

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)



Connecting Champions for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Health Professions¹

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to advancing good health for all through equitable and accountable health and healthcare systems. A healthcare system designed for equity requires diverse health professionals who bring cultural knowledge, a commitment to antiracism,² and a clear understanding of how inequity operates in healthcare systems and in society.

RWJF seeks to fund **one** lead organization or consortium to serve as a national *network-weaver* for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in the health professions. The selected grantee will connect and support leaders, organizations, and institutions across the ecosystem, strengthening relationships, aligning strategy and communications, and facilitating shared learning and collective action. By building the connections and infrastructure needed for collaboration, the grantee will help advance belonging, accountability, and systems change across health professions education and healthcare institutions.

Achieving a healthcare system grounded in equity requires both a diverse health professions workforce and institutions committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). While diverse teams improve quality of care and health outcomes, RWJF has learned that increasing representation alone is insufficient without addressing structural and institutional

¹ All funding opportunities are contingent upon final funding confirmation from the Foundation. In addition, the Foundation may elect to modify or terminate this funding opportunity if an event or events beyond the Foundation's reasonable control (e.g., change in law; civil disturbance; epidemic, pandemic; or other medical emergency; labor dispute; natural disaster; quarantine; terrorism; war; or other unforeseen events, including, but not limited to, emergencies and nonemergencies) is threatened, occurs; or is continuing that, as determined by the Foundation in its sole discretion, makes the awards under this call for proposals illegal, impossible, impracticable, or otherwise inadvisable under the circumstances.

² <https://www.bu.edu/csc/edref-2/antiracism/>

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

barriers that shape belonging, leadership, advancement, and accountability. *Structural racism* and other forms of systemic inequity continue to limit opportunity across the health professions education and healthcare institutions.

Lasting change requires not only supporting diverse leaders, but also strengthening connections among educational institutions, healthcare organizations, professional associations, accrediting and credentialing bodies, students, advocates, community actors, and others within the health professions ecosystem, whose relationships, actions, practices, and mindsets shape health outcomes for the communities they serve. These relationships create the support, trust, shared learning, and coordinated action necessary to advance DEIB and build a more equitable healthcare system.

RWJF's Leadership for Better Health (LBH) focus area invests in leaders and organizations that address structural racism and other systemic inequities in accountable, relational, and transformational ways. This includes supporting leaders who build and strengthen relationships across the field, foster shared responsibility and collective action, and challenge the status quo to advance more just, equitable systems. LBH recognizes that lasting change requires both collective leadership and stronger field alignment. LBH seeks to build an explicitly antiracist health professions ecosystem by shifting power, strengthening collective leadership, and advancing system-level accountability for DEIB.

One way to achieve that is through *network-weaving*—connecting leaders, organizations, and movements across the health professions ecosystem so they can align strategies, strengthen shared narratives, build collective power, and act together. While many leaders and organizations remain deeply committed to advancing DEIB, we recognize that these efforts, though well-meaning and often courageous, are siloed and fragmented. At the same time, coordinated opposition to DEIB has become increasingly effective at shaping public discourse, influencing institutional decision making, and slowing progress by appealing to concerns about fairness, quality, and inclusion with a narrow interpretation of all of those principles. In this environment, advancing DEIB requires coordinated strategies that help translate values into action, build power across the field, and support collective leadership capable of influencing systems, institutions, narratives, and culture.

RWJF is intentionally using an open call for proposals (CFP) to broaden participation; identify organizations and partnerships that may not already be connected to RWJF; encourage collaboration; and ensure this investment reflects the breadth of expertise, relationships, and

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

innovation present across the field. We invite applicants or consortia with the experience, credibility, and capacity needed to support national, field-level coordination and collective action.

The selected applicant will serve as a field-level coordinator, connector, and catalyst for collective action across the health professions ecosystem. The organization will help align strategies; strengthen narratives and messaging; facilitate shared learning; and build trust. Additionally, the chosen grantee will foster coordinated action across the field; amplify effective approaches; and work more collaboratively to advance an affirmative vision for belonging in health professions education.

