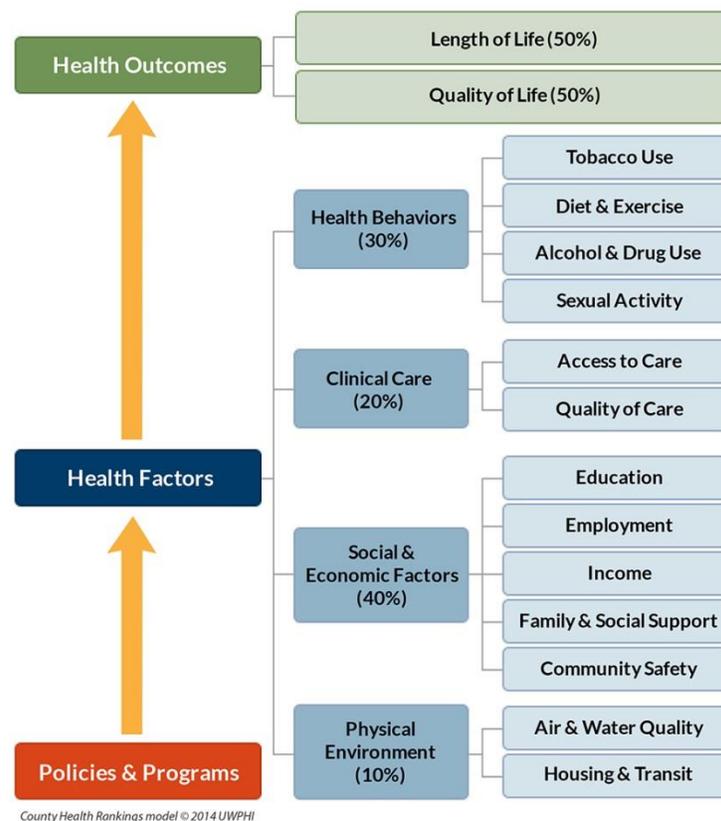


County Health Rankings Research Grants 2015 CALL FOR PROPOSALS



The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program is seeking proposals from qualified researchers to strengthen and evaluate the impact of the *County Health Rankings*.

Brief Proposal Deadline: February 18th, 2015

County Health Rankings Research Grants Overview

For complete details, refer to specific pages/sections noted below.

Purpose

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) are collaborators on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program to mobilize local communities, national partners, and leaders across multiple sectors to improve health. *County Health Rankings* Research Grants serve an important role in strengthening and evaluating the *County Health Rankings (Rankings)*. Funding for this solicitation is provided by UWPHI as part of its grant from RWJF to support the *Rankings*. UWPHI will support studies by researchers for: quantitative analyses of *Rankings* data or results; refinement of current methodology used in the *Rankings* model; or, studies of the quantitative or qualitative impact of the *Rankings*. (See Areas for Research on page 4).

Total Awards

Up to \$300,000 will be available for research under this Call for Proposals (CFP), with a combination of:

- Small studies—up to \$50,000 for a maximum of 12 months.
- Complex/comprehensive studies—up to \$100,000 for a maximum of 12 months. Applicants seeking higher funding amounts will need to clearly specify the data collection or analysis steps requiring the higher amount.

Eligibility Criteria (Page 5)

To be eligible, an applicant organization must be located in the United States or its territories.

- Applications must be submitted by an educational institution or nonprofit organization that is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3).
- We welcome applications from investigators in health, social and behavioral sciences, biostatistics and/or informatics, and other fields.
- We seek a diverse group of applicants, including minorities, early career researchers, and individuals who work in non-academic settings.

How to Apply (Page 6)

A Brief Proposal should be submitted to the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. A form has been created for the Brief Proposal (pages 9-11).

Selection Criteria (Page 7)

Complete selection criteria can be found on page 7.

Key Dates and Deadlines (Timeline page 7)

- February 9, 2015 Questions on the CFP due to Marjory Givens E-mail: marjory.givens@match.wisc.edu
Frequently Asked Questions posted February 12, 2015
- February 18, 2015 Brief Proposals due by 6:00 pm ET
- March 16, 2015 Notification to all applicants
- April 14, 2015 Full Proposals due
- mid-May, 2015 Announce final selection
- July 1, 2015 Start date for funded projects

Background

We know that much of what influences our health happens outside of the doctor's office—in our schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. The ability to find good jobs, to prepare our children for college and career success, to establish financial security, and to live in safe communities that promote positive relationships among family and friends are often not thought of as health interventions. However, these factors play an important role in our ability to lead long and healthy lives.

