



# National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life

2025

## Frequently Asked Questions

### General

- 1. Does Lilly Endowment anticipate offering an opportunity for organizations to apply for grants in the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life again next year?**

At this time, the Endowment has no plans to offer this opportunity next year.

- 2. Will a recording of the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life information sessions be made available?**

No.

- 3. Is a concept paper required before submitting an implementation proposal?**

Yes. In the first stage of the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life, eligible charitable organizations must submit concept papers describing their ideas for potential storytelling projects. The Endowment intends to invite up to 30 organizations that submit the most promising concepts to move to the initiative's second stage. The invited organizations will receive planning grants to help them develop their storytelling concepts and prepare and submit proposals for implementation grants to execute them. If an organization's concept paper is not selected, that organization may not submit an implementation proposal in the second stage.

- 4. What is the difference between a concept paper and an implementation proposal?**

In the first stage of the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life, eligible organizations will submit concept papers that explain their interest in the initiative and provide initial descriptions of potential storytelling projects that they wish to develop. In the second stage, invited organizations prepare and submit implementation proposals that provide detailed plans for how they will develop and implement their concepts, including detailed descriptions of storytelling project activities and project budgets, among other required information.

- 5. May an organization submit a request for a planning grant of up to \$50,000 to be used to implement a project for which the organization does not intend to submit a concept paper?**

No. Planning grants are intended to assist organizations that have been invited to participate in the initiative's second stage to engage in planning activities to develop potential storytelling concepts and prepare proposals to implement the plans developed during the planning process.

- 6. If an organization is selected to move to the second stage, will it be provided with implementation proposal guidelines that are significantly different from the Request for Concept Papers?**

Yes. The Endowment will provide guidelines for preparing an implementation proposal. The guidelines will describe the required elements of an implementation proposal, including detailed information about the proposed storytelling project's purpose, activities, intended outcomes, evaluation plan and

budget, among other items. The aim, objectives, rationale and guiding questions for the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life, as described in the Request for Concept Papers, will remain the same in the second stage, however.

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

Organizations may submit a limited number of appendices with their concept papers. The Endowment strongly encourages organizations to be very judicious in adding pages to their concept papers and makes no guarantee that these additional materials will be considered during the review process. Organizations should include key information about their proposed storytelling concepts and their capacity to develop and carry out high-quality projects in the five-page limit of the Concept Paper Narrative.

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

Please see the Endowment’s website for information about other Endowment initiatives.

**9. Will an organization’s concept stay a part of its own creative rights and not be shared with others, or will Lilly Endowment have rights to the submitted concepts? Will an organization have full creative rights should it receive a grant?**

To assist with the review of concept papers, the Endowment may disclose concept papers, organizational information submitted with concept papers and supporting materials (collectively, the “submission materials”) to its consultants, employees and other third parties. The Endowment enters into agreements with such parties that are designed to protect the confidentiality of those submission materials. In addition, the Endowment treats any personal information disclosed in the submission materials in accordance with its privacy policy (posted on the Endowment’s website). Although these safeguards have been implemented, the Endowment cannot guarantee the confidentiality of ideas or concepts included in submission materials. The Endowment, therefore, encourages applicants to take reasonable steps to protect any information, including intellectual property, that may be submitted to the Endowment.

Applicants should consult qualified legal counsel with respect to ownership of creative works and related intellectual property associated with their submission materials and any grant-funded work product.

## **Eligibility**

**10. What kinds of organizations are eligible to apply for this initiative?**

Charitable organizations operating in the United States (which includes U.S. territories) that are tax-exempt public charities under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3) and corresponding statutes and regulations that have a demonstrated interest in Christian faith and life are eligible to apply for grants in the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life.

**11. May individual artists apply for grants under the initiative?**

No. The Endowment will only accept concept papers and invited implementation proposals under the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life that are submitted by eligible organizations. Individuals may not apply on their own.

**12. Is an organization or person who has a fiscal sponsor eligible to apply?**

A fiscal sponsor that is a charitable organization that has a demonstrated interest in Christian faith and life and is otherwise eligible to apply for this initiative may submit a concept paper that includes collaborations with other organizations or individuals.

If successful, the fiscal sponsor will remain responsible for any grant awarded to it under the initiative, including responsibility for submitting program and financial reports and complying with all its obligations under a corresponding grant agreement with the Endowment.

