Supplemental Guidance on Concept Papers

The following frequently asked questions (FAQs) are meant to provide additional guidance to community foundations submitting large-scale funding opportunity concept papers under Lilly Endowment’s Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow (GIFT) Phase VII initiative. For full details on the requirements for the large-scale funding opportunity grants, please refer to the GIFT VII Request for Proposals.

General Guidelines

How does the large-scale funding opportunity grant relate to the implementation grant phase of this initiative?
The large-scale funding opportunity and implementation grant process should be viewed as two separate funding opportunities.

Should a large-scale funding opportunity concept paper address the same topic being addressed by an implementation grant proposal?
The concept paper idea may, but does not need to, address the same matter or matters addressed in an implementation grant proposal. Grant decisions for each funding opportunity will be made exclusive of the other.

Does the Endowment expect each community foundation to assume a specific type of leadership role in its community?
No. As noted in the GIFT VII Request for Proposals, the role a community foundation may play as a local leader will vary from one foundation to another given differences in operational capacity, expertise, organizational priorities and local needs and culture. Some community foundations may be well-suited to direct local leadership initiatives while others may show leadership by playing a supporting role in partnership with other organizations. The Endowment encourages each community foundation and its board of directors to identify its responsibilities, capacities and opportunities within the context of its local landscape to inform the type of leadership role it takes in addressing local issues.

Can an organization other than a community foundation be the recipient of a GIFT VII large-scale funding opportunity grant?
No. GIFT VII Eligibility Guidelines specify that only Indiana community foundations that have satisfactorily participated in a previous GIFT phase or program may participate in the initiative; however, there may be appropriate situations where a community foundation’s concept paper involves regranting and/or providing financial support to other organizations as part of its community leadership strategy.
If a community foundation decides it is not able or willing to pursue a large-scale funding opportunity grant, will its ability to participate in future GIFT initiatives be affected?

No. As noted in the GIFT VII Eligibility Guidelines, participation in any component of GIFT VII is not required as a condition to participate in future GIFT programs the Endowment may offer.

Can a large-scale funding opportunity concept paper request support for a community foundation’s existing program or initiative, or does it need to address a new area of focus?

The Endowment recognizes that some community foundations already may be exercising a leadership role with existing programs or initiatives. A community foundation may propose to further enhance or expand existing work or, if appropriate, it may pursue a new focus. The decision to enhance such existing leadership work or begin a new program or initiative should be made by a community foundation and its board of directors after thoughtful deliberation and consideration of its local context during the planning period.

How many grants will be awarded as part of the large-scale funding opportunity of GIFT VII?

The Endowment has allocated up to a total of $31.6 million for large-scale funding opportunities. The Endowment is not targeting a specific number of grants to award; rather, the number of grants awarded will depend on the number and quality of concept papers submitted and full grant proposals invited, among other factors.

How much funding can a community foundation request as part of the large-scale funding opportunity?

A community foundation can request up to $5 million of large-scale funding per county. There is no prescribed funding formula to determine the amount requested; however, the budget included with a concept paper should be scaled to the anticipated impact of the idea being proposed. The Endowment expects to make grants in a range of amounts. Accordingly, larger funding requests will need to have an anticipated impact at a scale that justifies the amount of the funding request.

What budget categories can be included in a large-scale funding opportunity concept?

The Endowment expects large-scale grant funding will be deployed to directly address high priority local challenges and opportunities and that grant expenditures may include, but are not limited to, program and administrative staff, equipment and supplies, consultants, capital investments, and regranted funds, among others, related to addressing the prioritized challenges or opportunities. If a community foundation plans to include general and overhead expenses in its large-scale funding opportunity budget, it should contact the Endowment prior to submitting its concept paper.

The budget narrative included in the large-scale funding opportunity concept paper should describe each budget line item and explain how it was calculated.

Does a large-scale funding opportunity need to continue beyond GIFT VII funding?

No. The Endowment is open to concept papers that include one-time funding expenditures that would not need to be sustained. A community foundation also may submit a large-scale funding opportunity concept paper that includes an idea that continues beyond GIFT VII but is not required to do so. If a community foundation intends that the proposed idea will be continued after the Endowment’s grant has been expended, the community foundation’s concept paper must include a credible plan that demonstrates how it expects to develop resources to sustain the idea. A community foundation should not expect the Endowment to provide additional funding for the idea beyond the GIFT VII grant period.
May a portion of the large-scale funding opportunity budget include funds to support the concept’s future sustainability (e.g., endowment funds, asset development)?

