

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Addressing Childhood Obesity and Health Inequities: Supporting, Sustaining, and Evolving the Field

OVERVIEW

Through this call for proposals, we are interested in advancing efforts that will support, sustain, and evolve the work of organizations and communities that have been at the forefront of equity-oriented childhood obesity prevention. This is a two-phase funding opportunity, through which RWJF expects to invest up to \$22 million in early 2025.

BACKGROUND

For over 20 years, RWJF has been a national leader in childhood obesity prevention efforts across the nation. The Foundation's focused commitment to preventing childhood obesity will conclude in 2025, but our work to ensure all children and families in the U.S. can thrive will continue. As we approach this milestone, our perspective on how best to support the field is guided by what we've learned over the past two decades.

Today, we understand that in order to make further progress to prevent childhood obesity and advance health equity, we need to deliberately address the many social, economic, and physical factors that contribute to obesity, including longstanding structural racism across the systems that circumscribe our lives. There is burgeoning awareness, research, and innovation—as well as multisector and global work around the intersection of health, land, education, food, housing, and racial equity. Among the bright spots is a growing momentum for change toward equity and justice. Community-level experts throughout the country are leading with local solutions that center equity, sustainability, new financing approaches, and community priorities. Advocates and researchers are bringing new information and energy to childhood obesity prevention and related issues.

This shift in thinking and work is reflected in RWJF's most recent [State of Childhood Obesity](#) report. RWJF has been moving its childhood obesity prevention approach further upstream to

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

focus on community conditions and the broader determinants of health. At the same time, the Foundation [continues to prioritize](#) an institution-wide focus on dismantling structural racism that harms health equity, as reflected in the January 2024 [Message from RWJF President and CEO Richard Besser](#). As we look ahead to 2025, we remain steadfast in our commitment to health and racial equity—and to helping ensure that the childhood obesity prevention field is strong and poised to continue to innovate and thrive.

PURPOSE

This call for proposals (CFP) is seeking projects with the potential to support, sustain, and evolve the field in promoting systems-level change to prevent childhood obesity, address structural racism, and advance health equity. We are especially interested in projects that aim to:

- Address structural racism and other systems that perpetuate health inequities.
- Respond to gaps in evidence or action identified by the field.
- Engage with communities most impacted by childhood obesity and nutrition insecurity and organizations focused on people of color.
- Leverage and complement existing field assets (RWJF's and others').

Within those broad goals, the four strategies below are intended to serve as suggestions, not boundaries, for potential projects. We encourage ideas and innovation from applicants that cut across these areas, and even go beyond them:

(1) Influence Policy and Systems Change: Work in this area may include, but is not limited to, projects that:

- help government, communities, organizations, and coalitions advance stronger government rules, enforcement, and capacities to address structural racism and change systems that perpetuate health inequities, including the disparities in childhood obesity prevalence.
- monitor, enforce, and support implementation of existing policies, regulations, and programs that have demonstrated positive impact on child nutrition and wellbeing at the local, state, and national level.
- strengthen the impact and reach of federally funded food and nutrition programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC, School Meals).

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

- help to shape and advance action that addresses the commercial determinants of health (e.g., regulations, analysis of issues and opportunities, legal strategies).
- fill gaps in data, knowledge, and analysis that lawmakers, regulators, advocates, clinicians, and community leaders need for advocacy, enforcement, activism, policymaking, and systems transformation.

(2) Produce and Disseminate Actionable Evidence and Data: Work in this area can help, but is not limited to, projects that:

- ensure ongoing access to and continued development of research, data, and surveillance at the intersection of childhood obesity and health and racial equity.
- generate qualitative and quantitative evidence and information for decisionmakers.
- fill gaps in the research and data on racism within the food system and its impact on communities of color.

(3) Catalyze Investment in Communities: Work in this area can help, but is not limited to, projects that:

- center historically marginalized communities, create economic opportunities, and build community assets and power via community-anchored food projects.
- build and strengthen infrastructure that supports equitable community conditions as they relate to child health and obesity prevention.

