



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:
ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION CULTURE OF HEALTH PRIZE
ALUMNI STORYTELLING COHORT

OVERVIEW

The RWJF Culture of Health Prize program (“the Prize”) is launching a one-time, 12-month Prize Alumni Storytelling Cohort (“Prize Story Cohort”) for RWJF Culture of Health Prize alumni communities (“Prize alumni.”) Key facts about the opportunity include:

Application deadline: January 16, 2024.

Amount: \$150,000 award from Health Resources in Action (HRiA), as part of the RWJF Culture of Health Prize program. These funds will be provided to awardees to support their local efforts related to storytelling and offset any potential costs incurred during their participation in the Prize Story Cohort.

Commitment: Awardees will identify one consistent person from the community who will participate in a 12-month Prize Story Cohort, and drive local storytelling efforts, in partnership with other community partners, that elevate and advance local change work related to the Prize.

Duration: 12 months (April 16, 2024–April 15, 2025).

Purpose: Support storytelling about the alumni community’s efforts that align with current Prize focus on addressing structural racism and other structural injustices to create conditions that advance health equity.

Who is eligible: Prize alumni communities awarded the Prize before 2023. Awardee communities will be required to identify one consistent representative from the community to engage in the full 12-month Prize Story Cohort on behalf of their community. This individual will serve as a liaison to the community in extending learning and action.

Number of awards available: Up to 10.

Who is managing the award and cohort: HRiA will manage the distribution of funds and connectivity between this effort and the overall Prize program alumni. Spitfire Strategies will lead the programming and cohort engagement for this award.

Selection of awardees: Interested applicants will submit applications via the HRiA grantmaking portal. Visit this [webpage](#) for instructions and use the application link on the right-hand side. **Applications submitted after 2 p.m. EST on January 16, 2023, will not be considered.**

A review committee composed of HRiA, Spitfire, and RWJF staff closest to the Prize program will review applications and select awardees by April 2, 2024.

BACKGROUND

We all want to live in a United States where everyone has a fair and just opportunity to reach their best health and wellbeing no matter their race, ethnicity, ZIP code, or socioeconomic status. Across the country, communities are working together to make this vision a reality.

An important step in building a Culture of Health is sharing stories about what is possible to effectively address structural racism and other forms of discrimination to improve community conditions to advance health equity. Uplifting these concrete stories of progress and solutions can inform people and motivate them to take action to advance health equity.



The RWJF Culture of Health Prize (“Prize”) program is launching this one-time Prize Story Cohort open to alumni communities that won the Prize before 2023. The Prize Story Cohort will engage individuals from selected communities to expand the reach and influence of the storytelling efforts happening in the alumni communities and as part of a national effort supported by RWJF. Selected participants will have the opportunity to hone their stories and storytelling skills and then apply them in a variety of settings.

Your storytelling will serve as inspiration to other communities, policymakers, and practitioners and build demand for systematic change to advance health equity.

As Prize alumni, you are part of a powerful network of partnerships leading change in communities across the U.S. In addition to creating positive change in your local communities, your work is influential in inspiring others to do so, too. Progress is most powerful when the people leading change—people like you—share your own stories and solutions.

The stories we see and hear shape how we perceive the world. Real, lasting policy, systems, and environmental change requires changing how people think about what is necessary and possible. Some Prize alumni are already doing this type of storytelling. Others are working on local policy, systems, and environmental changes, but not promoting that work through storytelling and communications. Regardless of the extent to which your community is already involved in storytelling and communications, if you are interested in starting or strengthening those efforts, we encourage you to apply for the Prize Story Cohort.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The selection committee will choose up to 10 winning communities through a competitive selection process to receive a range of resources and supports including the following:

- **A \$150,000 award.**
- **Training from Spitfire Strategies to enhance story development and storytelling** with media, policymakers, advocacy networks, and grassroots organizations.
- **Support from Spitfire Strategies in bridging relationships with priority audiences**, which can include policymakers and journalists.
- **Opportunities to expand networks** by connecting with other Prize communities, as well as national and local leaders working to build a Culture of Health.

THE COMMITMENT

Awardees will identify one consistent person from the community who will participate in a 12-month Prize Story Cohort, and drive local storytelling efforts in partnership with other community partners that elevate and advance local change work related to the Prize focus and criteria. The primary expectations of members of the cohort include:

- Participate in select virtual cohort gatherings and one in-person meeting with Spitfire Strategies throughout the award period to aid in development of relationships and peer-to-peer learning across the cohort.
- Participate in four to six virtual cohort-related trainings and monthly coaching sessions with Spitfire Strategies to strengthen storytelling strategies and skills.
- Engage with Spitfire Strategies, including the above-mentioned monthly coaching sessions over the course of the cohort to shape storytelling strategies and identify storytelling communications opportunities specific to the community’s focus and priorities.
- With Spitfire’s support, identify, pursue, and enable two communications opportunities (e.g., conferences, public speaking engagements) and leverage four to six local media efforts to gain regional, state, and national audiences and influence over the course of the Prize Story Cohort.
- Actively connect the storytelling work back with relevant community partners and the local change work in the community related to the Prize, engaging them in the storytelling work, lifting up their voices and stories, and strengthening the community’s storytelling capacity in a way that will endure beyond the award cycle.



