



Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. May a theological school ask Lilly Endowment to provide feedback on its ideas?

No. Because both the Individual School Implementation Grants and the Large-scale Collaboration Grants in the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative are competitive, the Endowment is unable to provide feedback on concepts or project ideas from individual schools. Theological schools should read carefully the Request for Proposals for the particular funding opportunity in which they are applying as they shape their proposals and/or concept papers.

2. Does Lilly Endowment anticipate offering this opportunity again next year?

At this time, the Endowment has no plans to offer another round of the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative next year.

Eligibility and/or Proposal Submission Criteria

3. May a theological school with an existing Lilly Endowment grant apply for grants under the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative?

Yes. Theological schools with current grants from the Endowment may apply. Theological schools with grants from the Endowment, however, should not request funding through the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative that simply seeks to replace funds for current Lilly Endowment-funded grant programs. Theological schools should pursue other sources of funding to sustain projects supported by current Endowment grants.

4. May a theological school submit multiple proposals for Individual School Implementation Grants and/or multiple concept papers for Large-scale Collaboration Grants?

No. Each ATS-accredited school that did not receive a Pathways Phase 2 grant previously may submit one proposal for an Individual School Implementation Grant. Each ATS-accredited school may submit one concept paper as the lead school for a Large-scale Collaboration Grant. Eligible schools may apply for both funding opportunities, but only one application per school is permitted in each opportunity.

5. May a theological school participate in multiple concept papers submitted for Large-scale Collaboration Grants?

Yes. A theological school may submit one concept paper for which it would serve as the lead school and also be named as a collaborating organization in up to three additional concept papers submitted by other theological schools. The Endowment encourages theological schools to think strategically and to use discretion when considering how best to deploy their energy and resources in the development of and potential participation in multiple potential Large-scale Collaboration Grant projects.

6. Is it necessary for a theological school to apply for and receive a planning grant through the Pathways for Tomorrow Coordination Program in order to be eligible to submit a proposal for an Individual School Implementation Grant?

No. Theological schools are welcome to submit proposals for Individual School Implementation Grants whether or not they have applied for and/or received planning grants through the Pathways for Tomorrow Coordination Program.

7. May theological schools submit proposals for projects that would serve students and congregational leaders in U.S. territories or Canada?

Yes. Eligible ATS-accredited theological schools are eligible to submit applications in any funding opportunity for which they are eligible that would strengthen the preparation and support of pastoral leaders who serve congregations in the United States (including U.S. territories) or Canada. To be eligible, a theological school must qualify as a tax-exempt public charity under Internal Revenue Code (Code) sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1)(2), or (3) (other than organizations described in clause (i) or (ii) of Code section 4942(g)(4)(A)).

Aim of Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative

8. The Request for Proposals states that the aim of the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative is to help theological schools strengthen and sustain their institutional capacities to prepare and support pastoral leaders for Christian churches. What leaders are included in this objective?

The Endowment's primary interest is to help theological schools prepare and support the kinds of pastoral leaders needed by local churches. These leaders may include full-time and part-time ordained clergy, professional lay ministers who are employed by churches and volunteer lay ministers who perform pastoral roles.

9. The Request for Proposals and other materials describe a broad range of challenges and opportunities facing theological schools. Is it necessary for a theological school to design a project to respond to all these challenges and/or opportunities?

No. The Endowment encourages each theological school to be intentional and selective in prioritizing the challenges and/or opportunities that it wishes to address. Proposals and concept papers reflecting this kind of strategic focus will be viewed more favorably in the adjudication process.

10. May a theological school that is eligible for both funding opportunities address the same challenges and/or opportunities in its Individual School Implementation Grant proposal and its Large-scale Collaboration Grant concept paper? Must it do so?

A theological school that is eligible for both funding opportunities may choose to address the same challenges and/or opportunities in its Individual School Implementation Grant proposal and its Large-scale Collaboration Grant concept paper, but it is not required to do so. The Endowment will review independently Individual School Implementation Grant proposals and Large-scale Collaboration Grant concept papers. If a theological school submits proposals for both funding opportunities, the school should avoid making the work envisioned in one application dependent on the successful funding of the other application.

Proposal Components

11. The Request for Proposals for Individual School Implementation Grants notes that applicants must provide “outcomes and performance indicators” in their proposals. How important are these? How specific do they need to be?

The Endowment will weigh heavily a theological school’s ability to articulate clear and realistic outcomes and performance indicators for its proposed project in the adjudication of concept papers and proposals. The outcomes should state the anticipated achievements of the proposed project (i.e., how it will make a significant difference in the lives of pastors and ministerial candidates, congregations that the school serves, the theological school’s faculty and staff, the theological school’s constituencies, etc.). The performance indicators should state the specific markers that the school will use to gauge its progress to the proposed project’s outcomes.

