

People, Parks, and Power

A National Initiative for Green Space, Health Equity, and Racial Justice

BACKGROUND

Please see the [Glossary](#) for definitions of key terms used in this call for proposals (CFP).

Urban parks and green spaces—playgrounds, pocket parks, outdoor recreation facilities, open spaces, trails, gardens, and green infrastructure—are crucial for community health and well-being, a fact made clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite widespread appreciation for the health and environmental benefits of urban parks and green spaces (“parks” and “green spaces” used interchangeably hereafter), [evidence](#) shows persistent inequities in access, availability, quality of facilities, and programming by race, place, and income. The policies, systems, and decision-making processes that shape how park resources are allocated across communities have been influenced by a culture of exclusion, structural racism, and classism.

This CFP is a call to participate in [People, Parks, and Power: A National Initiative for Green Space, Health Equity, and Racial Justice](#) (P3), a joint effort of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, led and managed by Prevention Institute. P3 will support community-based organizations and base-building groups working in urban, low-income communities of color across the United States to increase park equity through local policy and systems change. The geographic focus of the P3 initiative is urban areas—with a particular interest in small and mid-sized cities (under 500,000 population). P3 will fund community-based organizations working toward equity-focused policy and systems change at the citywide, countywide, or districtwide level. Letters of intent are due by November 4, 2021 (see [How to Apply](#) for more details).

RWJF is working to build a Culture of Health where everyone in America has a fair and just opportunity to live the healthiest life possible. Park equity is a key component of this vision. Parks [protect health and promote mental well-being](#) by providing people of all ages and abilities opportunities for physical activity, time in nature, social connection, and respite. These vital resources also have [climate benefits](#): they cool temperatures, cleanse air, filter stormwater, and replenish groundwater. The P3 initiative is grounded in the premise that urban parks are essential community infrastructure that should serve every neighborhood in a fair, just, and safe manner, without displacing longtime residents or community-serving businesses.

P3 comes at a critical moment. The COVID-19 pandemic and the nation’s reckoning with racial injustice have led to a greater appreciation of parks as essential infrastructure. The pandemic

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has also increased public awareness of how structural racism has and continues to shape inequitable community environments and related health outcomes. Recognizing that *people and power* drive policy and systems change, P3 prioritizes investing in the capacity of communities closest to the problem, and the organizations that represent their interests, as key to building an effective movement for park equity in the United States. Employing strategies drawn from public health [successes](#) and generations of people of color-led movements, P3 seeks to transform the field at this unprecedented moment and apply best practices to address longstanding park inequities in urban environments.

African Americans, Latinos, and people living in low-income urban areas across the United States have disproportionately been denied the health, social, and environmental benefits of vital public spaces. Far from being accidental or coincidental, park inequities are born from historical and current day [policies, systems, and norms](#). Imbalances in political and economic power and a [legacy of racial discrimination](#) in the conservation movement have excluded groups led by people of color from full participation in park and green space work or have [tokenized](#) their involvement. The traditional approach to addressing park inequities has focused on building new parks, recreation facilities, and green infrastructure projects in communities, or on improving existing infrastructure. While “on-the-ground” project development is crucial, this approach on its own will not reverse park inequities or achieve large-scale impacts across the population or entire communities. Park inequities will persist, worsen, or take on new forms until the policies, institutional practices, power dynamics, and problematic narratives that produced these inequities in the first place are transformed. Therefore, **the “north star” of the P3 initiative is upstream policy and systems change, not planning, building, or operating individual, on-the-ground projects**. Ultimately, equitable policy and systems change work *will* enable more project development in the communities hardest hit by park inequities, however project development is not the focus of this initiative.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the People, Parks, and Power initiative is to increase participation of urban communities most impacted by park and green space inequities in policy advocacy and system change efforts to advance park equity. P3’s [theory of change](#) centers power building and community-driven policy initiatives led by communities of color as fulcrums for reversing longstanding park inequities. **Community-based organizations that are led by people of color and build community power to influence public policy at the local level are strongly encouraged to apply**. This includes groups that are [already](#) working on local, equity-focused park policy, as well as groups that may be [new to this issue](#) but have a history of advancing equity-focused policy on related issues (e.g., built environment, civil rights, climate change, community development, environmental justice, racial justice, water equity). The geographic focus of P3 is urban areas—with a particular interest in small and mid-sized cities (under 500,000 population). We are interested in funding a spectrum of eligible organizations across the United States, including those that are early in their park equity policy advocacy work, as well as more experienced groups that already have campaigns underway.

