

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

## Section 1 – Overview

### Purpose

The purpose of the Community Marriage Initiatives Fund is to encourage, promote, and support community-wide implementation of Marriage Ministries and Programs as a way to strengthen marriages and reduce county-wide divorce rates. The purpose of this grant opportunity is to fund non-profit organizations who already have some track record of assisting churches implement marriage ministries, who want to expand that work, who want to replicate one specific model, and who have a goal to drive down their county's divorce rate. This is a capacity-building grant, designed to equip, empower and position these organizations to be able to raise additional funding in the future once they have a critical mass of programs in their community.

### Background

Dennis Stoica is the Founder and one of the Funders of the Community Marriage Initiatives Fund (CMI Fund). He has been active in the field of Community Marriage Initiatives since 2002, when he founded the Orange County Marriage Resource Center in California. In 2005 he, along with Patty Howell, started the California Healthy Marriages Coalition (CHMC), which is now known as Healthy Relationships California (HRC). Between 2002 and 2007, Dennis and Patty and members of their team developed a model for Community Marriage Initiatives which was described in the 2008 Smart Marriages annual conference keynote presentation titled *The California Campaign*. That presentation described how the implementation of that model in Orange and Fresno Counties had led to a significant reduction in the divorce rate in those counties over the previous five years. From 2016 to 2018, Live the Life Ministries, a Florida-based organization, replicated that model in Jacksonville, Florida (Duval County) under Dennis' leadership and through private funding from the Philanthropy Roundtable's Culture of Freedom Initiative (COFI) project. The results were an impressive 24% reduction in Duval County's divorce rate from 2015 to 2018, a result which was studied and reported on by researchers from Florida State University, University of Virginia, and Brigham Young University. The main components of this approach are:

1. Empower local churches to implement highly effective, self-sustaining marriage ministries - balanced across the three areas of Vision, Skills and Support - across all the ages and stages of the marital life cycle.
2. Implement the 3-part model of: Increase Supply, Increase Demand, and a Community Marriage Resource Center website using USMarriage.org
3. Be funded at a significant level – ideally at the rate of one dollar per person living in the community.

### 7&7 Project

Based upon the success of this model in those initial three communities – Orange County CA, Fresno CA and Jacksonville, FL – in early 2021 the CMI Fund partnered with Live the Life Ministries on a 5-year project to attempt to replicate this same model on a larger scale. The two organizations identified the 14 highest divorce rate counties in Florida having populations of fewer than 700,000 and divided these counties into two groups – 7 in which they would implement the model by investing at the rate of \$1 per person per year and 7 which they would ignore. Over the five years of this project, it is expected that the divorce rates from the 7 Intervention Counties will fall at a much faster rate than will occur in the 7 Comparison Counties. As this occurs, it will provide compelling evidence that this approach is both replicable and scalable – which will set the stage for other funders to want to invest in these same types of projects. Initial results are highly encouraging. During the first three years of the project, the average reduction of divorce rates in the 7 Intervention Counties was 86% higher (14.6%) than in the 7 Comparison Counties (7.8%).

### Conclusion:

Based upon the results of these four experiments – in Orange County CA, Fresno CA, Jacksonville FL and the initial results of the 7&7 Project - the CMI Fund, in partnership with the Marriage Initiative Team (MIT) and in alliance with the National Alliance for Relationship and Marriage Education (NARME), is pleased to release this Request For Proposals (RFP) for its sixth round of funding of up to \$100,000 per organization across three years to further replication of this specific model in communities across the U.S.

