



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Salud America!

The RWJF Research Network to
Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children



2008 Call for Proposals

Proposal Deadline

February 6, 2009

Program Overview

(Please refer to specific sections for complete details.)

Purpose

Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that supports research on environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic of obesity among Latino children. The program also aims to develop a network of researchers whose findings will help identify the most promising obesity-prevention strategies specifically tailored for Latino communities. This call for proposals (CFP) seeks research proposals with the potential to inform policy-makers, community leaders and others who are working to prevent and reduce childhood obesity in Latino communities. Findings will advance RWJF's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.

Eligibility Criteria (page 11)

Complete eligibility criteria are described on page 11.

Proposals must be submitted by an educational institution or non-profit organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, that is not a private Foundation under Section 509(a) of the Code, that is located in the United States, and with which the proposed investigator is affiliated.

- Because the projects funded under this program require close collaboration with Latino communities, proposals are strongly encouraged from investigators who are of Latino descent, have demonstrated a commitment to working with the Latino community or who can demonstrate a desire and capability to work on the issue of Latino childhood obesity.
- Research proposals submitted by junior investigators will be considered separately from proposals that are submitted by more experienced investigators.

Selection Criteria (page 12)

Complete selection criteria are described on page 12.

Total Awards

- A maximum of 20 grants will be awarded through this single funding opportunity.
- Grants of up to \$75,000 each, including indirect costs, will be awarded for a period of up to 24 months. All funded activities must be completed within the 24-month period.

Key Dates and Deadlines

- **February 6, 2009 (3 p.m. ET)**—Deadline for receipt of proposals.
- **April 15, 2009**—Finalists notified.
- **July 1, 2009**—Funding initiated.

How to Apply (page 15)

Proposals must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system at <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/salud>. Please direct inquiries to:

Fira Rawasia, *helpdesk specialist*
E-mail: saludamericahelpdesk@sra.com
Tel. (866) 941-7146

www.salud-america.org

Cover photo: Charlie Schuck

Background

Today, nearly one-third of U.S. children and adolescents are either overweight or obese, placing them at an increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other serious health problems. Latino children, who belong to the largest, youngest and fastest-growing minority group in the United States, have one of the highest rates of obesity.

The most recent data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey show that 38 percent of Mexican-American children are obese or overweight, compared with 30.7 percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 34.9 percent of African-American children. Unfortunately, there is insufficient data available for other Latino subgroups. This problem underscores the critical nature of this call for proposals (CFP) and highlights the urgent need for further research to identify the most effective policies and programs for reversing the childhood obesity epidemic among Latino children.

According to the Institute of Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most effective policies, programs and interventions for addressing the epidemic require a comprehensive approach involving key stakeholders from many sectors, including government, industry, the local community, schools and families. Strategies and interventions must also be responsive and culturally sensitive to the communities at risk.

Accordingly, in spring 2008, *Salud America!* conducted a national Delphi survey among 313 researchers, policy-makers, community leaders and other Latino childhood obesity stakeholders to identify and assess the top priorities for research aimed at preventing obesity among Latino children. Delphi participants represented 31 states and Puerto Rico, and 49.2 percent of the respondents were Latino. The findings from this Delphi survey comprise the *Salud America!* research agenda and are the basis for the research areas and topics identified

in this CFP. The national program office (NPO) for *Salud America!* aims to help develop investigators in the field of Latino health and position them for funding from the National Institutes of Health and other competitive awards.

The Program

Through this CFP, *Salud America!* aims to advance the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's goal to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by building the evidence base for childhood obesity prevention strategies among Latinos.

The specific objectives of this CFP are to:

- increase the skills and experience of researchers who are working to reduce and prevent obesity among Latino children; and
- identify the most promising policy-relevant strategies to reduce and prevent obesity among Latino children.

Up to 20 research projects will be funded. Grants of up to \$75,000 each, including indirect costs, will be awarded for a period of up to 24 months. All funded activities must be completed within the 24-month period.

Investigators must propose a project in one of two general areas: 1) research that has strong potential to inform policy; or 2) the evaluation of an existing policy or program, its implementation or its impact. Specific details are provided below:

1) Research that has strong potential to inform policy.

Investigators may propose to conduct research that informs the development or improvement of policy that addresses Latino childhood obesity at the national, state, local or institutional (e.g., school, park, restaurant) level.

Research proposals must include:

- a research plan, including an abstract, background, goal description, data requirements, data collection plan, methodology and analysis plan;
- a description of how the research findings will inform decision-makers who have the potential to address Latino childhood obesity at the national, state, local or institutional (e.g., school, park, restaurant) level;
- a description of how the intended end-users of these research findings will be included in the development and implementation of the research plan; and
- a letter of support from a policy-maker or intended end-user of the research that describes the specific potential contribution of the findings to their work. The letter also should explain how the policy-maker or intended end-user contributed to the conceptualization of the proposed research design, as well as his/her participation in the development of the proposed plan for analysis and reporting.

