



Lead Forward

Building Stronger Leaders. Empowering Stronger Churches

An Initiative of the Midwest Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church

Technology Equipment Matching Grant

A Lead Forward Program of the Midwest Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church | Funding provided by Lilly Endowment Inc.

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Program Summary

Technology plays a vital role in how the church proclaims the Gospel, nurtures Christian community, and forms disciples in today's world. It is no longer a secondary or optional tool — it has become an essential means through which we communicate, connect, and care for people with consistency and excellence.

The Challenge

For many congregations, technology needs are pressing and varied. Sound systems are aging and difficult to hear clearly. Livestream setups are unreliable or nonexistent. Computers used for administration are outdated. When these systems are insufficient, worship becomes harder to follow, guests encounter unnecessary barriers, and the church's ability to connect beyond the building is limited.

What This Grant Is

The Technology Equipment Matching Grant provides direct funding support to help Indiana congregations upgrade the technology they use for worship, ministry, and administration. This could include replacing an aging sound system or adding wireless microphones so every voice is heard clearly, purchasing a camera and lighting setup to launch or improve a livestream, upgrading a computer used for church administration, or acquiring the accessories needed to make an existing setup actually work — such as cables, capture cards, or audio interfaces. The grant is structured as a dollar-for-dollar match: your congregation contributes toward the equipment you need, and the district matches that contribution up to the tier maximum. It is practical, focused, and designed to produce a real, noticeable improvement in how your church communicates, gathers, and extends its ministry reach.

The Commitment

The Midwest Episcopal District remains committed to building stronger leaders and empowering stronger churches — and that includes equipping congregations with the practical tools needed to thrive in a changing ministry environment.

This grant is structured as a matching program so that every church receiving support is also investing in its own capacity for growth and sustainability. When a congregation contributes toward its technology needs and the district matches that commitment, we expand impact and reinforce good stewardship.

- ❏ All funded projects must be completed and all post-award documentation submitted to the district no later than January 15, 2027. This grant is offered on an annual cycle; prior recipients may reapply, though repeat awards may be limited to ensure broad access across Indiana congregations.

Eligibility & Key Dates

Who Can Apply

Any A.M.E. Zion congregation located in the state of Indiana is eligible to apply. Eligibility is determined by the congregation's physical location in Indiana, regardless of which annual conference the church is affiliated with.

Matching Funds Commitment

- Dollar-for-dollar match equal to the amount requested from the district
- Minimum church contribution: **\$250**
- Applications requesting a district match of less than \$250 will not be considered
- Matching funds must be confirmed and available within **30 days** of the award announcement
- Funds must be released to the district within **14 days** of that confirmation
- Written confirmation from the church's Trustee Board is required

Documentation Agreement

Award recipients must agree to provide basic post-award documentation and grant permission for the district to use submitted photos and project information for program communications and reporting to the grantor.

Key Dates

April 1, 2026

Applications
Open

**October 17,
2026**

Awards
Announced —
Midwest
Refresh
Conference

**January 15,
2027**

All
Documentation
Due

**August 1,
2026**

Applications
Due

**December
17, 2026**

Equipment
Purchase
Deadline (60
days after
award)

Grant Tiers

The Technology Equipment Matching Grant is offered in two tiers to expand access for as many congregations as possible while also providing targeted support for churches with greater technology needs. Each year, the district expects to award **up to nine grants** across Indiana — typically up to eight Tier 1 awards and up to one Tier 2 award.

Tier 1

Matching Grant up to \$1,000

Designed as the primary pathway for most applicants. Appropriate for churches addressing a single, focused technology need — such as improving audio clarity, upgrading a camera, or replacing an outdated computer.

- Church invests \$1,000 → District matches \$1,000 → **\$2,000 total**
- Church invests \$750 → District matches \$750 → **\$1,500 total**
- Minimum church investment: **\$250**

Tier 2

Matching Grant up to \$2,500

Reserved for proposals that require a larger investment to address a clearly demonstrated gap, where multiple components must work together to achieve a meaningful improvement in ministry effectiveness.

