

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
International Leaders Program

Scholarship Application Guidelines

2026-27



Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in America

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Table of Contents

Background and Purpose	2
Values and Principles	2
Core values	2
Gender justice.....	3
Statement of welcome for members of the LGBTQIA+ community.....	3
Zero tolerance policy	4
Application Process	5
General eligibility requirements	5
Scholarship application types and detailed eligibility requirements	5
What do scholarships cover?	6
Application process timeline	7
Selection criteria.....	8
Notes for the endorser	9
Tips for a successful application	10
Artificial Intelligence guidelines for scholarship applications	11
Scholarship Implementation.....	13
Award documentation	13
Award acceptance or declination	14
Award payments	14
Reporting and continuation requirements	15
Changes after approval	15
Commitment to Serve	16
Contact Us.....	17
APPENDIX	18
How to register using GrantMaker	19
How to apply using GrantMaker.....	21

Background and Purpose

The International Leaders Program is a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which began its mission as a mainline religious denomination in 1988. Since the beginning, the ELCA has accompanied our partners around the world—known as *global companion churches and institutions*—through the awarding of academic scholarships for education and training. Members of the ELCA, through offerings in congregations and other charitable giving, have supported well over 1,000 global leaders in their education and training endeavors. These leaders serve in church and society around the world in a wide variety of roles.

The International Leaders Program offers unique scholarship opportunities, different from most other scholarship programs. It is born out of the relationship that exists between the ELCA and its companion churches and institutions around the world. These churches and institutions prioritize missional leadership needs in their contexts and identify promising leaders to help fulfill those priorities. International Leaders Program scholarships serve as a means for those leaders to acquire or enhance the necessary knowledge and skills for service.

Values and Principles

Core values

The International Leaders Program is a community of scholarship recipients from around the world who are committed to achieving educational goals in collaboration with their sending churches/institutions and the ELCA. As a community, we share a commitment to values and standards such as non-discrimination, integrity, civility, trust, and non-violence. In order to uphold this commitment, there is a need for a common understanding of the principles that will guide our life together, both as a community of scholarship recipients and as members of our respective campuses/institutions and communities. All participants in the International Leaders Program, including its staff, commit to the program's Code of Conduct, which is provided to scholars at the time of awards being offered. The Code of Conduct outlines expectations around the standards listed above and also establishes key values for the scholarship program, such as respect, safety, wellness, and service.

Gender justice

The International Leaders Program equips leaders for the sake of the world, a calling which commits us to work for justice that upholds the dignity of all humans and the planet. A key focus area within that commitment is the program's emphasis on gender justice. In the words of Dr. Mary J. Streufert, ELCA Executive for Theological Discernment, as written in *A Commitment Toward Gender Justice*:

"We believe that the Holy Trinity, the One God, desires human flourishing. We believe that the God who creates, the God who redeems, and the God who sanctifies and sustains us is at work to turn us away from sin and toward serving the world to flourish. This includes flourishing without the negative effects of patriarchy and sexism on all of God's beloved creation.

Justification by grace through faith was the central wager of the Reformation, and it continues to be the scripturally based belief that God's promise of grace through Jesus Christ is for us. We do not earn God's love; we are loved because we belong to God through Jesus Christ. The Christian's response to God's justifying grace is love of the neighbor. Love of neighbor often takes the form of justice, including gender justice. God's grace through Christ reminds us that God, not any human, whether by gender, ethnicity, race, age, ability or sexuality, is God. No human is lord over others. As the churchwide organization of the ELCA, we realize that fostering and creating gender justice is one form of love of neighbor."

Through this document and the ELCA's social statement [Faith, Sexism, and Justice](#), the International Leaders Program commits itself to principles of gender justice in the awarding of scholarships. Further, we join the entire Lutheran World Federation communion in our collective commitment to the LWF [Gender Justice Policy](#). Functionally, this commitment takes several forms, including:

- Companion churches/institutions must ensure that at least half of the individuals endorsed to apply for scholarships identify as women or another underrepresented gender identity. **If less than 50% of the individuals endorsed by a church/institution are women or people of other underrepresented gender identities, then none of the applications received that year will be considered.**
- The International Leaders Program commits that at least 50% of all scholarship awards each year will be awarded to women and those of other underrepresented gender identities.

