

## Lightbearers Mission Partner Engagement

The Lightbearers vision is to disciple students and fund missions. As we consider these two components and recognize from Scripture that God has a heart for the nations, we want to disciple students towards the nations. As a parachurch ministry, we want to come alongside the local church in our discipleship of students and in support of gospel work that is solely focused on seeing healthy churches established. We are not the local church, so we do not send the partners we work alongside, but we do have a role to play in partnership with them. So, what does our engagement look like both in funding and in additional support?

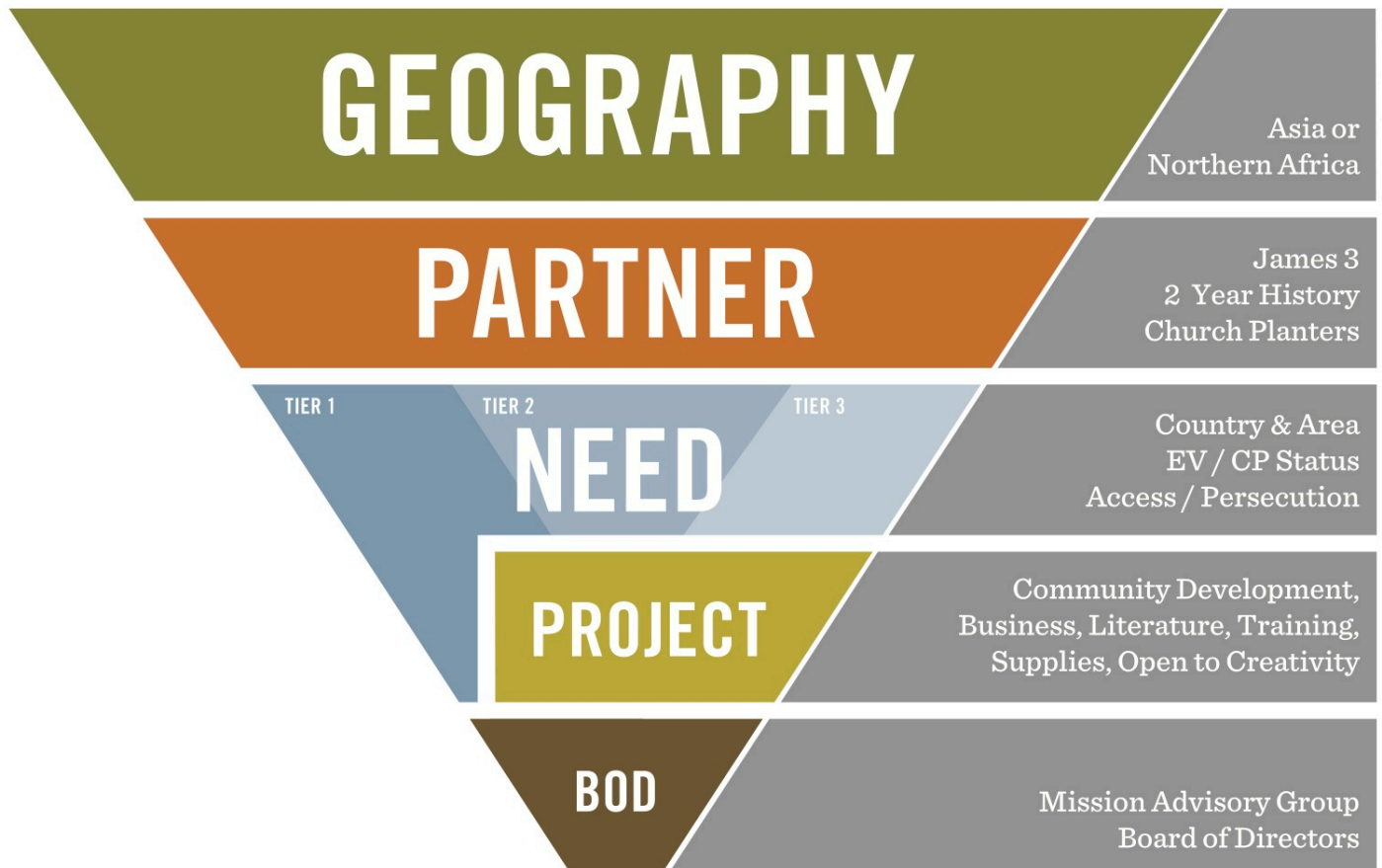
**Our Focus:** We believe that Jesus came to ransom a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation (Revelation 7:9). We feel called to direct our funding towards those that have the least access to the gospel and the fewest resources to that end. Most of these areas are in Asia and northern Africa, so we have chosen to focus on that part of the world.

