

Project Name* Character Limit: 100

Bridge Builders Charlotte: An Interfaith Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Project Description* (3000 characters)

What will it take for our Charlotte and Carolina communities to rise out of the pandemic crisis more deeply committed to the wellbeing of all? Rethinking public policy, private charity, and corporate commitment may be important impulses, but it's our spiritual, religious, and faith traditions that provide the resources that will inform our shared values and practices. In turn, those traditions undergird the communities that have the social capital required to transform our social fabric for the good.

This project will identify, equip, and strengthen community-building initiatives that deliberately draw on those resources while working together, across lines of difference, to create a more inclusive social order. Ultimately, we hope the nation will look to our community as an example of meaningful interfaith collaboration that brings hope, possibility, and opportunity to those who are most vulnerable in these precarious times.

Structured as a partnership between Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) and Queens University's Belk Chapel, this project will leverage both IFYC's and Queens' particular assets to galvanize and showcase interfaith cooperation. Based in Chicago, IFYC is a nationally-recognized leader in the emerging fields of Interfaith Studies and interfaith cooperation and equips campuses nationwide to make interfaith engagement a vital part of the college experience and ultimately a positive force in our religiously plural society. With IFYC's active support, Queens University has embraced its Presbyterian and Pluralist identity in both academic and co-curricular learning and has emerged as a regional and national leader in this work.

The project will involve the following elements:

- \$20,000: Planning Team, made up of campus and community representatives from Charlotte and beyond
- \$30,000: Student Interns, each assigned to support and capture the story of partner non-profit grant recipient
- \$100,000: Charlotte-area non-profit organizations whose responses to the COVID-19 crisis qualify for mini-grants and other forms of support
- \$50,000: Consultative support and mini-grant administration from IFYC
- \$50,000: Strategic and administrative leadership from Queens' Belk Chapel

Together, IFYC and Queens will establish criteria for signature initiatives to be funded and supported through this project. We will also work to ensure the interfaith story gets told in compelling ways locally, nationally, and even globally. Finally, we will use this "moment of opportunity" to lay the groundwork for a robust state-wide network of campuses committed to making interfaith leadership a "norm" in higher education and in the wider world.

Funding Type*: New initiative

Amount Requested: \$250,000

Project dates: 4/6/2020 - 12/31/2020

Focus Area*

List your organization's area(s) of focus.

Arts

Community Development

Education

Environmental

Health and Social Services

Prisons

Not Applicable

Number of People Served*

Impact - Will this impact a significant number of people?*

Significant number of people

Fewer people, significant results

Not sure

Demographic Description*

Those served by this project will include communities directly affected by partner organizations, with a focus on those most deeply impacted by the pandemic crisis.

If Other Geographic Area Served, Please Specify.

Our project will focus on the Charlotte area, with the possibility of connecting to a handful of statewide university partners and, through them, communities throughout North Carolina.

Link to Charlotte's Opportunity Insights Work

Economic opportunity expands where those who lack advantage can connect to and leverage meaningful social and economic capital. Though this project doesn't focus on economic development, its outcomes will bring opportunity as a by-product of the stronger social cohesion that comes through deliberate, well-tended interfaith engagement.

Community Impact*

How will you measure the impact of this project on our community? Character Limit: 1000

The mini-granting approach means that the project has potential to impact a wide range of groups and populations. Project leaders will pay close attention to the variety of community-based organizations and projects that are planned. We will assess impact by (1) reviewing the number and type of projects developed, (2) monitoring the variety of populations engaged in granted programs,

(3) hearing and curating stories of impact, and (4) facilitating new connections and relationships across the community.

Transformation*

How will you measure the impact of this project on our community? Character Limit: 1000

As “religious” a community as Charlotte can be, the spiritual dimension of our social fabric is often bracketed out of civic initiatives (even if those initiatives are sometimes faith-based). This project is transformational in that we bring our spiritual, religious, and faith traditions to bear as resources for promoting the wellbeing of all. By engaging meaningfully across religious and worldview difference, we will strengthen relationships and thus civil society as a whole.

Originality*

Explain how this project is unique among other projects/programs in our community. Provide references to similar evidence-based programs throughout the country, if applicable.

Character Limit: 1000

Both Charlotte and other communities nationwide have established interfaith organizations (e.g., MeckMin, or Mecklenburg Ministries), but their influence and impact have been limited and “niche.” By anchoring our civic work within higher education, we marry the intellectual capital of the university with the social capital of the community. Because campuses share a commitment to the broader good and address complex social questions as a matter of course, the academic foundation of this project promises to ensure its deep impact. But our work goes beyond the theoretical to connect with organizations serving on the front lines of human need. By equipping partners to name, claim, and engage with a range of sacred traditions, we will bring out the best in our community for the good of all. IFYC’s position as a nationally-focused higher education leader means there is strong potential for nation-wide recognition and repetition of the model.

Benchmarking - Outcome: What are you trying to accomplish? (1000 characters)

Please explain how project goals will be measured. List three specific outcomes this project will accomplish. Outcomes can be quantitative or qualitative as long as you can develop a method to measure progress throughout and beyond the life of the grant. In the following questions, identify indicator, data source, baseline and goal for each outcome. Be as specific as possible.

1. The Charlotte community will understand the civic goods of religious pluralism as a signature quality.
2. Recipients of supportive initiatives will be able to tell the story of connecting across worldview difference.
3. If the RNC takes place, this story of a “Better Together” Charlotte will emerge as a leading theme in national and global coverage.

All outcomes will be measured by gathering intentional, qualitative data. Local project leaders including Queens University student interns will collect stories and reflections from program participants. Project leaders will analyze stories for evidence of understanding of the above goals and take steps to share stories of impact across the Charlotte community.

Sustainability* (1000 characters)

Describe two potential sustainability strategies to ensure continuation and/or the spread of the project/program after the grant period ends.

1. We will use this crisis as a launching opportunity to build a statewide network of campuses that can mobilize similar projects in their communities. Campus-based individuals who provide leadership to the COVID-19 response project will be well positioned to lead a broader group that will remain continuously focused on the power and potential of civic religious pluralism.
2. We will continue to build the “town-gown” relationships between Charlotte-area campuses and the wider community to promote broad embrace of the value of interfaith leadership in corporate and civic spaces.
3. We will work with partner organizations (including MeckMin) to build systems that carry forward our Better Together work in the Charlotte area. Relationships that are built and fostered during this time of crisis will continue to exist and can be leveraged for future high-impact work in the region.

Partners

Are there partners involved that can carry the impact further? Briefly explain.

1. Campus partners: We will engage leaders from Charlotte-area campuses (Davidson, JCSU, Wingate, UNCC, CPCC) in a network that supports and strengthens the initiative. As resources allow, we will engage a select group of statewide campuses as we envision the project’s next phase.
2. Community partners: We will offer mini-grants to non-profit organizations responding to the COVID-19 crisis out of faith or value-based traditions. We will both support and extend their work, connecting it to a broader network of faith- and value-based initiatives.

Additional Project Information (optional)

Is there anything you would like to share with us that we have not asked?