



GUIDELINES

For Requesting Financial Assistance from the USCCB Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America

I. Introduction

The Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) exists to foster communion and solidarity between the faithful of the United States of America and those of Latin America and the Caribbean. This goal has been inspired by several Church documents and initiatives, starting with the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “The virtue of solidarity goes beyond material goods. In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for, the development of temporal goods as well. And so, throughout the centuries has the Lord's saying been verified: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (CCC, 1942).”

The Second Vatican Council stated that “The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel (Gaudium et Spes #4).” It is in this spirit of responding to the signs of the times that in 1965, after the conclusion of Vatican Council II, wishing an increase in the sense of the oneness of the Church in the Americas, and responding to the calls of Popes Pius XII and Saint John XXIII to help Latin America, the bishops of the United States approved a collection to benefit the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean. Years later, in his opening address at the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, Saint Paul John II said that “The Church feels absolutely duty-bound to bring into still deeper spiritual union the peoples who compose this great continent and also, prompted by the religious mission which is proper to the Church, to stir among these peoples a spirit of solidarity” (Acta Apostolica Sedis, 1993, 820-821). In addition, the pope in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* stated that, by speaking of the Church in America, he wanted to point to the “closer bond which the peoples of the continent seek and which the Church wishes to foster as part of her own mission, as she works to promote the communion of all in the Lord” (*Ecclesia in America*, 5). Given the foregoing:

- a) The Subcommittee considers project requests that respond to a range of needs. Thus, the Subcommittee notes that in Latin America and Caribbean a great variety of experiences exist and that one or two of those may be given emphasis by the Church at one time or another. There is a diversity of cultural traditions (such as the indigenous, afro, mestizo, urban, rural, and peripheral-urban cultures, among others) and popular religious expressions; the mass media continues to influence cultural and moral values; family life, with young people at the center, experiences great diversity and complexity; ecclesial movements are appearing as a sign of the strength of the Church; while economies are driven by market forces that have an impact on the respect for life and human rights, the social good and the environment.

- b) This Collection is administered by the USCCB's Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America. The Subcommittee supports projects of the Catholic Church, especially those related to the application of the Second Vatican Council and all the General Assemblies of the Bishops of Latin America (From Medellin to Aparecida).
Priority is given to pastoral programs and pilot projects that help the Church in Latin America plan more efficiently and build leadership capacity. The Subcommittee understands capacity building, in its broadest sense, as any process that promotes human and Christian growth in individuals or increases the Church institutions' capacity to facilitate such growth. Capacity-building efforts can be directed to several yet integrated levels: individuals, pastoral agents/trainers/multipliers/animators, institutions and faith communities. The project requests need the endorsement of the Latin American bishop of the jurisdiction where the project will be implemented.
- c) The Subcommittee wishes to approach these projects in a collaborative way that, following the principle of subsidiarity, respects the ability of the local Church to evaluate and prioritize needs and to initiate projects. The process of assisting in the formulation of projects and the follow-up conducted by Subcommittee members and staff is intended not only to support local Church efforts but to develop deeper bonds of solidarity which go well beyond fiscal relationships.

II. Basic Principles

- a) Since the inception of the USCCB's Collection for the Church in Latin America, certain basic principles were taken into consideration when establishing criteria for financial aid. With their brother bishops in Latin America, the U.S. bishops recognize that programs should be designed to aid the Church in Latin America in the development of local responses to local challenges. All economic aid from the outside is by nature exceptional and transitory. Funding is provided in imitation of the early Christian communities (an act of Solidarity) to assist ecclesial communities lacking necessary resources to hand on and share the Faith.
- b) The object of the funds provided by the Collection is to initiate programs, not to maintain them. That is, funding is provided in a manner that will not foster economic dependency on external sources. Applicants must supply from local sources at least *one third* (i.e. 33%) of the total initial cost of a project for which funding is requested. Any grant would cover expenses for no more than 12 months, as the Subcommittee does not fund multi-year projects.
- c) Funding is intended to facilitate the development and implementation of sustainable activities that build the Church's capacity to develop or use local skills and resources. Sustainability refers to the ability of a given initiative to continue to meet the needs of a community of faith once the initial grant of external funding has ended.

III. Categories

- a) The members of the USCCB Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America are aware of the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean are heterogeneous societies and that programs vary from country to country. Regardless of the socio-religious and socio-economic situations of each locality, requests must fall under the following general categories:

1. Catechesis/Faith Formation
2. Evangelization/Mission
3. Formation of Lay Pastoral Agents
4. Pastoral Activities
5. Preparation for the Permanent Diaconate
6. Formation of Clergy and Religious*
7. Socio-Religious Research
8. Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
9. Stewardship and Church administration/management

The Subcommittee gives priority to multi-parish, diocesan, national and regional projects.

