomplishment?**

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted existing inequities. Building a Culture of Health recognizes community-wide efforts to work collectively to create conditions to ensure all residents have a fair and just opportunity for health. Given the Prize recognizes the accomplishments made in communities, that we are in the midst of the novel coronavirus response as a nation, and that not every community is impacted the same by the novel coronavirus, there is no expectation that you feature a COVID-19-related accomplishment. It is expected that communities identify how they are addressing a fair and just opportunity to health.

- **Do reviewers give preference to applications that emphasize well-established policies, programs, or strategies?**

Applicant communities are encouraged to demonstrate a balanced approach to community improvement that may feature well-established accomplishments as well as newly implemented efforts, selecting four that collectively best exemplify the six Prize criteria. ***Please note, however, that planning and convening processes such as coalition development, community health assessments, or improvement plans do not qualify as “accomplishments” for this submission.*** This type of foundational work can be featured in the introduction of your Phase I essay.

- **Is there a minimum or maximum population size for communities that apply?**

No. The program invites applications from all communities that meet the eligibility requirements regardless of population size.

- **Our community participated in a previous year’s selection process. May we reapply for 2021?**

Yes. Past applicants are eligible and encouraged to reapply, with the exception of 2020 finalist communities and all past Prize-winning communities.

## **Phase I Application Process**

**To begin the application process,** please visit [www.rwjf.org/prize](http://www.rwjf.org/prize) and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org>. Detailed application instructions are available within the online system. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with the application process and the online submission requirements well in advance of the submission deadline. Applicants are also encouraged to begin the process early to allow adequate time to collaborate with community partners.

**To be accepted, applicants must submit completed proposals by the time and date of the deadline.** The submission process may be substantially slower when many users are simultaneously trying to submit their applications. Staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline. Reasons such as lack of Internet connectivity, applicant server problems, confusion about time of deadline, or difficulty working with partners, are *not* grounds for exceptions.

By starting or submitting an application, whether you are selected to advance or not, you give permission to each the RWJF and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) to use your submission, in whole or in part, to inform research or learning about your community improvement efforts and/or for other non-commercial purposes, such as conducting surveys of applicants, related to RWJF's work to build a Culture of Health.

Building a Culture of Health means recognizing that communities' improvement stories and accomplishments hold tremendous power for inspiring change, and this is true not only for the Prize winners, but for many of the applicant communities. To this end, RWJF, UWPHI, or their designees may contact applicants after viewing submission content to explore storytelling opportunities; in addition, RWJF and UWPHI may create photographs and videos of winning communities and promote them in ways that help elevate, amplify, and advance RWJF's commitment to building a Culture of Health throughout the United States.

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***"The best part of the RWJF Prize application process has been to identify and acknowledge the amazing things our leaders have accomplished with and for us. We often forget to stop, smell the roses and reflect on our endeavors and the Prize experience has allowed us to do just that."***

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– Prize-winning community leader

### **Phase II Application**

A select group of Phase I applicants will be invited to advance in the process and submit a Phase II application. Detailed guidance will be provided to communities invited to advance in the selection process.

### **Phase III Site Visit**

Up to 12 Phase II applicants will advance as finalists in the selection process and be invited to host a site visit. Detailed guidance will be provided to communities invited to advance in the selection process.

### **Recognition Phase**

Immediately following the selection process, Prize-winning communities will work closely and collaboratively with Prize program and communications staff to prepare for a national announcement of Prize winners, as well as preparing for celebration opportunities. Prize winners may also be invited to share their stories beyond the announcement and celebration activities, such as through conferences, webinars, panels, and other presentation opportunities.

## **How Will Winners Be Selected?**

**The 2021 RWJF Culture of Health Prize will be awarded to up to 10 communities.** Reviewers will evaluate each applicant individually, considering demonstrated progress relative to the Prize criteria. Reviewers will consider each community's unique challenges, opportunities, resources, and stage of improvement. Reviews will be conducted by staff at RWJF and UWPHI, along with a panel of national experts serving on the Prize National Advisory Group. Final decisions will be made by RWJF.

RWJF reserves the right to disqualify a community or its designated Prize recipient should RWJF learn of circumstances involving the community or designated Prize recipient that conflict, in fact or in spirit, with RWJF's goals or values.

## Registrant/Applicant Survey Process

Registrants who complete applications may be contacted after the submission deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The Applicant Contacts will be asked to complete a brief, online survey about the application process and applicant characteristics. This voluntary questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Responses provided to SSRS will not impact the decision for your application 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. SSRS, RWJF staff, or another firm may reach out to registrants who do not complete their application to understand their applicant experience.

