

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Active Living Research:

*Special Solicitation for Obesity and
the Built Environment Grantees*



Proposal Deadline: February 21, 2006

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 Call for Proposals aims to provide supplements to existing Obesity and Built Environment studies funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), other NIH Institutes, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The goals are to expand grantees' capacity to measure physical environments, add measures that can be compared across studies, and increase the diversity of new investigators studying active living. Research funded under this Call for Proposals will inform the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to halt the increase in childhood obesity rates by 2015. *Research topic areas are described beginning on page 5.*

Eligibility Criteria (page 8)

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

Selection Criteria (page 8)

Complete selection criteria are described on page 8.

Total Awards—Special Solicitation (page 5)

Through this special solicitation, *Active Living Research* will make available up to \$250,000 in three categories of grants. Up to 11 grants will be funded. *The number of grants and funds available in each category are described beginning on page 5.*

Deadlines

February 21, 2006 (1 p.m. PST)—Deadline for receipt of full proposals.

How to Apply (page 11)

All proposals must be submitted to *Active Living Research* via courier or mail as described in the application packet. For further information, and to obtain an application packet, please contact:

Active Living Research

Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *Research Coordinator*

Phone: (619) 260-5539

E-mail: cspoon@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 youth guideline of 60 minutes of physical activity per day, and at least 60 percent of American adults 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. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 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 prevent childhood obesity. *Active Living Research* is a \$12.5-million national program of RWJF 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 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 for adults and 60 minutes per day 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. *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.

SUPPLEMENTS TO OBESITY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT GRANTS

Funding under this Call for Proposals is available only to grant recipients of RFA-ES-04-003, Obesity and the Built Environment (OBE), an offering of the NIEHS, other NIH institutes and CDC. The purposes of this supplement program are to enhance the quality of previously funded OBE research, improve comparability of study results, and enhance diversity in this research field. *Active Living Research* will make available funds of up to \$250,000 in three categories of grants.

Diversity Dissertation Grants

Up to four grants of up to \$25,000 each (\$100,000 total allocated for this category) will be made available to support dissertation research conducted by doctoral students that builds on the OBE grants. This grant opportunity is made available to doctoral students who are committed to studying or improving physical activity levels in understudied, diverse communities. Doctoral students who come from groups that are historically disadvantaged (e.g., educationally, economically, racially/ethnically) or under-represented in scientific research are particularly encouraged to apply. Dissertation grants can attract talented students into this new research area, and increasing the diversity of investigators can enhance the ability of research teams to study issues of relevance to specific groups.

Dissertation proposals may involve data collection related to the underlying OBE grant or analysis of data collected by the OBE grant. While each proposed dissertation topic must examine the relationship between the environment and physical activity, it also may examine the relationship between the environment and nutrition or weight status. Each proposal must be sponsored by a principal investigator (PI) of one of the OBE grants. Sponsor PI’s may be associated with either the R01 or R21 category of grants.

Each award will be made in the name of the doctoral student's institution. The student need not be located at the same institution as the PI, but the application must describe how mentoring will occur despite geographical distance. Grants may be for up to two years in duration, and funds may be used for data collection, data analysis, travel and student support. Up to \$15,000 may be used for stipends, tuition remission, student fees and similar expenses.

Observational Measures Grants

Up to two grants of up to \$50,000 each (\$100,000 total for this category) will be made available to support OBE investigators to add or substantially expand use of environmental observation measures previously developed by grantees of the *Active Living Research* program. These measures assess characteristics of communities, parks and trails. Information about these measures is available in the Resources section of www.activelivingresearch.org. The specific measures to be supported by this funding are identified in a list included in the application packet. Applicants must propose use of *Active Living Research*-developed observational measures that were not included in the applicant's original grant proposal to NIEHS, or they must substantially expand implementation of these observational measures beyond the scope originally proposed in the OBE grant. The contribution of the new or expanded observational measures to the original OBE grant should be clearly described. Attention should be given to adequate training of observers, and ongoing assessments of interobserver reliability are encouraged. PI's of OBE grants in both the R01 and R21 categories are eligible to request supplements in this category, but budgets should be in proportion to the scope of the proposed work. Grants may be for one to four years in duration, and funds may be used for activities related to data collection, data management, data analysis, local travel related to data collection, and travel to present findings at scientific meetings.

Common Measures Grants

Up to five grants of up to \$10,000 each (\$50,000 total for this category) will be made available to support OBE investigators to adopt "common" self-report measures used by *Active Living Research* grantees. The purpose of supporting use of a common core of self-report measures is to enhance comparability of results across studies and permit future pooled analyses or meta-analyses. A set of common self-report measures of perceived environments, physical activity and secondary outcomes has been adopted by grantees studying community design. A second set of common self-report measures of trail use and related variables has been developed, evaluated and adopted by grantees studying trails. The common measures are described in the application packet, and the instruments are available in the Resources section of www.activelivingresearch.org. It is not necessary to adopt the entire set of common measures in any given instrument, but applicants need to explain their rationale for including and excluding specific sections. Proposals should describe how the added measures are expected to contribute to the success of the OBE grant and how they will complement previously planned measures. PI's of OBE grants in both the R01 and R21 categories are eligible to request supplements in this category. Grants may be for up to two years in duration, and funds may be used for activities related to data collection, participant incentives, data management, data analysis and travel to relevant scientific meetings.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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

Additional eligibility criteria:

- *Diversity Dissertation Grants*—Investigators must be students in a doctoral program. A PI of an OBE R01 or R21 grant must act as a sponsor.
- *Observation Measures Grants*—PI's of OBE R01 and R21 grants are eligible to apply in this category.
- *Common Measures Grants*—PI's of OBE R01 and R21 grants are eligible to apply in this category.

