

**HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH SPECIAL SOLICITATION:
COVID-19 AND SOCIOECONOMIC RECOVERY EFFORTS—
IMPACTS ON CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Frequently Asked Questions

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1) About this funding opportunity

What is the Healthy Eating Research Special Solicitation on COVID-19 and Socioeconomic Recovery Efforts funding opportunity?

The Special Solicitation on COVID-19 and Socioeconomic Recovery Efforts grants are offered through the *Healthy Eating Research* program. This special funding opportunity aims to fund research on how COVID-19-related relief and recovery policies and programs impact child health, nutrition and well-being. HER is interested in understanding how social and economic programs and policies related to poverty reduction—such as financial payments to families, income assistance programs, housing assistance or housing security programs, and increased access to social services—impact child obesity, diet quality, food security, and other relevant child and family health outcomes among lower-income and families of color.

What is the maximum award available through this funding opportunity? How many grants will be awarded?

Each grant will award up to \$250,000 for up to 18 months. Smaller grants, such as those involving secondary data analysis, which can be conducted with smaller budgets and across shorter time periods (e.g., under \$200,000 for 12 months) will also be considered.

How do I apply for a grant?

Applications for this solicitation must be submitted electronically. Visit and log in to the [application site](#) to apply. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register at <http://my.rwjf.org> before you begin the application process.

There are two stages in the application process.

Stage 1: Concept Paper

Applicants must submit: 1) a concept paper narrative of up to three pages (1.5 line spacing) describing the study, including the total budget amount and project timeline estimate; and 2) biosketches for key personnel. The deadline to submit concept papers is November 17, 2021 (3 p.m. ET). Applicants must follow the instructions and use the templates provided in the RWJF online system. Concept papers submitted after November 17, 2021 (3 p.m. ET) will not be reviewed.

Stage 2: Full Proposals (if invited)

Selected Stage 1 applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal narrative of up to 15 pages (1.5 line spacing) accompanied by a detailed budget spreadsheet and budget narrative and

additional supporting documents. Applicants must follow the instructions and use the templates provided in the RWJF online system. The deadline to submit full proposals is February 16, 2022 (3 p.m. ET).

Why do you first use the concept paper instead of accepting a full proposal from all applicants?

The concept paper method saves your time and ours. We review all of the concept papers and invite a limited number of applicants to submit a more detailed full proposal for further consideration. When reviewing concept papers, we aim to select those proposals we feel are the strongest in meeting the study parameters as outlined in the CFP, and that are aligned with the overall goals of our program. Concept Papers will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to clearly articulate the rationale, research question(s) and aims, strength and feasibility of the research design and methods, and focus on the targeted age group and priority populations. We aim to invite a portfolio of full proposals that represent a balance of topic areas (e.g., income supports, diet quality, obesity, food security, housing) and are timely and policy-relevant. Qualifications of the PI and other key personnel are also considered.

How detailed should my budget be in the concept paper?

You should not include a budget in your concept paper. As part of the concept paper stage, applicants are required to provide only the total amount of funding requested. Applicants invited to submit a full proposal will need to provide detailed budget information via a budget worksheet spreadsheet and budget narrative. Templates for the required budget documents will be provided at the full proposal stage, if invited.

When can I expect to be notified on the status of my concept paper?

Applicants will be notified whether they are invited to submit a full proposal no later than December 20, 2021.

How can I check the status of my proposal?

Stage 1: Concept Paper

Upon submission of the concept paper, you will receive a confirmation email from the RWJF online system. Please ensure that you have confirmation of your concept paper submission; this will be necessary should any issues arise regarding your submission. Your concept paper will be available to you via <http://my.rwjf.org> for one year from date of submission.

Stage 2: Invited Full Proposals

Upon the successful submission of your proposal, you will receive a confirmation email from the RWJF online system. Please ensure that you have confirmation of your proposal submission.

Your full proposal will be available to you via <http://my.rwjf.org> for one year from date of submission.

