

## Request for Proposals for Grants from the Catholic Marriage Initiatives Fund

### Background/Introduction

On June 17, 2021, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved the release of a document entitled “**Called to the Joy of Love: National Pastoral Framework for Marriage and Family Life Ministry**” - which provides a framework for dioceses and parishes to follow when developing and implementing critically important Marriage and Family Life Ministries. The purpose of that document, which we refer to here as the “Pastoral Framework” is explained in its second paragraph which states:

“Catholic marriage and family life ministry serves all married couples and families by proclaiming the love of God to them and helping them embrace their vocation to love and discipleship. Inspired primarily by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, **this document presents a framework of pastoral principles for marriage and family life ministry and advocacy that can serve as a resource to assist pastoral planning in parishes, dioceses, or eparchies nationwide.** This framework is offered in continuity with the pastoral letter *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan* as a practical and pastoral counterpart to the theological principles about marriage that are presented there”. (emphasis added)

Between 2022 and 2024, The Catholic Marriage Initiatives Fund (“The CMI Fund”) awarded \$950,000 in grants to 19 dioceses/archdioceses to assist them in implementing new and expanded marriage and family ministries. The CMI Fund has recently set aside an additional \$300,000 to be awarded in 2025 for grants ranging in size between \$10,000 and \$50,000 to up to six dioceses and archdioceses<sup>1</sup> who are serious about implementing new and/or enhanced marriage ministry programs which are in alignment with both this Pastoral Framework and the goals and objectives of the CMI Fund, which are stated on the homepage of its website at [www.CatholicMarriageFund.org](http://www.CatholicMarriageFund.org) as:

“The purpose of the Catholic Marriage Initiatives Fund is to dramatically increase the availability of and participation in high quality Catholic Marriage Ministries throughout the United States. We do this by empowering U.S. dioceses and parishes to implement high quality Marriage Ministries that are balanced between Vision, Skills, and Support, across all the ages and stages of the marital life-cycle. In this way, we are assisting and empowering the local Church to operationalize the Gospel by teaching people how to love.”

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to provide the information a diocese or archdiocese (hereafter both referred to as “diocese”) will need to provide to apply for this grant opportunity. This RFP document is supplemented by additional information which is available on the CatholicMarriageFund.org website.

---

<sup>1</sup> The CMI Fund is a Donor-Advised Fund housed at the National Christian Foundation (NCF). NCF restricts its grants only to 501(c)(3) organizations that are in alignment with Christian principles, which includes all U.S. Catholic dioceses and archdioceses.

**Specific Information about the Grants:**

- 1) **Eligible Applicants:** Catholic Dioceses<sup>2</sup> within the United States
- 2) **Amount of Funding and Project Period:** A diocese is eligible to receive a maximum grant allocation from the CMI Fund up to \$50,000 to fund a project that will span three to five years, at the diocese’s discretion.
- 3) **Number and Timing of Grant Awards.** Because different dioceses will be at different stages of readiness to apply for and begin implementing these grant projects, the current plan is to award up to six of these grants in 2025, across two rounds of funding<sup>3</sup>. The application deadlines for these rounds of grants are 11:59 pm ET on:

| <u>Round #</u> | <u>Application Due Date</u> | <u>Response to Applications</u> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 8              | January 1, 2025             | February 1, 2025                |
| 9              | July 1, 2025                | August 1, 2025                  |

Dioceses are encouraged to apply in whichever round best fits their state of readiness.

