

CALL FOR PROPOSALS



ROUND 5

Proposal Deadline: May 25, 2005

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

(Please refer to specific sections for complete detail.)

Purpose

Active Living Research is a \$12.5-million national program 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, both young and old.

The primary purpose of this Call for Proposals is to increase understanding regarding how policies influence physical activity in schools and communities in order to motivate and guide policy change. The research funded under this Call for Proposals is expected to inform the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to help halt the increase in childhood obesity rates by 2015. *Research topic areas are described beginning on page 6.*

Eligibility Criteria (page 12)

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

Selection Criteria (page 12)

Complete selection criteria are described on page 12.

Total Awards—Round 5

- Up to \$1 million is available in this fifth round of funding for research grants. Grants of up to \$200,000 total over two years are available.
- Funds also are available for doctoral dissertation awards. *Details are described on page 15.*

Deadlines (page 18)

- **May 25, 2005 (1 p.m. PDT)**—Deadline for receipt of brief proposals for research topics and full proposals for dissertation awards.
- **August 15, 2005**—Applicants will be notified if they have been selected to submit a full proposal for a research topic. In addition, applicants selected to receive a dissertation award will be notified at this time.
- **October 5, 2005 (1 p.m. PDT)**—Deadline for receipt of invited full proposals for research topics.

How to Apply (page 14)

All proposals must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system.

For detailed information and submission guidelines, please visit the program's Web site or contact:

Active Living Research
Andrea Deen, Research Coordinator
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E-mail: adeen@projects.sdsu.edu

www.activelivingresearch.org

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, between 40 and 70 percent of adolescents do not meet the U.S. Surgeon General's youth guideline of 60 minutes of physical activity per day, and at least 60 percent of adult Americans do not meet the recommendation for accumulating at least 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.

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 automobiles, widespread use of labor-saving devices, and sedentary patterns of both work and recreation. Yet little is known about the impact of these trends or how best to counter them to promote physical activity.

THE PROGRAM

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is engaged in multiple strategies to promote healthier communities and lifestyles and to reduce the growing rate of childhood obesity. *Active Living Research* is a \$12.5-million national program of the Foundation, created to stimulate and support research that will identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity among Americans. Research funded under this Call for Proposals is expected to inform the Foundation's efforts to help halt the increase in childhood obesity rates by 2015.

“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 *Active Living Research* program focuses on the relationships among characteristics of natural and built environments, public and private policies, and personal levels of physical activity. Policies adopted and implemented by governmental and nongovernmental organizations can affect physical activity by creating changes in the physical environment (such as changes in zoning or requirements for recreational facilities), by altering incentives (such as increased parking fees or location-efficient mortgages), or by improving the quality or quantity of activity-related programs (such as physical education in schools).

Active Living Research has three primary objectives: (1) to establish a strong research base regarding the environmental and policy correlates of physical activity; (2) to help build a transdisciplinary field of physical activity policy and environmental researchers; and (3) to facilitate the use of research to support policy change.

The chief aim of the *Active Living Research* program is to fill a 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. Because decisions about community design are made continually, decision-makers need timely and accurate information about how their design and construction choices can affect the physical activity and health of entire populations. Research supported by this program will provide policy-makers with evidence about how to create more activity-friendly communities. Each year, *Active Living Research* will release a Call for Proposals to stimulate research on the wide variety of issues that are relevant to understanding how environments and policies can support active living. Information about previously funded grants is available on the Grants Page of the program's Web site at www.activelivingresearch.org.

Round 5 of funding will have a total pool of \$1 million for policy research grants described in detail below. Grants of up to \$200,000 total over two years are available.

Evaluating Active Living Policies

The primary purpose of this Call for Proposals is to increase understanding of policies that are likely to be related to active living so that information can be used to motivate and guide policy change. There is a need to understand the factors and processes that lead to policy change, as well as the consequences of those policies that are enacted. Understanding how policy change occurs can lead to more effective advocacy. Understanding the consequences of different policies, especially on active living, can help policy-makers and advocates target their efforts to those policies that are most likely to support active living and improve health.

To make the most effective use of the funds available for this Call for Proposals, a diverse group of advisers recommended some active living policy research priorities. Based on this input, *Active*

Living Research selected five policy research topics, described below. It is possible that some topics may not be funded.

1. Analysis of School Siting Policies

Schools are settings that can be used for physical activity. The siting, or specific location, of schools may have indirect effects on development practices that affect active living within the broader community. For example, placing schools on the outskirts of communities may result in the creation of automobile-oriented developments as parents move to be near the new schools. Siting schools on busy streets may create unsafe conditions for walking and cycling to school. Building or renovating schools in existing neighborhoods that are more pedestrian-friendly may facilitate active commuting. A variety of policies are likely to govern school siting decisions, but these policies are not well understood. The impact of different school siting policies has not been evaluated, so the effects on development practices and active living need to be assessed. The purpose of a study funded under Topic 1 would be to (a) analyze the influences on school siting policies, and (b) evaluate the outcomes of specific school siting policies.

