



# Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

2022

**L**illy Endowment is pleased to announce its Christian Parenting and Caregiving Initiative (Christian Parenting Initiative). The aim of the initiative is to help interested parents and caregivers share their faith and values with their children. (Throughout this Request for Proposals (RFP), the term “children” includes biological, adopted and foster children and youth.)

In this open and competitive initiative, eligible charitable organizations located in the United States may submit proposals for **up to \$1.25 million** that may be used for **up to a five-year period** to establish new and/or enhance existing programs that advance the aim of the initiative and address one or both of the following objectives:

1. Supporting congregations (especially pastors, children and youth ministry staff and congregational volunteer leaders) and other Christian organizations by developing and providing resources, programs and educational opportunities that will create and/or strengthen ministries to help interested parents and caregivers share their Christian faith and values with their children.
2. Supporting Christian parents and caregivers by developing and providing resources and programs to help them learn, adapt and embrace time-honored practices to share their Christian faith and values with their children.

The Endowment is especially interested in supporting organizations that provide programs and other activities through which they will walk alongside parents and caregivers and congregations as they further the initiative’s aim. **The Endowment anticipates awarding approximately 60 grants** to charitable organizations that submit the most promising and compelling proposals. The Endowment is seeking to support organizations that demonstrate in their proposals that they have the capacity to design, implement and sustain high-quality programs.

**Interest Form:** Interested charitable organizations should complete and submit the online Interest Form and a one-page Letter of Interest **by December 5, 2022**.

**Application Form:** **Proposals are due by February 13, 2023** and must be submitted through the online Christian Parenting Initiative Application Form.

The Endowment anticipates announcing grant awards in summer 2023.

The rationale, eligibility criteria, selection criteria, application process and application guidelines are discussed more fully below.

## Rationale

The Christian Parenting Initiative builds directly on research findings about the pivotal role of parents in the transmission of faith and values to their children. For example, the highly regarded National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), which was directed by Dr. Christian Smith, found that parents are the single most important influence in shaping the religious beliefs, values and practices of their children. This key finding counters many conventional assumptions that emphasize the roles of peers and media in influencing the religious and moral values of children and young people, especially as they begin to assert their independence. It also underscores the importance for churches and other Christian organizations to provide support and guidance to interested parents as they navigate the challenges of raising children today.

After completing the NSYR, Smith and a research team conducted a follow-up study that examined how and why parents share their faith and religious practices with their children. The study involved in-depth interviews with a national sample of 100 families from a broad array of religious traditions, different socio-economic backgrounds, diverse racial and ethnic groups and various levels of religious commitment. The study's findings, which were published in 2021, found remarkable consistency among many parents about their hopes for nurturing the religious lives of their children, as well as common challenges they faced as they sought support from religious organizations.

Smith and his research team discovered that many parents believe faith formation is a gradual, natural and intuitive process that takes place over time. The study noted that most parents share their faith with their children primarily by engaging in religious practices, such as prayer, worship and volunteering, and by modeling their values in their daily lives. The study also found that parents take a more active approach in the faith formation of their children when they are young but give their children more discretion and flexibility in discerning and expressing their faith as they grow older. These findings are not surprising for most religious leaders.

Smith's parenting study also discovered a significant disconnect in what parents expect congregations to provide relating to the faith formation of their children and what congregations are generally providing. This finding from Smith's study resonates with insights from other recent studies about religious education. For example, in 2015, Vibrant Faith conducted a survey of 926 parents and grandparents from across the United States. The study found that common congregational models for the Christian education of children, which often utilize school-based educational approaches, were losing their effectiveness. In particular, the study noted declining enthusiasm from parents and children for participating in traditional Christian education activities, such as Sunday schools. Parents' reasons for not having children participate included busyness, outside pressures, difficulty in finding time for the family to be together, lack of enthusiasm from children and even parental fatigue. At the same time, researchers noted that parents wanted congregations to be more supportive of their family life and to offer more relevant assistance to them in their role as parents.