This CFP seeks an organization, or consortium of organizations, with a demonstrated commitment to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; to addressing systemic inequities; elevating the voices and experiences of historically marginalized communities; and supporting collective action across the health professions ecosystem.

Core activities. Applicants should propose a clear, coherent, and actionable approach to serving as a network-weaver. Competitive proposals may include the following activities:

Network Gatherings and Field-Building

- Designing and facilitating gatherings (virtual and in-person) that bring together leaders from health professions education, academic health institutions, professional associations, student groups, advocacy organizations, and movement partners, community organizations, and other relevant actors.
- Planning sessions, workshops, strategy meetings, and/or panels at key conferences and field events.
- Maintaining ongoing infrastructure that enables communications, peer learning, resource-sharing and coordinated action among network participants between gatherings.
- Creating and stewarding shared spaces, such as communities of practice, peer learning networks, working groups, or strategy tables that enable alignment in a common vision, strategy, and narrative for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Building and sustaining relationships across sectors to reduce silos, strengthen trust, and support coordinated action.
- Fostering alignment not only in shared values, but also in shared priorities, coordinated strategies, and collective leadership capable of advancing ecosystem-level change.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

Communications and Narrative Strategy

- Supporting the development and dissemination of a clear, affirmative narrative about how diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the health professions contribute to stronger health systems, improved health and wellbeing of all people, but especially those who have been marginalized and excluded from opportunities to be healthy.
- Coordinating messaging across partners to amplify effective strategies, align framing, and strengthen coherence across the field.
- Providing support to align, coordinate, and share effective messages to fight back against the anti-DEI sentiment, reframe harmful narratives, amplify effective practices, lessons learned, and credible messengers.
- Grounding communications strategies in an understanding of how audiences move from shared values to action, including how beliefs and unmet needs shape engagement and resistance.

The selected entity will not be solely responsible for developing narrative change work. It will be expected to coordinate and collaborate with RWJF-supported communications and narrative change efforts already underway, helping to translate, disseminate, and activate narrative resources across the health professions ecosystem.

Field Coordination and Collective Action

The selected grantee will help field actors identify, refine, and advance shared priorities for collective action.

Activities may include:

- Facilitating processes that help partners to identify, refine, and advance shared priorities and coordinate strategies for collective action such as campaigns, institutional change efforts, policy influence, or field-level accountability efforts.
- Identifying opportunities for joint action that strengthen collective power, influence institutional norms, and advance accountability among health professions institutions, healthcare organizations, professional associations, accrediting bodies, and other actors whose decisions shape equity-related outcomes.
- Identifying under resourced but promising strategic partners, including student medical associations serving students underrepresented in medicine, to recommend for direct grantmaking by RWJF and other funders.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

- Liaising with funder collaboratives and consulting on multi funder strategies to advance DEIB in health professions.
- Supporting collective responses to emerging challenges, including coordinated approaches to countering misaligned or harmful narratives.
- Facilitating coordination that enables ecosystem-level action, enabling diverse actors to align strategies, mobilize resources, and advance shared goals, rather than isolated efforts.
- Supporting the development of shared accountability mechanisms, common priorities, and collective commitments that enable organizations to work toward common goals and sustain progress over time.

Knowledge Generation and Synthesis

The selected grantee will help capture and share learning from the network to support broader implementation, adaptation, and field learning.

Activities may include:

- Capturing, synthesizing, and sharing insights, promising practices, and lessons learned from the network to support broader implementation and field learning.
- Producing field-facing products such as briefings, toolkits, case examples, learning memos, strategy briefs, or other resources that support shared understanding and advance field learning.
- Generating insights that help the field understand how to translate shared values into meaningful action and systems change.
- Sharing lessons with RWJF and other partners to inform future grantmaking, field-building, and narrative strategies.

