

How Johnson & Johnson is **Accelerating a Health Equity Mindset** Across the Organization

A Look Inside the **Business Match Fund**

Read time: 15 minutes or less

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Key organizations and people

NationSwell is in gratitude to the following organizations and individuals for making this case study possible:

JOHNSON & JOHNSON

Johnson & Johnson (“J&J”) believes good health is the foundation of vibrant lives, thriving communities, and forward progress. For over 135 years, J&J has worked across research and development, manufacturing, and sale of healthcare products, and is now one of the world’s largest healthcare companies. J&J’s 140,000+ employees are committed to improving access and affordability; creating healthier communities; and putting a healthy mind, body, and environment within reach of everyone, everywhere.

OUR RACE TO HEALTH EQUITY TEAM



Vanessa Broadhurst
Executive Vice President,
Global Corporate Affairs



Lauren Moore
Vice President,
Global Community Impact



Frank Rodriguez
Global Leader,
Our Race to Health Equity,
Global Community Impact



Jorge Leon
Director,
Global Community Impact,
Our Race to Health Equity

Scenario

Johnson & Johnson advances racial health equity in the U.S. with a \$100 million commitment

In the U.S., health disparities for people of color relative to White individuals include higher rates of illness and death and less access to quality care. The impact of COVID-19 proved no exception, with Black individuals dying from the virus at more than double the rate of White individuals ([NIH](#)).

In response to these longstanding and systemic healthcare inequities, Johnson & Johnson (“J&J”) launched its “Our Race to Health Equity” initiative (“ORTHE”) in November 2020. The bold undertaking “aspires to help eradicate racial and social injustice as a public health threat by eliminating health inequities for people of color” with a \$100 million commitment over five years.

J&J’s solutions center upon three complementary approaches:

- **People First Culture:** Cultivating one of the most diverse and inclusive workforces that inspires innovative healthcare solutions around the world
- **Healthier Communities:** Helping close the racial mortality gap by investing in culturally competent community care models that create health outcomes for people of color
- **Enduring Alliances:** Leading and leveraging J&J’s powerful partnership network to combat racial and social health determinants

Additionally, J&J’s Healthier Communities and Enduring Alliances commitments are anchored in four solution areas in order to focus their impact:

- **Community health capacity building:** Expanding access to affordable, community-centric care through investments in community health centers, community health workers, and other care model innovation
- **Community engagement and education:** Empowering patients and end users with tools, resources, and community-based services to “own” their health and increase health literacy
- **Culturally competent care:** Increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the healthcare talent pipeline and workforce and promoting an equitable point of care experience
- **Inclusive research and representative clinical trials:** Increasing access to clinical trials through diverse site selection and patient recruitment, as well as incorporating equity into end-to-end therapy and device design

The company will invest half of ORTHE's \$100 million through external grants, programs, and initiatives by 2025. To embed a health equity mindset into J&J's everyday business practice and strategy, J&J has also committed to driving change from within their large enterprise, allocating \$50 million over five years to a **Business Match Fund** ("BMF"). The BMF will serve as an incubator and catalyst for alignment at all levels of J&J by providing dollar-for-dollar co-investment alongside business units seeking to advance a health equity-oriented initiative in the United States.

The remainder of this case study dives deeper into the strategy, structure, and operations of the BMF, a model that other companies may adopt for their own unique purposes.



“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”

[Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#)

Approach

This case study details how Johnson & Johnson designed and executed the Business Match Fund to accelerate the adoption of a health equity focus across its divisions and, consequently, to seed large-scale organizational change. Their approach includes five core elements, explored further in the pages to come:

1. Design a funding approach that promotes innovation, long-term thinking, and engagement

2. Use a varied toolkit to invite applications from across the enterprise

3. Administer a layered and inclusive review process to select fund recipients

4. Track impact centrally and regularly, leaving room for flexibility

5. Tell the story of catalyzed impact internally and externally

Design a funding approach that promotes innovation, long-term thinking, and engagement

The ORTHE Business Match Fund oversees the spending of \$50 million in the form of internal grants to support the launch and execution of health equity-related initiatives across Johnson & Johnson. The BMF is carefully designed and operationalized to create as much leverage and sustainability out of those investments as possible. Here's how:

1:1 CO-INVESTMENT

Every business unit and project that applies for and receives funds from the BMF must be at least an equal contributor of its own resources. By requiring a commitment to co-invest, the BMF ensures that its \$50 million catalyzes at least \$50 million in additional budgeted spending.

