

E4A Innovative Research to Advance Racial Equity

Webinar Questions & Answers

On October 13, 2021, we hosted a webinar to provide information on and insights into the new Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Evidence for Action (E4A) call for proposals, Innovative Research to Advance Racial Equity. Below are the answers to most of the questions submitted during the live portion of the webinar.

Questions that were purely logistical or focused on specific projects and their fit with the call were omitted. Except in a few cases where minor contextual additions have been made for clarity in this document, questions are included verbatim from the webinar Q&A tool.

Access the webinar recording, transcripts, and slides [here](#). For more details about the funding program and applicant resources please visit [funding section of the E4A website](#). If you have additional questions, please contact the program office at evidenceforaction@ucsf.edu.

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E4A Innovative Research to Advance Racial Equity

Submission

Multiple Submissions to E4A and RWJF Funding Opportunities

Is it acceptable to make multiple submissions for similar or complementary projects that may have the same researchers, investigators?

Is it okay to submit a grant for the Evidence for Action grant and the Pioneering Ideas grant at RWJF at the same time? Should one take priority over another?

Can you apply for other RWJF grants if you already have one?

The answer to all of these questions is yes.

Applicants and teams may submit multiple applications to E4A or other RWJF funding opportunities, although we discourage submission of the same idea to multiple RWJF solicitations at the same time. Applicants may also resubmit a refined or new application if a previous submission was not accepted. There are no rigid restrictions against multiple submissions from the same applicant or team. Current applicants or grantees may also serve as a partner for another organization's application.

In terms of priorities, it's up to you which submission you prioritize. We advise applicants to prioritize submission to a deadline-driven solicitation.

Timing

This is a rolling call for proposals, but do you have any insight into sooner rather than later? How long will the call be open for?

When do you anticipate this opportunity closing?

There is no benefit to submitting your proposal at any particular time. We recommend applying when it makes the most sense for your project. The call for proposals will be open for the foreseeable future. Our prior call for proposals was open for over 6 years, with only minor updates during that time.

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Eligibility

Are individuals permitted to submit proposals for the Evidence for Action grant?

Awards are granted to organizations, not individuals.

Is it possible for new/small businesses with less than 5 employees to be considered for this opportunity?

My nonprofit received seed funding from the state to develop a pilot program. The contract has identified a university research group to lead a 3 year study. We are seeking funding for this research. Can our nonprofit apply for this grant or do we need the research group to apply?

Is this grant for universities AND non-profit community-based organizations?

Institutes of higher education, public entities, nonprofit organizations (including, but not limited to, community based nonprofits and organizations), and for-profit organizations are all eligible to apply.

The size of the organization does not matter, as long as the organization has the capacity to administer the grant.

Application and Review

How will the reviewer pool be constructed? Having received several reviews that were inadequate specific to structural racism, I'm curious about how you are approaching so called peer review.

We are committed to ensuring a racial equity perspective is applied when reviewing each letter of intent and full proposal submitted under this call for proposals. In addition to the E4A leadership team, we also invite external reviews at both the letter of intent and full proposal stage. E4A National Advisory Committee members also provide full proposal reviews. We select external reviewers on a case by case basis depending on the proposal.

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In terms of selection criteria, do you give priority to projects that are led by BIPOC researchers?

We encourage submission from BIPOC research leaders. However, RWJF does not ask questions about racial and ethnic backgrounds and demographics of applicants during the E4A application process, and therefore, we cannot make selection priorities based on the demographics of researchers or principal investigators. The application asks for details about the qualifications and expertise of applicant teams, and we prioritize projects led by teams with deep understanding of and expertise in racial equity principles.

Could you please let us see the 2-page LOI of your proposal?

Our Letter of Intent Applicant Guide is available at <https://www.evidenceforaction.org/funding/applicant-resources>. The guide outlines general information about the funding opportunity, explains the application and review process, and provides practical, in-depth guidance around answering the questions required in the letter of intent.

Is there a time limit to submit the full application once invited?

Yes, once invited to submit a full proposal, applicants will have 2 months to submit the necessary materials via the RWJF Application & Review System.

Technical Assistance

How much support can you give to teams that don't have Ph.D level researchers as part of them?

Please explain how Technical Assistance might help to find evaluators to augment an existing team.

Can we request Technical Assistance prior to submission of the letter of intent?

A PhD is not a requirement for the research team, but teams that feel they need or would like additional research support may contact E4A for technical assistance (TA) before submitting their LOI. TA may consist of design consultation (a series of meetings with E4A staff tailored to your specific project) or matching.

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Matching is a service provided by Accelerating Collaborations for Evaluation (ACE), a team based at Johns Hopkins University. For eligible applicants who have a suitable research idea, but not the specific content, research, or methodological expertise to conduct a particular study, the matching team will work with them to fill gaps, by identifying new partners from across a range of institutions, sectors, etc. They'll take into consideration what the applicants are looking for in research partners; for example, sometimes there is a preference for geographic location, expertise, personality dynamics, and other factors that can be considered.