**13. If an organization operates under the umbrella of another (e.g., a school that operates under a church), and will be the organization implementing the project, which organization should apply?**

If an implementing organization is not independently eligible to participate in the initiative, its eligible umbrella organization may apply. As with a fiscal sponsor, however, the eligible umbrella organization will remain responsible for any grant awarded to it under the initiative, including responsibility for submitting program and financial reports and complying with all of its obligations under a corresponding grant agreement with the Endowment.

**14. Are charitable organizations that are primarily secular but also engage in activities related to Christian communities eligible?**

Yes. Eligible organizations interested in developing and implementing projects that would identify, produce and share compelling stories about Christian faith and life may apply.

**15. Is a charitable organization that serves interfaith communities eligible to apply?**

Yes. But the proposed project would need to focus on identifying, producing and sharing compelling stories about Christian faith and life.

**16. May a new organization that has applied to the Internal Revenue Service for its Code section 501(c)(3) and public charity status but has not received it yet still apply?**

No. Eligible organizations are required to have Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recognition as a public charity and must receive notification from the IRS that confirms their public charity status before submitting concept papers. Each organization must submit a copy of its IRS Exempt Status Determination Letter with its proposal.

**17. May an organization with a current grant from Lilly Endowment apply for this initiative?**

Yes. An organization with a current grant from the Endowment that is unrelated to this initiative may submit a concept paper in the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life. However, organizations that have already received a grant in the initial invitational round of the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life are not eligible to apply.

**18. May multiple organizations work together to submit a concept paper?**

Yes. Organizations may work collaboratively to prepare a concept paper. While the Endowment encourages collaborative endeavors, only one lead organization may submit the concept paper on behalf of the collaboration. Letters of support from the leaders of the other organizations should be submitted with the concept paper.

**19. May an organization submit a concept paper if it is partnering with another organization that is also submitting a concept paper?**

Yes. An organization that intends to participate in a collaborative project that is described in another applicant's concept paper but is not the lead applicant on that project may submit a separate concept paper for its own separate project.

**20. May an organization submit a concept paper if the organization is located outside of the United States?**

No. The National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life is focused on eligible charitable organizations located and operating in the United States (which includes U.S. territories).

## **CONCEPT PAPER GUIDANCE**

**21. May an organization speak with someone at Lilly Endowment to discuss ideas, receive feedback on a concept paper or obtain further clarification about the initiative?**

No. Because this is a competitive initiative, the Endowment is unable to provide feedback on ideas or concepts from individual organizations. Please read carefully the Request for Concept Papers and accompanying documents for guidance while designing concepts and preparing submissions.

**22. May an eligible organization submit a concept for a project that would provide funding from its grant (either through a sub-grant or contract) to another organization for the purpose of this initiative?**

Yes. An organization may enter a contractual relationship or provide sub-grants to collaborating organizations that will implement particular storytelling project activities. As with a fiscal sponsor or umbrella organization, however, the eligible organization that submits the proposal must have a demonstrated interest in Christian faith and life and will remain responsible for any grant awarded to it under the initiative, including responsibility for submitting program and financial reports and complying with all its obligations under a corresponding grant agreement with the Endowment. The amount of funds that the organization estimates that it will distribute to collaborating organizations should be described in the concept paper narrative or in the planning grant budget as appropriate.

**23. Are capital improvement costs allowable for inclusion in projects described in concept papers?**

Storytelling projects may include modest capital expenses that are directly associated with and required to implement the activities of the proposed project.

**24. Are indirect costs allowable for inclusion in a planning grant budget?**

Yes. The Endowment allows organizations to request funds for indirect costs in their proposed budgets. Indirect costs should not exceed 10 percent of the direct costs of the proposed project requested from the Endowment. Indirect costs are generally associated with the conduct of more than one activity of the organization that cannot be assigned to a specific program. Please see the Guide to Planning Grant Budget Preparation on page 10 in the Request for Concept Papers.

**25. Is there a minimum grant amount an organization can include as its estimated funding level for an implementation grant?**

No. In the Concept Paper Narrative, organizations should provide the estimated costs to implement the proposed concept and indicate the level of funding the organization would seek from the Endowment if invited to submit an implementation grant proposal. Concept papers will be evaluated on the quality and promise of the proposed project, not on the projected amount of implementation costs.

