**Northwest District**

**Next Steps Ministry Grants**

**Equipping churches to transform their communities** is the mission statement of Northwest District. To fulfill our mission and help local churches, your District Advisory Board (DAB) is offering a continuing initiative called **Next Steps.**

The district would like to make finances available through multiple ministry grants to help churches who are experiencing fruitful ministry to continue the momentum in their kingdom work. The grant is intended to come alongside churches that have been strong and faithful participants in the District’s mission through various means of support.

Here was the roll out for past years:

* 2015-2016—$50,000 was designated and $42,000 given
* 2016-2017—$75,000 was designated and $53,830 given
* 2017-2018—$100,000 was designated and $94,500 given
* 2018-2019—$75,000 was designated and $49,910 given
* 2019-2020—$75,000 was designated and $77,799 given

The district plans to designate $75,000 for 2020-2021.

**Next Steps** invites pastors and laity to prayerfully listen to the voice of God. Then boards or teams need to engage in thoughtful conversations about where they believe God is calling them to go. Your DAB invites you into imaginative kingdom thinking as you seek, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to extend the gospel impact where you serve.

* Is there a new ministry that could open doors for you to be more effective in your local community?
* Do you have a vision for strengthening or expanding a current ministry with a desire to expand your kingdom impact?
* Is there a key step you would like to take in moving your local mission forward?
* Is God encouraging you to start a new work in your community or a neighboring one?
* Might you join hands with another church for kingdom impact in your area?
* Is there something God has laid on your heart and you need help to step up and set out on a new adventure?

Here is how it will work.

1. **Where you begin**—You start with prayer, seeking the direction of the Spirit and dreaming about what God might have in store for an expanding vision. As together you discern the leading of the Spirit, you may want to make a proposal for a Next Steps Grant.
2. **Proposal Letter­**—When the pastor and board come together with clarity of direction, then the questions raised in the **Proposal Letter** (see below) need to be answered. The questions listed below will guide you.
3. **Next Steps Grant Team**—The DAB will appoint a team of pastors and laity to review and make recommendations. Their role is to listen carefully to the proposal, offer helpful insights that might enhance it, and discern the viability and strength of what is being considered. Priority will be given to those who have shown their strength of stewardship by consistently paying their budgets.
4. **Final determination**—The DAB or a group they designate will make the final awarding. Total district awards will be up to but not exceeding the annual amount set aside for this grant program.
5. **Ongoing accountability**—The DAB or a group they designate will request periodic ministry initiative updates, including financial reports.
6. **Telling the story**—The district will make available, as possible, media and technical support for recording and sharing the success of the ministry initiative with our district family.
7. **Significant dates**—Knowing there are two strategic calendar times to launch new initiatives—September and January—we are setting up our calendar with this in mind.
   1. **Year Six (2020-2021)**
      * The date when the **Proposal Letter** must be submitted to office@nwdistrict.org is July 30, 2020.
      * The Next Steps Grant Team of pastors and lay leaders will review the letters and respond to the requests by August 30, 2020.
      * With a desire to help broadly, finalists will be chosen and invited to meet with the Next Steps Grant Team in August.
      * Grants will be awarded in October 2020.

**Proposal Letter guidance**

**for Next Steps Grant application**

We are inviting local churches seeking a ministry grant from Northwest District to provide a Proposal Letter. The intent is to help you with missional ministry initiatives in your local church and/or community. To aid you in your planning we have prepared scoring criteria that will be used to designate projects for funding. To help you prepare, consider and answer the following:

1. **(10 points) Your dream:** Give us a description of the ministry dream which, with additional resources, you believe can become reality.
2. **(25 points) Your plan:** Please describe in detail how you see this ministry initiative making a difference in your church or community. The following questions are provided as a guide in describing your plan.
   * Does your project have some history of development?
   * Is this a new initiative or the strengthening of a current ministry?
   * What is the outcome you are seeking?
   * What specific steps will you take to achieve the outcome?
   * Who will benefit?
   * What is your timeline for reaching the outcome?
   * How long do you envision the initiative to continue?
   * Who will oversee it?
   * What is your plan to manage the initiative?
3. **(10 points) Your local involvement:** Tell us how your local congregation will support this initiative.
   * Is there opportunity for spiritual impact within the local congregation? How will those from your congregation be strengthened as they participate in this ministry initiative?
   * How many people will be needed to start, run, and sustain the initiative?
   * What facilities will be necessary and are they adequate?
   * Do you have local buy-in from your board and congregation for this ministry plan? If not, how will you achieve it?
4. **(10 points)** **Forward momentum in your church and community:** Tell us some history of both.
   * How would you describe the trajectory of your church across the past three years?
   * Do you see yourself as a fruitful and healthy congregation?
   * Have you been faithfully engaged in Northwest District connectional covenant to support the wider mission of the church through paying budgets?
   * What is the health of your community and what trends are you seeing that might give direction to your ministry initiative?
5. **(10 points)** **Relationship building and evangelism:** How will you focus on building authentic relationships with those your project will serve?
   * Who will you seek to serve with your project? Which group or groups will benefit from the services you design?
   * What steps will you take to become acquainted with those you serve, to know their needs and listen to their perspectives?
   * How will you acquaint yourselves with their experience and seek to meet them in the context of their lives?
   * How will you embed the message of the Gospel in your communication with them?
   * If your project focuses on services to children in your community, do you have plans to occasionally connect with these children’s families as well?
   * How will you foster an ongoing relational connection to those you serve whether or not they engage in the regularly scheduled activities of your local church?
6. **(10 points) Budget capacity and sustainability:** As you think of implementing your initiative, you will need to think through the cost.
   * What is the breakdown of the total cost as you currently see it?
   * Will you need the money up front, monthly, quarterly or on some other schedule?
   * How will local funds and resources combine with Next Steps grant funds to support the project?
   * How will you sustain your project into the future when grant funds have been expended?

**Projects requesting multiple year funding:**

Churches may apply for one, two, or three years of funding based on project scope and need. The following assumptions are made regarding funding for years two and three:

* The amount requested will be less than the previous year’s request.
* Funding for years two and three will be contingent upon substantially meeting the project objectives from the previous year.

**Continued funding for more than three years:**

In general, projects will be limited to three years for the same project in the same church. However, if all funds are not expended in a year, the Next Steps Grant Team may consider requests for additional funding in years four and following. When considered, such requests will be given a lower priority than new applications or requests for years two and three of a previously funded project.

1. **Additional Criteria:** Your proposal will be strengthened by including the following discretionary components as well.
   * **(10 points) Missional commitment to community:** How will your project address the needs of those in your community and engage with those both inside and outside your church?
   * **(5 points)** **An emphasis on non-traditional ministry:** A focus on service to those who are not currently active in a church or on services other than those your congregation typically provides in the church or at regular congregational events.

**Special consideration for the design of compassionate ministry projects:**

The Next Steps Grant Team may require participation in specific training regarding compassionate ministry models for projects designed to provide a no cost/low cost service or goods to low income community members. The purpose of the training will be to minimize developing dependence among those receiving the service and to enhance the leadership and voice of participants in the design of the ministry.

* + **(5 points) Clear outcomes:** A description of how these will be measured and analyzed.
  + **(5 points)** **New proposals:** We encourage churches that have never received a Next Steps Grant to apply.

1. The Next Steps Grant Team will thoughtfully and prayerfully consider all applications. There are a possible 100 points to be awarded to each application. The team will prioritize funding as indicated by the criteria described. Finalists will be invited to meet with the team to further describe the project. Final grants will be awarded based on the quality of the project and the way it addresses the above criteria.