In fact, the BMF does not fund projects that have not already been approved and budgeted for by individual business units. This requirement incentivizes business units to develop health equity projects based on the potential for greater impact through a matching investment while ensuring that projects that don't receive a match are carried through. Funds from the BMF, therefore, focus on **scaling impact**, especially through its encouragement of partnerships across the enterprise.

CONTINGENT CONSIDERATIONS

To further encourage the business to invest in health equity programming, the BMF program is set up to allow the business to determine which health equity projects will have the greatest impact and make the most sense for them. Projects that can demonstrate high impact potential through the intersection with other community impact initiatives and ORTHE's goals are most likely to secure funding. That said, the BMF de-prioritizes investments in projects that are strictly commercial or for which media and marketing are major budgetary categories. These projects tend to fall out of the selection process in favor of projects that are more concretely committed to the goal impact goals of Healthier Communities and Enduring Alliances.

ENTERPRISE-WIDE ALLOCATIONS

Each year for five years, J&J allocates \$10 million into the BMF to support new or existing projects. Investments range in size from \$200,000 to \$1 million. To ensure that each division and function within the company has equitable access to funding, J&J allocates BMF funds **across each of its major divisions** as well as its supply chain. Importantly, projects will only receive a funding commitment for one year at a time, though they can **reapply in subsequent years**. This helps to ensure that previously funded projects don't crowd out new initiatives in gaining access to the co-investment dollars.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Compared to White pregnant people, Black pregnant people are three times more likely to experience mortality from a pregnancy-related cause ([CDC](#))
- People of color make up about 39% of the U.S. population, but only 2% - 16% of patients in clinical trials ([Harvard Business Review](#))
- American Indian, Alaska Native, and Black people are twice as likely as White people to die from diabetes ([Kaiser Family Foundation](#))

Use a varied toolkit to invite applications from across the enterprise

To spread the word about the Business Match Fund to as many of Johnson & Johnson's 140,000 employees as possible, the team relies on two main levers: **executive champions** and **internal communications channels**.

In an enterprise as large as J&J, executive leadership support is essential in communicating the BMF opportunity and value to business units. When the application is ready for distribution each fall, the BMF team works through an executive champion – in this case, Vanessa Broadhurst, Executive Vice President, Global Corporate Affairs – to relay details to executive leadership and the heads of business units. Those business leads then cascade the information further down into the organization through email and personal outreach, among other methods.

The BMF team also uses J&J's existing internal communications channels, such as business unit and company newsletters, and the internal ORTHE social media site, to drive awareness of the BMF funding cycle.

Regardless of the channel or the messenger, the information conveyed is relatively high-level – a strategic choice, as the application itself holds details on how the process works. In addition to clearly outlining all of the requirements to apply for and receive funding, the BMF application contains an introduction to ORTHE and its pillars for those who are not yet well-versed in the initiative.

Despite the detail contained in the application materials, questions are inevitable. Any and all employees can send follow-up questions directly to the BMF team through a centralized inbox. BMF staff monitor and reply to inquiries while also looking for patterns that indicate the need to adjust the application information accordingly in the next cycle.

WHAT'S REQUIRED IN THE APPLICATION?

- **Executive summary:** explain what inspired the program, how it will address health equity, and why is it important to J&J's commitments to health equity
- **Health equity impact:** provide an overview of the program and how it would address health equity in a differentiated way, with evidence to support projected impact
- **Measurement & outcomes:** detail how projected outcomes will address ORTHE's pillars, plus any additional impact measurements
- **Partnerships:** describe how the program will engage internal and external partners to increase impact
- **Implementation:** describe the program team, high-level activities, and a timeline of projected milestones
- **Sustainability & scalability:** explain how the funding will be catalytic and/or how the impact will extend beyond the funding period
- **Budget & expected resources:** provide itemized budget by year as well as expectations for future funding needs

Administer a layered and inclusive review process to select fund recipients

Given finite resources and the potential for high demand, the BMF team carefully designed a multi-stage application review process that ensures principles of integrity, balance, and rigor underlie every funding decision.