* Formation of Clergy and Religious is provided to those dioceses and religious congregations which are in need of support for the **formation of men and women preparing for religious life or ordination**. Minor seminaries and seminarians younger than 17 years of age are not eligible for funding. Seminarians in their “pastoral” year, aspirants or religious beyond their fourth year of temporary vows are not eligible for funding.

In special circumstances, funding may be made available to dioceses and religious congregations to send the professors of men and women preparing for religious life to specialized programs of limited duration within Latin America. It is the policy of the Subcommittee **NOT** to provide money for studies outside of Latin America or the Caribbean.

It is the policy of the Subcommittee **NOT** to provide money for advanced education of priests and religious **UNLESS** the bishop or superior requests the training for a particular individual in order to meet a pressing pastoral need of the diocese. Such requests will be considered on a case by-case basis and their approval is not guaranteed.

- b) **IMPORTANT:** Grants for the following types of requests are **NOT** normally approved:

1. Programs not related to local pastoral priorities;
2. Construction, repairs, remodeling, and/or construction materials – including furnishings;
3. Purchase of land, lots, premises, buildings, etc.;
4. Purchase of equipment (vehicles, office equipment – including computers, etc.);
5. Establishment of funds (investments, rotating, scholarships*, etc.);
6. Payments for events, activities, debts or expenses incurred prior to the meeting at which the bishops will consider the application;
7. Maintenance of churches and/or buildings;
8. Programs which have no possibility of future self-financing;

9. Recurring general administrative/operational expenses for already existing institutions (salaries, electric and water bills, expenses for phone and mail, etc.);
 10. Consecutive requests for the same project and/or from the same organization or institutions;
 11. Requests for grants to cover periods over 12 months.
 12. Requests from individual parishes.
- c) The following considerations apply to all requests:
- i. The Subcommittee welcomes requests/applications from parishes located in Vicariates, Prelatures or very poor dioceses. Other parish requests not from those areas need to be grouped, and submitted as one request, under a deanery or any other diocesan structure that reflects a regional nature.
 - ii. A congregation may submit one project request (whether for initial formation or pastoral) per Subcommittee meeting/funding cycle;
 - iii. A bishops' conference (whether its departments, units or the General Secretariat) or a diocese (whether its departments or units) may submit two project requests per SCLA meeting/funding cycle.

IV. Protection of Minors & Vulnerable Adults

The USCCB is committed to the protection of minors and follows a policy ([click here for the Dallas Charter](#)) to ensure their safeguarding. In this spirit, all grantees who seek a CLA project that deals directly with minors or vulnerable adults must submit their institution's plan to protect these groups before the project will be approved. *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (2019) defines vulnerable adult to be "any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offense." The essentials of the plan to be submitted must, at a minimum, address in detail:

- a) How your institution responds to accusations of misconduct;
- b) What is being done to prevent harm; and
- c) What is being done to promote healing. *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, Pope Francis' Motu Proprio "On the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons" 2019, provides the guidelines for such projects.

V. Endorsements

- a) When related to the work of a *religious congregation*, the provincial or superior must also endorse the project in addition to the bishop or bishops as noted below.
- b) A project of *diocesan* scope, or located within a specific diocese (i.e. parishes, religious congregations, seminaries, other Catholic organizations), must be endorsed by the local diocesan bishop.
- c) A project of *regional* scope (i.e. taking place in more than one diocese), must be endorsed by the bishop of **every** diocese that is involved in the project.

- d) A project of *national* scope must be endorsed by the bishop president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of that country, or by the bishop chairman of the appropriate Episcopal Committee.

VI. Funding Cycles and Procedures

Those persons interested in presenting a request to the Subcommittee should use the on-line application found at www.usccb.org/committees/church-latin-america or write to LatinAmerica@usccb.org or the address below:

Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America
 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
 Office of National Collections
 3211 4th Street NE
 Washington, DC 20017-1194

Once a completed application form is received on-line or a completed paper application has submitted, it will be assigned to a bishops’ subcommittee meeting date for review. Provided there is no delay **it may take approximately 6 to 9 months to process a request from the day the completed application is received.** The Subcommittee on the Church in Latin America meets twice a year, June and November, to consider applications submitted. The deadlines for receiving the fully completed applications are:

June	Deadline = April 15
November	Deadline = September 15

Given the number of projects received and the need to prepare all the documentation and evaluation of the applications, there can be no exceptions to the deadlines. That is, the Subcommittee cannot consider any application that is received after that deadline. Applications that are not received with all the required documentation by the deadlines may not be considered in the following meeting given the lack of information to make a decision.

The entire process of soliciting funds from the Subcommittee, from the first contact with the USCCB, could take 6 to 9 months, as long as there is no need for further information of clarifications (For example, late or lost emails, missing documentation, etc.).

Petitioners should plan to start the process of seeking funding from the Subcommittee with a minimum of 9 months before the expected starting date of the project.