The Vibrant Faith study also identified congregations that had adapted their Christian education and faith formation ministries successfully to support families. Researchers noted that these congregations (including small membership churches) listened attentively to parents and caregivers and then designed ministries that met the needs of their families, including families with different structures and sizes, racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and even different religious identities among their members. These congregations recognized the home as an essential environment for faith formation

and built their ministries for children, as well as parents and caregivers, around the lives of families, rather than prescribing congregation-based ministries for them.

Other recent research studies on early childhood faith development also suggest that congregations may need to help interested parents and caregivers broaden their current approaches to faith formation, especially for their youngest children. For example, recent research confirms that children “learn what they live” and that one of the most critical windows for faith formation may be between birth and age 3. When a child is born into a family that has a relationship with God, the child is more likely to experience an individual relationship with God. Additional insights from child development research suggest that the ways in which a child develops attachment, security and trust through their relationships with parents and caregivers has an effect on their awareness and understanding of God. These research findings can help new parents and caregivers, whether biological, adoptive or foster, gain knowledge and confidence in their abilities to share their faith with their young children, especially by modeling divine love and embedding faith language from a very early age.

During the last two years, religious leaders have shared with the Endowment that the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened challenges about how congregations can support Christian parents and caregivers. Pandemic-related restrictions have disrupted the daily lives of children and their families and isolated them from others. Parents have spent more time with their children and played more active roles in their children’s education and daily lives. These experiences have prompted for parents many questions about their faith and values, especially as they have attended to their children’s deeply spiritual questions about the pandemic and the challenges and traumas that they experienced. Parents have expressed their eagerness to raise their children to be faithful and are asking pastors and church leaders, “What do we do?” At the same time, pastors have expressed their desire to find better ways to reach and support families and help parents and caregivers nurture the faith of children, especially as churches are rethinking ministry priorities as they move toward a post-pandemic future.

## **Guiding Questions**

Through the Christian Parenting Initiative, the Endowment seeks to encourage congregations and Christian organizations to consider three broad questions:

1. How might findings from recent research on child development and parenting inform the kinds of Christian practices that are most effective for interested parents and caregivers to embrace to share their faith and values with their children, especially those practices most appropriate for home settings?
2. What might congregations, as well as other Christian organizations, do to bring parents and caregivers together for mutual support and to provide them with opportunities and resources to help strengthen their confidence and ability in sharing their Christian faith with their children?
3. How might congregations, as well as other Christian organizations, attend to the specific challenges of parents and caregivers who are raising children within a broad range of family structures and experiences, including raising children from increasingly diverse backgrounds?

These three guiding questions prompt a series of additional questions that organizations may wish to explore as they develop programs to support parents and caregivers, such as:

- What are the milestones in a child’s life, such as first days at school and graduations, that prompt spiritual questions and offer opportunities for parents and caregivers intentionally to share their faith and values with their child? What Christian practices, rituals, liturgical traditions or resources could parents and caregivers draw on at such moments? How might congregations provide support for parents and caregivers during key moments in the lives of families, such as pregnancy, the adoption or fostering of a child, a child learning to read or making other cognitive leaps in learning, or a young person leaving home?
- What are the daily routines in a child’s life that provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to engage in practices and rituals to share their faith with their children? How might congregations inspire parents and caregivers with creative ideas that help their children connect faith and daily life?
- How might congregations strengthen their support for parents and caregivers as they guide their children through common Christian rites of passage for children, such as baptism, child dedication, first communion and confirmation?
- What are the implications for faith formation from insights emerging from recent research on child development, parenting, and digital cultures, as well as other fields of research? How do these insights affirm or challenge common assumptions about how faith and values are passed to children?
- How might congregations or other Christian organizations help interested parents and caregivers discern which Christian practices are most appropriate and effective for their families? For example, what practices are most helpful for families with children with different abilities? Or families from various racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds? Or families with single or divorced parents? Or families with parents with different religious backgrounds or levels of commitment? Or families experiencing financial stress or chronic illness?
- What resources need to be created or adapted to support faith sharing in families from various racial and ethnic backgrounds? How could those resources reflect specific cultural traditions, languages, values and rituals? What resources are needed for immigrant families that attend to faith sharing across first, second or third generations?

