



BHFH Application to Friends Foundation for the Aging - Executive Summary

Beacon Hill Friends House (BHFH) is applying for \$18,000 of supplemental grant funding in addition to the \$10,000 grant we received last Spring for our Vocational Discernment Program for Older Adults.

To our surprise and excitement, our project has found a solid footing and is gaining momentum. This grant proposal is for funding to extend the work of our grant from the Spring.

Additional funding we are requesting will enable us to travel around the US and pilot the workshop with different constituencies — the model that worked well for honing our work with young adults.

Project Details

In the last two years, BHFH created a vocational discernment workbook and curriculum grounded in Quaker principles and practices geared toward young adults, funded by the Forum for Theological Exploration and the Lyman Fund. During these workshops, older adult attendees (from local meetings or college professors, for example) often remarked how much they valued the space to engage in their own discernment instead of serving as a mentor for others (as was an unspoken expectation).

This Spring, Friends Foundation for the Aging granted BHFH \$10,000 to support our piloting a workshop geared toward adults over 60 and updating our workbook to provide resources for this demographic. So far, we have engaged in conversation with older adults about what might be helpful, connected with some potential co-writers to update our curriculum, and created a pilot workshop with a new co-facilitator for adults over the age of 60 (which will occur October 7, 2023).

As a part of this work, we surveyed 51 adults ages 60 to 93 from around the country (including at least four different Yearly Meetings) about their interest in this programming. 90% of survey respondents said either “yes” or “maybe” to: “Would you want to attend a workshop focused on helping people explore their vocation specifically for ages 60 and older?”

All but seven people surveyed took an optional opportunity to share the questions they were holding about vocation. Here is a selection of their responses:

Age bracket: 60-64 (12 respondents)

- “As I contemplate retirement, how will I fill my time with meaningful activity? Can I transition to a new career that is personally fulfilling now that I don't need to worry about money?”
- “Is this mine to do? How can I best use my skills? How can I accurately assess my Gifts? Who is best able to guide me through this process?”
- “What about my experiences living toward that of God within can be supportive of others' journeys in spiritual formation and toward alignment with one of several possible Quaker 'identities?' How do I discern what is Spirit-led and what could be understood as ego-identified?”
- “Can I still do a job change at this age? Change seems harder. How do I fit into fast-paced work environments with lessening energy? (Yes, everything seems fast-paced these days, including among Friends, and instant communication is a basic expectation.) How do life choices I've made in the past fit with current societal needs?”

Age bracket: 65-69 (9 respondents)

- “How can I serve my community with my new, lower levels of energy?”
- “What is God calling me to do in this phase of my life? Do I continue part time work in my profession?”
- “How do I identify myself in this new 'waiting for death' period?”

Age bracket: 70-74 (12 respondents)

- “How may I use my gifts to continue to be of service in the world as some of my mobility, ability, and acumen decline?”
- “I'm experiencing a long awaited transformation of heart. How will this paradigm shift affect my vocational aspirations?”
- “How do I listen with integrity to what the Holy Spirit is sharing? Does my calling have to change or the way I share what I am called to? Can the skills learned in my vocation be refreshed or extended to this new age in my life?”
- “Can I find a useful calling in the wider world, or will all my energy go into my quaker community?”

Age bracket: 75-79 (8 respondents)

- “What am I led to be doing now that I have fewer responsibilities, a bit more time, but less mobility?”
- “I've been retired for 6 years now and have been pretty happy with my engagement. But recently I've [been] questioning some commitments and wondering if I being called in a different direction.”
- “Is this 30 year leading ending? How do I know?”

Age bracket: 80-84 (9 respondents)

- “Am I really led to be fully engaged in the world at age 84, or am I missing the spiritual work of an elder?”
- “Why don't people want health [sic], active, alert Seniors on their payroll?”
- “Does my life have any purpose at this point?”

As they enter new seasons of their lives, we know adults in their seventh decade and beyond need spaces to unpack, discern, and explore how they are called to act in the world. One of the things that we're finding as we engage with interested participants is that this is not one generation of older adults. There is so much diversity in this season of life — in aspiration, in need, and in desire. Some people are tech-savvy, and some are not. Some people will continue in their profession until their last days, and others are interested in exploring new

passions in new seasons. It has been surprising and exciting how much interest there is in a space for older people to engage with peers around these questions, and there is nothing like this workshop out there yet.

In response to our survey question, “What resources would be helpful for exploring vocation in this season of your life?” friends responded (selected responses):

- “hearing from others who have found purpose”
- “conversations with other elders”
- “Hearing from other recent retirees about their experience. For whatever reason, I know lots of people still working and lots of people who retired 10+ years ago, but very few recent retirees. I would love to learn from this cohort.”
- “in person gatherings, hands-on experiences, creativity and accountability circles, Clearness Committees”
- “Skilled leadership”
- “Hearing how others in my age group are dealing with their need to provide service while learning to rest more as we get older.”
- “How do I search online?”
- “Sharing with others. Knowing how to use my aged talents. Do I still have talents?”
- “I would find it helpful to see and hear from individuals doing an assortment of things. I would find it particularly helpful to learn about skills to care for your own home and yard and basic to more advanced computer skills.”
- “A place to explore and listen deeply to others who are still asking the where, the why, and the how as we get older”
- “stories of similar vocations retunings, especially when the person with the vocation is elderly like me.”