The Endowment anticipates some large-scale funding opportunities will be one-time projects or initiatives that would not need to be sustained beyond the grant’s implementation timeframe. However, some concepts may include programs or strategies with an extended implementation timeframe. Except in especially compelling situations, a community foundation should allocate no more than 15 percent of the requested funding amount for a large-scale funding opportunity to activities that support the ongoing sustainability of the idea. Community foundations invited to submit a full proposal should be prepared to address questions from Endowment staff about how the idea will be sustained beyond the grant period, if applicable.

Does a large-scale funding opportunity need to include collaborations with other stakeholders?

The Endowment expects large-scale funding opportunities to include collaborations with local and/or regional stakeholders. The roles, responsibilities, and commitments of participating stakeholders should be clearly defined in the concept paper and corroborated by those stakeholders in letters of support included with the concept paper.

Does a large-scale funding opportunity concept paper need to include external funders?

No. Commitments from external funders are not required at the concept paper stage. However, if the total funding request for a proposed idea is greater than the community foundation’s funding request to the Endowment, or the community foundation intends that the idea will be continued beyond the Endowment’s grant period, the community foundation should explain in its concept paper how the foundation expects to develop resources to address any funding gaps and/or the financial sustainability of the idea. A community foundation invited to submit a full proposal will be required to present in its full proposal a credible plan to address any funding gaps or obtain the necessary funding to sustain the idea after the grant period ends. At the full proposal stage, commitments from external funders will be looked at favorably by the Endowment, if applicable.

Do letters of support need to be included with a large-scale funding opportunity concept paper?

Yes. Letters of support from relevant collaborators or community stakeholders should be included with a large-scale funding opportunity concept paper. Each letter of support should corroborate the importance of the proposed idea to the local community, describe the role the stakeholder will play in implementing the proposed idea, and highlight the financial or other resources, if any, that the stakeholder has committed to supporting the proposed idea. For community foundations submitting concept papers on behalf of or including affiliate funds, large-scale funding opportunity concept papers should include letters of support from each affiliate fund’s advisory board.

Can a community foundation submit multiple large-scale funding opportunity concept papers?

Except as noted below under “Multi-County Large-Scale Funding Opportunity Concept Papers,” the Endowment will accept only one large-scale funding opportunity concept paper from each community foundation.

Is there a certain time period a large-scale funding opportunity should cover?

While the GIFT VII Request for Proposals does not mandate a specific time period during which large-scale funding opportunity grant funds must be spent, large-scale funding opportunity grant periods should not exceed five years. Regardless of the length of time during which grant funds will be spent, the Endowment...
expects that each successful grant will be paid as a single sum (rather than in parts paid out over multiple years). If a large-scale funding opportunity covers a grant period of more than one year, the budget should detail how grant funds will be used each year during the grant period.

**How soon should a community foundation begin to implement its proposed idea?**

Except in rare instances, the Endowment would expect that large-scale funding opportunity grant activities would commence by the end of 2021.

**How much detail will be required in the large-scale funding opportunity concept paper?**

As stated in the GIFT VII Request for Proposals, concept papers for a large-scale funding opportunity are meant to provide an overview of an especially compelling idea that could address a more substantial, larger impact challenge or opportunity. A clear framework for the idea should be developed during the concept paper stage, but it is not necessary to have 100% certainty on every detail.

In its concept paper, a community foundation should present a statement of need that presents a rationale for the proposed idea. This rationale should be corroborated by research findings, community assessments, statistical projections, and/or assessments of the work being (or not being) done to address the issue, among other things. The concept paper must also identify the core programs or strategies associated with the proposed idea, the resources and collaborations needed to execute those programs or strategies, and the anticipated timeline for their execution. In addition, the concept paper should describe what the proposed activities are expected to achieve and how success will be evaluated and measured.

**Multi-County Large-Scale Opportunity Concept Papers**

**Are collaborative multi-county large-scale funding opportunity concept papers acceptable?**

Yes. Collaborating community foundations may submit a single large-scale funding opportunity concept paper that addresses challenges or opportunities across different counties. In such cases, funding requests may exceed $5 million depending on the number of collaborating community foundations.

