

West Virginia Fund Source Document

Program Purpose

The West Virginia Fund consists of funds from the estates of Annie Gebhardt and Frances Littlepage Irwin that were given to the Board of Pensions for the purpose of ministerial relief in the State of West Virginia, and explicitly in the presbyteries of West Virginia, Shenandoah, and Upper Ohio Valley.

Parameters

Eligible persons for the West Virginia Fund may be active or retired Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Ministers, their dependents, spouses, surviving spouses, who have served for a number of years in the presbyteries of West Virginia. Commissioned ruling elders and commissioned pastors (hereafter referred to as CRE's) serving in pastoral positions and their dependents, spouses, surviving spouses, who have served for a number of years in the presbyteries of West Virginia, may also be eligible.

Unless otherwise stipulated, "all eligible persons" will refer to the aforementioned group.

The three presbyteries have agreed to access to available funds as follows:

- Presbytery of West Virginia: 70%
- Presbytery of Shenandoah: 15%
- Presbytery of Upper Ohio Valley: 15%

Designated presbyteries will initiate requests for from the Board of Pensions for Eligible Persons using a Short Form supplied by the Board of Pensions.

Grants may be requested for, but are not limited to, the following (described more fully below):

- Emergency Assistance Grants
- Educational debt
- Education costs
- Moving expenses
- Medicare supplement for surviving spouse
- Technology
- Community building efforts
- Counseling

Policies and Potential Uses

Emergency Assistance Grants

As with all grants under the Assistance Program, these grants are to be used to benefit all eligible persons. These grants will be shared equally between the presbytery and the Board of Pensions when the grant request meets the parameters of the current Emergency Assistance Grant program. The presbytery's portion will come from the West Virginia Fund.

In the case of ministers or CREs not enrolled in medical or pension of the Benefits Plan, or retired and not receiving a pension from the Board of Pensions, or where the grant does not otherwise meet the parameters of the Emergency Assistance Grant program, grants will be fully funded from the West Virginia Fund.

The presbytery is expected to retain adequate records suitable for an audit for a period of three years following the award of the grant.

Other Potential Uses

Other grants, like those suggested below, may be recommended by the presbyteries using the short form for Emergency Assistance grants. When such recommendations do not comply with policies of the Emergency Assistance Program, approved grants will be funded fully from the West Virginia Fund. The Board will consider such unshared uses of the fund if the funds are for the support of ministerial relief and the residency requirements are met.

Educational Debt

The Board of Pensions offers the Minister Education Debt Assistance program for ministers, CREs, and seminarians under the care of eligible presbyteries who meet eligibility requirements. The presbyteries may complement the Minister Education Debt Assistance program with grants from the West Virginia fund.

Education

For ministers, this program is for continuing education beyond the Master of Divinity.

An annual grant of up to \$2,000 per family can be used for education leading to certificates, diplomas, etc. approved by the presbytery for spouses and dependents. Each individual in a clergy couple is eligible for up to \$2,000 per year.

Where applicable, applicants may apply for additional funds through the Board's Transition to College Assistance program.

The presbytery leadership must initially approve the course of study and conduct an annual evaluation of progress to ensure that it meets presbytery's expectations.

The pursuit of the certification or degree shall not exceed five years. The eligibility may be extended one additional year upon review and approval by presbytery.

The grant may be used for the cost of registration, tuition, books, and materials. It may not be used for costs associated with housing or transportation.

The minister may not receive a grant for continuing education and educational debt assistance in the same calendar year. This limitation does not apply to grants for spouses and dependents.

Initial Moving Expenses

A grant of up to \$1,000 to assist with the costs of relocation, over and above the employer's customary reimbursement for moving household goods and travel.

Medicare Supplement for Surviving Spouse

The Board of Pensions offers income and housing supplements for qualified pensioners and their surviving spouses. The presbytery may facilitate an application to these assistance programs.

At its discretion, the presbytery may apply for a grant toward the cost of the Medicare Supplement obtained through the Board of Pensions for a surviving spouse for amounts and periods of time it designates.

Technology Program

Grants, limited to \$1,500, help provide technological support, including cell phones and computers, to eligible persons and other church workers.

Community Building

Grants of up to \$2,000 will be given to eligible persons (ministers, commissioned ruling elders, their spouses, surviving spouses) participating in presbytery-sponsored community building activities such as:

- An annual or semi-annual retreat planned by one or more of the presbyteries.
- An annual event for ministers and their spouses.
- A gathering of persons by areas of presbytery.
- The grants will include the costs of housing, meals, person care, group meeting space, leaders, and automobile reimbursement at the current federal government rate.
- The presbytery may apply for a block grant attaching a list of eligible persons participating.

Counseling, Coaching, and Vocational Assessment

The presbytery must request this counseling for ministers, CREs, and seminarians. The counselor or coach shall be approved and recommended by the presbytery. The grant is for direct expenses to the counselor, therapist, or coach and shall not exceed \$100 an hour.

The grant is for up to ten counseling sessions. The presbytery may recommend renewal of the grant for up to ten additional counseling sessions.

If the nearest counselor or therapist is more than 40 miles from the place of residence, the grant may include the automobile reimbursement at the current federal rate plus \$25.00 for cost of meal for each session.