NJ DEPARTMENT OF STATE
OFFICE OF FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES GRANT PROGRAM

<u>Freedom School Planning Grants</u>

To download the grant guidelines, click this link: https://www.state.nj.us/state/ofbi.shtml

The mission of the New Jersey Office of Faith Based Initiatives (OFBI) is to eliminate barriers to funding and other resource opportunities, create greater access for partnership and enhance the capacity of faith and community-based organizations (FBCOs) to create and implement innovative approaches that are designed for community and economic transformation.

Grant Awards are Subject to the Availability of Funding
Application Due Date: <u>February 28, 2025 @ 4:00PM</u>

Training Webinars:
Technical assistance training webinars can be found on OFBI's website
https://www.state.nj.us/state/ofbi.shtml. Scroll down to "Spotlights" click "Grant Opportunities" then click "Webinars" located on the right-hand side.

Eligibility Criteria:
Applicant must:
- Be a non-profit Faith and/or Community-Based Organization serving low-income residents;
- Must be tax-exempt by determination of the Internal Revenue Service in accordance with Section 501(c)(3) and upload their 2024 IRS Determination Letter that states that the organization is created for charitable purposes and not for religious purposes;
- Must be registered with the NJ Division of Consumer Affairs and have a valid Charity Registration Number and be **IN COMPLIANCE** with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, Charitable Registration and Investigation Section
- Be registered with the NJ Department of Treasury - Division of Revenue and Enterprise Services and must have a valid Business Revenue Number;
- Be **IN GOOD STANDING** with the Department of Treasury - Business Service Center
- Applicants must have their Certificate of Incorporation.

Ineligible Applicants:
- Houses of Worship;
- Public schools, charter schools, or private schools

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Category Descriptions:

Service Category	Maximum Request	Total Funding Available
Freedom Schools	**$20,000**	**100,000**

<u>Freedom Schools:</u>
- The Freedom School grant is designed to support organizations that are interested in launching NJ Freedom Schools.
- The planning grant will assist the organization to fully think through its organizational capacity, it's infrastructure, and collaborating partners. It will allow the organization to identify and recruit certified teachers to support potential program participants in improving in academic classes that the students are struggling with based on their final report cards.
- The planning grant will assist the organization to develop a parent academy designed to support parents with resources that include but are not limited to:
  - Employment readiness
  - Emotional and mental health services
  - Access to medical services
  - Connect parents to existing municipal, county and state resources
- Organization's applying for a Freedom School Planning grant must create a Freedom School Leadership Team (FSLT). The FSLT must be comprised of no less than 5 volunteers. The team should be comprised or active or retired teachers, local business owners, a community advocate. The purpose of the FSLT is to fully support the planning and prototyping and testing of the proposed Freedom School. All FSLT members must attend mandatory training and technical assistance offered by the NJ Office of Faith Based Initiatives and its partners. The FSLT must also actively participate in the planning process.
  - The FSLT will be instrumental in attaining community feedback to include but not limited to:
    - Virtual meetings to educate the community of the importance of Freedom Schools
    - Focus groups to develop effective parent/school collaborations.
      - Develop approaches that entice parents to actively participate in the parent academy.
- Organization's applying for the Freedom School planning grants will develop a method to track their program participants during the academic school year and provide additional academic support.
- The planning grant will be used to assist the organization to think though the pilot Freedom School to include
  - High quality academic and character building enrichment;
  - Parent and family involvement
  - Civic engagement and social action

- Intergenerational servant leadership
- Access to high quality nutrition, health and mental health wellbeing services.

- The organization applying for a Freedom School Planning grant must be willing to apply to become a NJ certified Freedom School through the Children Defense Funds Freedom School Program and commit to attend all mandatory trainings. Children Defense Fund Freedom School program (https://www.childrensdefense.org/programs/cdf-freedom-schools/)

Program Procedures:
Applications are submitted to the OFBI on the System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) and reviewed by an outside independent panel. Recommendation for funding is based solely on the merit of the application. Award and denial letters are e-mailed to the appropriate organizations via the SAGE system. **Funding period is from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.**

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

The proposal is to be submitted via the Department of State – System Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE) no later than **February 28, 2025 @ 4:00PM.**

All applications must include the following items in order to be considered complete.

