

CALL FOR PROPOSALS



ROUND 6

Proposal Deadline: May 10, 2006



Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

(Please refer to specific sections for complete detail.)

Purpose

Active Living Research is a \$12.5-million national program that stimulates and supports research to 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.

This research will help increase our understanding of the relationship of environmental characteristics to physical activity for three priority topics: young people's use of parks, physical activity in and around buildings, and physical activity in rural areas. Evaluations of community interventions that are part of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *Active Living by Design* program also will be supported. The research funded under this call for proposals will inform the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to help halt the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015. *Research topic areas are described beginning on page 5.*

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 6

- Up to \$1.1 million is available in this sixth round of funding for research grants. For three research topics, grants of up to \$200,000 total over two years are available. For one of the research topics, grants of up to \$60,000 total over one year are available.
- Funds also are available for doctoral dissertation awards. *Details are described on page 15.*

Deadlines (page 19)

- **May 10, 2006 (1 p.m. PDT)**—Deadline for receipt of full proposals.
- **September 2006**—Applicants will be notified of awards.

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 listed below or contact the National Program Office:

Active Living Research

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www.activelivingresearch.org

BACKGROUND

Despite the well-documented social, physical and mental health benefits of physical activity, between 40 and 70 percent of adolescents do not meet the 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 recommendations of the U.S. Surgeon General for accumulating at least 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity most days of the week. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates physical inactivity is 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 and important modifiable health problems.

We do not fully understand why the majority of Americans are insufficiently active. Some research suggests 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 increasing prevalence of childhood obesity.

Active Living Research is a \$12.5-million national program of the Foundation that stimulates and supports research to identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity among Americans. Research funded under this call for proposals will inform the Foundation's efforts to help halt the increasing prevalence of childhood obesity 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 for adults and 60 minutes for youth. 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 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 identify environmental factors and policies that could 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 6 of funding will have a total pool of \$1.1 million for research grants described in detail below. For topics 1, 2 and 3, grants of up to \$200,000 total over two years are available. For topic 4, grants of up to \$60,000 over one year are available. Dissertation grants of up to \$25,000 are also available.

Research Topics

The research topics identified in this call for proposals are designed to expand the range of built environment settings that have been studied so far and to fill selected gaps in knowledge. To make the most effective use of available funds, *Active Living Research* has identified four high-priority research topics, based on recommendations from advisers.

1. Examine environmental correlates of young people's use of parks for physical activity.
2. Examine correlates of physical activity in and around buildings, with a primary focus on workplaces.
3. Evaluate community interventions of RWJF's *Active Living by Design* program.
4. Define activity-friendly environments in rural communities.

We expect to fund one grant each for research topics 1 and 2, two grants for research topic 3, three grants for research topic 4, and four dissertation grants.

1. Youth Physical Activity in Parks.

Public parks are often used for physical activity by children and adolescents, but the specific characteristics of parks and their neighborhood contexts that may influence young people's use of parks for physical activity are poorly understood. *Active Living Research* has supported the development of detailed assessments of park characteristics and studies of environmental correlates of park use, but few studies focus specifically on improving understanding of children's use of parks for physical activity. Answers to the following questions could help to inform changes in park design and broader policies:

- What are the characteristics of parks and the physical and sociodemographic features of the surrounding neighborhoods that explain the extent to which youth use parks for physical activity?
- What elements of parks (e.g., play equipment, ball fields, open space, trails) do children and adolescents use for physical activity most often?
- How are parks used differently for unstructured play and structured activities, such as team sports?
- What effect does adult supervision have on children's park use?
- How do the answers to these questions differ by age, sex, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status?

Active Living Research seeks studies that will use high-quality, preferably objective, measurement methods to answer the priority research questions. It may be necessary to identify specific subgroups of youth or types of parks as a focus of the study. RWJF has a special interest in factors that affect children ages 3 to 12 years, particularly those residing in low-income and racial/ethnic minority communities. Proposals should articulate clear rationales for decisions about study aims and approaches,

and should explain the potential to generalize findings to other populations of children. We expect to award one grant of up to \$200,000 over a two-year period.