More information about technical assistance and how to apply in advance of letter of intent submission can be found on our website: <https://www.evidenceforaction.org/funding/applicant-technical-assistance>.

Project Fit

Engaging Community

"You mentioned that people who will ultimately use the research should be engaged in the project." Could you please elaborate on that statement?

Applicants should be very specific about who they envision using, being able to interpret, and applying the findings in their own work. Sometimes that might be a policymaker. Sometimes it might be a public agency, program administrator, etc.

They don't need to be part of the research team, but ideally the researchers will have relationships with those end-users before starting on the research project, to ensure that their research questions, approach, outcomes of interest, and other project components align with the type of information that those end-users will find useful.

Applicants should demonstrate if they have had those conversations and the level of those conversations - anything from vetting the initial research question(s) and what you hope to gain from the research, to engaging those people on the research team or in parts of the outreach and dissemination, or whatever seems most appropriate.

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How do you consider when the optimal research designs for causal inference may be at odds with community autonomy, experience, and knowledge?

There is not a one-size-fits-all or perfect approach to equitable evaluation and balancing the needs of the research with the experiences and knowledge of the community.

The committee will pay close attention to how each research team is attempting to address any tensions that may arise between the research design and community autonomy, experience, and knowledge, to ensure we are not perpetuating extractive research.

We are committed to working with applicants to determine approaches that can both respect community power and autonomy and achieve the research aims.

Health & Other Outcomes

Is “health” broadly defined ([does it] include mental health)?

Health and well-being outcomes refer to physical, mental, socio-emotional, and well-being outcomes that can be objectively measured using validated instruments. We prioritize outcomes that directly reflect these dimensions of health, or behaviors known to influence health and well-being.

Is cost evaluation as evidence of intervention impact (e.g., health care utilization improvement in er/hospitalization) acceptable as one potential outcome?

We do not consider “health care access or utilization” alone to be a sufficient health outcome measure, because they can be difficult to interpret. For example, increased access does not always equate to better health outcomes; and increased utilization may signal either improved or worse health status.

E4A-funded studies can have as many outcomes as can be justified by the theory of change, but at least one must be a health outcome.

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With regard to including health outcomes in research studies, how would that work if the intervention was aimed at medical/nursing students, and therefore very far away from actual patients? The focus of the research would be on the process of teaching students to shift their educational outcomes, so they improve the health of their future patients once they are in the healthcare field. The health of the students themselves is not related to the intervention. Would changes in knowledge about health outcomes count toward “health outcomes” in the research study?

“Knowledge about health outcomes” would NOT count as a health outcome. In general, we consider intermediary outcomes as proxies or surrogates for health outcomes on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should provide research evidence or other support for their inclusion as a proxy health outcome method.

Are you prioritizing outcomes at the individual-level or community/population level?

At E4A, we are interested in the outcomes that indicate community and population health. Sometimes those are a summation of individual responses. However, we are focusing on interventions that impact population health and equity. We are interested in both how they may affect individual people who are part of the community, but we’re more interested in the community level outcomes, as well as the community level processes.

Methods

Can you all go over causal inference?

We use causal inference to mean approaches that can assess the direct impacts of an intervention or treatment on the outcomes in the study population. A variety of methods can be used for causal inference. Quantitative approaches generally involve a control or comparison group, adequate sample sizes, and a rigorous data collection and analysis plan.

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In addition to extractive aspects of Euro-American research methodologies, do you have an approach that honors indigenous research methodologies, as well as indigenous concerns in addition to cultural expropriation, such as the cultural imperative of sharing what might be beneficial with all inclusively, which means RCTs and quasi-experimental designs may be unacceptable in some communities? Also, if you are funding research of interventions but not the intervention itself, then what measures can be taken to ensure that presumed 'beneficiaries' of the intervention being researched have also had deep involvement and shared power in developing the intervention? If they only have this for the research of the intervention, but not for the development of the intervention to be researched, how would you prevent that from being at odds with your goals?

We value and respect Indigenous research approaches and would welcome them in applications. We ourselves are still learning about those approaches, and so are engaging with others who can help us to better evaluate the applications that might be submitted related to Indigenous methodologies.

In order to help ensure we do not fund extractive research that perpetuates power imbalances, the application contains questions for applicants to describe the involvement of community and other stakeholder perspectives in the development of the intervention and design of the research project, including the dynamics of the research team.

As a research funding program, E4A cannot provide funds for the implementation of an intervention. However, research related to either the development or evaluation of interventions to address structural racism is eligible. In both of these stages, reviewers will pay attention to power dynamics and level of involvement of communities for which interventions are intended.