Applications missing requested information will be disqualified from review; Applications rating 69 percent or lower will not be considered for funding.

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Application Requirements and Rating Criteria		
Section	**Description/Criteria**	**Maximum Rating**
Project Summary	• Provide an overview of the organization, its name, the mission of the organization as well as the proposed activities, SMART goals the impact the program is designed to achieve. This needs to align with the logic model • Justify why the organization is applying for a Freedom School Planning Grant	**5 Points**
Organization Capacity and Infrastructure	• Describe the leadership makeup of the organization. It's board of directors, who are they, what skills do they bring to the organization, how long have they served, how many times does the board meet. • Who comprises the Freedom School Leadership Team • Does the organization have an existing facility	**15 Points**

Application Requirements and Rating Criteria		
Section	**Description/Criteria**	**Maximum Rating**
	that's ADA compliant? • Does the organization have a smart facility (Wi-Fi, White Boards, Laptops for program participants) • What is the ability of the organization to provide healthy nutritious meals? • Does the organization have a list of qualified teachers that may be willing to teach various subjects designed to improve the academic short comings of its program participants?	
Statement of Need	• Utilize the Human Services Advisory Councils (HSAC) needs assessments to assure that the social issue being addressed is identified in the HSAC needs assessment? • If Freedom Schools are not identified why is the organization applying for the planning grant? • Indicate which surveys, needs assessments were used to inform the organization that their local community wants a Freedom School.	**10 Points**
Statement of Collaboration	• Identify three collaborating partners and indicate the ways which each collaborating partner will recruit program participants, help identify teachers to work in the Freedom School and assess viable locations to host the Freedom School Collaborating partners must include: • A Community College or 4 Year Institution of Higher Learning • A district/local school that will help identify teachers to support the implementation of its Freedom Schools • Local business	**10 points**
Project Design	• Provide a detailed description of the project. The reader should have a full understanding of the step by step account of what a client will go through in order to maximize program benefit. • What is the marketing and recruitment plan to register 30 students for the freedom school • What will the approach be to educate the community about freedom schools, where and how will you meet with parents/guardians? • What design will the approach have to assure proficiency in academic courses where students are deficient based on their final report cards • Explain the parent engagement component • What role will teachers play in developing individualized lesson plans during the summer freedom school program	**10 Points**

Application Requirements and Rating Criteria		
Section	**Description/Criteria**	**Maximum Rating**
	• Explain the design of the after school homework and tutorial program (how many days per week, times, etc.)	
Target Population	• Describe the target population, where do they live, what are their ages, what is their income level, educational status, single individuals or families or both, what percentage are employed or underemployed, etc.	**N/A**
Goals	• Indicate the S.M.A.R.T goals S pecific: Well defined, clear and unambiguous M easureble: With specific criteria that measure your progress toward the accomplishment of the goal A chievable: Attainable and not impossible to achieve R elavant: Within reach, realistic and relevant to the clients life purpose T ime-bound: With a clearly defined timeline, including a starting date and a target date. The purpose is to create urgency Smart Goals Resource Links: [Activity and Program Smart Goals](#) [Example of Smart Goals for Service to Seniors](#) [A How to Guide for Smart Goals](#) [13 Smart Goals Examples](#) [13 Smart Goals for Food Insecurity](#)	**10 Points**
Evaluation	• How will you evaluate and demonstrate the impact of the individualized lesson plans designed to improve academic proficiency based on the final report cards • How will you evaluate and demonstrate the impact of the after school homework and tutorial program • How will you evaluate and demonstrate the impact of the parent engagement component	**15 Points**

