



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## **Active Living Research** Building Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity



**2010–2011 Call for Proposals—  
Rapid-Response Round 3 Grants**

**Letter of Intent Deadline: July 1, 2011**

Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis; letters of intent may be submitted at any time until July 1, 2011.

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## Program Overview

(For complete details please refer to specific sections noted in parentheses.)

### Purpose

*Active Living Research* is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that supports research to inform policy and environmental strategies for increasing physical activity among children and adolescents, decreasing their sedentary behaviors and preventing obesity. The program places special emphasis on reaching children and youths ages 3 to 18 who are at highest risk for obesity: Black, Latino, American Indian and Asian/Pacific Islander children, as well as children who live in under-resourced and lower-income communities.

This call for proposals (CFP) will support opportunistic, time-sensitive studies on emerging or anticipated changes in physical activity-related policies or environments. Rapid-response grants are expected to accelerate progress toward policy and environmental strategies to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. See page 4 for more details about this funding opportunity.

### Eligibility Criteria (page 9)

Eligibility requirements include the following:

- Preference will be given to applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. The focus of this program is the United States; studies in other countries will be considered only to the extent that they may directly inform U.S. policy.

### Selection Criteria (page 10)

Complete selection criteria can be found starting on page 10.

### Total Awards

- A total of up to \$1.5 million will be awarded under this CFP. The maximum award for a single grant is \$150,000, with a funding period not to exceed 18 months.
- Funding for approved studies may be initiated as early as four months after submission of *invited* full proposals.

### Deadlines (inside back cover)

- Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis. Letters of intent may be submitted at any time until July 1, 2011 (5 p.m. ET). Additional information on deadlines can be found on the inside back cover.

### How to Apply (page 13)

All letters of intent and initial application materials must be submitted via e-mail to the *Active Living Research* national program office. Detailed instructions and application materials for the letter of intent are available online at [www.activelivingresearch.org/grantsearch/grantopportunities/current](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/grantsearch/grantopportunities/current). Invited full proposals must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system.

Please direct inquiries to:

Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *research coordinator*

Phone: (619) 260-5539

E-mail: [cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu)

[www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org)

## Background

Childhood obesity poses a serious threat to the health of our nation. In the United States, obesity rates among children of all ages are dramatically higher than they were a generation ago. Today, more than 23 million U.S. children and adolescents—nearly one in three young people—are either overweight or obese, placing them at increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and many other health conditions.

Social and environmental changes over the past few decades have resulted in less physical activity in children's daily routines. For instance, there has been a decrease in children's access to safe places to walk, bike and play. Fewer than 4 percent of elementary schools offer daily physical education, and there has been a significant decrease in the number of children who walk or bike to school. In addition, children are spending more sedentary time using electronic media, such as television, computer games and the Internet. As a result, few children and adolescents get the 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for healthy growth and development.

There also is growing evidence showing that environmental inequities underlie the pronounced socioeconomic disparities in physical activity levels among youths. For example, children living in lower-income communities often have limited access to public recreation facilities and to quality school-based physical education, and their parents are more likely to report that fear of crime leads them to keep their children indoors.

At the same time, changes in children's food environments have increased the availability, appeal, affordability and consumption of foods and beverages that are low in nutrients but high in fat and calories. Together, lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating patterns create an energy imbalance that leads to unhealthy weight gain. Research that analyzes

the impact of interventions aimed at increasing children's physical activity levels and monitors energy expenditure is needed to inform policy and environmental strategies recommended by the Institute of Medicine, U.S. Surgeon General and others for preventing childhood obesity.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to tackling childhood obesity and the threat it poses to the health of our nation's children and families. The Foundation's goal is to reverse the epidemic of childhood obesity by 2015 by changing community environments and public policies to help children be more active and eat healthy foods. The Foundation places special emphasis on reaching children and youths ages 3 to 18 who are at greatest risk for obesity: Black, Latino, American Indian and Asian/Pacific Islander children, as well as children who live in under-resourced and lower-income communities.

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**The Rapid-Response Grant Program**

*Active Living Research*, an RWJF national program, supports research to identify and evaluate policies and environmental approaches that have the potential to prevent and reduce childhood obesity, especially among children at highest risk. The overall aim of the program is to provide key decision- and policy-makers with evidence to guide effective action to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic.

States and communities across the country are adopting or modifying policies and creating environmental changes in a variety of settings to address childhood obesity. For example, an increasing number of states and communities are enhancing school physical education standards, implementing physical activity guidelines in before- and after-school programs, and improving crosswalks, bikeways and access to safe places to play. Changes in national policies and regulations (e.g., Safe Routes to School and Head Start physical activity policies) also are affecting children's physical activity environments,

and there is a need to evaluate the impact of these changes at the national, state, community and/or institutional level. Often these changes come about quickly, with little advance notice.