- 4) **Match Requirement:** Yes – a dollar for dollar match is required. Additional information about this is provided in Item 6A on page 5 of this document.
- 5) **Length of Initial Grant Period and Commitment:** One year. Although it is anticipated that most dioceses are likely to apply for the full \$50,000 amount over a three-to-five-year project period, the initial grant period will be for only 12 months. This provides greater focus on the first 12-month time period, and allows the initial match requirement to be only for the amount of funding requested during the initial 12-month period.
- 6) **Scope of Project:** Combining the grant and match amounts gives a combined project budget for most applicants of \$100,000 to be spent over three to five years. Approved grant projects will implement new and/or enhanced ministry program offerings, balanced between Vision, Skills and Support, in two or three of the following Named Ministry Areas (NMAs), as described in the Pastoral Framework document:
  - A) Preparing Young Adults for Marriage: Proximate Marriage Preparation (page 20)
  - B) Preparing Engaged Couples for Marriage: Immediate Marriage Preparation (page 21)
  - C) Accompanying Married Couples in the First Few Years (page 23)
  - D) Ongoing Marriage Enrichment (page 24)
  - E) Accompanying Married Couples in Crisis (page 27)Projects are required to spend at least half of their budget on the 4<sup>th</sup> NMA on the above list, Ongoing Marriage Enrichment, in which they implement at least one of the 6 skills-building programs approved by the CMI Fund<sup>4</sup>.
- 7) **Length of Application and submittal process:** Maximum application length, excluding the five required attachments, is 10 pages, single-spaced, with 1” margins and 12-point font, in one pdf file. Please number pages in the narrative. Applications should be emailed to [Dennis@CatholicMarriageFund.org](mailto:Dennis@CatholicMarriageFund.org). Applications submitted past the deadlines listed above will be considered with the following round of applicants.
- 8) **Five Required Attachments** (mentioned in #7, above), and their reference locations in the following sections
  - A) Relevant sections of the *Diocesan-Eparchial Inventory for Marriage and Family Life Ministry* (Item 3B-1)
  - B) First-Year Timeline – using format provided (Item 3D)
  - C) Signed Letter of Support for this project from your Bishop (Item 4B)
  - D) 1 Page Diocesan Needs Assessment (Item 5A), a sample of which is provided as page 6 of this RFP.
- 9) Signed Certifications sheet – mentioned (#10) below and provided as page 8 of this RFP.
- 10) **Selection Process:** Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, when scored against the criteria described in the following pages. Dioceses who apply but are not selected for funding in one round will receive feedback on their applications and will be encouraged to reapply in a subsequent round.
- 11) **Certifications:** All applicants must agree with and sign the Certifications sheet provided as page 7 of this RFP.

<sup>2</sup> As stated on page 1, the term “diocese” in this document refers to both dioceses and archdioceses

<sup>3</sup> This RFP was prepared for Round 8 applicants, with a January 1, 2025 due date, and may be revised for subsequent rounds.

<sup>4</sup> For a list and comparative matrix of these six programs, please contact Bill Coffin at [BillCoffin68@gmail.com](mailto:BillCoffin68@gmail.com)

**Application Contents and Scoring Criteria.** Specific questions to answer and information to include in your grant application – along with their respective score weighting are as follows:

1) Description of your diocese (5 points).

In order to assist the grant application reviewers to understand the environment in which your project will be operating, please provide a short (less than ½ page) description of your diocese. This may include some of the following items: geography your diocese covers, information about the size and make-up of your diocese – such as number of deaneries/vicariates, number of parishes and number of registered Catholics (both the number and as a percentage of the total population that your diocese covers), the role of your office or department and anything else that you think will help the application reviewers understand your diocese.

2) Overview of the project (10 points)

A) Project period and budget amounts:

1. Over how many years will you be implementing this project? (Your three choices are 3, 4 or 5 years).
2. Do you think it is likely that you will be applying for the full \$50,000? If so, what is your anticipated budget request by year? (For 3-year projects, we believe the two most common scenarios will be \$10,000 in year 1 and \$20,000 in years 2 and 3 or \$16,667 in each of the 3 years. Please do not ask for more than one-third of your project's total project to be used in Year 1)

B) Project Scope: (Please refer to #6 "Scope of Project" on the previous page when preparing this.)

1. Which two or three of the specified Named Ministry Areas are you choosing to implement?
2. Why have you chosen these particular Ministry Areas? In answering this question, you may want to refer to the Diocesan Needs Assessment performed in Section 5A, described on the next page.
3. Which of these Ministry Areas will you be placing the most emphasis on in the first year – and why?

3) First Year Project Description (20 points)

A) Planning Period. The first 90 days of the project period is designated as the Planning Period, during which it is expected that you will review and revise your grant application based upon work you will perform and things you will learn during that period of time. As such, please feel free to answer "this will be determined during the Planning Period" in response to any questions for which that will be an appropriate response within this category of "First Year Project Description". With that in mind, please list and/or describe the activities you plan to take during the first 90 days of your project period to solidify your project plan.