To better illustrate how these factors influence people's health where they live, learn, work and play, and to identify solutions that make it easier for people to be healthy in their own communities, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI) have collaborated to establish the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program. The goal of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, first launched in 2010, is to mobilize local communities, national partners, and leaders across multiple sectors to improve health.

The *County Health Rankings (Rankings)* are based on a model of population health (shown on the cover) that emphasizes the many factors that, if improved, can lead to better health. The *Rankings* are released annually, providing a ranking of overall health for nearly every county in all 50 states. In addition, the *Rankings* identify the crucial factors that drive health in communities, such as high school graduation rates, unemployment rates, rates of violent crime, and the percentage of children in poverty. Based on the latest data available, the *Rankings* are unique in their ability to measure the overall health of each county in all 50 states on the multiple factors that influence health.

Intended to serve as a call to action, the *Rankings* have ignited important conversations and activities focused on improving health in communities across the country. We have seen the emergence of multi-sector collaborations in communities that include business, education, public health, health care, community organizations, community members, foundations, and policymakers working together to take aim at the root causes of poor health brought to light by the *Rankings*. These groups are identifying their community's health needs, assets and priorities, and developing strategies to improve their residents' health.

The *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program is a way for local leaders, concerned citizens and policymakers to create strong and healthy communities. This approach encourages communities to work together to translate the *Rankings* into action by identifying priorities for change, and then using evidence about what works to change policies and systems in ways that make it easier for people to be healthy and improve their quality of life. The *Roadmaps to Health* Action Center provides customized technical assistance to communities on strategies to improve health, with a specific focus on policy and system change. For more information on the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program see <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>.

The County Health Rankings Model

The conceptual model for the *Rankings* provides a visual that can guide applicants as they think about research ideas that might fall within the scope of this CFP. The model is shown on the cover and is described in greater detail on the CHR&R website at www.countyhealthrankings.org/our-approach. It is based on a population health model incorporating social, clinical, behavioral, economic, and environmental determinants of health.

The model includes two categories of health outcomes (length and quality of life) that are weighted equally to rank Health Outcomes for each county within a state. These outcomes are determined by a set of modifiable Health Factors: health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the

physical environment. While policies and programs impact health factors and health outcomes, they are currently not incorporated into the *Rankings*.

The underlying measures and data sources can be found on the website at <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/ranking-methods/data-sources-and-measures>, under “List of Measures and Sources”. The weighting assigned to the Health Factors was determined using five perspectives: history, review of the literature, weighting schemes used by other health rankings, analysis, and expert opinion.

The underlying data used to construct the *Rankings* are available to the public; we anticipate quantitative researchers will avail themselves of the data via website downloads, reducing effort to locate data and re-create the analysis for testing. All data metrics (raw and conversions) are included for calculating the *Rankings*; data are released in CSV (EXCEL) and SAS formats.

County Health Rankings Research Grants

Two major efforts focus on rankings of entire populations:

- 1) Since 1990, [America’s Health Rankings](#) have ranked the health of all 50 states using a composite measure including health outcomes and determinants.
- 2) In 2010, the [County Health Rankings](#) were released for the first time, with two overall ranks of the health of nearly every county within each of the 50 states: 1) health outcomes and 2) health factors (determinants).

This CFP, “The *County Health Rankings* Research Grants,” serves an important role in strengthening and evaluating the impact of the *County Health Rankings*. The goal of these research grants is to provide scholarly inquiry from outside the program to identify potential improvements to the *Rankings* and measure the impact that has occurred from the *Rankings*.

Researchers will work either independently or collaboratively to address a set of questions based on the research categories provided below.

Areas for Research

For this CFP, we are focusing on three categories of research that are most relevant to strengthening the *Rankings* or evaluating the impact of the *Rankings*. We have provided several *examples* of research topics within each of the three categories of research.

1) Quantitative analyses of *Rankings* data or results

- a) Using the *Rankings* data as a starting point to assess disparities across counties
- b) Using the *Rankings* data or results with other sources of information, such as measures of public health, medical care, and/or population health expenditures and investments, to conduct new analyses that could enhance the *Rankings* and drive changes in population health
- c) Using the *Rankings* data to identify and analyze trends
- d) Using the *Rankings* data to ascertain the costs or savings associated with changes in health within counties

2) Refinement of current methodology used in the *Rankings* model

- a) Exploring opportunities to analyze disparities in Health Factors or Outcomes Using the *Rankings* data, or develop new measures consistent with the *Rankings* model to communicate health gaps

- b) Developing new methods for utilization of data/measures on transit or housing to improve the “Physical Environment” section within the *Rankings* model
- c) Developing new methods for utilization of data/measures of Family and Social Support, such as child abuse and neglect or social connectedness, to improve the measures within the Social and Economic Factors section of the *Rankings* model
- d) Developing and testing measures of health care value (quality/costs)
- e) Testing alternative methods for addressing small sample sizes in counties.