FUNDING DETAILS

- **Type of Award:** Awards funded under this opportunity will be structured as grants.
- **Number of Awards:** RWJF anticipates making one award of up to \$2,000,000 to a lead organization capable of serving as the network-weaver. RWJF may consider supporting a consortium-based proposal in which a lead organization serves as the primary grant holder and coordinates strategic partners with complementary expertise.
- **Amount of Award:** Up to \$2,000,000
- **Award Duration:** 24 months

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

This is an initial two-year investment. Future support, if any, will depend on the extent to which the grantee demonstrates progress in building relationships, reaching DEIB champions, advancing effective narratives about DEIB, and inspiring new actions, and contributing to RWJF's broader goals for Leadership for Better Health. The external environment is also rapidly changing, and RWJF will continue to assess whether this approach is advancing the Foundation's goals.

RWJF strongly encourages consortium-based proposals. Competitive proposals may include:

- A clear lead organization serving as the primary grant holder.
- Strategic partners with complementary strengths, such as health professions education expertise, communications and narrative strategy, power-building, movement partnership, facilitation, or field learning.
- **Use of Funds:** Award funds should cover actual costs of the project, including personnel and other direct costs. 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 Awards:** Payment of the award generally will be based upon spending against approved budgets or milestones (not invoices).

OPEN ACCESS

In order to ensure RWJF-supported research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, awardees 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.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligibility criteria are intended to determine which applicants may apply. Selection criteria, described in the next section, will be used to assess the strength and competitiveness of proposals. Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Applicants 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 non-

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

functionally integrated Type III supporting organizations. The Foundation may require additional documentation.

- Applicant organizations must be **based in the United States or its territories**.
- Applicants must apply as a single organization but may represent a consortium. Consortium-based applications must identify one lead organization that will serve as the primary grant holder and be responsible for grant management, coordination, and reporting.
- Demonstrate the ability to manage large, complex grants and coordinate work across multiple partners.
- Applicants must have the capacity to operate at a national level and engage constituents across the health professions ecosystem.

SELECTION CRITERIA

RWJF will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

Strategic Fit and Clarity of Approach

Competitive applicants will:

- Provide a clear and compelling theory of action linking proposed activities to intended field-level and systems-level outcomes.
- Explain how the proposed approach will help move the field from shared values to coordinated action.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the current DEIB landscape, including legal, political, institutional, and narrative dynamics shaping the health professions ecosystem.
- Articulate how the work will address barriers that prevent alignment from translating into sustained collective action.
- Demonstrate alignment with RWJF's goals for advancing antiracism, equity, belonging, collective leadership, and system-level accountability.

Network Leadership and Field Coordination

Competitive applicants will:

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

- Demonstrate experience connecting, aligning, and mobilizing diverse actors across a field or ecosystem, preferably the health professions ecosystem.
- Show evidence of national reach, credibility, and trusted relationships with relevant constituents.
- Demonstrate experience designing and facilitating gatherings, communities of practice, peer-learning networks, working groups, or other mechanisms that support sustained engagement and collective action.
- Describe how they will engage health professions education institutions, professional associations, student groups, advocacy organizations, movement partners, and other key actors.
- Demonstrate an understanding of leverage points for advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the field.

Communications and Narrative Capability

Competitive applicants will:

- Demonstrate experience developing, aligning, or activating narrative strategies across organizations or networks.
- Show the ability to coordinate messaging across partners to increase consistency, reach, and influence.
- Explain how data, research, audience insights, or field learning will inform communications and strategy.
- Describe how they would coordinate with RWJF and existing RWJF-supported communications and narrative initiatives.

Equity and Power-Building Orientation

Competitive applicants will:

- Demonstrate a clear commitment to antiracism, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- Show experience addressing structural racism and other forms of systemic inequity.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

- Demonstrate approaches that shift power to leaders and communities most impacted by inequities.
- Describe how they will support shared leadership, inclusive participation, and accountability across partners.
- Demonstrate experience working with historically excluded or underrepresented groups in the health professions or related fields.

Implementation Feasibility and Organizational Capacity

Competitive applicants will:

- Present a realistic workplan, timeline, staffing model, and budget aligned with the proposed scope.
- Demonstrate the organizational capacity to manage a complex national effort.
- Describe governance and decisionmaking structures, particularly for consortium-based proposals.
- Identify key risks and propose strategies to adapt as conditions change.
- Demonstrate readiness to begin implementation and sustain momentum over the grant period.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Award recipients 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.

