

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Research Grants 2024 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Background

County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) is a program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI), with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). CHR&R works alongside others to influence our understanding of what shapes health and our decisions about shared resources so that people and places have what they need to thrive. CHR&R provides actionable data, strategies, and virtual learning forums to enhance how we work together to improve community conditions for all.

CHR&R Research Grants serve an important role in strengthening and enhancing the utility of the CHR&R data platform and tools to further health and equity. Funding for this solicitation is provided by UWPHI as part of its grant from RWJF to support CHR&R.

UWPHI will support studies that align with our work towards a world we envision - a world in which we value each other, honor our connectedness, and build communities where everyone can thrive. We continuously seek and advocate for a new understanding of data and evidence and develop methods that can challenge assumptions, explore possibilities, and build knowledge and collective power. CHR&R contributes actionable tools and resources to help accurately diagnose community problems, draw attention to the root causes of health inequities, and showcase solutions that leverage community strengths and reverse harmful impacts by shaping norms, values, laws, and policies to advance the best possible health for all.

Entering its second decade, the CHR&R program seeks to build upon the foundation it helped establish regarding the multiple determinants of health. We seek to evolve in ways that can accelerate efforts to acknowledge and intervene on the structural determinants of health and grow community power¹. Guided by prevailing public health theory and frameworks for population health and equity research², this Call for Proposals (CFP) focuses research on the conceptualization and measurement of structural determinants of health and community power. By focusing on these areas for research, we encourage scholarship that can recognize and clarify historical influence and how structural mechanisms have present day relevance. We also encourage scholarship that questions assumptions and critically reflects on widely held theories that undergird the production of health and equity.

More information on the CHR&R program can be found by visiting www.countyhealthrankings.org.

¹ Structural determinants of health: The written and unwritten rules (and how they are applied) that create, maintain, or eliminate hierarchical patterns of advantage between socially constructed groups in the conditions that affect health. People and

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groups with more power based on current social structures work — implicitly and explicitly — to maintain their advantage by reinforcing or modifying these rules. (Heller et al. manuscript under review, 2023)

Community power: The ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain, and grow an organized group of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance health equity ([Lead Local](#)).

² Public Health Critical Race Praxis tailors Critical Race Theory to the field of public health, thus facilitating its use for health equity research. See [Ford & Airhihenbuwa, Ethnicity & Disease, 2018](#)

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This CFP, “The CHR&R Research Grants,” plays an important role in strengthening and enhancing data and evidence-informed efforts to advance health and equity. The goal of these research grants is to provide scholarly inquiry from outside the program to identify potential improvements to the CHR&R data platform and tools that will increase their strategic use and impact. Investigators will work either independently or collaboratively to address a set of questions based on the research focuses provided below.

Areas for Research

The 2024 CFP will focus on the conceptualization and measurement of structural determinants of health and community power. By focusing on these areas for research, we encourage scholarship that can recognize and clarify historical influence and how structural mechanisms have present day relevance. We also encourage scholarship that questions assumptions and critically reflects on widely held theories that undergird the production of health and equity. We have provided several specific research questions and priority topics below that are most relevant to strengthening CHR&R data and tools to improve data accessibility, communication, or usability that can enhance learning and impact. However, investigators are encouraged to submit innovative proposals for other research topics that fit within the focus areas of research.

Focus Areas: Conceptualization and measurement of structural determinants of health and community power that evolve CHR&R data sources, methods, tools, and narratives and support understanding of the past and present context and patterning of health and racial inequity

- a. Exploring structural drivers of health inequities and the contemporary mechanisms through which power imbalances operate, including policies, laws, budgets, practices, and norms relevant to:
 - i. Democracy, civic participation, and representation (e.g., census and voter participation, gerrymandering, civic education, polling places)
 - ii. Environment and climate change (e.g., regional climate events, place-based risks and mitigation strategies)
 - iii. Wealth building and community financial health (e.g., banking access, community development investments, cost of living)
 - iv. Family and social support (e.g., systems that address child abuse and neglect, community allostatic load, social connectedness) and health-related quality of life (e.g., wellbeing, self-rated health, spirituality, happiness, loneliness)
- b. Enumerating policy design and implementation or historical data relevant to structural determinants of health for integration into CHR&R data and tools
- c. Exploring methods for the analysis of evidence related to health equity impacts of policies and interventions, including approaches to incorporation of historical context (see What Works for Health methods for [equity analysis](#))

