

Northeastern Iowa Synod Outreach Fund

Purpose

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Outreach Fund exists to empower and support innovative ministry initiatives led by ELCA- affiliated ministries in the NEIA Synod. These initiatives should extend beyond existing organizational boundaries, engage new populations, foster deeper connections between congregations and their broader context, and equip people to live out their faith. The Fund seeks to nurture creative efforts to embody the love of Jesus through collaboration, inclusion, relationship building, faithful service, and forming faith. Funding priority will be given to ideas that are new to the congregation/ministry, and that reach out to people who are not currently connected to that congregation/ministry.

Each year for the next 10 years, the Northeastern Iowa Synod Outreach Fund will award up to \$70,000 to support new ministry efforts.

Grant Eligibility

Grants will be in the amounts of \$10,000, \$5,000, or \$1,000. *Please ensure your request matches the scope and scale of your proposed project.*

The following ministries are eligible to apply:

- Programs and ministries connected to a NEIA Synod congregation
- Programs and ministries connected to a NEIA Synod conference
- Programs and ministries connected to a NEIA Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWCs)
- Camps or campus ministries located within the territory of the Northeastern Iowa Synod
- Collaborative projects are welcome, but one entity needs to serve as the fiscal agent

Ministries may submit one application per project. Grants from the Outreach Fund are non-renewable. We encourage applicants who are planning a multi-year project to apply for the full amount needed upfront and if awarded a grant, allocate the funds throughout the duration of the project.

Grant Timeline

There are three application cycles each year, with key dates listed below. Up to \$25,000 will be awarded during each cycle.

Completed applications should be emailed to grants@NEIASynod.org. Applications submitted after the due date will be considered in the next cycle. Final reports must be submitted using the final report template by the due date listed below.

Cycle	Application Due	Decision Communication	Funding Disbursed	Final Report Due
Spring 2026	March 1, 2026	April 15, 2026	May 1, 2026	July 31, 2027
Summer 2026	July 1, 2026	August 15, 2026	Sept 1, 2026	Oct 31, 2027
Fall 2026	Nov 1, 2026	Dec 15, 2026	Jan 1, 2027	Feb 28, 2028

Types of Funding Available

The Outreach Fund supports a wide range of faith-based projects that align with its mission to empower innovative ministry initiatives. See our ‘Ideas for Qualifying Ministry Experiments’ on page three to spark your imagination!

The following types of funding are available:

- Project support
- Matching funds
- Events/conferences
- Travel (see eligible and ineligible expenses below)
- Capital/equipment expenses (for innovative projects)

The Fund does not support endowments or general operating expenses for congregations or outreach ministries.

Travel expenses are eligible only when the primary purpose is immersive learning, interreligious dialogue, or the exploration of new ministry models for adaptation within the synod. Grants will not cover annual or recurring service trips. If you have questions about the eligibility of your travel expenses, please contact grants@NEASynod.org.

Application Evaluation Process

The Mission Table will serve as the selection committee. At least 4 members of the Mission Table must read and respond to each application during a cycle.

A rubric will guide decision-making, evaluating each application based on alignment with the Synod and Outreach Fund’s mission, feasibility of the proposed project, potential to engage new populations, ability to foster deeper community connections, and commitment to inclusion.

Ideas for Qualifying Ministry Experiments

The Outreach Fund is designed to spark bold, relational, and imaginative ministry efforts. Below are examples of initiatives that may qualify for support — each one rooted in the spirit of outreach, connection, and innovation. **This is not an exhaustive list! We welcome and encourage other creative ideas that align with the Outreach Fund's purpose of engaging new populations and strengthening relationships between congregations and their communities.**

\$1,000

- Supplies to start a community garden for a food pantry
- Language classes (e.g., Spanish) or other skill-building courses to help create deeper connections with community members
- Stipends for facilitators who offer cross cultural learning experiences (e.g, exploring Jewish perspectives on scripture, learning to cook a Somali meal, or engaging with Indigenous spiritual practices)
- Supplies and food for a community block party
- Tuition or fees for training someone to serve as a [chaplain for first responders](#)
- Costs associated with taking a group through a [FaithLead](#) course like *Starting a Fresh Expression of Church*
- Costs associated with starting a [Rejoicing Spirits worship service](#)
- Supplies and training for starting a [Wild Church](#)

\$5,000

- Costs for a feeding ministry where congregation members prepare meals using food from local sources
- A weekend-long Faith Festival with Friday night meal and keynote speaker, discipleship workshops on Saturday for all ages, service-learning project, and a community outreach meal
- Curriculum and supplies to hold a multi-congregation relational skills training course like [Peer Ministry](#)
- Supplies for a warming shelter in winter and cooling shelter in summer

\$10,000

- Participation in a program like [The LEAD Journey](#) that equips congregations for adaptive leadership.
- A group of congregations creating an online community to connect with new people and those who are unable to attend in-person worship.
- Training expenses or cultural immersion trips to visit unique ministries that inspire innovation and new approaches to ministry

Northeastern Iowa Synod Outreach Fund Grant Application

Completed applications should be emailed to grants@NEIASynod.org

Contact Information

Name of congregation or organization Street address

City

State

Zip code

Website

Contact name

Contact title

Contact phone number

Contact email address

Organization mission

Project and Funding Request Information General Information

Project name

Size of grant requested (choose one)

- \$1,000
- \$5,000
- \$10,000

Provide a 3-5 sentence summary of the project.

Definition of Need and Alignment with Outreach Fund

How does this project align with the purpose and goals of the Outreach Fund, to extend beyond existing organizational boundaries, engage new populations, foster deeper connections between congregations and their broader context, and equip people to live out their faith? (2-4 paragraphs)

What is the expressed need for this project in your community? (1-3 paragraphs)

What inspired you to try this project? Is this something that has been tried in your area before? (1-3 paragraphs)

Project Description

List 1-3 goals for your project using the SMART framework.

SMART is an acronym for Specific; Measurable; Attainable; Relevant; and Timebound. This framework is designed to set clear and attainable goals that can be effectively measured and achieved within a set timeframe. Though each SMART goal should tie into your project's need statement and activities, their main purpose is to describe the results of your project – not the methods used to achieve them.

Example project: Our congregation will establish a weekly feeding ministry where congregation members will prepare meals from food sourced from local farmers or other suppliers.

Goals:

1. *Each week, at least 10 volunteers will prepare and serve 40 meals to individuals in our community.*
2. *We will form partnerships with at least four local farmers or suppliers to source food for the project.*

What activities will you carry out to achieve these goals? (1-3 paragraphs)

How do you plan to track your progress towards achieving your goals? (1-3 paragraphs)

Describe the population and communities you plan to serve. (1-3 paragraphs)

Describe the intended impact of your project, especially how your project will foster deeper community connections and/or have positive impacts on inclusion. (1-3 paragraphs)

What is the project's timeline for implementation? (1-3 paragraphs)

Who will carry out this project? Please list staff, volunteers, and outside partners and their roles in the project. (1-3 paragraphs)

Budget

How do you plan to use grant funds? Please attach a spreadsheet of the budget or list the proposed budget items and amounts. Example: For our community garden, we will spend \$300 on site preparation and fencing, \$300 on soil, \$200 on tools and equipment, \$150 on seeds, and \$50 on other supplies.

Additional information (optional)

Add additional information, if necessary, to clarify any answer you provided above.