Because childhood obesity is a major threat to the lifelong health of children across the nation, it is important to learn as much as possible about the impact of these initiatives, and to act as quickly as possible to identify the most promising and effective strategies for addressing the epidemic. Results of evaluations can inform policy debates for local, state and national action.

This call for proposals (CFP) will support opportunistic studies that take advantage of emerging or anticipated changes in physical activity-related policies or environments. Studies funded under this CFP are expected to produce findings relevant to policy debates for local, state or national action and accelerate progress toward policy and environmental strategies to prevent and reduce childhood obesity. Results must be reported in a timely manner, and efforts should be made to reach policy and scientific audiences.

Studies and analyses can evaluate imminent changes in policies or environments (i.e., “natural experiments”), conduct pre-test or baseline evaluations prior to planned environmental or policy changes, or conduct post-test evaluations when baseline data are available. Studies should assess or estimate changes in physical activity and/or sedentary behavior among children, adolescents and/or families.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly demonstrate that the proposed study or analysis needs to be, and can be, conducted and reported in a short window of time. Letters of intent and *invited* full proposals must: 1) outline the relevance of the research to a specific policy decision, debate or opportunity; 2) explain why there is a limited window of opportunity to conduct the research; 3) describe

circumstances that might delay the research or policy decisions, the likelihood of such delays, and the contingencies for managing such risks; and 4) describe plans for disseminating results to reach decision-makers in time to inform policy decisions.

Up to \$1.5 million will be awarded through this funding cycle. The maximum award for a single grant will be \$150,000, with a funding period not to exceed 18 months. A total of up to 10 rapid-response grants will be awarded through December 1, 2011.

### *Research Topics*

Types of studies eligible under this funding cycle are described below. These examples are for illustration purposes only. We rely on the creativity of researchers to generate the best ideas for solution-oriented environmental and policy research.

### **Examples of opportunistic evaluations of imminent changes in policies or environments (i.e., “natural experiments”) include:**

- evaluating the effects of policies that are about to be enacted, such as physical activity requirements and strategies to implement them in child-care settings or new funding to enforce physical education requirements in schools; and
- evaluating the impact of environmental changes, such as renovations of parks or playgrounds, street safety improvements as part of Safe Routes to Schools, or the initiation of community policing to improve the safety of parks and playgrounds.

**Examples of studies that can inform an ongoing or upcoming policy debate (e.g., small experimental studies; secondary data analyses; cost-effectiveness analyses; health impact assessments; simulations of policy effects or macro-level policy analyses) include:**

- small-scale evaluations to assess the feasibility of training Head Start staff to lead physical activity programs;
- small-scale evaluations of strategies to improve the implementation of, or adherence to, policies related to physical education in schools and television restrictions in preschool or day care; and
- cost-effectiveness and health impact assessments of national, state, community or institutional policy or environmental changes that aim to increase physical activity among youths and their families (e.g., an increase in federal or state funding for Safe Routes to Schools or proposed state policy to promote joint-use agreements).

### *Study Guidelines*

- Specific outcomes for grants will vary depending on the topic, but outcomes of interest include documentation of policy or environmental changes and their effects on youth physical activity, sedentary behaviors and/or weight status. Applicants are encouraged to include objective measures of physical activity whenever possible. Variables likely to affect the impact and feasibility of the policy and environmental changes studied (e.g., demographic variables, community characteristics or other contextual variables) also should be assessed.
- Due to the short window of time to conduct these studies and the limited funds available, and because some of the planned policy and environmental changes being enacted may take place over an extended period, it is permissible to request funding only to collect and analyze baseline data. A plan that describes how additional funds for follow-up data collection will be sought must be included in the proposal. The value of the baseline data to science or policy also should be described within the proposal.

- In most cases, grant funds will be used to evaluate policy or environmental changes already planned or taking place. However, for small experimental studies of potential policy changes, grant funds can be used to support the proposed intervention.
- Quasi-experimental designs should be proposed for evaluation studies, with pre-post evaluations of physical activity or weight measures and use of comparison or control sites if feasible.
- Applicants should seek input from relevant stakeholders—such as policy-makers, school or community leaders, parents and children—to help assure feasible, policy-relevant project goals and outcomes, and to assess possible risks associated with implementation. Proposals should describe the input received from these stakeholders in designing the study and framing the research questions, as well as the strategies that will be used to communicate research results. Applicant teams should include at least one representative of the community or stakeholder group targeted (e.g., community leader, policy-maker) as a regular adviser. This will help ensure that research and policy analyses reflect critical institutional, community, and policy needs and issues, and that grant results are communicated using the methods and channels most likely to reach the intended audiences.
- Studies focused solely on evaluating behavior change at the individual level, health education interventions, childhood obesity treatments, and physical activity programs or curricula *will not be funded*.
- Studies may be conducted as supplements to existing studies. Co-funding is welcome; all sources and amounts must be fully described in the letter of intent and the proposal. The added value of the proposed research grant also should be clearly described.
- Applicants must develop a specific plan for communicating study results to key stakeholders as rapidly as possible. This is especially critical for studies