- Church invests \$2,500 → District matches \$2,500 → **\$5,000 total**
- Church invests \$1,500 → District matches \$1,500 → **\$3,000 total**
- Minimum church investment: **\$250**

❏ In both tiers, the district match will not exceed the tier maximum, and the church's match must equal the amount requested from the district. If a Tier 2 award is not granted in a given year, those funds may be reallocated to support additional Tier 1 awards.

\$20K

Total Available

In Episcopal District matching funds for the 2026 grant cycle

9

Max Awards

Up to nine grants awarded across Indiana congregations

\$5K

Max Total

Maximum combined church + district investment per Tier 2 project

\$2K

Max Total

Maximum combined church + district investment per Tier 1 project

Program Design: What to Consider When Applying

For the 2026 grant cycle, up to \$20,000 in Episcopal District matching funds is available to support Indiana congregations. The strongest proposals follow these seven principles:

1 Start with the Ministry Need

Describe the ministry challenge you are trying to solve — unclear audio, inconsistent livestream quality, limited communication capacity, or inadequate administrative tools. Connect the technology request to a specific ministry outcome.

2 Focus on Foundational Improvements

Priority is given to equipment that strengthens the basics and provides immediate, reliable improvement — microphones, sound support, cameras, lighting, computers, and essential accessories. Avoid overly complex setups that cannot be sustained locally.

3 Build a Complete, Sustainable Plan

Strong proposals include an equipment list that works together as a system and reflects wise stewardship over time. Ensure your budget includes what is truly needed for the equipment to function well.

4 Be Clear About Matching Funds

Apply with a realistic plan to provide your match within the required time period. Identify the source of matching funds and confirm that Trustee Board leadership is prepared to authorize and release those funds if selected.

5 Name Measurable Outcomes

Identify two to four outcomes you expect to see within 90 days of installation. Examples: average weekly online viewers increasing, percentage of services successfully livestreamed, or reduction in sound complaints.

6 Describe Your Sustainability Plan

Briefly describe who will be responsible for the equipment going forward, how basic upkeep will be covered, and whether the Tech Lead will remain in the role for at least one year after the grant.

7 Prepare to Document Installation

Award recipients will be expected to confirm delivery, provide basic installation documentation, and share a short impact update. Plan to take photos, track basic outcomes, and share what improved.

Ineligible Expenses

The following expenses are **not eligible** for funding through the Technology Equipment Matching Grant. If you are unsure whether an item is eligible, contact the program team before applying. Equipment substitutions after award must be approved by the district before purchase.

→ Subscriptions & Software

Subscriptions, software licenses, or ongoing monthly service fees of any kind

→ Repairs & Maintenance

Repairs or maintenance of existing equipment already owned by the church

→ Personal Use Equipment

Equipment intended for personal use by any individual rather than ministry use

→ Large Display Screens

Large display screens or projection systems installed in the sanctuary (consult the district if you have a specific need)

→ Personal Communication Devices

Computers or devices primarily used for personal communication rather than ministry administration

→ Indirect Costs

Indirect costs or administrative overhead not directly tied to equipment

→ Unapproved Expenses

Any expense not directly connected to the approved equipment plan submitted with the application

Questions? Contact the program team before applying at specialprojects@jwamezsouthfield.org to confirm eligibility of any item.

Proposal Guidelines & Application Requirements

Application Format: The main application narrative, excluding appendices, should not exceed six pages. All submissions must use a minimum 12-point font, one-inch margins, and be paginated. Appendices do not count toward the page limit.