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- d. Exploring new data repositories and collection efforts such as data sources to allow access to more timely and inclusive information (e.g., electronic health records, social media) and allow for the measurement of within-county disparities (e.g., sub-county data)
- e. Developing measures of place-based assets and resource allocation that might complement or replace people-oriented measures (e.g., number of local job opportunities vs unemployment rate)
- f. Exploring the responsible measurement of disparities within and among counties (e.g., intersectionality of racial, spatial, and other axes of inequity), with particular attention to the underlying theory and ethics of disparity measurement
- g. Exploring adjustments to variables included and appropriate weighting schemes for summary measures of population health (also referred to as composite measures or indices)
- h. Developing approaches to set benchmarks for measures of population health and equity with transparency around underlying values to define progress and improvement at the county level
- i. Exploring methods to highlight positive deviance (aka bright spots, resilience, places with conflicting factors and outcomes) and understanding the determinants of this deviance

Successful applicants will demonstrate how the proposed research will benefit and strengthen the CHR&R tools or enhance their use to improve health and health equity. Proposed research must fit into the general focus areas described above, but applications are not bound by the examples that are given. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate innovative approaches to improving data accessibility, communication, or usability that can enhance an understanding of complex and intertwined health factors.

Total Awards

Up to \$400,000 will be available for research under this CFP, with a combination of:

- Targeted 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 funding amounts higher than this will need to clearly specify the data collection or analysis steps requiring the higher amount.

Eligibility Criteria

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

- Applications must be submitted by tax exempt educational institutions, government agencies, or nonprofit organizations that are tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3).
- We welcome applications from investigators in a wide range of disciplines, including: health, social and behavioral sciences, biostatistics, environmental science, political science, demography, spatial data science, community psychology, history, economics, and/or informatics, and other relevant fields.

How to Apply

Required Content for Proposals

The CHR&R team is asking for a Proposal from those eligible to apply (see Eligibility Criteria above). The Proposal should include the five sections of content outlined in the Proposal Form (see page 8) and adhere to the length and formatting guidelines specified below:

Section	Length	Format
1. Applicant Information	Page limit: 1	Use Proposal Form (page 8)
2. Project Description	Page limit: 6	Double-spaced, 11 pt. Arial Font
3. Experience Conducting Similar Research	One paragraph for each key participant (max of 150 words per paragraph)	Double-spaced, 11 pt. Arial Font For each key person, include a 4-page biosketch (NIH format or similar) in the appendix.
4. Work Plan	Page limit: 2	Double-spaced, 11 pt. Arial Font
5. Summary Budget	Page limit: 1	Use Project Budget Form (page 10)

Selection Criteria

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

1. A clearly defined focus on research within the focus areas of interest: the conceptualization and measurement of structural determinants of health and community power.
2. Rationale for how the findings will improve population health or advance health equity and be useful to the CHR&R program and others, including practitioners and researchers.
3. 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.
4. A description of data source(s) and sound methods for the proposed research.
5. Demonstrated experience conducting research.
6. A clear and feasible plan for achieving the proposed research and a timeline of key events.
7. A budget that aligns spending with objectives and strategies.
8. Commitment to and capacity of the applicant organization to implement the proposed research; manage the grant funds; administer and track expenditures and funding, if ultimately selected.

Proposals should succinctly describe the rationale/hypothesis, supportive data, and methods. The proposal must assure reviewers that the question being asked is important, that it addresses one or more of the specific research areas outlined in this CFP, and that the data collection methods, measures, hypotheses, and analyses will rigorously be developed and clearly described. **We place a high value on clarity and brevity in the proposal.**

Proposals may include collaborative research efforts conducted jointly by two or more organizations or research centers working together. Applicants must clearly explain how any external members will participate in the proposed project.

Successful applications will feature the necessary skills and expertise to ensure the investigators can feasibly and appropriately address the targeted content areas/questions within the broader focuses. We anticipate investigators submitting an application will review materials on our website related to the conceptual model of population health ([County Health Rankings model](#)) as well our research methods, data sources, etc., and familiarize themselves with the CHR&R data and evidence available for download on the website: www.countyhealthrankings.org.