The RWJF Narrative Reporting process is designed to be flexible, purpose-driven, and grantee-centered. The Foundation is dedicated to a Narrative Reporting process that strengthens relationships between partners and our program officers, fostering mutual learning for both. We believe this reimagined process better expresses RWJF's values and our commitment to trust-based philanthropy. Learn more about our [Narrative Reporting requirements here](#).

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

We may ask project directors to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on their awards. At the close of each award, the lead organizations are expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.

HOW TO APPLY

Proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/CCDEI 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.

RWJF will use a two-stage application process to reduce applicant burden and support an equitable review process.

Phase 1: Letter of Intent

Applicants should submit a concise Letter of Intent of no more than three pages using the template provided at my.rwjf.org. The Letter of Intent should provide a high-level overview of the applicant's proposed approach and demonstrate strategic fit, network leadership, and readiness to support coordinated action across the health professions ecosystem.

The Letter of Intent should include:

- A brief description of the applicant organization, including the consortium it represents (if applicable).
- A summary of the proposed approach to serving as a network-weaver.
- A description of relevant experience and relationships across the health professions ecosystem.
- A description of how the applicant would support coordination, narrative alignment, and collective action.
- A preliminary budget estimate.
- Identification of any proposed partners, if applicable.

RWJF will review Letters of Intent and invite a smaller group of applicants to submit full proposals.

Phase 2: Full Proposal

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

Selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal of no more than 10 pages, accompanied by a detailed budget, budget narrative, and any required additional information.

The proposal narrative should be uploaded as a PDF to the Project Proposal Narrative section of the online system. The proposal narrative cannot exceed **10** pages. Please use Arial font at size 11 with line spacing at 1.5.

Full Proposal Narrative Requirements

Applicants invited to submit a full proposal should provide clear, coherent, and actionable descriptions of their approach, aligned with the goals of this funding opportunity. The narrative should be broken down in the following sections.

Project Overview

Describe the project's overarching goals and intended contributions to advancing DEIB in health professions education and the broader health professions ecosystem.

Please include:

- The goals of the proposed effort;
- How the project will contribute to field-level coordination, collective leadership and systems change;
- How the project connects health professions education to broader healthcare systems and health outcomes.

Approach and Core Activities

Describe your strategy for serving as a network-weaver.

Please include:

- Your approach to network leadership and field coordination, including how you will align diverse actors across the ecosystem;
- Planned activities such as gatherings, communications, coordination, learning, or strategy development;
- Your strategy for moving from shared values to coordinated action;
- Your approach to identifying and responding to emerging challenges and opportunities in the field.

Narrative and Communications Strategy

Describe how you will support narrative alignment and communications coordination.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

Please include:

- How you will develop, adapt, align, or activate field-wide narratives that advance DEIB;
- How you will coordinate with RWJF and existing RWJF-supported communications and narrative efforts;
- How you will use insights, research, data or field learning to inform your narrative strategy;
- How you will support responding to harmful or misleading narratives.

Network Engagement and Governance

Describe how you will engage and connect partners across the health professions ecosystem.

Please include:

- The types of partners and constituents you will engage;
- How you will build trust and sustain engagement across the network;
- Your approach to shared governance, decisionmaking, and accountability.
- How you will ensure historically excluded or underrepresented groups have meaningful voice and leadership;
- If applying as a consortium, description of the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Equity and Leadership Approach

Explain how your work will advance antiracist and equity-centered systems change.

Please include:

- How the work will shift power to leaders and communities most impacted by inequities;
- How the work will build solidarity across actors, advocates, institutions, and networks;
- How the work will address structural barriers to belonging and advancement in the health professions ecosystem.

Outcomes and Measures of Success

Describe how you would define and measure success.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

Please include:

- Short-and long-term outcomes related to field coordination, collective action, narrative alignment, systems change, and more;
- Three to five specific (quantitative and/or qualitative) measures you would report to RWJF;
- How you will collect, synthesize, and share learning with network participants.

Organization Capacity and Partnerships

Describe the applicant organization's capacity to lead this work.