- Attend the 2024 Prize winners celebration event and alumni gathering to share learning from participation in the cohort and stories developed.
- Upon completion of the Prize Story Cohort, present stories, accomplishments, and impact of participation in the cohort on advancing your community's work to the Prize program team.

ELIGIBILITY

This competitive opportunity is open only to communities that are previous winners of the RWJF Culture of Health Prize (prior to 2023) that have continued any community effort associated with or evolving from efforts originally recognized by the Prize. Recognizing that people, organizations, and focus of local efforts shift and evolve over time, if the primary contact people or organizations have changed, the applicant must be able to connect the present to the past, describing how the current work connects to the collective effort of the original Prize-winning partnership.

To be eligible, applications must designate a local U.S. government entity or tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity operating within the community to receive the \$150,000 award.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Successful applicants must:

1. Reflect the breadth of work and collaboration happening across the community and across multiple sectors that reflect the spirit of the Prize focus and selection criteria (see Appendix);
2. Describe alignment of the ongoing work in the applicant community and the focus of the intended storytelling efforts with the spirit of the 2023 Prize and its selection criteria, especially criterion 1: *Addressing structural racism and other structural injustices to create conditions that advance health equity* (see Appendix);
3. Demonstrate interest and ability to actively participate in the cohort over the 12-month period, with clear description of how participation will benefit the community's local change efforts. Please identify one person who will be consistently and actively engaged throughout the cohort;
4. Demonstrate that the proposed cohort participant plays a relevant role in the community to serve as a lead in driving storytelling efforts and local change efforts.

HOW TO APPLY

All applications for this funding opportunity must be submitted via the HRiA grantmaking portal. Visit this [webpage](#) for instructions and use the application link on the right-hand side.

Applicants will be asked to submit an essay, limited to four pages, with answers to the following:

1. How is your work connected to, or how has it evolved in relationship with the original organizations and efforts that were recognized by the Prize?
2. Describe the cross-sector work as it's currently playing out in your community (recognizing it has most certainly shifted and evolved since you were awarded the Prize). Describe how it aligns with the current Prize focus and selection criteria, specifically criterion 1: *Addressing structural racism and other structural injustices to create conditions that advance health equity*.
3. Describe the storytelling efforts that you propose to advance through this funding/Cohort opportunity. Include a description of whether these storytelling efforts are ongoing and the value this funding/cohort opportunity would add, or if it would be new (either is fine). *Note: this will be something that the Prize Story Cohort participant will evolve in partnership with Spitfire and your community partners over the course of the cohort, so this response is not meant to set things in stone, but to offer a starting point.*
4. Describe the audiences you are hoping to reach with this work, and what you want them to do differently. Include any local audiences and others that may be beyond your immediate community. *Note: this will be something that the cohort participant will evolve in partnership with Spitfire and your community partners over the course of the cohort, so this response is not meant to set things in stone, but to offer a starting point.*



5. List and describe the organizations and people that would be involved in this funding opportunity, who would participate in the cohort, and to whom cohort participants would be connected (and how) to advance local storytelling work.
6. To the extent possible, describe potential types of communications and storytelling-related activities and resources that you anticipate or might want to consider. Note that these ideas are just a starting place and will be more fully developed as part of cohort participation with support from Spitfire.

BUDGET AND USE OF FUNDS

No formal budget is required as part of the application process and no formal expense reporting will be required. It is expected that the award be used to support cohort participation and expenses related to your community's storytelling efforts, including but not limited to staff, local travel, activities, tools, capacities, collateral, and resources. A general narrative summary of the elements, activities, and products the funding was used for will be expected upon completion of the cohort.

FUNDING DETAILS

Number of awards: Up to 10 awardees

Amount: \$150,000 per awardee

Payment of Award: The award will be paid in full to winners upon awardee selection and completion of the grant agreement with HRIA.

IMPORTANT DATES

November 28, 2023: Open for submissions

December 6, 2023: Informational webinar

January 16, 2024: Deadline for submissions

February 12, 2024: Notification of application status (turndown or advance as finalist)

March 4–8 2024: Virtual interviews with the finalists

April 2, 2024: Notification of selected participants

April 16, 2024: Cohort and grant start

April 15, 2025: Cohort and grant end

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about the application portal and instructions, contact Michelle Stuart or Albaney Gray at CultureOfHealthPrize@hria.org.

For questions about the RWJF Culture of Health Prize Alumni Storytelling Cohort, contact Michael Crawford or Claire de Leon at CultureOfHealth@spitfirestrategies.com.



APPENDIX: 2023 RWJF CULTURE OF HEALTH PRIZE SELECTION 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 for 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.

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



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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.

ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to improving health and health equity in the United States. In partnership with others, we are working to develop a Culture of Health rooted in equity that provides every individual with a fair and just opportunity to thrive, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.