

■ CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Active Living  
Policy and  
Environmental  
Studies  
Program  
*Round II*

THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

## Purpose

*Active Living Policy and Environmental Studies (ALPES)* is a \$12.5-million national program of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® (RWJF), created to stimulate and support research that will identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity. Findings are expected to inform environmental and policy changes that will promote active living among Americans.

“Active living” is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. The goal is to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day. Individuals may do this in a variety of ways, such as walking or bicycling for transportation, exercise or pleasure; playing in the park; working in the yard; taking the stairs; and using recreation facilities.

The ALPES program focuses on relationships among characteristics of natural and built environments, public and private policies, and personal levels of physical activity. ALPES has three primary objectives. The first is to establish a strong research base regarding environmental and policy correlates of physical activity. The second is to support research that will guide decisions about policies that can affect active living. The third is to help build a transdisciplinary field of physical activity policy and environmental research.

This Call for Proposals is intended to encourage experts in fields such as exercise science, public health, transportation, urban planning, architecture, the behavioral sciences, health care, recreation, geography, law enforcement, economics, policy studies and education to form transdisciplinary teams to identify environmental factors and policies that are related to physical activity.

Enhancing the understanding of associations between physical activity and characteristics of natural and built environments is the primary focus of this first regular cycle of funding. The entire spectrum of physical activity will be considered, with an emphasis on transportation and recreational aspects of active living.

ALPES plans to release annual Calls for Proposals focusing on topics of current interest. This round of funding will make available up to \$3.5 million for research grants. The maximum grant amount per project will be \$600,000 over three years.

## Background

Physical inactivity is one of the most important modifiable threats to health. Despite the well-documented social, physical and mental health benefits of physical activity, at least 60 percent of adult Americans do not meet the recommendations of the United States Surgeon General for accumulating 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity most days of the week. Physical inactivity is estimated to be responsible for more than 200,000 deaths and \$77 billion in direct health care costs each year. It is widely recognized as one of the nation's most pressing health problems.

We know that the majority of Americans are insufficiently active, but we do not fully understand why. Some research supports the idea that physical activity has been engineered out of our lives because of changes in how communities and buildings are designed, growing dependence on the car for transportation, widespread use of labor-saving devices, and sedentary work and recreation patterns. Yet little is known about the impact of these trends or how to counter them to promote physical activity.

## The Program

The chief aim of the ALPES program is to fill this knowledge void by supporting research to identify environmental factors and policies with potential to substantially increase levels of physical activity among Americans of all ages, incomes and ethnic backgrounds. Decisions about community design are continually being made, so decision-makers need timely and accurate information about how their design and construction choices can affect the physical activity and health of entire populations. ALPES-funded research will provide policymakers with evidence about how to create more activity-friendly communities.

Three priority topics have been identified for this Call for Proposals. ALPES expects to fund multiple studies in each topic area to build a substantive evidence base.

ALPES will place high priority on projects that use original data collection to expand the range of environmental variables investigated for their relation to physical activity.

Investigators may supplement existing databases and ongoing studies to make possible a rigorous examination of environmental or policy correlates of physical activity. For example, investigators might request funding to add high-quality measures of physical activity to an ongoing transportation study. Or they might supplement physical activity databases by collecting land-use measures in participants' communities.

Investigators may request funds to support analyses of existing databases. Proposals must clearly indicate how such analyses will make substantive contributions to the understanding of environmental and policy influences on physical activity.

While three current-priority topics are listed below, ALPES also will consider uniquely creative, rigorous and timely proposals that fall within the broader field of physical activity policy and environmental research.

### *Topic 1: Physical activity and community environmental characteristics.*

Research in transportation and urban planning demonstrates that patterns of land use are associated with nonmotorized transportation. In general, studies show people walk and cycle more in neighborhoods with traditional designs that are characterized by mixed use, high street connectivity and greater density, as opposed to modern suburbs typically characterized by single use, low street connectivity and lower density. Beyond these general characteristics, there are virtually no data on community characteristics that are related to physical activity. However, many other variables may contribute to the “walkability” or

“bikeability” of communities. Testing the community design variables that have been proposed to contribute to physical activity is a high priority. Associations with physical activity of different types or purposes, such as transportation and recreation, are also of interest.

Applicants are encouraged to evaluate multiple environmental variables believed to be related to physical activity. Environmental aspects of walkability have been categorized in the following ways:

- Accessibility to destinations, such as shops.
- Functionality, or quantity and quality, of the walking and cycling infrastructure.
- Aesthetic features of the environment.
- Safety issues, which can include safety from traffic and crime.

Other categorizations or conceptual models are welcomed and should include a logical rationale or explicit model for selecting variables.

The use of geographic information systems (GIS) is recommended in the measurement and analysis of environmental data. Both objective and perceived (i.e., self-reported) environmental measures can be included. Objective measures of physical activity (e.g., validated accelerometers) are recommended.