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Policy Advocacy Action and Approaches

P3 grants will help grantees build toward a policy and systems change initiative for park equity by bringing to bear their power building and policy advocacy expertise. While grantees may not use Foundation funds for lobbying, grantees may use funds to implement a range of strategies including, but not limited to, base building/community organizing, coalition building, community engagement, data collection, education of key stakeholders and decision-makers, leadership development, narrative change, and policy development. The “right” policy and systems change goal will depend on the grantee’s local context—historical, cultural, ecological, financial, and political—as well as the specific inequities and salient solutions identified by the grantee and their constituents. Prevention Institute’s publication [Changing the Landscape: People, Parks, and Power](#) includes details about the following equity-focused policy ideas that have been implemented in jurisdictions across the United States. Applicants are encouraged to consider these seven broad categories and envision other relevant policy innovations:

1. Public finance measures
2. Agency policies that prioritize equity in internal processes and practices (e.g., budget allocations, staff diversity)
3. Policy directives for a comprehensive assessment that quantifies park/green space needs and inequities
4. Joint use policies for schoolyards to serve as park space
5. Land use policies that facilitate access to parks/green space
6. Establishment of community engagement units within agencies
7. Anti-displacement policies or provisions

Power building and policy and systems change work are long-term in nature. Therefore, we do not necessarily anticipate that policy change will occur in the 24-month funding period. At a minimum, we do expect all P3 grantees to make significant and measurable progress *toward* policy and/or systems change outcomes. Depending on the local context, progress toward policy and systems change can include working alongside residents, community organizations, public agencies, and other stakeholders to, for example:

- Organize residents and allies around park equity issues, conduct research on current park and green space deficit conditions, and develop corresponding policy solutions.
- Build the leadership, skills, and expertise of residents to engage in policy and systems change solutions for park equity.

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- Develop and implement a communications plan and materials that frame parks and green spaces as essential community infrastructure that should benefit all people and neighborhoods equitably and point toward equitable policy and systems change solutions.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for a local, community-driven policy initiative, identifying, for example, goals, organizational considerations, constituencies, power dynamics, decision-makers, and tactics.

Participating in the People, Parks, and Power Initiative

Prevention Institute will manage the P3 initiative and design and implement a comprehensive technical assistance (TA) program to provide grantees with necessary support. The TA program will support grantees in their efforts to advance park equity through policy and systems change. With facilitation from Prevention Institute, P3 grantees will form a peer learning community to share strategies, tactics, resources, and problem-solving ideas, and to support one another. All P3 grantees will be expected to:

- Actively participate in strategy and information-sharing activities, calls, virtual and in-person meetings (COVID-19 guidelines permitting).
- Collaborate on communications efforts to bring attention to park equity.
- Contribute to the development of a research agenda to guide future policy and systems change.
- Participate in the evaluation of the P3 initiative throughout the 24-month grant cycle.

TOTAL AWARDS

- RWJF expects to award grants up to \$500,000 each (up to \$250,000 per year). Grants will be 24 months in duration, beginning in May 2022.
- Awards will be made to up to 14 sites (RWJF reserves the right to make more awards should additional funding be made available).
- The grant opportunity outlined in this CFP is contingent upon final funding confirmation from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 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.

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- Awards will be made to organizations, not to individuals.
- Organizations that are fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) entity that meet all other eligibility criteria are eligible.
- Coalitions are eligible if the lead applicant organization meets all other eligibility criteria. In the case of a coalition, one organization must be the lead applicant and will be responsible for administrative oversight of the grant. Universities or academic institutions are not eligible to be the lead applicant, but they may serve as a coalition partner to the lead applicant.
- Applicant organizations must demonstrate the capacity to manage awards of this size, either directly or with the benefit of technical assistance.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection process will involve the following steps:

1. Letters of intent (LOIs) submitted and reviewed
2. Selected applicants invited to submit full proposals
3. Full proposals submitted and reviewed
4. Grants awarded to up to 14 applicants (RWJF reserves the right to make more awards should additional funding be made available)

Review will be based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated capacity to work effectively on equitable park and green space policy advocacy or adjacent issues, including but not limited to built environment, civil rights, climate change, community development, environmental justice, racial justice, or water equity.
- Demonstrable track record (at least three years) of proactively organizing and advocating for equity-focused public, administrative, or agency policies in the low-income community of color where the proposed initiative will take place.
- Extensive experience implementing power-building strategies and tactics in the organization's day-to-day work; evidence of mutual trust with residents, community organizations, and other stakeholders; and success with institutionalizing community supports that enable robust resident involvement (e.g., translation/interpretation, childcare,

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transportation, and compensation). See the [Glossary](#) for a definition of power-building strategies and tactics.

