



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Public Health Law Research

Making the Case for Laws
That Improve Health



2010 Call for Proposals—Round 2

Brief Proposal Deadline

April 14, 2010

Program Overview

(Please refer to specific sections for complete details.)

Purpose (See The Program on page 3.)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® (RWJF) seeks to build the evidence for and strengthen the use of regulatory, legal and policy solutions to improve public health. RWJF is equally interested in identifying and ameliorating laws and legal practices that unintentionally harm health. As public health practitioners, policy-makers and others consider how laws influence the public's health, they need evidence to inform questions such as: How does law influence health and health behavior? Which laws have the greatest impact? Can current laws be made more effective through better enforcement, or do they require amendment? The purpose of RWJF's *Public Health Law Research* program is to answer such questions by building a field of research and practice in public health law.

Eligibility Criteria (page 10)

Preference will be given to those applicant organizations that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or a tribal group recognized by the U.S. federal government, or affiliated with a tribal group. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. The focus of this program is the United States; studies involving other countries will be considered only to the extent they may directly inform U.S. law and policy.

Selection Criteria (page 10)

Complete selection criteria can be found starting on page 10.

Total Awards

- *Short-term studies*: Up to 18-month awards of up to \$150,000 each.
- *Complex and comprehensive studies*: Up to 30-month awards of up to \$450,000 each.
- Up to \$3.5 million will be available under this call for proposals (CFP) for research studies.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- **February 10, 2010**—CFP released and online application becomes available.
- **March 17, 2010**—Web conference for interested applicants. Registration is required.
- **April 14, 2010 (3 p.m. ET)**—Deadline for receipt of brief proposals.
- **Early June**—Applicants notified if invited to submit full proposals.
- **June 17, 2010**—Web conference for full proposal applicants. Registration is required.
- **July 21, 2010 (3 p.m. ET)**—Deadline for receipt of full proposals.
- **September 30, 2010**—Finalists notified.
- **November 15, 2010**—Funding initiated.

How to Apply (page 12)

Applications for this solicitation must be submitted electronically. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/phlr and use the Apply link for this solicitation. You will be required to register at MyRWJF before you begin the application process.

www.publichealthlawresearch.org

The Program

Public health law research is *the scientific study of the relation of law and legal practices to population health*. Laws have improved the public's health by influencing individual behavior (e.g., seatbelt use and immunizations) and the physical and social environment in which people live (e.g., regulating exposure to lead, mandating smoke-free workplaces, limiting sales of hazardous products). Laws not designed as health measures also influence public health for better or worse (e.g., criminal law enforcement by police). Rigorous, credible research can inform and guide the crafting and implementation of laws that promote public health.

Public Health Law Research is a five-year, \$17.3 million RWJF national program. The goal of this program is to build the evidence for and increase the use of effective regulatory, legal and policy solutions—whether statutes, regulations, case law or other policies—to protect and improve population health and the public health system.

This program includes three primary activities:

- Funding research and evaluation related to public health laws and their impact.
- Providing technical assistance to and coordination for those engaging in this type of research, analysis, evaluation and/or integration into practice.
- Supporting communication, translation and outreach efforts.

Total Awards

Up to \$3.5 million is available in this round. There are two categories of funding. Both require the integration of legal analysis and empirical research to determine effects of laws and policies on the health of the public. We encourage applicants to carefully consider their proposed research questions and scope of work to determine the appropriate level of funding to pursue. The selection process will focus on both the adequacy of funding to complete an individual

project, and the selection of a set of projects that most efficiently advances the program's goal of supporting rigorous research that will help to pave the way for public health laws and policies that improve health in communities around the country.

1. **Short-term studies.** This category includes qualitative or quantitative studies of the development, implementation, and/or mechanism(s) of action or health effects of specific laws or regulations. These grants will be up to \$150,000 each for up to 18 months.
2. **Complex and comprehensive studies.** This category includes multistate, time-series analyses and other in-depth evaluations of laws implemented across a variety of jurisdictions and fields, analyses of effective and ineffective components of laws and regulations, and analyses of implementation and enforcement challenges. These grants will be up to \$450,000 each for up to 30 months.