STAGE 1: BUSINESS UNIT CULLING

Starting with the 2023 application cycle, senior business unit leaders are engaging potential applicants to prioritize submissions prior to the deadline. While the BMF team is not providing strict guidance to business units on this process, nor is it requiring this stage of internal vetting, the advantages are clear: business unit leaders gain greater control over the proposals their teams are putting forth, ensuring quality and alignment with the business unit's overall strategy. This step also streamlines the number of applications submitted, making the review process less time-consuming and increasing the likelihood that individual projects will receive funding.

STAGE 2: BMF STAFF REVIEW

Once submitted, each application is reviewed by members of the ORTHE team: Frank Rodriguez and Jorge Leon. The application itself is the main consideration for advancing recommendations to the next stage, with **no additional interviews or materials typically requested** (though the BMF team may reach out to applicants for clarifying information as needed).

STAGE 3: ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

From the total applicant pool, the BMF staff creates a shortlist for consideration by an **Advisory Council** of leaders representing the two main J&J divisions – J&J Innovative Medicines and J&J MedTech – plus supply chain. This Advisory Council ensures that there is **enterprise-wide input** into the selection process, justifying decisions and guarding against any potential pushback with a “blessed by many hands” mindset.

STAGE 4: EXECUTIVE APPROVAL

Final approval of funding decisions comes from the BMF’s executive committee champion, who also sends out the notification of awards to selected applicants.

MORE ABOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Each year, the BMF team opens the application in mid-September with submissions due by mid-November. This timeline ensures that projects are already budgeted in business unit financials for the following year before matching investment decisions are made, typically by the end of January.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS MUST:

- Deliver against the external ORTHE pillars and solution areas
- Articulate a specific and measurable health equity contribution to Executive Committee Scorecard targets
- Serve people of color in the United States
- Include matching fund requests that range from \$200K to \$1M
- Be financially matched at least 1:1 by the requesting J&J entity
- Have support from Company Group Chair or Executive Committee member

FURTHER REVIEW PRIORITIZES FUNDING THAT:

- Demonstrates highest potential contribution to health equity impact metrics
- Balances funding across the participating enterprise entities

Track impact centrally and regularly, leaving room for flexibility

BMF funding applicants must address how their project will specifically advance ORTHE's goals of Healthier Communities and Enduring Alliances within the four solution areas. The application also requests information on project-specific impact areas and KPIs that fall outside those two goals. Once projects receive funding, they are required to track and record their impact centrally and regularly.

Leaders of BMF-funded projects log progress against the two overarching ORTHE goals using a bespoke **centralized tracking tool** built for the internal ORTHE portal. All BMF-funded projects are required to input their results on a quarterly basis, while non-funded ORTHE initiatives use the tool to input results twice per year. Projects that were once funded by BMF but no longer receive funding also use the tool to track their continued results, allowing the organization to **track long-term progress**.

Project teams are encouraged to track additional metrics that fall outside of the two overarching goals, though they are not required to report progress against those metrics through the central tracking tool.

OVERALL ORTHE IMPACT GOALS WITH WHICH BMF PROJECTS SHOULD ALIGN

- Reach 5 million people of color with more relevant, trusted, and culturally competent inclusive care, with emphasis on community-based solutions
- Develop more relevant, trusted, culturally competent health systems by developing and supporting 200,000 healthcare professionals and researchers

Tell the story of catalyzed impact internally and externally

Because the BMF is an internally oriented initiative, telling the story of its impact is as important within the organization as it is without. While J&J anticipates that the breadth and potency of its storytelling will increase with time, there are two primary communications elements already in motion:

ANNOUNCING AND CELEBRATING FUNDING DECISIONS

The BMF's executive champion is responsible for informing applicants about funding decisions, after which those decisions are widely disseminated in the company-wide newsletter. Throughout the year, the BMF team organizes "lunch and learn" events so that projects can provide updates to those interested and sow the seeds for further collaboration and inspiration.

