

2016 Call for Proposals

Letter of Intent Deadline: October 5, 2016



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

INCREASING OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN RESEARCH

OVERVIEW

This call for proposals (CFP) supports innovative open science¹ approaches that can increase transparency and accountability throughout the research life cycle, with a special emphasis on open access.² The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has a long history of funding applied research as a part of our efforts to drive social change. As we work to build a Culture of Health in the United States, we need a strong evidence base, but we also need to ensure that our grantees' research findings are disseminated widely to reach multiple audiences who can turn this research into action. Currently, there are many barriers that slow this process and make it difficult for research findings to reach their intended targets. Nonetheless, many members of the research community are experimenting with promising new approaches that could accelerate progress toward broader, faster dissemination of research findings.

Individuals and organizations working on these issues are invited to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) briefly describing the problem they are trying to solve, the methods that will be used, the impact that will be achieved at the completion of their project, as well as a statement describing why they are interested in “openness” and any previous work on this topic. After a review of the LOIs, the Foundation will ask a limited number of applicants to submit a full proposal. Selected finalists will be asked to submit a more detailed scope of work, budget, and timeline for completion of the project. Up to \$1.5 million has been allocated for this work, and the Foundation anticipates making up to 6–8 individual awards for projects to be completed within 12–24 months. It is anticipated that the award will begin March 1, 2017.

BACKGROUND

In its 2015 annual message, *Building a Culture of Health*, RWJF shared a vision that addresses what all can do to improve collective health, well-being, and equity. The Culture of Health vision requires the continued and persistent pursuit of sound, objective, and timely research and analysis. RWJF understands

¹ Open science is the pursuit of transparency throughout the research lifecycle that includes research methods, observations, data collection, data access, communication, collaboration, and research tools. Michael Peper, Duke University (<http://blogs.library.duke.edu/scholcomm/2010/09/13/what-is-open-science/>)

² Open access is the free and immediate sharing of research findings, coupled with the rights to use findings in the digital environment. SPARC (<http://sparcopen.org/open-access/>)

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that in order for its vision of a Culture of Health to be achieved, the value of its investment in research needs to be maximized through wide sharing and use of these research findings. These priorities are essential to encourage increased discovery, more open dialogue and debate within the scientific community, all leading to the acceleration of further studies and translational research.³

In the last several years, there have been a number of stories in the popular press and in academic circles about the challenges with the traditional approach to the peer-reviewed publication process. Many voices inside and outside the research community have been calling for a new emphasis on open science and open access. RWJF has been following these discussions closely and has begun to think about how open science and open access could help achieve our goals of promoting our research findings broadly, not only to other researchers, but also policymakers, practitioners and the media. We have developed a series of initiatives, culminating in this CFP, to learn more about how open science and open access can increase the accessibility and speed of the flow of information from funded research to action.

In 2015, RWJF convened a meeting to learn more about the opportunities for funders to expand their understanding and implementation of open access. This gathering brought together a diverse array of stakeholders, including researchers, funders, international governmental funders, universities, and others, to collectively explore:

- Recent experiences with open access practices and policies among meeting participants, and their assessments of how the policies have fared thus far;
- Concerns, barriers to implementation, and strategies for educating internal and external stakeholders about the merits of open access;
- The effect of current federal policies, institutional mandates, international initiatives, and other open science developments on foundations' efforts to maximize research finding impact;
- The motivations and constraints specific stakeholders feel with respect to open access, and to leverage this understanding in service of practical, workable open access policies;
- Development and implementation of comprehensive open access policies; and
- An open access “community of practice”, or regular collaboration among funders and other stakeholders in similar and diverse fields.

A report on the proceedings of the meeting can be found [here](#).