## Section 2 - Specific Information about the Grants:

- 1) **Eligible Applicants:** Non-profit organizations<sup>1</sup> within the United States
- 2) **Amount of Funding and Project Period:** An organization is eligible to receive a maximum grant allocation from the CMI Fund up to \$100,000 to fund a project that will span three years, with expected funding levels of up to \$30,000 in Year 1, \$45,000 in Year 2 and \$25,000 in Year 3.
- 3) **Number and Timing of Grant Awards.** Because different organizations are at different stages of readiness to apply for and begin implementing these grant projects, the plan from the Fund's inception was to offer two rounds of grants in each of the years of 2022, 2023, and 2024, for a total of six rounds across those three years. Five of those six funding rounds have been completed, with one remaining. The application deadline for the sixth round of funding is 11:59 pm ET on:

<u>Round #</u>	<u>Application Due Date</u>	<u>Grant Period Begins</u>
6	September 1, 2024	October 1, 2024

Organizations were consistently encouraged to apply in whichever round best fit their state of readiness.

- 4) **Length of Initial Grant Period and Commitment:** One year. Although most organizations are expected to apply for the full \$100,000 amount over a three-year project period, the initial grant period will be for only 12 months. Successful grantees will be encouraged to apply for Year 2 and Year 3 funding on a non-competitive basis at the end of the first and second years of the project.
- 5) **Purpose of the Grants:** To accomplish the objectives described on the first page of this RFP.
- 6) **Model to be implemented:** The specific model to be implemented is the one described in Dennis Stoica's 2018 NARME keynote presentation which is found at [MarriageInitiatives.org](http://MarriageInitiatives.org).
- 7) **Scope of Project:** Each project will consist of the following three parts:
  - A) Planting, nurturing, and developing Marriage Ministries at local churches
  - B) Creating broad community support
  - C) Organizational capacity-building
- 8) **Guidance Provided:** The Marriage Initiative Team (MIT), in partnership with the CMI Fund, will lead the grantees through a two-year structured approach that includes Workshop Trainings and Individualized Coaching to assist them in achieving the objectives of the grant project.
- 9) **Selection Process:** Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis<sup>2</sup>, when evaluated against the Scoring Criteria described in Section 4 of this RFP. Organizations 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, should those occur.
- 10) **Format and Length of Applications.** As detailed in Section 4, applications will consist of several types of responses including Narrative Descriptions, Tables, Church Assessments, and Biographical Write-ups. Applications should be submitted in two separate pdfs described as follows:
  - PDF #1 – Narrative Descriptions – Maximum of 6 pages, single-spaced, with 1" margins using 12-point font, with each page numbered.
  - PDF #2 – All other content – compiled in the order listed in Section 4 of this RFP.
- 11) **Submittal process:** Applications should be emailed to [Grants@MarriageInitiatives.org](mailto:Grants@MarriageInitiatives.org). Applications submitted past the deadlines listed above will be considered with the following round of applicants.
- 12) **Certifications:** Applicants must agree with, sign, and include the 1-page Certifications sheet as part of their application.

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<sup>1</sup> Organizations that have received previous funding from the CMI Fund are not eligible for this round of funding.

<sup>2</sup> The CMI Fund is a Donor-Advised Fund housed at the National Christian Foundation (NCF). NCF only issues grants to organizations that are in alignment with Christian principles.

## Section 3 – Description of Projects to be Funded

### **Positioning Select Organizations for Success**

Based upon the success of the three experiments in Orange County CA, Fresno CA, and Jacksonville FL and the first three years of the 7&7 Project, we at the CMI Fund believe we have found a winning formula and a replicable model. We also believe that as the gap between changes in divorce rates between the two groups of counties in the 7&7 Project continues to expand that this success will inspire other funders – both private and public - to want to invest in these types of projects. Currently, however, few communities have organizations in place that are ready to successfully take on these types of projects. The purpose of this series of grants from the CMI Fund is to raise up a network of these types of organizations across the country so that as other funders become interested in investing in these types of projects, they will have a ready pool of credible organizations to choose from.

