



Enhancing Opportunity in Indianapolis

FAQs

General

Will applying for this initiative jeopardize my charitable organization's chances of receiving funding from Lilly Endowment for other purposes?

No. This is a separate initiative and is in addition to Lilly Endowment's other grantmaking.

When will Lilly Endowment communicate with applicants about moving to the second stage? When will meetings with Endowment staff happen for those that advance?

It will be dependent on the volume of concepts we receive. We expect to review concept papers in April and then communicate with all applicants by mid-May. We expect meetings with those advancing to the second stage to take place in late May to early June.

If an applicant is invited to participate in the second phase, will its collaborators also be invited to the meeting with Endowment staff? How about the individuals to be served?

We will provide specific meeting guidance in May to those advancing to the second stage. The meeting with Endowment staff may include collaborators and others as appropriate and will focus on sharing feedback to help inform the development of a full proposal.

Will Lilly Endowment use content experts or external reviewers during the review process?

We intend to use independent, external reviewers and will seek external expertise, as necessary and appropriate.

Eligibility

An organization can participate in multiple applications; however, can an organization also initiate multiple applications?

Yes. However, we encourage any organization to consider carefully its capacity to implement the concepts for which it is an initiator or collaborator.

Does an organization have to be in operation for a certain period of time to be an applicant? Is Lilly Endowment only considering concepts from established nonprofit organizations?

The initiative is not limited to established nonprofit organizations. If an organization meets the eligibility requirements outlined in the RFP, it is eligible to apply. We ask that all organizations, perhaps especially relatively new organizations, consider among other things their ability to execute on any concept submitted.

If an organization is not already an approved 501(c)(3), may it file papers with the IRS to be considered for 501(c)(3) status and at the same time submit a concept paper and be considered an applicant under this initiative?

Application to and review and approval by the IRS for 501(c)(3) status can take several months. Most likely, if an organization has not already applied for and received approval as a 501(c)(3), it will need to collaborate with an eligible applicant to submit a concept paper for this initiative.

Does an applicant have to be audited by a CPA to apply?

No. If an organization is invited to participate in the second stage, we will provide guidance on organizational financial information that is required in full proposals.

Concept Paper Topic Areas

In topic area one, you talk about good or promising jobs in or around Marion County. Can you define what counts as around Marion County? Is there a geographic boundary for those to be served?

We do not tightly define “around Marion County.” Proposed concepts should be feasible and benefit largely Marion County residents.

In the definition of good and promising jobs, it sounds like you are talking about people being employed at a specific employer. Could those who are self-employed or working toward self-employment count as being in a good or promising job?

In general, yes. Compelling self-employment opportunities could help people make lasting progress toward economic self-sufficiency, which is the aim of this initiative. Like all concepts proposed in concept papers, a convincing rationale for the proposed strategy will be necessary.

Are grant funds intended to address wage inadequacies for individuals who are employed by other organizations, or may we address wages within our own organization? Can we include in a concept paper how to raise the wages of our own staff at our charitable organization?

We understand the importance of this question and recognize the need many organizations have to improve the pay of their employees. With that said, the part of this initiative focused on wages is oriented toward strategies to provide good or promising jobs at the community level, not just for a grant recipient. Although some strategies might benefit an individual class that could include some employees of a recipient organization, it is not our intention to award operating funds under this initiative that would primarily expand annual operating budgets to provide wage increases for employees at the recipient organization.

Can applicants propose serving populations facing added challenges beyond those expressly stated in the RFP? Perhaps seniors or grandparents of clients being served? What about caregivers?

Yes. The populations listed in the RFP are examples only.

If an applicant has a grant—say a federal grant—supporting a new project, would Lilly Endowment consider a concept that expands the range of people to be served?

In general, yes. We invite concepts that seek to expand and enhance existing promising efforts if there is strong rationale that such an expansion and enhancement will meaningfully help people make progress toward lasting economic self-sufficiency.

Collaboration

With the emphasis on collaboration, will Lilly Endowment take overt actions to connect interested organizations either as part of the concept phase or when inviting full proposals?

The Endowment will not coordinate or connect organizations as concept papers are being developed. However, as we review the full set of submitted concept papers, if we see compelling opportunities to connect organizations, we may offer those suggestions.

If multiple organizations are partnering to submit a concept paper, are there guidelines as to who should serve as the applicant versus who should serve as a collaborator?

We leave it to the organizations to determine those roles, consistent with the guidance provided in the RFP.

Given that employers are critical to providing “good or promising jobs,” are employers expected to be collaborators? Will a concept be viewed more favorably if employers are offering “good or promising jobs” and are participating as collaborators?