Application Requirements and Rating Criteria		
Section	**Description/Criteria**	**Maximum Rating**
Budget	• Complete all budget forms in the SAGE system; • No personnel costs will be approved • Funds can be used to support a consultant with experience in designing, launching freedom schools. The identified consultant must be vetted by the OFBI • Funds can be used for the purchase of technology • Funds will be used to prepare for the CDF certification process and if certified, use funds to attend mandatory training in January, March and purchase the curriculum and accompanying books.	**25 Points**
Required Appendices	• Board Resolution • Upload 3 letters of support • Logic Model	
Appendices		
Total		**100 Possible Points**

Restrictions and Limitations

♦ Nondiscrimination by Religious Organizations and Entities

Applicants agree that if provided funds from the New Jersey Department of State Office of Faith-based Initiatives, they will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for services or participation in the proposed program on the basis of religion, race, gender and/or physical disabilities.

♦ Recognition of Cultural Sensitivity

Applicants must assure that all programs are linguistically appropriate and culturally relevant to groups within the community. Appropriate accommodations for services will be developed and maintained for those individuals who are deprived of reasonable access to those services due to language barriers or ethnic and cultural differences. All programs and services *must* be reflective of the demographic needs of the community, while providing all people the opportunity to experience any and all available services irrespective of their ethnic or cultural heritage.

♦ Reporting Requirements

All funding recipients are required to submit quarterly programmatic and fiscal. Schedules of due dates for reporting periods and program terms will be provided upon notification of preliminary approval of award. Funding recipients must adhere to a schedule determined by the New Jersey Department of State Office of Faith Based Initiatives

♦ Training

All funding recipients are required to attend technical assistance and training sessions scheduled throughout the fiscal year as coordinated by the New Jersey Department of State Office of Faith-based Initiatives and/or its training intermediary

♦ Applications that fail to meet these requirements detailed in this Grant Guideline will not be reviewed and the application will be disqualified. All applicants will be notified by email regarding the outcome of their award.

- Grant awards may only be used to further the project that the organization has applied for. Paying for organized fundraising or solicitation, construction and purchase of real property, medical/health-related activities or items are ineligible costs and will not be approved.
- Funds may not be used to build an organization's capacity to provide programs or services that include inherently religious activities. If a recipient provides programs or services that include inherently religious activities, such activities must be separate in time or location from the programs or services that the organization is seeking to improve through this grant.
- Grantee's activities are governed by all applicable State laws and regulations and will be provided directly to individual faith-based and community organizations to develop impactful services.
- The New Jersey Department of State reserves the right to reject any and all proposals when circumstances indicate that it is in its best interest to do so including, but not limited to, loss of funding for the contract, insufficient infrastructure, the applicant's failure to provide adequate services, indication of misrepresentation of information and/or non-compliance with any existing State or Federal laws and regulations, contracts or procedures. Grantees applications document the applicant's readiness to implement the project.

Selection and Notification of Award
- All applications are screened for eligibility and conformity with the specifications in the Grant Guidelines. Applications that fail to meet these requirements will not be reviewed and will be disqualified.
- Applicants are not pre-selected. All applications are rated by a panel of independent, objective reviewers according to the precise selection criteria specified in the Grant Guidelines.
- The independent committee reviewing and scoring applications will not include individuals employed by the organization, affiliated with the organization, organization's board members, contractors, training providers, providers of cost share or in-kind support, or any organization/individuals affiliated in any way with the organization.

Post Award Requirements
- **Once grantees receive their award letter, grantees have 90 from the date of the letter to upload all required documents in SAGE. If required documents are not uploaded within 90 days of receiving their award letter funding will be rescinded.**
- OFBI will monitor grantee compliance with grant requirements, in the event of non-compliance and request appropriate documentation. Should the grantee fail to comply with these requests, sanctions may be implemented up to and including the repayment of all funds associated with this grant award.
- Promptly Respond to Requests for Communication and Information
- Participate in all Required Events, Activities and Evaluations
- Comply with all OFBI Contracting, Fiscal Monitoring and Other Reporting Requirements