### **Importance of Strengthening Marriages and Reducing Divorces**

About 12 years ago, scholars from 18 universities across the country came together to write a comprehensive document detailing the benefits of marriage. It is called “Why Marriage Matters: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences.” The researchers outline 30 areas of benefits, including eight ways marriage creates strong families, seven ways it improves our economy, six ways it improves physical health and longevity, four ways it improves mental health and emotional wellbeing, and five ways it reduces crime and domestic violence. Marriage helps children and couples thrive. Tyler J. VanderWeele, Director of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, writes in the Institute of Family Studies, “The existing research indicates that marriage is associated in longitudinal studies with higher life satisfaction, greater affective happiness, better mental health, physical health, and longevity, even controlling for baseline health.”

While the primary emphasis of the activities of these marriage-strengthening organizations will be strengthening marriages, we believe the best way to measure the success of community-wide marriage-strengthening projects is by tracking changes in county-wide divorce rates<sup>3</sup> over time. This is because of the following:

- 1) Since happily married couples rarely divorce, natural results of successful community-wide marriage-strengthening projects should be both increases in marital satisfaction and reductions in county-wide divorce rates.
- 2) Divorce rates are an objective measurement, available for most if not all counties in America;
- 3) This approach provides an easy and objective way to quantify the value of and provide cost-justification for these projects. According to research performed by David Schramm from the University of Utah, the average taxpayer cost of divorce in America is \$40,000<sup>4</sup>. Cost-benefit analyses on the results of the three projects mentioned earlier in this RFP showed annual return on investment (ROIs) for those projects exceeding 3000% - meaning more than 30 dollars of savings for every dollar invested in them.<sup>5</sup>

### **Potential Future Funders**

In March of 2016, David Riggs, Vice-President at the Philanthropy Roundtable shared his perspective on the potential for future funding for this area when he said “Many philanthropists understand that the break-down of the family is the root cause of most of our social problems. However, it is widely believed to be an intractable problem. Once your field demonstrates that you have a solution to that problem, you will never need to worry about funding again since funders across the country will be lining up to give you money to invest in these types of projects.”<sup>6</sup> Potential funders for these types of projects in the future are likely to include:

- Private philanthropists, either directly or through their Donor Advised funds
- Foundations
- Local and state governments, including through accessing unallocated TANF funds<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> By divorce rate in this document, we refer to the number of divorces either filed or completed on an annual basis in a county divided by the total population of that county, expressed in thousands.

<sup>4</sup> Schramm, David G. “Individual and Social Costs of Divorce in Utah”. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, Vol 27, Number 1, April 2006, pp 133-151. \$40,000 is Dr. Schramm’s revised figure, based upon inflation since the article was published.

<sup>5</sup> Because this is a capacity-building grant, we have no expectations of divorce-rate reductions during the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 years of this project.

<sup>6</sup> Meeting of the COFI project in Jacksonville, Florida, March 3, 2016

<sup>7</sup> TANF is Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Three of the four allowable activities within TANF are met by marriage-strengthening activities.

- Federal government through use and/or expansion of the Healthy Marriage Initiative funds to include these types of projects.

### **What Future Funders Are Likely To Be Looking For**

We anticipate the most important factors future funders will want to see in organizations before investing in them are:

- 1) An effective team of competent and passionate people committed to this cause led by a committed, passionate, and visionary leader.
- 2) A track record of success in starting, expanding, and/or improving marriage ministries in churches
- 3) A network of churches willing to start, expand, and/or improve their marriage ministries
- 4) Ability to track their community's divorce rate(s) in order to demonstrate success of their efforts
- 5) An organization infrastructure able to handle these operations when brought to scale.

### **Goals for the Project**

The purpose of these projects is to empower and position organizations that already have success in some of the forementioned areas to build upon their strengths and shore up their deficiencies so that they become able to attract outside funders to invest in them. Our two primary goals for these grantees are:

- 1) That they become able to raise their own financial support by the end of the second year of the project;
- 2) That they become positioned to effectively perform if they are able to attract funders to invest at or near the dollar per person per year level.