## Program Design Considerations

The Endowment is especially interested in proposals that demonstrate that the organization values and has used or will use the following approaches in designing and implementing the proposed program:

**Listening to Christian parents and caregivers.** The organization will provide ongoing opportunities for pastors, children and youth ministry professionals and congregational volunteer leaders to engage in conversations with interested parents and caregivers who are both inside and outside of congregations about their hopes for sharing their faith and values with their children.

**Listening to pastors, children and youth ministry professionals, and congregational volunteer leaders.** The organization will have ongoing conversations with pastors, children and youth ministry professionals, and congregational volunteer leaders to listen to challenges they face in developing and sustaining vital ministries for families, children and youth, and parents and caregivers.

**Exploring recent research.** The organization will draw on findings from recent research on child development and parenting to identify insights that shed new light on effective parenting practices for sharing faith and values with children.

**Identifying Christian practices.** The organization will identify Christian practices in its theological and ecclesial traditions that resonate with findings from recent research, are attuned more fully to the daily life of families, are most appropriate for sharing faith with children, and nurture children's relationships with God (e.g., talking about faith within warm and caring relationships, celebrating rituals and milestones, following seasons of the church year, praying together as a family, practicing spiritual disciplines like fasting or pilgrimage, encountering God through family Bible devotions, engaging in service and mission, and worshipping God).

**Supporting Christian parents and caregivers in diverse families and family structures.** The organization will encourage ministry leaders to enhance and expand ministries that reflect adequately the needs of Christian parents and caregivers who are raising children in a broad range of family structures and experiences, including those raising children from increasingly diverse backgrounds (e.g., ministries that are grounded in specific cultures, languages, values and Christian traditions of families from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and experiences, attentive to different family structures, and sensitive to intergenerational dynamics in Christian parenting and caregiving).

**Nurturing faith in home life.** The organization will help congregations develop ministries and resources that assist interested parents in connecting church life with home life and home life with church life (e.g., ministries that bring parents and caregivers together for mutual encouragement and support, engage families in intergenerational experiences of the congregation and provide digital resources for Christian practices in the home).

**Walking alongside congregations and/or parents and caregivers.** The organization will work directly with congregations and/or parents and caregivers and walk alongside them as they help interested parents and caregivers share their faith with their children (e.g., gathering parents and caregivers for mutual support; convening cohorts of congregations to share insights as they develop and/or strengthen ministries from parents, caregivers and families; helping congregations both identify and use appropriate resources for their ministry contexts, etc.).

The Endowment encourages organizations to think creatively about how to design programs that further the aim of the Christian Parenting Initiative and intends to support a variety of programs that are appropriate for different organizations' capacities and constituencies.

## **Eligibility, Selection Criteria and Application Process**

Charitable organizations in the United States with Internal Revenue Code (Code) section 501(c)(3) and public charity status that support Christian congregations and other Christian organizations are eligible to apply for grants in the Christian Parenting Initiative. Eligible organizations may submit proposals of **up to \$1.25 million** each that may be used for **up to a five-year period** to develop new and/or enhance existing programs that advance the initiative's aim and objectives stated above.

The Endowment is looking to award grants to organizations that demonstrate that they have the capacity to design, implement and sustain a high-quality program. Funding decisions will take into consideration the following criteria, among others:

1. Clarity of the program's purpose.
2. Quality of design of the program and its potential to advance the initiative's aim and one or both of the initiative's objectives.
3. The extent to which the organization responds to the Guiding Questions on pages 3 and 4 of this RFP.
4. The extent to which the organization has used and has committed to the Program Design Considerations described on pages 4 and 5 of this RFP.
5. Capacity, readiness and appropriateness of the organization to develop a new and/or enhance an existing program.
6. Reach of the program and its potential positive impact on significant numbers of parents, caregivers, congregations, ministry professionals or congregational volunteer leaders.
7. Level of commitment and capacity of the organization to garner the financial resources needed to sustain its program beyond the grant period.

The Endowment encourages each organization to apply for an amount appropriate to its capacity, the needs of the proposed program, and the organization's ability to sustain its program beyond the end of the grant period. Organizations should have no expectation that Endowment funding will be available to sustain the program after the grant period ends. Successful organizations are expected to continue their programs from other funding sources.