In community based participatory research, we would want to resource BIPOC resident leaders. Is this funded?

As long as the involvement of BIPOC resident leaders is related to the research process, it is eligible for funding.

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Do you include community based participatory research (CBPR), action-research, mixed methods?

We consider CBPR to be a research process, not an analytic approach or methodology. At E4A, we encourage community participation and ownership in the research design and implementation process. Typically, we do not fund the early stages of the CBPR process when community members are still determining priorities; but we will fund all aspects of a community participatory/action-oriented approach once a specific research question has been agreed upon.

How important is it to have quantitative study and data or that it is a component of grant? How would you view a study that focused on qualitative data?

Will you consider ethnography as the qualitative component in a mixed methods study?

E4A will fund quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research. The review committee will be looking for an awareness of the strengths of the approaches being proposed versus the limitations. Reviewers will apply a strong standard of rigor to both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Does “research” for this opportunity imply that we need to implement a “scientific method” with control groups (for example), and/or an outside professional evaluator or academic researcher?

Research needs to adhere to the standards of rigor appropriate for the approach being proposed, which differs by question and context. This may or may not require control groups. Please visit our office hours or reach out to us directly if you have questions about how we define “rigor” for your particular approach or method.

The team does not need to include an academic researcher or professional evaluator, but does need to have the expertise and capacity necessary to carry out data analysis and other components of the research. Researchers do not need to be external to the organization implementing the intervention, but an impartial perspective on the team may be warranted depending on the nature of the research.

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Is formative research funded?

Formative research may be funded if it is explicitly focused on dismantling racism. This may include pilot studies evaluating the effectiveness or feasibility of novel policies, programs, or practices being newly implemented at a small scale, which may not be fully powered to detect all meaningful effects, but can still demonstrate proof of concept or early indicators of impact.

What's the definition of "descriptive research" that is intentionally not a funding priority? Some argue that certain types of descriptive studies illuminate unknown sources of differences that can be a target for intervention.

E4A does not fund research simply describing the problem or inequities. We believe there is sufficient evidence demonstrating that inequities exist due to unjust systems. We're focused on developing and evaluating solutions to those injustices.

We fully agree that certain types of descriptive studies illuminate unknown sources of differences that can be the target for intervention. Our decision not to fund this type of descriptive research is not meant to be a reflection of or a value statement on descriptive research. It's solely a way to prioritize how finite resources are used through Evidence for Action.

In some cases, if applicants are proposing descriptive research in an attempt to identify specific priorities, analyze a theory of change, or justify potential interventions explicitly focused on dismantling structural racism, they might be eligible for E4A funding.

Are simulation/modelling studies of the impacts of social and health policies on racial equity and/or health disparities eligible for this grant opportunity?

Simulation and modeling studies are eligible if applicants demonstrate direct applicability to advancing racial equity. Additionally, the review committee will evaluate if the approach is aligned with the research question and context. Applicants need to justify the appropriateness and actionability of the design.

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Will observational studies be funded?

Observational studies are eligible if they are designed and conducted in a way that can provide convincing evidence of the effect or impact of an intervention.

Do you fund research in the area of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (provided it's related to racial equity)?

RWJF explicitly does not fund research/development of drugs or medical products or devices and tends not to fund research related to specific medical treatments.

What is an example of a screening tool?

Examples of screening tools include survey questions or clinical tests intended to identify someone's risk of a particular condition or disease. Development of screening tools is not eligible for funding through E4A.

Specific Project Questions

We received a number of questions about specific research project ideas, which we have not included here out of courtesy to the individuals that submitted them. In order to make recommendations on specific projects and their potential fit with E4A, we need more information. Consider joining one of our virtual office hours for more individualized guidance, or reach out directly to the program office at evidenceforaction@ucsf.edu.

Funding

Operations & Indirect Costs

Is the grant a gift (development) for the research process or is it more geared towards sponsored programs?

In cases where the awardee is an institute of higher education, E4A grants are typically managed by the institution's sponsored programs or similar team.

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Could you please distinguish between the allowable indirect cost rate for E4A proposal vs. not funding program implementation or program operation costs?

There was a point about not funding implementation and operations. Does this include staff time on the project?

E4A funds all research-related aspects of a project, including staff time spent on research, travel stipends, support for involvement of participants, and a variety of other research-related costs that you might consider operations/implementation of the research project.

E4A does not fund the operation or implementation of the intervention itself. So, for example, if your intervention is related to service delivery, we do not fund the delivery of the services and we don't fund the operations associated with the delivery of those services.

At the letter of intent stage, applicants are not required to submit a detailed budget. Applicants only need to submit a ballpark estimate of the funds necessary to fully complete the project over the duration of the grant, including dissemination activities. It's acceptable for the budget request to change at the full proposal stage within reason to accommodate the guidelines of the Foundation or costs that were unanticipated.