2) Evaluation of an existing policy or program, its implementation or its impact.

The policy or program evaluated must address childhood obesity among Latino children at the national, state, local or institutional (e.g., school, park, restaurant) level.

Evaluation proposals must include:

- a description of the policy or program to be evaluated, a statement describing the purpose for the evaluation and an explanation of how the proposed evaluation could inform policy or program improvements;
- a description of the plausibility of the policy or program goals, given the challenges and resources available to the implementing organization;
- a description of the evaluation plan, including data to be collected, how it will be collected and the measures to be used in evaluating the policy or program;

- a description of how policy-makers and the intended end-users of the evaluation findings have been included in the development of the proposed evaluation plan; and
- a letter of support from a policy-maker or intended end-user of the evaluation findings that describes the specific potential contribution of the findings to their work. The letter also should explain how the policy-maker or intended end-user contributed to the conceptualization of the proposed evaluation design, as well as his/her participation in the development of the proposed plan for analysis and reporting.

Research Topics

Results from the national Delphi survey conducted by *Salud America!* were the driving force behind the program's research agenda. The agenda, which is the basis for this CFP, identifies communities, schools and families as its priority research areas, and includes five of the most important research topics within each area. Both research and evaluation proposals must focus on *one topic* from the following list.

Communities

- Policies and programs that address the built environment (i.e., man-made surroundings) and involve collaborations with multiple stakeholders to promote physical activity.
- Collaborations among community organizations, schools and families to generate after-school opportunities for children to engage in physical activity.
- Community participatory processes that encourage Latino families to discuss their needs and define action strategies to address childhood obesity. Community participatory processes engage partners from a community in all phases of the research process, with a shared goal of producing knowledge that will be translated into action or positive social change for the community.
- Policies and programs that limit the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in public institutions.

- The influence of neighborhood safety (e.g., crime, traffic, dogs) on outdoor recreation and physical activity.

Schools

- Integrating health, nutrition and active physical education classes into the school curriculum.
- Policies and programs mandating daily, active, physical education classes for students based on age and health status (e.g. tailored programs for toddlers, extremely obese or handicapped children).
- Breakfast and lunch food choices.
- Policies that determine standards for nutrition and physical activity.
- Collaborations between or among parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders to inform better policies related to healthy nutrition and physical activity.

Families

- Research on engaging Latino families as advocates for initiatives that aim to prevent and reduce childhood obesity at the community and school levels.
- Comprehensive interventions that treat the family as the unit of analysis (i.e., childhood obesity interventions that recruit entire families to participate, rather than just the children).
- Parental knowledge, attitudes and behaviors (i.e., modeling) related to children's food consumption and food preferences.
- Family access to physical activity opportunities at parks, playgrounds, schools and recreational facilities, as well as the impact of intermediate variables (e.g., how perceptions of safety relate to access).
- Food literacy education initiatives that aim to help families provide nutritious foods on a limited budget (e.g., programs that provide cooking classes using healthy and affordable ingredients).

Examples of Possible Research Proposals:

- *Example One:* Parents at a local school have formed a small advocacy group that aims to change the physical education curriculum to increase their children's opportunities for physical activity and expose their children to more culturally-relevant forms of physical activity. Potential projects include:
 - examining the strategies employed by the group, including its formation, growth and approaches for overcoming potential barriers;
 - analyzing the effectiveness of the group's use of culturally appropriate community participatory practices towards the furtherance of their goals; or
 - studying culturally relevant adaptations to the existing curriculum proposed by the group and how their implementation influenced the children's physical activity levels.
- *Example Two:* An investigator seeks to confirm a hypothesis that lack of nutrition education among a community of low-income Latino families contributes to childhood obesity rates within that population. Potential projects include:
 - assessing the need for a nutrition education program for Latino families within a community;
 - studying the effects of parental participation in nutrition education programs targeted at Latino children; or
 - assessing how lack of access to affordable, culturally appropriate foods within the area is contributing to the increased consumption of less healthy foods.

Examples of Possible Evaluation Proposals:

- *Example One:* A local community with a large Latino population has recently collaborated with its neighborhood associations to build new sidewalks that will provide children with safer routes for walking to school. Potential research projects include:
 - an analysis of the impact of these changes on children's ability to walk to school and how these changes have differed based on the neighborhoods' cultural and/or ethnic compositions;
 - a study of changes in parental perception of neighborhood safety and its impact on Latino children's opportunities for physical activity; or
 - an analysis of subsequent activities and collaborations that resulted from the creation of new sidewalks to further encourage Latino children's physical activity (e.g., the introduction of school crossing guards at high-traffic intersections).
- *Example Two:* A local school district with a large Latino population has recently revised its student lunch menus to provide healthier meal options. Potential projects include studies that examine:
 - the adherence of local school cafeterias to these changes;
 - the effectiveness of enforcement activities by the school district to implement the new menus;
 - the receptiveness of students and parents to these changes, including how the changes impact students' and parents' knowledge of nutrition;
 - the impact that these changes have had on students' dietary habits; or
 - factors that are influencing the effectiveness of the program, such as the cultural appropriateness of the food options.