Our workshop for young adults and the accompanying workbook were shaped by rigorous piloting around the country. It was due to this participant feedback that we made key adjustments that took into account the broad theological views and the varying degrees of familiarity with Quaker practices and principles. We will conduct a similar effort to hone our workshop to the needs of this population through trial and adaptation, with the aim to build something widely beneficial and spiritually grounded. We are piloting our first version of this adapted hybrid workshop at BHFH on Saturday, October 7. (Currently, 19 participants have signed up). This workshop will benefit from more trials at different locations across the country, where we can gather feedback before and after the program, make adjustments, and build partnerships.

We are proposing approximately \$18,000 to cover the costs of running multiple retreats for Quaker communities around the country to give this workshop and tailor this experience for aging adults.

If awarded funding, our plan is for Jen and Greg to travel together during the calendar year 2024 to the areas listed below, to run this workshop outside of the Boston area, connecting with Quaker meetings/churches, Quaker organizations, local aging-in-place organizations, and retirement communities in each area. With each workshop, we will formally collect feedback at the beginning and end and offer informal opportunities for connecting with us afterward. This is the model that provided success for honing our work for young adults. We plan to run 2 to 3 workshops in each location.

- Proposed travel locations (organized in terms of potential 2024 travel schedule):
 - Greensboro/Raleigh-Durham area
 - D.C./Baltimore area
 - Greater Philadelphia area
 - California and the Pacific Northwest
 - Richmond, Indiana area

The \$18,000 will be used to cover plane flights, rental cars, accommodations, Greg's time for facilitation, and some of Jen's time as a facilitator and support staff. BHFH will supply materials and technology for the workshops and cover the remainder of BHFH staff time.

About Beacon Hill Friends House

Beacon Hill Friends House is an intergenerational and diverse intentional community organized around Quaker practices and principles, established in 1957. Our mission is: "To embody the Quaker principles of faith, simplicity, integrity, community and social responsibility in order to nurture and call forth the Light in all of us."

Our frequent online and hybrid public programs cultivate community, nurture spiritual deepening, and empower collective action. We frequently partner on programming with many Quaker organizations (Pendle Hill, New England Yearly Meeting, Quaker Voluntary Service, American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation). We have a proven track record of running successful grant-funded programs and sustaining our programming over time through a combination of grant funding, program fees, and general fundraising. We are currently stewarding six-figure grants from the Shoemaker Fund and the City of Boston Community Preservation Commission. We have successfully completed projects funded by the Forum for Theological Exploration, Obadiah Brown's Benevolent Fund, the NEYM Legacy Fund, and more.

BHFH Alignment with FFA Values

As an organization dedicated to supporting community, intentionality, and Quaker values, Beacon Hill Friends House is committed to ongoing attention to issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging across our areas of work. This manifests in many ways, including how we interview prospective residents, the use of sliding scales and financial aid to improve financial accessibility across our program areas, our choice of facilitators and speakers, and the professional development opportunities we provide for staff and community members.

We are excited about the strength of the alignment we see between FFA's articulated values and this application. Our proposed program is designed to **support populations that are diverse** across many dimensions, including diverse geographies and cultural contexts within and outside the Society of Friends. With regard to the **potential to create change**: This application is grounded in an optimistic view of older adulthood, rooted in the deep belief in the potential, viability, and possibility inherent in older adults to discern and to carry a vocation, no matter their age. We are excited about the potential of this project to **leverage other resources**, both our own prior work that this initiative builds upon, and our existing connections to other Quaker organizations with which we see many opportunities for **collaboration** (including NEYM's new ARCH program established with funding from FFA). This application centers the **engagement of participants** — as inherently interactive programs, and through our planned mechanisms for collecting feedback on participant experiences and using that feedback to iterate and improve our programming. This project also **integrates service** to multiple facets of participants' lives, including aspects of their physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social needs. Finally, we will eagerly seek any opportunities for **continued engagement with FFA** to help distribute and raise further awareness and engagement of Quakerism-grounded resources for older adults that we are developing under this grant. FFA's position as a nexus of information and support of older-adult concerns and the Society of Friends makes it a perfect partner to put these resources in front of more people whose lives may be improved by them. Likewise, input from FFA's expertise during the development of these vocational resources will also be further supportive of our shared goals.

Program Budget - Expenses		
Vocational Discernment Program		
Item	Amount	Description
Greg Woods	\$6,500	Stipend for outreach to Meetings, workshop planning and facilitation
Travel	\$10,000	Costs of travel to site locations for pilot workshops across diverse geographic and vocational contexts. Includes plane flights, other transportation, and accommodations for proposed areas: D.C./Baltimore area, Greater Philadelphia area, California and the Pacific Northwest, and the Richmond, Indiana, area.
BHFH Staff time Covered by FFA	\$1,500	BHFH staff time for workshop promotion and facilitation, and overall project support and administration covered by FFA
Total	\$18,000	

Additional Funding:

We received \$15,000 from Obadiah Brown's Benevolent Fund for additional content production and printed materials costs for the Vocational Discernment curriculum.

Attach copies of your IRS determination letter. We may also look at your website, your Guidestar profile, and your IRS non-profit status

-  IRS Determination Letter (BHFH) (1).pdf
- [Beacon Hill Friends House, Inc. - GuideStar Profile](#)