Overall Study Guidelines

Studies funded through this program will be at the intersection of law and public health. Studies may draw upon a range of other disciplines, including medicine, economics, sociology, psychology and public policy and administration, but the primary focus of the study should be a law or policy and its influence on public health.

The program seeks to support innovative theoretical approaches to assessing how laws influence public health. We encourage creativity and innovation in selecting and blending research methods. Innovative methods include experimental designs and simulations, the use of biological markers as outcome variables, mixed qualitative-quantitative studies, and the application of cutting-edge econometric and time-series models.

Research teams must demonstrate expertise in both law and public health. Research teams that combine legal expertise with advanced research design and statistical competence are strongly encouraged. Successful proposals will normally demonstrate that the research team includes investigators with practice experience, and/or that the research plan is closely informed by practice. Cooperation with health officials and other public health and governmental practitioners will usually enhance theoretical significance, methodological rigor and practical relevance.

Please note: Studies that focus primarily on substance abuse (i.e., alcohol, tobacco and drugs), the health care system and health care delivery and preventing childhood obesity will not be candidates for funding under this round. Please visit the Foundation's Web site (www.rwjf.org) for information about those areas.

Key Proposal Elements

Regardless of topic or academic discipline, proposals should convey essential information about the proposed study. Recognizing the space limitations of the brief proposal format, we expect applicants to ensure that:

- The proposal presents a theory or conceptual framework that clearly guides the design of and/or motivation for the empirical research.
- The proposal demonstrates the topic's relevance to and significance for public health, and explains how the results of the study will be useful to practitioners and policy-makers.
- The study design is systematic and rigorous. For example, for interview studies, the application addresses sampling, recruitment, interview topics, and methods for conducting the interviews and analyzing the data.
- The methods description is clear and appropriate to the research question(s) posed.

- The design, methods and measures draw, where appropriate, on theory and empirical research in law and regulation as well as epidemiology or other disciplines in public health.
- The measures are appropriate: variables for outcomes, mechanisms of action and other data accurately represent the underlying constructs or populations of interest.

Applicants selected to submit full proposals will be asked to address these study elements in greater detail. General guidance on PHLR design criteria can be found on the project website at www.publichealthlawresearch.org.

Topics for Research

This call for proposals focuses on three topics:

1. The impact of laws and legal practices on population health outcomes.
2. The use of innovative policies or regulatory techniques to promote healthier individual or organizational behavior.
3. The development, implementation and/or effectiveness of ordinances, executive orders and other legal tools used by local governments to improve public health.

The first two topics above are not specific to any jurisdictional level. Topic 3 is confined to the study of *local* laws and enforcement practices. *The examples of studies are for illustrative purposes only; they do not indicate a preference for studies of these specific topics.*

Topic Area 1: The impact of laws and legal practices on population health outcomes

Studies in this topic area will examine how laws or the activities of legal institutions and agents influence health outcomes, behaviors, or environmental conditions that are reasonably (and demonstrably) proximal to a health outcome. These *intervention studies* empirically assess the intended or unintended

effect of law on public health. They may involve the design and implementation of a new legal intervention or the observation and assessment of an existing law or regulatory tool. The evaluation of the intervention may include a quantitative assessment of changes in the relevant health outcomes, process evaluations of how the law has been implemented or both. Study methods may include case studies, controlled experiments, exploitation of natural experiments and quasi-experimental designs. The development of interventions by themselves without a public health application or assessment of potential health effects will not be funded.

Illustrative examples of studies that may contribute to improved understanding of the impact of law and legal practices on population health outcomes include:

- studies exploring how compulsory vaccination laws influence vaccination coverage rates or incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases;
- studies of the effect on death and injury of laws restricting cell phone use or similar behaviors while driving;
- studies of the impact of civil rights laws and policies in improving health outcomes;
- studies of the effects of clean water laws and enforcement on the safety of drinking water.

