

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – Evidence for Action: Innovative Research to Advance Racial Equity

From: Office of Foundation Relations
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Website: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/funding-opportunities/2021/evidence-for-action--innovative-research-to-advance-racial-equity.html>
Submission Limitations: None
Foundation Deadline: Open Call for Proposals, Application Deadline: Open. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.** Applicants will generally receive notice within six to nine weeks of applying as to whether they are invited to submit a full proposal.

Please contact your RAS unit ***and Nicole Dancz to inform them of your intent to submit.***

Background and Purpose:

Evidence for Action prioritizes research to evaluate specific interventions (e.g., policies, programs, practices) that have the potential to counteract the harms of structural and systemic racism and improve health, well-being, and equity outcomes. Their focus on racial equity means they are concerned both with the direct impacts of structural racism on the health and well-being of people and communities of color (e.g., Black, Latina/o/x, Indigenous, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other races and ethnicities), as well as the ways in which racism intersects with other forms of marginalization, such as having low income, being an immigrant, having a disability, or identifying as LGBTQ+ or a gender minority.

This funding is geared toward studies about “upstream” causes of health inequities, such as the systems, structures, laws, policies, norms, and practices that determine the distribution of resources and opportunities, which in turn influence individuals’ options and behaviors. Research should center on the needs and experiences of communities exhibiting the greatest health burdens and be motivated by real-world priorities. It should be able to inform a specific course of action and/or establish beneficial practices, not stop at characterizing or documenting the extent of a problem.

While they will consider research on various aspects of health equity, they prioritize studies of interventions that are designed to reduce race-based disparities (e.g., by confronting a root cause of disparities or targeting benefits to those experiencing the greatest burdens). RWJF is particularly interested in strategies focused on developing healthy and equitable communities; supporting the needs of children, families, and caregivers; and fostering alignment among health care, public health, and social service systems.

Examples of projects that may be a good fit for E4A include research to:

- Measure the impact of strategies that target structural or systemic inequities (e.g., reparations, eviction moratoria, anti-displacement neighborhood revitalization) on physical or mental health outcomes for marginalized populations;
- Determine whether changes in given practices (e.g., grassroots organizing, school assignment, credit scoring, vaccine distribution) improve health and racial equity;
- Assess whether new policies or programs (e.g., public infrastructure investments, child tax credits, police reforms) have differential health impacts across racial/ethnic groups;
- Replicate prior studies of interventions using samples of additional racial/ethnic groups, to establish whether outcomes differ for different groups.

Because some approaches to disrupting structural racism are in early stages of development or trial, they will also consider other types of research that can inform action to advance racial equity, which may include:

- Research to identify viable policy or programmatic responses to community needs and priorities;
- Pilot studies to demonstrate proof of concept or feasibility of promising novel initiatives and/or provide early estimates of effectiveness;
- Implementation studies to improve the acceptability, sustainability, or scalability of initiatives that promote racial equity;
- Development and validation of new key measures of racial equity that can be used to guide and monitor progress toward equity goals.

These examples are intended to provide context and stimulate thinking, not to serve as rigid guidelines or restrictions. Investigators are encouraged to submit innovative proposals using any appropriate combination of research designs/methods, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches. We encourage studies that take advantage of natural experiments, which involve changes in large-scale programs, policies, or practices that may provide unique opportunities to establish causation. Given the program’s focus on systemic and structural causes of inequities, applicants should note that studies of interventions operating solely at the individual, household, or other hyperlocal unit—for example, programs that encourage individuals to modify their personal behavior in the absence of greater environmental or structural changes—are not a fit for E4A.

Eligibility

- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. Submissions from teams that include both U.S. and international members are eligible, but the lead applicant must be based in the United States.
- Preference will be given to applicant organizations that are either institutes of higher education, public entities, or nonprofits that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are not private foundations or Type III supporting organizations. Other types of nonprofit and for-profit organizations are also eligible to apply. RWJF may require additional documentation.

Selection Criteria

As an investigator-initiated program, E4A does not pose a specific set of research questions, topics, or categories for funding. In general, research funded by E4A should apply a racial equity “lens” in both its topic and approach. This means that research topics center the health priorities of people or communities that have been impacted by structural racism; that problems and solutions being studied are motivated and/or validated by people who are directly impacted; and that the research process engages stakeholders at appropriate stages of the project. Moreover, E4A-funded studies should be designed so that positive, negative, or null findings can all be informative for policy or programmatic decision-making. Studies will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance**—research aims are important to advancing racial equity and building a Culture of Health; research can inform demonstrable policy or implementation priorities.
- **Actionability**—goes beyond theoretical implications and demonstrates potential for practical and timely application in the real world; conditions (e.g., timing, relationships, windows of opportunity) are favorable for translating findings to action; dissemination plans and tactics are appropriate.
- **Methodological rigor**—studies designed to support causal inference are powered to detect meaningful and plausible effect sizes, account for relevant context and covariates, and include appropriate comparison groups; qualitative studies adhere to best practices in design, sampling, analysis, and interpretation.
- **Inclusion of health outcome measure(s)**—outcomes may include diverse dimensions of physical, mental, and socio-emotional health and well-being, or behaviors that are well established as determinants of health and well-being, assessed using validated instruments.
- **Feasibility**—evidence of timely access to appropriate data and/or study populations; reasonable budgets, and timelines that account for sufficient and equitable engagement of relevant stakeholders.
- **Qualifications of team**—expertise of academic researchers, practitioners, and individuals or groups with issue-specific knowledge and experiences are integrated at appropriate stages of the project; community members, advocates, policymakers, and/or other stakeholders are engaged equitably and meaningfully.

Budget and Use of Grant Funds

- There is not an explicit range for allowable budget requests. You should request the amount of funding you will need to complete and disseminate findings from your proposed research project—including direct and indirect costs for the entire duration of your grant.
- The size of the budget will be weighed in relation to the importance and likely contribution of the proposed work. Pilot studies and formative stage research are expected to correspond with lower budgets.

- As a research funding program, E4A does **not** fund the costs of program implementation or operations.
- OFR can work with you to identify a sense of the budget range of grants funded by E4A.
- Grant periods are flexible up to 36 months; rare exceptions may be made for projects needing up to 48 months if sufficient justification is provided. Their preference is for projects that produce findings in the near term.
- Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project, and indirect costs to support the applicant organization's general operations.
- In keeping with RWJF policy, funds may not be used to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.
- Additional budget guidelines are provided in the online application materials.

How to Apply : Applicants should work with their RAS unit and the Office of Foundation Relations before final submission to the sponsor. There are two phases in the competitive proposal process:

- Phase 1: Letter of Intent (LOI)—Applicants first must submit an LOI describing the proposed research through RWJF's online Application and Review system.
- Phase 2: Full Proposals—Applicants whose LOIs meet the outlined selection criteria are invited to submit a full proposal narrative of up to 10 pages, along with a detailed budget, dissemination plan, and other supplemental information.

At either the LOI or full proposal stage, the NPO may provide feedback or request further clarification or revisions that would improve the proposal's fit with E4A program goals. Applicants whose LOIs do not meet certain selection criteria—but satisfy other criteria—may be offered Technical Assistance (TA).

Application Timeline:

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Applicants will generally receive notice within six to nine weeks of applying as to whether they are invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due two months from the date of notification. Funding recommendations will generally be made within eight weeks of receipt of the full proposal. In circumstances when a research opportunity is time sensitive, reviews may be expedited. An explanation of the timesensitive nature of the research should be included in the LOI application.

Application Components: Applicants should work with their RAS unit and the Office of Foundation Relations before final submission to the sponsor.