**Our Funding:** We fund project grants for missionaries involved in planting gospel-centered churches in Asia and northern Africa. The funding process works as follows:

We connect with new partners (national or ex-pat, sent through local churches and mission organizations), through existing relationships and recommendations. After visiting a potential partner, we determine how they fit within our granting criteria, and if so, we then invite them to apply for a grant. We look to James 3 as our guide in seeking partners who exhibit wisdom and are peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy and good fruits. We recognize that in some places, simple perseverance is good fruit.

Our funding occurs through a granting process, normally on an annual basis in the Spring. This process begins with Lightbearers soliciting grant requests from partners. The partner must outline the project, the need, how the project aids the work of church planting, additional sources of funding, and answer questions related to their understanding and application of theology, ecclesiology, and missiology.

As the applications are received by the Lightbearers staff, the Director of Missions works alongside a project advisory board comprised of like-minded, missions-focused individuals to evaluate and make recommendations on each grant request.



## A SELECTION MODEL

The project advisory board uses a “funding funnel” to evaluate grants. The above illustration shows how the selection is broken down into five levels:

1. **Geography:** Our focus is on Asia and northern Africa, where the most least-reached peoples and places exist with little to no access to the gospel.
2. **Partner:** We want James 3 to guide the types of partners we engage. We require that ex-pats must have been in the country for at least two years so that they have begun learning the language, acclimated as a family for the long haul, and can discern the needs of the church and community. We do not fund projects with partners who have not been on the field more than two years. We also make sure that church planting is at the heartbeat of their ministry and that they are working towards the establishment of healthy churches. We must visit any partner on the field prior to funding a project.
3. **Need:** We recognize that we likely are one of several revenue streams for these projects; therefore, we prioritize our partners based upon their need. We want to ensure that a ministry project can be fully funded even if we cannot fund the entire amount. We also gauge need based upon the partner’s location, access to the gospel, level of persecution in that area, and evangelism, discipleship, and church planting work in that region.

4. **Project:** Projects includes things like Bible translation, pastoral training, start-up business expenses for missionaries in closed countries, and microfinance projects administered by Great Commission workers. Because we are limited to project grants, we do not fund salaries or ongoing budget items such as maintenance and utilities.
5. **Board of Directors:** Following an application and recommendation process by the project advisory team, the Lightbearers Board of Directors makes a final decision on grant funding.

Once grants have been approved, we inform our partners and set up a timely transaction to wire the funds. We follow up with those partners for updates on the work and, when the opportunity arises, we travel to see the project first-hand.

*Additional Opportunities for Mission Partner Engagement:* While project funding is our primary method of partner support, we also engage in other ways:

- **Prayer Support:** As part of our discipleship community, we encourage our students to pray for our partners. This may occur through the Lightbearers Institute, house time, or missions publications.
- **People Support:** We encourage our students to engage in missions through their local churches, but we also want them to be among the Lightbearers partners. We give regular opportunities for each Lightbearers campus to send short-term teams at our partners' request. We see these trips as valuable discipleship opportunities, and we have three goals for them: 1) advance the long-term work of our mission partners, 2) encourage the long-term workers, and 3) enhance the students' understanding of God's plan for the ends of the earth. Students who travel return often with a greater understanding of the "why" and "how" of missions.
- **Strategy Development:** We often are able to provide strategy development for our national partners and ex-pat partners as they think through best practices, contextualization methods, and developing ministry goals.
- **Resource Development:** We help partners with developing resources like websites and newsletters.
- **Collect and Distribute Stateside Funding:** In rare occasions for our national partners, we enter into an agreement to receive and distribute stateside funding. These funds are collected in a Lightbearers bank account and distributed to the partner monthly.

We pray that in each of these avenues of engagement we can undergird and support the work of the gospel and the church being planted among the nations.