Statement of welcome for members of the LGBTQIA+ community

The International Leaders Program staff strives to create a community of learning based on equity, and **we welcome and celebrate members of the LGBTQIA+ community**. This practice is rooted in the ELCA's commitment that ELCA Churchwide Organization staff (and other ELCA leaders) "renew their efforts to welcome, care for, and support the lives and gifts of LGBTQIA+ persons and to oppose discrimination against these persons so that they may live into the promise of gender justice..." ([Faith, Sexism, and Justice](#) social statement). We acknowledge that there are many spaces in church and society where members of the LGBTQIA+ community face discrimination. The ELCA international scholarship selection process does not discriminate based on an applicant's identification with the LGBTQIA+ community, and applicants are never required to disclose information about sexuality or gender identity as part of the application process. Any applicants who have questions may contact us confidentially at GlobalScholars@elca.org.

Zero tolerance policy

The International Leaders Program joins the Lutheran World Federation scholarship program in forbidding any abuse of power and exploitation in the scholarship endorsement process. The language of the policy below is borrowed, in large part, from the [LWF Scholarship Implementing Guidelines](#) and applies to the ELCA's scholarship process (ELCA additions indicated in brackets).

The processes of the [International Leaders Program] imply unequal power relations between scholarship candidates on the one side and endorsing churches and the [ELCA churchwide organization] on the other.

Viewed positively, power is the ability to act, especially in ways that respect and empower rather than dominate and oppress others. Those in positions of authority or trust are expected to carry this out in responsible and just ways that do not take advantage of others, especially those who are more dependent or vulnerable. Abuse of power is manifested in how those with less social power are treated physically, psychologically, emotionally, and/or sexually. Unequal power relationships provide the basis for sexual exploitation and abuse. Due to their unequal status, women and girls are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. However, it is important to recognize that boys [and those of other gender identities] are also vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

The [International Leaders Program] Code of Conduct documents embody **zero tolerance with regards to sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, abuse of power, fraud and corruption.**

For persons involved in implementing [International Leaders Program] processes, this means that:

- No money, goods or services (such as scholarship endorsement letters) shall ever be exchanged for any kind of sexual favors.
- No acts of fraud, corruption or unethical business practice, including conflict of interest, shall ever be committed.
- No people shall ever be accused falsely for harassment or exploitation of any kind for own advantages.

All [companion churches and institutions] are encouraged to widely share the [scholarship] guidelines together with other information about the scholarships at the beginning of each new application phase.

Should the values, principles and commitments outlined in these guidelines be violated in the context of the scholarship application, approval and/or implementation process, any person concerned may be guided by the following procedures:

- **In case the concerned person feels the need to raise the issue with the [International Leaders Program staff], they may inform [the scholarship staff via email to the Director of the International Leaders Program (contact information below)].** Any issues brought to the attention of [International Leaders Program staff] shall be carefully assessed in consultation with the concerned person, with relevant [ELCA] staff, [with

relevant LWF Geneva staff] and, [if appropriate and only with permission] with the leadership of the respective church [or institution].

Application Process

General eligibility requirements

The International Leaders Program accompanies global companion churches and institutions as we together equip and connect leaders. The intent of the scholarship program is to build and expand leadership capacity in ways that align with the strategic goals of each church/institution. Given this, all scholarship applications must be endorsed by the appropriate authority at a church/institution with a companion relationship with the ELCA. This endorsement is indicated by the completion and submission of the scholarship endorsement form, which is provided in each application and asks the endorsing official to explain the relevance of the proposed training to the strategic priorities of the church/institution. Any applications without a valid endorsement will not be considered.