Existing datasets may be used to examine environmental and policy variables that may be related to physical activity and other health-related outcomes, such as health status, quality of life, social health, environmental quality and crime. Creative approaches to combining data from different disciplines are encouraged. However, physical activity measures must be included in all studies, and quality of physical activity data is a key consideration.

### *Topic 2: Use of parks and recreation facilities for physical activity.*

There has been major public investment in parks, and both public and private investment in recreation

facilities. These resources exist in virtually every community, yet there is little research to document how they contribute to physical activity. Understanding the specific characteristics of parks and recreation facilities that are related to their use for physical activity could provide direction for improving design guidelines to optimize contributions to public health. ALPES seeks studies of associations between physical activity and the physical characteristics and operational policies of parks and recreation facilities. Proposals must include both a conceptual model of facility characteristics that could influence physical activity, and the methods proposed for measuring those characteristics. Physical characteristics could include size and layout of facilities, equipment, walking or cycling trails, vegetation, lighting, restrooms and accessibility to the surrounding community. It would be useful to assess policy-related variables, such as budgets and staffing, types of physical activity programs offered, and program cost and availability. On-site physical activity could be measured by direct observation, objective monitors, surveys of community members or other validated measures.

### *Topic 3: Impact of changes in community environments or policies on participation in physical activity.*

Grants in this category will take advantage of “natural experiments” presented by planned environmental or policy changes by providing funds for pre- and post-change evaluation of communities. For example, physical activity could be assessed in a community before and after the implementation or introduction of traffic-calming methods, biking and walking trails, a walk-to-school program, or changes in parking availability or fees. Evaluation of special events, such as TV-turnoff week, bike-to-work day, or days on which roads are open only to pedestrians and cyclists, also could be evaluated. In addition to assessing the specific type of physical activity likely to be affected by the intervention, it may be appropriate to assess the contribution of the change to overall community physical activity levels. Simultaneous assessments of comparable communities that are not implementing the changes would strengthen proposals.

## Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Documentation of actual environmental and policy changes should be included.

If the planned changes will take place over an extended period, the applicant may request funding for a baseline assessment of both intervention and control communities. The applicant also should include a plan for post-change assessment that could be funded by a later grant. ALPES grant funds may not be used for advocating, implementing or promoting environmental or policy changes.

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

Proposals should demonstrate the potential to produce high-quality, scientifically sound research that could be used to inform policymakers about environmental and policy changes that could increase physical activity levels in the United States. ALPES will assess each proposal based on the degree to which it:

- Addresses one or more of the topics listed in this Call for Proposals or is a uniquely creative, rigorous and timely proposal that advances research related to environmental and policy influences on physical activity.
- Uses transdisciplinary research approaches and teams that draw from different fields and disciplines to provide the variety of measurement, study design and analytic methods needed for the best possible research.
- Articulates a clear theoretical framework, conceptual model or rationale for selecting the proposed environmental variables.
- Is focused on sound scientific research and does not request funds for advocating, implementing or promoting environmental or policy changes.

## Funding Opportunities

- Utilizes quality objective environmental, policy and physical activity measures.
- Uses common measures, when appropriate, to allow for meta-analyses of ALPES-funded studies.
- Demonstrates sufficient range and variability in environmental characteristics and physical activity to demonstrate associations.
- Is relevant to diverse age, gender, ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Applicants may target a specific population group or include a diversity of subgroups, but the target population(s) must be clearly defined.
- Assesses additional outcomes, such as quality of life, psychological health, socialization, choice of transportation mode, crime, safety characteristics of the environment, injury or injury risk, and economic factors.
- Documents experience, qualifications and time commitment of the investigator(s) and key project staff.
- Demonstrates that budget request and timeline are reasonable and appropriate to the proposed scope of work.
- Describes a plan to disseminate research results.

All primary data collected under the ALPES program are subject to RWJF's general requirement for producing data tapes for public use. In addition, the tools, measures, software and supporting materials developed will be made available in the public domain.

*Proposals requesting \$150,000 to \$600,000 total, for up to three years.*

These projects will fund original data collection as part of a new study or as a supplement to an existing study. Brief proposals must be received by 1 p.m. PST on January 17, 2003. See Timetable A on page 13.

*Proposals requesting less than \$150,000 total, for up to two years.*

Brief proposals for these amounts will be reviewed periodically throughout the year. Applicants should follow Timetable B on page 14. This mechanism is most appropriate for time-sensitive projects, minor supplements for existing grants from other sources, secondary data analyses, or evaluations of planned environmental or policy changes.

#### *New Investigator Awards.*

ALPES offers special opportunities for investigators in the early stages of their research careers. These awards should be used for research projects that address one of the topics in this Call for Proposals.

New Investigator Awards will be offered in two categories:

- Doctoral candidates may request support for their doctoral dissertations (up to \$35,000 total, for up to two years). Rolling proposals will be accepted between December 2, 2002, and September 2, 2003.
- Investigators who received their doctoral degrees five or fewer years before the date of submission are eligible to apply for up to \$100,000 total over two years. These funds may be used to support a postdoctoral fellow or junior faculty member to do research addressing one of the topics described in this Call for Proposals. Rolling proposals will be accepted between January 2, 2003, and September 2, 2003.

