THE BTS CENTER

2018 - 2019

INNOVATION INCUBATOR

Compass and Cairn Projects

Exploring New Landscapes

This information packet will introduce you to The BTS Center's Innovation Incubator, which supports Cairn and Compass Projects that map the contours of today's religious and spiritual landscapes, mark creative paths for navigating them, and explore new ideas and insights for nurturing exceptional leadership in contemporary faith communities.

About Us

The BTS Center is a nonprofit startup that is also 200 years old. Originally founded as Bangor Theological Seminary in 1814, The Center was born after the seminary's closure in 2013.

Emerging in a historic moment of radical discontinuity with its origins, The BTS Center is transforming its identity, purposes, and mission. While it is no longer an accredited degree-granting seminary, it still is committed to the goal of "equipping and supporting leaders for theologically grounded, effective leadership in 21st-century communities of faith."

The BTS Center's Story

The BTS Center's story of necessary change is a familiar one, sounding a lot like the stories unfolding in churches and seminaries across the country. While the stories often appear to be tales of loss, uncertainty, and fear, if you listen carefully, you can also hear narratives of do-overs, clean slates, and new possibilities.

Seeking Explorers & Cartographers

If you are investigating The BTS Center's Innovation Incubator, you:

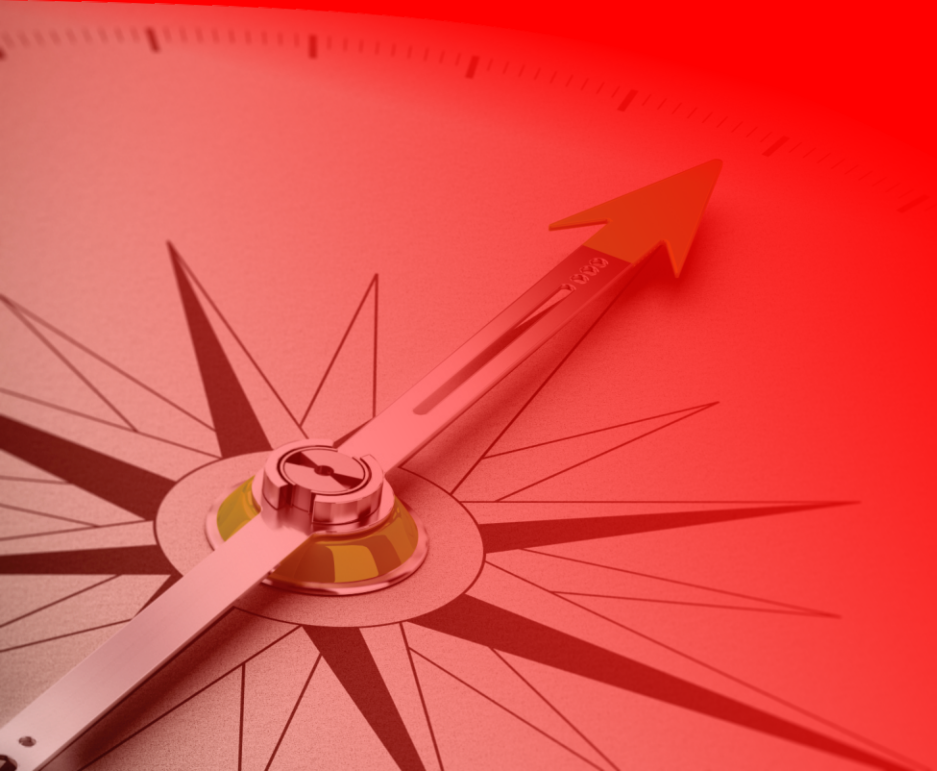
- **are interested in the spiritual life and its formation.** Maybe you have come with longstanding commitments to the church and to ministry. Or you have questions and concerns about the future of theological education and religious leadership. Perhaps you are here because you are passionate about the good news of God and have some ideas for how and where you might most potently share it.

- **see how old and familiar stories of church and ministry and seminary training have been disrupted and are being interrupted.** And, like The BTS Center, you are searching for the new plot lines, characters, and dialogue that will shape 21st-century spirituality but have remained mostly unwritten—until now.

- **are a leader, an investigator, and an experimenter who prizes transformative exploration.** You realize that the traditional narratives and time-worn maps of religious life no longer suffice, and you desire to create *new* stories and tools that are appropriate for contemporary contexts.

    - Do you have an idea for a unique, innovative program that you've always wanted to try? A hunch you've wanted to follow? A theory you've wanted to test?
    - Do you long to examine a specific site or a particular group of people where you see spiritual life, community, and leadership emerging in new and unexpected ways?
    - Do you desire to tell the particular story of the challenges facing New England's churches, ministry practices, and leadership training initiatives?
    - Do you seek insight into the spiritual lives of New Englanders and the specific conditions, circumstances, and contexts influencing spiritual life in this region?

Welcome, Explorers and Cartographers.
We look forward to working with you.



