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September 12, 2016

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## New Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Leadership Program Launches: Nearly 40 Social Innovators From Across Sectors Selected to Build Culture of Health

(WASHINGTON, D.C.)—Leaders from Los Angeles to New York City working across a range of fields, including architecture, education, and government have been selected to participate in the *Culture of Health Leaders* program. These individuals will develop high-level leadership skills through professional coaching, networking and an advanced leadership curriculum. Along the way they will address top-of-mind issues in health and equity in their communities and nationally, including food systems, the role of business in advancing health, racial stress in urban communities, and immigrant trauma.

*Culture of Health Leaders*, co-led by the National Collaborative for Health Equity and CommonHealth ACTION with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), brings together nearly 40 individuals from across the country to innovate and experiment with new solutions to persistent challenges to health. Over the course of three years, their increased capacity to lead will position them to advance a Culture of Health—one that places well-being at the center of every aspect of life.

“The inspiration and vision these leaders bring to our program is astounding, and they come at health and equity from every angle,” said Brian Smedley, *Culture of Health Leaders* co-director and executive director and co-founder of the National Collaborative for Health Equity. “They will redefine the way leaders in every field use their innovation and influence to shatter the status quo on health in our country.”

For example, participants—some working in established or emerging teams—are taking on brownfields as a threat to health in under-resourced areas, prison gardening to improve health and reduce recidivism, and systemic solutions for rural health disparities. Others are working on issues that are particularly timely and urgent, including the lead contamination and water access crisis in Flint, Mich., and community health in Baton Rouge, La.

Selected through a competitive process that attracted more than 500 applicants, participants in the program receive an annual stipend and are eligible for additional funds to support a project in their third year of the program. They will continue to work in their home communities and apply lessons learned and new knowledge to build local cultures of health.

“This program’s approach to leadership development is unusual in that we will grow leaders’ abilities beyond traditional leadership competencies and specific knowledge regarding the public’s health,” said Natalie S. Burke, *Culture of Health Leaders* co-director and president and CEO of CommonHealth ACTION. “We will create the environment for our participants to explore the internal barriers to their leadership and coach them to move those barriers out of the way, all while positioning them to lead substantive and meaningful change.”



Additional partners providing training and coaching include: American Planning Association, American Public Health Association, Build Healthy Places Network, Center for Creative Leadership, Institute for Alternative Futures, and Leadership Learning Community.

The 2017 application period will open in January. The full list of *Culture of Health Leaders* is available at [www.cultureofhealth-leaders.org](http://www.cultureofhealth-leaders.org)

*Culture of Health Leaders* is one of four new leadership development programs launched this year by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The three additional programs, all with an emphasis on cross-sector collaboration and health equity, include:

[\*Clinical Scholars\*](#) prepares and supports small teams of clinicians, from a range of disciplines, to lead transformative change—centered on health equity—in their communities.

[\*Health Policy Research Scholars\*](#) builds equity by investing in scholars from underrepresented populations or disadvantaged backgrounds in graduate programs whose research, connections, and leadership will inform and influence policy toward a Culture of Health.

[\*Interdisciplinary Research Leaders\*](#) equips teams of researchers and on-the-ground change agents with advanced leadership skills and a clear focus on health and equity, allowing them to apply health research and policy to meet the pressing needs of communities.

Each program will provide training in topics from change leadership to health policy; mentoring and executive coaching; networking with other program participants; and the opportunity to work on solutions to real, complex problems in local communities. Participants will work together in-person, via webinar, distance learning, and online collaboration several times each year.

These programs represent a new four-year, multimillion dollar investment by RWJF, and one that continues a long legacy of supporting the development and diversity of leaders. Initially focusing on health and health care, the programs have expanded in the past year, recognizing that building a Culture of Health requires the attention and contributions of a wide range of individuals in every field. Five additional leadership programs, grounded in health and health care but also increasingly focused on collaboration across sectors and disciplines, are continuing as well: [\*Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program\*](#), [\*New Connections\*](#), [\*RWJF Health Policy Fellows\*](#), [\*Summer Health Professions Education Program\*](#), and [\*State Health Leadership Initiative\*](#).

#### About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. It is working with others to build a national Culture of Health, enabling everyone in America to live longer, healthier lives. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter at [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or on Facebook at [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).

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