B) For each of the Named Ministry Areas you will be implementing during Year 1, please provide as much information as you can about the following topics:

1. Please describe your assessment of the current availability, levels of participation in, and quality of any existing ministry offerings which are currently available to your constituents in each of those Ministry Areas. Included in this, please describe how they are currently balanced across the three dimensions of Vision, Skills, and Support described in Item #5 on the following page and provide a sub-table of the DNA scores from Item #5 for those Ministry Areas. As part of answering this question, please complete (and attach to your application) the relevant sections (for your selected Named Ministry Areas) of the "Diocesan-Eparchial Inventory for Marriage and Family Life Ministry" prepared by Julia Dezelski of the USCCB and downloadable from the CMI Fund website.
2. Have you decided which program(s) you would like to offer in Year 1? If so, which one(s)? If not, please describe the process and timeframe by which you will choose the program(s).
3. Please describe which delivery system(s) you will be using: Parish, Parish Cluster, Deanery / Vicariate, Region, Diocesan and/or online – and if more than one, how they will work together.
4. How will each Ministry Area be rolled out? Will it be diocesan-wide? A phased approach? If a phased approach, what methodology will be used to determine the sequences?

- C) How will this project be staffed during its first year? Has a project leader been selected? If so, what is that person's main qualifications? If not, what will be the primary qualifications you will be looking for in this person? What level of time commitment will each person assigned to this project be expected to dedicate to this project?
- D) Using the Sample Timeline provided, please provide a high-level listing of major activities or objectives you plan to complete or achieve in the first twelve months of this grant project.
- 4) Alignment with other goals and/or priorities of your Bishop and/or Diocese (15 points)
- A) Please describe how the proposed project would tie into or be directly aligned with other priorities, projects or initiatives that are occurring in your diocese. Rationale: Every Bishop and/or Diocese has their own set of priorities. We have found that when a Diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life attempts to implement a project that is directly aligned with what else their Bishop and/or Diocese is trying to do, that office is typically more successful with their projects than an Office that operates disconnected from those priorities.
- B) Please provide a signed Letter of Support from your Bishop that communicates the level of support, commitment, and ownership he would have towards this proposed project.
- 5) Alignment with the 3-part Model of Vision, Skills, and Support promoted by the CMI Fund (20 points).  
During the 2019 NACFLM Conference, Dennis Stoica, the Founder of the CMI Fund, delivered a keynote presentation titled "Marriage Ministries – The Best Way to Operationalize the Gospel!" – in which he described his vision for Marriage and Family Life Ministries at both the Diocesan and Parish levels, which is summarized in the Purpose Statement for the CMI Fund provided on the first page of this RFP. Before completing this section of the grant application, we recommend applicants view the edited and enhanced version of that presentation which can be found on the CatholicMarriageFund.org website.
- A) Diocesan Needs Assessment (DNA). Please complete the 1-page Excel spreadsheet "Diocesan Needs Assessment" which will report on the current presence of programs and resources for each of the five targeted Ministry Areas, rated on a scale of one to ten in each of the three categories of Vision, Skills, and Support.<sup>5</sup> Please include a pdf of your completed spreadsheet as an attachment to your application.
- B) Vision: How will you incorporate the category of VISION into your project?<sup>6</sup> Which core Catholic or Christian teachings will be taught and/or emphasized? How will they be taught? (Video? Lecture? Readings? Small group discussion? Other?)
- C) Skills: Which SKILLS will be taught?<sup>7</sup> Please describe your proposed approach to teaching these skills. Will you be following the 6-step approach to teaching skills described in the NACFLM keynote – or will you be using a different approach. Please be specific. Note: at least one-third of the time allocated for the grant must be spent teaching skills.
- D) Support: How will SUPPORT be provided to program participants?<sup>8</sup>
- E) Balance: <sup>9</sup> As explained in the keynote, it is not practical to expect that every ministry program will be equally balanced between the three categories of Vision, Skills and Support. Nor is that necessary as long as a balanced approach is available to and encouraged for participants within each Ministry Area. How well balanced is your proposed intervention? Are their opportunities for participants to receive balance in other ministry offerings within the Ministry Areas you will be implementing in this project?

