**Grantmaking Process Frequently Asked Questions**

2024 Cycle

**What is the purpose of ECS-NJ’s grants program?**

Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey (ECS-NJ) supports congregations as they proactively address human needs and relentlessly work against both social and racial injustice. ECS-NJ invites us to walk with Christ together and make a positive impact on our communities.

Our grants will fund a new initiative or the expansion of existing outreach. If the grant is for an existing ministry, it is expected that grant funds will be used to expand the ministry in a significant way. The project should address*at least two* of the following objectives:

● To meet human need in underserved and marginalized communities, especially communities of color

● To encourage advocacy for issues relating to social justice, including spearheading new advocacy efforts, particularly those affecting underserved or marginalized communities

● To engage, collaborate and partner with other organizations, including faith-based, secular, community, and governmental agencies.

**What are the big changes in ECS-NJ’s grant~~s~~ process starting in the 2024 cycle?**

Moving forward ECS-NJ will offer grants only once per year. The application process will have several steps, starting with a required Letter of Intent due in late April, followed by a conversation and consultation about the proposed program with ECS-NJ staff, volunteers, and Advisory Council members between May and August.

In addition, the time frame for ECS-NJ grants can be expanded from one to two years with support available for both years. These changes are designed to help launch and sustain strong programs.

**With only one grant cycle starting in 2024, what are the new timelines for the application submittal process?**

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| Timeline | Grant Submittal Process |
| March 18, 2024 | Grant information session  |
| April 1-30, 2024 | **Submit required Letter of Intent** |
| May 1-Aug. 15, 2024 | Consultation Period |
| September 6, 2024 | **Grant Application Deadline** |
| October 2024 | Grant Awards Announced |
| November 2024 | Memoranda of Understanding Due |
| December 2024 | First grant payment issued |
| March 2025 | Check-Ins (In-Person or Video Conference) |
| June 15, 2025 | Written report due; Grant payments issued (after review as appropriate) |
| September 2025 | Check-Ins (In-Person or Video Conference) |
| December 15, 2025 | Written report due; Grant payments issued (after review as appropriate) |

*Table 1: Grant Application Submittal Process*

**Our church has been awarded an ECS-NJ grant in the past, when are we eligible to apply for another?**

Congregations that have been awarded previous grant(s) from ECS-NJ are eligible to apply afterthe previous grant is closed and the final report has been accepted by ECS-NJ. In addition, congregations are not eligible to receive more than two ECS-NJ grants in a five-year period.

If a church has received and closed two previous ECS-NJ grants, it is eligible to apply five (5) years after the closure of the first grant. For example:

* St Swithins in the Swamp received a grant in October 2021 and closed this grant in November of 2022 by sending in a final report that was reviewed and accepted by ECS-NJ. St Swithins was awarded a second grant for a different ministry in April of 2022 and closed that grant successfully in August of 2023. They cannot apply for another ECS-NJ grant until 5 years after the closure of the first grant (that is, five years after November 2022, so the cycle that opens after November of 2027).

**Is the Letter of Intent required and what should we include in it?**

Yes. The purpose of the Letter of Intent is for ECS-NJ to have an idea of the number and types of projects that may be submitted. The Letter of Intent should include a brief program description, contact information for the program team, and describe how the program addresses at least 2 of the three objectives of the ECS-NJ grants program (see page 1 of this document). Please make sure you also tell us 1) how members of your congregation will be involved throughout the project, 2) how this project will deepen your community connections, and 3) that you read the guidelines for ECS-NJ grants. The Letter of Intent does not commit the church to submitting an application, but it allows the ECS-NJ staff and volunteers the opportunity to meet with the church’s leadership either in person or via video or conference call to discuss the potential project.

**Is a consultation with someone from ECS-NJ required? What happens during the consultation period?**

Consultation is not required but highly recommended. The staff and volunteers of ECS-NJ will be able to offer advice and direction on a potential application, which would serve to strengthen the application. The time between application submittal and application review will be limited, therefore taking advantage of the consultation period to hear suggestions and provide clarifications will be helpful.

**If I have a great idea over the summer for a new program or ministry, can I apply for an ECS-NJ grant this fall?**

No, unfortunately you will not be able to apply in this cycle. This new grant process is designed to support projects through an extensive development period. However, we encourage anyone interested in a new ministry to speak to ECS-NJ staff at any time and arrange a consultation.

**Can we apply in Spanish or Haitian Creole?**

Yes, you can! While the Formstack form is in English, a copy of the application questions is available in other languages. Applications will be translated into English for review. The application in Formstack is here: <https://dioceseofnj.formstack.com/forms/ecs_grant_application_spring_2024>

**What kind of expenses are eligible for funding?**

Operating expenditures that support the direct provision of services are permitted, as are capital and staff expenses. Requests for funding for capital expenses must be closely tied to program goals and implementation to be considered.

Requests to cover staff compensation must also be closely tied to program goals and implementation. If a project budget includes this line item, the application should describe how hiring of professional staff is necessary for success of the project as well as the qualifications of the staff. Staff compensation is not expected to make up the majority of a typical budget. When it does, any special circumstances should be described.

**Am I eligible to receive money for the same project two years in a row?**

Yes, additional funding at a reduced rate will be available in Year 2 of the grant. This second year of funding provides an opportunity for churches to develop internal and external funding streams for longer-term sustainability of the program.

**How does multi-year funding work?**

Applicants will be eligible for up to two years of funding for new grants. In Year One, funding will range between $7,000 - $15,000 and $5,000 - $10,000 for Year 2. However, to qualify for the second year of funding, applicants should provide cost estimates and supporting documentation to justify the additional need and show financial support besides the ECS-NJ grant. The Budget Template should be helpful here.

**What do the ECS-NJ Guidelines mean by congregational support?**

It is important to the sustainability of any church-based ministry that there is involvement by many members of the congregation. We are looking to see how this project is expressing and deepening the faith of the congregation. In addition projects that partner with other local organizations are encouraged.

**What is meant by sustainability and external support?**

The purpose of the ECS-NJ’s grant program is to assist congregations in starting a new ministry or expanding an existing ministry. It is critical that the application outlines a plan highlighting how the ministry will be sustained beyond the ECS-NJ grant term.

Applicants should think and include possible alternative financial support whether through the church, individuals, foundations, businesses or by collaborating with other organizations to create a stronger and more viable program. Applicants need to have given thought to project sustainability and be able to discuss it during the consultation.

**Our Church had a successful ministry before the Covid pandemic which caused us to discontinue the ministry. Can we apply for funding to re-start the same ministry?**

Yes. Ministries that were suspended during Covid that are seeking to re-open will be eligible for funding in the 2024 Grant Cycle.

**If I need further clarification, who should I contact?**

First, check the grant guidelines. In the case of any discrepancy between this document and the guidelines, the guidelines are the final word. If you still have questions please reach out to grants@ecs-nj.org.