



Lilly Endowment Inc. Grant FAQs

- **What is the VAUMC's proposal that is being funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc.?**

Hatching Faith Cohorts will invite congregations into a child-and-family-led process of innovating and iterating on a series of worship experiments inspired by experts at creating multi-sensory, child-first programming and contextualized to each community. The program will be structured as a series of kick-off events and subsequent cohort gatherings. Ultimately, the vision is to equip churches of all sizes in the Virginia Conference with the inspiration, risk capital, and skills to see worship as a place of holy imagination and sacred play, which will not only lead to more engaging, accessible worship for children but for everyone in the church. Learn more [here](#).

- **How can my church participate and what can we expect if we are accepted into a cohort?**

If you and your church have discerned an interest and commitment to Hatching Faith Cohorts, first you should submit an application, which can be found [here](#). We suggest that you go ahead and begin forming your "Hatch Team" at this stage. Next, you and members of your church will be invited to complete an [Innovation Culture Index \(ICI\)](#) questionnaire and schedule a debrief session with our ministry partners. The Hatching Faith Cohorts team will review applications and invite churches into upcoming cohorts, based on available space (ideally 10-12 churches in each cohort). When a church is invited to join a cohort, they will be assigned a coach who will work closely to help them design and implement the worship experiments at their church. Hatch Teams are asked to sign a [Team Covenant](#). They are then invited to attend an in-person kick off event (to include their entire Hatch Team-children included) with other churches in their cohort to begin the year-long process together. A Hatching Faith Cohort Coordinator will also be assigned to each cohort to provide guidance, communication and support throughout the process. Lastly, you can expect some experiments to succeed while others may experience some push-back or challenges. Our hope is that you can expect that your congregation and community will experience transformation and spiritual growth as they seek to better understand and more deeply engage with children in prayer and worship. Learn more [here](#).



- **What size churches in the VAUMC should apply to a cohort?**

Any size church is encouraged and welcome to apply for a Hatching Faith Cohort. The first cohort will begin in May 2025 and will have a mix of small, midsize and large churches, rural, urban and suburban churches and churches from across the conference. The size of the church is not as important as the commitment and desire of the pastor, staff, leadership and members wanting to be part of an intentional process to more fully engage Christ's youngest disciples through worship and prayer.

- **Do I have to have an established children's ministry to participate?**

No, you do not have to have a children's ministry established to participate. Churches participating should have a desire to more fully engage young disciples (children) in worship and prayer and a willingness to make changes and try new things in order to do so. The Hatching Faith Cohorts are not designed to help you create or grow children's programs, but rather, to help your congregation become more aware of ways to engage children in meaningful acts of worship and prayer. If your church does not have children/families already engaged in the life of the church, part of your Hatch Team's work will be to identify and brainstorm ways to reach children in the surrounding community.

- **Who should be on the Hatch Team?**

Each Hatch Team will have a team leader (this does not have to be the pastor) and 8-12 team members. This will be the team working with the coach, cohort coordinator and other Hatching Faith staff as needed throughout the cohort process to dream, plan, communicate and implement the experiments in your faith community.

- Lead Pastor or equivalent
- A children's ministry or worship leader
- 2-3 children (12 years old or younger)
- Caregivers of the children listed above

You are welcome to add additional children and caregivers. We do ask if you invite additional adults who aren't children and caregivers, that you make sure to invite additional children as well so that the team remains as balanced as possible.

- **When do applications open for churches to apply?**

The first cohort, launching in May 2025, was invitation-led in order to incorporate churches and leadership who were involved in the creation and ideation of the grant proposal. The first cohort will be experimental in nature and a place of learning for grant staff. For future cohorts, applications for the following year will be open from July-November. When applications are open, you can apply [here](#).



- **What is the Innovation Culture Index (ICI)?**

The Center for Youth Ministry Training's Innovation Culture Index (ICI) "is a self-diagnostic questionnaire that will help you understand how your faith community's outlook and attitude in nine key areas is impacting your ability to innovate. The ICI also includes a group discussion package to debrief scores and strategize appropriate next steps." You can learn more about the ICI [here](#).

- **Is there any cost to participate in a cohort?**

There is no application fee or up front costs for your church to participate in a cohort. Each church that is selected to be part of one of the cohorts will receive a grant up to \$2,500 to help implement their experiments. All costs for the kick off event (travel, meals, lodging) are covered for the Hatch Team from your church. The cost for the Hatch Team Coach or Hatching Faith Cohort Coordinator are all covered by the funds from the Lilly Endowment. Your church will be responsible for any costs beyond those specified above to design/implement the experiments at your church.

- **Who can I contact for more information?**

Rev. Jennifer Coffey - Hatching Faith Cohort Coordinator - jennifercoffey@vaumc.org

Rev. Hannah Bryn - Director of Hatching Faith Cohorts and Assistant Director of Discipleship and Congregational Vitality - hannahbryn@vaumc.org