**26. May an organization submit a concept paper for a project that targets audiences located outside of the United States?**

The main audiences for storytelling projects about Christian faith and life described in concept papers should be based in the United States (which includes U.S. territories). Storytelling projects should focus primarily on U.S.-based activities.

**27. May an organization submit a concept paper for a project that produces and shares stories that are about Christian communities and individuals located outside of the United States?**

Storytelling projects should be designed to reach and inspire audiences in the United States (which includes U.S. territories). To further this end, organizations may design storytelling projects that identify and share stories about Christian communities and individuals in a wide variety of settings, including stories about those located outside of the United States. In all cases, organizations should explain in their concept papers why these stories would be meaningful for U.S. audiences and how they would advance the aim and objectives of the initiative.

**28. May an organization submit a concept paper for a project that produces and shares stories that are from the past, or must all stories be contemporary?**

Some of the stories may be about people and communities from the past. In these cases, the organization will need to make a compelling case for why and how those stories would reach and inspire contemporary audiences in the United States and help to advance the aim and objectives of the initiative.

**29. May a concept for a project include multiple media types and approaches to storytelling?**

Yes, this is encouraged. However, concept papers should cohere around central themes and not include unrelated activities or unconnected ideas for projects.

**30. May a concept for a project include producing and sharing stories in languages other than English?**

Yes.

**31. How much detail in the concept paper is expected in the funding level projection for the future implementation of a concept?**

In the Concept Paper Narrative, organizations should provide the estimated costs to implement its proposed concept and indicate the level of funding the organization would seek from the Endowment if selected to advance to the second stage of the initiative and submit an implementation grant proposal. A line item budget is not required in this first stage of the initiative. Instead, organizations may identify major categories of income and expenses for their proposed storytelling projects, describe what would be in those categories and include a total funding level, up to \$5 million, that the organization would seek from the Endowment if it were to advance to the second stage.

**32. What is the difference between a planning grant budget and the funding level projection for the project?**

The funding level projection included in the Concept Paper Narrative should describe the estimated costs for implementing the concept (up to \$5 million). The planning grants of up to \$50,000 each are intended to help selected organizations develop their concepts and prepare implementation grant proposals. All organizations submitting concept papers are required to include a planning grant budget indicating how a planning grant would be used if the organization is selected. Planning grant budgets are line item budgets as described in the Request for Concept Papers.

**33. May an organization submit a concept that enhances current or ongoing projects?**

Yes. If an eligible organization presents a concept to provide support for a current project, its concept paper will need to make a compelling case about how the proposed project would enhance significantly its current work and advance the aim and objectives of the initiative.

## **SUBMISSION GUIDANCE**

**34. May an organization submit multiple concept papers?**

No. Each organization may submit only one concept paper in which it would serve as the lead organization that presents the organization's best idea.

**35. May an organization include in its concept paper links to online portfolios and/or other digital resources?**

Yes. Organizations may include a limited number of hyperlinks in their concept papers. The Endowment strongly encourages organizations to be very judicious in including hyperlinks and makes no guarantee that these hyperlinks will be viewed during the review process. Content accessed through hyperlinks should not replace the required information for a concept paper as described in the Request for Concept Papers.

**36. What documents should an organization submit if an audited financial statement is unavailable?**

The concept paper should include a copy of the organization's most recently completed audited annual financial statements (completed by a certified public accounting firm). The financial statements should include a balance sheet, income and expense statement and footnotes that provide an accurate assessment of the financial condition of the organization. Audited financial statements are preferred. If an organization does not have audited financial statements, the concept paper should include a discussion about why these statements are not available and provide annual financial review statements conducted by an outside agency or third party. The financial review should include a balance sheet and income and expense statement along with footnotes, if footnotes are included.

**37. Should a lead organization submit audited financial statements for each organization participating in a collaborative project?**

No. Only submit the financial documents for the lead organization requesting the grant for the collaboration.

**38. Where can an organization get information about formatting proposal documents as a PDF?**

The Endowment asks organizations to upload their proposals through the Application Form on the National Storytelling Initiative on Christian Faith and Life webpage as a single PDF file. Please consult your IT support for advice, if needed.

**39. Is the February 24, 2025, submission deadline flexible?**

No. The Endowment will not accept concept papers submitted after the deadline.

**For more information about this initiative, please refer to the Request for Concept Papers or the news release regarding the initiative, which may be accessed through the initiative webpage at [lillyendowment.org](http://lillyendowment.org).**