

Indiana Yearly Meeting Ministerial Excellence Fund Grants

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Who can I contact for more information about the Ministerial Excellence Fund (MEF) grants?

The best person to contact is Indiana Yearly Meeting (IYM) Ministerial Advocate Matt Hisrich. He can be reached by email at matt@iym.org or by phone at 765-319-3244.

2) Where does the funding for the MEF come from?

IYM applied for and received a generous grant of seed money from the Lilly Endowment to launch the Ministerial Excellence Initiative (MEI) in January of 2009 and allow it to continue for an initial four-year period. In order to receive the funds, the Lilly Endowment asked IYM to match its contribution, which IYM has done through existing sources in the budget and voluntary contributions from individuals and monthly meetings. MEF grants are one component of the overall MEI.

3) I'm a pastor interested in receiving a grant. How do I apply?

Applications for MEF grants are available in IYM Pastor Information Packets and online at <http://www.iym.org/MinExInitiative.htm>. Applications are submitted by monthly meetings, so you will need to talk to Matt or someone from your meeting about next steps.

4) I am not a pastor but I am engaged in ministry – does that qualify?

No. MEF grants are designed to provide financial assistance to those engaged in pastoral work within and employed by established monthly meetings within IYM.

5) What types of things do MEF grants support?

The MEF grants are targeted toward education debt relief, health insurance, and retirement accounts. In addition, applications will be considered for other pressing needs that present obstacles to ministry. So far, other examples that have been approved include: compensation, medical debt, housing, and undergraduate education.

6) How much can a meeting apply for?

MEF grants are dollar-for-dollar matching grants. Monthly meetings apply for a match of whatever new support they offer to their pastor(s) - up to \$2500 per pastor, per year.

7) How long do MEF grants last?

One year.

8) What are the deadlines to apply?

February 1, June 1, and October 1.

9) What does the MEI steering committee expect in terms of ongoing commitment from meetings?

Just as the Lilly Endowment sees their initial investment as seed money for ongoing support assumed by IYM, IYM in turn views the grants it makes through the MEF as seed money for ongoing support to eventually be assumed by the monthly meeting. How exactly the monthly meeting achieves this goal should be outlined in a sustainability plan. For more information on this, please see question 15 below.

10) How can meetings raise their match?

While the MEF grants do require a dollar-for-dollar match, it is not necessary that the new support be “new money.” While meetings certainly can raise new funds through a variety of means, they may also reconfigure existing resources within their budget.

11) What all does a meeting need to include with its application?

In addition to a completed application form, meetings need to submit a budget and balance sheet. If your meeting does not have either of these, please contact Matt about how to begin incorporating these tools into your meeting.

12) Who all has to approve grant applications before they are submitted?

It is important that your meeting understand and support the application it makes for an MEF grant. Applications must be approved by at least one of the following bodies, preferably both – Ministry and Oversight or Monthly Meeting.

13) The application asks for a “Non-pastor MEI Contact Person from the meeting.” Who should that be?

This should be a non-pastor contact person such as a Monthly Meeting, M&O, or stewardship and finance clerk. Anyone that the meeting feels will help carry the vision of the MEI to the meeting and serve well as a point person both within the meeting and for IYM qualifies for this role.

14) Who makes the final decision about grant applications?

All MEF grant applications are reviewed by the MEI steering committee. This is the group that initially developed the grant proposal and is authorized by IYM Ministry and Oversight to oversee its implementation.

15) How soon after applying will my meeting find out whether or not we have been approved?

Generally, the steering committee meets within 1-2 weeks of the application deadline and makes decisions regarding grants at that meeting. Matt may contact you by phone or email shortly thereafter, but the steering committee will issue a formal letter to the meeting with their decision, as well.

16) My meeting received its approval letter today – how soon can we access the grant funds from the MEF?

IYM MEF grants are triggered by the monthly meeting’s submitting its match to IYM. As soon as your meeting has been approved it can send in whatever portion of its match is appropriate and that amount will then be matched and either sent back to the meeting or on to a designated provider or account.

17) Our meeting received a grant and the steering committee requested that we develop a “sustainability plan.” What is that?

Each meeting that applies for an MEF grant is raising support for their pastor to a new level. This new level is made up of two halves – one from the monthly meeting and one from the MEF grant. To avoid a scenario where this new level of support is reduced in the future, it is helpful for meetings to begin a process of determining how they can move toward ultimately covering both halves. For example, a meeting might wish to re-apply for MEF grants for several years in a row, assuming a greater portion of the total increase in compensation in each subsequent year. A meeting could build this into its budget or secure an ongoing source of support outside the budget such as a private donor or annual fundraising event(s). How your meeting will accomplish its goal and on what timeline is the kind of information that forms a sustainability plan. Matt is available to assist your meeting through this process.

18) Are there tax implications for pastors receiving MEF grants?

Yes, although this depends in part on what the meeting seeks funding for – a grant for compensation is treated as taxable earnings for a pastor, for instance, while a grant for health insurance that passes through a meeting would not be.

19) Can our meeting reduce our pastor's compensation and increase what we give to retirement to qualify for an MEF grant?

No – all MEF grants must be for support over and above existing compensation packages.

20) My meeting is in the midst of a pastoral search. How do we know what qualifies as "over and above" when we do not currently have a compensation package?

In this case, the previous pastor's compensation package serves as the baseline for all MEF grants. Meetings that choose to compensate new hires at rates below previous pastors – regardless of qualifications, experience, etc. – are not eligible to apply.

21) Can a meeting re-apply after it receives a grant?

Yes, meetings may apply to renew their existing grant(s) or apply for additional grants after their initial grant cycle is complete.

22) How much longer will the MEF grants be available?

The Lilly Endowment grant covered an initial period that takes the MEI (including its MEF grants) through the end of 2012. IYM has approved a four-year extension of the MEI that takes the Initiative through the end of 2016. Just as the new pastor support in monthly meetings is "over and above" existing support, though, the MEI is "over and above" the IYM budget, and will not be included in monthly meeting program assessments. This means that the existence of the MEI and MEF grant support is dependent on the support of individuals and meetings that value what these mean to the lives of their pastors, their meetings, and IYM as a whole.

The Ministerial Excellence Fund Grants are one component of the overall Ministerial Excellence Initiative. The Ministerial Excellence Initiative includes assistance with financial planning sessions for pastors and meetings, tax trainings for pastors and church treasurers, assistance with meeting mission and vision, the coordination and development of new and existing programming for the yearly meeting, and full-time staff support.

The MEI presents an opportunity to think broadly about how to foster and sustain ministerial excellence and vitality within monthly meetings and the yearly meeting as a whole. With this initiative, IYM seeks to spur conversation among member meetings and provide support to those in need of assistance and interested in exploring paths to greater health and impact.

The transformational work of strengthening ties between monthly meetings and the yearly meeting, strengthening ties between each of our monthly meetings, encouraging proactive leadership, and fostering meaningful mission and vision discussion is an ongoing effort of those who share a vision for renewal and the full release of the ministry potential within IYM.

If you would like to learn more about how the MEI can be of help to your meeting, please contact Ministerial Advocate Matt Hisrich at 765-319-3244 or matt@iym.org.