Required Submission Components

01

Application Form

Church contact information: congregation name, mailing address, pastor name and contact, primary contact, identified Tech Lead, and Finance Lead

02

Tier Selection & Funding Request

Indicate Tier 1 or Tier 2 and the amount requested; district match and church match must be equal and no less than \$250

03

Ministry Need Statement

150 to 300 words describing the technology challenge, how it impacts ministry, and why addressing it matters now

04

Equipment Plan & Use Plan

What will be purchased, who will manage it, how it will be used, and what will improve within 30 to 90 days

05

Measurable Outcomes

Two to four specific, trackable outcomes expected within 90 days of installation

06

Sustainability Plan

Who will manage the equipment long-term and how upkeep will be covered

Required Appendices

Appendix A

Church Profile (1 page max): year established, address, average Sunday attendance, annual operating budget, paid staff count, pastor tenure

Appendix B

Key Personnel Biographies: Tech Lead and Finance Lead (150 words each, describing qualifications)

Appendix C

Organizational Chart: key leadership with names and roles (one page)

Appendix D

Pricing Documentation: vendor quotes or screenshots for all requested items

Appendix E

Current State Photos: one to three photos of existing audio, video, or tech setup

Additional Required Documents

01

Itemized Budget

Item name, quantity, unit cost, total cost, and how costs are split between church and district

02

Pricing Documentation

Vendor quote or screenshots showing current pricing for all requested items

03

Match Funding Plan

Source of the church's matching funds and the expected date the match will be available

04

Trustee Board Authorization

A signed letter or resolution from the church's Trustee Board confirming matching funds have been authorized

05

Current State Snapshot

One to three photos showing the current audio, video, or tech setup

06

Program Expectations Agreement

Signed agreement to all post-award documentation and communications requirements

Sample Budgets

The following sample budgets illustrate how funds may be allocated under each tier. Adjust items to fit your actual church and district split.

Tier 1 Sample Budget

Church purpose: Improve livestream audio and clarity for worship

Item	Qty	Cost
Wireless handheld microphone	2	\$600
Basic audio interface	1	\$180
Tripod for camera or phone	1	\$90
LED light kit — two-light set	1	\$150
Cables and adapters	3	\$240
Tech Training	1	\$540
Livestream software/encoder accessory	1	\$200
Total		\$2,000

Church

\$1,000

District

\$1,000

Total

\$2,000

Tier 2 Sample Budget

Church purpose: Establish a reliable camera and audio chain for hybrid worship

Item	Qty	Cost
Camera — mid-level	3	\$2,700
Heavy-duty tripod	3	\$450
Capture card or streaming encoder	2	\$400
Wireless lavalier mic set	1	\$350
LED lighting kit	1	\$200
Tech Training	1	\$700
Cables, adapters, mounting supplies	1	\$200
Total		\$5,000

