



Policies for Action

Policy and Law Research to Build a Culture of Health

Research on Housing Policies That Promote Equity

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I. About Policies for Action and this Funding Opportunity	3
What is Policies for Action?	3
How does Policies for Action fund research?	3
II. Areas of Interest	4
Are there specific questions, areas, or policies we should address in our proposal?	4
How does RWJF define racial equity?	4
What is equitable evaluation?	4
Are research projects that have policy implications but do not examine a policy considered for this CFP?	5
Are federal housing policies out of scope for this CFP?	5
Is RWJF interested in policies that address homelessness?	5
Is there a preference for proposals focusing on policies that only affect renters as opposed to policies that affect low-income or restricted-income homeowners?	5
Is RWJF interested in policies addressing COVID-19 for this CFP?	6
Are non-housing policies that have housing outcomes within scope?	6
Can a proposal focus on state-wide policies?	6
Can more than one policy or more than one city be included in the project?	6
Is RWJF only interested in small and medium sized cities?	6
Is RWJF receptive to research on policies/outcomes in other countries?	7
III. Eligibility	8
What types of projects are eligible?	8
What types of organizations are eligible to apply?	8
What types of investigators should apply?	8
What types of credentials are required to be a Principal Investigator?	9
May a proposal list multiple principal investigators?	9

Do eligibility requirements for applicant organizations also apply to partners?	9
Can an organization be listed as a partner on more than one proposal?	9
May a US-based organization subcontract with an international organization?	10
Can an organization submit more than one letter of intent (LOI) to this call for proposals?	10
May I apply for this opportunity even if I am already funded by RWJF, have been an RWJF grantee in the past, or am also currently applying for other RWJF funding?	10
If I am not chosen for this funding opportunity, will I still be eligible for other RWJF grant opportunities?	11
How should I know whether to apply for this CFP or another opportunity?	11
IV. Funding	12
How much funding is available per grant?	12
What are allowable uses of grant funding?	12
How should I estimate my budget?	12
Does the maximum award include indirect costs?	12
What are the direct and indirect rates?	13
What is open access?	13
V. Crafting and Submitting the Letter of Intent and Full Proposal	14
What elements should a successful letter of intent include?	14
What is the application process?	14
Will the LOI be extended due to COVID-19?	14
How do I submit my LOI?	14
Are there formatting requirements for the LOI?	15
Does the two-page limit for the LOI project narrative need to include any references?	15
Should the LOI address dissemination of the final research?	15
Who should I contact with questions regarding my LOI?	15
VI. Selection Process	16
Who will review my LOI?	16
How will my LOI be evaluated?	16
How will I know if I have been selected to move on to the full proposal phase?	16
What is the anticipated start date for the award?	17
Will we receive specific comments on our proposal after a decision is made?	17

I. About Policies for Action and this Funding Opportunity

What is Policies for Action?

[Policies for Action \(P4A\)](#) was created in 2015 as one of four signature research programs of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). P4A solicits, funds, supports and disseminates transdisciplinary research to help develop the evidence base on policies, laws, system interventions, and community dynamics that can promote the goals of RWJF's vision of a [Culture of Health](#). P4A is overseen by the [national coordinating center \(NCC\)](#) at the Urban Institute.

This year, P4A is issuing a special call for proposals (CFP) seeking research on housing policies that promote equity. Proposals should investigate the effectiveness of state, county, and city public policies designed to increase housing affordability and stability, address racial segregation and isolation from opportunity, and increase access to opportunity-rich neighborhoods and place-based resources.

How does Policies for Action fund research?

Policies for Action currently funds [four research hubs](#) and [twenty-four grantee](#) teams. The collaboration among these institutions brings expertise and experience in conducting research that matters at the local, state, and national policy levels, and exemplifies our aim of supporting cross-sector and transdisciplinary research.

The four research hubs conduct research within specific issue areas, such as housing, education, criminal justice, health insurance expansion, and the impact of work-family policies on health and well-being. They also provide strategic support for the program and its grantees.

P4A also funds investigator-initiated research, and supports twenty-four grantee teams, each focusing on a single research project. You can learn more about the grantees and their projects [here](#).

II. Areas of Interest

Are there specific questions, areas, or policies we should address in our proposal?