By applying for and accepting an ELCA scholarship award, applicants commit to serving their endorsing church/institution upon completion of their funded academic program. Similarly, the endorsing church/institution commits to providing to the scholarship recipient a position of leadership (paid or volunteer) that utilizes the skills gained. The specificity of the commitment to service may vary across the scholarship types (outlined below), but the understanding of such a commitment is required for an application to be considered.

All applicants must submit a complete and accurate application form no later than the advertised due date, which is typically in October of each year. Applications received by the due date are considered for possible funding beginning no sooner than June of the subsequent year. Incomplete applications will not be considered. There are multiple types of application forms offered, and the applicant must select the correct form based on the more specific criteria outlined below.

Scholarship application types and detailed eligibility requirements

The International Leaders Program offers various types of scholarship/training awards, each with their own application form and requirements. Applications submitted using the incorrect form may not be considered. Please contact program staff if you need guidance on which application type to choose.

Award type	Who should use this type?	Eligibility	What expenses can this award type support?
Long-Term Scholarship	This application should be used by individuals seeking academic programs of study that last 12 months or longer .	• Can apply toward academic programs located in or near the applicant's home country, or in another part of the world • Individuals of any gender are eligible to apply for this scholarship type	The type of expenses covered by scholarships of this type depend on the specific request and the results of the review process. Supported expenses may include: academic tuition/fees, living, medical, technology, and travel.
Short-Term Scholarship	This application should be used by individuals seeking programs of study that last less than 12 months .	• Can apply toward academic programs located in or near the applicant's home country, or in another part of the world • Individuals of any gender are eligible to apply for this scholarship type	The type of expenses covered by scholarships of this type depend on the specific request and the results of the review process. Supported expenses may include: academic tuition/fees, living, medical, technology, and travel.
International Women Leaders Scholarship	<i>Due to ELCA budget shortfalls, we will not be receiving new applications for the International Women Leaders Scholarship in 2026. Note that women are eligible and encouraged to apply for all of the other scholarship types listed here.</i>		
Global Sabbatical	This application should be used by current instructors/professors/educators who wish to teach at an institution in another part of the world during a sabbatical. (This application should not be used by individuals seeking to study in an academic degree program.)	• Individuals of any gender are eligible to apply for this award type • The applicant is responsible for securing approval from the institution at which the proposed sabbatical will take place	The type of expenses covered by awards of this type depend on the specific request and the results of the review process. Supported expenses may include: academic fees, living, medical, technology, and travel.

What do scholarships cover?

International Leaders Program scholarship offers are typically customized to each applicant's specific situation. The program may offer either full or partial awards, based on the quality of the application, the needs expressed in the application, the total amount of funding being requested, and the funds available in the program budget. Applicants typically submit an itemized scholarship budget proposal at the time of application, and the proposed budget must be verified for accuracy and signed by an official

either at the endorsing church/institution or the school. Budget proposals must be accurate to the best ability of the applicant and must always be accompanied by a fee structure from the school. The review committee uses the fee structure and budget proposal as one indicator for determining the final approved award amount. In most cases, the actual approved budget will differ from the proposal in order to align with program policies and fund availability. The details of the approved award budget are provided at the time of acceptance, and awardees may either accept or decline an offer.

Not all expenses are eligible for inclusion in a scholarship award:

- The program will typically not cover any retroactive expenses incurred before the start date of the award. This is why applicants who have not begun their academic programs are prioritized over those who begin before scholarship support is approved.
- The program is typically not able to directly support expenses associated with family members of the awardee, which includes spouse and/or children.

Application process timeline

All applications are submitted through the ELCA's online grants system, called ELCA GrantMaker (unless internet access prohibits the use of the system, in which case applicants should contact program staff for an alternative). All applications require the applicant to answer questions about their past academic, work and leadership experience, as well as information about the academic program being proposed. All applications must include the required supporting documents, which vary between each type.

Detailed instructions about accessing and navigating the GrantMaker system can be found at the end of this document in the Appendix. Please read these instructions carefully before accessing the system.

