



2020 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q. What is the mission of Epiphany and what is a social entrepreneur?

Epiphany exists to serve as a catalyst for social change by providing guidance, funding, spiritual support and connections for social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurs have a mission to solve a range of social problems, including poverty, inequality, education, environment, and economic development. The social entrepreneur delivers goods, services or solutions using a business approach. The venture may be for-profit or not-for profit, is mission-oriented and creates a sustainable revenue model beyond just charitable funding.

Q: What kinds of ideas are we looking for?

We are looking for ideas that reflect our conviction that the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to a life of tangible compassion. Successful ideas will further the values of love, community, transformation, and servant leadership. We want to invest in entrepreneurs who seek to use their ideas to transform our community and the world and whose ventures will be brought to life through the sharing of resources, knowledge, experience, and gifts from our own congregation. The business-directed ventures should be scalable and sustainable.

Q: What is the timeline for applications and awards?

- **January 5, 2020 - Epiphany Sunday:** First Presbyterian church-wide program kick-off
- **January 6 – February 2:** Social entrepreneur **Open Application Period** through FPC online portal
- **February 2 – 16:** Application **Screening Period** to select program Semi-Finalists
- **February 23 – Semi-finalists announced:** Paired with FPC Navigators
- **February 23 – April 19: Navigators assist Semi-Finalists** to identify needs, acquire resources and connect with FPC Skills Coaches to refine concepts, written business plans, and presentations.
- **March 14 – One-Day Skills Training:** A day of energy, inspiration and encouragement for all Semi-Finalists, Navigators and Skills Coaches.

- **April 19 – Finalists are announced** to pitch to FPC panel of judges.
- **April 19 – May 10 – Finalists hone presentations** in coordination with Navigators and Skills Coaches.
- **May 10 – 16: PITCH WEEK – Finalists present in person** to FPC panel of judges.
- **May 17 - Epiphany Recipients are presented to the FPC congregation at Sunday service**

Q: Do applicants have to be Christian?

Epiphany is an initiative of First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, created to live out our call to participate in God’s mission in and for the world. While adherence to the Christian faith is not required for an applicant’s proposal to be considered, proposals should further the Christian values of love, community, transformation, and servant leadership. Such ideas will pursue authentic diversity, offer radical hospitality, provide mutual care, seek restorative relationships, reflect bold humility, model just generosity, and reflect a commitment to missional living.

Q: How many ideas are we going to fund?

Relying on the generosity of our congregation and using other revenue wisely, we were able to award a total of \$250,000 in 2019. The number of ideas we incubate and ventures we help to launch will depend on the applications we receive and what resources they require. The Judging team will develop objective criteria and will have full discretion as to how many ventures to launch, how to allocate the money and how to structure the funding.

Q: Are there award minimums and maximums?

There are no set parameters for how much the judges may award to one individual or project. However, the judges will select multiple "semi-finalists" who will be mentored. From that pool of projects, finalists will be chosen to receive funding. Relying on the generosity of our congregation and using other revenue wisely, We expect to award a maximum of \$150,000 in total awards in 2020.

Q: What happens to people who don't get funded?

They will still have access to our mentorship, skills coaches, and navigating teams. While we will not be able to fund all the applications we receive, we hope the sharing of other kinds of gifts will help even those entrepreneurs whose projects are not funded bring their ideas to fruition.

Q. Can social entrepreneurs who did not get funded in first round, reapply for 2020? Absolutely. We hope that social entrepreneurs with great ideas will continue to refine their ideas and take part in the program again.

Q: Will we only allow ideas that impact the city/area/region of Atlanta?

Not necessarily, but we will require that applicants reside in the Atlanta area so that they can fully participate in the incubation process.

Q: Is there an age requirement or limit for applicants?

No. Our Screeners will consider applicants even if they have limited entrepreneurial experience.

Q: What are the benefits to an individual whose idea is accepted into this incubator?

Beyond the possibility of grant money, there are other benefits from participating in the Epiphany process—benefits we believe can be even more compelling than award money.