School siting decisions may be affected, for instance, by local zoning codes and policies within departments of education and school districts. Other potential influences that could be investigated include developer contributions, land purchase and construction costs, and state policies. The proposal should describe methods to identify factors affecting school siting decisions and to analyze the role of those factors in specific decisions.

The proposal should specify a plan to evaluate the impact of divergent school siting policies on outcomes related to community design and potential for impact on physical activity. Community design outcomes could include indicators of development patterns around schools that are related to active living (such as density, diversity, design, destinations) and rate of growth in suburbs in the region. Factors that could affect active living, especially active

commuting to school, might include distance from students' homes to school, percentage of students who need to cross busy streets, facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and street-crossing aids.

2. Analysis of Physical Education Policies

Physical education is a primary method of promoting physical activity that has the potential to reach virtually all children in the United States. Some states are considering adopting or modifying physical education requirements. These initiatives have arisen in response to concerns of health professionals and others that children's physical activity is crucial for long-term health. Yet in light of budget constraints, many states have reduced their physical education requirements, and some school systems have been circumventing or minimizing requirements by, for example, declaring that recess fulfills the requirement. Many groups have called for improvements in the quantity and quality of school physical education as a means of promoting physical activity and addressing the childhood obesity epidemic. An analysis of policy decisions regarding physical education could identify (a) model approaches that could be recommended to states and school districts and (b) opportunities to intervene to improve existing policies.

Proposals should analyze the process of policy change in two or more states that have increased their physical education requirements or resources recently. The policy changes that are targeted should have clear implications for increasing physical activity among students. Qualitative case-study methodology would be appropriate for this topic. The analysis should address the following questions:

- What are the costs of the new requirements or resources in terms of direct costs and forgone opportunities? Who pays the costs, and what are the sources of funds?
- Who supports and opposes these policies and on what grounds? Please consider constituencies in various government departments, as well as those outside of government.

- What strategies have been effective in increasing support for physical education enhancement policies? What strategies have been ineffective?
- What strategies have been employed to oppose or dilute implementation of the policies? What strategies have been employed to overcome opposition to the policies?

3. Zoning Ordinances, Development Codes and Land-Use Regulations: Opportunities, Experiences and Barriers to Creating Active Living Communities

During the post-World War II era of suburbanization, local governments have passed numerous ordinances, codes, permit requirements and regulations based on the assumption that residents prefer low-density, automobile-oriented development. These regulations present significant barriers to building communities that support routine daily physical activity. Among the regulations are municipal zoning ordinances that require minimum lot sizes and a separation of residential and commercial land uses. Neighborhood design codes and subdivision regulations often focus on the mobility needs of motorists and emergency vehicles, sometimes at the expense of pedestrians and cyclists. Cumulatively, these and other regulatory initiatives have created environments that are inconvenient, unattractive, or unsafe for walking and cycling.

Proposals should identify several U.S. communities that have made notable progress in reforming past regulatory practices, whether to curb sprawl, promote smart growth, preserve open space, reduce air pollution, increase housing choices, or promote physical activity and health. Identifying and analyzing some of the most successful examples of land-use policy reform that support active living could inform policy changes in other communities. Factors that contributed to specific policy changes should be examined. To the degree possible, the impacts of policy reforms on development practices, the resulting built environment, and economic outcomes (such as infrastructure costs and land values) should be evaluated. Research designs should involve mixed qualitative-quantitative

methods. Case studies and informant interviews, for example, might be used to study the policy reform process. Matched-pair comparisons or other forms of quasi-experimental designs might be used to evaluate the impacts of specific initiatives on built environment and economic outcomes. Although the study could focus on a single policy reform, examining a more comprehensive approach to changing zoning ordinances, development codes, and land-use regulations would be preferable.

4. Impacts of Federal Transportation Legislation on Local Investments in Bikeways, Pedestrian Facilities and Active Living Improvements

The 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) marked a watershed in federal transportation legislation, directing more capital grant funds than ever to non-highway alternatives, devolving decision-making to local authorities, and mandating coordinated transportation and land-use planning. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), enacted in 1998, expanded funding for and strengthened many of the provisions of ISTEA. Three elements of ISTEA and TEA-21, in particular, provided substantial funding for facilities to support walking and bicycling for transportation. The Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program directed \$6 billion in funding to metropolitan areas that violated national air quality standards for investing in non-highway programs, including bicycling and pedestrian enhancements. Two other programs—the Transportation Enhancement Program and the Transportation, Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP)—appropriated funds for a variety of facility enhancements, including pedestrian ways, bike paths, crosswalk and streetscape improvements, greenways, trails, and transit stations.

Research is needed to evaluate the impacts of federal initiatives like ISTEA and TEA-21 on nonmotorized transportation investments and built environments, and how these in turn have influenced walking, bicycling and other forms of physical activity.