Note on language: Although English is the primary language used in the ELCA application process, applicants are welcome to submit the application in another language of their choice. In most cases, program staff will rely on online automated translation to read applications in languages other than English. If the applicant's academic program will be conducted in English, then the applicant *must* complete the application form in English. Applicants can choose to translate the application form itself (the questions and instructions) into the language of their choice using language translation tools available in many internet browsers, though this is an automated translation service that may not be fully accurate.

An overview of the application process timeline is provided below. Please note that the actual dates may vary slightly depending on a variety of factors.

August	Companion churches/institutions are invited to begin the application process by endorsing applicants and sharing this document with each endorsed applicant. Applicants begin working on the appropriate application form.
October	Due date for completed applications (refer to annual application announcement letter for exact due date)

October - December	Applications are initially screened and scored by the International Leaders Program staff, based on alignment with the selection criteria below. Follow-up with applicants is made as needed. Regional review committees (made of up ELCA staff with specializations in each region) provide feedback and scoring on applications.
January – March	Applications are prioritized based on the average of International Leaders Program scores, regional review committee scores, and priority ranking of the endorsing church/institution. Final award decisions are made based on available funding.
April – June	Decision letters (both award letters and denial letters) are released to applicants and endorsing churches/institutions.
June	First possible date for payment of new awards

Selection criteria

The following criteria guide the review, scoring, and prioritization of scholarship applications:

- *Alignment with strategic leadership priorities of the endorsing church/institution:* The proposed academic program must align with the strategic leadership priorities of the endorsing church/institution. Applications that demonstrate a clear and compelling link between the individual applicant, the proposed study program, and the priorities and needs of the church/institution will typically receive higher priority. Successful applications will provide a clear rationale for how the proposed academic program will enhance the mission and ministry of the endorsing church/institution. **This is often the most important selection criterion.**
- *Commitment to service:* Applicants must commit to serving their sending church/institution upon completion of the academic program, and the church/institution must commit to providing meaningful leadership opportunities to the applicant. The exact nature of the service to the church/institution may vary by context, but priority is given to scholarships leading to a highly impactful leadership role in the church/institution. Successful applications will make a compelling case for the strength of this commitment to service.
- *Application quality:* The application must be completed fully and accurately to receive a positive review. Applications that are incomplete or that provide only minimal information may not be considered. Successful applications will provide clear responses to all questions and will include all required supporting documents.
- *Track record of leadership or leadership potential:* The applicant must show a strong track record of leadership in the past, and/or a strong interest in pursuing leadership opportunities in the future. Leadership may take many forms and could vary by context. Successful applications will demonstrate a commitment to leadership that will continue both during and after the academic program.
- *Regional balance:* The International Leaders Program seeks to maintain balance in the awarding of scholarships across the several regions into which the ELCA's companion relationships are organized.
- *Gender balance:* At least half of all scholarships will be awarded to women or individuals of other underrepresented gender identities.
- *Increasing access to education:* The program preferences applications from individuals who may not have access to educational opportunities without scholarship support. In other words, the

program seeks to support those who face barriers to education because of finances or other factors. For example, the program often prioritizes people with few financial resources; youth/young adults; women, femme, nonbinary, and gender-expansive people; LGBTQIA+ people broadly; indigenous people; people with disabilities; and people directly impacted by war/occupation.

- *Study location:* Due to context and cost, the program often prioritizes requests for applicants who plan to study in or near their home countries. This does not automatically exclude requests to study in other parts of the world, especially if there is a strong rationale for the study location.
- *Partnership with ELCA seminaries/colleges/universities:* Only for applicants who wish to study in the United States, the program will preference those seeking study at an ELCA-affiliated seminary, college, or university, since these institutions often share in the total cost of the award. Please note that those who wish to study at an ELCA-affiliated school will need to complete both a scholarship application for the ELCA and an application for admission for the school. Academic programs in the United States that are not at an ELCA-affiliated institution typically receive lower priority. This criterion is not applicable to those who wish to study outside the United States.
- *Cost:* The scholarship budget is limited and cannot support every individual who applies. When all other factors are equal, requests that are lower in total cost often receive preference over requests that are higher in total cost.

