

2024 Call for Applications

Application Deadline: June 3, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize

Background

We all have dreams for ourselves and our families. But we don't all have the same opportunities to make those dreams come true. For too long, our social practices, laws, and policies have placed more value on some lives than others based on race, class, and other factors. To achieve health equity, we have to uproot this hierarchy of human value and dismantle the structural racism that permeates society with the ambitious goal of building the future we all want for our children and grandchildren. We believe that, together, we can build a world where health is no longer a privilege, but a right.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize (“the Prize”) honors the work of communities that are at the forefront of addressing structural racism and other structural injustices to advance health, opportunity, and equity for all. Since its launch in 2013, the Prize has recognized [more than 60 communities](#) across the country. The Prize serves to inspire change and highlight community-led solutions that show us that another world is possible, one where barriers to health are broken down through community power-building, cross-sector partnerships, policy reform, systems change, and the reclamation of cultural practices.

Previous Prize winners are leading efforts that address the interconnectedness between health and the policies that restrict the ability of communities to thrive in place. They are creating the conditions to enable community residents to reach their best health and wellbeing, each working on several key aspects—such as access to healthy foods, transportation, safe and affordable housing, economic opportunity, clean water and air, reproductive justice, and Native and Indigenous peoples' sovereignty.

Every community's journey and strategies are unique, but across the board, Prize communities create and sustain deep cross-sector partnerships. These partnerships create the resilient infrastructure needed for making incremental wins and creating big change.

The Prize recognizes the collective work of communities whose efforts show us that improving health and equity is possible.

In 2024, RWJF will select up to 10 communities to receive the Prize, including the following:

- **A \$250,000 Prize**
- **National and local promotion of communities' stories** that will inspire others' efforts
- **Training and support to advance equity work and enhance influence** with media, policymakers, advocacy networks, and grassroots organizations

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- **Opportunities to expand networks by connecting with other Prize communities** and national and local leaders working to build a Culture of Health

Who Is Eligible to Apply for the RWJF Culture of Health Prize?

The Prize is awarded to place-based communities. Eligible applicants must represent one of the following:

- Whole city, town, village, borough, or other municipality with a publicly elected governing body
- County or parish
- Federally recognized tribal nations, state-designated American Indian reservation or other Indigenous communities
- Native Hawaiian organization serving and representing the interests of Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders in Hawaii
- Community within the territories administered by the United States (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands)
- Region, defined as geographically contiguous municipalities, counties, and/or reservations

Partnership within communities is at the heart of the Prize. To be eligible, applications should represent a partnership of multiple unique organizations whose collaboration predates the Prize application.

Types of organizations participating in the partnership could include, but are not limited to:

- Nonprofit community-based organizations
- Businesses
- Community development organizations
- Government agencies or departments
- Community coalitions
- Faith-based organizations
- Grassroots and advocacy organizations
- Hospital or healthcare organizations
- Local and regional foundations
- Resident groups
- Schools, colleges, and universities

To be eligible for the Prize, applications must designate a local U.S. government entity or tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity operating within the community to accept the \$250,000 Prize on the community's behalf should it win. Community partners can decide together how to use the unrestricted funds to benefit the community; budget reports on Prize expenditures are not required.

If you have any questions about eligibility, please contact the Prize program at the contact information below well before the application deadline.

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What Are Reviewers Looking For (Selection Criteria)?

Communities are best positioned to define for themselves the solutions they need to make racial and health equity a reality. As such, the Prize selection criteria intentionally focuses on the journey—including strategies and other guideposts of progress—as much as the results your community has achieved together and the ways you are tracking them.

Reviewers use the following six selection criteria to evaluate all submissions throughout the process, with a particular focus on the first three criteria.

1. Addressing structural racism and other structural injustices to advance opportunity, health, and equity. Successful applications will show evidence of:

- Dismantling the systems that cause racial and health disparities and cultivating communities where everyone can thrive.
- Strategies addressing structural racism, other forms of discrimination, poverty, and obstacles to wellbeing, such as lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, language and cultural sovereignty, safe communities and environments, healthcare, or a sense of belonging that fosters wellbeing.

2. Committing to lasting changes in policy, systems, and financing that improve community conditions and center people directly impacted by the inequity addressed. Successful applications will show evidence of:

- Making and implementing decisions designed for long-term improvement in wellbeing, power, and opportunity of those most impacted by racial and health inequities.
- Advancing policy change at the legislative or organizational level, systems change such as change to the community's physical, economic, or social conditions for population-wide impact.