³ John Houghton and Peter Sheehan. “Estimating the Potential Impacts of Open Access to Research Findings.” *Economic Analysis & Policy*, Vol. 39 No. 1, March 2009. https://kuramoto.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/v39_i1_10_-houghton.pdf

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RWJF also continued its exploration of open access with a project to better understand the policies its grantees' institutions have, as well as what grantees and Foundation staff know about open access, what experiences they have had with open access, and what their perceptions of open access are. Recommendations from this exploration have informed the examples of areas of interest in this CFP (see below).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this solicitation is to encourage and support a series of projects aimed at increasing transparency and accountability throughout the research life cycle, with a special emphasis on open access, to increase the speed of the flow of information from funded research to action. RWJF wants to use these grants to help increase our understanding, and the understanding of the research community, about the potential for these approaches to accelerate the discovery process and expand access to research findings.

TOTAL AWARDS

Up to \$1.5 million has been allocated for this work, and the Foundation anticipates making six–eight individual awards for projects to be completed within 12–24 months. It is anticipated that the award will begin March 1, 2017.

FOUNDATION FUNDED

The grant opportunity outlined in the call for proposals is contingent upon final funding confirmation from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for such grants.

Examples of Areas of Interest

RWJF is most interested in new ideas and proofs of concepts that can demonstrate the feasibility of practical application of an already established approach. Preference will be given to projects designed to produce implementable changes. RWJF is looking for research that will advance science, including social science research and interdisciplinary research around a Culture of Health. We are interested in advancing current models of knowledge production and dissemination. The Foundation anticipates that projects could include, but would not be limited to the topics listed below:

- Investigate “nudge policies”, or small changes to current models (publishing, academic, including tenure-related, etc.) that build the supply of and demand for more open and accessible research;
- Explore ways to measure the quality of a journal and/or a manuscript, which can influence where authors choose to publish their work;
- Propose innovations leading to greater efficiency in the peer review process, leading to increased speed, collaboration, transparency, and ultimately more rigorous research;

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- Create a business case for currently closed or hybrid journals to make their content open (e.g., examining opportunity costs such as lower website traffic for closed publications);
- Build the reputation of open access journals within the research community to overcome biases associated with open access publishing;
- Explore if and how open policies align with Institutional Review Board policies and the research consent process;
- Investigate how “openness” fosters transdisciplinary collaboration;
- Incentivize research to experiment with new approaches that accelerate the Culture of Health vision, which includes: 1) making health a shared value; 2) fostering cross-sector collaboration to improve well-being; 3) creating healthier, more equitable communities; and 4) strengthening integration of health services and systems.

Examples of Areas That Are Not of Interest

Projects focused too narrowly, or in the following areas are not of interest:

- Evaluations of existing institutional and federal policies;
- Development and measurement of data platforms, frameworks, or other infrastructure; and
- Alternatives to or evaluations of licensing, e.g., Creative Commons.

ADVISORY GROUP

An Advisory Group comprised of nationally and internationally recognized experts in open access and open science has been convened to inform the trajectory of this work. Specifically, the Group will inform the selection of Letter of Intent applicants who will be asked to submit a full proposal and will provide funding recommendations. Final decisions on project funding will be made by RWJF based on these recommendations.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Phase 1—Letter of Intent (LOI)

Content of LOI

Include the following in your Letter of Intent (maximum 3 pages):

- Explanation of the problem your project is trying to solve;
- Overview of the methods that will be used
- Statement of the potential impact of your proposed project

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- Statement describing why you are interested in “openness” and previous work you have done on this topic.

Your Letter of Intent must be submitted by October 5, 2016.

Phase 2—Full proposals (if invited to apply)

Content of Proposal

Include the following in your proposal (maximum eight pages):

- The problem you are trying to solve and details of how this project will increase openness and transparency, leading to increased accessibility and speed of the flow of information from funded research to action;
- An overview of the general design components and/or methodology for the project you are proposing;
- A plan for disseminating what you learn, and if applicable, how you would garner additional support to build on this work;
- Challenges you foresee in this work and how you might address them.