In making scholarship award decisions and implementing scholarship awards, the International Leaders Program respects the humanity of people of all backgrounds and identities, including but not limited to people of any sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, social and economic class, educational level, color, language, immigration status, sex, age, size, family status, political belief, religion, and mental and physical ability.

Notes for the endorser

Every application must be endorsed by the appropriate official or committee at a companion church/institution with a formal relationship to the ELCA. Most often, the endorsing official is a leader or committee representing the national church/institution body, such as the bishop, president, general secretary, or church council. Typically, local church leaders such as congregational pastors are not considered to be valid scholarship application endorsers. Any questions about endorsing officials can be sent to program staff.

The notes below should be considered by the official or committee making the endorsement. Some language below is borrowed from the *LWF Scholarship Implementing Guidelines*.

- **Transparency:** Information about scholarship opportunities should be shared widely and equitably within the church/institution, especially including the grassroots level. The International Leaders Program preferences applications from those who may not otherwise have access to educational opportunities.
- **Screening:** The process of screening and endorsing individuals should be guided by clear and objective criteria and should be followed consistently. As stated above, no abuse, exploitation,

fraud, corruption, or conflict of interest shall ever be committed during the course of the screening and endorsement process. The endorser will be asked to explain the screening process in detail as part of the endorsement form within the application.

- **Decision-making:** Companion churches/institutions are encouraged to establish a committee that makes decisions about scholarship endorsements. Decisions should not be made by a single individual.
- **Criteria:** Endorseees should be selected based on their merits and the strategic leadership needs of the church/institution. No private, professional or any other relationships should be misused for the endorsement of scholarship candidates.
- **Communication:** The endorsing church/institution should be in regular and clear communication with the applicant about the status and details of the application.
- **Clarity:** The endorsement form should be completed fully and clearly, with all applicable answers included. Endorsements that are vague or incomplete may not be considered.
- **Prioritization:** When a church/institution endorses more than one applicant in a given year, the endorsing official will be invited to provide a priority ranking of the endorseees. This information can be submitted directly to scholarship staff via email. This prioritization often influences final scholarship decisions.

Tips for a successful application

Scholarship applications that follow these guidelines typically receive a more favorable review:

1. **Use the correct application form:** There are multiple application forms used by the International Leaders Program. Please use only the form that matches the request type. See the eligibility table above for more details.
2. **Submit the application by the due date:** Applications received after the due date may not be considered. Please note that the applications have multiple components, and all are typically due in October. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required documents are collected and submitted on time.
3. **Prepare in advance for necessary documents:** Each application will require the applicant to upload supplemental documents, which vary between the different applications. Please scroll to the bottom of the application form and find the "Required Documents" section, which will list the documents that are required before submission. Applicants will usually need to obtain documents like transcripts, fee structures, and endorsements. Please plan ahead so these documents are complete before the due date. If applicants have any problems downloading the blank forms or uploading the completed documents into the GrantMaker system, they should email program staff immediately. We can assist you with this step, if needed.
4. **Secure admission into a degree program as early as possible:** The application form asks each applicant to explain the academic program for which they are requesting scholarship support. Applicants who have obtained admission into the school before applying for a scholarship often receive more favorable review.

5. Avoid requesting scholarship support for a degree program that is already in progress:

International Leaders Program scholarships are meant to align with the leadership development priorities of companion churches/institutions. As such, applications that request scholarship support for academic programs that have already started typically receive lower priority. The program's preference is to fund students who are beginning new academic programs, as this often indicates greater alignment between the program chosen and the endorsing church's priorities. International Leaders Program scholarships do not cover past costs retroactively.

