



Jan 26, 2025

Dear Collaborators,

We are delighted that you are applying for the *Innovating Forward Initiative: Faith-Based Lay & Community Leaders' Certification Program* to support collaborative initiatives between faith/spiritually-based organizations, community groups, and mental health providers. SEED Grants are available to applicants who have completed the certification program (6 weeks of training, once a week) and whose proposals are approved by the Spiritual Mind Body Institute at Columbia University, Teachers College, thanks to the generous support of The John Templeton Foundation.

We aim for the Faith-based and Community Lay Leaders certification program to equip you with education, resources, and tools rooted in the science of spirituality and mental health. By completing the program and pursuing the SEED grant, our aim is to ignite collaborative initiatives that authentically address community needs, nurture emotional connections, and cultivate strong partnerships among leaders and professionals.

Please use this SEED grant as an opportunity to be creative and implement a program that is tailored for your own community; feel free to be original, take a well-grounded risk, or *attempt the approach that you might have always envisioned would help those to whom you are providing support and care.*

Funding Parameters*

- At least one or two representatives from each organization are expected to fully engage in all sessions of the certification program. Additionally, they must actively contribute by submitting weekly reflections and surveys throughout the duration of the program.
- Project proposals should underscore the significance of integrating the science of faith and spirituality with a mental health focus to enhance community well-being.



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- Proposals must outline the organization's strategy for assessing the project's long-term sustainability and effectiveness.
- All groups must be based in the United States.
- A team, consisting of **one or more collaborators from each department or organization**, representing a convening of knowledge, wisdom, and experience. The team of lay/community leaders must convene **at least four times** within their own organization.

Purpose of *Faith-Based Lay and community Leaders' Partnership*

Pragmatically, SEED grants encourage communities “to start by starting,” with novel initiatives that may evolve, refine, and perhaps become organically funded or supported regionally.

The approach of your ***Faith-Based Lay and community Leaders' Partnership*** team may vary widely, to include whole-person wellness, mental health support, renewal, deepening inner life, and relationship building, as well as broad community-based initiatives; all are welcomed.

With an open heart and mission to create communities where inclusiveness is not an initiative but rather an automatic reflex, we encourage applicants whose organizations foster a spirit of engagement and passion. We welcome applicants who encourage diversity and participation without regard to race, religion, color, age, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic disposition, neurodiversity, disability, veteran status, or any other protected category under federal, state and local law.

Proposal Requirements

SEED grants will be up to \$5,000 to be used over a period of six months. Also, the extension of the grant for an additional six months is contingent upon the review of the project's merits. We ask for a **two-page, double-spaced** proposal stating the core vision of the partnership service including the following requirements:

- **Description of the program** - “For whom, what, why, how, etc,”



- **Partner Biographies** - A brief (2-4 line) bio for each partnership leader/core contributor(s).
- **Deliverable Summary** - A working sketch of what you'll be offering (e.g. event, programming, etc.). This may naturally evolve through the collaboration. This deliverable should showcase a blending of spirituality and mental health.

Kindly submit the two-page proposal by **the end of the certification program** via email to Yoel Paredes (yjp2107@tc.columbia.edu). Notification will be sent two weeks after the you have submitted your proposal.

Over the grant period, we will convene monthly gatherings where recipients can exchange insights, advancements, and achievements fostered by our partnerships. As the grant period draws to a close, we will kindly ask recipients to provide a concise two-page overview detailing the status of their projects, whether ongoing or completed. Should we find that your program demonstrates significant promise warranting further support, a decision regarding potential additional funding for an additional six months will be made upon review of your comprehensive grant summary.

Finally, if you have questions/concerns about meeting any of these parameters, please email yjp2107@tc.columbia.edu to set up an appointment to further discuss your concerns.

We aim to welcome an active Faith-Based Lay Leaders' community!

Kindest Regards,

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