

Self-Assessment: Ten Questions to Determine Whether Your Congregation is Ready to Compete for Public Funding

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Many opportunities exist today for congregations to seek public funding to underwrite their social service programs. But competing for government dollars is a new experience for many. How can you know whether your congregation is ready? Faith leaders can use the questions below to help them consider whether it is appropriate for them to compete for public funding.

1. Is the service your organization plans to provide a *public* service, not just a program for church members?
2. Does the service produce outcomes that are important to the whole community?
3. Can you identify (specify) those outcomes?
4. Are you comfortable with the idea of choice; that participants in your program must be free to not participate in any inherently religious activities that you might offer alongside the publicly funded service?
5. Are you comfortable with a "relational approach to the gospel;" that is, to sharing your faith principally through acts of friendship and care?
6. Is the service for which you seek public funding one that the church will support with its money and volunteers?
7. Is this a service you plan to offer whether or not you are successful in obtaining public funding for it?
8. Are you comfortable with a significant increase in recordkeeping and accountability (which will inevitably accompany public funding)?
9. Have you established a documented community need for this service?
10. Are you willing to establish the appropriate structure for receiving and managing public dollars (i.e., setting up a separate 501(c) 3 nonprofit corporation with its own board of directors and financial accounting system)?

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