



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Ladder to Leadership

Developing the Next Generation of
Community Health Leaders



2008 Call for Applications

Application Deadline

July 1, 2008—August 27, 2010
depending on community

Program Overview

(Please refer to specific sections for complete detail.)

Purpose

Ladder to Leadership: Developing the Next Generation of Community Health Leaders is a national initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in collaboration with the Center for Creative Leadership. The initiative aims to enhance the leadership capacity of community-based nonprofit health organizations serving vulnerable populations. RWJF is committed to leadership development and improving the health of all Americans, particularly those in the most vulnerable communities—where people are often economically disadvantaged and have limited educational opportunities and inadequate access to health services.

Eligibility Criteria (page 6)

Only one applicant from each organization will be considered. Qualified applicants must:

- be an early- to mid-career professional with one to five years of supervisory experience;
- be an employee of a community-based, health or health-related nonprofit or government organization that serves vulnerable populations;
- work in one of the priority communities targeted by the initiative;
- commit to a 16-month leadership development initiative and curriculum;
- have the support of their organization's executive director or senior leader and their board of directors; and
- be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States or its territories at the time of application.

Selection Criteria (page 6)

Applications will be evaluated using the criteria listed on page 6.

Total Awards

Up to 30 fellows will be selected to participate in the program in each of nine targeted U.S. communities or regions: Central N.Y.; Cleveland, Ohio; Birmingham, Ala.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Eastern N.C.; Portland, Ore.; Mid-South Region (Western Tenn., Eastern Ark. and Northern Miss.); N.J. (specific site/region to be determined); and Starr County, Texas. More precise geographic boundaries can be found at www.laddertoleadership.org. This program will support travel costs.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- The program will be implemented in nine priority communities on a staggered schedule over the next four years.
- Please refer to the Timetable on page 11 for community-specific deadlines.

How to Apply (page 7)

Application forms can be found online at www.laddertoleadership.org. This program only accepts applications submitted online. For additional information, including answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), please visit the program Web site or contact:

Christy Schaefer, *project manager*
Phone: (336) 286-4595
E-mail: info@laddertoleadership.org

www.laddertoleadership.org

Background

In an increasingly complex and fragmented U.S. health system, community-based nonprofit organizations provide critical support for millions of underserved Americans. These organizations encounter growing demand for services at the same time that their financial resources are decreasing. The impending exodus of senior nonprofit leaders due to the retirement of the baby boom generation exacerbates the challenges of building leaders for nonprofit organizations. According to a study conducted by the Bridgespan Group, by 2016 the nonprofit sector will need approximately 80,000 new senior managers each year. To address these obstacles, nonprofits need to develop new leaders who can create innovative, client-focused practices, manage day-to-day operations and serve as visionary catalysts for systemic change.

Another key study, *Ready to Lead? Next Generation Leaders Speak Out*, asked thousands of nonprofit professionals what they needed to adequately prepare for executive leadership positions. Respondents most frequently cited the need to further develop their external connections and networks; their leadership capabilities, including increased self-confidence; their ability to lead and manage staff; and their collaboration skills. Respondents also indicated that leadership development programs preparing nonprofit professionals for senior level positions were seldom available to them.

To examine these leadership development challenges, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Center for Creative Leadership conducted a survey of more than 1,000 nonprofit leaders that focused on the specific competencies that leaders in health-related nonprofit organizations need to be effective today and in the future. Among leadership competencies deemed most necessary were: collaborative leadership skills, political savvy, influencing skills, networking skills, translational leadership skills to work across boundaries, systems thinking, visionary thinking and time management skills.

The Program

Ladder to Leadership: Developing the Next Generation of Community Health Leaders is focused on developing critical leadership competencies for 270 early- to mid-career professionals through an innovative, 16-month leadership development curriculum.

The program will be delivered in nine priority communities on a staggered schedule over the next four years. These communities were chosen after an extensive evaluation, which took into consideration census and other demographic data, community-based needs for public health leadership development and commitment of community partners to successfully implement the program.

Each phase of the three-part curriculum includes a mixture of face-to-face training sessions, individualized executive coaching and mentoring and team project work—all anchored within the context of the communities in which these leaders live and work to maximize the application and impact of the program concepts.

In Phase I, the Ladder to Leadership fellows will: receive an orientation to the program and curriculum; identify specific leadership challenges and form action learning teams among cohort members; and learn the fundamentals of the action learning leadership process, which will give them experience working across community agencies on specific health issues.

In Phase II, fellows will focus on relationship building, self-awareness, systems thinking, problem-solving, innovation and development of communication skills. By the end of this phase, fellows will be better able to select appropriate decision-making strategies, use strategic thinking and influencing skills, promote effective workplace conflict resolution and deploy effective innovation strategies.