For collaborative multi-county large-scale funding opportunity concept papers, collaborating community foundations should, in a joint cover letter included with the proposal, designate which community foundation will serve as the grantee. The joint concept paper must also follow the guidelines described in the Request for Proposals and describe the role that each community foundation has in implementing the proposed idea.

**Can a group of community foundations combine the foundations’ total eligible large-scale funding to propose an idea focused on a single county?**

Yes. The Endowment recognizes that community foundations may identify a large-scale funding opportunity in a single county that would impact and/or benefit a larger region. If a group of community foundations collectively determines to fund such an opportunity, the foundations may propose combining their total eligible large-scale funding to support a concept focused on a single county. However, the budget included with a concept paper should be scaled to the idea being proposed. Accordingly, larger funding requests will need to have an anticipated impact at a scale that justifies the amount of the funding request.
Can a community foundation with affiliate funds in multiple counties submit a separate concept paper for each affiliate fund?

Yes. The Endowment does not require that affiliate funds participate in a joint concept paper; rather, it encourages the community foundation and its affiliate funds to determine whether to combine their resources and submit a joint concept paper, or to submit separate concept papers. Both joint and individual concept papers must follow the guidelines described in the Request for Proposals and should include letters of support from the advisory board of each affiliate fund that is part of a concept paper submission.

Large-Scale Funding Opportunity Application and Review Process

When are large-scale funding opportunity concept papers due?

Large-scale funding opportunity concept papers must be submitted on or before March 13, 2020, at 5 p.m. (Eastern time). Please note this date is different than that stated in the original request for proposals.

Why did the deadline for the submission of large-scale funding opportunity concept papers change from the request for proposals?

The Endowment originally intended for planning grants to be awarded no later than May 15, 2019; however, in reviewing initial planning grant submissions, the Endowment decided to allow each community foundation the opportunity to revise and resubmit its planning grant proposal to include investments in internal capacity-building, which pushed back the date planning grants were awarded. The large-scale funding opportunity concept paper deadline was changed to provide additional time for each community foundation to conduct and complete its planning.

How should the large-scale funding opportunity concept paper be submitted?

A cover letter (signed by the community foundation executive director and board chair) and the full concept paper (executive summary, concept paper narrative, budget and budget narrative, and letters of support) should be submitted electronically as a single PDF document to the Endowment at gift@lei.org. A copy of the budget should also be submitted in Excel format. The concept paper and its components should be written in 10-point font or larger with 1-inch margins.

Can supplemental appendices be submitted as part of the concept paper?

No. A community foundation’s large-scale funding opportunity submission must follow the guidelines detailed in the Request for Proposals.

If a community foundation is invited to submit a full large-scale funding opportunity proposal, does that mean it will receive a grant?

No. An invitation to submit a full large-scale funding opportunity proposal should not be seen as an indication that a grant will be awarded.

What happens after the community foundation submits its concept paper?

After the Endowment reviews the submitted concept papers, it expects to extend invitations to submit full large-scale funding opportunity proposals by late spring 2020. Each community foundation invited to submit a full proposal will have the opportunity to meet with the Endowment to receive feedback on the concept paper before developing its full large-scale funding opportunity proposal. Full proposals will
be due by late summer 2020. The Endowment anticipates large-scale funding opportunity grants will be announced and paid on or before December 31, 2020.

**What criteria will be used to evaluate large-scale concept papers and, if invited, full proposals?**

Large-scale funding opportunity concept papers should address the same elements as implementation grant proposals as detailed in the [Request for Proposals](#). The Endowment in its sole discretion may invite community foundations that propose the most compelling and promising ideas to submit a full proposal for funding. The Endowment may identify situations in which it may be beneficial to combine and/or coordinate ideas proposed in separate applications. In such a case, the Endowment may suggest collaborations among applicants.

The following criteria will be considered in evaluating each concept paper:

- How compelling the opportunity or challenge is
- The extent of local (or regional, if applicable) benefit and/or impact
- Concept feasibility
- Rationale for the idea
- Strength of community partnerships
- Innovation
- Financial sustainability
- Local consensus and support

Additional criteria may be used in evaluating full proposals.

**How will the Endowment make grant decisions?**

Concept papers and full proposals will be reviewed and adjudicated by the Endowment under its regular grantmaking procedures.