6. Provide a detailed, specific, and clear rationale for the scholarship request: One of the most important parts of the scholarship application is the rationale for the request. Why is the proposed degree program important for the applicant and for the endorsing church/institution? How does this request align with the strategic plan of the endorsing church/institution? What position of leadership will the applicant take upon completion of the academic program? These types of questions should be answered with as much detail as possible, both by the applicant and by the endorser. We strongly encourage the endorsing church/institution and the applicant to spend time in conversation in order to develop a detailed plan for the scholarship applicant's role. Applications that show strong strategic planning and close collaboration between the applicant and the endorsing church/institution receive much more favorable reviews.

7. Provide a clear and accurate budget proposal: The scholarship application includes a space to propose the annual scholarship budget that is being requested. It is crucial that the budget proposal submitted be both accurate and clear. Applicants should always submit an official fee structure from the school at which they plan to study as part of the application packet. It is likely that the budget proposed will be adjusted by ELCA staff based on the availability of funds, and so there is no guarantee that the proposed budget will be funded in full.

8. Check your email as often as possible: After applying for an ELCA scholarship, the applicant can expect to receive periodic email communication from our office. It is the applicant's responsibility to read these emails and to respond as quickly as possible. It is also the applicant's responsibility to maintain contact with the endorsing church/institution as it relates to the progress of the scholarship application. Applicants who respond to requests in a timely manner typically meet program deadlines more easily. Applicants are welcome to email our team in any language they prefer, and we will use online translation tools to read emails submitted in languages other than English.

Artificial Intelligence guidelines for scholarship applications *

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are algorithms or computer processes that perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as language processing, problem solving, pattern recognition, and creation of content like text and images. AI tools are constantly evolving and becoming increasingly accessible.

At the ELCA, we understand that AI is becoming increasingly prevalent in daily life and that scholarship applicants may think about using AI to complete their applications. For the sake of stewarding an

* Thank you to the [ELCA Gather Network](#) for insights that contributed to the writing of this policy.

effective and fair scholarship application process, and out of concern for the ethical implications of AI use, we share the guidelines below related to AI.

Applicants to the ELCA scholarship program may not use Artificial Intelligence in the following ways:

- Using an AI tool (like ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, etc.) to write your application responses
- Copying and pasting content directly from an AI tool into your application
- Replacing your unique written voice and tone with content from an AI tool
- Submitting application content that is plagiarized or copied from other sources
- Translating essay responses originally written in other languages (we prefer that you submit essay responses in a language you know well)

Submitting a scholarship application that contains AI-generated content may result in disqualification from the scholarship program. At the very least, we find that applications that include AI-generated content often receive lower scores than those written entirely by the applicant. The application review team may check application responses that appear to be generated by AI.

AI-generated application content is not permitted for the following reasons:

- **Accuracy and trust:** The scholarship application asks a variety of questions about the applicant's background, educational goals, vocational identities, and connections to the endorsing church/institution. This information is highly nuanced and specific to each applicant. Because AI generates content based on broadly available internet content, it is likely to write information that is not accurate or trustworthy based on the applicant's lived experience. It is important that applicants share their authentic voice, perspectives, and experiences as part of a successful scholarship application. For this reason, our review committees cannot consider AI content to be trustworthy or representative of the applicant and church's realities.
- **Environmental impact:** The ELCA is committed to "examine how environmental damage is influenced by racism, sexism, and classism, and how the environmental crisis in turn exacerbates racial, gender, and class discrimination" ([Caring for Creation](#) social statement), and joins other LWF member churches in a commitment to climate justice. AI data centers consume large amounts of water and electricity, and the environmental impacts of these centers disproportionately affect rural communities, people living in poverty, Indigenous people, and people of color. We invite critical reflection on how our collective call to climate justice may lead us to reduce our reliance on AI tools that harm the environment.
- **Data privacy:** With the current reality of limited governmental oversight in many parts of the world, AI technologies can capture and access personal data and information, presenting a risk to those who interact with it.
- **Intellectual property:** AI technologies consume content, writing, research, and art from across the Internet in order to generate outputs. In many cases, this consumption is done without the permission or compensation of the original creators. AI outputs often lack proper citations and can risk spreading misinformation.