Topic Area 2: The use of innovative policies or regulatory techniques to promote healthier individual or organizational behavior

Studies in this topic area will assess innovative uses of regulatory authority to promote public health. Governments are using legal authority in new ways to effectively leverage other forms of control. Agencies have tackled complex regulatory challenges by creating partnerships and networks across government and with the private sector. Instead of issuing and enforcing rules, some agencies have enlisted regulated entities in setting industry standards of behavior,

drawn on the public to help monitor compliance, used market forces to shape behavior, and have emphasized incentives rather than punishments. For example, legal preparedness for disasters has entailed the creation of a legal infrastructure for cross-agency and inter-jurisdictional cooperation. Efforts to keep our food supply safe depend on government regulations and inspections and also industry codes of practice and accreditation programs. Voluntary accreditation and other quality improvement strategies are being used to improve the performance of public health agencies.

Illustrative examples of studies that may contribute to improved understanding of innovative public health regulation would include:

- a study of governance mechanisms—health impact assessments, advisory boards, participatory planning—used by health agencies to increase community participation in the public health regulatory process;
- a study of innovative laws and law enforcement practices to reduce the harmful community health effects related to crime, policing and incarceration;
- qualitative analysis of the role of private organizations in the regulatory process, such as the involvement of the food industry in developing, implementing and evaluating food safety policies;
- a study of health authorities’ use of environmental design, “default rules” and other “soft-law” mechanisms to promote healthier behavior in place of overt regulation.

Topic Area 3: The development, implementation and/or effectiveness of ordinances, executive orders and other legal tools used by local governments to improve public health

Studies funded in this topic area will add to the evidence base for effective use of law at the local level by exploring the implementation and effectiveness of local ordinances, codes, orders, and other legal tools.

Towns, cities and counties are vested with authority over a range of activities, such as food safety, land use, disease control and prevention, and law enforcement. Through that authority they can powerfully influence behaviors and the environment in which decisions that influence health are made. Using their legal authority, towns, cities and counties can also enhance the impact of or fill gaps in state and national regulations. In the past, local governments have offered important early leadership in areas such as tobacco control, harm reduction and the prevention of unintentional injuries. Local governments have often been innovators in public health law, developing new measures like menu labeling, bans on trans fats, clean indoor air laws and health-oriented zoning codes.

Illustrative examples of studies that may add to the evidence base on local public health law include:

- multi-city comparative assessment of zoning and land use regimes and how they affect individual health behavior, the community health environment, and health outcomes;
- identification of factors supporting effective diffusion of beneficial local public health law innovations to other jurisdictions;
- a study of how, why and to what extent local governments make use of their legal authority to achieve local public health goals;
- a study of the health impact of a city-level anti-violence initiative;
- studies of the health effects of legal measures undertaken by transportation, economic development, housing, and other “non-health” agencies.

Eligibility Criteria

Preference will be given to those applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or a tribal group recognized by the U.S. federal government, or affiliated with a tribal group. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories. The focus of this program is the United States; studies involving other countries will be considered only to the extent they may directly inform U.S. law and policy.

Selection Criteria

All proposals will be screened for eligibility and then assessed by a committee composed of RWJF staff, national program office (NPO) staff, a national advisory committee and other expert reviewers. The following criteria will be used to assess proposals:

- Significance of the public health problem addressed;
- Effective collaboration between public health and legal researchers and practitioners;
- Inclusion of investigators who are new to the field;
- Potential impact of study results on the development, crafting and implementation of laws and policies that positively influence population health;
- Plan for translation of research findings to the practice community and policy-makers;
- Efficient use of available funds within individual proposals and across the set of funded proposals;
- Ability of the study to advance methods in public health law research in general;
- Adequacy of personnel and resources to complete the proposed project.