Performance indicators may include both quantitative and qualitative markers. For example, one of the proposed project’s outcomes may be that “cost per headcount” in the MDiv program decreases by 20 percent (as a result of increasing enrollment, reducing underlying costs, or both). An accompanying performance indicator may be that “cost per headcount” in the MDiv decreases by four percent each year during a five-year grant period.

A second example of a project outcome may be that 90 percent of master’s level graduates indicate in a survey that their degree program prepared them well for the realities of ministry in their particular contexts. If 60 percent of students currently indicate this level of preparedness, then an accompanying performance indicator may be that this percentage will rise to at least 75 percent after the third year of the project.

A third example of a project outcome may be that the school will be able to increase revenues and cut costs in such a way to decrease its endowment draw to four percent annually. If the current endowment draw is seven percent annually, then an accompanying performance indicator may be that this percentage will drop to a maximum of five percent by the third year of the project. Theological schools should include clear timetables for the achievement of proposed outcomes and performance indicators as part of their evaluation plan.

12. The Request for Proposals notes that Official Request Letters in Individual School Implementation Grant proposals and Letters of Submission in Large-scale Collaboration Grant concept papers must be signed by the theological school’s “president or chief executive officer.” Who should sign the letter?

The Endowment recognizes that theological schools have a variety of governance structures and key leaders carry different titles. For free-standing or independent theological schools, the letter should be signed by the officer who serves as the school’s chief administrative or executive officer (e.g., president, CEO, rector, etc.). The letter also should be signed by the chair of the school’s governing board. For theological schools embedded in the structure of larger universities, the letter should be signed by the university’s president in addition to the primary executive (e.g., dean, rector, etc.) of the theological school and the chair of the theological school’s governing or advisory board. Questions about the required signatures should be addressed to the Endowment at pathways@lei.org.

13. What will the grant periods be for each grant funding opportunity?

For both funding opportunities, theological schools may request grants of up to five years, beginning January 2026 and potentially lasting until December 31, 2030.

Large-scale Collaborations

14. What kinds of organizations can serve as collaborating organizations for a Large-scale Collaboration Grant concept paper?

Eligible theological schools may wish to consider and propose collaborations with organizations including (but not limited to) other ATS-accredited theological schools, theological schools without ATS accreditation, colleges and universities, congregations, denominational judicatories, Bible colleges, *institutos bíblicos*, church camps, and parachurch organizations, among other organizations.

15. Are Letters of Support required from all potential collaborating organizations in a Large-scale Collaboration Grant concept paper?

Yes. The Endowment expects all organizations listed as potential collaborators in concept papers to provide a Letter of Support indicating their understanding of the envisioned concept and their intention to participate in the proposed collaboration as a collaborating organization.

16. Do all collaborating organizations need to fill out the Theological School Data Form?

A Theological School Data Form is required of all collaborating organizations that are ATS-accredited theological schools. Theological School Data Forms do not need to be submitted by other kinds of collaborating organizations (colleges, denominational judicatories, etc.). The Theological School Data Form is designed to collect information about ATS-accredited theological schools, which schools typically provide to ATS on an annual basis.

17. The Request for Proposals for Large-School Collaboration Grants includes a guide to determine the matching requirements for requests for Endowment and/or Scholarship Funds. These matching requirements are based on the theological school's long-term investments (LTI). If multiple ATS-accredited theological schools are part of a potential collaboration, how should the applicant calculate the LTI for the matching requirement? How should the applicant calculate the LTI if the potential collaboration will include other organizations?

If a potential large-scale collaboration would involve multiple ATS-accredited theological schools that would work collaboratively to create new and/or enhance current endowment and/or scholarship funds, the calculation for the LTI for matching requirements would be based on the average of the LTIs of the participating ATS-accredited theological schools.

If a potential large-scale collaboration would involve ATS-accredited theological schools and other organizations that would work collaboratively to create new and/or enhance current endowment and/or scholarship funds, the calculation for the LTI for matching requirements would be based only on the average of the LTIs of the participating ATS-accredited theological schools.

18. May a theological school submit a proposal for an Individual School Implementation Grant that also involves collaborations with other organizations?

Yes. Theological schools are not required to collaborate with other schools or organizations in proposing Individual School Implementation Grant projects. A theological school, however, may propose a project in which it would work collaboratively with other organizations to strengthen its capacities to prepare and support pastoral leaders for Christian churches for the long term.

Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative Timeline

19. When will theological schools learn about decisions regarding Individual School Implementation Grant awards and invitations to submit implementation proposals for Large-scale Collaboration Grants?

The Endowment anticipates announcing Individual School Implementation Grants in the fall of 2025.

The Endowment anticipates inviting up to 35 theological schools to develop full proposals for Large-scale Collaboration Grants in late spring 2025.