2. Physical Activity in and around Buildings.

People spend the vast majority of their time in buildings, and millions of Americans spend most of their working time in sedentary jobs in office buildings. Improved understanding of opportunities for physical activity in and around office buildings as well as how building and site design characteristics can facilitate physical activity could lead to interventions that increase physical activity in and around buildings.

Active Living Research seeks proposals that examine how the following features and policies affect physical activity levels:

- Building design features, such as placement of stairs, layout of pathways, arrangement of functions, and availability of bike racks, exercise facilities and showers.
- Site design features, such as parking arrangements, connections to public transit, and pedestrian and cycling infrastructure.
- Policies that encourage building office parks on isolated suburban campuses rather than in walkable areas.
- Workplace policies, such as those that provide exercise classes at the workplace, paid time for activity breaks, and incentives for active commuting or transit use.

No single study would be expected to examine all of the possible correlates of physical activity in and around workplaces. While *Active Living Research* is most interested in comprehensive studies that use objective measures, we also will consider proposals for studies with focused aims and smaller budgets.

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods may be appropriate for these studies. When new measures are needed to collect appropriate data, proposals should describe systematic development methods and evaluation of reliability. There is

already substantial literature in some topic areas related to the workplace, such as design of stairwells and promotion of stair use. Proposals should seek to develop knowledge well beyond the published literature and examine a wide range of building and site characteristics that may be related to physical activity. The strongest proposals will be those that are likely to have the most generalizable results and broadest potential impact on science and policy. We expect to award one grant of up to \$200,000 over a two-year period.

3. Evaluation of Active Living by Design Community Interventions.

Active Living by Design (www.activelivingbydesign.org) is an RWJF-funded program to increase physical activity in 25 communities throughout the United States. The program features a comprehensive “5P” intervention approach that includes Preparation, Promotion, Programs, Policy and Physical Projects (see www.activelivingbydesign.org/index.php?id=293 for a detailed description of the 5P model). The *Active Living by Design* communities represent a range of diverse populations, geographic areas and interventions. The 25 community partnerships were selected in late 2003 to receive funding and technical assistance for a five-year period.

Active Living Research seeks proposals that will conduct a cross-sectional and retrospective evaluation of at least one *Active Living by Design* community and a demographically matched comparison community in the same region. We expect to award two grants of up to \$200,000 each over a two-year period. Proposals should include funds for one or two investigators to attend a two-day planning meeting in the first year.

Three evaluation approaches are of particular interest. Applicants are required to address at least the first two approaches in their proposals:

- **Population sample surveys** within the project area(s) to assess perceptions of community resources and barriers related to active living, changes in physical activity patterns since 2003, program awareness, exposure to various components of local *Active Living by Design* interventions, and engagement in related activities such as advocacy. In some cases, community partnerships have collected baseline data or conducted other assessment activities that could be used to inform and/or supplement the proposed evaluation.
- **Stakeholder interviews** to document the process of implementing the community interventions. Stakeholders might include city planners, elected officials, transportation or recreation officials, health department personnel, leaders of community organizations, and local *Active Living by Design* community partnership leaders and members. Interviews could assess progress in implementing and integrating the 5P strategies, functioning of the community partnership, factors related to success and failure of intervention initiatives, policy changes that could affect physical activity levels, and evidence of other outcomes, such as increased awareness of the importance of active living, increased physical activity, improved health, increased civic engagement and participation, or enhancements in community design and the built environment.
- **Documentation of changes in the physical environment** of relevance to physical activity since 2003. Systematic descriptions of built environment changes in transportation or recreation facilities, improved aesthetics, and building improvements would provide documentation of potential impacts of the community interventions.

Applicants interested in submitting evaluation proposals should visit www.activelivingbydesign.org to obtain more information about the program and the community partnerships. After reviewing the Web

site and developing preliminary ideas, interested investigators should contact *Active Living by Design* at (919) 843-2523 and speak with a project officer about their proposed study. The project officers will make introductions to community partnership leaders if a potential fit exists. Proposals should include identification of the target community, methods for selecting the comparison community, and a description of access to needed data and people. Proposals also should describe how evaluators will interact and collaborate with community partnership leaders to ensure a high-quality evaluation and include a letter of support from the local *Active Living by Design* project director to document collaboration. Proposals should demonstrate a well-developed plan for assessing all 5Ps.