We are interested in learning about the effectiveness of state, county, and city public policies aimed at increasing housing affordability and stability, addressing racial segregation and isolation from opportunity, and increasing access to opportunity-rich neighborhoods and place-based resources. We also want to better understand how such policies affect racial equity in housing and neighborhood conditions. Given the extensive evidence that already links housing affordability, stability, and neighborhood quality to health, we do not require that the proposed research examine the impact of policy changes on individuals' health outcomes. See the [Call for Proposals](#) for a list of example research questions illustrating appropriate topics that will fill existing research gaps.

How does RWJF define racial equity?

Racial equity is defined as “both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one’s socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live. As a process, we apply racial equity when those impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved with the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact our lives” Source: [Center for Social Inclusion](#)

What is equitable evaluation?

Equitable evaluation aligns equitable practices with an equity approach and uses evaluation as a tool for advancing equity. RWJF believes that applying principles of equitable evaluation will help leverage evaluation as a driver of health equity and build a cadre of researchers with diverse backgrounds and expertise who can illuminate the historical and cultural contexts that may be important for understanding and addressing inequities. The following aspects should be considered when applying equitable evaluation to your research:

- Diversity of teams moving beyond cultural to disciplines, beliefs, and lived experiences
- Cultural appropriateness and validity of methods
- Ability of the design to reveal structural and systems-level drivers of inequity (present-day and historically)
- Degree to which communities have the power to shape and own how evaluation happens

Source: [Equitable Evaluation Initiative](#)

Are research projects that have policy implications but do not examine a policy considered for this CFP?

The research must have a central focus on evaluating the impact or implementation of one or more public policies. We will not fund research that can only inform policy development.

Examples of research that has a central focus on evaluating the impact or implementation of one or more public policies:

1. What types of eviction protection policies are being tried, how are they being implemented, and how effective are they, especially for low-income communities of color?
2. What types of inclusionary zoning policies are most effective at increasing affordable housing units for low-income communities and people of color?

Examples of research that can only inform policy development:

1. What are the rates of eviction by race and other demographic characteristics?
2. What are the trends in racial gaps and access to opportunity rich neighborhoods?

See our current grantee project descriptions on the [P4A website](#) for further examples.

Are federal housing policies out of scope for this CFP?

For this CFP, we are only interested in state, county, and city public policies. This can include innovative ways that these entities are using federal resources but we are not interested in federal policies per se.

Is RWJF interested in policies that address homelessness?

Although important, the focus of this CFP is not on policies related to homelessness or people currently unhoused. Policies that reduce homelessness by increasing stable, affordable housing are within scope for this CFP.

Is there a preference for proposals focusing on policies that only affect renters as opposed to policies that affect low-income or restricted-income homeowners?

No, there is no preference. We are interested in policies that affect both renters and homeowners.

Is RWJF interested in policies addressing COVID-19 for this CFP?

Yes, RWJF has set aside up to \$500,000 of the \$2 million available for this CFP for proposals investigating state, city, and local policy responses to COVID-19. Other criteria still apply to these proposals. (A research question considered in scope could be, “What are the implications of local policies that have placed moratoria on evictions as a result of COVID-19?”)

Are non-housing policies that have housing outcomes within scope?

Yes, non-housing policies are in scope as long as they have outcomes and meet other criteria outlined in the CFP.

Can a proposal focus on state-wide policies?

Yes, proposals focusing on state-wide policies are within scope.

Can more than one policy or more than one city be included in the project?

Yes, proposals may focus on more than one policy and/or multiple cities, or states. There is no preference over focusing on one policy versus multiple policies or one location versus multiple locations.

Is RWJF only interested in small and medium sized cities?

We are prioritizing small and medium sized cities, which we define as having populations between 50,000 and 500,000 because this is where we see the biggest gap in research. We will still consider innovative studies from cities outside of this population range.

Is RWJF receptive to research on policies/outcomes in other countries?

This CFP only focuses on domestic policies.

III. Eligibility

What types of projects are eligible?

We believe collaborative, cross-sector research designs are best suited to inform policy action. We encourage applicants to propose interdisciplinary research teams as appropriate.

The program seeks to fund studies that can be conducted expeditiously, given the maximum duration of 24 months, using valid and appropriate research designs and analytic strategies. Though not required, we encourage proposals that pair government and for-profit/nonprofit housing actors with researchers. We are also interested in funding projects that incorporate participatory approaches to research and that use evaluation as a tool for advancing equity by applying principles of [equitable evaluation](#). Methods and designs that have been successful in the past vary and include natural experiments; implementation research; microsimulation studies; randomized controlled trials; linkages and analyses of existing data sources; mixed-methods analyses; and qualitative research. Various data sources can be proposed to be analyzed, such as social service and other public records; restricted-access survey or administrative data; social media data; and marketing data. Given that it can take a long time to gain access to restricted data, preference will be given to investigators who already have access to any restricted-use data proposed, as well as data that can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Investigators may also propose research that would serve as a continuation or supplement to other existing programs or research studies.

