

Grant Guidelines & Procedures

Lilly Endowment receives a few thousand grant requests each year, but we can fund only a small percentage of many worthwhile proposals. These guidelines, formulated over the years by our founders and the Endowment's Board of Directors, govern our grantmaking decisions.

Areas of Interest

We consider proposals in three program areas: community development, education and religion. We also are interested in initiatives that benefit youth and promote the causes of philanthropy and volunteerism.

Community Development

Our community development grantmaking focuses primarily on enhancing the quality of life in Indianapolis and Indiana. We grant funds for human and social needs, central-city and neighborhood revitalization, low-income housing, and arts and culture in Indianapolis. On a statewide level, we routinely offer initiatives to support community foundations and United Ways.

We also support on an invitational basis programs that enhance higher education opportunities for African-Americans, Native Americans and Latino Americans throughout the country.

Religion

Our primary aim in this field is to deepen and enhance the religious lives of American Christians, principally by supporting efforts that enrich the vitality of congregations and parishes and strengthen their pastoral leadership. We believe that the long-term health of churches depends, in part, on excellent pastoral leadership, and our grants seek to ensure that congregations have a steady stream of wise and well-prepared leaders. We also support efforts that seek to help Christians draw on the wisdom of their scriptural and theological traditions as they strive to understand and respond to contemporary challenges and live out their faith more fully and well. Much of this work centers on the theological concept of vocation and focuses on helping Christians, especially youth and young adults, discover how God calls them to lead lives of meaning and purpose.



Nationally, the Endowment also occasionally provides support on an invitational basis for compelling causes that are consistent with our areas of interest, such as disaster relief and recovery efforts, and programs for veterans' affairs and their families.

Education

Our education grantmaking primarily revolves around objectives to enhance and increase educational attainment and meaningful economic opportunities of residents in Indiana with the overall aim of improving the quality of life of all of the state's residents. We support programs in Indiana on an invitational basis to promote high-quality early childhood education; strengthen K-12 education; prepare students for education and careers beyond high school; connect college students and graduates with meaningful employment opportunities in Indiana; enhance the effectiveness of Indiana colleges and universities to prepare their students for successful lives and careers; and build the state's intellectual capital.

In addition, we believe that religion has long played a critical role in shaping American life. Through grants to major cultural organizations and nonprofit news and media organizations, we seek to foster public understanding of religion as well as lift up the contributions of religious communities to our greater civic well-being.

Youth and Philanthropy

Besides grantmaking in our three principal areas of community development, education and religion, the Endowment also awards grants in support of youth development and to advance and study philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. Our youth grants support direct service organizations in Marion County, Ind., build the capacity of intermediary organizations throughout the state, and provide professional development for the staffs and volunteer leadership of these organizations. Regarding philanthropy, we seek to support and nurture good stewardship among the trustees and executives of charitable organizations by providing occasional funding for research on the

governance and effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. We also support efforts to advance philanthropy by supporting selective research projects and educational programs focused on charitable giving and fundraising.

Geographic priorities

In keeping with the founders' wishes, the Endowment gives priority to efforts that improve the quality of life in Indianapolis and Indiana.

This priority applies to grants for community development and elementary/secondary education. Exceptions include occasional funding for national programs that complement or relate to our work in Indiana.

The Endowment's interest in higher education extends to Indiana colleges and universities and nationwide to historically black colleges and universities, Native American colleges and programs to increase access to college by Latino Americans. Grants to institutions of higher learning outside Indiana generally are restricted to programs offered by the Endowment on an invitational basis. Similar to our work in religion, our support relating to philanthropy and the nonprofit sector is national in scope. Grants for international purposes are limited to a few United States-based economics and public policy programs affecting North and South American countries.

Limitations

The Endowment generally does not support the following:

- Loans or cash grants to private individuals. Most grant money is awarded to charitable entities. We do not assist individuals with personal or business-related finances.
- Requests to discharge pre-existing debts of individuals or organizations.
- Healthcare projects.
- Mass media projects. The Endowment does not typically fund mass media projects and limits consideration to projects that fall squarely within our specific program areas.
- Endowments or endowed chairs. The Endowment targets its grants for specific purposes. Except in unusual cases involving longstanding grantees or special initiatives, we do not contribute to endowments or endowed chairs.
- Libraries. Except for special initiatives, the Endowment regularly declines grants to public libraries outside Marion County, Ind.
- Outside Indianapolis. Requests usually are declined for building campaigns, elementary/secondary education, arts and culture, human service projects, general operating funds and neighborhood projects (except as part of invitational grant programs).

Application process

If you believe your charitable organization has a request that fits within our guidelines, we suggest that you write us a preliminary letter of no more than two pages.

The letter should tell us about your organization, the project you have in mind and the amount of support you will need from us. We respond in writing to all preliminary inquiries. In cases that warrant further consideration, we may ask you to furnish a full proposal. Emailed or faxed requests will not be considered.

For arts and cultural organizations in Marion County, Ind.:

Several local grantmaking foundations have collaborated on the development of a shared grant application form. This form was developed in consultation with leaders of local arts and cultural organizations with a goal of making fundraising efforts more efficient. The Shared Grant Application Form may be used to apply for general operating support. For specific project requests, the Project Grant Attachment Form may be completed along with the Shared Grant Application Form. While Lilly Endowment will accept these shared forms from local arts and cultural organizations, applicants are not required to use them, and the Endowment reserves the right to request additional information. Links to the forms are on the Endowment's website.

Approval process

A program director generally reviews grant proposals. Those that meet the criteria for consideration proceed to the appropriate division for review, then to the corporate officers, and finally to the Endowment's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors considers grants in March, June, September, November and December. The grant review process takes three to six months. All grantseekers receive written notification of our decisions.

Please direct correspondence to:



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