The first phase of the research should examine the distribution of funds like CMAQ and TCSP for such purposes as bike path and pedestrian-way improvements. For example, are enhancements equitably distributed among urban, suburban and rural areas or between low-income and high-income communities? Other policy questions that might be addressed include the following:

- Institutionally, what local agencies and organizations have been most actively involved in securing federal support for local nonmotorized transportation enhancements?
- What was the role of public participation in advancing these projects?
- Did local governments leverage federal support in other ways, such as through zoning or urban design policies?

The second phase of the research should evaluate the impacts of bikeways, pedestrian facilities, and other enhancements funded by federal transportation grants on measures of physical activity and well-being, such as active travel-mode trends and accident levels. It is expected that existing data will be used for these evaluations, but data may not be available for all outcomes that are of interest. Factors that explain successful outcomes should be identified. If possible, best-case practices should be highlighted. Policy lessons that were learned and their implications for future federal transportation policies should be presented.

5. Disparities in Access to Public Recreation Facilities

Economically disadvantaged and racial/ethnic minority populations are often found to have lower levels of recreational physical activity. Unequal access to quality recreation opportunities may explain socioeconomic and racial/ethnic variations in levels of recreational physical activity. Disadvantaged children may be particularly impacted by restricted access to quality public recreational opportunities because they have few other recreational options. Public recreation facilities are considered here to be those that can be used by substantial populations for physical activity on a frequent basis. These may include parks, trails and recreation centers, as well as affiliated

programs. It is important to document the equity of access to recreation facilities, as well as underlying reasons for any disparities.

Proposals should address two aims. The first aim is to conduct qualitative analyses of policies at multiple levels of government that may affect the equity of access to recreation facilities. This part of the study should explore historical, political and legal reasons for the patterns of accessibility observed. Plans for studies examining these issues in more than one state are preferred.

The second aim is to examine quantitatively the distribution of public recreation facilities across socioeconomic and racial/ethnic characteristics of communities in those states identified in the first aim as having policies that might lead to different distributions of facilities. Environmental and policy characteristics of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Quantity of facilities accessible to communities, based on such indicators as acres of parkland, miles of trails, and number of recreation centers.
- Quality of facilities accessible to communities, based on such indicators as number and types of amenities and level of repair.
- Expenditures for maintenance.
- Consideration of tailoring facilities to meet community needs.
- Level of staffing and provision of programming, especially related to physical activity.
- Economic access (entry fees, program fees, travel cost).

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

SELECTION CRITERIA

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

- Thoroughly addresses one of the topics listed in this Call for Proposals.
- Uses transdisciplinary research approaches and teams to provide the variety of conceptual measurement, study design and analytic methods needed for the best possible research.
- Articulates a clear hypothesis or conceptual framework that guides the design of the study.
- Describes a plan for systematic data collection and analysis.
- Provides evidence of access to needed data.
- Documents that the experience, qualifications and time commitment of the investigator(s) and key project staff are adequate for conducting the proposed project.
- Justifies the reasonableness of the budget request and feasibility of the timeline.
- Describes a plan to disseminate research results to scientists and policy-makers.

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. *Active Living Research* 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. Grantees also will be expected to participate in the program's evaluation by responding to periodic surveys during and after the actual grant period.

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, 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. *Active Living Research* grant funds may not be used for advocating, implementing or promoting environmental or policy changes.

Applicants are expected to include in their proposed budgets those travel costs needed to present their results to an audience that is consistent with their dissemination plan. They also are required to include travel costs to attend the *Active Living Research* Grantee Meeting and Conference in 2006 and to present their findings at

the Conference in 2007. In some instances, applicants may be asked to participate in media and policy briefings and other forums that will help communicate research results to a wide audience.

HOW TO APPLY

All proposals must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system. To apply, use the Web links listed under Research Topics and Dissertation Awards.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

Guidelines and information, including a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), are available on the *Active Living Research* Web site at www.activelivingresearch.org. *Active Living Research* will host applicant conference calls (listed under Timetable) to answer questions about the program, as well as the application and selection processes. Participation in these calls is strongly encouraged, but not required.

Research Topics

In Round 5, *Active Living Research* will accept proposals for research projects requesting up to \$200,000 total for up to two years. There are two stages of review for this cycle of funding:

Stage 1: Brief Proposal

Applicants must submit a brief narrative (2,000-word limit) that describes the project and a preliminary budget table.

To submit a brief proposal for one of the five research topics, please go to: <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/pap7>.

Stage 2: Full Proposal

Successful Stage 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal (20-page limit) accompanied by a budget and budget narrative and additional supporting documents.

Dissertation Awards

Doctoral candidates may request up to \$25,000 total for up to two years as support for their doctoral dissertations. Projects must have clear relevance to the overall mission of *Active Living Research*, but they do not have to address the specific topics in this Call for Proposals.

Only full proposals will be accepted. Dissertation full proposals will be accepted until May 25, 2005 (1 p.m. PDT). Detailed information and application guidelines are posted at www.activelivingresearch.org.

All proposals must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system. To submit a full proposal for a dissertation award, please go to: <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/pap8>.

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 quality health care at reasonable cost.
- To improve the quality of 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

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