

## 2022 Call for Proposals

Proposal Deadline: April 13, 2022 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

# Incubating a Public Health Institute in New Jersey

## BACKGROUND

Public health institutes are unique nonprofits that work closely with governmental public health agencies and others to complement health improvement efforts.<sup>1</sup> Today, there are 45 institutes that collectively employ over 8,000 subject matter experts in a wide variety of content areas, managing over \$2.2 billion of programming. Institutes are nimble and flexible entities that complement public health systems, increase multisector collaboration, and leverage new resources to advance population health and well-being. Many of the institutes are part of an active network through the [National Network of Public Health Institutes](#) (NNPHI) in 33 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. The COVID-19 pandemic poses a unique opportunity for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to help advance a 21st-century public health system for New Jersey—the creation of a public health institute—which is a critical, long-term strategy to improve New Jersey’s public health infrastructure and advance the opportunity for population health, racial equity, and well-being for all New Jerseyans. Throughout the COVID-19 response, state, tribal, local, and territorial health departments across the United States have utilized public health institutes and public-private partnerships to quickly mobilize resources, apply for new funding from federal partners, engage historically marginalized communities, share data with state executive and legislative branches, address food insecurities, and much more.

For almost three decades, health leaders across New Jersey have explored the benefits of establishing a public health institute to accelerate multisector collaboration, advance racial equity, and address the social determinants of health. New Jersey has chronically underfunded public health systems, leaving state and local health departments with inadequate resources to manage routine matters, including a wide-scale pandemic. New Jersey is one of just a few states without a public health institute, which can achieve the above and serve as a clearinghouse for best practices, innovations, research, and advancement of public health services. New Jersey is also a state that has wide inequities, including:

- Ranking 47th in the nation for maternal deaths and has one of the widest racial disparities for both maternal and infant mortality<sup>2</sup>
- Being one of the worst states in the nation for racial wealth disparities. The median net worth for White families is \$271,402—the highest median net worth in the nation. By contrast, the median net worth for New Jersey’s Black and Latino families is just \$5,900 and \$7,020, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated long-standing racial inequities, helped illuminate the role that the social determinants play in overall health, and exposed weaknesses in the New Jersey public health system (e.g., inadequate public health data systems; a lack of coordination between public health organizations; and access and uptake of vaccines has been difficult for the most marginalized due to transportation challenges, job schedules, childcare needs, etc.)<sup>4</sup> Hispanic/Latino people were most likely to have contracted COVID-19 and Black/African American people were most likely to have died from the virus. These disparities are not intractable; there is an

<sup>1</sup> Learn more at <https://nnphi.org/network-engagement/>

<sup>2</sup> *Nurture New Jersey 2021 Strategic Plan*, January 2021, The State of New Jersey, available at <https://nurturenj.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20210120-Nurture-NJ-Strategic-Plan.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Becoming the United States of Opportunity: The Economic Equity and Growth Case for Apprenticeships*, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, available at <https://www.njsj.org/equitycaseforapprenticeships>

<sup>4</sup> The COVID Tracking Project at *The Atlantic*, available at <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/region/us/new-jersey>

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opportunity to use this moment as a catalyst to advance a 21st-century public health system for New Jersey and the creation of a public health institute is a critical long-term strategy to meet this moment.

The Nicholson Foundation, in collaboration with RWJF and in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), supported a 10-month planning phase to develop a guiding framework (with support from NNPHI) for a public health institute. The framework identified key criteria for an incubator organization to launch an institute in New Jersey. The funders engaged a diverse design team of leaders from across sectors in New Jersey to develop the strategic framework. These leaders are knowledgeable about state and local public health and healthcare systems, social determinants of health, and had a vision for improving health in New Jersey. The most successful public health institutes have actively partnered with their state health department to complement their efforts. For this effort, NJDOH participated in the design process and anticipates being a partner and collaborator with the institute.

This call for proposals seeks an independent, nonprofit “incubator” organization that can serve as an administrative, operational and strategic home for the development of a public health institute for the state of New Jersey. In many other states, institutes have successfully utilized an incubator to support their administrative and financial needs as they develop in the first three to five years. More information can be found in [A Modular Guide to Developing & Thriving as a Public Health Institute](#).