Cairn and Compass

During the 2018 – 2019 funding cycle, The BTS Center will fund two types of projects:

- **Cairn Projects** are experimental, have a practical or applied focus, and are "local" in character (i.e., specific to a location, a demographic, an institution, or a denomination). They offer outcomes that provide concrete direction, materials, and insight to religious and spiritual leaders who constantly contend with new, ever-changing circumstances. Cairn Projects are undertaken by explorer-practitioners who are traversing the religious landscape, navigating their way at ground level through the transformations taking place.

- **Compass Projects** are descriptive and interpretive. They contribute to a "thicker description" of the religious landscape in New England by using larger-scale units of analysis to observe changes, influences, and trends. They provide interpretive frames that deepen our understanding of the current conditions and circumstances that influence spiritual life and the practice of ministry in this region. Compass Projects are undertaken by spiritual cartographers who desire to map what is occurring on the religious landscape from a 10,000-foot view—and thereby produce knowledge that can help faith leaders better serve communities of faith.

Up to $70,000 will be awarded. Depending upon the projects submitted, the pool of grant money most likely will be divided between larger projects (each of which may receive up to $20,000) and smaller projects (each of which may receive up to $5,000). **Cairn and Compass Projects are equally eligible for the larger grants**—but the amount of requested grant money should be commensurate with a project's size and scope.

Sample Projects:

Are you wondering whether your idea would best qualify as a Cairn Project or a Compass Project? Here are some sample initiatives for each project type and funding level.

	Cairn Project	**Compass** Project
Award of up to $5,000	A new programmatic partnership between a faith community (church, synagogue, mosque, etc.) and a local artists' collaborative. Together, the institutions develop a month-long program that showcases the ways in which spirituality has historically been expressed through art. The program also offers participants opportunities to creatively express their *own* spiritualities. The program curriculum is made available for sharing and dissemination.	A comparative study of different denominations' lay education programs in New England. The investigators identify particularly effective teaching practices. They then produce a written report that offers policy recommendations for judicatory bodies looking to strengthen denominational training initiatives.
Award of up to $20,000	A new ministry/training initiative that offers unemployed individuals classes in the culinary arts and catering. Three agencies partner on the project: (1) an outreach ministry that serves the homeless; (2) a municipal workforce development agency; and (3) a local church with a commercial-grade kitchen. A comprehensive handbook and system of guidance for setting up and administering the program is produced, so that the initiative may be replicated.	A documentary film that shows the variety of spiritual communities and religious expressions that have developed in New England during the past decade. In addition to "telling the story," the film offers insight into how the new communities meet 21st-century spiritual needs.

Project Outcomes

New Tools for Navigation

Here at The BTS Center, we understand that the changing religious and spiritual landscapes of the 21st century demand the development of a wide variety of navigational tools. We are no longer in the realm of "one size fits all."

Thus, our Innovation Incubator seeks to create, promote, and disseminate new practices, knowledge, and scholarship that will help individuals and organizations successfully traverse the terrain that surrounds them. Through the Incubator, we seek to support change agents and leaders who desire to generate positive transformation in the fields of religion, spirituality, practical theology, and ministry.

If you are awarded funding for your Cairn Project or your Compass Project, you will be expected to create, at the end of your yearlong investigation, a final product or artifact or tool that will be available for sharing with The BTS Center, its constituents, and the wider public.

It is important to note that all Cairn and Compass products will not necessarily look alike. We understand that people learn in a variety of ways, and we know that different types of projects will demand different outputs. For example, if you receive a $20,000 grant, you will be expected to produce an end product that is larger in scope, compared to the output of less expensive projects.

On the next page, you will find a list of potential final products. Please consider it a jumping-off point, rather than a definitive catalog.

Let imagination and inspiration determine the product that you ultimately create.

Potential Cairn and Compass Products:

Tools for 21st-Century Ministry, Spirituality, and Religion

Literary Arts

- Article
  - Academic Publication
  - Popular Press
  - Professional Journal
- Book
- E-book
- Essay Collection
- Interview Transcripts
- Oral History
- Poetry
- Theatrical Production
- White Paper

Research

- New Question
- New Model or Theory
- New Area for Investigation

Connectivity

- New Religious/Spiritual Community
- New Network
- New Methods of Sharing Knowledge

Technology & New Media

- App
- Computer Program
- Social Media Tool
- Website

Visual & Fine Arts, Worship

- Art Work
- Documentary
- Film
- Hymn Collection
- Liturgy
- Slide Show

Teaching & Presentations

- "Content in a Box"
- Course Offering
- Curricular Material
- Conference Talk
- Workshop Presentation
- Research Questions
- New Teaching Model
- Pecha Kucha

Regardless of project type or proposed product outcome, funding priority will be given to initiatives that:

- generate insights, knowledge, and ideas that are useful to faith leaders.
- contribute to knowledge of 21st-century religious and spiritual life.
- focus upon New England.
- emerge from and/or support communities of collaborative inquiry.