(4) Change Narratives: Work in this area will elevate community voices and help to shift public narratives away from those that create harm to those that foster belonging, health equity, and shared solutions, including projects that:

- continue to move the popular narrative on childhood obesity away from a narrative of personal responsibility and toward a systems narrative.
- ensure state, local, and regional policymakers, and others who build, govern, and finance communities understand the connection between place, race, and health and, in this case, its connection to food ecosystems, with the ultimate goal of encouraging community decisionmakers to rethink the way they design, plan, and implement food systems.

Types of Projects and Funding Mechanisms

Funded projects may support a wide range of activities and generate outputs that include but are not limited to data, resources, enhanced surveillance systems, mapping and monitoring

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

approaches, program implementation, advocacy and community power-building, coalition and partnerships, strengthened infrastructure for community engagement and activism, and/or storytelling. Innovative ideas and approaches and new partners in this work are welcome and encouraged.

We envision this ecosystem of funded diverse projects to be an important learning opportunity as well. As such, RWJF will provide support and resources to strengthen the community of practice that emerges from the constellation of projects funded through this CFP. The details will be worked out in collaboration with the grantees, based upon interests and needs.

FUNDING DETAILS

- **Types of Award:** Awards funded under this opportunity will be structured as one-time awards that can take various formats (project grant; general operating support; endowment; and others), determined collaboratively with RWJF and the prospective grantee/institution.
- **Number of Awards:** The program will distribute up to \$22 million in funding. The number of awards will depend on the budgets of selected projects; we anticipate making up to six awards of varying sizes.
- **Amount of Award:** Each award will be a minimum of \$1,000,000. Applicants should request the amount of funding they will need to complete the proposed project.
- **Award Duration:** Funding will be awarded for projects that can be 12 months to 48 months in duration.
- **Use of Funds:** Award funds should cover the actual costs of the project including personnel and other direct costs. If the grantee is a public charity, grant funds will also cover 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, and for lobbying or political activities. Additional budget guidelines are provided in the online application materials.
- **Payment of Award:** Payment of the award generally will be made on a one-time basis against the approved budget (not invoices).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Eligible applicants must have the organizational infrastructure that demonstrates sufficient capacity and history to conduct proposed efforts in a timely, well-managed way that leads to desired outcomes.

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

- Eligible applicants must be based in the United States or its territories.
- Awards will be made to organizations, not individuals.
- Applicants may include but are not limited to nonprofit, private sector, and government organizations; local or state-based philanthropy and intermediary/backbone organizations; academia; professional membership organizations; and community-based state, and national advocacy organizations or coalitions. The Foundation may require additional documentation to confirm that eligibility requirements have been met.
- We encourage projects that engage and center communities most impacted by structural racism and other systems of oppression; partnerships spanning state and community-level organizations; and entities that have not applied or been awarded a grant from RWJF previously.
- We encourage partnerships and collaborations. Two or more organizations may partner to develop and implement a concept/proposal. While each collaborating organization must be described in detail in the proposal, only one organization can be the lead contact in the application process and may engage the other organization(s) through a subcontract or grant.
- We encourage applicant organizations that are led by or that reflect the leadership of Black or African American; American Indian, Alaska Native, or Indigenous; Hispanic, Latinx/e, or Latin American; Middle Eastern or North African; Asian or Asian American; and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander communities and those from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Alaska Native-Serving Institutions, Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs).
- Preference will be given to applicants that are 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 Type III supporting organizations. The Foundation may require additional documentation.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be reviewed by external reviewers (with relevant expertise) and RWJF staff. Final funding decisions will be made by RWJF leadership.

Concept papers (phase 1 of the application process) will be evaluated based on:

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

A **concept narrative** (maximum four (4) pages, 12-point Arial font, 1.5 line spacing) that presents:

- High-level project overview, rationale, and intended audience.
- Anticipated influence on racial and health equity and disparities in childhood obesity.
- How the proposed concept will support the field and influence policy, produce and disseminate actionable data and evidence, catalyze investment in communities, change narratives, and/or other systems change(s).
 - Why and how will the concept be important to the field of childhood obesity prevention and its ability to continue to sustain, innovate, and evolve?
 - How does the concept complement and/or leverage existing field assets (RWJF's or others')?
 - How does the concept address structural barriers, including racism? How will the concept influence racial and health equity and disparities in childhood obesity?
 - How is this concept informed by community needs and how will the work be shaped by organizations accountable to frontline communities?
- How the proposed work is commensurate with the funding thresholds outlined in this CFP (see page 4).
- **Supporting documentation** (required): A brief (up to one page; does not count toward the four-page limit) background on your organization/key partners that helps us understand the experience, perspective, and capacity you bring to this work.

