

## Prize Criteria

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize (“the Prize”) honors the work of communities that foster health and wellbeing for all by addressing systemic inequities. In the 10 years since it launched, the Prize has recognized more than 50 communities across the country that are at the forefront of advancing health, opportunity, and equity for all. The Prize serves to inspire change and highlight community-led solutions that are breaking down the barriers to health and wellbeing caused by structural racism and other forms of discrimination.

The Prize shines a light on communities that are paving the way to health equity, from cities and counties to tribes and regions. Every community’s journey and strategies are unique, but across the board, Prize communities create and sustain a Culture of Health through deep cross-sector partnerships, efforts led by those directly affected by inequities, and sustainable solutions that address policy, systems, and environmental factors.

## Selection Criteria

Communities are best positioned to define for themselves the solutions they need in order to make health equity a reality. As such, the Prize selection criteria intentionally focuses on the journey—including strategies and other guideposts of progress—as much as the results your community has achieved together and the indicators you are tracking.

Reviewers use the following six Prize selection criteria as the lens to evaluate all submissions throughout the process, with a particular focus on the first three criteria.

### 1. ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL RACISM AND OTHER STRUCTURAL INJUSTICES TO CREATE CONDITIONS THAT ADVANCE HEALTH EQUITY

... means dismantling the systems that cause health disparities and cultivating pathways that support wellbeing. We encourage communities to show how they respond to challenges and build on strengths to address health inequities. Strategies addressing structural racism and other obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and healthcare—and focusing on positive solutions—are considered crucial to achieving a Culture of Health.

### 2. COMMITTING TO SUSTAINABLE POLICY, SYSTEMS, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND CULTURAL CHANGES

... means making thoughtful, data-informed decisions that are designed to last and to increase power, wellbeing, and opportunity of those most impacted by health inequities. For example, building participatory budgeting practices that put decision making power about resources in the hands of people most affected by those decisions, or establishing meaningful and effective community advisory boards for relevant policies and programs. It takes interconnected, mutually reinforcing processes that are practiced regularly across community initiatives, rather than as discrete or isolated activities, to shift communities toward a Culture of Health. We encourage communities to demonstrate how residents, leaders, and organizations are collectively identifying policy, systems, environmental, and cultural priorities; addressing major factors that influence health; making space for what works; and taking coordinated action to implement solutions that have staying power.

## Prize Criteria

### 3. WORKING ALONGSIDE PARTNERS ACROSS SECTORS, AND ELEVATING THE EXPERTISE AND SOLUTIONS HELD BY PEOPLE WITH FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH INEQUITIES

... means that people and organizations across disciplines and sectors (public and private) are working together—from grassroots organizations to businesses, including and especially those that plan, govern, and finance communities. Building community power, voice, and participation, and ultimately achieving a Culture of Health, requires the leadership of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color; people with firsthand experience of health inequities; and those who are navigating resource-scarce environments. We encourage communities to show how they approach redistributing power, such as through visible and meaningfully compensated roles and leadership positions, and/or deep engagement with community organizers or other power-building organizations.

### 4. ENGAGING IN CULTURAL WORK THAT CELEBRATES COMMUNITY AND ENVISIONS AND ADVANCES A MORE JUST FUTURE

... means communities are actively engaged in cultivating and maintaining relevant cultural touchstones to celebrate and preserve community culture in ways that cultivate belonging and shared meaning. Creative, cultural practices that cultivate a sense of belonging and invite community members to experience their interconnectedness are the bedrock to healing and repair from structural racism and other forms of structural injustices that have created, and still perpetuate, health inequities. We encourage communities to show how they are inspiring others and sharing collective dreams for a future beyond structural racism and status quo power structures.

### 5. MAKING THE MOST OF AVAILABLE COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND FOSTERING SUSTAINABILITY

... means building on community assets and designing the work so that it can continue over time. This includes making equitable decisions about how to invest resources. We encourage communities to demonstrate how they are centering sustainability through the generation, allocation, and alignment of diverse financial and nonfinancial resources, such as network- building and knowledge sharing to improve health equity in the community.

### 6. MEASURING AND SHARING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS OF PROGRESS IN CULTURALLY RELEVANT WAYS

... means establishing shared goals across sectors and partners; agreeing on definitions of success; identifying measurable indicators of progress that include process as well as outcomes; and continuously using data to improve processes, track outcomes, and change course when necessary. This criterion recognizes the rigor and validity of culturally relevant forms of qualitative measurement; that many communities have experienced a historical lack of investment, which has resulted in insufficient data infrastructure and capacity; and that meaningful progress takes steps that are complicated to measure, such as the development of trusted relationships. Measuring and sharing progress is a form of embracing community accountability and requires local and cultural context.