Prospective entrepreneurs will:

1. Undergo a rigorous process and receive constructive feedback on a project or venture they have wanted to pursue but for which funding/assistance/technical know-how have been unavailable. The process of applying for the Epiphany project will force social entrepreneurs to hone their ideas and strengthen their plans.
2. Receive hands-on coaching from a team of mentors with a wealth of successful experience in a variety of business and entrepreneurial endeavors. Develop and improve a venture idea for judging by a panel of experts.
3. Gain experience and feedback on how to pitch and communicate a venture, not just for the sake of Epiphany, but for other future opportunities as well.
4. As a semi-finalist, participate in a one-day workshop with marketplace and city leaders as well as other semi-finalists to build relationships, receive encouragement and further refine ideas, then “pitch” their venture to a panel of judges.
5. As a Finalist, present their winning idea to our Judging Team and the FPC congregation, and if selected, receive further consulting, financial and business planning assistance, and funding awards.
6. Receive advanced mentoring on topics critical to organizational development.
7. Develop relationships with an ongoing group of advocates and connectors ready to help ideas and new businesses thrive beyond the program.

Q: It seems like the basis for getting through the screening process is "idea focused." What about the individual? How will Epiphany distinguish between the idea and the person with the idea? Will there be criteria applied to accepting individuals?

There are three layers of vetting:

1. Initial Screening Process: this will be a systematized, efficient review of submitted ideas and proposals by a team of screeners dedicated to developing a healthy pool of screened ideas that fit our high-level criteria:

- Is the idea compelling?
- Is the idea feasible?
- Is the idea a “fit” with FPC? Does it further the values that are our foundation?

2. Once the initial proposals are objectively reviewed according to those criteria, the accepted screened pool will move on to the Navigation team: one-on-one mentors who

will be matched with each accepted idea. The Navigators will meet with all applicants and select **"Semi-finalists."** This layer of screening will involve the "person" more than the "idea" and will require Navigators to select the social entrepreneur and corresponding idea that are best matched with their passions and skills. Navigators will be trained in what to look for in an idea, what questions to ask in interviews with social entrepreneurs, and more, enabling them to make decisions that reflect not only their preference towards working with someone new, but also a well-thought-out list of qualities to look for to evaluate the likelihood for success.

3. The final layer of vetting involves the Judges, who hear the pitches and award the funding to **"Finalists."** The judges can ask questions related to the proposal and idea as well as the ways in which the individual plans to live out foundational values in running the venture, etc.

Q: Does First Presbyterian Church want to own any of these ideas or future organizations?

No. First Presbyterian Church is interested in accountability but not ownership. Our desire is to serve our city and world, through the power of encouraging social entrepreneurs who want to share love, create solutions, build community, seek transformation, and model servant leadership.

Q: Are applicants required to become FPC members in order to be funded?

No. Epiphany is a new way to reach beyond our walls to share the Good News with the world. The Epiphany project will model for applicants and any whom they seek to serve the radical hospitality to which we are called. Any who seek a spiritual home would be welcomed in the FPC community.

Q: What is the long-term support model for finalists after funding is awarded? How do we ensure we are truly being stewards of the money, effort, ideas and individuals that are brought into the process?

Determining the appropriate support model and engagement with the selected finalists who receive funding is the role of the "Incubator" team. It is not enough to simply help launch the ideas. We want to prepare social entrepreneurs for long-term success. This does not mean that FPC would commit any financial resources beyond an Epiphany grant to a finalist, but we will endeavor to provide a solid foundation and abiding relationships that will enable our finalists' ventures to flourish. Specific answers to this question will depend on the entrepreneur and social venture and will be developed through the incubation process.

Q: How will the prize money be awarded?

We anticipate awarding funds as grants. If a social venture requests another type of funding, that will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Is there a preference between non-profit and for-profit entities?

We want to encourage all ideas. We expect that most applications will present ideas that have not been incorporated and are not the property of any legal entity. Our skills coaches, judges, and incubators will help evaluate and give proper guidance as to the most desirable vehicle for an individual idea. However, both non-profit and for-profit ideas will be considered.

Q: Is this an annual event?

Our first Epiphany round kicked off in August 2018 with five finalists selected in April 2019. In addition to funding, we continue to monitor and nurture those finalists to help ensure long-term success for each venture. We do that through prayer, continued navigational support and access to resources and people. The success of the first round encouraged us to use our learning to make refinements and move to Round Two. Our prayer is that this will be an on-going way of engaging God's mission as a congregation, and that, by the Holy Spirit's leading, we will generate the interest, desire, results, and passion to solve the challenging issues facing our community and world.