---

<sup>5</sup> This DNA is a modified version of the exercise performed between time marks 59:25 and 1:01:27 in the NACFLM keynote.

<sup>6</sup> Vision is discussed between time marks 7:33 and 17:45 in the NACFLM keynote.

<sup>7</sup> Skills is discussed between time marks 17:45 and 56:54 in the NACFLM keynote.

<sup>8</sup> Support is discussed between time marks 56:54 and 59:25 in the NACFLM keynote.

<sup>9</sup> Balance is discussed between time marks 1:01:27 and 1:08:55 in the NACFLM keynote.

6) Budget/Match (10 points)

A) Match. This grant requires a one-to-one match for all moneys provided by the CMI Fund for this project, within the following guidelines:

1. The funds for the match must be new funds into the Office of Marriage and Family Life (or equivalent).
2. They cannot come from reducing budgets in some other area of the Office of Marriage and Family Life or another department within the diocese.
3. Examples of allowable sources for the match would include:
  - New donation(s) from an outside source
  - Diocesan reserves
  - Unallocated funds within the diocese
4. At all times, funding from the CMI Fund will be provided AFTER funding from the match arrives.

Please describe the likely sources for this match and/or how you anticipate raising these first-year funds. Please describe your level of confidence in your (or your diocese's) likely success in raising or otherwise providing the funds you will need to provide the dollar-for-dollar match for the first year of this project.

B) Budget: In approximately ½ page, provide a breakout and description of how the total funds for this project, including both the funds provided by the CMI Fund and the match, would be spent in Year 1.

7) Sustainability (10 points). What is your plan for sustainability? How will the programs or activities funded by this grant be continued once this grant project period is over? Why should the CMI Fund feel confident that the strategies and tactics you describe for sustainability will be successful for ensuring that these activities and services will continue after funding from the CMI Fund ends? Rationale: The CMI Fund is not interested in funding projects or activities that end once its funding ends. Therefore, grantees need to build into their project ways that the activities funded in these projects will continue once the funding from the CMI Fund ends. Examples of ways this sustainability could be built in include such things as embedding programs at a parish level and/or charging fees to participants for the programs.

8) Expected impact and potential replicability of this project. (10 points)

A) Impact: Please provide a description of your estimate of the total impact of your proposed project within your diocese – assuming that it is funded and successfully implemented for the full three-to-five-year project period specified in your application. Included in this section should be a table that shows the number of people you expect to serve each year in each of the programs you are proposing. Rationale: The donors behind the Catholic Marriage Initiatives Fund are what is known as “Impact Investors”, meaning that they like to make philanthropic investments into projects that are expected to have a major impact in the world. As such, you are encouraged to describe for these Donors (who will be some of the Reviewers of the grant applications) what kind of an impact you anticipate your project will make. Needs to be measurable.

B) Replicability: One way to increase a project's impact is for it to be replicated in other locations / dioceses. Do you believe that, if successful, parts of your project would be likely to be replicated in other dioceses? If so, what parts and why – and what steps would you take to encourage that replication?

**Exhibit #1 – Sample Form  
Diocesan Needs Assessment (DNA)**

|  |               |               |                |              |
|--|---------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| For: Diocese or Archdiocese of: _____  |               |               |                |              |
| Completed by: _____  |               |               |                |              |
| As of: _____ (date)  |               |               |                |              |
|  |               |               |                |              |
|  | <b>Vision</b> | <b>Skills</b> | <b>Support</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| <b>Eligible Ministry Areas:</b>  |               |               |                |              |
| A) Preparing Young Adults for Marriage: Proximate Marriage Preparation         |               |               |                | 0            |
| B) Preparing Engaged Couples for Marriage: Immediate Marriage Preparation      |               |               |                | 0            |
| C) Accompanying Married Couples in the First Few Years                         |               |               |                | 0            |
| D) Ongoing Marriage Enrichment   |               |               |                | 0            |
| E) Accompanying Married Couples in Crisis                                      |               |               |                | 0            |
|  |               |               |                |              |
| TOTALS   | 0             | 0             | 0              | 0            |
|  |               |               |                |              |
|  |               |               |                |              |
|  |               |               |                |              |
|  |               |               |                |              |
| Note: Instructions to complete this Assessment are found on page 4 of the RFP. |               |               |                |              |