Further guidance on PHLR research can be found on our Web site, www.publichealthlawresearch.org.

This program has a National Advisory Committee that makes funding recommendations to the Foundation. All final funding decisions are made by RWJF.

Grantees are expected to participate in the program's annual meeting, specifically, the Principle Investigator and Co-Principle Investigator. The National Program Office will pay for up to two senior project personnel to attend the meeting. In addition, grantees are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to communicate grant results including but not limited to conferences, policy briefings, media interviews and other forms of communications.

Evaluation and Monitoring

An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF will conduct an evaluation of the program. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, grantees will be required to participate in the evaluation.

Grantees are expected to meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports, as well as periodic information needed for overall project performance monitoring and management. We may ask principle investigators to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on their grants. At the close of each grant, the lead agency is expected to provide a written report on the project and its findings, suitable for wide dissemination.

Use of Grant Funds

Grant funds may be used for project staff salaries, consultant fees, data collection and analysis, meetings, supplies, project-related travel and other direct project expenses, including a limited amount of equipment essential to the project. 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.

How to Apply

Applications for this solicitation must be submitted electronically. Visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/phlr and use the Apply link for this solicitation. You will be required to register at MyRWJF before you begin the application process.

There are two stages in the competitive proposal process: (1) applicants submit a brief proposal that describes the project and, if invited (2) applicants then submit a full proposal and line-item budget for a grant.

Stage 1: Brief Proposals

Applicants must submit a brief proposal that describes the project and include a one-page preliminary budget. These should total no more than five pages in length.

Stage 2: Full Proposals

Selected Stage 1 applicants will be invited by letter or e-mail to submit a full proposal accompanied by a budget and budget narrative. Applicants invited to submit a full proposal will be expected to elaborate on the brief proposal, including a discussion of the study's significance, theoretical foundation, design, methods of data collection and analysis, and dissemination of findings. Further description and information will be provided at that stage to successful applicants.

For more information on the program and application requirements please contact the *Public Health Law Research Grant Solicitation Helpdesk* at (215) 204-2134 or phlr@temple.edu.

Helpdesk is available during the application process 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday, with the exception of May 31, July 2, and September 6, 2010.

Program Direction

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by the *Public Health Law Research* national program office located at:

Center for Health Law, Policy and Practice,
Temple University Beasley School of Law
1719 N. Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA 19122
www.publichealthlawresearch.org

Responsible staff members at the NPO at Temple University and other institutions are:

- Scott Burris, J.D., *program director*
- Heidi Grunwald, Ph.D., *deputy director*
- Jennifer Ibrahim, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.A., *associate director*
- Alexander Wagenaar, Ph.D., M.S.W., *associate director, University of Florida*
- Sharon Barkley-Samuels, *office manager*
- Evan Anderson, J.D., *legal fellow*
- Marek Sulzynski, M.P.A., *research and policy network coordinator*
- Michelle Mello, Ph.D., J.D., M.Phil., *methods core member, Harvard University*
- Jeffrey Swanson, Ph.D., M.A., M.Phil., *methods core member, Duke University*
- Jennifer Wood, Ph.D., M.A., *methods core member*
- Prabhu Ponskshe, M.A., L.L.B., *communications consultant, Health Matrix, Inc.*

Responsible representatives at RWJF are:

- Angela McGowan, J.D., M.P.H., *senior program officer*
- Michelle Larkin, J.D., M.S., R.N., *team director and senior program officer*
- Tom Andruszewski, *senior grants administrator*

**Other Grant
Opportunities**

RWJF's *New Connections* initiative, in collaboration with *Public Health Law Research* will release a new CFP in early 2010. It will support research consistent with the *Public Health Law Research* mission by investigators from underrepresented groups. Announcements of the CFP will be available at www.publichealthlawresearch.org and www.rwjf-newconnections.org.

Timetable

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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 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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 more than 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

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