

Diocese of Allentown  
Local Poverty Relief Fund

GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION PROCESS

**Description of Use and Distribution of Funds**

A collection for the Local Poverty Relief Fund will be held throughout the Diocese of Allentown during the weekend before Thanksgiving. Proceeds from this collection will fund projects and services that alleviate or address poverty as approved by the Bishop of the Diocese.

**Eligibility**

Programs and projects that reduce poverty and/or address underlying causes of poverty within Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Northampton and Schuylkill counties may apply for Local Poverty Relief Fund grants. To be eligible, applicants must demonstrate a commitment to the moral and social values of the Catholic Church and not participate in or promote activities which contradict Church teachings. Additionally, grant recipients must demonstrate the administrative capacity to effectively manage and use funds. Requests from individuals will not be considered. Projects and organizations, including St. Vincent de Paul Societies, which involve active participation from parishes, schools, and other ministries, are strongly encouraged to apply.

Applications and deadline information available at: [www.allentowndiocese.org/poverty-relief](http://www.allentowndiocese.org/poverty-relief)

**Funding Amounts**

The amount of funds collected will determine the number and amount of grants awarded. Maximum grant award will generally not exceed \$10,000.

**Project Guidelines**

- Project proposals must demonstrate an understanding of the local community's issues and needs. Input should be sought from a number of sources including individuals who are very low income. Proposals must show how funds will directly relieve poverty in the local community.
- Projects are encouraged to seek additional sources of support in addition to Poverty Relief Funds. Proposals should describe how all funds would impact the local community.
- Please describe organizational structure, leadership, and fiscal policies/procedures for the project.
- The project's goals must be defined. Goals should be written in measurable terms. If selected, these goals will become the basis for evaluation of the project.
- Projects that describe new initiatives or collaborations that result in institutional/ community change that address the root causes of poverty will receive priority consideration.
- The maximum amount that an organization/ parish can request is \$10,000.
- A parish or organization may only submit one grant application.
- Funding of a project through the Local Poverty Fund in the previous grant year does not guarantee funding for the current grant year.

- Organizations are generally restricted from receiving Local Poverty Relief funds for more than six consecutive years. Recipients that receive funding for six consecutive years are eligible to apply again following a year without support from the Poverty Relief Fund.
- An organization/parish that has received Local Poverty Relief Fund support funds for five consecutive years may apply for a grant in the current year, but their potential award will be capped at 50% of last year's awarded amount.
- A pastor's approval is required for parish organizations that submits an application. If awarded, the pastor's approval is required on the interim and final grant reports.
- Projects that provide material or cash assistance for individuals are encouraged to follow the Best Practice Recommendations listed below.
- A site visit may be requested with a member of the Grant Committee for additional information.
- If awarded, the project will complete a report at 6-month and 1-year intervals. The names of recipients should not be included in these reports.
- All grant funds must be expended within the calendar year.

### **Application Information/Deadline**

- **Applications and deadline information available at: [www.allentowndiocese.org/poverty-relief](http://www.allentowndiocese.org/poverty-relief)**
- Applications may be submitted online or mailed to:

Diocese of Allentown  
Office of Stewardship & Development  
Attn: Poverty Relief Allocations Committee  
P.O. Box F  
Allentown, PA 18105

For additional information, contact Paul Acampora at 610-871-5200 ext. 2210.

### **Best Practice Recommendations for Poverty Relief Grant Funds**

- The project should pay bills directly to the landlord, utility, or individual who is owed.
- Whenever possible, encourage recipients to also seek assistance from Catholic Charities and other local agencies.
- Do not use credit cards for hotel/motel payments (damages will be charged!)
- Collect receipts and records (lease, bills, etc.) noting the recipient's name. Follow the procedures for record-keeping for the organization and parish.
- Treat gift cards like cash. Develop a process of tracking all gift cards. Follow up with the recipient to determine what they spent the gift card on.
- If someone is months behind on a utility bill, a partial payment may suffice to avoid shut-off.
- Consider paying medical insurance premiums as well as some medical bills.
- If the grant is being used to make a debt payment (e.g. car, mortgage), determine that one-time assistance will be the difference that stops a foreclosure on the house, or repossession of the car.