



# Thriving Congregations Initiative 2023

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Is submission of the Interest Form required?**

No. The submission of the Interest Form from your organization is not required. Lilly Endowment, however, strongly encourages organizations to submit the Interest Form and upload a one-page Letter of Interest. These items will help the Endowment know about your interest and prepare to receive your proposal. Please submit your Interest Form and Letter of Interest by March 31, 2023, through the Thriving Congregations 2023 webpage on the Endowment's website. If your organization is unable to submit these materials by the deadline, you may still submit a proposal by the submission deadline of June 23, 2023.

### **Should we wait for a response from the Endowment about our Interest Form before working on the proposal?**

No. The Interest Form is intended to indicate your organization's intent to submit a proposal, not for a preliminary evaluation by the Endowment of the merit of potential proposals. Please go ahead and begin working on your proposal.

### **May we speak with someone to discuss ideas, receive feedback on a proposal or obtain further clarification about Thriving Congregations 2023?**

Unfortunately, no. Thriving Congregations 2023 is a national competitive initiative, and the Endowment anticipates receiving a high volume of proposals. Because this is a competitive initiative, Endowment staff is unable to provide feedback on ideas or proposals. Please carefully read the Request for Proposals (RFP) and accompanying documents for guidance as you design your programs and prepare your proposals.

The Endowment will host information sessions on February 28 and March 7 to review the RFP in detail. Questions for clarification about the initiative may be directed to [thrivingcongregations@lei.org](mailto:thrivingcongregations@lei.org).

### **What does the Endowment mean by evaluation, and what are the Endowment's expectations?**

Evaluation entails the activities built into the organization's program to gauge its progress toward the program's intended outcomes. Evaluation also is intended to help organizations learn from their work so that they can refine their programs to make them more effective. The Endowment considers carefully the organization's evaluation plan in reviewing its proposal. Most evaluation plans include quantitative and qualitative measures to gauge the effectiveness and impact of the organization's program.

### **What types of outcomes and performance indicators are appropriate for inclusion in an organization's proposal?**

Outcomes and performance indicators can be qualitative or quantitative and should clearly indicate what the organization plans to achieve and what changes will occur as a result of the program funded by the grant.

### **What are the Endowment's expectations regarding sustainability?**

Through Thriving Congregations 2023, the Endowment seeks to help organizations design, launch, refine and sustain programs that advance the initiative's aim. As described in the Request for Proposals, 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. Organizations should have no expectation that Endowment funding will be available for its program beyond the grant period. In the proposal, describe the organization's sustainability plan and how the organization will continue the program with other funding sources.

### **May an organization submit multiple proposals?**

No. Each organization may submit only one proposal that presents the organization's best idea.

### **May multiple organizations work together to submit a proposal?**

Yes. Organizations may work collaboratively to design a program and prepare a proposal. While the Endowment encourages collaborative endeavors, only one lead organization may submit a proposal requesting a grant for a collaborative program. 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.

### **May an organization submit a proposal for a program that would work with congregations in different denominations and/or in a variety of Christian traditions?**

Yes. An organization may submit a proposal for a program that would work with congregations from different denominations and traditions, if such a program is appropriate for the organization's mission.

### **May an organization submit a proposal for a program that would work with congregations outside of the United States?**

Only charitable organizations in the United States are eligible to apply for Thriving Congregations 2023, and proposed programs should be for activities that support congregations located in the United States.

### **May a single congregation apply?**

Yes. However, the Thriving Congregations Initiative is not intended to provide grants to individual congregations for the sole purpose of funding its own ministries. Rather, it is intended to support organizations that work with multiple congregations to help them thrive. If the purpose of the program is to work with multiple congregations, a single congregation may apply.

### **May an organization with a current grant from the Endowment submit a proposal for Thriving Congregations 2023?**

Yes. An organization with a current grant from the Endowment may submit a proposal. However, organizations that have already received Thriving Congregations grants in 2019 and 2020 are not eligible to apply.

**May an organization that is partnering with a Thriving Congregations project apply for a grant?**

Yes. Organizations that do not have their own Thriving Congregations grants but are partnering with an organization may apply. All applicants must have Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) and public charity status.

**May an organization provide a subgrant to another organization?**

Yes. An organization may provide subgrants to, or fund contractual relationships with, collaborating organizations that will implement program activities. The amount of funds the organization will distribute to collaborating organizations should be indicated in the budget submitted with the proposal.

**May an organization use grant funds to advocate for legislation that supports the mission of a church and/or the improvement of life for citizens (e.g., affordable housing, alleviation of poverty, education of children)?**

No. The Endowment grant funds cannot be used for lobbying or political activities per federal tax regulations. Please consult your organization's legal counsel for clarification.

**When should organizations propose to start the grant period?**

The Endowment anticipates notifying organizations of funding decisions in the fall of 2023. The Endowment anticipates that most organizations will propose to begin activities in January 2024, but each organization should discern and propose to the Endowment when it would like to start its program. Funding decisions will be based to an important degree on the capacity and readiness of the organization to develop and sustain the proposed program.

**Does the Endowment anticipate offering this opportunity again next year?**

No. The Endowment has no plans to offer this opportunity next year.

**Is there a page limit for appendices?**

No. But the Endowment strongly encourages organizations to include key information about the proposed program and the capacity of the organization to carry it out in the proposal narrative (12-page limit). The Endowment also encourages organizations to be judicious in appending additional materials to their proposals.

**Will the Endowment provide guidance about how to prepare the grant budget?**

Please see the Guide to Budget Preparation, which is provided on the Thriving Congregations 2023 webpage on the Endowment's website. The guide includes helpful information to assist organizations in preparing their budgets. Please consult with your organization's financial officers for guidance when preparing your budget.

**Are indirect costs allowable for inclusion in proposal?**

Yes. The Endowment allows organizations to request funds for indirect costs in their proposals. Indirect costs should not exceed 10 percent of the direct costs included in the proposed budget. For example, if an applicant requests a \$1.25 million grant, the maximum allowable indirect costs would be \$113,636 (approximately 10% of \$1,136,364 in direct costs). Please see the Guide to Budget Preparation, which is provided on the Thriving Congregations 2023 webpage for more guidance on indirect costs.

**Where can we get information about formatting proposal documents as a PDF?**

The Endowment asks organizations to upload their proposals through the website as a single PDF file. Please consult your IT support for advice, if needed.

**Where can we learn about related grant opportunities?**

Please see the Endowment's website for more information about other grant initiatives.

For more information about Thriving Congregations 2023, please refer to the Request for Proposals or the news release regarding the initiative, which may be accessed through the [Thriving Congregations 2023 webpage](#) on the Endowment's website.