3) Study of the quantitative or qualitative impact of the *Rankings*

- a) Examining the ways in which *Rankings* data have been used to inform decision-making on policies or programs by policymakers or other leaders within various sectors of the community
- b) Determining whether trends in *Rankings* outcomes or factors are leading toward better health within counties, or decreases in health disparities
- c) Ascertaining which types of data have been useful to mobilizing action toward community health across sectors and other types of data that communities desire to aid their efforts to achieve a culture of health
- d) Determining the ways in which media coverage has led to community or policymaker action related to the *Rankings*.

Successful applicants will either demonstrate how additional research can benefit and strengthen the *Rankings* or will conduct an evaluation that will define the impact of the *Rankings* on policies or communities. Proposed research must fit into one of the three categories but applications are not bound by the examples.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, an applicant organization must be located in the United States or its territories.

- Applications must be submitted by an educational institution or nonprofit organization that is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3).
- We welcome applications from investigators in health, social and behavioral sciences, biostatistics and/or informatics, and other fields.
- We seek a diverse group of applicants, including minorities, early career researchers and individuals who work in non-academic settings.

How to Apply

There are two stages in the competitive proposal process: (1) applicants submit a Brief Proposal that describes the proposed study and, if invited, (2) selected applicants then submit a full proposal, line-item budget, budget narrative, and other documentation.

Successful Applications

Successful applications will feature the necessary expertise to ensure the researcher(s) has the necessary skills to appropriately address the targeted content areas/questions within the broader categories. We anticipate researchers submitting an application will review materials on our website related to the conceptual model as well our ranking methods, data sources, etc., and familiarize themselves with the *Rankings* data available for download on the website at

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/ranking-methods>.

If a collaborative research effort is used, it should include participation from a university or other organization with expertise in the area being addressed. While the individual research applicant need not have an explicit focus on health, the research group that is defined must include participation from researchers with expertise in health outcomes and statistics if focusing on changes to the methodology. By collaborating with research organizations such as a public health institute; a health policy organization; or a group with experience studying disparities, the research team will be better able to describe, understand, and demonstrate its role in achieving meaningful and practical research impact.

Applicants must clearly explain how any external members will participate in the proposed project. It is also possible to add expertise when needed during the course of the research if the work requires it, but the core members should be defined in the proposal. Successful applicants will have experience with research, data management and analysis, and publication of findings in peer-reviewed journals.

The unit of analysis for the quantitative projects should be the county level. Other units of analysis would not allow us to incorporate findings from the research into the current ranking system. Qualitative approaches, by their design, may use other levels of analysis.

As mentioned above, an expected deliverable for research projects is a manuscript submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. If the paper is focused on additions to the *Rankings* or new methodology for ranking, a methods white paper will be acceptable in place of a manuscript. The anticipated outcome of this research is a more effective approach in the development and dissemination of the *Rankings* which further results in better health across counties.

Submission of a Brief Proposal to CHR

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute team is asking for a Brief Proposal from those eligible to apply (see eligibility criteria above). The Brief Proposal should include these sections and follow the length and formatting guidelines:

Section	Length	Format
1. Applicant Information		Use Brief Proposal Form (page 9)
2. Project Description	Page limit: 3	Double-spaced, 11 Font
3. Experience	One paragraph for each key participant (max of 150 words per paragraph)	Double-spaced, 11 Font For each key person, include a 4-page biosketch (NIH format or similar) in the appendix.
4. Work Plan including roles/FTEs (and collaborating partners if applicable)	Page limit: 2	Double-spaced, 11 Font
5. Summary Budget		Use Project Budget Form (page 11)

Proposals should succinctly describe the rationale/ hypothesis, supportive data, plan for statistical or qualitative evaluation and must assure reviewers that the question being asked is important and that the methodology applied to the question will be sound.

Applications must adhere to the page limits and formatting requirements for each section. We place a high value on clarity and brevity in the proposal.

The Brief Proposal form can be found on page 9.