SPOTLIGHTING PROJECTS IN VIDEO FORM

J&J is producing 10-15 minute videos about select BMF-funded projects that will be shared through internal newsletters and social sites. The videos will allow for a greater degree of immersion into the unique and powerful initiatives happening to advance health equity. They will also become assets that can be used for external storytelling and communications purposes.

Results

As of spring 2023, Johnson & Johnson's Business Match Fund has completed three rounds of funding and with them has deepened the organization's cultural and operational commitments to health equity. The results below outline the milestones reached within those first three years:

128 projects

128 individual projects have requested BMF funding across three cycles

53 programs

The BMF has funded 53 programs across eight different J&J entities to date

\$30 million

The BMF has co-invested \$30.0 million alongside individual businesses, for an average of over \$566,000 in matching funds per project

EXAMPLES OF BMF-FUNDED PROJECTS

Johnson & Johnson presents [My Health Can't Wait](#)

A community wellness initiative designed to help patients and caregivers take a proactive role in managing their health through increased access to vital information and resources.

[Save Legs Change Lives](#)

An education and screening based initiative designed to create urgency and action around the hidden threat of peripheral artery disease (PAD)-related amputation. It consists of more than 12 programs across three focus areas: empowering individuals and communities placed at an increased risk of PAD, collaborating with powerful partners, and driving research.

Healthcare Professional Health Equity and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training

Partnering with a national continuing medical education (CME) provider to develop unconscious bias, health equity, and other diversity, equity, and inclusion training for healthcare professionals as an option for meeting required annual medical CME credits.

[Research Includes Me](#)

A community-focused effort focused on awareness and engagement of Black and brown communities to elevate the discussion around clinical trials. The campaign prioritizes building trust-based relationships with communities to provide clinical trial information, as well as hosts an educational website.

Pareto's page

Also known as the 80/20 rule, the Pareto Principle observes that 80 percent of outcomes are derived from 20 percent of inputs. Below you'll find NationSwell's take on which inputs are most strongly associated with positive outcomes in this case study.

1:1 co-investment from business units

By requiring business unit financial investment, J&J helps to ensure a lasting, organization-wide commitment to the health equity mindset and change.

Incentivizing sustainable commitments

By funding projects that are already approved and budgeted, J&J helps to ensure quality and commitment from applicants while encouraging big ideas and accelerating impact.

Advocacy from business leaders and executives

By leveraging support from the top of the enterprise, J&J signals institutional importance, encourages broad participation, and streamlines communications.

Advisory Council review

By relying on an Advisory Council as part of the selection process, J&J ensures equal input into the decision-making process from all parts of the enterprise and thereby increases the strength and credibility of its funding decisions.



TIME MACHINE:

One thing Johnson & Johnson would do differently

In an enterprise as large as J&J, communication is critical. During its first application cycle, the BMF team relied on a cascade of communications from executive leadership downward to share details of the opportunity. Those requests to share information occasionally got lost in inboxes, effectively delaying communication of the opportunity to different areas of the business. As the BMF continues its work, it is focused on employing more intentional communications strategies, including the direct and bespoke involvement of individual business leadership teams.

Related resources

For continued learning on the topics discussed in this case study, we recommend the following:

- Johnson & Johnson, [Our Race to Health Equity](#)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, [What Is Health Equity?](#)
- American Heart Association, [Driving Health Equity in the Workplace](#)
- Harvard Business Review, [You Don't Need a Grand Strategy to Achieve Organizational Change](#)
- McKinsey, [How to drive sustainable and lasting change in your transformation journey](#)

Thank you

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NationSwell would love your feedback on this resource so that we can continue providing valuable insights to you and your organization. Please consider taking 30 seconds to complete this [brief questionnaire](#). For more information about this project, please contact Danielle Benedetti at daniellebenedetti@nationswell.com.

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