

2008 Call for Proposals

Brief Proposal Deadline

December 16, 2008



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Public Health Practice

Evaluating the Impact of Quality Improvement

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to increasing the successful application of quality improvement (QI) methods in health departments. We believe that the use of QI will enable local, state, tribal and territorial health departments to improve their performance and their ability to protect, promote and preserve health in the communities they serve. Additionally, in preparation for national public health accreditation, many health departments are looking at QI as a means of improving performance to meet accreditation standards. Currently, however, there is little published evidence on the value and impact of QI in public health, and only preliminary evidence exists about the factors that promote the successful implementation and spread of QI efforts in governmental health departments.

Fifteen to twenty projects of between \$120,000 and \$160,000 for up to 24 months will be funded through this solicitation. Funds will be awarded directly to the selected health departments.

Purpose

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation seeks to build the evidence regarding the:

- scope and nature of QI efforts in governmental health departments;
- value of QI efforts to improve public health processes, service delivery and health status outcomes;
- QI techniques best suited for different types of processes and outcomes;
- data sources and methods required to evaluate QI efforts;
- barriers that impede health departments' efforts to apply QI, and the factors that enable the successful application of QI; and
- resources and/or conditions needed for QI efforts to yield meaningful improvements in the delivery and impact of public health services.

The term "quality improvement" is applied to a broad spectrum of strategies and techniques. This call for proposals (CFP) refers to a QI approach focused on systems change to improve performance on specific measurable outcomes such that changes in outcomes can be assessed by data collection and analysis. This definition of QI is based on the model for improvement, which entails four steps: setting the aim; defining the measures for the outcomes of interest; making changes based on the use of various analytic approaches (e.g., process analysis, fishbone diagrams, root cause analysis); and then testing the effects of the changes on outcomes. This final step involves the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) model—an iterative, multidisciplinary, data-driven process used for microsystem improvement. This approach to QI has been used to achieve improvements in public health infrastructure, policies and the delivery of services. For example, health departments are currently applying PDSA to reduce costs, increase efficiency, increase customer satisfaction, create healthier environments in their community and improve health status outcomes of the populations they serve.

The University of Minnesota, School of Public Health is managing this solicitation and seeks proposals from local, state, tribal and territorial health departments to evaluate and document the effects of QI efforts conducted by health departments. All health departments must identify an evaluator, either internal or external to the health department, who will conduct the evaluation. The University of Minnesota will

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Key Dates and Deadlines

- **November 14, 2008 (2:30 p.m. ET)**
Informational Web conference call.
- **December 16, 2008 (3 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of brief proposals.
- **Early February 2009**
Applicants notified if invited to submit a full proposal.
- **March 4, 2009 (3:00 p.m. ET)**
Deadline for receipt of full proposals.
- **June 15, 2009**
Start of grants.

Inquiries

For complete information about this call for proposals, selection criteria or proposal process please visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/ph2.

Inquiries may be directed to Tim Crowley at info-QIPublicHealth@rwjf.org

www.rwjf.org/cfp/ph2

For more information about funding opportunities from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, visit Grants at www.rwjf.org.

Sign up to receive Funding Alerts on upcoming calls for proposals at www.rwjf.org/services.



offer assistance in identifying qualified evaluators, if needed, and all selected health departments will be offered technical assistance on designing and implementing their QI efforts and evaluations.

For more detailed examples of the type of QI eligible for this CFP, please see the following references:

The Multi-State Learning Collaborative (MLC-3), Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement

www.nmphi.org/home/section/1-15/about-us/view/39/

The RAND Corporation's report "Enhancing Public Health Preparedness: Exercises, Exemplary Practices, and Lessons Learned, Phase III; Task B2: Final Report: Promoting Emergency Preparedness and Readiness for Pandemic Influenza (PREPARE for PI), Pilot Quality Improvement Learning Collaborative"

www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/2007/RAND_WR491.pdf

"Embracing Quality in Local Public Health: Michigan's Quality Improvement Guidebook"

http://accreditation.localhealth.net/MLC-2%20website/Michigans_QI_Guidebook.pdf

National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO), Quality Improvement Resources

www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/accreditation/QIresources.cfm

Public Health Foundation, Performance Management and Quality Improvement

www.phf.org/pmqi/index.htm

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for grants provided as part of this solicitation, applicants must:

- be a local, state, tribal or territorial health department in the United States or one of its territories;
- have prior experience in conducting quality improvement processes;
- initiate a new QI project that can be implemented immediately after the grant period begins and completed within one year or have a QI initiative currently in progress that will continue through the first year of the grant award period;
- have a plan for identifying a qualified evaluator or, if a potential evaluator has already been identified, provide a letter of support and curriculum vitae for that evaluator (who may be internal or external to the health department); and
- be willing to publish and present findings to help increase the successful application of QI in health departments across the nation.