A successful application will also demonstrate 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.

Proposal Follow-up

The reviewers may contact applicants with questions if necessary; please be sure to include email/phone contact information on the cover page of the Proposal. The UWPHI team will notify all Proposal applicants following the review of the Proposal and any subsequent follow-ups.

Expectations for Grantees

1. Work with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) to establish grant contract and payments.
2. Provide a detailed work plan to the UWPHI team within 4 weeks of notification of award.
3. Participate in quarterly conference calls with UWPHI staff or other researchers as needed.
4. Prepare 3 brief (1-2 pages) quarterly progress reports for submission to the CHR&R team.
5. At the close of the grant, deliver a copy of a submitted paper for publication and/or provide a more detailed white paper on study methods to the CHR&R team. An expected deliverable for research projects is a publication-ready manuscript submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, but if the product is focused on additions to the CHR&R model or new methodology for ranking or rating, a methods white paper will be acceptable in place of a manuscript.
6. Share findings and methodology with external audiences as appropriate.
7. Work with the CHR&R communications staff to plan and participate in the dissemination of findings, as well as potential future evaluation activities.

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Timeline for CHR&R Research Grants

- October 27, 2023 Questions on the CFP due to County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
- November 3, 2023 Responses to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) posted on CHR&R website
- November 10, 2023 Proposals due by 6:00 pm ET
- December 1, 2023 Follow-up questions to applicable applicants
- December 8, 2023 Follow-up answers due
- By December 15, 2023 Announce final selection
- January 1, 2024 Start date for funded projects

SUBMISSION:

By November 10, 2023, 6:00 pm ET, submit completed Proposal via email to:
County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
research@chrr.wisc.edu

Please note: In fairness to all applicants, CHR&R will not accept late submissions.

QUESTIONS: For further information about the application or administration of funds, please contact CHR&R at research@chrr.wisc.edu.

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute www.uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute advances health and well-being for all by developing and evaluating interventions and promoting evidence-based approaches to policy and practice at the local, state, and national levels. The Institute works across the full spectrum of factors that contribute to health and equity. The Institute promotes an exchange of expertise between those in academia and those in the policy and practice arena.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation <http://www.rwjf.org/>

For more than 45 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has worked to improve health and health care. RWJF works alongside others to build a national Culture of Health that provides everyone in the United States a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. RWJF provides support for the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps program. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation. For more information visit RWJF.org.

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2024 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Research Grants Proposal Form

By **November 10, 2023 (6:00 PM ET)**, submit completed application via e-mail to research@chrr.wisc.edu

1. Applicant Information

Proposal Title	
Organization Name	
Organization Tax Identification Number	
Address	
Website	
Research Director	
Phone	()
Email	
Contact for grant administration (if different from Research Director)	
Phone	()
Email	

2. Project Description

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

- 1) Your proposed hypothesis/question(s), how it/they fit(s) within the focus areas of research described in the CFP and how the findings will be useful to CHR&R program and others, including practitioners and 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
- 5) The importance and anticipated impact of the research and how the findings could be used to advance health equity

This section of the proposal should not exceed 6 pages.

3. Experience Conducting Similar Research

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

(Please include a table that lists all members of the research team, their titles and email addresses.)

4. Work Plan

Please provide a detailed work plan for the study. Include evaluable, critical milestones, and task completion dates. Please indicate expected deliverables (e.g., manuscript, white paper, etc.), roles/FTEs (include collaborating partners external to your organization, if applicable), and project timeline. If a collaborative effort, note how the proposal team will be working together. *(Gantt chart or similar charts preferred)*

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 January 1 st , 2024 and latest end date is December 31 st , 2024) with a brief budget narrative.	
Personnel (Salary and Fringe)	<i>List individuals</i>
Supplies	
Travel	
Consultants	<i>List name, number of hours (cost per hour)</i>
Other Direct Costs	<i>(rent, phone, copying, etc)</i>
Indirect <i>(may not exceed 12% of above costs)</i>	
TOTAL	
Budget Narrative <i>(Please provide information on salary and percent effort and any detail necessary to justify the distribution of anticipated expenditures. Please note any in-kind contributions)</i>	