



Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church
Congregational Development Ministry Area
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612-870-0058; congregational.development@minnesotaumc.org

Investing in Congregations Grants

Guidelines, Philosophy, and Criteria

Deadline for 2018 Applications: Oct. 15, 2017

Three Granting Streams

The Investing in Congregations process includes three distinct, but not separate, funding paths.

- Grants of \$2500 or less (not renewable)
- Grants of more than \$2500
- Renewals of previous grants – possible but not guaranteed, and usually for declining amounts (in thirds, for example \$12,000 in year 1, \$8,000 in year 2, \$4,000 in year 3) encouraging self-sufficiency of the ministry.

The guidelines, criteria, and philosophy for all three paths are predominately the same. The applications are specific to the path.

Grant Guidelines

- Grant applications are only accepted from local churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church that demonstrate the potential, capacity and commitment to reach new people, grow in love of God and neighbor and heal a broken world.
- This is a one year grant. With grants larger than \$2,500 the local church may apply for a renewal of their grant for an additional two years, but renewals are not guaranteed.
- The grant must be for a new ministry (not underwriting the operating costs of current ministries or staffing) and the ministry must be focused on the gospel imperatives of reaching new people, growing in love of God and neighbor and healing a broken world.
- A congregation must pay 100% of their apportionment in the year(s) they receive the grant.
- To be considered by the granting team, the grant application must be accompanied by requested documentation, the approval of the pastor and church council of the local church, and the recommendation of the district superintendent, and must be submitted electronically by the deadline.
- Congregations currently involved in the implementation with coaching phase of HCI or MCCI processes can skip application questions marked with an asterisk (*) if the grant relates to a recommendation from the HCI or MCCI report.
- A congregation that receives a grant commits to holding a church conference to accept the grant.
- Those churches receiving more than \$2500 will receive their grant in two installments and must complete a mid-year report. Remaining funds of the grant will be disbursed based on progress reported in the mid-year evaluation report.

Evaluative Criteria of the Granting Team

- The church has a strategic congregational ministry plan and this effort fits into the overall plan.
- The grant is not just the last minute, bright idea of a select few in the congregation, but the concept and implementation has been well thought out and is owned by the leadership of the congregation.
- The congregation and pastor have the leadership capacity and competency to implement this effort.
- The ministry demonstrates creativity, innovation and experimentation appropriate to the context.
- The grant is being used for ministry and/or staffing, not capital expenses. This grant is not intended for pastoral compensation.

For those churches requesting more than \$2500, these additional criteria are applied:

- The congregation has a long term plan and capacity for the funding of this ministry beyond the grant.
- The effort has specific benchmarks to mark progress and clear, measurable outcomes.
- For the renewal of a grant, the congregation has demonstrated measurable results from the previous year of the grant.

Philosophies and Practices of the Granting Team

- The total amount available for Investing in Congregation Grants in a year is \$200,000.
- Past grants have ranged from \$500 to \$37,000.
- Grants for staffing have often been made on a matching basis, asking the congregation to raise funds for this added position, so that there is assurance this position can and will continue beyond the granting year(s).
- A grant application that includes additional staffing is more likely to be considered favorably if there is evidence that the lack of staff has become a barrier to growth rather than the hope that "if we staff it, they will come." Any request for additional staffing should be clearly related to ministry initiatives and priorities.
- These grants are seed money or venture capital rather than a long term subsidy of a ministry.
- Renewals are generally for fewer dollars than the original grant as it is expected the congregation is moving towards financial sustainability with the ministry. (Reduction is typically in thirds, for example \$12,000 in year 1, \$8,000 in year 2, \$4,000 in year 3).
- Preference is given to healthy congregations who are seeking to do new things versus congregations in significant conflict or those who are making a last attempt to avoid closing.
- Congregations that have collaborated with the superintendent in the development of their grant are viewed positively.

If you would like to talk about your application, and receive clarification and/or guidance about any aspect of your application, please feel free to contact Amy Jo Bur, committee chairperson, at pastor@stpaulsmn.org or 651-452-5683.

Steps for Applying for an Investing in Congregations Grant

- 1) Develop the ministry plan within your congregation, including implementation and leadership.
- 2) Discuss your grant plan with your District Superintendent. Their approval is required for all applications and they can coach you for the best outcome.
- 3) Complete the application appropriate to your request: New Grants of \$2500 or less, New Grants over \$2500, New Grants over \$2500 for MCCI/HCI Churches, or Grant Renewal.
- 4) All applications and supporting materials, including your District Superintendent's approval, are due, by 11:50pm, October 15, 2017.
- 5) Applications should be submitted electronically (either PDF or Word document) to Congregational Development (congregational.development@minnesotaumc.org). Confirmation of receipt will be sent via return email.

The granting team may ask to meet with pastors and lay members on **Saturday, December 2, 2017** (in person or electronically). Invitations are made in mid-November; not all grants require interviews. Grant notifications will be sent by December 10.

If a congregation receives a grant but does not undertake the ministry, it is expected to return the funds to the Minnesota Conference so that another congregation and ministry may benefit. If a congregation wishes to redirect the grant money to an effort other than that cited in its application, it must first receive the approval of the Investing in Congregations Grant team.

If you have questions about the process, please contact Gail Johnson, Congregational Development Associate at (612) 870-0058 or congregational.development@minnesotaumc.org.

Please retain this information for your records.