Note: We expect to receive many proposals. If you have a question about a specific proposal, please send an email to healthyeating@duke.edu or call us at 800-578-8636. Please be sure to include the name of the applicant institution, the principal investigator, and contact information in your communication.

How will proposals be reviewed?

Invited *Full Proposals* will be reviewed by a minimum of three external reviewers with research content area and/or policy expertise, HER leadership, and RWJF senior staff. Final funding decisions are made by RWJF leadership. Complete selection criteria for proposals can be found in the CFP.

When will grants be awarded? When will I be notified if I have been awarded a grant or not?

Applicants will be contacted via email and informed whether or not they have been selected as finalists. Notification of finalists for all grant types will occur in April 2022. Awards will begin in June 2022.

Who is the funding institution for these grants – HER or RWJF?

Healthy Eating Research (HER) is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), with the National Program Office (NPO) based at Duke University. All research grants awarded via this CFP will be established as subawards from Duke University to the applicant organization. All funded awards will be managed by HER NPO staff.

Because the HER NPO prime funding is from RWJF, all applicants and grantees will be required to adhere to the RWJF budget guidelines referenced in the online application system.

How can I get more information about these grants?

Visit [Healthy Eating Research's](#) website to learn more. You may also contact the *Healthy Eating Research* national program office, at healthyeating@duke.edu.

2) Eligibility

We have two distinct grant proposal ideas. Can we submit both? Is there any chance we could be funded for both?

Your organization can apply for more than one grant through the funding opportunity described in this CFP. The proposals will be reviewed independently; however, when making final funding recommendations to RWJF, we will also consider the uniqueness of the project in relation to the mix of potentially funded projects and geographic dispersion of grantees. It is rare that we will fund the same PI or project team for two grants.

If we have received RWJF funding in the past, can we apply for another RWJF grant?

Yes, individuals who have received HER or other RWJF funding in the past are eligible to apply for these grants.

Can an investigator participate in more than one proposal, or submit multiple proposals?

Yes, an investigator may participate in more than one proposal. For example, an investigator might serve as the principal investigator on one proposal and a co-investigator on another proposal. In making final selections, however, we will consider the geographic and organizational representation of grantees.

Can two organizations submit a joint proposal?

Yes, two organizations may submit a joint proposal. However, one organization must serve as the recipient of the grant. This organization will be identified in the online system as the “Applicant Organization.” The organization receiving the grant may choose to establish a subcontract or consulting arrangement with the other organization(s). You will need to identify one principal investigator (PI) and you also may choose to name one co-principal investigator (Co-PI). There is no limit to the number of co-investigators. If the proposal is funded, the person listed as PI at the Applicant Organization will have ultimate responsibility for the grant.

Will you award grants to multiple institutions for the same project?

No. One organization must serve as the recipient of the grant. This organization will be listed as the “Applicant Organization” in the online system. However, subcontracts to multiple institutions are allowed for the same project through one grant award. The organization that receives the grant will manage the subcontracts. The organization receiving the grant may also enter into consulting arrangements with other individuals or institutions.

What types of organizations are eligible to receive a grant under this program?

Preference will be given to applicants that are either public entities or nonprofit organizations that are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and are not private foundations or Type III supporting organizations. *Healthy Eating Research* may require additional documentation from organizations not meeting these criteria. Applicant organizations must be based in the United States or its territories.

My organization is not classified as a 501(c)(3) type organization. Can I still apply?

Yes. While preference is given to tax exempt organizations classified as 501(c)(3) organizations by the I.R.S., other types of organizations may apply. Organizations that are not classified as 501(c)(3) organizations may be required to submit additional documentation, or complete additional reporting requirements if a grant is awarded.

Are there restrictions or preferences regarding nonprofit collaborations with for-profit firms?

There are no specific restrictions or preferences. We will review all collaborations for actual or perceived conflicts of interest and for issues that might affect the perceived credibility of the research results.

Can governmental entities such as USDA, NIH, the Indian Health Service, and local public health departments apply to this program?

Yes, governmental entities may apply. In some cases, additional documentation/paperwork may be required if your organization is chosen as a finalist. The *Healthy Eating Research* national program office will advise you about these requirements (if necessary) prior to the grant award.