### THE PROGRAM

One award will be made to support an incubating organization to cover the first phase (24 months) of work, during which time the incubating organization will develop and launch a public health institute. The incubating organization will be expected to engage in the following areas of activity:

1. To serve as an administrative, operational, and financial temporary home for a public health institute that includes:
  - a. Providing comprehensive financial management, including administration of federal funding, accounts payable, accounts receivable, procurement, financial reporting, etc.
  - b. Forming a new legal entity and preparing documentation and filing for Section 501(c)(3) public charity status for the institute. This includes working with counsel to prepare bylaws, articles of incorporation, and submitting all necessary documentation to the state and Internal Revenue Service.
  - c. Negotiating the development of an agreement for partnership with the Department of Health.
  - d. The incubator will work closely with the Executive Director and additional institute staff as hired to support a pipeline for funding for the institute.
  - e. Hiring and managing human resources and providing physical workspace, technology, and remote capabilities, benefits, and other support needs for the first Executive Director and initial program and administrative staff. It is our expectation that the organization will take racial diversity and inclusion into consideration when selecting staff and board members.
  - f. Providing communications infrastructure to host the institute’s website, developing social media, print marketing, and other communications needs.
  - g. Creating a Memorandum of Understanding with the institute (once nonprofit status is secured) that outlines the relationship, including management of the Board of Trustees for the institute and a process for becoming independent from the incubator at an appropriate phase of development.
2. Support connections to potential partners across the state within diverse sectors:
  - a. Recruiting and facilitating a diverse, multisector Board of Trustees that will provide strategic guidance and oversight of the institute development.
  - b. Providing logistical support for both virtual and in-person meetings hosted by the institute.
  - c. Providing introductions and connections between the Executive Director and the incubator’s partners, as appropriate.

A commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and more specifically, health equity, should be reflected through all aspects of this work including, but not limited to, communications about the work and hiring and engagement practices for staff, board members, and contractors. All activities of this project will be supported with technical assistance from the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI). NNPHI will utilize its framework of 28

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indicators of growth for public health institute sustainability to support the incubator and the institute.<sup>5</sup> NNPHI will provide mentorship from a previous or current leader of a public health institute who will give ongoing guidance on strategic development, building partnerships, governance, and other topics as needed. In addition, NNPHI will provide communications' planning support, business development guidance, and connectivity to funding opportunities. The Foundation is providing a separate grant to NNPHI for these services.

### TOTAL AWARDS

The Foundation plans to identify an incubating organization that will receive up to \$1 million for up to a 24-month period. It is anticipated that the activities of the incubating organization will continue after this period, contingent upon appropriate progress toward agreed-upon deliverables within the first 24 months.

Award time period: Program start date will be August 15, 2022, and continue through August 14, 2024.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible to be the incubating organization of the public health institute, the applicant must have the following core capabilities:

- **Administration**
  - Status as a public entity or nonprofit organization that is federally tax-exempt as a public charity under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
  - Organizational mission compatible with the mission of the institute: *To actively promote collaborative and community-driven partnerships to effect policies and practices to improve health; strengthen public health infrastructure; leverage resources to foster collective impact and social justice; and systemically advance equity and quality of life for all.*
  - Demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion through partnerships, funding, hiring, relationships, etc.
  - Facilities management—provide flexible office and meeting space that supports the changing demands of project work.
  - Experience being a trusted, successful convener. Track record of bringing together statewide, multisector organizations.
  - Grant writing expertise and support, including processes for identifying diverse funding opportunities.
  - Commitment to mentor the infrastructure development of the institute at the program, operations, and finance levels. The Foundation anticipates that the incubating organization will develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the institute to outline the relationship and a transition to independence.
  - Capacity to provide human resource, finance/accounting and payroll, technology needs, etc. in a flexible agreement as the institute grows its internal capacity to perform these functions.
  - A multiyear contractual relationship that allows the institute to exit the incubator organization at an appropriate phase of its development (likely three to five years).
- **Fiscal management**
  - Track record of financial excellence in nonprofit management, as evidenced by progressively more complex funding partnerships, including with state/federal/private funders and long-term relationships (three years or more) with funders.
  - Strength in core financial processing capabilities: general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, etc.
  - A track record of outstanding fiduciary integrity and responsibility, including audited financial statements with no outstanding issues.
  - Project-based cost accounting and financial reporting that facilitates transparency.
  - Experience with grants management and reporting, particularly federal and state.
  - Expertise in contracting and procurement.

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<sup>5</sup> Available in *A Modular Guide for Developing & Thriving as a Public Health Institute* at [https://nnphi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/PDF-Purchase\\_-\\_A-Modular-Guide-for-Launching-and-Thriving-as-a-Public-Health-Institute.pdf](https://nnphi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/PDF-Purchase_-_A-Modular-Guide-for-Launching-and-Thriving-as-a-Public-Health-Institute.pdf)

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- **Human resource management**
  - Recruitment and orientation of new employees.
  - Flexible staffing arrangements that support the changing demands of project work.
  - Management of compensation and benefits.
  - Management of contractual relationships with partners/vendor organizations.
  - Documented policies and practices that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion.
  - Clear policies and trainings to create a workplace which emphasizes including zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination.
- **Technology/information systems**
  - Network stability and security.
  - Workstation availability, configuration, and support.
  - Software applications that support the core work of the institute.
  - Continuity of operations plan and technology support for both in-person and remote work environments.
  - Host and curate a placeholder website for the institute as it evolves into a permanent entity.
- Applicant organizations must be either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are not private foundations or nonfunctionally integrated Type III supporting organizations. The Foundation may require additional documentation.
- Applicant organization must have a physical location and established relationships in New Jersey.