## Where Can My Community Learn More About the RWJF Culture of Health Prize?

**Visit us online at [www.rwjf.org/prize](http://www.rwjf.org/prize), view our webinars, or contact us by email or phone.**

Please attend the 2021 RWJF Culture of Health Prize Call for Applications Informational Webinar to learn more about the Prize, the application process, and to ask any questions that you may have.

### **2021 RWJF Culture of Health Prize Call for Applications Informational Webinar**

On August 6, 2020 from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. ET, join us for an informational webinar on the 2021 RWJF Culture of Health Prize Call for Applications. To register go here: [https://chrr.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_MKmqSANKQ8yxY4mY7FShww](https://chrr.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MKmqSANKQ8yxY4mY7FShww)  
A recording of the webinar will be posted within a week at [www.rwjf.org/prize](http://www.rwjf.org/prize).

Additionally, we are offering the RWJF Culture of Health Prize Alumni Webinar: The Value of the Prize, to hear from Past Prize Winners about their experiences with the Prize program.

### **The RWJF Culture of Health Prize Alumni Webinar: The Value of the Prize**

On September 15, 2020 from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET, representatives from Prize communities will share their insights on the value of winning the Prize. During the webinar, participants will have the opportunity to ask panelists questions about their Prize experience and how the national recognition has opened doors to new opportunities. Panelists will not provide guidance on applications. To register go here: [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_hf7RBtiqSd-z3MbG49s6PA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_hf7RBtiqSd-z3MbG49s6PA)

### **Online Resources:**

- RWJF Culture of Health Prize information, application link, full FAQs document, and Winners Gallery: [www.rwjf.org/prize](http://www.rwjf.org/prize)
- This resource on health equity from RWJF includes several definitions and concepts included in the Prize criteria and may serve as a helpful reference to applicants: <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/04/what-is-health-equity-.html>

### **Contact Information:**

E-mail: [info@cohprize.wisc.edu](mailto:info@cohprize.wisc.edu)  
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## Program Direction

The RWJF Culture of Health Prize is a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

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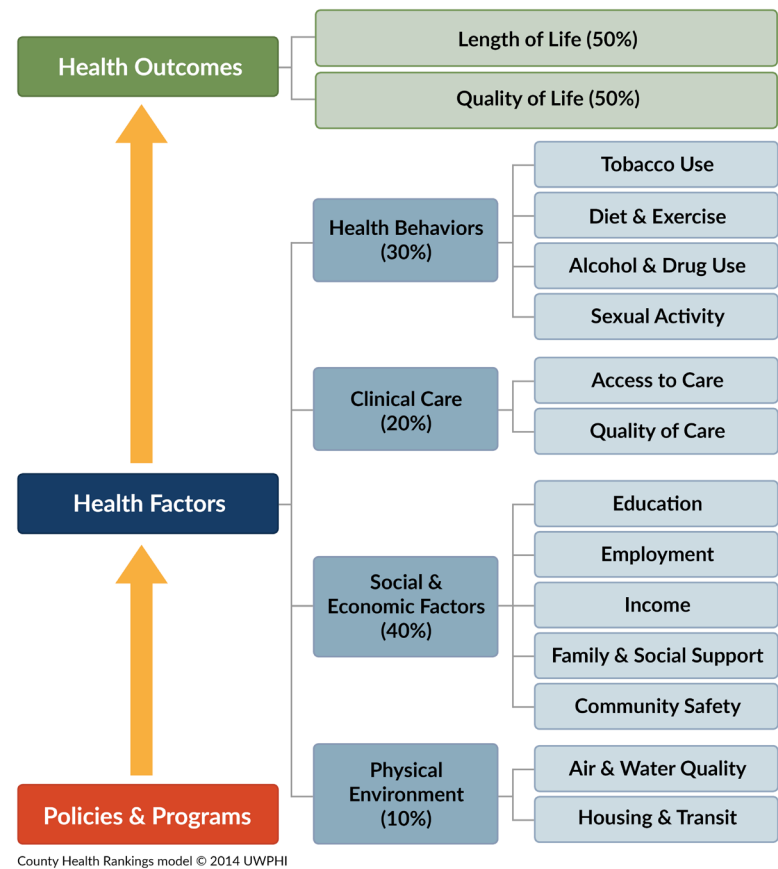
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## County Health Rankings Model of Health



University of Wisconsin  
Population Health Institute  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH



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