

HEALTH AND CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Helping Build a Healthy Equitable Future on a Rapidly Warming Planet

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is working to build a Culture of Health in which everyone living in the United States has a fair and just opportunity to live a healthy life. Health harms from climate change, which are now happening with increasing frequency and intensity, are a major threat to any vision of a healthier, more equitable future. From wildfires to stronger, bigger hurricanes, extreme heat events and worsening air pollution, everyone in the United States is experiencing the consequences of climate change. Efforts to help build a Culture of Health must address and factor in these intensifying threats to health and wellbeing.

Human health and the health of our planet, including the stability of our climate, are intertwined. Damage caused by global climate change also magnifies the inequities that prevent all people from experiencing a fair and just opportunity to live a healthier life. Where one lives or works, one's age, if one has pre-existing health conditions or chronic illnesses, and race or income all impacts how and how much climate change harms health.

The good news is that, across the United States, people are coming together and developing promising approaches to improve health and address climate change. We know that health solutions can benefit the climate—and climate solutions can help build a Culture of Health for everyone impacted by climate change in the United States, no matter who they are or where they live. And as such, RWJF is working with leaders in communities across the United States to identify, highlight, and learn from smart, effective approaches that do just that: improve health, advance health equity and work to address climate change.

7 Funded Projects

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RWJF has extended grant funding to seven communities to help us all learn from and about existing approaches that have been under way for at least one year and that aim to lessen the health impacts of climate change, advance health equity and focus on climate change solutions. Here are brief descriptions of these seven projects:

ANCHORAGE, AK:

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC)

ANTHC has developed an innovative, portable water sanitation system for homes in rural, Native Alaskan communities where climate change impacts on infrastructure and the environment makes it nearly impossible to access safe, clean water.

AUSTIN, TX:

City of Austin

Recognizing the ways that worsening extreme heat reduces opportunities for physical activity and harms overall emotional well-being of young people, the City of Austin government is working to increase the amount of green space and tree shade around inner city public schools.

VANDERWAGEN, NM:

Covenant Pathways

Navajo farmers working on dryland farms are using regenerative agricultural practices to improve soil quality and the nutrition levels of the foods they grow as more frequent drought or intense rainfall and extreme heat create new challenges to farming.

PORTLAND, OR:

Friends of Trees

Friends of Trees is planting trees—an effective tool to reduce climate change—in low-income, ethnically-diverse neighborhoods to improve the health and well-being of local communities.

BUFFALO, NY:

People United for Sustainable Housing, Inc.

PUSH Buffalo is helping weatherproof houses in inner cities to improve energy efficiency, community development and resilience and improve health, while boosting the local economy.

FINLAND, MN:

Organic Consumers Association

Across several Midwestern states, researchers are comparing the demographics, economics, environmental health and human health of communities practicing regenerative farming and those using conventional agricultural practices.

LA CONNER, WA:

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community

Leaders in the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community are blending the CDC's public health approach—the Building Resilience Against Climate Effects (BRACE) Framework—with traditional indigenous values, understanding and practices.