We recognize that some applicants may consider using AI tools in order to make the scholarship application process more accessible. Our team values accessibility and invites you to contact us if you

have questions or requests about scholarship application accessibility. We also suggest the following alternatives to common uses of AI:

- Rather than using AI to translate your application responses into English, we encourage you to submit your application in any language with which you feel comfortable. It is not required that scholarship applications be submitted in English.
- Rather than using AI to write your application responses, we encourage you to take time to answer the questions in your own unique voice. The endorsing officials in your church/institution may also be a helpful resource in crafting robust explanations about the connection between your studies and your leadership in the church/institution. Application responses that are honest, accurate, and authentic will be scored higher than application responses that use AI to perfect grammar or writing style.
- Rather than asking AI to search the internet for information about the ELCA scholarship application program, we encourage you to thoroughly read this Scholarship Application Guidelines Document. We do not publicly publish extensive information about the ELCA scholarship program online, so AI-gathered information may not be correct. If you have any questions about the scholarship process, you can email us (in any language) at GlobalScholars@elca.org.

Currently, the ELCA international scholarship team does not use generative AI tools to evaluate, summarize, or score scholarship applications. The ELCA scholarship team does use online translation tools to read applications that are not submitted in English. Each application is reviewed and scored carefully by members of our review committees and by the scholarship program staff.

Scholarship Implementation

Award documentation

All new scholarship awardees, along with their endorsing official(s), will receive formal communication via email informing them of the scholarship offer. The award packet will include the following documents, which must be read carefully by the awardee and the endorsing official(s):

- **Award letter:** The award letter lists the details of the scholarship offer, including start/end date, total dollar amount, academic program, and post-study commitment to service.
- **Scholarship agreement:** The scholarship agreement lists the detailed terms of the award. The awardee must agree to all terms in order to activate the scholarship. The agreement also includes terms that bind the endorsing official and the church/institution they represent. Both the awardee and the endorsing official must sign the agreement.

- **International Leaders Program Code of Conduct:** All awardees who accept scholarship offers must commit themselves to abiding by the program's Code of Conduct throughout the duration of their scholarship.
- **Annual award budgets:** Most award packets will include itemized scholarship budgets, which outline the exact approved amount of the award and are typically organized by year. Scholarship payments will follow the schedule and amounts listed in these budget documents, and approved budgets are not negotiable.
- **Program-specific documents:** Some awards will include additional documentation specific to the program, especially for those who study in the United States, who will receive supplementary information about policies and procedures.

Award acceptance or declination

The scholarship awardee may choose to either accept or decline the scholarship offer. To decline the offer, the awardee should inform scholarship staff via email, within 15 days of receiving the award packet. To accept the offer, the awardee must return all required documentation within 15 days of receiving the award packet. Typically, this documentation includes:

- Scholarship agreement signed by all parties
- Code of Conduct signed by the awardee
- Banking information for the account to which scholarship funds will be sent (scholarships are typically paid to the endorsing church/institution, or the awardee's school; payments cannot be made to the awardee's personal account)
- Confirmation of the start and end date of the academic program
- If not already provided, a copy of the official acceptance letter from the school

Normally, the scholarship is only valid for the dates listed in the award documentation, and the award will be cancelled if the awardee does not begin the academic program as planned. If the dates of an academic program change, the awardee should contact the scholarship staff immediately to request a deferral of the scholarship offer. In some cases, the award dates may be revised.

Award payments

Scholarship awards are normally paid once per year for the duration of the award period. The exact details of the payment schedule are included on the annual award budgets sent with the award packet for most scholarship recipients. For those studying at ELCA seminaries, colleges, or universities in the United States, payments are coordinated directly with the school.

Most payments are made via international wire transfer, one month before the time period covered by that year's budget. For example, if a payment is meant to cover expenses from August 2030 to July 2031, the payment would normally be made in July 2030. See the annual award budget for specifics. Once a wire transfer is initiated, scholarship staff will inform the recipient and the institution receiving the funds, via email. Wire transfers usually contain a small additional amount to help cover banking fees.