It is permissible for one investigator or team to submit proposals under more than one category.

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.

We will assess each proposal based on the degree to which it:

- Is responsive to guidelines related to one of the three supplemental grant funding opportunities.
- Substantially adds to or expands, but does not duplicate, activities funded by the OBE grant.
- Describes a plan for systematic data collection and analysis that deals with physical activity-related environmental or policy issues, enhances the OBE grant and has potential to make substantive scientific contributions. Additional contributions to the under-

standing of eating behaviors or obesity-related outcomes would be considered strengths of the proposal.

- Documents that the investigator(s) and key project staff have the experience, qualifications and time to conduct the proposed project.
- Justifies the budget request and feasibility of the timeline.

Additional Criteria for Diversity Dissertation Grants:

- The dissertation student demonstrates a commitment to studying or improving physical activity among members of understudied, diverse communities and/or is from a group that is historically disadvantaged or underrepresented in scientific research.
- The dissertation student shows promise for a scientific career likely to include research on active living.
- The dissertation topic deals broadly with environments and policies related to physical activity, eating behaviors or obesity, and it is likely to make a contribution to the scientific literature.
- The mentoring plan is adequate and well described.

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, 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 specific environmental or policy changes.

Applicants are expected to include in their proposed budgets those travel costs needed to present their results to a relevant scientific audience. Funds should be budgeted to allow at least one study team member to travel, each year, to attend the *Active Living Research* grantee meeting and conference. 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

Applications must be submitted to *Active Living Research* no later than February 21, 2006 (1 p.m. PST). Decisions about awards will be announced on April 3, 2006.

Active Living Research will host one applicant conference call (listed under **Timetable**) to answer questions about the program, as well as the application and selection processes. Participation in this call is strongly encouraged, but not required.

All interested applicants must request a formal application packet from *Active Living Research*. To do so, please contact the program by e-mail (cspoon@projects.sdsu.edu) or by calling (619) 260-5539 well in advance of the deadline. Complete instructions will be enclosed with the application packet, including forms for signature by applicant institutions.

Diversity Dissertation Grants

Doctoral candidates who are committed to studying or improving physical activity among members of understudied, diverse communities and/or who are from groups that are historically disadvantaged or underrepresented in scientific research 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 a clear relation to the OBE grant. Proposals must comply with all requirements included in the application packet and should include a narrative of up to 10 pages, single-spaced, that includes a literature review, study aims or hypotheses, methods (including data analysis plans) and a mentoring plan. A letter of support from the PI of the OBE R01 or R21 grant is required.

Supplements for Observational Measures and Common Measures

Observational measures proposals must comply with all requirements included in the application packet and should include an application narrative of no more than 10 pages, single-spaced, that summarizes the OBE study; provides a rationale for adding or expanding the *Active Living Research* observational measures; describes the methods for integrating the observational measures into the data collection, management and analysis processes; and explains the potential scientific benefits of the supplemental grant.

Common measures proposals must comply with all requirements included in the application packet and should include an application narrative of no more than five pages, single-spaced, that summarizes the OBE study; provides a rationale for adding the common measures; describes the methods for integrating the common measures into the data collection, management and analysis processes; and explains the potential scientific benefits of the supplemental grant. The requested budget and accompanying narrative may be for up to two years and \$10,000 total costs.

RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals submitted.

Proposals should be submitted via courier or mail and received by the NPO no later than February 21, 2006 (1 p.m. PST) to:

Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *Research Coordinator*
Active Living Research
San Diego State University
3900 Fifth Avenue, Suite 310
San Diego, CA 92103
(619) 260-5539

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
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3900 Fifth Avenue, Suite 310
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Responsible staff members at the NPO are:

- James Sallis, Ph.D., *Program Director*
- Leslie Linton, J.D., M.P.H., *Deputy Director*
- Chad Spoon, M.R.P., *Research Coordinator*
- Amanda Wilson, M.S.R.S., *Research Coordinator*
- Irvin Harrison, M.A., *Administrative Coordinator*
- LeeAnn Adan, *Administrative Assistant*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Terry Bazzarre, Ph.D., *Senior Program Officer*
- Jim Marks, M.D., M.P.H., *Senior Vice President and Director, Health Group*
- C. Tracy Orleans, Ph.D., *Senior Scientist and Senior Program Officer*
- Kathryn Thomas, M.J., *Senior Communications Officer*
- Jeanne Stives, *Grants Administrator*

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.

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

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