What types of organizations are eligible to apply?

As stated in the call for proposals, awards will be made to organizations, not to individuals. Eligible organizations include academic institutions; public entities; private nonprofit organizations; state and local government agencies; and for-profit organizations.

What types of investigators should apply?

We welcome applications from all investigators, and the following are especially encouraged to apply:

- Interdisciplinary teams, especially government and for-profit/nonprofit housing actors paired with researchers
- Researchers who are from groups that are underrepresented in policy research and/or who are affiliated with institutions that serve underrepresented groups, such as historically black colleges and universities; academic institutions serving primarily Latino students such as the Hispanic Centers of Excellence; tribal colleges; and other similar institutions.

- First time applicants to RWJF

What types of credentials are required to be a Principal Investigator?

There are no specific education requirements to be a Principal Investigator on a proposal. You must, however, be able to demonstrate that the research team has the expertise to conduct the proposed project.

May a proposal list multiple principal investigators?

Yes, there may be up to two Principal Investigators for a proposed research project. Both must be eligible to serve as Principal Investigators, according to the rules presented in the Call for Proposals. One must be called the “Principal Investigator” and must be from the lead organization, and the other must be called the “Co-Principal Investigator” and must either be from the lead organization or from another eligible organization.

Only two CVs/biosketches may be submitted with the letter of intent, but if invited to the full proposal stage, applicants may provide CVs/biosketches for additional key team members.

Do eligibility requirements for applicant organizations also apply to partners?

No, but if a subcontract or partner relationship is crucial to a project’s success, it can sometimes raise issues that require additional financial and/or legal due diligence.

Can an organization be listed as a partner on more than one proposal?

Yes, partners can be listed on more than one letter of intent, as long as each letter of intent submitted is for a distinct project.

May a US-based organization subcontract with an international organization?

The primary applicant must be from an eligible organization (see above) based in the United States or its territories, and the results of the proposed study must further the Foundation's mission of improving the health and wellbeing of all in America. It is acceptable for investigators to be non-U.S. citizens, as long as the organization receiving the grant award is based in the United States. While applicants may submit proposals that include a proposed subcontract relationship with an organization that is based outside of the United States or its territories, such proposals will be subject to heightened scrutiny and a preference will be given to proposals that do not involve the payment of grant funds to organizations based outside of the United States or its territories.

Can an organization submit more than one letter of intent (LOI) to this call for proposals?

Yes. Each letter of intent, or LOI submitted must be for a distinct project.

May I apply for this opportunity even if I am already funded by RWJF, have been an RWJF grantee in the past, or am also currently applying for other RWJF funding?

Applicants who have been RWJF grantees OR who currently have other active RWJF grants, **are** eligible to apply.

Applicants who are current Principal Investigators or co-Principal Investigators of P4A grants OR who have finished their P4A funding within the past two years **are not** eligible to apply. (If your P4A grant was extended, the end of the extension period is considered the end of the award.) This does not prevent other researchers at the home institution of a P4A grantee from applying.

Applicants may submit proposals that are being considered by other RWJF programs.

If I am not chosen for this funding opportunity, will I still be eligible for other RWJF grant opportunities?

Yes, interested applicants may apply for other RWJF grants in the future. You must submit to other opportunities in which you are interested; proposals declined by P4A will not be automatically considered by other programs.

How should I know whether to apply for this CFP or another opportunity?

To learn more about current and upcoming RWJF funding opportunities, and whether they might be of interest to you or your organization, visit the Foundation's [Funding Opportunities](#) page. You can also use RWJF's new [Program Finder](#) tool to identify programs that may align with your interests and goals. For other upcoming funding opportunities that may be of interest to your organization please visit RWJF's [Funding Opportunities](#) page.

IV. Funding

How much funding is available per grant?

Each grant will be capped at \$250,000 (in total and direct costs) for a maximum funding period of 24 months.

What are allowable uses of grant funding?

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project. In keeping with RWJF policy, grant funds may not be used to subsidize individuals for the costs of their health care, to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities. RWJF budget preparation guidelines are available [here](#).