These awards are under development and carry special requirements. You may find detailed information at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws). You also may request information by sending e-mail to [alpes@projects.sdsu.edu](mailto:alpes@projects.sdsu.edu).

## **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, training, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, dataset procurement, meeting costs, project-related travel, supplies, computer software and other direct expenses essential to the proposed project, including a limited amount of equipment. 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.

Total project awards will be funded to a maximum of \$600,000 and may extend for up to three years. Timeliness in completing and reporting studies funded under this Call for Proposals is a high priority.

Principal investigators are expected to participate in annual grantee meetings or technical assistance training sessions, and funds for such meetings should be included in the proposed budget. In some instances, principal investigators and co-investigators may be asked to participate in media and policy briefings and other forums that will help communicate research results to a wide audience.

## **Evaluation and Monitoring**

Grantees will be expected to meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports. Grantees also will be required to submit periodic information needed for overall project performance monitoring and management. Project directors may be asked to attend periodic meetings and to give progress reports on their grants. ALPES staff or 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, suitable for wide dissemination.

## **Program Direction**

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by San Diego State University, which serves as the National Program Office (NPO). James F Sallis, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Psychology at San Diego State University, is the program director. Leslie S. Linton, J.D., M.P.H., is the deputy program director. Julie Weitzel, M.A., is the research coordinator. Irvin Harrison is the office manager.

This program addresses a grantmaking priority of the Health and Behavior team at The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Responsible staff is M. Katherine Kraft, Ph.D., senior

program officer; C. Tracy Orleans, Ph.D., senior scientist and senior program officer; Kathryn Thomas, M.J., senior communications officer; Ben Warner, financial analyst; and Cynthia Kiely Isaacson, program assistant.

## How to Apply

There are two stages in the competitive application process: (1) submission of a brief proposal that describes the project and, *if invited*, (2) submission of a full proposal and line-item budget for a grant.

Those wishing to apply for funds must submit a brief proposal online. The ALPES section of the RWJF Grantmaking Online system will be available beginning January 2, 2003. Timetables for submission of proposals are listed on pages 13 and 14. We strongly encourage applicants to prepare in advance using the guidelines posted at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws) under "How to Apply." ALPES staff will be available to guide applicants through the online process, if necessary. ALPES will not review or consider proposals that are not received by the due dates, are incomplete, or do not follow format and transmission instructions.

A limited number of applicants will be asked to submit full proposals, for which application instructions will be provided. RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

ALPES will host applicant conference calls (listed under Timetables) to answer questions about the program, as well as the application and selection processes. Participation in these calls is encouraged, but is not required. For additional information, including a list of frequently asked questions, please visit the ALPES Web site at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

Please direct all other inquiries to:

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## Timetables

### *Timetable A: Projects requesting \$150,000–\$600,000*

*December 4, 2002 (12 p.m. PST)*  
Optional teleconference for potential applicants.  
Details and preregistration information posted at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

*January 2-17, 2003*  
Applicants submit brief proposals via the RWJF Grantmaking Online system. During this period, you may access the system via the ALPES Web site at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

*January 6, 2003 (8:30 a.m. PST)*  
Optional teleconference for potential applicants.  
Details and preregistration information posted at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

*January 17, 2003 (1 p.m. PST)*  
Deadline for receipt of brief proposals.

*March 21, 2003*  
Applicants will be notified if they have been selected to submit a full proposal. Instructions for submitting a full proposal via the RWJF Grantmaking Online system will be provided at that time.

*May 16, 2003 (1 p.m. PST)*  
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.

August 15, 2003  
Notification of awards.

Fall 2003  
Funding initiated.

*Timetable B: Projects requesting less than \$150,000\**

December 4, 2002 (12 p.m. PST)  
Optional teleconference for potential applicants.  
Details and preregistration information posted at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

January 2 - September 2, 2003  
Applicants submit brief proposals on a rolling basis via the RWJF Grantmaking Online system. During this period, you may access the system via the ALPES Web site at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

January 6, 2003 (8:30 a.m. PST)  
Optional teleconference for potential applicants.  
Details and preregistration information posted at [www.alpes.ws](http://www.alpes.ws).

February 1 - September 2, 2003  
Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applicants will be notified within two months of submitting a brief proposal if they have been selected to submit a full proposal. Any such notice will include a submission deadline for the full proposal.

September 2, 2003 (1 p.m. PST)  
Deadline for receipt of brief proposals.

Various dates  
Funding initiated on a rolling basis.

*\*Please note: this timetable does not apply to New Investigator Awards. For detailed information regarding proposal requirements for New Investigator Awards, please visit [www.alpes.ws/nia.htm](http://www.alpes.ws/nia.htm).*



## About RWJF

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas:

- To assure that all Americans have access to basic health care at reasonable cost.
- To improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions.
- To promote healthy communities and lifestyles.
- To reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse—tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

*This document, as well as many other Foundation publications and resources, is available on the Foundation's Web site:  
[www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)*

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