Will HER fund individuals?

No. We do not award grants to individuals.

Can we submit an application for an ongoing partnership or project?

Yes, we accept applications from existing partnerships and projects, as long as they are for research projects that meet the overall grant parameters as outlined in the CFP. For all grants, it should be made clear in your proposal if this is a new component or extension of your existing project.

Will you fund community demonstration projects?

No, *Healthy Eating Research* awards grants for research studies. This program does not fund demonstration projects.

Will you fund measurement development studies?

Yes, we will fund measurement development studies.

Will you fund dissertation studies?

No, *Healthy Eating Research* does not fund dissertation studies at this time.

Is it required that the PI have a PhD, JD, MD, etc., or would a master's degree be acceptable?

The experience and qualifications of the research team is one of the primary criteria for proposal review. A doctorate or other terminal degree (e.g., PhD, JD, MD) is not required, but is strongly preferred for the principal investigator.

Can research associates/postdoctoral researchers be principal investigators?

Yes, research associates and postdoctoral researchers may serve as principal investigators on *Healthy Eating Research* grants. However, you should check your institution's policy regarding this, as some universities only allow faculty members to be principal investigators on grants.

What sort of research expertise are you looking for in an investigator?

Research expertise should include a strong knowledge of formulating research hypotheses, crafting an appropriate study design and methodology, analyzing and reporting on the findings, and then communicating and translating these findings to relevant audiences. It is important for the research team to have a track record in policy-related research. It is also expected that the research team includes individuals with relevant content expertise.

3) Proposal Content and Programmatic Questions

What topics are you most interested in for this CFP?

HER is interested in understanding how social and economic programs and policies related to poverty reduction—such as, financial payments to families, income assistance programs, housing assistance or housing security programs, and increased access to social services—impact child obesity, diet quality, food security and other relevant child and family health outcomes among lower-income and families of color.

The COVID-19 recovery plans, like the CARES Act or ARPA, provide a unique opportunity for researchers to examine how or whether economic or social policies impact family and children's health, nutrition, weight, or food security status. These could be policies directly focused on food and nutrition (e.g., nutrition assistance programs), or indirectly related such as improved income supports (e.g., child tax credits, increasing minimum wage), paid family leave, housing support, and healthcare access (e.g., Medicaid provisions). More details on topics of interest for this CFP are provided in the "Topic Areas for this Special Solicitation" section of the [CFP](#).

Where can I learn more about HER and RWJF's focus on equity and priority topics for this grant opportunity?

Information about Healthy Eating Research's focus on equity can be found [here](#) and RWJF's Culture of Health [here](#). More details on the COVID-19 recovery plans are provided on page 8 of the FAQ.

Will you consider proposals related to COVID-19 recovery plans that do not focus specifically on family and children's health, nutrition, weight, or food security status?

We are primarily interested in the impacts of COVID-19 recovery plans on family and children's health, nutrition, weight, or food security status. Other child health indicators can be included. Proposals that focus on outcomes more broadly related to overall family and children's health should discuss the connection between the priority COVID-19 and socioeconomic recovery effort and the outcomes of interest.

Do all proposals need to focus on a COVID-19 recovery plan?

This CFP will only fund proposals that focus on a component of a COVID-19 recovery plan. In 2020, the U.S. Congress passed four special appropriations laws to assist federal agencies with recovery and aid to state and local governments, businesses, and families. Two emergency COVID-relief packages were also passed. More information about each is provided below:

