



THE ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT

Thank you for your interest in the *Accompaniment Project* from the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM). This grant-funded initiative will seek to guide parishes through a strategic planning process, where they will be challenged to create and implement an experimental approach to youth ministry that specifically meets the needs of the young people in their communities. NFCYM will select forty diverse parishes across at least five dioceses in the United States to participate in this 3-year project.

INFORMATION FOR DIOCESAN DIRECTORS

OVERVIEW

The *Accompaniment Project* is not a youth ministry program. It is a strategic planning process that guides parishes through reimagining how to accompany young people encountering Christ and growing in discipleship. To help the parishes, an *Accompaniment Project* coach, a veteran professional minister assigned by NFCYM, will accompany and coach the parish leaders at no cost to the parish. NFCYM has developed all the resources needed for the project and will share them with participating parishes.

Our current methods and strategies for making youth disciples are failing us, as evidenced by how many youth and young adults are no longer practicing the faith. If you would like the opportunity to reimagine your diocese's efforts to evangelize and catechize youth, we encourage you to advocate with pastors and parish leaders in your diocese to apply for this intentional and systematic project grounded in accompaniment.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Since the *Accompaniment Project* is not a program, but rather a way to empower the adults in the parish to become Faith Companions for the youth, the project is well suited for adaptability in different cultural contexts. One goal of the project is to have parish leaders implement these resources in as many different cultural contexts as possible. This will allow us to learn what adaptations need to be made before sharing the resources with the wider Church. As such, all resources will be offered in both English and Spanish as needed, with the possibility of adapting them in other languages if the right partners can be identified. NFCYM welcomes parishes with all kinds of ethnic and cultural diversity to apply for the project. Dioceses with greater diversity across the parishes who apply may increase their chances of being selected for the project.

BENEFITS

While diocesan offices cannot directly apply for the project, you can play a significant role in the application process and benefit from the implementation of the project in your diocese. NFCYM is seeking cohorts of eight parishes in at least five dioceses to participate in the project. NFCYM encourages you to discern if the goals of the *Accompaniment Project* fit with the vision of ministry with high school youth in your diocese. If so, NFCYM encourages you to advocate to the pastors and ministry leaders in your diocese to consider applying for the project. Each diocese in the project will receive consultation, training, resources, and support. The NFCYM appointed coach will walk with the diocesan staff through a consultation process of evaluating current programs and services from a lens of accompaniment and develop a strategic planning process of how to move towards fostering accompaniment at the diocesan level. The diocesan staff will be strongly encouraged to participate in

all the cohort trainings and gatherings in hopes that the diocese could launch their own accompaniment cohorts in the future.

EXPECTATIONS

To participate in the *Accompaniment Project*, diocesan leaders should be willing to commit to the following expectations.

During the application process:

- Share information about the project and the application process with your pastors and parish ministry contacts.
- Identify diverse parishes in your diocese who are open to trying new ways of accompanying young people in faith, and personally invite them to apply.
- Work with the NFCYM staff to answer any questions parish leaders or pastors may have about the project.
- Work with NFCYM staff to secure approval from your (arch)bishop to implement the project in your diocese.

If selected, the diocese would identify a Diocesan Staff Person to serve as liaison to the project who will:

- Commit to supporting the project.
- Participate in the diocesan consultation process.
- Participate in orientation and planning for the project.
- Participate in some of the workshops of the project with parish teams.
- Provide ongoing support for parishes as needed, in conjunction with the Accompaniment Project Team.
- Collaborate with the Accompaniment Project Team by helping to evaluate the project and by sharing experience to assist other parishes and dioceses in developing ministry with youth through accompaniment.
- Assist NFCYM in securing a host site for the initial cohort training and ongoing cohort gatherings.
- Agree to continue with the project over the 3-year timeline.