

2007 CALL FOR PROPOSALS



ROUND 7

Proposal Deadline: May 16, 2007



Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

(Please refer to specific sections for complete details.)

Purpose

Active Living Research is a \$12.5-million national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that stimulates and supports research to identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity.

The purpose of this call for proposals is to increase our understanding of how environments and policies affect children's physical activity in community and school settings. Grants will be awarded for two research topics:

- 1) Examination of how children's and parents' perceptions of community and recreation environments are related to objective attributes of the environments and how those perceptions affect their desire to use the environments for physical activity.
- 2) Evaluation of policy interventions to promote physical activity in schools.

Research funded under this call for proposals will inform the Foundation's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015. Research topics are described beginning on page 5.

Eligibility Criteria (page 10)

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 10)

Complete selection criteria are described on page 10.

Total Awards—Round 7

- Up to \$1 million is available in this seventh round of funding for research grants. For research topic 1, grants of up to \$150,000 total over one to two years are available. For topic 2, grants of up to \$200,000 total over one to two years are available. We expect to fund up to four grants under topic 1 and two under topic 2.
- Funds also are available for doctoral dissertation awards. Details are described on page 13.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- **May 16, 2007 (1 p.m. PDT)**—Deadline for receipt of proposals.
- **September 2007**—Applicants will be notified of awards.

How to Apply (page 12)

Proposals must be submitted online through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system.

For detailed information and submission guidelines, please visit the program's Web site at www.activelivingresearch.org or contact the national program office:

Active Living Research
Chad Spoon, *research coordinator*
Phone: (619) 260-5539
E-mail: cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu

www.activelivingresearch.org

BACKGROUND

Childhood obesity is a serious public health epidemic. During the past four decades, obesity rates have soared among all age groups, more than quadrupling among children ages 6 to 11. Today, an estimated 9 million children in the United States are considered obese.

Physical inactivity is a contributing factor to the childhood obesity epidemic. It's also one of the most important modifiable threats to health. Despite the well-documented social, physical and mental health benefits of physical activity, between 40 percent and 70 percent of adolescents do not meet the U.S. Surgeon General's youth guideline of 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

THE PROGRAM

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is engaged in multiple strategies to promote healthier communities and lifestyles and to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. *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. Research funded under this call for proposals will inform the Foundation's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.

"Active living" is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines. The goal is for adults to accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity each day, and for youth to get at least 60 minutes. 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. Because decisions about community design are made continually, decision-makers need timely and accurate information about how their policy, 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 that can contribute to preventing childhood obesity. 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 and prevent childhood obesity. Information about previously funded grants is available on the Grants Page of the program's Web site at www.activelivingresearch.org.

This round of funding will provide up to \$1 million for research grants described in detail below. For topic 1, grants of up to \$150,000 total over one to two years are available. For topic 2, grants of up to \$200,000 over one to two years are available. We expect to fund up to four grants under topic 1 and two under topic 2. In addition, four dissertation grants of up to \$25,000 each are available.

RESEARCH TOPICS

The research topics identified in this round of funding will inform the Foundation's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015, with a focus on the populations at highest risk. Active Living Research has identified two high-priority research topics:

1. Children's and parents' perceptions of community and recreation environments.
2. Evaluations of policy interventions in schools.

Topic 1: Children's and parents' perceptions of community and recreation environments. Studies funded by Active Living Research have emphasized using objective measures of attributes of community, transportation and recreation environments, and assessing their relation to physical activity. Numerous studies have assessed simple perceptions of these environments by asking people to report on the presence, absence and qualities of environmental attributes. However, there has been little study of people's subjective evaluations of environmental attributes and how those perceptions may be independently related to physical activity and use of specific places within communities. The emotional and judgmental components of environmental perceptions are of interest for this call for proposals. These perceptions are likely to vary across socio-demographic groups and among individuals within groups. Perceived safety, comfort, convenience, attractiveness, cultural relevance and relevance to activities of interest may independently affect children's and

parents' willingness to use environments for active recreation or transportation and parents' willingness to allow their children to use environments for physical activity.

