

Guidelines for Application for Ministerial Excellence Fund Grants

The purpose of the Ministerial Excellence Fund (MEF) is to provide assistance to Professional Church Leaders (PCLs) facing financial difficulties that prevent them from focusing on the greater tasks of Kingdom ministry. By removing barriers of financial hardship and need, the path is cleared for pastors to focus on, develop and implement excellence in their personal ministry serving their local churches.

Applications will be reviewed in light of expected outcomes which include:

- Relief of significant financial hardship,
- Provision of personal financial counseling when appropriate,
- Receipt of matching funds, preferably from the PCL's local church,
- Participation in appropriate educational programs and Regional/area/associational events by the PCL,
- Participation in appropriate educational programs, Regional/area/associational events and ministries by the local church,
- Better recruitment and retention of church leadership,
- Strengthening of the local church's financial resources beyond the scope of the grant,
- Strengthened stewardship within the local church,
- Increased financial resources flowing out of the church into ministry and mission,
- Enhancement of the overall ministry of the PCL and local church as a result of participation in the MEF ministry.

PCLs from churches in the American Baptist Churches of Indiana and Kentucky (ABC/IN-KY) and American Baptist Churches of Indianapolis (ABC/GI) may apply for a grant. Assistance will be provided for a variety of needs including, but not limited to:

- Health care costs including medical bills, sudden illness, etc;
- Emergencies and disasters (flooding, fires, etc.);

No grant moneys will be provided for:

- Supplementing retirement or savings accounts of any kind;
- Supplementing local church budgets;
- Providing salary support or benefits (insurance/retirement/etc.);
- Eliminating student loan debt;
- Providing scholarships for educational or continuing education opportunities (college, seminary, CLI, etc.).

The MEF Team may, at its discretion, proactively pursue grant projects that otherwise fall within these guidelines.

Grant recipients may be required to meet with a financial advisor who will provide appropriate assistance in regard to household budgeting, debt reduction, savings, etc. Initial meetings may be required prior to distribution of grant moneys. This counsel will be provided at no cost to grant recipients.

Financial coaching will also be offered to non-applicants whom the MEF Team believes may benefit from counseling. Requests for assistance can be initiated by PCLs, ARMs or other referrals.

Application process:

- The MEF Team will receive all requests and work with PCLs to determine that the request meets with the MEF program guidelines.
- Applications will be due on a quarterly basis on the following dates:
 - March 1,
 - July 1,
 - November 1.
- The MEF Team will bring qualified requests forward to regular meetings.
- The MEF Team will review all requests and award grants within the guidelines of the MEF program.
- NOTE: Any funds provided by recipients' household will not be counted toward the required dollar-for-dollar match.

Application information must include:

- The basic financial need of the PCL's family,
- How the grant will benefit the ministry of the PCL,
- How the PCL's congregation will secure matching funds.

NOTE: Applications from PCLs who are married will be considered as one application. All needs should be identified in a consolidated application.

Evaluation of Grants:

It is our desire to engage in a continuing effort to enhance the MEF ministry for all partners involved. Consequently, it will be important for us to follow-up with grant recipients to evaluate the impact grants have on PCLs, their churches and the Region. Therefore, we will seek to evaluate grants based on expected outcomes noted earlier in these guidelines.

Disbursement procedures:

- Upon successful receipt of matching program funds, the grant will be disbursed according to ABC/IN-KY's standard accounting and accounts payable system.
- All matching funds must be sent to ABC/IN-KY for documentation purposes.
- Grants will be paid directly to third parties on behalf of the pastors, based on the financial need identified in the grant.
- Use of all grant and matching funds must be documented.

To address the income tax obligation incurred by grant recipients, MEF grants will include moneys to pay half of the tax liability. Matching funds will be required for the remaining half.

The Ministerial Excellence Fund Ministry began in January of 2009. In an effort to improve, enhance and expand the ministry, the results and impact of the ministry will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. These Guidelines, therefore, are subject to revision by the MEF Team. Revised Guidelines will be published.

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