Having an employer as a collaborator that is committed to providing good or promising jobs to more people could represent an important element of a compelling concept paper. Please note, however, that this initiative covers several topic areas, and we are open to a range of concepts from a broad spectrum of organizations.

If the collaboration is among several grassroots organizations, would Lilly Endowment consider an application that includes an organization to serve as the fiscal agent?

An organization that meets the RFP’s eligibility criteria can apply, with “grassroots” organizations participating as collaborators. The applicant will be legally responsible for all aspects of the grant, such as fiscal oversight, programmatic oversight and grant reporting.

Do collaborators have to submit tax information in the concept stage?

No. Tax information is required only for the applicant.

Can a nonprofit agency partner with a state agency? For example, could we partner with a state entity to put on a conference that seeks to help a certain population?

As noted in the RFP, we do not intend to fund governmental agencies directly, but we recognize the important role they can play in an initiative like this and encourage them to be collaborators. Regarding the specific question on hosting a conference, the aim of this initiative is to help people make progress toward lasting economic self-sufficiency. A standalone, one-time event, such as a conference, will likely not be competitive in this initiative.

Must all details with respect to collaborators be defined in the concept paper?

As part of a concept submission, the applicant should identify collaborators and articulate their respective role(s). While an applicant does not need to have every detail finalized at the concept phase, it should document to the best of its ability how the collaborators will work together and what they hope to accomplish.

Will applicants be able to add supporters/collaborators between the concept phase and final phase?

We recognize that expanding the number of stakeholders could strengthen a final proposal. As a result, successful applicants will be able to add supporters and/or collaborators between the two stages of this initiative.

Is there a limit to the number of supporters/collaborators that may be included in the concept phase?

No. We will leave it to the applicant to determine the optimal number of collaborators. Letters of support are required from all collaborators; for other supporters, no more than three letters of endorsement are permitted at the concept stage.

Budget / Budget Narrative

As part of the concept stage, what are the expectations for the budget and budget narrative? Are differences between the concept budget and full proposal budget allowed? What if numbers don't match up between the concept phase and the full proposal stage?

We know applicants may not have 100% certainty on every detail of the budget. As a result, we expect some full proposals will request modest budget changes compared to the concept budget. Endowment staff will provide guidance if changes are requested. We do not anticipate approving significant budget changes.

Funding

Will funds be available for revolving loans?

There are some programs that use revolving loans for charitable purposes. Applicants should consider legal and other relevant issues regarding revolving loans and provide a compelling rationale for their use in concept paper narratives.

Will Lilly Endowment offer guidelines about how much funding may be used to serve individuals through high-touch and personal programs? For example, will high-touch concepts be penalized because they might be more expensive per person served?

We will not have specific guidelines. We are encouraging concepts that may help only a relatively small number of people but in intensive and highly personal ways. We recognize that these concepts will cost more per person served but could have a more meaningful impact than efforts that might only superficially touch a larger number of people.

If a concept involving an educational or training program requires an investment in capital equipment or other assets in order to be effective, will that fit within the scope of what Lilly Endowment might consider?

In general, yes. Applicants should provide a compelling rationale for the importance of such investments.

Can you confirm that regrating funds is an allowable purpose? Can they be placed into an endowment?

Regrating of funds will be allowed. For example, an intermediary organization might propose to regrant funds to collaborators providing high-touch services to people.

We do expect grant funds awarded under this initiative to be deployed within the proposed grant period, however. As such, grant funds awarded under this initiative should not be placed in an endowment for future use.

Are funds from Lilly Endowment allowed to be dedicated to wage support in the private sector?

Grant funding must go to eligible charitable organizations and for eligible charitable purposes. Direct wage support in the private sector are likely not eligible for funding, but properly targeted personnel costs such as childcare or transportation subsidies might be covered by grant funds in appropriate circumstances. In such cases, please closely analyze the legal and other relevant issues and provide a clear and compelling rationale for the proposed use of grant funds.

May a concept include health care services or assistance with healthcare needs? For example, could grant funds pay for a collaborator to provide direct health care services as part of the concept?

Consistent with our longstanding general grant guidelines, we will not directly fund healthcare projects under this initiative. Concepts must focus on economic self-sufficiency. However, if a healthcare-related item, such as a collaboration with mental health or addiction counselors, is part of an array of interventions designed to help people make progress toward lasting economic self-sufficiency, grant funding for that item may be appropriate. Please provide details in the concept paper narrative and budget narrative.

Can we request resources that can then be provided as direct assistance (e.g., “barrier busting” funds) to some of our clients?