Studies should address two policy-related questions, but other aims can be identified as well. First, which environmental perceptions are most related to the likelihood of using an environment for physical activity among identified population groups at high risk for childhood obesity? Understanding which environmental perceptions have the highest value for each subgroup could help policy-makers and designers tailor environments to the needs of each group. For example, children's desire to be active in a place could be driven by attractiveness and equipment, while parents could value safety the most. Second, what objective environmental attributes are related to evaluative perceptions? Understanding which objective environmental attributes are cues for making evaluative judgments can inform designers about what to build so environments are tailored to the social and cultural composition of the neighborhood. To the extent that objective environmental correlates of physical activity also are perceived as supporting physical activity, a stronger argument for policy change can be made. Applicants should make clear the ability of the proposed research to inform policies that could increase physical activity, especially among youth at highest risk for obesity.

Proposals for this topic should focus on determining how youth and parents perceive, evaluate and respond to residential, commercial, transportation and recreation environments that vary in objective "activity-friendliness," and how such perceptions may vary by the social context (e.g., poverty or dominant culture in the community). "Activity-friendliness" refers to presence/absence of environmental supports and barriers for physical activity for recreation or transportation purposes. Proposed studies should engage a specific racial or ethnic group at high risk for childhood obesity so in-depth understanding of

defined groups can be gained; comparisons of low- and middle-income groups are encouraged. Both young people and parents should be included in the study. Because of the challenges of collecting self-report data from children younger than 10 years, either age-appropriate methods should be proposed for children, or data collection from youth can be limited to older children and adolescents.

Studies should include both objective measures and perceived measures of environments that vary in their potential to facilitate physical activity by children and parents. For example, it is of interest to determine whether parks with high versus low levels of play equipment, quality of the equipment, and trash or graffiti are perceived as being more or less desirable places for physical activity for children and parents. Applicants are encouraged to examine a variety of settings, such as residential, commercial and recreation environments, as well as elements of the transportation system.

Applicants should propose a conceptual framework of environmental perceptions as they relate to use of environments for physical activity. Existing, adapted or newly developed measures of environmental perceptions can be proposed. Participants can be exposed to environmental stimuli by a variety of methods, including still photo, video, on location, or other modes. Extent of familiarity with the environmental settings should be specified and justified. Because each study will examine only one ethnic or racial group, it is important to be able to compare some measures of environmental perceptions across samples. Thus, applications should include a statement that investigators are willing to participate in developing a core set of environmental perception data that will be used in all studies funded under this research topic. Measuring selected aspects of the social environment may be viewed as a strength, but such measures are not required. Objective environmental measures can include direct observation measures developed with Active Living Research grants or other measures with evidence of reliability

and/or validity. A key purpose of data from the objective environmental measures is to explore the specific attributes of environments that appear to be driving people's perceptions and judgments related to suitability for physical activity.

Qualitative data collection methods are likely to be useful and can serve multiple purposes. For example, qualitative methods can be used to identify the perceptual dimensions that are most relevant to physical activity in each subgroup; those dimensions then may be assessed quantitatively. Qualitative methods can be used to explore reasons for the perceived environment ratings, elicit suggestions for how existing environments could be made more activity-friendly for children and parents, and explore how cultural factors may affect environmental appraisals. Examples of appropriate "outcome" indicators include self-reported willingness, desire, likelihood or intention of being physically active in specific settings and parents' willingness to allow their children to be active in these settings. Parents should report desire or intention related to their own use of settings and their children's use of the same settings. Applicants are encouraged to provide brief rationales for major choices about methodology.

Analyses of the relation of objective or perceived environmental variables to physical activity behavior are not expected in these studies. Analyses of the relation of objective and perceived measures of environments to each other are expected, with a goal of identifying which environmental attributes are driving evaluative perceptions. Detailed analysis plans should identify specific associations of interest and statistical analyses to be used.

We expect to fund three to four studies under this topic, with each grant totaling up to \$150,000 for a period of one to two years.

Topic 2: Evaluations of policy interventions in schools.