There is quite a bit of additional detail related to the budget in both the Frequently Asked Questions on the E4A website, as well as in a budget tutorial by our Financial Manager, and budget guidelines accessed in the Foundation's A&R System.

Funding Amounts

Is the typical grant level of \$300-500k the amount per year or over the life of the grant?

The typical funding level of \$300k to \$500k is the amount over the life of the grant.

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How many projects get funded per year?

How many projects will be awarded?

The number of funded projects each year depends on the number and responsiveness of applications received. E4A does not have a target number of projects we fund each year.

Similarly, the total number of grants funded through this call for proposals will depend on the number of successful applicants, the funding levels of the individual projects, and how long the call remains open.

If we estimate our project to cost a certain amount, will the review board reject it if they disagree or will they just award a lower amount?

If there are concerns about the requested amount of funding, the E4A national program office will engage with applicants at the full proposal stage to come to a mutually agreed-upon funding amount for the life of the project. This can result in either a lower or higher amount of funding than requested, depending on the concerns or perspectives of reviewers.

Multiple Funding Sources

Can there be multiple funding sources? Or, does E4A have to be the only source?

Does E4A need to be the sole funder of a project, or will you fund a new aim or component of funded work?

There can be multiple funding sources for the research project. We will also fund additional aims or components of projects that are funded by another source.

Grantee Expectations

What do you mean by pre-register study? Could you please clarify more on that? Thank you!

E4A grantees are required to register their studies on Open Science Framework, a social science registration site. Registration requires research

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teams to specify the research questions and approach in advance of conducting the research to ensure adherence to what was planned. We believe pre-registration strengthens research findings by improving transparency of and accountability to the original research plan. All E4A grantees will receive instructions and guidance on completing this step at the start of their grant. It is a straightforward process that typically requires minimal time and effort.

Can you speak a bit more about your expectations around how and where data are disseminated beyond academia?

Applicants need to demonstrate that they will disseminate findings beyond publishing in an academic journal. The specific communications tactics and audiences really depend on the research project itself, who the end-users of the research are, the socio-political landscape, and other considerations. Examples of how and where the findings are disseminated may include, but are not limited to, Op-Eds in local or national media outlets, one-pagers shared with decision-makers and advocacy organizations, presentations at professional conferences, the development and sharing of infographics on social media, writing a blog post, etc. To get a sense of what other E4A grantees have done, you can explore the [What We're Learning](#) section of our website.

Additionally, if invited to submit a full proposal you will receive further guidance about the development of a dissemination strategy. Grantees are also provided with a great deal of support from the Foundation and the E4A program office around dissemination.

Other

Do you have published, previous studies and solutions about racial inequity and solutions for the individual facing systemic racism? If so, how can we get it?

We have funded some studies in this area, including “Health Impacts of Social Policies to Expand Economic Opportunity in Underserved Populations” and a number of immigration-related studies.

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What are the principal outcome measures of the Healthy Neighborhoods Project (HNP) in New Orleans and what are these variable's operational definitions?

The research team is looking at civic engagement, IPV (interpersonal violence), the amount of physical activity that people are engaged in, social connectedness, by surveying the people that are living near the treated properties. The overall inquiry is if mediating blight changes the way people feel about safety in their neighborhood, about their ability and interest in engaging with the people living around them, and the use of shared space. As changes begin to happen in the physical environment, does it change people's relationship to their neighbors and to their communal living space?

For more information on the project, please visit <https://www.evidence-foraction.org/grant/building-culture-health-through-built-environment-adaptable-solutions-community-well-being>.

Could the HNP team please share their research question?

The research questions being explored in relation to the Healthy Neighborhood Project are: What's the impact and role of blight reduction on well-being and health interconnectedness, sense of community, sense of safety, and civic engagement? What's the moderating impact of additional neighborhood level buffers (e.g., fewer alcohol outlets, greater green and park space) on blight reduction efforts?

Is it a good strategy to look at funded projects from the past? Or will the priorities be shifting significantly with this new call?

Examining past projects can be informative for potential applicants when it comes to funding amounts, size and scope of studies, and examples of social determinants of health. The explicit focus on racial equity of our new call means that some of our past projects wouldn't be funded if we received them now because they didn't specifically address structural racism. At the same time, under this new call, we will consider a broader range of research objectives, outcomes, and methodologies than we have funded in the past, which would not be reflected in our previously funded projects.

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Additional Resources

- [Call for Proposals](#)
- [E4A Office Hours: A Virtual Question and Answer Session](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [E4A Methods Blog & Methods Notes](#)
- [Technical Assistance](#)

Additional Links

- [Meet the E4A Team & Reviewers](#)
- [Review E4A Funded Projects](#)
- [RWJF Application & Review System](#)

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