### **What These Grant Projects Will Entail**

In order to achieve progress in the 5 areas listed above, grantees will participate in a series of tailored Workshop Trainings and individualized Coaching Sessions conducted and/or coordinated by the Marriage Initiative Team (MIT). The real work of this project for each grantee will be taking the concepts contained in those workshops and coaching sessions and implementing them within their individual communities in order to show success across the five areas listed above. These Workshop Trainings, Individualized Coaching Sessions and their associated project activities fall into the three main categories described below – and It is expected that grantees' times will be split roughly equally across those three categories:

- 1) Planting, nurturing, and developing Marriage Ministries at local churches. The local team would seek to discover churches and parishes that are open to serving marriages more effectively and provide best-in-class guidance on how to establish and grow these ministries. During the ministry building process, the local team will also be provided with community-wide strategic marketing tools (print and digital) for supporting the growth of marriage ministries as well as to collaboratively support marriage events.
- 2) Creating broad community support. As relationships begin to formulate, it is important that the local team create an "outward facing" inclination, encouraging community members to think beyond their own agenda and toward a larger, collective strategy. Community members soon discover that new relationships are mutually beneficial as people, churches, and organizations work together to bring about their full potential. As the saying goes, "A rising tide lifts all boats." As the local team begins to listen well and cultivate meaningful, long-lasting relationships with other marriage leaders, grantees will communicate a compelling community-wide vision that reinforce a consistent, trustworthy, and valuable message.
- 3) Organizational Capacity-Building. According to the National Council of Nonprofits, capacity building is anything that is needed to bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity so that it may more effectively and efficiently advance its mission into the future. Grantees will be encouraged to pursue capacity building efforts to include: building a robust leadership team to guide the organization, creating effective, repeatable processes that perfect the core interactions of the mission, implementing a donor development program, implementing internal financial safeguards, creating internal governance structures that protect the organization, its assets, and its brand, and other efforts the local team would deem valuable to pursue.

## Section 4 - Application Contents and Scoring Criteria.

Applications will consist of several types of responses including Narrative Descriptions, Tables, Church Assessments, and Biographical Write-ups. Applications should be submitted in two separate pdfs described as follows: PDF #1 – Narrative Descriptions: Maximum of 6 pages, single-spaced, with 1” margins using 12-point font, with each page numbered, and PDF #2: All other content – compiled in the order listed below. Listed below is specific information to include in your grant application – along with their respective score weighting, and when applicable, suggested page length guidelines for some of the sections<sup>8</sup>.

**Section A - Target Community - 10 points** – (Suggested length of about ½ page per each county for A1; Tables for A2 & A3 are not counted against page restrictions).

Please describe the Target Community this project will be focusing on. Realizing that the model which was used in Jacksonville and in the 7&7 project described in the first page of this RFP utilized funding at the one dollar per person per year rate, please choose a geography that you feel comfortable with your organization being able to grow into over the next few years. Since divorce statistics are compiled at the county level, we ask that you define your target community by the county or counties you intend to serve.

Provide the following information for each county you include in your target community:

A1 - General description. (about ½ page per county) Your general description should include enough information to allow the application reviewers to understand the environment in which your project will be operating. It may include some of the following items: Total population, a general description of where in your state the county(ies) is located, some basic socio-economic information such as median income and/or racial mix, and any other information that you think will allow the reviewers to better understand the area you intend to serve.

A2 - Breakout by denominations/religions. Using data from [www.thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership](http://www.thearda.com/us-religion/census/congregational-membership) and the format provided in Sample Table A2, please provide a breakout of the Top 7 denominations / religions, both in terms of number of congregations and number of members/adherents. (Note: the most recent data ARDA has is dated 2020.)

A3 - Information about historical divorce rates. Please fill out Table A3 with the following information for each of the years from 2020 through 2023 and for each of the months of 2024 for which it is available:

- Population
- Number of divorce filings
- Number of divorce completions.

Please also provide source for the above information, including website addresses if they are online sources. If you were not able to obtain some of that information, please explain what attempts you made to obtain it<sup>9</sup>.