We encourage collaborative projects that promote the building of new strategic or programmatic partnerships between multiple institutions or organizations.

Who Should Apply?

There is no perfect applicant for The BTS Center's Innovation Incubator Program. We desire to work with a variety of people, including but not limited to:

- Church leaders (including individuals from non-Christian traditions)
- Artists, writers, poets, filmmakers, and musicians
- Teachers and scholars
- Community builders and activists
- Business and nonprofit leaders
- Social workers, clinicians, and chaplains
- People who are religiously unaffiliated & spiritually inclined
- YOU

Letter of inquiry must be received by **January 26 2018**

If you have a great idea for a project about 21st-century faith leadership, religion, or spirituality, we would love to hear about it.

Program Benefits

Ultimately, The BTS Center's Incubator Program seeks to support creative individuals who desire to engage in transformative work through innovative projects.

If your Cairn Project or Compass Project is funded, you will receive more than simple financial support. We want to be a conversation partner, rather than a patron.

As a BTS Center Fellow, you will become part of a cohort group made up of individuals who are dedicated to sharing ideas and encouraging one another's work. The BTS Center will facilitate cohort gatherings for its fellows. In addition, it will provide access to online resources and other benefits designed to help promote networking and support your research.

Application Process

The full application process for The BTS Center's Innovation Incubator is by invitation only, but all are eligible to seek an invitation.

Start the process by submitting a letter of inquiry (see below) by **January 26, 2018.** Those asked to submit a full application will receive an invitation to do so by **February 23rd.** Full applications will be due by **April 6th**, and final decisions about projects will be made by **mid-May.**

Innovation Incubator

Letter of Inquiry Instructions

Innovation Incubator applicants are required to submit an initial Letter of Inquiry (LOI) highlighting the purpose and objectives of the proposed project.

Application Process

1.) Letters of Inquiry must be received no later than 11:59 PM on Friday, January 26, 2018. They may be addressed to Dr. Pamela Shellberg, Scholar-in-Residence, The BTS Center. All of the materials received will be shared with the Incubator's application review committee.

2.) Letters will be submitted via an online application system located at the following address:

https://webportalapp.com/appform/btsc_incubator_loi

Upon arriving at the application website, you will input basic information about your project and its investigators. You then will be instructed to upload your letter of inquiry, **which should be written and saved using a word processing program.**

Blind Review

The BTS Center uses a process of blind review when evaluating letters of inquiry. We want our reviewers to subjectively evaluate your project based upon its merits, without being influenced by what they may know of you or your organization. Therefore, as you compose your letter, please:

- **Place the title of your project at the top, either in the header or above the letter's text.** (The project title should not contain your name, the name of your organization, or your organization's location.)
- **Do not include any personally-identifiable information in the document**. The letter should not contain your name, the identification of your organization, or the specific towns in which you and your organization are located.
- **Ensure that the letter uses generic language when referring to you, your organization, and/or your location.** For example, instead of writing "I am the pastor of Saint Willibrord parish in Hartford, Connecticut," you might write "I am the pastor of an urban church in Connecticut." Instead of writing "Rev. Smith, Ms. Jones, and I administer Helpful Nonprofit, an organization in Manchester, New Hampshire that supports local food banks," you might write, "My colleagues and I run a New Hampshire nonprofit that works to address the issue of food scarcity."
- **Your letter may include the identities of people who have inspired or shaped your proposed project**. It just cannot identify you, your co-investigators, or your organization(s).
- **Your letter may include the names of specific geographic locations you plan to use in your project.** For example, if you plan to conduct research or undertake your project in multiple cities, your letter may include the names of all the towns. That said, if one of them coincides with the city in which your organization is located, your letter should not reveal that fact.

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Letter of Inquiry Contents

When composing your Letter of Inquiry, please keep the following guidelines in mind.

As described previously, The BTS Center uses a process of blind review. In your letter of inquiry, remember to leave out any information that identifies you, your organization, or your specific geographic location. (More information is available on page 9.)

Letters should be no longer than 1500 words (approximately 3 single-spaced pages) and contain the following information:

- **A Project Description, to include:**
    - Project title
    - Whether the project constitutes a Compass or Cairn Project
    - A description of the question, problem, or need that the project seeks to address
    - The project's goals and objectives
    - A short project summary that outlines
        - what will take place
        - who will be involved
        - a timeframe for the work (NOTE: The Incubator's funding cycle is from July 2018 through June 2019. If your project schedule does not coincide with those dates, be aware that reimbursement will only be available for project expenses incurred during those twelve months. See below.)
    - The potential impact of your work
        - Who might benefit from your project?
        - How might it help them?
    - An explanation of how you will determine and evaluate your project's success

- **Project Budget**
    - A preliminary estimate of how much financial support you may need (a detailed budget is not necessary in this initial letter of inquiry)

    - Funding will work on a reimbursement basis. The BTS Center will only be able to reimburse you for expenses that are (1) directly related to your project and (2) incurred between July 2018 and June 2019.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you.