How should I estimate my budget?

A detailed budget is not necessary at the LOI stage (with the April 29, 2020 deadline) of the application process but will be required of applicants invited to the full proposal stage.

You should request the amount of funding you will need to complete your proposed research project. In the case of multi-year proposals, budget requests should reflect the entire grant period (up to 24 months), as opposed to an annual amount. When entering the budget request at the LOI stage, round up to the nearest hundred as opposed to estimating to the exact dollar amount.

Does the maximum award include indirect costs?

Yes, a budget request should not exceed \$250,000 and should include all direct and indirect costs.

What are the direct and indirect rates?

Budget requests should be inclusive of both direct and indirect costs. The Foundation's approved rate for indirect costs is 12% of all project costs (Personnel, Other Direct Costs, and Purchased Services). However, if the Purchased Services category equals more than 33% of the total of Personnel, Other Direct Costs and Purchased Services, RWJF allows 12% indirect on Personnel and Other Direct Costs, and 4% on Purchased Services. Keep in mind that personnel funding that leaves the Lead Applicant Organization is considered "Purchased Services."

What is open access?

Open access is the free, immediate, online availability of research articles. RWJF views open access as a mechanism for ensuring that anyone can access and use results, and translate research to actions that improve population health, well-being, and equity.

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). For more information on RWJF's policy on open access, [click here](#).

V. Crafting and Submitting the Letter of Intent and Full Proposal

What elements should a successful letter of intent include?

All applicants must submit a LOI of no more than two pages that describes the project and includes the amount of funds requested. The LOI should include: a brief plan for the proposed project, outlining a clear research question; proposed data/methods; and communications plans.

A personal statement is also required at this stage from each principal investigator on the project. The personal statement should include a description of how the investigator's background, professional, or personal experiences have guided their interest in the proposed research.

What is the application process?

There are two stages in the application process:

- ▼ Letter of intent (due April 29, 2020, by 3 p.m. ET)
- ▼ Full proposal (if invited, due August 19, 2020 by 3 p.m. ET)

Will the LOI be extended due to COVID-19?

No, the LOI will not be extended. LOIs are due on April 29, 2020, by 3 p.m. ET)

How do I submit my LOI?

Applicants must submit a LOI through the RWJF Online System. Visit <http://www.rwjf.org/cfp/p4a-housing> and use the Apply Online link.

If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at MyRWJF at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the application process.

Are there formatting requirements for the LOI?

Yes. Please refer to the templates in the online application system. All LOI narratives should be no more than two pages, single-spaced, with Arial 11-point font.

Does the two-page limit for the LOI project narrative need to include any references?

References are not required in the LOI narrative, but if provided, they must fit in the two-page limit. In the full proposal stage, references can be submitted as an appendix, not counting against the full proposal narrative limit.

Should the LOI address dissemination of the final research?

Policies for Action is interested in “actionable” research that can be used to impact a Culture of Health. To that end, we’re interested in understanding how your team will work to actively disseminate your research for audiences who may use it. However, that does not need to be a focus in the LOI narrative. Full proposal applicants will be asked to address this.

Who should I contact with questions regarding my LOI?

You may contact the national coordinating center via email at policies4action@urban.org. Please note that in fairness to all applicants, we cannot give feedback on specific research ideas or proposals.

VI. Selection Process

Who will review my LOI?

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, leaders of the P4A national coordinating center (NCC) at the Urban Institute, the program's national advisory committee, and other expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF staff and leadership.

How will my LOI be evaluated?

LOIs will be evaluated on the basis of:

- ▾ Eligibility in accordance with the eligibility criteria listed in the CFP;
- ▾ Policy relevance to the question(s) being addressed;
- ▾ Alignment with topics described in this solicitation;
- ▾ The strength and feasibility of the research design;
- ▾ The importance of the potential contribution to improving racial equity in housing and housing-related outcomes;
- ▾ Capacity to translate research into action; and
- ▾ Experience working with people and organizations from the housing, community development, or community organizing sectors

How will I know if I have been selected to move on to the full proposal phase?

Applicants will be notified in late June, 2020 regarding whether they have been invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due August 19, 2020.

What is the anticipated start date for the award?

Grants will begin on November 15, 2020

Will we receive specific comments on our proposal after a decision is made?

RWJF policy prevents us from providing detailed proactive feedback; however, applicants are welcome to contact the NCC with specific questions about the status of their proposal.

Thank you!

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