1. *Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020* ([Public Law \(P.L.\) 116-123](#), §8B): This act included emergency funding for both domestic and international responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, largely to the Department of Health and Human Services and USAID. Details on this act can be found [here](#).
2. *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* ([P.L. 116-127](#), §19B): The key provisions included in this act are public health, food and nutritional funding (including waivers for SNAP), Medicare and Medicaid, paid sick leave, tax credits, unemployment insurance, and extended benefits. Learn more [here](#).
3. *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* ([P.L. 116-136](#), §2.08T): The CARES Act temporarily expands unemployment benefits, provides tax rebates to American citizens, and suspends payments and interest to student loans. Individuals, small businesses, big corporations, hospitals and public health, federal safety net, state and local governments, and education were impacted the most by this Act. Learn more [here](#).
4. *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act* ([P.L. 116-139](#), §483B): This act provided funding for the paycheck protection program for small businesses, small business disaster loans, COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, and health care centers. Details can be [found here](#).
5. *COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill*: Signed into law on December 27, 2020, this measure includes \$900 billion in COVID-relief and \$1.4 trillion in annual government funding through Sep 2021. This bill was passed as part of the *Fiscal Year 2021 Omnibus Appropriations bill—[Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021](#)*, which provided a round of direct payments, enhanced unemployment benefits, educational funding, and aid to specific sectors. No additional state and local aid was provided through this bill, but the deadline for spending CARES act resources was extended to December 31, 2021. Learn more about the COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill [here](#).
6. *American Rescue Plan Act* ([P.L. 117-2](#), §1.9T): Passed in March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act includes provisions on state and local aid, agriculture, direct payments, health and human services, education, housing, taxes, expanded unemployment benefits, and more. More information on ARPA can be [found here](#).

Many of these policies could significantly reduce poverty and impact child health and well-being. To date, little research has been done on the relationships between nutrition, obesity, and food security in families and policies related to poverty reduction, economic resources, and housing security. The COVID-19 recovery plans, like the CARES Act or ARPA, provide a unique opportunity for researchers to examine how or whether economic or social policies impact family and children's health, nutrition, weight, or food security status. These could be policies directly focused on food and nutrition (e.g., nutrition assistance programs), or indirectly related such as

improved income supports (e.g., child tax credits, increasing minimum wage), paid family leave, housing support, and healthcare access (e.g., Medicaid provisions).

Will studies be considered if their primary target is parents/caregivers of children?

Yes, as long as the applicant can make the connection to how targeting parents/caregivers of children (0 to 18) will lead to changes in children's health outcomes, these studies will be considered.

What age range and population are you most interested in for this CFP?

The target population is children (0 to 18) and families in the United States, with high priority on those who are at highest risk for poor nutrition and obesity, specifically lower-income families and racially and ethnically diverse populations (e.g., Black, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders). Studies do not have to include the entire age range of 0 to 18, and could focus only on one age group such as preschool-age children.

Do you have a certain city or region size that you are looking for in terms of the project sites?

No, this is a national program and we hope to receive proposals from across the U.S. in a variety of geographic locations for studies of various-sized communities.

Are rural populations considered to be underserved or at high risk for poor nutrition and obesity?

Yes, rural populations where risk of nutritional disparities, poor dietary quality and patterns, and food insecurity is high are of interest to *Healthy Eating Research*.

Will proposals be given consideration even if they do not target lower-income or racially or ethnically diverse populations?

The goal of *Healthy Eating Research* is to help all children achieve optimal nutrition and address nutrition-related disparities. Low diet quality and obesity rates are highest in lower-income and certain ethnic and racial populations. All studies must have the potential to impact groups at highest risk for poor health and well-being, and nutrition-related health disparities. We are especially interested in studies focused on racially and ethnically diverse populations (Black, Latinx, American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders), with an emphasis on families and children (ages 0 to 18).

While this does not necessarily require including children from these populations in the study sample, relevancy of findings to these high-risk groups must be clearly specified. If your

population includes neither lower-income nor racial and ethnic minority children, you will need to specify clearly in your proposal how your results will be relevant to these groups.

Evidence generated through HER should be timely and policy-relevant, and aimed towards identifying equitable policies and programs.

Are the criteria for addressing lower-income and racially and ethnically diverse populations exclusive or mutual?

Your study can include lower-income and/or racial and ethnic populations at risk for nutrition-related health disparities.

How is lower-income defined in this context?

