

Rhythms of Faith Project

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS · 2024



The Rhythms of Faith Project seeks to empower parents and caregivers in family faith formation by leveraging the power of camp experiences to establish rhythms of faith through regular Christian practices.

Since fall 2023, we have been investigating the most promising strategies of overnight Christian summer camps to influence faith formation in the home. Now it is time to test and refine these strategies at camps across the country. The evidence is clear that if we want to have lasting impacts on campers, we must influence faith in the homes and local churches of our camp families.

We are seeking up to 9 Christian camp organizations to commit to journeying with our team for a period of 3 years from January 2025 through the fall of 2027.

Together, we will use action research to test and refine strategies for influencing faith practices in the home through interactions with our camps. Interested camps should be committed to influencing faith in the home and open to implementing new strategies, in partnership with families and local churches. As a temporary community, camp operates best when it works alongside permanent spaces, such as home and the local church. We hope to help camps strengthen these partnerships.

Proposals are due by October 15, 2024 and must be submitted by filling out the submission form found at rhythmsoffaith.com/rfp.



Grant Awards

Camps that are selected to participate will receive resources, training, and other benefits. We will then evaluate the effectiveness of those strategies over successive years, refining them along the way.

Selected camps will receive the following:

- **Grant funds:** Selected camps will receive grant funds of \$7,500 for each year of participation (up to 3 years). These funds are for direct support of the Rhythms of Faith Project. They may be used to offset compensation for personnel dedicated to the project, supplies, or initiatives related to the project. These funds may be used for new initiatives directly related to the project or to enhance existing initiatives.
- **Training:** Rhythms of Faith Project personnel will lead two training retreats at each selected camp (spring 2025 and fall 2026) designed for year-round camp staff and leaders from 6-10 partner churches. All expenses will be covered by the grant.
- **Ministry Resources:** Resources designed to engage families and partner churches will be provided to each selected camp.
- **Research:** The project includes ongoing evaluation, including both qualitative interviews and surveys of participating families. Selected camps will receive insights from the research with their constituents in personalized reports.
- **Consultations:** Over the course of the project, Rhythms of Faith personnel will regularly consult with selected camp leaders about the success and opportunities revealed in the research data. Leaders will also join with other participating camp leaders in cohorts designed to enhance the experience and individual ministries.
- **Incentives and Camperships:** In addition to the grant funds noted above, selected camps will have access to grant funds to be used towards camperships for families who participate in the survey. These funds will serve as incentives to complete the surveys, as well as offsetting the cost of camp for participating families. The amount provided to each camp will be determined by the number of families completing the survey, not to exceed \$6,000 per year of participation.

Who can apply?

In order to be eligible for this grant, camp organizations must:

- Be a non-profit organization: 501(c)(3)
- Be affiliated with one of our three partner organizations on this project: Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries, or Christian Camp and Conference Association (up to 3 will be selected from each)
- Operate overnight summer camp programs (minimum of 4 overnights) serving children and youth (ages 8-17)
- Engage children/youth from at least 100 families in overnight camp programs each summer
- Commit to project guidelines and submit a proposal by October 15, 2024
- Demonstrate a commitment to participating for all 3 years of the project
- Be willing to engage families and churches, as per the project guidelines
- Designate a readily available, primary contact for the project who is able to commit to timely communication and advocate for the project amongst the camp staff team

Note that camps that received site visits and individual write-ups in summer 2024 are welcome to apply and will be considered, if space allows. Priority will be given to camps that have not already directly benefited from the Rhythms of Faith Project.

Project Guidelines

Rhythms of Faith Project personnel will work with selected camps to apply tested strategies, with thorough evaluation, to strengthen family faith outcomes of camp participants. The team will walk alongside these camps and their congregational partners in order to demonstrably increase their effectiveness at influencing family faith formation over the course of 3 years. As the project progresses and the strategies are further refined, they will be applied to additional camps and their church partners. The goal is to make the strategies self-sustaining among the core group of participants and replicable to other contexts. To this end, leaders of selected camps will also serve as ambassadors to their colleagues in camp ministry. Selected camps will commit to 3 years of project participation, allowing the research team to track improvement over time.