### 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

The Foundation anticipates selecting an incubating organization that demonstrates competency in the following:

- Alignment with the mission of the public health institute: *To actively promote collaborative and community-driven partnerships to effect policies and practices to improve health; strengthen public health infrastructure; leverage resources to foster collective impact and social justice; and systemically advance equity and quality of life for all.*
- Demonstrated commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion through organizational policies, partnerships, funding relationships, communications, hiring practices, etc.
- Previous experience providing administrative, financial, operational, strategy and/or technical assistance support to another organization, entity or program.
- Legal experience with forming a new charity from incorporation through the Section 501(c)(3) application process (including, but not limited to: experience developing governance structure, managing a Board of Trustees, incorporation, registering to solicit charitable contributions, etc.).
- Demonstrated work and partnerships with key public health partners, such as the New Jersey Department of Health, other government entities, universities, nonprofit organizations, organizations that serve communities of color.
- Demonstrated ability to regrant or contract with organizations that serve communities of color.
- Demonstrated ability to contract and hire quickly.

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- Experience with developing and implementing an organizational communications strategy.
- Experience convening multisector partners, both virtually and in-person.
- Commitment to mentor the infrastructure development of the institute at the program, operations, and finance levels. Examples of mentoring other organizations with their nonprofit development are welcome.

### MONITORING

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 incubating organization is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.

RWJF monitors the grantees' efforts and careful stewardship of grant funds to assure accountability. Grantees will be required to submit periodic narrative and financial reports.

### APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

The project director of the proposal may be contacted after the submission deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The project director 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, other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project, and indirect costs to support the applicant organization's general operations. 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. Additional budget guidelines are provided in the online application materials, as a portion of the budget should be reserved for seed funding of initial projects to be identified.

### 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

- Applicants will need to complete the online application that includes: proposal, budget, budget narrative, three letters of support, and up to four relevant CV/resume(s).
- Applicants are invited to attend or review a recording of an optional applicant webinar scheduled for April 1, 2022, at 9 a.m. ET. Registration is required [through this link](#).
- Proposals are expected to be five pages in length, use Arial 11-point black font, and be single-spaced. Proposals should describe organizational experience, approach to activities, and administrative processes. The proposal should reflect the organization's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and explain how the applicant operationalizes that commitment in its work. Additional documents to be submitted include: budget and budget

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narrative, letters of support, timeline of activities, and CV/resume(s). (Please note: these documents are not included in the five-page proposal limit).

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit [www.rwjf.org/cfp/njphi](http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/njphi) and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at [my.rwjf.org](http://my.rwjf.org) before you begin the proposal process.

### Site Visits

RWJF will conduct a virtual, half-day site visit with each finalist applicant. We anticipate these visits will take place June 6 through June 10, 2022. More information will be provided to finalists once selected.

Please direct inquiries to:

Sallie A. George, *program officer*  
Email: [IncubatePHINJ@rwjf.org](mailto:IncubatePHINJ@rwjf.org)

All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online submission requirements and frequently asked questions 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

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Sallie A. George, MPH, *program officer*
- Susan Halucka, *program financial analyst*

### KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **April 1, 2022 (9 a.m. ET)**  
Optional applicant webinar. Registration is required [through this link](#).
- **April 13, 2022 (3 p.m. ET)**  
Deadline for receipt of proposals.\*
- **June 6–10, 2022**  
Site Visits—RWJF will conduct a virtual, half-day site visit with each finalist applicant. More information will be provided to finalists once selected.
- **August 15, 2022**  
Grant start date.

### Applicant Deadline Policy

\*All proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit [www.rwjf.org/cfp/njphi](http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/njphi) and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at [my.rwjf.org](http://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. Please note that, in the 24-hour period leading up to the application deadline, staff may not be able to assist all applicants with any system-related issues. Therefore, we encourage you to submit your proposal well before the deadline so that any unforeseen difficulties or technical problems may be addressed in advance.

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**Late submissions will not be accepted for any reason.** While late submissions will not be accepted, RWJF may choose, at its sole discretion, to extend the application deadline for all applicants. Such extensions generally will be granted only in the event of: (1) a verified issue with the RWJF application system that prevented completion and submission of applications; or (2) a disaster, emergency, or significant internet outage that affects one or more regions. For purposes of this policy, a region is generally considered to be one or more states. RWJF strives to give all applicants any support needed to successfully submit their proposal prior to the deadline. Submission is defined as all sections completed, marked finished, the proposal “submit” button used, and the proposal status shows “Submitted.” If the deadline is extended for any reason, the extension will be posted on the Funding Opportunities page at [RWJF.ORG](http://RWJF.ORG). In addition, an email will be sent to all individuals that have started an application in the RWJF online system.

### ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

For 50 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 [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at [www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html](http://www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html).

50 College Road East  
Princeton, NJ 08540-6614