

Lilly Grant Initiative: Ministerial Excellence Fund FAQ

~~The Grand Canyon Synod is pleased to announce that it will be sharing in a grant awarded to the Rocky Mountain Synod as part of the Lilly Endowment's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. The Rocky Mountain Synod received a second grant from the Lilly Endowment to continue Equip, Educate, Enact (3E) in January 2020.~~ The grant helps us address some of the challenges we face with rostered ministers feeling isolated, which is made more significant when debt is present. One aspect of Equip, Educate, Enact is the Ministerial Excellence Fund, which encourages financial wellness both in rostered ministers and in congregations. The Ministerial Excellence Fund is comprised of funds from the grant, as well as funds from generous congregations and individuals who recognize the connectedness we share, and that helping the welfare of others only increases our own welfare. Fundraising for the Ministerial Excellence Fund is ongoing.

1. Who may apply for a grant from the Ministerial Excellence Fund?

All rostered ministers and active candidates (all categories) of the ~~Grand Canyon~~ Rocky Mountain Synod will be eligible to apply. For Education Debt Relief Grants specifically, candidates must be in final categories (approved and/or approved & assigned) in order to be eligible to apply.

2. How do I apply?

Inquiries for a Ministerial Excellence Fund grant are available online at <https://www.rmselca.org/lilly-MEF-initial-inquiry>. Once you submit a grant inquiry, you will be contacted by the ~~Program Manager~~ Associate Program Director for the Ministerial Excellence Fund who will overview the application process with you. You will talk about the need and ways to address the financial challenge.

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3. What types of debt qualify for a grant?

The Ministerial Excellence Fund grants are designed to provide assistance with education debt and medical debt. In addition, applications will be considered for emergency needs that present obstacles to ministry. All possible avenues of alternative relief should be investigated and applied for before application is made to the Ministerial Excellence Fund. This includes the use of personal savings and available credit.

4. How much grant support is available to me?

For Education Debt Relief Grants, 10% of the student loan balance (not to exceed \$10,000) can be applied for. For Medical Debt Relief Grants, up to \$2,000 can be applied for. If medical debt exceeds \$2,000, a contribution to the ~~Grand Canyon RMS~~ Synod 3E Program of up to \$1,000 (raised by either the congregation/ministry or a source other than the grant applicant) will be matched by 3E up to \$1,000. The maximum amount of a Medical Debt Relief Grant cannot exceed \$4,000. For Emergency Grants, up to \$1,000 can be applied for if all possible avenues of alternative relief have been investigated and applied for, including the use of personal savings and available credit.

5. What commitment is expected on my part?

Just as the Lilly Endowment offered their grant as seed money so that new life and ways of

serving might grow, so the grant is offered to you as seed money for your life and ministry to grow. You will be expected to schedule a least one appointment with LSS Financial Counseling (as a benefit of Portico Benefit Services). You are expected to report about the impact the grant has made on your wellness as a rostered minister or candidate via annual surveys.

6. What is included with an application?

You will be asked about your household income and debt, as well as personal savings and available credit. Documentation will need to be provided with your grant application to validate the existing debt or emergency expense.

7. Who makes the final decision about grant applications?

All Ministerial Excellence Fund grant applications are reviewed by the [Grand Canyon Synod Fiscal Wellness](#) Grants Board, **composed of 3 rostered ministers and 2 lay leaders**. The Board meets at least quarterly. When your application is received, you will be notified of their next meeting. Within two days after that meeting, you will be notified if your request has been approved. For Emergency Grant applications, Bishop [Deborah Hutterer](#) ~~Jim Gonia~~ will also participate in the review process.

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8. Are there tax implications for receiving Ministerial Excellence Fund grants?

There are possible tax implications when receiving a grant. The rostered minister or candidate is responsible for paying those taxes. Your tax advisor should be consulted.

9. May I apply for a grant again next year?

Yes, applications may be submitted once a year for medical debt and emergency. Education debt is only awarded once to an applicant during the three-year grant period (2020-2022). The [Grand Canyon Synod Fiscal Wellness](#) Grants Board will strive to distribute grants to new applicants as well as consider applications from prior grantees.

10. How long will the Ministerial Excellence Fund grants be available?

The Lilly Endowment grant covers the period from 2020 to 2022. As funds are raised for the [Grand Canyon Synod RMS 3E Program](#), it is our hope that the Ministerial Excellence Fund grants will be continued into the future.

11. Who do I contact for more information about the Ministerial Excellence Fund grants?

You are welcome to contact [Molly Gary](#) ~~Julie Nelson~~, [Program Manager](#) ~~Associate Program Director~~ of the Ministerial Excellence Fund. Her email is marykgary2julienelson@gmail.com, and her phone is [480-737-3802970-324-5100](tel:480-737-3802970-324-5100).

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