

Request for Proposals (RFP):

Research on Theologically-informed Business Models and Practices

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Thanks to generous funding from supportive friends and donors, the Center for Integrity in Business (CIB) at Seattle Pacific University will make grants to support research related to a Christian understanding of business.

CIB is actively working to promote and develop a transformative vision of business, dubbed “Another Way of Doing Business” (AWDB). AWDB contends that the purpose of business is to serve society by producing goods and services which enable communities to flourish and providing productive opportunities for people to employ their god-given talents and abilities; doing so in a financially-sustainable (i.e., profitable) manner.

Goals

CIB grants fund theoretical and empirical scholarly research; however, all CIB-funded research should be relevant to and have practical implications for business practitioners.

In this Request for Proposals (RFP), CIB is seeking projects that will help business practitioners and scholars to transform the way business works. While not necessarily explicit, all projects should exhibit an inherently Christian theology and/or worldview. Projects may focus on documenting and testing alternative business models and practices, or exploring remaining unresolved questions and debates. Preference will be given to projects that are collaborative in nature, connecting business scholar(s), theologian(s) and/or practitioner(s) in some combination. The following list of topics describes CIB’s research agenda. Projects explicitly addressing listed topics will be given priority in funding decisions.

Empirical Research

- Construct an expanded range of business outcomes than is typically considered. Develop metrics to measure these various outcomes. Identify and explore causes and consequences of the various outcomes. [If a business’ primary purpose is “to serve” then how might we assess its effectiveness in accomplishing this purpose? For example, if providing “vocationally-rich work” is one of business’ goals, then perhaps measuring employees’ level of job-related engagement and meaningfulness would be an important outcome to monitor.] If business is about more than making money, or satisfying stakeholders... then how do we monitor its performance?
- Identify and document exemplars (individual and corporate) in written or video case-studies. What role-models already exist?
- Survey businesses to collect data about their current AWDB-related practices and outcomes. How much of such activity is already occurring?
- Create tools and resources to help managers make decisions and choices manifesting AWDB priorities. This might entail surveying practitioners to compile a list of “hard questions” for a new business model as well as suggestions for answers to such questions based upon their

- experience. What difference does AWDB make in the day-to-day decisions of a company?
- Compile and compose a “glossary” of AWDB terms in order to create a shared vocabulary among practitioners and scholars in the field.

Conceptual Research

CIB is interested in research on the purpose and role of business in society. These “core questions” include, but are not limited to:

- Articulate a more detailed explanation of the role of profit, economic value-creation and capital formation in the mission and operation of a company. What is the proper role of profit and wealth?
- Develop a “theology of institutions.” How do we think faithfully about the social-conventions and systems of our culture?
- Explore the discipline-specific applications and implications of AWDB to management, marketing, finance, economics, accounting, etc. How does AWDB transform practice within these disciplines?
- After the “Fall” humanity was banished from the divinely-controlled Garden and now lives in the wilderness, characterized by a state of pervasive disorder. What if in this natural state of “wildness” where entropy and disorder are rampant, there exist natural systems of equilibrium/tension (“dynamic balance”), which provide some degree of order and within which organized action becomes possible? How do we account for such “natural systems” of order? Do market forces qualify as such? How does living in the wilderness impact the practice of business?
- Compare and contrast AWDB with the stakeholder model. Articulate areas of overlap as well as highlight points of divergence.
- Develop a rich understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and map onto AWDB. How are they different? How are they the same?
- Compile a “glossary” of business and theological terms so that the community starts to speak the same language when discussing these issues.

Parameters for Research

CIB welcomes all rigorous methodologies, including qualitative, normative, and quantitative studies. We are open to funding field research, quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal studies, cross-sectional surveys, historical studies, qualitative designs such as ethnographies, interviews, and case studies, theoretical model/paradigm development, and normative arguments.

CIB welcomes proposals from academics, students (especially PhD candidates at the dissertation stage), independent scholars, and practitioners.

Procedures and Deadlines

Applicants are invited to submit proposals at any time (ten pages maximum). The proposal should address:

- goals and purposes of the proposed research;
- relevance of the project to the study and practice of business;
- literature review, with discussion of motivating theology and interests;
- methodology, with details about any proposed quantitative or qualitative data;
- qualifications of the researcher(s);

- a timeline;
- a proposed set of “deliverables,” such as one or more CIB Working Papers, scholarly articles, datasets, or case studies; and
- an itemized budget with narrative.

CIB staff will review the proposals and select applicants whose research is most closely aligned with CIB’s research priorities and which shows the greatest promise for making a significant contribution to the field. Grant applications will be reviewed quarterly during the following months: January; April, July; and October. After a decision is made and if an award is granted, a period of approximately six weeks is usually necessary to complete financial arrangements between the CIB and the grantee and to disburse the first money.

Procedures

CIB seeks to make information as widely available as possible. To this end, CIB reserves the right to disseminate all findings generated from CIB grants, unless the applicant negotiates a specific exception or postponement. CIB also reserves the right to disseminate research abstracts and short summaries based on all our grantees’ work. Grantees are normally invited to provide Working Papers and Fact Sheets.

All public products based in this RFP must acknowledge support from “The Center for Integrity in Business at Seattle Pacific University”

Non-itemized overhead or indirect costs are limited to 10% of the project budget.

The total pool of money available in this RFP is \$50,000. CIB has never chosen to make a grant in excess of \$5,000 and is unlikely to exceed that amount. However, grant requests up to \$10,000 will be considered.

Grants made under this RFP will expire no later than 18 months after being awarded. The proposed timeline should indicate that all CIB-funded research will be complete and all products created by that date, at the latest.

Electronic submissions are preferred. If you choose to send a hard copy please also send an electronic copy.

Letters of Inquiry should be sent to:

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Questions can be sent to:

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