Church

\$2,500

District

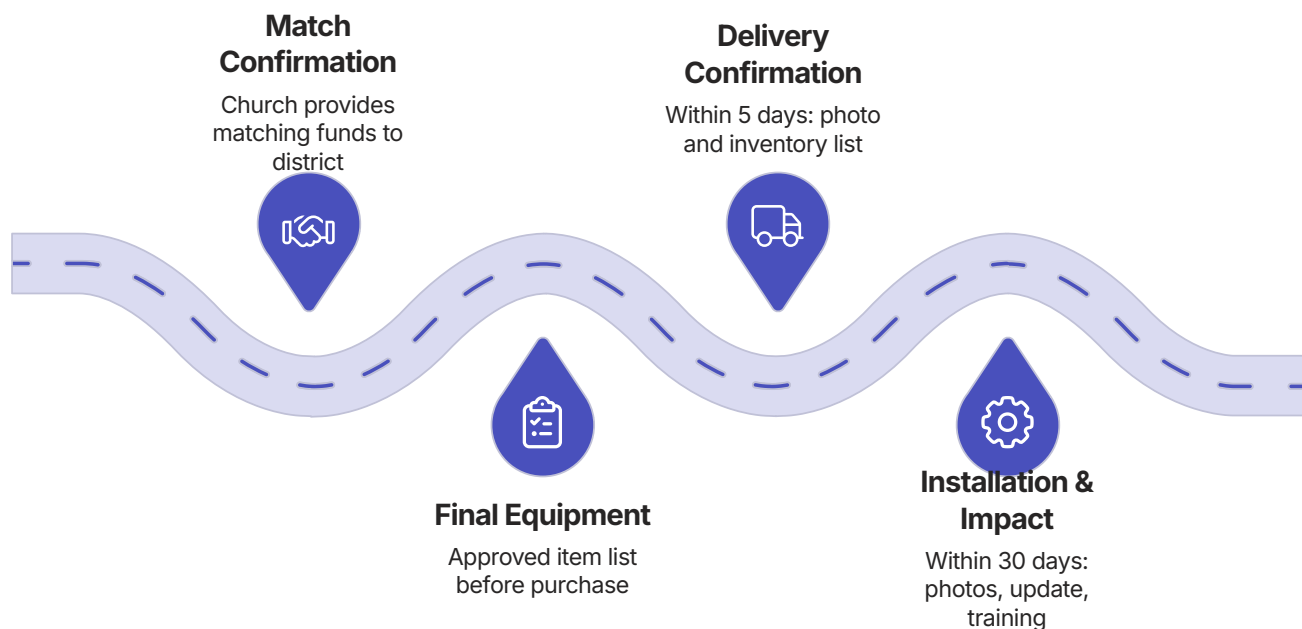
\$2,500

Total

\$5,000

Post-Award Documentation Requirements

To keep the program accountable and to help tell the story of impact, award recipients must submit the following documentation. All documentation is due no later than January 15, 2027.



Each step in the post-award process ensures accountability, celebrates impact, and supports the district's reporting to Lilly Endowment Inc. Timely documentation also protects your congregation's eligibility for future grant cycles.

Match Confirmation

Confirmation that the church has provided its matching funds to the district as agreed upon in the award letter.

Final Equipment Confirmation

Written confirmation of the final approved item list prior to purchase, including approval of any substitutions from the original proposal.

Delivery Confirmation

Within 5 days of delivery: Photo of delivered items and a quick inventory list confirming all items were received.

Installation & Impact Update

Within 30 days of delivery: Two photos showing equipment installed or in use, a brief five-sentence update describing what has improved, and confirmation of participation in the basic tech training or support session.

Frequently Asked Questions & Contact

Common Questions

What does "matching" mean?

The church and the district contribute the same amount toward the approved equipment plan, dollar for dollar, up to the tier maximum.

Do we need Trustee Board approval?

Yes. All applications must include written authorization from the Trustee Board confirming that matching funds have been approved and will be available within 30 days of the award announcement.

Do we have to buy from a certain vendor?

The district will purchase items on the church's behalf from reputable vendors. Applicants should provide quotes or screenshots from common vendors so pricing is clear.

Can a church apply again next year?

Yes. However, repeat awards may be limited to ensure broad participation across Indiana congregations.

Will my score be shared?

Scores are not published publicly, but applicants who were not selected may request their score and a brief summary of reviewer feedback within 30 days of the award announcement.

Questions & Support

Churches are encouraged to reach out early for help shaping an equipment plan or confirming documentation before the August 1, 2026 deadline.

Email: specialprojects@jwamezsouthfield.org

Program Team

- LaTascha Moses, Administrative Assistant
- Miah Powell, Financial Assistant
- Rev. Austin J. Young, Program Director
- Bishop Daran H. Mitchell, Presiding Bishop

About This Program

This grant is part of **Lead Forward**, an initiative of the Midwest Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Zion Church. Funding is provided by **Lilly Endowment Inc.**

APPLICATIONS OPEN: APRIL 1, 2026

APPLICATIONS DUE: AUGUST 1, 2026

AWARDS ANNOUNCED: OCTOBER 17, 2026