



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Advancing Religious Pluralism Grants

“Institutions that nurture pluralism do not fall from the sky or rise from the ground. People build them.” - [Eboo Patel, We Need to Build](#)

Opportunity

Higher education plays a crucial role in building and sustaining pluralistic communities. Interfaith America (IA) knows from our work and [IDEALS research](#) that college students place a high value on diversity and believe in the importance of interfaith cooperation—70% are highly committed to bridging religious divides. But our data also shows that less than one-third of those students develop a deeper skill set to interact with people of diverse beliefs. Through increased opportunities such as the [Institute on Teaching and Learning for Campus-wide Interfaith Excellence \(IIE\)](#), IA has already invested in developing these critical skills among students, faculty, and staff, turning the pluralistic potential of higher education into reality. As we continue to expand our work in the field of higher education, Interfaith America seeks to equip select campuses and campus leaders—administrators, chaplains, faculty, staff, and students—with the tools and support needed to advance religious pluralism.

The ever-increasing diversity of the United States means that we regularly encounter religious differences in our everyday lives. We navigate these differences in our workplaces, our schools, and our healthcare settings. These differences come to the fore during presidential election cycles and in debates over refugee resettlement and school curricula. We have a choice in how we respond to this unprecedented diversity in our communities and nation. Rather than allowing apathy, intolerance, or polarization to define the future of our democracy, we can choose to build bridges across lines of difference and work together for the common good.

Interfaith America believes that higher education helps set a broader civic agenda and advances a knowledge base for the rest of society. We understand campuses to be mini-civil societies—communities where citizens of diverse racial, political, and religious identities interact in proximity and serve as models for what it means to be, and to thrive in, a diverse democracy. Campuses are uniquely positioned to equip graduates both civically and professionally to navigate and lead in a religiously diverse nation and world.

The Advancing Religious Pluralism Grants create opportunities for colleges and universities to develop interfaith infrastructures that strengthen and advance religious pluralism on campuses and in the surrounding communities.



Racial Equity Commitment

Interfaith America is committed to partnering with a diverse array of institutions (e.g., public, private, religiously affiliated, minority-serving) through the grants we offer. We are also intentional about engaging campus leaders and students from diverse racial and religious backgrounds in our grant programs, and we think critically about racial and religious diversity in every phase of our granting process, from creation to outreach, application, implementation, and evaluation.

Program Overview

Interfaith America seeks partnership with campuses who recognize that American colleges and universities have a unique role and responsibility to help our communities and our nation explore and learn how to embrace differences while maintaining a common life together. **With the Advancing Religious Pluralism Grants, colleges and universities will develop and expand their interfaith infrastructures and will strengthen strategic plans, programs, initiatives, resources, and personnel across the institution that equip students to engage across lines of religious differences to contribute to a sustainable and thriving democracy.**

Through IDEALS research, Interfaith America has found that students are more likely to develop interfaith competencies when they have at least one curricular experience in college focused on religious diversity. Developing these competencies also correlates with participation in at least two structured interfaith activities outside the classroom. Furthermore, offering programs that provide spaces for interfaith learning fosters student growth regardless of participation rates.

The Advancing Religious Pluralism Grants **generate opportunities for campuses to develop their context-specific plans for integrating interfaith cooperation across the curriculum and co-curriculum in far-reaching and sustainable ways.** Grant funds should be used to advance a comprehensive cross-campus strategy, which may include a series of projects such as, but not limited to:

- Integrating interfaith literacy into curricula for business, health care, or other pre-professional programs
- Embedding interfaith education and attention to religious diversity into the broader curriculum, including required first-year courses, other general education courses, diversity courses, courses on world religions, courses on interfaith studies, or courses in disciplines allied with religious studies (philosophy, history, sociology, etc.)
- Launching or expanding interfaith leadership development programs for students, such as an Interfaith Ambassadors or Interfaith Fellows program
- Training counselors in mental health services on how to support students experiencing religious or spiritual exploration or struggles.



- Implementing religious diversity training for student leaders, staff, and faculty administrators
- Building bridges between particular faith communities on campus, such as Jews and Christians or Hindus and Muslims, in instances where tensions are prevalent
- Creating a more welcoming physical environment for students of diverse religious backgrounds on campus, such as adding a ritual washing space or a kosher kitchen
- Establishing an interfaith residence hall or living community on campus
- Redesigning or repurposing campus spaces to include symbols, art, or architecture from diverse religious traditions
- Cultivating interfaith partnerships with the local community around issues of shared concern

Grant Information

The grant is up to \$30,000 and will be paid in two installments. The grantee is responsible for understanding and navigating their institutional or organizational grant processes. Additionally, those who receive funding may receive a 1099 tax form at the end of the year.

Required

- Completed online application which will include a description of two or more proposed projects that have the strong potential to advance religious pluralism in significant and comprehensive ways
- A timeline for developing and implementing the projects
- A draft budget for how the grant will be used before or by April 15, 2025
- Letter of endorsement from the college or university president
- Results from a methodologically sound survey that adequately maps religious diversity on campus, such as [the INSPIRES Index](#), and that will inform the blueprint for the proposed projects; institutions that lack such a survey but commit to completing the INSPIRES Index will also be considered
- Identification and solidification of a team of five people to oversee the projects that includes a team leader capable of spearheading logistics, two senior-level administrators, and if possible, a student representative
- Demonstrated commitment to interfaith cooperation as an institutional priority

Preferred

- Past participation in Interfaith America's [Institute on Teaching and Learning for Campus-wide Interfaith Excellence \(IIE\)](#), or a comparable program with or outside of Interfaith America that has helped the institution invest more deeply in interfaith awareness and cooperation
- At least one of the projects involving an academic or curricular dimension



Funding

- Accepted applicants will receive **\$30,000** in grant funding to support their campus interfaith initiatives and programming.
- Funding will be disbursed in two installments: 1) after attending the launch meeting in **February 2024** at the beginning of the grant period; and 2) in **September 2024**, following a completed project status report.
- Funding can be used for the kinds of projects listed in the Grant Overview section. A portion of the funding can also be used to compensate those who lead the projects. Funds cannot be used for endowments, annual funds, capital campaigns, tuition, or student fees.

Deliverables

- Team participation in the Cohort Launch Meeting on **February 7, 2024**
- Participation in three IA grant resourcing workshops in the **spring of 2024** and in the Interfaith Leadership Summit on August 2-4, 2024
- Completed Project Status Report by **September 13, 2024**
- **Completed final report by May 1, 2025**
- Two articles submitted for publication in the Interfaith America Magazine

Program Timeline

This is an **18-month grant commitment from January 2024 to May 2025.**

- October 2 – November 17, 2023: The application period is open.
- December 15, 2023: Grantees will be notified of their selection.
- February 7, 2024: Cohort Launch Meeting (virtual)
- Spring 2024: Grant Resourcing Workshops
- August 2-4, 2024: Interfaith Leadership Summit
- September 13, 2024: Project Status Report Due
- April 15, 2025: Deadline for Grant Expenditures
- May 1, 2025: Final Report Due

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For further information, please contact Dr. Todd Green, Director of Campus Partnerships, at tgreen@interfaithamerica.org.