**Section B - Description of the Specific Model and your willingness to implement it – 10 points** (about 1.5 pages)

B1 - Describe in your own words the strategy used to drive down Jacksonville’s divorce rate, as described in the 2018 NARME keynote presentation mentioned in this RFP.

B2 - How comfortable are you with that strategy? Which components of that strategy are you eager to implement in your own community – and why? Which components of that strategy are you reluctant to implement in your community – and why?

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<sup>8</sup> The 6-page overall maximum limit for the combined Narratives is a firm requirement; the break-outs for each section are suggestions only and you may vary from them as you see appropriate.

<sup>9</sup> While population data is usually easy to find, locating information on the number of divorce filings and completions will usually require some independent investigation. The County Administrative Offices may be of some assistance in some situations.

**Section C – Your Organization - 5 points** (about ½ page)

Provide an overview of your organization, including among other things: when it was established, whether or not it currently has 501(c)(3) status<sup>10</sup>, a short version of its Vision or Mission Statement, its total operating budget for 2024, whether or not it is a standalone organization or it is part of a larger organization and if it is a part of a larger organization how it fits into that organization and anything else you think will allow the reviewers to better understand your organization.

**Section D – Positioning for Future Fundraising - 5 points** (about 1 page)

While we do not expect that fundraising will be a major emphasis of most grantees during Year 1 of this project, since one of the two main goals for this project listed on page 4 of this RFP is that grantees be “able to raise their own financial support by the end of Year 2 of the project”, it is expected that fundraising will become an area of emphasis in Years 2 and 3 of these projects. Therefore:

D1 – Please specify what level of funding you will be targeting your organization to raise for Year 3 of this project;

D2 – Please describe the level of fundraising expertise members of your Team already have

D3 – Please describe your organization’s willingness to develop or otherwise obtain additional expertise in the area of fundraising and to allocate sufficient resources in this area starting in Year 2 of this project.

**Section E - Relationship with churches – 20 points** (The pdfs for this section do not count against the page restriction.)

Please demonstrate the level of support you currently have from churches to implement, expand, or improve marriage ministries in your community by providing the following:

E1 - A pdf file containing the 10 most impressive completed “Church Assessments for Marriage and Relationship Ministries” forms you are able to obtain from churches in your community.

E2 – Copy of the Sample Letter of Support for Churches you had church leaders signed.

E3 – Please fill out Table E3 to list information for all of the churches you were able to get to sign a Letter of Support and to fill out the Church Assessment.

**Section F - Your Team – 30 points** (The pdfs requested for this section do not count against the page restriction.)

F1 - After reading this RFP and the articles referred to in it, please provide a pdf containing a 1-page write-up for each of the three most important members of your team containing the following information:

- Name, Role on the Team, Primary Responsibilities on the Project, Average number of hours per month in 2025 you expect them to dedicate to this project.
- Information about their background (education and/or experience) that qualifies them to assume the Role and perform the Primary Responsibilities listed for them above.

F2 - If your team is made up of more than 3 key people, in the pdf please provide that same information in summary form for all additional key team members, using no more than 1/3 page for each of these additional Team Members.

**Section G - 1<sup>st</sup> Year Budget – 5 points** (about ½ page)

Provide a breakout and description of how you anticipate spending the initial \$30,000 grant for the first year.

**Section H – Make your case – 15 points** (about 1.5 pages)

Based upon your understanding of the types of organizations and projects we are interested in supporting with this opportunity, please explain why we should choose your organization for this.

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<sup>10</sup> As stated on page 2 of this RFP, the CMI Fund is a Donor-Advised Fund housed at the National Christian Foundation (NCF). One of NCF’s restrictions is that they can only issue grants to non-profits that have already received their 501(c)(3) designation. Therefore, any awards made through this RFP to organizations that have not yet received their 501(c)(3) designation will be contingent upon them receiving that status, a process that typically takes less than 30 days and one which MIT will assist with.