Grant funds may be used to fund the costs of developing and implementing a new and/or enhancing an existing program. Grant funds may not be used for endowments or routine operating expenses unrelated to the proposed program.

Interested organizations are asked to use the following application procedures and timeline:

**Interest Form:** Submit the online Interest Form and a one-page Letter of Interest on the Endowment's website **by December 5, 2022.**

Each organization is asked to complete and submit an Interest Form and a Letter of Interest indicating its intent to submit a proposal. The submission of an Interest Form and Letter of Interest is not required, but it will inform the Endowment of the organization's interest and aid in the implementation of the initiative.

**Application Form:** Submit a complete proposal through the online Christian Parenting Initiative Application Form on the Endowment's website **by February 13, 2023.**

The Endowment anticipates notifying organizations of funding decisions in summer 2023.

## Application Guidelines

A complete proposal must include the following information:

**Official Request Letter:** A proposal should be accompanied by a cover letter requesting a grant. The letter should be signed by the organization's chief executive officer.

**Information Form:** This form provides key information about the proposal and the appropriate contact persons for the organization and proposed program.

**Executive Summary:** This is a one-page summary that describes the organization, its mission and constituencies, the primary purpose of the proposed program and the highlights of key activities. (Not included in 12-page limit for the Proposal Narrative described below.)

**Budget Summary:** This is a one-page summary of the proposed program's budget that should condense budget line items from the detailed Line-Item Budget described on page 9. See the "Guide to Budget Preparation."

**Proposal Narrative:** This narrative should provide the items below and not exceed 12 pages in length, excluding the Executive Summary, Budget and other supporting materials.

- **Purpose:** State the proposed program's purpose.
  - › How will the proposed program advance the aim of the initiative and one or both of the objectives as described above?
  - › What does the organization endeavor to achieve through the program?
- **Rationale:** Provide a discussion of the rationale explaining the organization's interest in developing the proposed program.
  - › Why is it important to undertake this work?
  - › How is the organization suited to implement the proposed program?
- **Steps to Develop the Proposed Program:** Provide a short narrative that chronicles the organization's decision to apply for this grant and describes the various participants involved in the planning process.
  - › How did the organization engage the approaches to Program Design Considerations described on pages 4 and 5 during the planning process?
- **Program Design:** Provide a detailed description of the proposed program.
  - › What is the program's overall design, and what are its key activities?
  - › How has the organization responded to the Guiding Questions posed in pages 3 and 4 of this RFP in designing the program?
  - › How will the program's activities demonstrate the organization's commitment to and use of the approaches to Program Design Considerations described in pages 4 and 5 of this RFP?
  - › How will the program's activities result in a coherent and effective strategy that advances the program's purpose?



- › Who are the leaders responsible for implementing the program and its activities?
- **Collaborations and Partnerships:** Describe potential collaborations and partnerships that will help the organization as it implements the proposed program.
  - › With whom will the organization collaborate (e.g., denominational judicatories, ecclesial networks, nonprofits and other ministry organizations that support children, families, congregations or ministry professionals)?
  - › Are these existing relationships or new relationships?
  - › What roles will collaborators or partners play?
  - › How will the organization manage these relationships?
- **Evaluation:** Provide a description of how the organization will measure the proposed program's progress and success.
  - › **Outcomes:** Provide a description of the desired outcomes the organization hopes to achieve through the program activities. What changes does the organization hope to see if the program is successful? What are the anticipated outcomes for children, for parents and caregivers, for ministry professionals and congregational volunteer leaders, for congregations, and for the organization?
  - › **Performance Indicators:** Provide a discussion of the specific and concrete performance indicators that will be used to measure the program's progress toward the outcomes stated above. Please include the intervals for achieving these outcomes in the timetable described below.
 

