

Northeastern Iowa Synod Energy Reduction Grant Policy & Application Draft #1

Purpose

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Energy Reduction Grants are matching grants to incentivize and assist congregations in lowering their energy use and the costs (both financial and environmental) of gas and electric utilities at congregationally owned facilities. The grants can be applied to projects that are in the planning stage as well as to projects that are already installed but not yet paid in full (see guidelines).

Grant Eligibility

All ELCA congregations in the Northeastern Iowa Synod are eligible to receive an Energy Reduction Grant. The grant amount must be matched by contributions from the congregation. Because the monies in this account were received through congregational mission support to the NE Iowa Synod, preference will be given to congregations that have consistently provided mission support to the Synod.

Congregations can submit one application per project. Applications for additional projects can be submitted twelve months after a previous application.

\$80,000 will be distributed until the funds are depleted. Congregations can apply for up to \$10,000 depending on the scope and scale of the project. Grants will be awarded based on costs of the project, expected impact, and congregational participation.

Examples of projects that are eligible for Energy Reduction Grants

- Renewable energy projects (solar/wind)
- HVAC upgrades
- Upgrading lighting
- Replacing old appliances with energy efficient replacements
- New, energy efficient doors/windows
- Projects at church, parsonage, other congregationally owned facility

Grant Timeline & Evaluation Process

There will be two grant application deadlines every year:

- March 1st, (connected to awards announced prior to Earth Day in April).
- September 1st, (connected to awards announced near the conclusion of Season of Creation in early October).
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The Energy Reduction Grant Team (ERGT) will review all grant applications and recommend grant amounts to the Synod Council. The ERGT will be composed of the Synod Bishop, Synod Vice President, one person from the Synod Council, and one representative from the Care for Creation network. The ERGT can invite up to three other people from the NE Iowa Synod to serve on the team with approval of Synod Council. ERGT members cannot participate in reviewing, evaluating, or recommending awards for grant applications from their own congregations.

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Council will review and approve all grant amounts prior to notice of awards and disbursement of funds. Recommended awards will be put on the Council agenda at their next scheduled meeting following the recommendations of the ERGT

Award funds will be disbursed when the congregation can confirm that the project has been completed and matching funds are secured or pledged.

FAQ

Why is the Northeastern Iowa Synod offering Energy Reduction Grants?

In 2023, the Northeastern Iowa Assembly approved a resolution on Synod-wide greenhouse gas emission goals. Part of this resolution required the Synod office to *"implement best management practices to serve as an example for its member organizations to...work to further conserve energy (e.g., by installing energy efficient HVAC and lighting systems); to utilize renewable energy resources (e.g., by installing solar panels)"*

Building renovations in 2025 included new LED lighting, new energy efficient windows and door. New HVAC had been installed in 2020. In 2025, with assistance from the Care for Creation Network, the Synod Council looked at proposals for installing solar panels. It was determined that due to the recent renovations and relatively low energy consumption at the Synod office, that installing solar panels at this one location was not the best stewardship of resources. Instead, the Council thought that offering grants to Northeastern Iowa congregations for energy reduction projects would achieve the objectives of the resolution and have a bigger impact toward reducing energy consumption across the Synod.

Responsible stewardship of all the resources God blesses us with is an important value to the people of the Northeastern Iowa Synod. By reducing energy consumption in our congregations, we can shift resources to other ministry costs and join together in reducing the environmental impact our energy use creates.

Where is the money for these grants coming from?

Since the beginning of the ELCA, the Northeastern Iowa Synod has followed the accounting practice of depreciation for the Synod office and furnishings. As part of that practice, funds equal to the annual depreciation amount were set aside in a special account for eventual upgrades. Over the years, that fund has grown to a sizeable amount. After extensive renovations in 2025, there were still funds left in that account. This is where money would come from if we were to install solar energy collectors at the Synod office. The money for the Energy Reductions Grants will come from this account without completely depleting the account.

How much money is available?

The Northeastern Iowa Synod Council has approved giving away \$80,000 in matching grants. Congregations that apply will be eligible for up to \$10,000 in matching funds depending on the scope of the project. Smaller grants can be requested.

What kinds of things are not eligible for Energy Reduction Grants?

The Energy Reduction Grants are meant to encourage congregations to reduce the amount of energy purchased by generating energy through renewables (solar/wind) and replacing old systems with more energy efficient appliances and building materials. New construction, or additional appliances (such as another refrigerator/freezer for the kitchen or new AC for a Sunday School wing where there wasn't AC before) will not be eligible for the Energy Reduction Grants.

How long will the energy reduction grants be available?

The Energy Reduction Grants will be available until the entire \$80,000 is disbursed. The ERGT is hopeful that additional monies will be made available from the Synod Council or through private donations to the program but cannot promise that extension at this time.

FAQ continued:

What if we completed our project already? Can we still apply?

Congratulations and thank you for your commitment to responsible stewardship of all the resources God blesses us with. If your project is completed and paid for through donations or pledges we encourage your congregation to begin another energy reduction project and seek a grant for that. If your congregation completed installation of an eligible project in 2025 and you stepped out in faith that God would provide, we encourage you to apply for a grant to help close the funding gap.

How can my congregation apply?

Your congregation can apply by filling out the attached application and returning it to the Synod office by one of the two annual application deadlines (September 1st, and March 1st). Applications will be reviewed by the Energy Reduction Grant Team, and recommended awards will be approved by the Synod Council at the next scheduled Council meeting.