- Evidence of skill in establishing collaborative relationships with elected officials and government agencies to achieve shared policy and systems goals and, when warranted, ensuring accountability from decision-makers.
- Ability to clearly and succinctly describe how: a) existing park inequities affect the community where the proposed policy initiative will take place; and b) these inequities link to other health, social, environmental, and economic needs of the community, referencing the organization's perspective and ability to work across issues.
- Evidence of organizational history working in and with urban, low-income communities of color; a meaningful portion of the organization's staff and board leadership are representative of the population(s) the organization serves, including multigenerational representation; and a clear commitment among organizational leaders to policy and systems change to achieve equitable outcomes.
- Proven administrative infrastructure and fiscal management capacity to manage the grant if awarded, and infrastructure to conduct policy advocacy. Demonstrated commitment and articulated willingness to invest organizational resources to fundraise to sustain the policy advocacy/systems change work beyond the grant period.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/P3 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 application process.

There will be an applicant webinar on September 29, 2021 (1–2:30 p.m. ET). Participation is optional but prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to attend or to view the webinar recording. Registration is required [through this link](#). Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/P3 for a link to the webinar recording, which will be available by October 1, 2021.

There are two phases in the competitive proposal process:

Phase 1: Letters of Intent

Applicants are required to submit a letter of intent (LOI), with a brief narrative of no more than three pages outlining their experience and initial vision for the proposed effort. LOIs must include the following elements:

1. Project title

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2. Project summary (maximum 1,500 characters, approximately one-half page)
3. Narrative (maximum three pages, 11-point font, single-spaced, following the section headings below and addressing the items specified):
 - **Organizational background and experience:** Briefly describe the lead organization, its leadership, and connection to people and communities most impacted by park/green space inequities. Describe your track record in community organizing and policy advocacy, including whether you have worked on park equity or related policy issues, such as built environment, civil rights, climate change, community development, environmental justice, racial justice, or water equity.
 - **Strategies and tactics:** Describe the power-building strategies and tactics the lead applicant or coalition uses in its day-to-day work, and the connection between these strategies and your policy advocacy work.
 - **Need:** Describe the park/green space inequities in your urban community. Relevant data would be helpful, if available. More important, however, is being able to convey a clear sense of the community's park/green space needs and how existing park/green space inequities impact residents' lives.
 - **Vision:** What is the applicant's vision for addressing the root causes of these park/green space inequities and needs? What kinds of policy changes seem relevant to the current context in the applicant's community? If the applicant is already working on local park policy issues, specify your policy and systems change goal in addition to strategies and tactics. What would progress look like if this vision were to be carried forward over the next few years?

Phase 2: Full Proposals

After a review of each LOI, selected applicants will be invited in early January 2022 to submit a full proposal of no more than 10 pages accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and additional information. Please note that the complete proposal template with details about materials required will be provided when an invitation to submit a full proposal is extended. Among the items to be requested are the following:

1. A proposal narrative (maximum 10 pages, 11-point font, single-spaced), following a template provided by the Foundation to invited applicants at a later date.
2. A budget and budget narrative that includes a realistic budget for 24 months, beginning May 15, 2022, and ending May 14, 2024.
3. The following supporting documents, which should be uploaded in the "Supporting Documents" section of the online proposal:

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- CVs/resumes/bio sketches for up to three project staff.
- Project timeline (maximum two pages).
- Optional: Applicants have the option to provide up to three letters of support from key partners that will collaborate on the proposed project (maximum one page per letter, no more than three letters total).

Applicants may be asked to participate in conversations with reviewers by video conference after proposal submission.

Please direct all inquiries to: P3info@rwjf.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 applications submitted.

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, RWJF requires 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.

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.

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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.

APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

The project lead of the application may be contacted after the submission deadline by SSRS, an independent research firm. The project lead 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 funding 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.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Grant funds may be used for staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, initiative-related travel, other direct expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the proposed effort, and indirect costs to support the applicant organization's general operations. In keeping with RWJF policy, funds may *not* be used to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying-related activities and expenses, 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.

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).

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction for this program is provided by Prevention Institute, located at:

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People, Parks, and Power
Prevention Institute
4515 Leimert Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008
Email: P3info@rwjf.org
Website: www.rwjf.org/cfp/P3

Responsible staff members at Prevention Institute are:

- Elva Yañez, MS, *director of health equity*
- Manal J. Aboelata, MPH, *deputy executive director*
- Rachel Bennett, MPH, MURP, *program manager*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Pamela Russo, MD, MPH, *senior program officer*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **September 15, 2021**
Call for proposals released.
- **September 29, 2021 (1–2:30 p.m. ET)**
Optional applicant webinar (registration is required through this [link](#)).
- **November 4, 2021 (3 p.m. ET)**
Letter of intent deadline.
- **January 4, 2022**
Invitations extended to selected organizations to submit a full proposal.
- **February 8, 2022 (3 p.m. ET)**
Full proposal deadline.
- **March 16, 2022**
Notification of grant awards.
- **May 15, 2022**
Grants begin.

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APPLICANT DEADLINE POLICY

All letters of intent and proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/P3 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 application process.

All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online application 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 application well before the deadline so that any unforeseen difficulties or technical problems may be addressed in advance.

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 application prior to the deadline. Submission is defined as all sections completed, marked finished, the application “submit” button used, and the application status shows “Submitted.” If the deadline is extended for any reason, the extension will be posted on the Funding Opportunities page at 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 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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GLOSSARY

- **Base-building** refers to strategies used by grassroots-led organizations to build collective strength and power. [It includes methods](#) to support community members to: be in relationship with one another; invest in each other's leadership; share a common identity shaped by similar experiences and an understanding of the root causes of their conditions; and to use their collective analysis to create solutions and strategize to achieve them.
- **Health equity** means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their full health potential and that no one is disadvantaged, excluded, or dismissed from achieving this potential. Health equity is the absence of avoidable, unfair, or remediable differences in health status among groups of people, whether those groups are defined by race/ethnicity, culture, class, national origin, or other means of stratification.
- **Parks** are accessible to the general public and may include playgrounds, pocket parks, outdoor recreational facilities, sports fields, urban open space, and other features that promote physical activity, active recreation, and respite. **Green spaces** are also accessible to the public and can include lakes, streams, riverbanks, trails, greenways, community gardens, green alleys, and other constructed facilities that use nature-based processes to manage stormwater, flooding, and water quality and address other environmental issues such as air quality.
- **Park equity** is the fair and just distribution of parks and green spaces, such that all communities have access to these health-promoting resources. Park equity requires closing gaps in access to parks and green spaces that disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color. Park equity entails multiple strategies to ensure [procedural, distributional, and structural equity](#).
- **Park and green space inequities** are the unfair and unjust distribution of parks, green spaces, and associated resources (e.g., programming, amenities, staffing, and funds for maintenance and operations) by race, place, and income, among other factors.
- **Policies** are decisions made by elected or appointed bodies or agencies that guide and influence future actions, procedures, or resource allocations by related entities that administer, implement, or are covered by the policy. Policies typically include ordinances, laws, administrative rulings, and regulations, among other types. Policies are distinct from plans, programs, on-the-ground projects, and direct services (all of which will not be funded by P3).
- **Power building** refers to efforts to increase the power and influence of members of underrepresented communities to set priorities and shape decision-making. Power-building strategies and tactics may include community organizing, youth and resident

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leadership development, strategic alliances, and narrative change, alongside more traditional capacity-building approaches like training, technical assistance, and funding.

- **Structural racism** is a [system](#) in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time.
- **Systems change** encompasses a broad set of interrelated changes including the norms, resources, behaviors, learned habits, culture, decision-making, and patterns operating within the legal, regulatory, social, and community environment.
- **Upstream** interventions focus on addressing the underlying, systemic, or root factors that determine whether communities will be healthy, safe, and equitable. Upstream approaches may include changes to policies and environments to remove barriers to health and safety and enhance social determinants of health, like access to parks and green spaces.