Expectations of grantees funded through this CFP include the following:

- All activities and reporting must be completed within 24 months from the start of the award.
- Investigators are required to participate in *Salud America!* annual scientific summit meetings. The first summit is scheduled for September 9–11, 2009.
- Each investigator is required to develop a manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Grantees also are encouraged to disseminate their research findings through additional strategies, including submitting and publishing findings in peer-reviewed journals; demonstrating the inclusion of findings in decision-making processes at the federal, state, local or institutional (e.g., school or day-care center) level; and providing evidence of attempts to promote findings to mainstream, nonresearch audiences.

Investigators also are strongly encouraged to use the data and experience gained from the research funded to submit future competitive proposals to other federal, state, regional or private funding organizations (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

The *Salud America!* NPO will provide the following support for award recipients:

- Opportunities for training related to their research (e.g., grants management, methodology, cultural competence) and opportunities for public presentations during the annual scientific summit meetings.
- Promotion of grantee activities in *Salud America!* publications (e.g., quarterly newsletter, E-alerts) and other media outlets.

Eligibility Criteria

Proposals must be submitted by an educational institution or non-profit organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, that is not a private Foundation under Section 509(a) of the Code, that is located in the United States, and with which the proposed investigator is affiliated.

Salud America! seeks proposals that are collaborative, culturally appropriate and relevant to Latino children. Investigators from a wide range of fields, such as agriculture, behavioral science, business, economics, education, law, marketing, medicine, nutrition, political science, psychology, public health, public policy and urban planning are encouraged to apply. The perspectives of researchers who are knowledgeable about racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in Latino communities are especially needed. Transdisciplinary proposals are encouraged.

Because the projects funded under this program require close collaboration with Latino communities, proposals are strongly encouraged from investigators who are of Latino descent, who have demonstrated a commitment to working with the Latino community or who can demonstrate a desire and capability to work on the issue of Latino childhood obesity.

Investigator Qualifications

Investigators are encouraged to submit proposals under one of two categories that will be considered separately during the review process.

1. *Junior investigators* who have completed their doctoral degree, or equivalent terminal degree, no more than seven years before the proposal due date.
2. *All other investigators* who have completed their doctoral degree, or equivalent terminal degree, more than seven years prior to the proposal due date.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed through a multistep review process, with participation from expert reviewers, RWJF staff, NPO staff, and the program's national advisory committee. RWJF will make all final funding decisions. RWJF does not provide individual critiques of proposals.

All proposals will be judged based on the individual merit of each proposal (as determined by the criteria below) and the degree to which the proposal, taken as whole, represents diversity in terms of topic area, geographical focus and the population to be studied. The following criteria will be used to assess proposals:

- Overall scientific merit.
- Potential to engage and/or inform policy-makers and/or end-users on issues related to Latino childhood obesity.
- Development of clear hypotheses, use of an appropriate conceptual framework and feasibility of the data collection and analysis plans.
- Use of commonly agreed upon and culturally appropriate measures of assessment within the research design and the participatory process, if applicable.
- Appropriateness of the budget and project timeline.
- Uniqueness and innovativeness of the proposal.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Evaluation

An independent research group selected and funded by RWJF may conduct an evaluation of the program. As a condition of accepting RWJF funds, grantees will be required to participate in the evaluation through periodic surveys during and after the actual grant period.

Monitoring

Grantees must meet RWJF requirements for the submission of narrative and financial reports, as well as periodic information needed for overall project performance, monitoring and management. NPO staff and consultants will be available to provide technical assistance to facilitate this process and maximize grantee success.

The program may ask grantees to participate in periodic meetings and give progress reports on their grants. At the close of each grant, the grantee 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 the first year of funding, travel expenses for the first annual *Salud America!* scientific summit meeting will be covered by the NPO and do not need to be included in the proposed budgets. However, travel expenses for the 2010 scientific summit meeting are the responsibility of the grantee and must be reflected in the proposed budget. Additional in-kind or external funding is welcome and should be described in the proposal.

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

All proposals for this program must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system at <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/salud>.

Proposals must be received by February 6, 2009 (3 p.m. ET) and are limited to 10 single-spaced pages. Additional guidelines and information are available on the *Salud America!* Web site at www.salud-america.org.

Two informational Web conference calls will be held on December 19, 2008, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET and on January 8, 2009, from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET to answer specific questions about the program, as well as the proposal and selection processes. Participation in these calls is strongly encouraged, but not required. To register, please send an e-mail to saludamericahelpdesk@sra.com. For more information on the program, proposal requirements or registering for the Web conference call, please contact:

Salud America! Helpdesk
Fira Rawasia, *helpdesk specialist*
E-mail: saludamericahelpdesk@sra.com
Tel. (866) 941-7146

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.

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Sign up to receive e-mail alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at www.rwjf.org/services.



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