Please include:

- The lead organization's role as the network-weaver and primary grant holder;
- Qualifications and relevant experience of key staff;
- Relevant organizational experience in network leadership, field coordination, communications, narrative strategy, equity, power-building, or health professions education;
- Key partners and collaborators, if applicable;
- Staffing, leadership, operational capacity, and grant management experience.

Timeline

Provide an estimated timeline for the project's major milestones, including communications, learning, and coordination of milestones.

Applicants should use their best judgment when projecting the project's timeline. While it is possible to request a no-cost extension if unforeseen circumstances cause you not to meet the original timeline, we expect that you will make every effort to complete the project on time.

Risks and Challenges

Identify key risks and challenges that may affect the project.

Please include:

- The type of risk, such as coordination, reputational, legal implementation, financial, or field-level risk;
- Factors that may stand in the way of success;
- Strategies to mitigate those risks and adapt, as conditions and context change.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

Sustainability

Describe how the effort could be sustained, extended, or adapted beyond the grant period.

Please include:

- Opportunities for continued partnership or field ownership
- Potential funding or sustainability strategies
- How learning, tools, relationships, or infrastructure developed through the grant could continue to benefit the field.

Expected Outcomes

Describe how your proposed strategy, activities, and approach will contribute to achieving the following outcomes. Through this work, RWJF expects progress toward:

- A stronger, more connected national network of leaders and organizations advancing DEIB and belonging in health professions education;
- Increased coordination and collaboration among institutions, associations, student groups, advocates, and movement partners across the health professions field;
- A shared, field-wide narrative that articulates the importance of DEIB and belonging and counters harmful or misleading framing;
- Stronger alignment across organizations in common goals, with strategies that sustain progress over time;
- Evidence of coordinated national action that influences institutional norms, policies, practices, and accountability mechanisms;
- A shared vision of belonging across the health professions ecosystem, including increased consensus on the conditions, policies, practices, and cultural shifts necessary to achieve it.

Deliverables

Applicants should propose deliverables aligned to their approach and capacity.

Competitive proposals may include:

- A network strategy and engagement plan or roadmap.
- A plan for gatherings, communities of practice, or other ongoing field coordination infrastructure.
- A narrative and communications strategy aligned with RWJF and related narrative efforts.
- Tools and resources that can be used by field actors to support narrative alignment, collective action, or systems change.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

- Field-facing briefs, case examples, synthesis memos, or learning products.
- Recommendations for future grantmaking, funder coordination, or field-building investments.
- A final report summarizing outcomes, lessons learned, challenges, and recommendations.

Additional Information

Applicants should submit project director CVs and any memoranda of understanding between partners. Letters of Support (optional but encouraged) from ecosystem partners may also be submitted. Please note that these supporting documents do not count toward the 10-page limit.

Selected applicants will be required to submit additional information through the RWJF online system prior to finalizing the award.

Please direct inquiries to: ccdei@rwjf.org

[Ayoola Carleton, Program Officer](#)

[Email: ccdei@rwjf.org](mailto:ccdei@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.

Proposal Review

Proposals will be reviewed by RWJF staff. RWJF will make all final funding decisions.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

- **September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of Letters of Intent.
- **November 6, 2026**
Applicants are notified whether they are invited to submit full proposals.
- **January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

- **June 1, 2027**
Grant start date.

Applicant Deadline Policy

All proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. You will receive an email invitation from my.rwjf.org with instructions and a link to the RWJF online proposal system. To begin your proposal, select the link in the email and follow the instructions.

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

OUR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITMENT

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is taking bold leaps to transform health in our lifetime and pave the way, together, to a future where health is no longer a privilege, but a right. 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 abilities, 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

2026 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: September 24, 2026 (3 p.m. ET)

Proposal Deadline: January 22, 2027 (3 p.m. ET)

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

RWJF is a leading national philanthropy dedicated to taking bold leaps to transform health in our lifetime. To get there, we must work to dismantle structural racism and other barriers to health. Through funding, convening, advocacy, and evidence-building, we work side-by-side with communities, practitioners, and institutions to achieve health equity faster and pave the way, together, to a future where health is no longer a privilege, but a right. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at <https://www.rwjf.org/content/rwjf-web/us/en/email-subscriptions.html>

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