Concern about the childhood obesity epidemic is stimulating a search for policy solutions, because policy change is seen as necessary to support widespread behavior change. One objective of policy initiatives is promoting physical activity in schools. Each policy intervention provides an opportunity for evaluation, and it is important to learn lessons from these experiences that can lead to wide adoption of effective policies and avoidance of ineffective policies. Many schools are implementing policies and partnerships to improve the quantity and quality of physical education and enhance opportunities for physical activity in recess and during after-school programs. Schools also are encouraging active commuting to school through promotional efforts. We invite applications that evaluate these and other promising policies to promote physical activity in and around schools.

The policy interventions selected for evaluation should have clear potential for increasing physical activity in large proportions of students attending school and should hold promise for widespread adoption if they are found to be effective. Policies to be evaluated should be implemented in schools serving low-income communities and should be realistic for diffusion to low-income schools.

Quasi-experimental evaluation designs should be proposed, with pre-post evaluations of physical activity and use of comparison or control schools. Process evaluation should be conducted to document policy and environmental changes. Proposals to evaluate policy interventions in multiple schools will be preferred, as will those that include objective measures of physical activity.

We expect to fund two school policy evaluation grants totaling up to \$200,000 each for a period of one to two years.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Preference is 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 and prevent childhood obesity 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 clear and specific plan for systematic data collection and analysis;
- provides evidence of access to needed data, settings and study populations;
- 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; and
- 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 travel costs to attend the Active Living Research Grantee Meeting and Conference in 2008 and to present their findings at the Conference in 2009 or 2010. 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

Proposals must be submitted online 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 also will host two conference calls for potential applicants to answer questions about the program, as well as the application and selection processes. Participation in these calls is strongly encouraged, but not required. Those who do wish to participate must register for the calls. (See Timetable.)

Research Topics

In this round of funding, Active Living Research will accept proposals for research projects requesting up to \$150,000 total for up to two years for topic 1 and proposals requesting up to \$200,000 total for up to two years for topic 2.

Full Proposal

Applicants must submit a full proposal accompanied by a budget and budget narrative and additional supporting documents. Full proposals for either of the two research topics are limited to 15 single-spaced pages.

To submit a full proposal for one of the two research topics, please go to <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/pap11>.

Dissertation Awards

Dissertation awards are a priority for Active Living Research, because they both help build the evidence base and increase the number of investigators in this new field of study. Doctoral candidates in any field or discipline 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, and preference will be given to proposals that are relevant to preventing childhood obesity. However, projects 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 16, 2007 (1 p.m. PDT). Detailed information and application guidelines are posted at www.activelivingresearch.org.

Proposals must be submitted online through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system. To submit a full proposal for a dissertation award, please go to <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/pap12>.

PROGRAM DIRECTION

Direction and technical assistance for this program 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
Phone: (619) 260-5534
Fax: (619) 260-1510
E-mail: ALR@projects.sdsu.edu
www.activelivingresearch.org

Responsible staff members at the NPO are:

- James Sallis, Ph.D., *program director*
- Carmen Cutter, M.P.H., *deputy director*
- Amanda Wilson, M.S.R.S., *research coordinator*
- Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *research coordinator*
- Irvin Harrison, M.A., *administrative coordinator*
- LeeAnn Adan, *administrative assistant*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- C. Tracy Orleans, Ph.D., *distinguished fellow and senior scientist*
- Dwayne Proctor, Ph.D., *senior program officer*
- Jim Marks, M.D., M.P.H., *senior vice president and director, Health Group*
- C. Tracy Orleans, Ph.D., *distinguished fellow and senior scientist*
- Kathryn Thomas, M.J., *senior communications officer*
- Jan Mihalow, *grants administrator*

TIMETABLE

March 26, 2007 (12 p.m. PDT) and

April 16, 2007 (12 p.m. PDT)

Optional conference calls for potential applicants. Details and registration information are posted at www.activelivingresearch.org. Applicants will have an opportunity to ask questions during calls.

May 16, 2007 (1 p.m. PDT)

Deadline for receipt of proposals.

September 2007

Notification of awards.

December 2007

Funding initiated.

** Proposals must be submitted online through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online submission requirements well before the final submission deadline. Program staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline. In fairness to all applicants, the program will not accept late applications.*

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, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change.

For 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.

Sign up to receive e-mail alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at www.rwjf.org/services.



Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation

Route 1 and College Road East
P.O. Box 2316
Princeton, NJ 08543-2316