Lower-income may be defined by the researcher since there are different ways to define and measure income levels. While we do not have a specific cutoff for defining lower-income populations, we encourage investigators to use thresholds or benchmarks commonly used in the chosen setting(s), policy, or with the chosen population(s). For example, in child-care, school, preschool, and after-school settings many researchers use the percentage of children living in households with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty line as this is a common threshold for meal and snack subsidies for federal nutrition assistance programs.

Are there specific evaluation methods that are preferred?

No, the evaluation methods and the analysis should be driven by the research question. A variety of designs could be used, including observation and measurement studies, secondary data analyses, analyses of the effect of natural variations in food policies and environments, and evaluating current programs and policies. Survey research looking at associations or correlations also could be included. Mixed-design (qualitative and quantitative) studies are also welcome.

4) Budget and Co-Funding

Do I need to submit a budget with my proposal?

Concept Papers

For the initial three-page concept paper, applicants should **not** submit a budget. Applicants will only need to provide the total amount of funding requested from HER.

Invited Full Proposals

Invited full proposal applicants will need to complete detailed budget worksheets and budget narrative documents using the templates provided in the online application system. The RWJF online system for full proposal applicants contains detailed budget guidelines.

How detailed does the budget narrative need to be for the full proposal?

All invited full proposal applicants will be provided with detailed instructions regarding the budget narrative and worksheets during the full proposal stage. Applicants will need to complete an online summary budget worksheet and a detailed budget narrative and spreadsheet. The online summary budget worksheet reports the total amount of funds requested for the project, as well as the total for each of the four HER/RWJF budget categories: personnel, other direct costs, purchased services, and indirect costs. The detailed budget spreadsheet provides additional information on the included line items within each category. The budget narrative should provide a detailed explanation for how each line item will be spent, and how the amount was determined. The budget narrative should demonstrate that the finances are consistent with the proposed study design and HER/RWJF budget guidelines, and that the project is financially feasible. If applicable, the budget narrative must include the amount and source of any in-kind support or co-funding. Additional instructions for each of these documents can be found in the online application system.

What can grant funds be used for?

All invited full proposal applicants will be provided with detailed budget guidelines regarding allowable expenses during the full proposal stage. Generally, 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 keeping with RWJF policy, grant funds may *not* be used to support clinical trials of unapproved drugs or devices, to construct or renovate facilities, for lobbying, for political activities, or as a substitute for funds currently being used to support similar activities.

In order to ensure that HER research is made accessible to a wide and diverse audience, grantees of the *HER Special Solicitation on COVID-19 and Socioeconomic Recovery Efforts* who publish HER data and findings in peer-reviewed publications must do so in open access journals or must include funds in their budgets to cover the cost of making the resulting publications open-access (typically \$3,000-\$5,000 per manuscript).

What is the allowable indirect cost rate?

All grants will be established as subawards from Duke University, where the HER National Program Office is housed, to the applicant organization. Because the HER NPO prime funding is from RWJF, all subawards are subject to [RWJF's indirect cost rate policy](#).

RWJF's current allowable indirect cost rate varies by institution:

- 12 percent for U.S. colleges/universities and hospital or health systems,
- 20 percent for nonprofit organizations, and
- 0 percent for for-profit organizations and government entities.

If consultants/contractor costs (i.e., sub-contracts or sub-grants) constitute more than one-third of the total direct costs of the project or program, the allowable indirect cost rate on those third-party costs is limited to 5 percent.

The maximum indirect cost rates apply to both the primary applicant organization and any sub-grantee or sub-contractor costs up to the rate applicable to their organization type. For example: if a U.S. university is the primary grantee and has a U.S.-based nonprofit organization as a sub-grantee, the U.S. university is eligible to receive a 12 percent indirect cost rate, while the U.S.-based nonprofit organization is eligible to receive a 20 percent rate. Similarly, if a U.S. nonprofit organization is the primary grantee and a for-profit organization is a subcontractor, the U.S. nonprofit organization may receive a 20 percent indirect cost rate, while the for-profit subcontractor may not apply indirect costs (0%).