Supporting Materials (not included in the eight pages):

- A statement of the roles/capacities of your team members;
- Brief bio sketches (up to two pages each) for up to four key team members;
- A proposed timeline/work plan;
- A budget for the proposed project;
- Letter(s) of support from partnering organization(s) (if applicable).

Your full proposal must be submitted by **December 9, 2016 by 3 p.m. ET.**

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following criteria are required to apply to this solicitation:

- All projects must have implications and impact in the United States.
- Lead organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. International individuals and organizations can partner with U.S.-based institutions in order to apply (see more information below).
- Previous work in open access and/or open science.

Applicant organizations may partner with other organizations in order to fulfill the purpose of this solicitation, eligibility requirements, and selection criteria. While the eligibility of each collaborating

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organization must be described in the proposal, only one U.S.-based organization may represent the collaboration and be the lead contact in the application process.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Consistent with RWJF values, this program embraces diversity and inclusion across multiple dimensions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age and socioeconomic status. We strongly encourage applications in support of individual candidates who will help us expand the perspectives and experiences we bring to our work. We believe that the more we include diverse perspectives and experiences in our work, the more successful we will be as we strive together to build a Culture of Health, enabling all in our diverse society to lead healthier lives, now, and for generations to come.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Preference may be given to those applicants who are either public entities or nonprofit organizations and are tax-exempt under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Additional preference will be given to:

- Projects that can most immediately influence policy or practice beyond those directly involved in the project;
- Projects with well-developed plans for dissemination and translation of findings; and
- Projects with a strong design and implementation team, including proposed leadership and their expertise.

Multi-organizational consortia can apply as long as a single eligible organization is designated as the primary applicant responsible for maintaining consortium agreements with other participating organizations. The applicant should provide information that assures RWJF that the applicant and/or team has the content knowledge and bandwidth to complete the proposed project in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

RWJF monitors the grantees' efforts and careful stewardship of grant funds to assure accountability. 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, including reflections on what is or is not working. At the close of each grant, the lead agency is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings suitable for wide dissemination.

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APPLICANT SURVEY PROCESS

To help us measure the effectiveness of RWJF grantmaking and improve the grant application experience, we will survey the Principal Investigator (PI) listed in proposals submitted under this call for proposals. Shortly after the proposal deadline, the PI will be contacted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI), an independent research firm, and asked to complete a brief, online survey about the application process and applicant characteristics. This voluntary questionnaire will take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Responses provided to PSRAI will not impact the funding decision for the proposals in any way. PSRAI will protect the confidentiality of the responses. RWJF will not receive any data that links a name with the survey responses.

If you have any questions about the survey or the use of the data, feel free to email applicantfeedback@rwjf.org.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, dataset procurement, meetings, supplies, project-related travel, and other direct expenses, including a limited amount of equipment deemed 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, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities. RWJF budget preparation guidelines are available [here](#).

HOW TO APPLY

Letters of intent and proposals for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system, MyRWJF.org.

Please direct inquiries to:

Email: openaccessresearch@rwjf.org

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Responsible staff at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation include:

- Oktawia Wójcik, PhD, *program officer*
- Margaret Tait, *senior research assistant*
- Kerry Anne McGeary, PhD, *senior program officer*
- Sofia Kounelias, *senior program financial analyst*

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KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

September 16, 2016

Applicant webinar (optional).

October 5, 2016

Letters of intent due.*

November 16, 2016

Full proposals invited.

December 9, 2016

Deadline for receipt of full proposals.*

January 16, 2017

Finalist notified of funding recommendations.

March 1, 2017

Grant start date.

**All content for this solicitation must be submitted via the RWJF online system. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the application process. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online application 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. In fairness to all applicants, late submissions will not be accepted.*

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are working with others to build a national Culture of Health, enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.

Sign up to receive email alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at www.rwjf.org/manage-your-subscriptions.html.

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