

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING FOR “BOLD NEW INITIATIVE” GRANTS

Through the Congregational Life Committee of the Lake Erie Presbytery

OVERVIEW

Over the past few years the Presbytery has been establishing ways in which we can challenge ourselves to seek new and different ways to spread the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel to those around us in our various communities. Presbytery committees have been challenged to allocate a significant portion of their budgets to “Bold New Initiative” programming. The Congregational Life Committee (CLC) is responding by establishing an ongoing program to encourage congregations to begin new program initiatives. It is our idea that these grants will be seed money for new ways of being the church in the various congregations and communities of our Presbytery.

WHAT IS A “BOLD NEW INITIATIVE”?

The INITIATIVE for the program comes from a congregation (or a group of congregations working together.) An initiative is something we conceive of and own, rather than something handed down to us by someone else.

There should be something about the project which is NEW to the congregation. If it has never been tried in the Presbytery before, so much the better. If it is the first time it has ever been tried anywhere, then it certainly is new.

BOLD may well involve some element of risk. There should be a way to measure success, but the congregation provides the criteria for success. There should be a way to learn and go forward, if success is not achieved.

The idea of thinking or acting ‘outside the box’ comes to mind as another way to think about these projects. The idea of excitement might well be a part of the project. The idea of reaching persons for Christ who have not been reached before might be a part of the project. Something that would attract persons ‘different from us’ in some way might be bold.

As can be seen from the above paragraph, there is not a single type Bold, New, Initiative. It is the work of the Holy Spirit unleashed upon your congregation. We have deliberately tried to provide a very general description and to use some different language to discuss these initiatives. We don’t know what God has in store for each congregation. We are not sure that what would be bold for one congregation would be also bold for another. Therefore, take this general definition as an invitation to be open to even the wildest possibilities and to share them with us.

A FEW SPECIFICS

1. **DURATION** – We think that most grant requests will be for more than one year (although our participation will be limited). We think most of our help should be early in a project – as seed and startup money. We think there will be agreement between the Session and Presbytery prior to grant approval of the duration and amounts per calendar year (for purposes of Presbytery and CLC budgeting). We think significant extenuating circumstances could alter this plan, but for the most part, both Session and Presbytery

would be bound by its scope and duration. We think most projects will be funded for a period of 2 to 5 years, with declining Presbytery contributions each year. We do not see renewing projects beyond the original term. We do think that progress toward successful completion or revised plans which are viable and agreeable to both Session and Presbytery would be necessary to continue beyond the first year.

2. **PRIMARY GOAL** – We see CHRISTIAN OUTREACH AND/OR EVANGELISM as the primary ultimate goal of projects receiving these grants. It may well be that a deserving project would be referred to another Presbytery committee. An example might be a project whose total focus is directed toward Christian Education might be referred there. We might also refer projects to other committees or funding sources if they seem not to meet the definition of Bold, New, Initiative. These referrals might be to other funds available through our committee or to other Presbytery committees, or even funding sources outside the Presbytery, if necessary. Projects which might get funded would include ones that seek to bring ‘people like us’ into the church using a methodology which is Bold or New; or projects which target a specific group of people, particularly if that group is under represented in our churches; or projects which bring a new or different group of people into our church.
3. **RESPONSIBILITY** – We think that each project must be the primary responsibility of a particular Session (or group of Sessions covenanted together for the administration of the project). Part of what might make a project ‘bold’ is that it is being jointly sponsored by a number of congregations. We think that a “lead session” would make it easier to administer the project and to exercise the oversight necessary to assure a project’s success; however, a steering committee drawn from all congregations might be a better way to share leadership. We think that most projects will be endorsed by Sessions prior to application for a grant. We would hope that elders or Session and members of the congregation were taking the leading role in the project. Even if we are providing seed money, we feel the Session must be willing as well to take risk and be committed to the project.

WHAT TO SUBMIT

Since these projects will be (we hope) varied and likely very different from each other, we want the application process to be flexible. Therefore, we suggest the following steps.

1. Once the Session has a reasonable description of the project and of the desire to request funds, they should write a letter to the CLC. This letter should be no more than 2 pages. It should contain certain elements.
 - a. An overview of the project.
 - b. Briefly, what has already been done.
 - c. A brief analysis of progress to date.
 - d. Why CLC should help (why this is a Bold, New, Initiative).
 - e. The nature of the help requested (how much for how long).
2. The CLC will, upon receipt of the request letter, assign one or more CLC members to work with the Session or its representatives to flesh out the proposal into something which is actionable by the CLC. On a really large project, there may be some seed money available to facilitate the project development process (through our regular helping congregations funding).
3. Representatives from the Session will present a full proposal to the CLC at either a regular meeting of the CLC (if there will be minimal discussion) or at a specially called meeting of the CLC.

4. The CLC will discuss and decide upon the merits of the proposal (following the openness and conflict of interest guidelines of the CLC). If approval is granted as requested, the CLC will appoint a liaison from the CLC to work with the Session as the project proceeds. If approval is granted for different terms than requested, the CLC representative and Session will negotiate a revised proposal meeting both Session needs and CLC concerns. If approval is denied, the CLC will provide alternative potential sources for funding. In all cases the CLC will briefly outline its reasons for the decision reached.
5. All projects will be approved, pending ratification of the Presbytery. [No longer required as long as the expenditure is within the budget of the committee.] No projects will be approved which would commit Presbytery to more funds in the current fiscal year than already approved or to more funds than would reasonably be expected in subsequent fiscal years. Any project which would require funding in excess of the above restrictions would be presented for full discussion and approval by the Presbytery along with a suggestion of the Presbytery funding source.
6. Each year of the project, the CLC liaison and Session will present an appropriately detailed progress report to the CLC for approval, prior to that year's funds being approved and released.

Send this information to:

Moderator - Congregational Life Committee

Presbytery of Lake Erie, 2816 Elmwood Avenue, Erie, PA 16508 Questions, call presbytery office.