At the full proposal application stage, the online application system will contain detailed Budget Preparation Guidelines; a complete explanation of indirect costs can be found [here](#). In addition, all finalists will undergo a thorough budget review by HER NPO staff, with opportunities to make corrections, before awards are made.

Are the indicated award amounts direct costs only or do they include both direct and indirect costs?

The indicated award amounts include both direct and indirect costs.

I would like to apply for funds to build onto an existing grant. What information do I need to provide?

Describe in the proposal narrative the existing study, its funding level, the funding source(s), and the ways in which your proposal will leverage or supplement existing funding. It may be beneficial to consider submitting additional supportive documentation regarding the existing grant to ensure that reviewers have as much information as possible during their review.

What if I am seeking additional support from other funders or I have already secured additional support from other funders?

If additional funding will be sought or required for the project you propose, please specify the source(s), amount, and uses of that funding in the budget, and provide written documentation that required funds will be awarded (if applicable). If you cannot provide documentation of an anticipated award, then indicate in your application materials the status of your requests to other funders. You also should indicate how critical the other funding will be to the success of the proposed project. Finalist applicants may be asked in the future to provide additional documentation about the status of their requests to other funders.

5) Selection Criteria

Will you provide the evaluation criteria to be used by the program in making these awards, with weights?

The evaluation criteria to be used in making funding decisions are outlined in the "Selection Criteria" section of the call for proposals (CFP). We do not assign weights to these criteria.

How will my proposal be evaluated?

The program grant review process is rigorous to ensure quality, fairness, and integrity. All proposals will undergo an initial screening for completeness and eligibility. Invited *Full Proposals* will be reviewed by a minimum of three external reviewers with research content area and/or policy expertise, HER leadership, and RWJF senior staff. Please see the CFP for a complete listing of the selection criteria used in the proposal review process.

After the proposal review process, finalist applicants will be recommended to RWJF for funding. All final funding decisions are made by RWJF.

6) Notification and Funding

When will we be notified if we have been selected as a finalist or not? When will grants be awarded?

Stage 1: Concept Paper

The initial concept paper must be submitted by 3 p.m. ET on November 17, 2021. Applicants will be contacted via email and informed of whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal no later than December 20, 2021.

Stage 2: Invited Full Proposals

Applicants will be contacted via email and informed whether or not they have been selected as finalists. Notification of finalists for all grant types will occur in late April 2022. Awards will begin in June 2022.

How will grant funds be disbursed?

All grants will be established as subawards from Duke University, where the HER National Program Office is housed, to the applicant organization; grant funds will not be disbursed directly from RWJF to finalists. If selected as a finalist, the NPO will work with the applicant organization to complete the necessary requirements for establishing a subaward contract with Duke University. The applicant organization will invoice Duke University for expenses as incurred once a subaward contract has been executed.

7) Post-Grant Award

What is required of *Healthy Eating Research* grantees?

Grantees are required to submit (1) semi-annual narrative reports at the 6-month mark(s); (2) annual narrative and financial reports at the 12-month mark(s); and (3) final narrative and financial reports at the conclusion of the project. In addition, grantees are expected to submit all final deliverables and publications to the *Healthy Eating Research* national program office (NPO) at Duke University. Reporting templates will be provided and all grant reports will be submitted to the HER NPO at healthyeating@duke.edu; grantees may also be required to respond to periodic surveys and other communications sent from RWJF and the NPO.

Up to two representatives from each grant are typically required to attend the *Healthy Eating Research* annual grantee meeting.

Optional activities for funded researchers also may include conference calls, participation in HER-led work groups, collaborative presentations, and commissioned research (e.g., papers, analyses).

What is the invoicing and payment schedule?

Grantees are permitted to invoice Duke University during the course of the project as work is completed or as expenses are incurred, but no more than once monthly. Payment of up to 80% of the contract amount can be invoiced prior to the completion of contract deliverables. Grantees may invoice for the final 20% of the contract upon delivery of all contract deliverables to the HER NPO, on or before the contract end date. The final invoice should be received no later than 30 days after the termination of the final budget period. Grantees must use the invoice template provided by HER. Additional information will be provided during the subaward contract process.