

Childhood Obesity Rapid Response Fund Overview for Prospective Applicants

Today, about one in three American children and teens is overweight or obese. Childhood obesity is causing a broad range of health problems previously not seen until adulthood, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and elevated blood cholesterol levels.

The childhood obesity epidemic is causing a national outcry as well as a multitude of efforts designed to help reverse this trend. But those efforts face a variety of hurdles from industry and political opposition to ignorance and apathy. One of the greatest emerging challenges is the ability of public policy efforts to build strong campaigns to overcome opposition and achieve success. That is why the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the American Heart Association, and a team of experts from across the childhood obesity movement have teamed up through the Childhood Obesity Rapid Response Fund.

Mission:

The mission of the fund is to make effective strategic investments in ongoing state, local, and tribal public policy campaigns in order to increase public policy impact on healthy weight and living among children. Our efforts target a wide array of childhood obesity policies and give particular focus to impacting the highest obesity prevalence and most at-risk populations. General information on policy areas can be found at www.rwjf.org/childhoodobesity/strategy.jsp. If you have specific questions on whether your policy goal falls within the fund, please email your question to the contact listed below.

What Does Rapid Response Mean?

We understand that changing policy requires quick action and flexible resource deployment. This is particularly true as shifts in political and public opinion create time-sensitive opportunities to organize coalitions, educate legislators and the general public, etc. If needed, the entire process for step two funding proposals (see below) can be completed in under a week. The fund considers proposals on a rolling, competitive basis.

Rapid response funding will support short-term supplemental advocacy activities like grassroots organizing, coalition building, polling and other public opinion research, media relations, etc - all of which are proven tactics and strategies for advancing and sustaining policy gains. However, the way you approach your policy advocacy work is as important as the specifics of what you want funded. Your supplemental advocacy project should be a strategically timed “level up” investment. A “level up” is a specific resource or activity that, when carefully integrated with the rest of your work, raises the effectiveness of your whole campaign. We can help you understand and build your “level up.”

Eligible Types of Campaigns:

- *State, local, and tribal public policy:* Both levels of policy effort are eligible.
 - Direct implementation of federal legislation or regulation is not eligible; however distinct state, local, and tribal action is eligible if it provides for advance implementation or increased real impact beyond the scope of the federal action.
- *State, Local, or Tribal Appropriations:* Advocacy efforts to secure funds for topical government programs can be eligible for this fund depending on scope of potential impact and other considerations. Also, efforts to create binding impact on how an existing government agency, department, or program utilizes funding (for example, to increase impact on priority populations) can also be eligible based on scale of potential impact and other considerations.

- *Passage vs. Implementation/Enforcement:* Most grantees will actively seek state, local, or tribal public policy change. If, however, a policy change has already been enacted but is not being implemented or enforced, and population impact can be demonstrated in the proposal, an enforcement campaign is eligible for funding.
- *Policy Defense:* The fund will, on a limited basis, support the defense of existing policies if population impact is proven.
- *Regulatory vs. Legislative Impact:* State, local, and tribal public policy efforts that target regulations (rather than legislation, for example) are eligible.

Grant Parameters and Requirements:

Grants will be made only to non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations. Most grant awards will be in the range of \$15,000-\$100,000, however larger awards could be considered depending on the population and impact. Current grants run within the range of two weeks to six month in duration. As short-term supplemental grants, no indirect or similar is allowed/funded. Grants must meet the following criteria:

- *Impactful:* The specific policy being pursued must actually deliver population impact.
- *Viable and Promising:* The applicant must be engaged in a viable and promising childhood obesity public policy effort.
- *Supported by Matching Lobbying Resources:* Grants are provided for non-lobbying advocacy activities only. Though there is no specific match requirement, applicants must demonstrate separate direct and grassroots lobbying resources adequate for the effort.
- *Compliance:* Grantees must follow compliance requirements mandated by the AHA.

The Two-Step Application Process:

Important: All interested parties must complete a pre-application consultation with the fund manager prior to applying (call or email to schedule your discussion).

- *Step-One, Eligibility Application:* Complete the application for eligibility at the link provided below. This first step is not a request for funding; rather, it is an application to qualify for funding eligibility. If your application is accepted, you will be notified that you are eligible to submit a step-two proposal for funding. **Eligibility is NOT a promise of future funding but it is an opportunity to submit a funding proposal. You cannot apply for funds if you are not approved for eligibility, so complete this application and get in the process today!**
Link: www.heart.org/obesityfund
- *Step-Two, Funding Proposal:* This second step is focused on your specific proposal for funding. Fund staff will work with you to determine proper timing for a proposal, but you may submit a funding proposal any time after you have been approved for eligibility in step one. Proposals will be considered on a rolling competitive basis. The proposal includes a budget, description of how you will use the funding, and updates on information provided in Step 1.
- *Decisions:* Submissions for both step-one and step-two are evaluated by a national Steering Committee of experts (committee roster is posted on our web site). This committee meets once a month; however, the step-two proposal process, from proposal submission to grant fund distribution, can be completed in under a week if needed.

Questions and Support:

Aaron Doeppers
 Manager for State and Local Obesity Initiatives
 American Heart Association
 aaron.doeppers@heart.org
 (608) 886-2988

Updated November 2012