3. Working in partnership across sectors, and elevating the expertise and solutions held by people with firsthand experience of the inequities being addressed. Successful applications will show evidence of:

- Ensuring diversity across the partnership and within the leadership, from public and private organizations, grassroots organizations, and government entities to businesses, including and especially those that plan, govern, build, and finance communities.
- Building community power, voice, and participation by putting decisionmaking power about resources in the hands of those most affected by those decisions and leadership by people with firsthand experience of the inequities, such as people with low incomes, Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian American people, and other people of color.

4. Engaging in work that preserves and celebrates community through cultural activities and practices that envision and advance a more just future. Successful applications will show evidence of:

- Honoring and centering community heritage and cultural practices as a means to breaking down the barriers to economic opportunity, health, and wellbeing caused by structural racism and other forms of discrimination.

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- Cultivating a sense of belonging and interconnectedness through creative cultural practices that provide healing and repair.
- Utilizing arts and culture to uplift their vision and inspire action for a more just future.

5. Making the most of available resources to ensure the effort can endure over time.

Successful applications will show evidence of:

- Mobilizing the dispersed talent, resources, knowledge and creativity of individuals, organizations, and institutions in—and supporting—the community.
- Making equitable decisions about how the community will continue to invest its financial resources, energy, and time toward policy and systems change.
- Building intergenerational knowledge and wealth and allocating diverse financial and nonfinancial resources to create the future the community wishes to see.

6. Measuring and sharing progress in culturally relevant ways. Successful applications will show evidence of:

- Establishing shared goals among community leaders, cross-sector partners, and residents most affected by the inequities being addressed.
- Agreeing on definitions of success and identifying culturally relevant ways to continuously gather and use data and community feedback to track and communicate progress on short- and long-term goals, improve processes, and change course when necessary.

What Should Communities Know Before Applying?

Prize applicants must showcase the breadth of work and collaboration happening within a community, across the entire community, and across different sectors. This communitywide approach should be reflected throughout the application. Communities should understand they are applying for a prize and not a grant. The Prize recognizes work that has already been accomplished and therefore no workplan, budget, or follow-up reporting is required.

Application Details

The application, selection, and announcement process has four distinct phases:

Initial Application Period (March 14 to June 3, 2024)—Applications are open for submissions.

Finalist Site Visits (October to November, 2024)—We will invite up to 15 communities to advance as finalists. A review team will conduct site visits with finalist communities to further understand the work described in their applications and how their accomplishments align with the Prize selection criteria. We will provide detailed guidance to finalist communities at that time. Site visits will be in person, pending any necessary virtual accommodations depending on COVID and other public health safety measures at that time.

Winner Selection (January 2025)—We will notify up to 10 communities that they are the 2024 Prize winners. Once selected, Prize-winning communities will collaborate with RWJF, Health

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Resources in Action (HRiA), and Spitfire Strategies staff to prepare for the public announcement and the celebration. Release of the results will not be shared publicly until the official announcement.

Public Announcement and Celebration (June 2025)—We will announce the winners and have a celebration of the Prize-winning communities.

How Do Communities Apply?

Eligible community partnerships are encouraged to submit either written essays (maximum four pages in total, single-spaced), or videos (maximum 20 minutes in total), including the following two sections. The specified lengths per section are provided below:

Section 1 is a one-page written essay or video up to five minutes in length introducing your community.

Who is your community?

Please describe:

- Key community demographics, historical and cultural context, characteristics, strengths, assets, and challenges, including who in the community is most affected by structural racism and other forms of structural injustices, and what root causes are driving community conditions that impact opportunity, health, and equity.
- What led your community to begin this work to create greater economic opportunity, health, and equity and what catalyzed collective action (such as an event, opportunity, or decision).
- Anything else you think is important for us to understand about your community's context and journey.

Section 2 is a three-page written essay or video up to 15 minutes in length that highlights three to six accomplishments by your community.

What did you accomplish? How did you accomplish it, and with whom?

Please use the six selection criteria starting on page 2 to guide your submission for this section, keeping in mind that we are weighing criteria 1, 2, and 3 most heavily. Applicants should name at least three accomplishments, provide a brief description which specifies what you accomplished, how multiple organizations across sectors worked together, and what you were up against. Feel free to approach your examples and the criteria however you wish. You may choose to provide one example for each criterion or provide examples that address multiple criteria.