Timeline for County Health Rankings Research Grants

January 14, 2015	Release of Call for Proposals
February 9, 2015	Questions on the CFP due by E-mail to Marjory Givens (marjory.givens@match.wisc.edu)
February 18, 2015	Frequently Asked Questions posted February 12, 2015 Brief Proposals due by 6:00 pm ET
March 16, 2015	Notification to all applicants
April 14, 2015	Full Proposals due
mid-May, 2015	Announce final selection
July 1, 2015	Start date for funded projects
June 30, 2016	End of funded projects

SUBMISSION:

By **February 18th, 2015, 6:00 pm ET**, submit completed Brief Proposal via e-mail to:
Marjory Givens, (UWPHI) marjory.givens@match.wisc.edu

Selection Criteria

All proposals will be screened for eligibility and then reviewed using the following criteria:

1. Commitment to and capacity of the applicant organization to implement the proposed research; manage the grant funds; administer and track expenditures and funding, and provide quarterly progress reports.
2. Demonstrated experience conducting research.
3. A clearly defined focus on research within one of the 3 categories of interest: quantitative analyses of *Rankings* data, refinement of current methodology, or study of the *Rankings* impact.
4. Rationale for how the findings will be useful to the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program and others, including other researchers.
5. A clear and feasible plan for achieving the proposed research and a timeline of key events.
6. An analysis of the anticipated opportunities and challenges that are likely to affect the research project, including a plan for how challenges will be addressed.
7. Data source(s) and sound methods for the proposed research.
8. A budget that aligns spending with objectives and strategies.

Brief Proposal Follow-up

The reviewers may contact applicants with questions if necessary; please be sure to include e-mail/phone contact information on the cover page of the Brief Proposal. The UWPHI team will notify all Brief Proposal applicants following the review of the Brief Proposal; if selected, we will ask for submission of a Full Proposal.

Expectations for Full Proposals

Applicants of selected research proposals will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. It is our intent to only select a small number of proposals to move forward. More details regarding the content of the Full Proposal will be provided at that time. In general, in a Full Proposal, applicants will refine their Brief Proposal and elaborate with more detail.

QUESTIONS: For further information about the application or administration of funds, please contact Marjory Givens, (UWPHI) at marjory.givens@match.wisc.edu or (608) 265-3992.

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Expectations for Grantees

1. Work with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) to establish grant contract and payments.
2. Within 4 weeks of notification of award, provide a detailed work plan to the UWPHI *Rankings* team.
3. Participate in regular conference calls with UWPHI staff, other grantees or researchers.
4. Prepare 3 brief (1-2 pages) quarterly progress reports for submission to the UWPHI *Rankings* team.
5. At the close of the grant, the grantee is expected to deliver a copy of a submitted paper for publication and/or provide a more detailed white paper on quantitative and qualitative methods used in the study to the UWPHI *Rankings* team.
6. Share findings and methodology with external audiences as appropriate.
7. Work with the CHR&R Communications Director and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation communications staff to plan and participate in the dissemination of findings.

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute <http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/>

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute is the focal point within the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health for translating public health and health policy research into practice.

Principal Investigators: *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*

Bridget Catlin, PhD, MHSA

Program Director for Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH), Senior Scientist

Julie Willems Van Dijk, RN PhD, Associate Scientist

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation www.rwjf.org

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. For more than 40 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.

Abbey Cofsky, MPH
Senior Program Officer

Andrea M. Ducas, MPH
Program Officer

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

Building a Culture of Health, County by County

A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program

2015 County Health Rankings Research Grants Brief Proposal Form

By **February 18, 2015 (6:00 PM ET)**, submit completed application via e-mail to
Marjory Givens, (UWPHI)
marjory.givens@match.wisc.edu

1. Applicant Information

Organization Name	
Organization Tax Identification Number	
Address	
Website	
Research Director	
Phone	()
E-mail	
Contact for questions during process (if different from Research Director)	
Phone	()
E-mail	

2. Project Description

In this section, be sure to include the following information:

- 1) Your proposed hypothesis/question(s), how it relates to the 3 categories of interest described in the CFP and how the findings will be useful to the *County Health Rankings and Roadmaps* program and others, including other researchers
- 2) Supportive data/studies
- 3) Data sources and quantitative or qualitative methods you propose to use to test the hypothesis/question
- 4) Anticipated opportunities and challenges that are likely to affect the research project, including a plan for how challenges will be addressed

This section of the proposal should not exceed 3 pages.

3. Experience Conducting Similar Research

Please describe your experience in conducting similar research using one paragraph (up to 150 words) for each key person working on the proposed study within your organization. Attach CVs as an appendix. (4 page limit on individual CVs)

4. Work Plan

Include roles/FTEs (include collaborating partners external to your organization if applicable)

This section of the proposal should not exceed 2 pages.

5. Project Budget

Provide estimated total costs for each category for the funding period (earliest start date is July 1, 2015 and latest end date is June 30, 2016) with a brief budget narrative.	
Personnel (Salary and Fringe)	
Supplies	
Travel	
Consultants	
Other Direct Costs	
Indirect <i>(may not exceed 12% of above costs)</i>	
TOTAL	
Budget Narrative	