Selected camps will identify 6-10 partner churches that are enthusiastic about participating in the project. These churches will commit to partnering with the camp on the project, including promoting the faith practices in direct partnership with the camp. Churches will commit to sending 2-3 leaders (at least one lay leader and at least one ministry staff) to 2 training retreats at the camp (spring 2025 and fall 2026). Each participating church is expected to recruit and enroll at least 10 campers at their affiliated camp during each summer of the project (totaling 50-100 families across the participating churches). Ongoing participation of the same campers will be strongly encouraged and significantly enhance the research. Churches will be strongly encouraged (if it is financially feasible) to provide matching funds for camperships provided by the grant to incentivize ongoing family participation in project evaluations and the camping programs themselves.

The goal is to engage at least 100 families at each participating camp for each year of the project, with half of these families connected with participating churches. This will allow researchers to compare experiences and practices of families engaged in both participating camps and churches with those only engaged in camp. Parents/caregivers will be asked to complete surveys at 4 different times: when they register for camp (or prior to arrival), immediately after the camp experience, in the early fall, and in the winter (approximately 6 months after the summer). There will be incentives for those who complete the surveys, intended to be used as camperships applied to camp registration fees. These surveys will be conducted for 3 years (2025-2027).

Participating camps and their partner churches will receive resources based on project findings. Camp leaders and church leaders will be invited to participate in cohorts to share challenges and successes related to the project. Consultations based on project findings will help camps and churches refine their ministry strategies. Participants will be encouraged to engage directly with parents and caregivers through training events, learning cohorts, and other programs designed to support and equip them for ministry in the home.

Application Guidelines

A complete proposal must be **submitted by October 15, 2024** and must include the following:

1. **Cover letter** officially requesting the grant signed by the organization's chief executive officer
2. **Proposal Narrative:** This is the primary document of the grant proposal. It should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words. It should address the following:
 - A brief description of your camp ministries and priorities
 - Clear rationale for why your camp would be a good fit for the project
 - Current strategies for engaging families, partnering with local churches, and influencing faith in the home, and any evidence you have of success
 - How participation in the Rhythms of Faith Project will enhance your ministries
 - Clear plan for using the \$7,500 per year grant funds to work towards the project goals
 - Plan for how you will extend the impact of the grant beyond its completion (the hope is that the initiatives will continue to some degree after the grant period)
3. **Letters of support** from at least 3 church leaders (from different churches) indicating their intention of participating in the project and affirming the camp's readiness to participate
4. **Proof of 501(c)(3) status**
5. **Designation of a primary contact** at the camp who will have the authority and capacity to coordinate this project
6. A copy of most recent year's **annual budget** (or published annual report, if available)

Selection Criteria

Grant recipients will be chosen based on the following criteria:

- Clarity of proposal and alignment with project goals
- Capacity and readiness of the camp to develop a new and/or enhance existing programs
- Capacity of the camp to administer the project by tracking camper registrations (including church affiliation), applying campership funds from the grant, and maintaining strong partnerships with church leaders
- Level of commitment and capacity of the organization to garner the financial resources needed to sustain its program beyond the grant period

Additional Considerations

As an ecumenical project, we seek to include camping organizations open to working alongside those of different theological backgrounds. This project is partnering with Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries, and Christian Camp and Conference Association. Selected camps will represent these three organizations and demonstrate a willingness to work together to enhance the project goals.

We seek to include camps that serve families with diverse backgrounds, especially racial and ethnic diversity.

Each camp's involvement will be reviewed each year, with those complying with project guidelines eligible to continue with the project and receive ongoing funding for the subsequent year (up to 3 years). It is anticipated that selected camps will continue for all 3 years of the project, but a camp may be removed from the project by mutual agreement between camp leadership and the Rhythms of Faith team or at the discretion of the Rhythms of Faith Advisory Team due to noncompliance with project guidelines.

Control Group Participation

Additional camps not selected for this cohort will be eligible to participate in the project in our control group cohorts. These camps will not receive grant funds or specialized training events, but they will receive research, consultation services, and access to ministry resources developed by the project. It is anticipated that 9-12 additional camps will be selected for participation in the control group during the first year of the project, along with another 9-12 camps in the subsequent year. Applicants who do not receive grants will be eligible and have first consideration for control group participation.

If you have questions or concerns prior to submitting, please contact the research team via email at rhythms.of.faith@wheaton.edu. Proposals are due by October 15, 2024 and must be submitted by filling out the submission form found at rhythmsoffaith.com/rfp.

