

## Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – Health Equity Scholars for Action

**From:** Office of Foundation Relations  
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**Website:** <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/funding-opportunities/2021/health-equity-scholars-for-action.html>  
**Submission Limitations:** None  
**Foundation Deadline:** LOI due: **June 16th, 2021, 3:00 p.m. ET** Applicants will be notified of invitation to submit full proposals July 21, 2021 and full proposals will be due September 1, 2021 at 3 p.m. ET

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

### Background:

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is dedicated to building a national Culture of Health that enables all in our diverse society to lead healthier lives now and for generations to come. Recognizing that health inequities in the United States are strongly linked with structural and systemic racism and other forms of oppression, RWJF supports research to identify and address its root causes. We believe that this research agenda is best advanced by a diverse academic workforce that encompasses varied perspectives and lived experiences—in order to challenge biases and conventions in research and academia; promote innovation; and train future generations of scholars.

Yet the scholarship of individuals from certain communities, especially Black individuals; Indigenous people; people of color; individuals from low-income communities; individuals with disabilities; LGBTQ+ individuals; non-native English speakers; first generation college graduates—and individuals who identify with more than one of these groups—have not been adequately supported in academia. Structural racism and discrimination have created obstacles for many qualified individuals when pursuing an academic career. Biased methods of assessment and evaluation criteria for tenure—and other forms of unfair treatment—can also lead to disparities in advancement and promotion.

### Purpose:

Many researchers from historically underrepresented backgrounds, who wish to investigate root causes of and solutions to health disparities, face challenges of insufficient funding and barriers to attaining tenure. Without mentors at their institutions who understand their lived experiences and supportive professional networks to help identify and offer guidance in pursuing opportunities, underrepresented researchers face many obstacles to academic career advancement.

A guiding principle of RWJF is that “we seek bold and lasting change rooted in the best available evidence, analysis, and science, openly debated.” Health Equity Scholars for Action (HES4A) is designed to enhance the supports, resources, and community necessary for participants to thrive professionally and personally, and in turn, be better able to contribute to and expand health equity-related research and evidence that can help build a Culture of Health.

The goal of HES4A is to support the career development and academic advancement of researchers from historically underrepresented backgrounds who conduct health equity research. Grants will be awarded to address the challenges that underrepresented researchers experience; help them overcome obstacles to earning tenure; and make progress toward acquiring independent research funding. Grants will support three aspects of career development: research, mentorship, and connection with a community of support.

### Eligibility

To be eligible for HES4A, the individual applicant must:

- Be from a systematically marginalized group that has historically been underrepresented in research disciplines. The term “systematically marginalized” refers to the challenges facing individuals because of their race, ethnicity, gender expression or sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or similar factors. Eligible individuals include, but are not limited to:
  - Individuals from ethnically and racially minoritized groups underrepresented in research disciplines

- First-generation college graduates
- People for whom English is not a native language
- People from low-income communities
- LGBTQ+ individuals
- Individuals with disabilities

These examples are intended to be illustrative, not exclusive. Applicants who do not fall within one of these categories, but who believe they meet this eligibility criterion, will have an opportunity to describe their individual circumstances as part of the online application process.

- Have completed a doctoral degree within the last five years. The degree can be in any field and is not limited to public health or health sciences.
- Be a junior faculty member in an accredited school in the U.S. or its territories (“home institution”), with a full-time academic position that could lead to tenure, or a postdoctoral fellow poised to be in such a position by the start of the grant.
- Have a home institution that agrees to administer and receive the grant. The home institution must be an accredited academic institution. Applicants from any universities classified among the R2-M3 by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Have never served as a project director or principal investigator on any grant since receiving their doctoral degree. Individuals who have been awarded grants to support predoctoral training or have received a predoctoral fellowship grant are eligible to apply. See frequently asked questions for further clarification.
- Not have received support from other post-graduate research fellowships/traineeships (e.g., NIH K award, or equivalent). Investigators are not prevented from applying to other fellowships/ traineeships while participating in the program.
- Be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the time of application. As federal policy or laws change, we may need to consider adjustments in eligibility and grant terms.
- Not be related by blood or marriage to any Officer or Trustee of RWJF, or be a descendant of its founder, Robert Wood Johnson.
- Federal, state, tribal, and local government employees are eligible to apply unless they are considered government officials under Section 4946 of the Internal Revenue Code.

### **Selection Criteria**

- Proposals will be reviewed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, alumni from the former RWJF New Connections program, staff and advisory committee members at national program offices, and other expert reviewers as needed. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF. RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.
- Letters of intent (LOIs) will be evaluated on the basis of:
  - Eligibility in accordance with the above criteria;
  - Potential for this program to influence the trajectory of the scholar’s academic career;
  - Relevance of the proposed research topic to one or more RWJF signature research program (E4A, P4A, and S4A) aims;
  - Relevance of research question to building a Culture of Health;
  - Feasibility of the proposed research (e.g., plan for access to data, populations, or research settings).

### **Key Dates**

- May 4, 2021 (12–1 p.m. ET): Webinar Recording, Slides, and Q&A session.
- June 16, 2021 (3 p.m. ET) : Deadline for receipt of letters of intent.
- July 21, 2021: Invitation to select applicants to submit full proposals.
- September 1, 2021 (3 p.m. ET): Deadline for receipt of full proposals.
- Mid-September 2021: Semifinalist interviews via web conference.

- Mid-October 2021: Notification of finalists.
- December 1, 2021: Program begins.

### **Budget and Use of Grant Funds**

- Grants of \$250,000 each will be awarded through this program. Funds will cover up to 70 percent of the scholar's salary for two years (capped at \$75,000 per year), with the remainder of the award to be used for research and other related expenses. See frequently asked questions for details.
- Up to 15 grants will be awarded.
- Grants will be for 24 months in duration.

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

### Phase 1: Letters of Intent

Applicants must answer some eligibility questions and submit a letter of intent consisting of a narrative and supporting materials that describe their eligibility and their proposed research project. The letter of intent should include:

1. Information on applicant's eligibility
2. Statement of impact
3. A brief (2-page) plan for the two funded years, outlining a clear rationale for the research, the research approach and activities, and plans for dissemination
4. Curriculum vitae for the applicant