Performance indicators may include quantitative and qualitative markers to gauge the program's progress toward its outcomes. **Examples of quantitative performance indicators may include:** increasing numbers of families engaging in Christian practices, increasing numbers of congregations that are creating ministries to support parents and caregivers and that are shifting to family-centered approaches to faith formation, increasing production and use of culturally appropriate resources for diverse Christian families, etc. **Examples of qualitative performance indicators may include:** increasing growth in faith among children, improving confidence and ability of parents in sharing their faith with children, strengthening connections between Christian practices in the home and faith formation activities in congregations, etc. The Endowment encourages each organization to give special attention to qualitative outcomes and performance indicators as it designs its program.
  - › **Evaluation Plan:** What is the organization's plan to evaluate the program? How will the organization track the program's performance indicators? What qualitative and quantitative methods will the organization use in the evaluation process (e.g., interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.)? Who is responsible for evaluation?
- **Communication:** Provide a communication plan that describes the various audiences the organization intends to communicate with about the proposed program (potential participants, general public, funders, collaborators, etc.) and the communication strategies it will employ.



- › What is the purpose of communicating with each audience, and what are the methods by which the organization hopes to reach them?
- **Sustainability:** Describe how the organization plans to continue the proposed program beyond the end of the grant period.
  - › How does the organization intend to support financially the activities that have been successful?
  - › How will new sources of funding be cultivated to replace grant dollars?
  - › How will other resources (e.g., intellectual capital, commitment of existing staff time, capacity building, etc.) be secured and deployed to sustain the momentum of the program into the future?
- **Organizational capacity:** Provide a brief description of the organization, including its mission, organizational structure (a profile of the board and how board members are recruited), relationship to a Christian denomination or tradition, annual operating budget and major sources of support for the operating budget.

**Program Timetable:** Provide a high-level timetable of the proposed program’s key activities, including evaluation (i.e., when specific performance indicators will be assessed to track progress towards outcomes), communication and sustainability activities.

**Line-Item Budget and Budget Narrative:** Prepare a Line-Item Budget and a Budget Narrative for the activities described in the proposal narrative. Refer to the “Guide to Budget Preparation” for formats.

**Line-Item Budget:** A detailed Line-Item Budget should specify how grant funds will be used. *The Endowment recommends working closely with those responsible for accounting procedures and financial policies in the organization to create a Line-Item Budget that aligns with those procedures and policies.*

**Budget Narrative:** A Budget Narrative should provide short narrative detail for each line item included in the Line-Item Budget. See the “Guide to Budget Preparation” for examples.

**Letters of Support (where applicable):** If the proposed program involves other collaborating organizations, letters of support from the leaders of the other organizations or agencies must be submitted with the application.

**Copy of Organization’s Current Year Operating Budget:** Please submit a copy of the organization’s operating budget for the current year.

**Copy of Organization’s Annual Financial Statements:** Please submit a copy of the organization’s annual financial statement for the most recently completed fiscal year. The financial statement should include a balance sheet, income and expense statement, and any footnotes or supporting schedules that provide an accurate assessment of the financial condition of the organization. The financial statement may be from an internal review of accounts, from an outside agency or from a formal audit.

**Exempt Status and Charity/Foundation Status Information Form:** This form verifies the organization’s tax status as a charitable organization under applicable United States federal tax law.

**Copy of IRS Exempt Status Determination Letter:** Please include a copy of the organization’s Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax-exempt status determination letter to provide verification of the organization’s status as a Code section 501(c)(3) entity and the organization’s public charity status under the Code. Please note: Many denominationally related organizations may not have asked for or received such a letter from the IRS. If that is the case, determine whether the organization is listed in a group exemption ruling for the denomination. If so, please attach evidence that the organization is covered by the ruling (for example, by sending copies of the directory cover and the page on which the organization is listed in the official directory of your denomination). No grants will be awarded until the proper tax status is confirmed.

## Submission Checklist

**Proposals must be submitted by February 13, 2023, through the online Christian Parenting Initiative Application Form on the [Endowment’s website](#).** The proposal must be uploaded as a single PDF with the following items in the order listed below.

- Official Request Letter
- [Information Form](#)
- Executive Summary
- [Budget Summary](#)
- Proposal Narrative
- Program Timetable
- [Line-Item Budget](#)
- [Budget Narrative](#)
- Letters of Support (optional)
- Copy of Organization’s Current Year Operating Budget
- Copy of Organization’s Annual Financial Statements
- [Exempt Status and Charity/Foundation Status Information Form](#)
- Copy of IRS Exempt Status Determination Letter

Please email any questions to [christianparenting@lei.org](mailto:christianparenting@lei.org).