Although proposals need to specify measurement and analysis methods, applicants should state their willingness to contribute to the development of a common evaluation protocol across *Active Living by Design* site evaluations (including those funded by *Active Living Research* and other sources) and, to the extent possible, to implement the common protocol.

4. Defining Activity-Friendly Rural Environments.

Virtually all of the research designed to improve our understanding of environmental correlates of physical activity has been conducted in urban and suburban communities. Many Americans live in rural areas, and most existing research findings have little relevance to rural areas. Thus, focused investigation is needed to examine how and where rural populations are physically active and to define environmental supports and barriers in rural environments, with a focus on young people.

The primary goal of research funded under this topic is to create a conceptual model of activity-friendly rural environments. *Active Living Research* encourages investigators to conduct qualitative studies to obtain information in two broad areas. The first area is to understand physical activity patterns of rural residents, including the most frequent activities they currently engage in across

multiple domains (such as leisure, transportation, household, occupation), the places where they currently engage in activity, transportation to those places, and activities residents would like to increase. The second area is to understand residents' perceptions of characteristics of physical and social environments that support or create barriers to physical activity, as well as residents' desired use of places to engage in activity. Investigators may collect data through surveys, focus groups, interviews, observations, diaries or other means. The target sample for these studies may be youth only, or a combination of youth and adults. This information should be used to create a conceptual model and develop hypotheses about environmental and policy characteristics that are likely to be positively and negatively related to physical activity of youth, and possibly adults, living in rural areas.

Based on the findings from qualitative studies, investigators may develop and evaluate measures of identified environmental and policy variables. The measures can be self-reported, directly observed, or both. Measures should be generalizable beyond the study area. Test-retest reliability and/or inter-observer agreement of the measures should be evaluated. Investigators may be encouraged to collaborate on the development and testing of new measures of rural environments.

To contribute to RWJF's childhood obesity objectives, the study must include a focus on children and adolescents, though it may also encompass adults. *Active Living Research* encourages proposals that examine primarily low-income rural residents, because they are at higher risk for inactive lifestyles and are a higher priority for policy and environmental interventions. Investigators must define "rural" for the purposes of the study and provide a rationale for the definition. The strongest proposals will be those that are likely to have the most generalizable results and broadest potential impact on science and policy. We expect to award up to three grants of up to \$60,000 each for one-year studies.

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, settings and study populations.
- For topic 3, demonstrates a working relationship and collaboration plan with *Active Living by Design* project officer(s) and community partnership staff.
- 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 to advocate for, implement or promote environmental or policy changes.

Applicants are expected to include in their proposed budgets travel costs to attend the *Active Living Research* Grantee Meeting and Conference in 2007 and to present their findings at the Conference in 2008 or 2009. 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 6, *Active Living Research* will accept proposals for research projects requesting up to \$200,000 total for up to two years for topics 1–3 and proposals requesting up to \$60,000 for one year for topic 4.

Full Proposal

Applicants must submit a full proposal accompanied by a budget and budget narrative and additional supporting documents. Full proposals are limited to 15 single-spaced pages for topics 1–3 and 10 single-spaced pages for topic 4.

To submit a full proposal for one of the four research topics, please go to: <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/pap9>.

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 do not have to address the specific topics in this call for proposals. We expect to award four grants of up to \$25,000 over a 12- to 24-month period.

Only full proposals will be accepted. Dissertation full proposals will be accepted until May 10, 2006 (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/pap10>.

ABOUT RWJF

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, the foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. The Foundation seeks to:

- Assure that all Americans have access to quality health care at reasonable cost.
- Improve the quality of care and support for people with chronic health conditions.
- Promote healthy communities and lifestyles.
- Reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse—tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

For more than 30 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.

Sign up to receive e-mail alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at: <http://subscribe.rwjf.org>



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