Types of Projects Funded

Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will focus on evaluating the implementation of the health department's QI effort. The evaluation should include both process evaluation and outcome evaluation.

Examples of eligible QI efforts include, but are not limited to:

- increasing the efficiency of public health services to lower costs, increase value of services, volume of people served, impact of services and customer satisfaction;

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- implementing and assessing the effectiveness of evidence-based practices and approaches to improve the conditions that make people healthier, including prevention activities (e.g., immunizations, increased access to areas for physical activity, reduced exposure to environmental toxins); and/or
- improving health status indices for the populations served by the health department or reducing disparities in health outcomes between different populations in the community.

Potential areas for evaluation include, but are not limited to:

- costs and benefits of implementing the QI effort;
- applicability of different QI methods for different types of targets (e.g., capacity, process or health outcomes);
- health department personnel attitudes towards and knowledge of QI before and after the QI effort;
- stakeholder satisfaction with the QI implementation experience; or
- enabling and limiting factors to the successful application of QI in the health department.

For more information on evaluating QI efforts in public health, see the report, *Embracing Quality in Local Public Health: Michigan's Quality Improvement Guidebook*, Appendix C, pp. 83-88. The report is available online at http://accreditation.localhealth.net/MLC-2%20website/Michigans_QI_Guidebook.pdf.

Selection Criteria

A panel of experts in public health QI and evaluation will review the brief proposals and select a subset to proceed to the full proposal stage. Selection criteria include:

- alignment of ongoing or proposed QI efforts with the definition of QI provided in this CFP;
- degree to which the proposed target area for QI has an indirect or direct link to improving population health status;
- potential for the evaluation of the QI effort to increase understanding of how to successfully apply QI to improve health department processes and outcomes;
- potential for the evaluation of the QI effort to demonstrate the value of QI for increasing the impact of public health services;
- an outline of the evaluation plan and qualifications of evaluator (*if the evaluator has been identified*); or
- proposed evaluation targets and actions for identifying an evaluator for the project (*if the evaluator has not been identified*).

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. Health departments that will be working with an outside evaluator will be responsible for paying the evaluator directly from their grant. Grantees must be available to attend two two-day technical assistance meetings, one at the beginning of the grant period and one at the end of the grant period. The budget should include travel to these two technical assistance meetings. The majority (70% or more) of the funds should be reserved for evaluation activities. The QI implementation period is expected

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to occur during the first year of the award, while the evaluation effort will take place before, during and after the QI implementation period.

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. Please refer to the budget guidelines within the Grantmaking Online system for additional budgeting information.

How to Apply

Proposals for this program must be submitted through the RWJF Grantmaking Online system at <http://grantmaking.rwjf.org/ph2>.

To apply, applicants should submit a brief proposal that:

- describes the target area for improvement that will be the focus of the QI project;
- describes the QI methodology that will be utilized;
- briefly describes the health department's experience with QI, including both current and prior efforts;
- provides an outline of the evaluation plan and qualifications of the selected evaluator (*if the evaluator has been identified*); or
- describes the specific focus of the evaluation and plan for identifying an evaluator (*if the evaluator has not been identified*).

All applicants should log into the system and familiarize themselves with online submission requirements well before the final submission deadline. Program staff may not be able to assist all applicants in the final 24 hours before the submission deadline(s). In fairness to all applicants, the program will not accept late or incomplete proposals.

Applicant Web Conference

A Web Conference call for potential applicants will be held on November 14, 2008 from 2:30-4:00 p.m. ET to provide an overview of the solicitation and offer an opportunity for potential applicants to ask questions. Registration is required. To register and receive dial-in information please visit www.rwjf.org/cfp/ph2 and click on the applicant Web conference link located in the Key Dates section.

www.rwjf.org/cfp/ph2