designed to inform specific policy decisions. As with all studies, publication of comprehensive results in scholarly journals is encouraged and expected. Key target audiences and anticipated timing of release of results to stakeholder groups must be detailed in the proposal. Funded applicants will be required to release research findings to policy and practice audiences prior to the scientific publication date. It also is recommended that research results be published in an online journal to decrease publication delays and accelerate communication with scientific audiences.

- Accelerometer Loan Program: To facilitate wider use of high-quality objective physical activity measures, *Active Living Research* is offering loans of ActiGraph accelerometers, subject to availability. For more information, please contact Chad Spoon at [cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu).

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## Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility requirements include the following:

- Preference will be given to those applicants that may be either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. The focus of this program is the United States; studies in other countries will be considered only to the extent that they may directly inform U.S. policy.
- The timing of the program, event or policy change to be studied must justify the rapid-review process in order to answer the proposed research questions.

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## Selection Criteria

Proposals must: 1) demonstrate that the policy or environmental change to be studied is *time-sensitive* and dependent on a review process more rapid than that available through the standard *Active Living Research* CFP process; and 2) demonstrate the potential to produce high-quality, scientifically sound research that will be used for immediate policy impact to increase physical activity and/or help prevent childhood obesity in the United States.

In addition to the above, the review committee will use the following criteria to assess proposals:

- relevance and timeliness of project to inform policy action.
- the degree to which the strategies or policies being studied are applicable in multiple jurisdictions, feasible and sustainable.
- relevance to the needs of children who are at greatest risk for obesity, as well as children who live in under-resourced and lower-income communities.
- clarity of project goals, hypotheses, methods and outcomes.
- use of a clear theoretical framework, conceptual model or rationale.
- scientific rigor of proposed research aims, study design and analytic methods, including a clear and specific plan for systematic data collection and analysis, and quality of the measures and data to be used.
- evidence of access to needed data, settings and study populations.
- use of transdisciplinary research approaches and teams to provide the breadth of conceptual, measurement, study design and analytic methods needed for the best possible research.
- documentation of experience, qualifications and time commitment of the investigator(s) and key project staff.
- appropriateness of proposed budget and feasibility of project timeline.

- a plan for prompt dissemination of research findings to scientists, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders, including a specific agreement and plan to release research findings prior to the scientific publication date. The plan also should be designed to ensure timely communication to scientific audiences, which may best be accomplished through publication in an online journal and presentations to appropriate national meetings and conferences.

Proposals are reviewed in a rigorous peer-review process with independent national reviewers from multiple disciplines. Proposals that the review panels recommend for funding are then presented to RWJF for approval. All funding decisions are made by RWJF. RWJF does not provide individual critiques of submitted letters of intent or proposals.

## Evaluation and Monitoring

Grantees will be expected to meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports. As part of the final process, applicants will be asked to disclose any financial arrangements (e.g., fees, funding, employment, stock holdings) or relationships that might call into question the credibility or perceived credibility of the findings, mirroring the types of disclosure requested by the field's leading journals. Grantees also will be required to submit periodic information needed for overall project performance monitoring and management. *Active Living Research* staff and consultants will be available to provide technical assistance when needed to ensure the success of the project.

At the close of each grant, the grantee is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings. *Active Living Research* and RWJF staff will work with investigators to actively communicate the results of the funded projects to scientific audiences, media, policy-makers, school decision-makers, educational organizations, public health advocates, the general public and other audiences, as

appropriate. An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF will conduct an evaluation of the *Active Living Research* program. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, grantees will be expected to participate in the programs' ongoing evaluation by responding to periodic surveys, e-mail inquiries and/or possible evaluation-related interviews during and after the actual grant period.

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**Use of Grant Funds**

Funding will be commensurate with the size and scope of the proposed activity. Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, dataset procurement, meeting costs, supplies, project-related travel and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment that is 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.

The proposed budget should include travel costs for up to two individuals to attend one *Active Living Research* annual grantee meeting and conference during the grant period. The full proposal application templates contain guidelines for travel budgeting.

