



**Congregation-based Organizing**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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**Date Submitted: January 31, 2007** (revised 5/9/2007)

**Grant Amount: \$150,000**

**Project:** An Initiative to Deepen Leadership for Public Engagement Through Rostered/Authorized and Congregational Leaders Formation

**Purpose of grant funds:** To provide for a synodical leadership development for public engagement initiative (based, in part, on the training model of the 2006 ELCA Bishops Academy training),

- to develop/deepen congregations as communities for public engagement through expert training of rostered/authorized and key lay leaders in twenty synods of the ELCA in the arts of leadership development using the principals and practices of congregation-based organizing;
  - Training will be led by a team of persons to include a national CBO network organizer, a lay or rostered/authorized leader practitioner in CBO, as well as a person with biblical/theological expertise for interpreting a faithful grounding for doing justice in a Lutheran context.
  - Each of the six, three-person teams will conduct at least three 3-day trainings on the territory of eighteen synods (this allows for several synods to collaborate in training).
  - Training will be conducted between the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009.
  - Evaluation of the project will begin in May 2009.

**The Proposal**

- Participating synods' commitment to the following objectives will be central to achieving the goal:
  - Becoming more effective in supporting and training of leaders for engaging congregations in the public square
  - Providing leaders biblical, historical and theological understanding of the mission of the church in the context of contemporary social reality
  - Equipping leaders with the skills that enable congregations to more effectively carry out their mission in the world
  - Establishing creative and diverse models that are particular to a synod's setting
  - Establishing partnerships with other institutions for the purpose of coaching and mentoring
  - Building upon the church's strengths, capacities and interests for this work
  - Developing a pedagogy that focuses on the integration of *head, heart and hands*.
- The design is to engage large numbers of leaders in key public leadership arts and understandings in order to:
  - build courage for leadership in public life from a Lutheran biblical/theological base.
  - develop/enhance understanding and skills in building a relational culture for doing ministry;
  - discern/shape a practical and working model for organizing ministry that is both powerful and humane;
  - nourish the skills and supportive relationships for engaging in a God-given public life to address issues of poverty and of doing justice;
  - Engage the arts and principles learned through congregation-based organizing as a paradigm/pedagogy for leading the church in public engagement and mission capacity building.

**Outcomes:**

- Leaders will be committed to leading with deeper courage, focused intentional relationality, greater power, with clear partisanship for the Gospel...on behalf of all that God is creating.
- Leaders' role in public life of the church and community will be affirmed.
- Public space created/expanded to lead faithfully in the tension of public life.
- Congregations will engage in public life more intentionally and boldly as central to their doing justice.
- Congregations that participate in training will explore participating in CBO in their local/regional area.

### Measurement of Success

We consider the following outcomes as indicators of the initiative's success

- Leaders will be prepared to effectively lead congregations into the public dimensions of the Christian life
- Evaluations reveal that 75% or more of persons participating in training will rate the sessions as helpful.
- Training will have a minimum of 40 leaders participate in the training modules.
- There will be an increase of 15% in the number of ELCA congregations participating in congregation-based organizing.

Winter '07	Discussion of Proposal with synod representatives
Winter '07-'08	<i>Leadership Team Orientation/Selection of synods/groups of synods for Training</i>
Winter '08	Training of Trainers
Summer/Fall '08	Training of leaders in synods
Winter '09	Training of leaders in synods
Spring '09	<i>Assessment – Review and Evaluation; Leadership Team</i>

### Participating Synods will be expected to:

1. Submit an application form, including a case statement demonstrating the synod's readiness and capacity for participating in the Initiative.
2. Secure the participation of the Bishop (and or her/his designee), together with at least two persons of the synod, who will serve as the synod's Program Team. One of these persons will serve as the synod/synod group program coordinator. The program team will be expected to participate fully in an orientation, the synodical training events and other meetings; and to take responsibility for the development and oversight of their synod's program of training.
3. Develop and conduct a plan of evaluation in accordance with Initiative guidelines.
4. Commit support (some financial and/or in-kind) for leaders' participation in the training events. (The grant will provide for all training leadership costs and some scholarship support for participants, but synods are also required to provide some sort of commitment of resources, as is also expected of congregations).
5. Devise and execute a strategy to disseminate the importance of and learnings from this project throughout synod and through the Leadership Team to the wider church.
6. Consider a plan to sustain the training program beyond the grant funding.

### A Contextual Background: Why do these initiatives?

Congregations have been publicly organizing around their mutually shared interests by building relationships of trust which can powerfully address issues in their communities and develop leaders with capacity for engagement in public life within the congregation and in the broader community. Doing the work of justice and seeking to live more by the *iron rule* ("Never do for someone else what they can do for themselves"), these congregations and their rostered and lay leaders have engaged in public witness in profound ways that give expression to a congruency of proclaimed Word and living a public life.

Congregation-based organizing brings together a remarkable diversity of faith traditions, but equally noteworthy is its success in bridging the racial divides of American society. CBO draws together large numbers of African-American, white, and Hispanic congregation members (along with smaller numbers of Asian and Native Americans, and immigrants from literally dozens of countries around the world). Thus, CBO has come to reflect the vibrant religious and ethnic diversity of urban and, increasingly, rural life in America, channeling that diversity into serving the common good and protecting the interests of poor, working class, and middle class neighborhoods.

Congregations who commit themselves to public engagement have struggled with the culture of individualism and privatization, even the privatization of faith. They have built organizations of relationships which help to release the God-given power of people to participate in public life, not just naming problems that need solving, but learning strategies of organizing that move to systemic change. These congregations and their rostered and lay leaders have put together organizing efforts which have addressed such justice issues as developing affordable housing, creation of living-wage strategies, jobs creation, educational excellence and public school reform, neighborhood revitalization, utility-rate reform, health care, after-school enrichment and child-care, the naming of specific projects for city bond elections, equity at the marketplace for small farmers and ranchers, etc.

The organizing is not just about winning on issues, however, and not just about congregational leadership development. It is also, and perhaps more profoundly, about having a means of powerfully living the faith in public life for the sake of justice and systemic change; about living the biblical mandate, having been made in God's image and freed in baptism to "love and serve all people in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to work for justice and peace in all the earth;" about not just having a *theology of the cross*, but, as Douglas John Hall has voiced, it is about "seeking to live publicly as a *people of the cross*."