In addition to the above, invited **Full proposals** (phase 2 of the application process) will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant demonstrates:

- A history of work, expertise, and/or leadership in childhood obesity prevention and related areas (such as the food system, food justice, racial justice, health equity).
- A history and commitment to health and racial equity.
- Deep understanding of systems change dynamics and structural inequities to health and wellbeing, including structural racism.
- A realistic budget and project timeline.
- Capacity of the project team and any key partners to implement the proposal.
- Institutional infrastructure and administrative capacity to manage a budget of \$1 million or more—directly or through a named intermediary or fiscal agent.

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

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). See our Open Access policy for more information.

HOW TO APPLY

There are two phases in the competitive proposal process. The first phase requires submission of a brief concept paper through the RWJF online application system (myrwjf.org). In the second phase, we will invite selected phase 1 applicants to submit full proposals. Applicants will be asked to identify if they are focusing on one of the strategies outlined on pages 2–3 [influence policy, produce and disseminate actionable data and evidence, catalyze investment in communities, change narratives, and/or other systems change(s)], understanding that projects may relate to more than one strategy or present an entirely different focus.

Phase 1: Concept Papers

All applicants must submit (1) a concept paper of up to four (4) pages (1.5 line spacing) describing the project/initiative; (2) the grant amount requested; (3) type of funding mechanism requested (optional); (4) background on your organization and any key partners (up to one page); and (5) biosketches for key personnel. Applicants must follow the instructions and use the templates provided in the online system. Responses are due June 27, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. ET.

Phase 2: Full Proposals (if invited)

Selected Phase 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal narrative of up to 10 pages (1.5 line spacing) accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, timeline with key milestones, and additional supporting documents. Applicants must follow the instructions and use the templates provided in the online system. We will invite full proposal applicants in August 2024 to submit a full proposal by October 24, 2024.

Phase 2: Grant Opportunities

Successful Phase 2 submissions may lead to an invitation for different types of grants described below. When submitting full proposals in Phase 2, the applicant(s) will have the opportunity to indicate which type of grant funding they believe would best support their idea, including but not

2024 Call for Proposals

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Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

limited to the types of grants listed below. (Please note that RWJF may determine that a different type of grant is more appropriate than the type of grant requested.)

- **Project grant:** Grant to support specific project or activities; grantee must use funds as designated in the budget.
- **Flexible funding:** funding to support a particular goal or project but grantee has discretion to allocate funding within those parameters.
- **General operating support:** flexible, unrestrictive funding to support core activities and organizational capacity of 501(c)(3) organizations.
- **Endowment grant:** funding invested by the grantee to provide a permanent stream of income for continued support of the organization or for a designated purpose and time.
- **Project grant rule grant:** funding to a project that includes lobbying where RWJF is not the sole project funder.

Applicant Deadline Policy

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

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 proposal 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.

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 proposal deadline for all applicants. Such extensions generally will be granted only in the event of (1) a verified issue with the RWJF proposal system that prevented completion and submission of proposals; 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 opportunity page at www.rwjf.org. In

2024 Call for Proposals

Concept Paper Deadline: June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

In addition, an email will be sent to all individuals that have started a proposal in the RWJF online system.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

PROJECT DIRECTION

Please direct inquiries to: COB@rwjf.org

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Jamie Bussel, *senior program officer, childhood obesity lead*
- Kristin Schubert, *associate vice president*
- Jennie Day-Burget, *senior communications officer*
- Kathy Hempstead, *senior program officer*
- Jan Mihalow, *program financial analyst*

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **June 27, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of concept papers submitted online.*
- **August 29, 2024**
Invitations to submit full proposals (to select applicants).
- **October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of full proposals submitted online.*
- **December 18, 2024**
Finalist notifications.
- **March 2025**
Awards begin.

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2024 Call for Proposals

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Full Proposal Deadline: October 24, 2024 (3 p.m. ET)

EVALUATION AND 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 lead investigator 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 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.

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 www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html.

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