Submission Guidance

Applications for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. One representative from each applicant community will be required to register at my.rwjf.org to begin the application process. Visit <http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/prize11> and use the “Apply Online” link.

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Essays should be submitted as PDF documents and videos may be submitted with a Vimeo or YouTube link.

This program will have a review committee that makes recommendations about Prize awards to RWJF. RWJF will make all final award decisions. RWJF does not provide individual feedback on applications submitted.

All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online submission 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 any unforeseen difficulties or technical problems may be addressed in advance. Please direct inquiries to Health Resources in Action at CultureOfHealthPrize@HRIA.org

Applicant Deadline Policy

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.”

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 this policy's purposes, a region is considered one or more states.

If the deadline is extended for any reason, the extension will be posted on the funding opportunity page at rwjf.org. In addition, an email will be sent to all individuals that have started an application in the RWJF online system.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- **April 3, 2024 (2 p.m. ET)**
Optional applicant webinar. Registration is available through [this link](#). A recording of the webinar will be available on the RWJF website for those not able to attend the live session.
- **June 3, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for all applications. Please direct any technological inquiries to [HRIA](#) at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline.
- **Week of August 12, 2024**
Applicants will be notified whether or not they have been selected as finalists.
- **October–November 2024**
Site visits will be conducted by a review team with selected finalist applicant communities.
- **June 2025**
National announcement and celebration of winners.

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Funding Details

- **Type of Award:** Awards funded under this opportunity will be structured as a prize for accomplishments previously completed. Since the Prize is not a grant, there are no programmatic requirements or deliverables required of winners once it is awarded.
- **Number of Awards:** Up to 10
- **Amount of Each Award:** \$250,000
- **Award Duration:** This is a one-time Prize
- **Use of Funds:** Award funds are distributed as a prize and do not have any specific budgetary requirements. Funds may be used at the discretion of the recipient with the following exceptions. In keeping with RWJF policy, funds may *not* be used to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, and for lobbying or political activities. Additional budget guidelines are provided in the online application materials.
- **Payment of Awards:** The Prize will be paid in full to winners upon awardee selection by the Foundation and completion of necessary documentation.

Frequently Asked Questions

We strongly encourage applicant communities to fully review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) located on the Prize website as they develop their applications. Key questions below address aspects of eligibility criteria:

Are applications representing the work of a single organization eligible to apply?

No, the Prize is awarded to whole communities and eligible applications represent the work of multiple organizations. Successful applications think and act beyond an individual organization or initiative, and an application should reflect communitywide partnerships.

Are states or neighborhoods eligible to apply?

No, states are not eligible to apply. Neighborhoods are not eligible to apply on their own; however, the work of neighborhoods can be featured as part of the broader efforts being undertaken in a city, town, tribe, reservation, or county.

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. We encourage jurisdictions of all sizes to apply.

Are previous Prize-winning communities eligible to apply?

No, communities that have previously received the Prize are not eligible to apply.

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Program Direction

Management and technical assistance are provided by Health Resources in Action:

Health Resources in Action

2 Boylston Street, 4th floor

Boston, MA 02116

Phone: (617) 451-0049

Email: CultureOfHealthPrize@HRIA.org Website: www.rwjf.org/prize

Responsible staff members at Health Resources in Action:

- Ana Maria De La Rosa, MPH, co-managing director, Healthy & Equitable Communities
- Heidi Klein, MS, co-managing director, Healthy & Equitable Communities
- Albaney Gray, MPH, program coordinator, Healthy & Equitable Communities

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:

- Katrina E. Badger, MPH, MSW, program officer
- Abbey K. Cofsky, MPH, managing director
- Elías Enenbach, MA, MPhil, senior communications officer
- Christine Phares, program financial analyst

Strategic communication partners at Spitfire Strategies:

- Claire de Leon, MPH, vice president
- Karley Kranich, director
- Ellie Klerlein, managing senior vice president

RWJF 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 wellbeing. 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.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to improving health and health equity in the United States. In partnership with others, we are working to develop a Culture of Health rooted in equity that provides every individual with a fair and just opportunity to thrive, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at <https://www.rwjf.org/emailsubscriptions.html>.

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