In appropriate cases, grants or loans to individuals in furtherance of charitable or educational purposes may be acceptable ways to further the goals of this initiative. Among other things, it would be important to describe how individual recipients will be selected, who will make the selections, and how assistance funds may be used.

Can Lilly Endowment funding be regranted to a collaborating governmental agency or department?

An eligible applicant can collaborate with a governmental department or agency as part of this initiative. In some of these circumstances, an eligible applicant could propose re-granting a portion of the Endowment grant funds to the collaborating department or agency. For a concept like this to be considered for funding, a compelling rationale must be provided that clearly articulates, among other things, the strategic relevance of the department or agency to the concept being proposed. Applicants also should ensure that any grant funds proposed for the department or agency are proportional to the results it intends to deliver. Please note that, if the structure or plan for the concept is substantially equivalent to direct funding of a governmental department or agency with a significant portion of requested funds, instead of a true collaboration with a lead eligible applicant, the concept may be viewed as outside the aim of this initiative.

Leveraging Funds / Matching Funds

Is there a matching requirement either as an applicant and/or if working with collaborators?

No. If an applicant or collaborators have or can access financial and/or in-kind resources that can strengthen a concept, that is certainly welcomed; however, it is not mandatory.

Would a financial match increase an applicant’s likelihood to advance to the second stage?

While matching is not required, it could strengthen the competitiveness of an applicant’s overall concept paper, depending on what is being proposed. For example, it could demonstrate broader community support for the concept and could help expand its impact.

Planning Grant Funds

If invited to participate in the second phase, grants of up to \$50,000 will be available for planning purposes. Is that funding automatic?

Applicants may include a request of up to \$50,000 for additional planning in the concept budget and detail how those funds will be used in the concept budget narrative. Examples of such uses are included in the RFP. Assuming the proposed use of planning funds is appropriate, applicants invited to the second stage will receive those funds in timely fashion.

How may planning grants be spent and does Lilly Endowment offer recommendations of consultants or other organizations that can support planning efforts?

Examples of allowable uses of planning grant funds are articulated in the RFP and include convening collaborators, conducting research, participating in site visits or conferences to learn about best practices in other communities, or funding staff or consultant time to develop a full proposal. We will not be providing specific advice or recommendations regarding consultants or other organizations to assist in planning efforts.

Evaluation / Research / Impact

Should evaluation plans be mentioned in the concept paper? Can we request funds for evaluation in the concept budget? Is there a maximum percentage that may be allocated to evaluation?

As noted on page 6 of the RFP, applicants should provide information in the concept paper narrative regarding how activities undertaken will be evaluated and how applicants will reasonably assess their impact. If an applicant elects to request funds for evaluation, it should provide details in the concept paper narrative and budget narrative. If the percentage of the overall budget dedicated to evaluation is greater than 10%, applicants should include a compelling rationale in the concept paper narrative. Endowment staff will provide more guidance on evaluation to applicants proceeding to the second stage of the initiative.

When it comes to research, it seems that supportive research will be more readily available for ideas that include expanding and enhancing an established program. What are the research requirements for new concepts? How will you score new ideas that may not have much, if any, research against ideas that are established and are being expanded and enhanced?

Citing relevant research, while not required, can strengthen a concept's rationale. However, there are circumstances, such as with new or innovative ideas, where there may be little traditional research available. In such situations, applicants should make other arguments and cite other sources of evidence, such as direct experience, to help build a strong rationale. Please note that we are open to a range of concepts as part of this initiative.

In terms of getting feedback from those we seek to serve, may we use existing data to support ideas in the application, or is new data required?

Our request is that concepts are informed by those the applicant seeks to serve. We leave it up to the applicant to determine the relevance and strength of the existing data they have and whether or not it should be supplemented with new data or input.

Can you define high touch interactions?

We will let applicants determine what high-touch might mean in the context of the concept they are proposing. A potential example could be a church working to intensively and comprehensively help a small number of families in its immediate neighborhood by developing personal relationships with the families.

What kind of reporting and data will be required of organizations receiving an award?

We will work with each recipient to determine specific data and reporting requirements. We will ensure requirements are reasonable and focused on the most important elements to evaluate what is being funded. We will also be interested in learning alongside the applicant of what is and is not working and how we can improve our efforts going forward.

What about sustainability past the proposed grant period? May concept papers include requests for endowments that would later support sustainability?

Applicants are not required to provide plans for sustainability in the concept phase. If invited to participate in the second stage, applicants will receive additional guidance regarding sustainability issues. Placing funds into an endowment, including for the express purpose of sustainability, is not allowed under this initiative.