Phase III will focus on sustaining the impact of Phases I and II at the organizational and community levels. Two key components of the Ladder to Leadership program are an action learning leadership process and the mentoring component. The action learning projects will give leaders experience working across community agencies on specific health issues. Mentoring by an experienced community leader during Phase III will help fellows enhance their understanding of the complexities facing leaders in their community and apply their new skills. When they have completed the program, Ladder to Leadership fellows should have increased their leadership and influencing skills and created stronger networks within their community.

The participating fellows' nonprofit organizations and their communities will also benefit from this program. Executive directors of participating organizations will benefit from the increased leadership capacity of the participating leader and from the community connections and networks these leaders create. In particular, the program will encourage increased cooperation among community health agencies, more frequent dialogue about addressing problems, more strategic partnerships and greater inter- and intra-community collaboration. Ultimately, the participating communities should be better served by a higher functioning, more collaborative group of leaders.

Eligibility Criteria

Only one applicant from each organization will be considered. Qualified applicants must:

- be an early- to mid-career professional with one to five years of supervisory experience;
- be an employee of a community-based, health or health-related nonprofit or government organization that serves vulnerable populations;
- work in one of the priority communities targeted by the initiative;
- commit to a 16-month leadership development initiative and curriculum;
- have the support of their organization’s executive director or senior leader and their board of directors; and
- be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States or its territories at the time of application.

Selection Criteria

Applicants will be chosen based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated record of accomplishment within the nonprofit sector.
- Potential for assuming leadership roles in the nonprofit health and health care field as evidenced by prior experience, accomplishments, membership on external boards and committees, references, etc.
- Proven commitment to serving vulnerable populations and improving their health outcomes.

How to Apply

Individuals who would like to apply to the Ladder to Leadership program should complete the electronic application form found on the program Web site, www.laddertoleadership.org. The completed application must be submitted online and include the following attachments:

- Resume
- Personal statement of desire and commitment
- A copy of the applicant organization's 501(c)(3) letter from the Internal Revenue Service
- Letter of commitment and support from the applicant organization's executive director or top official
- Two letters of reference (one of which must come from a board member)

Applications that do not include all documentation specified above will *not* be considered. Answers to FAQs and other relevant information are available on the program's Web site at www.laddertoleadership.org. Please direct all other inquiries about the program to:

Christy Schaefer, *project manager*
Phone: (336) 286-4595
E-mail: info@laddertoleadership.org

Program Direction

Direction and technical assistance for this program are provided by the Center for Creative Leadership, which serves as the national program office (NPO) located at:

Center for Creative Leadership
P.O. Box 26300
Greensboro, NC 27438-6300
Phone: (336) 286-4595
E-mail: laddertoleadership@ccl.org
Web site: www.laddertoleadership.org

The Center for Creative Leadership focuses on leadership education, research and expertise in solving the leadership challenges of individuals and organizations through creative leadership, the capacity to think and act beyond the boundaries that limit our effectiveness.

Responsible staff members at the NPO are:

- David Altman, Ph.D., *co-program director*
- Karen Dyer, Ed.D., *co-program director*
- Shera Clark, M.S., *co-deputy director*
- Lynn Fick-Cooper, M.B.A., *co-deputy director*
- Christy Schaefer, *project manager*

Responsible staff members at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation are:

- Sallie Petrucci George, M.P.H., *program officer*
- John Lumpkin, M.D., M.P.H., *senior vice president and director, Health Care Group*
- Linda Wright Moore, M.S., *senior communications officer*
- Lois Shevlin, *grants administrator*

**National Advisory
Committee**

This program has a national advisory committee that makes selection recommendations to RWJF staff. RWJF makes all grant decisions. RWJF does not provide individual critiques of applications submitted.

Timetable

Since the program will be delivered in communities in a staggered manner, dates may change. Therefore, the following application deadlines are subject to revision. Within each designated community, applications will only be accepted during the stated timeframe.

- **June 1–July 1, 2008 (3 p.m. ET)**
Central N.Y.
- **September 5–November 14, 2008 (3 p.m. ET)**
Cleveland, Ohio
- **December 5, 2008–February 13, 2009 (3 p.m. ET)**
Birmingham, Ala.
- **March 20–May 15, 2009 (3 p.m. ET)**
Albuquerque, N.M.
- **June 26–August 14, 2009 (3 p.m. ET)**
Eastern N.C.
- **September 25–November 13, 2009 (3 p.m. ET)**
Portland, Ore.
- **December 18, 2009–February 26, 2010 (3 p.m. ET)**
Mid South (Western Tenn., Eastern Ark., Northern Miss.)
- **March 19–May 21, 2010 (3 p.m. ET)**
N.J. (specific site/region to be determined)
- **June 25–August 27, 2010 (3 p.m. ET)**
Starr County, Texas

For the most current information about the deadlines and key dates for each community, please visit the program's Web site at www.laddertoleadership.org.

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.



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