## How to Apply

There are two stages in the competitive proposal process:

### *Stage 1: Letter of Intent*

All applicants must submit an initial application that includes the following three documents:

- a) a **project information form** indicating the title of the proposal; applicant organization; principal investigator and co-investigators; total amount requested; proposed project start and end dates; and other background questions.
- b) a three-page **letter of intent** (1.5 line spacing) describing:
  - the need for rapid review in order to answer the proposed study question;
  - the specific program, event or policy change to be studied and its potential impact on reducing childhood obesity;
  - risks related to possible changes in the timing or nature of the specific program, event or policy change to be evaluated, including details about circumstances that might delay the research or policy decisions, the likelihood of such delays, and the contingencies for managing such risks;
  - an overview of the proposed research questions and methods;
  - a timeline of the project, including an explanation of how the timeline will ensure study results are likely to be released prior to a relevant policy decision;
  - organizations involved with the project and any co-funding available; and
  - the plan for how research will be used to inform policy, including a list of key policy or advocacy groups that will be targeted.
- c) **biosketches for key personnel.**

All letters of intent and initial application materials must be submitted via e-mail to the *Active Living Research* national program office and will be accepted up until July 1, 2011 (5 p.m. ET). Detailed instructions and application materials for the letter of intent may be downloaded from [www.activelivingresearch.org/grantsearch/grantopportunities/current](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/grantsearch/grantopportunities/current).

*Stage 2: Full Proposal (if invited)*

Within two weeks of receipt of the letter of intent and initial application materials, Stage 1 applicants will be notified of the review results and selected applicants will be invited by e-mail to submit a full proposal. Full proposals consist of an executive summary, a project narrative of no more than 15 pages (single-spaced), budget, budget narrative and additional supporting documents. The project narrative must describe: the project's significance and need for rapid review; research aims and hypotheses; detailed methods and analysis plans; communication and dissemination plans; and the project timeline.

**All invited full proposals may be submitted only through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system at <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/pap19>.**

Applicants invited to submit full proposals will be given additional information in the RWJF Grantmaking Online system about formatting requirements and instructions on preparing and submitting the full proposal. Deadlines, requirements for receipt of *invited* full proposals and information about funding for approved studies are listed in the Timetable section.

For more information on this grant opportunity, please direct inquiries to:

Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *research coordinator*  
Phone: (619) 260-5539  
E-mail: [cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu)

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**Program Direction**

Direction and technical assistance for *Active Living Research* are provided by San Diego State University, which serves as the national program office (NPO):

Active Living Research  
San Diego State University  
3900 Fifth Avenue, Suite 310  
San Diego, CA 92103  
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E-mail: [ALR@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:ALR@projects.sdsu.edu)  
Web Site: [www.activelivingresearch.org](http://www.activelivingresearch.org)

Responsible staff members at the NPO are:

- James Sallis, Ph.D., *program director*
- Carmen Cutter, M.P.H., *deputy director*
- Deborah Lou, Ph.D., *program analyst*
- Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *research coordinator*
- Amanda Wilson, M.S.R.S., *research coordinator*
- Debra Rubio, *administrative assistant*

Responsible representatives of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Celeste Torio, Ph.D., M.P.H., *program officer*
- James S. Marks, M.D., M.P.H., *senior vice president and director*, Health Group
- Jan Mihalow, M.S.M., *grants administrator*







## Timetable

The *Active Living Research* NPO will make every effort to achieve a quick turnaround time for each proposal.

- Within two weeks of receipt of the letter of intent and initial application materials, applicants will be contacted by e-mail and informed whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal.
- Invited full proposals must be submitted via the RWJF Grantmaking Online system and may be submitted for only one of the five due dates listed in the timetable.
- Full proposals received after a due date has passed will be reviewed as part of the next sequential full proposal due date.
- Full proposals submitted after August 1, 2011, will not be reviewed.
- Funding for approved studies may be initiated as early as the corresponding date listed in the following timetable.

<b>Full Proposal Due Date</b>	<b>Funding Initiated</b>
July 15, 2010 (5 p.m. ET)	November 15, 2010
September 15, 2010 (5 p.m. ET)	January 15, 2011
January 14, 2011 (5 p.m. ET)	May 15, 2011
April 15, 2011 (5 p.m. ET)	August 15, 2011
August 1, 2011 (5 p.m. ET)	December 1, 2011

## About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change.

For more than 35 years we've brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those we serve. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, we expect to make a difference in your lifetime.

For more information visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

Sign up to receive e-mail alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at [www.rwjf.org/services](http://www.rwjf.org/services).



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Foundation

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