Once the payment arrives, it is the recipient's responsibility to work with their church/institution to ensure that the funds are disbursed according to the approved scholarship budget. Any mishandling of scholarship funds could result in immediate termination of the award. Recipients are asked to report on the use of their scholarship funds each year.

Reporting and continuation requirements

Scholarship recipients must remain in good standing in order to receive subsequent award payments. The basic requirements to remain in good standing are listed below. Please note that the Director of the International Leaders Program may terminate any scholarship award if program conditions and policies are not met.

- **Annual reporting process:** All scholarship recipients are required to complete an annual reporting process, which is the primary mechanism for reporting progress to the program staff. Reports are due for each year of the award duration, and once following the completion of the academic program. Recipients will receive the required report forms by email each year, and the completed forms are usually due in May or June. The report packet includes forms completed by the scholarship recipient, an advisor at the recipient's school, and the endorsing official at the home church/institution. Recipients must complete the evaluation process each year in order to receive subsequent scholarship payments.
- **Academic performance:** All scholarship recipients must show satisfactory progress through their academic programs. Grade reports/transcripts must be submitted annually as part of the reporting packet mentioned above. Recipients must maintain satisfactory grades/marks and should demonstrate that they are on track to complete the academic program within the approved timeline.
- **Code of Conduct:** All scholarship recipients must abide by the International Leaders Program Code of Conduct, provided at the time of the award. Violations of the Code of Conduct could result in sanctions and/or termination of the award.
- **Connection with the endorsing church/institution:** All scholarship recipients must maintain contact with the endorsing official(s) at their home church/institution, sharing periodic updates about their progress through the academic program. Recipients and their endorsers are also strongly encouraged to continually collaborate to prepare for the period of service after completion of the academic program.

Changes after approval

Changes to the approved amount or duration of the scholarship award may not be possible. However, if the scholarship recipient or endorsing church/institution need to request a change to the award terms, they must submit the Award Adjustment Request Form, available from scholarship staff upon request. This form must be signed by both the recipient and the endorser. Any request for changes will be evaluated by the program staff and, if necessary, the scholarship review committee and/or partner school. Approval of such requests is not guaranteed and is dependent on the availability of funds and the following guidelines:

- Changes to the approved scholarship budget will only be made in extreme cases that impact the ability of the recipient to complete the academic program.
 - Changes to the approved duration of the scholarship award will only be made for legitimate reasons and with the approval of the endorsing official. If a duration change impacts the scholarship budget, the above point applies.
 - Changes to the approved academic program or school will only be made for legitimate reasons, and only prior to the start of the scholarship period. In order to request such a change, the recipient must submit several additional documents explaining the new program, including a new endorsement from the church/institution. Approval is not guaranteed.
 - Changes to the approved scholarship candidate are not possible. If an approved awardee is not able to accept the award or undertake the program of study, it is not possible to substitute another candidate to take up the scholarship. A completely new application would need to be made in this case.
-

Commitment to Serve

As mentioned previously, the scholarship program exists largely to support the strategic leadership development of companion churches/institutions. Upon acceptance of the scholarship award, scholars and endorsing officials sign a covenant agreement that commits to a plan for leadership and service in the church/institution. This service may take the form of a paid position in the church/institution, it may take the form of volunteer contributions, or it may be through the implementation of a project. The commitment to service may vary among the various scholarship types offered, and the specifics of each commitment are outlined in the scholarship agreement provided as part of the award packet. If either the scholarship recipient or the endorsing church/institution fails to fulfill the commitment as outlined in the scholarship agreement, any remaining ELCA scholarship funds may be withheld or cancelled, and future ELCA scholarship funding to the endorsing church/institution may be unavailable.

Contact Us

On behalf of the ELCA, **we thank you** for your partnership in equipping leaders for the sake of the world. We are available to assist both applicants and endorsing officials at any stage in the scholarship process. For more information, please contact the International Leaders Program staff:

Kaleb Sutherland

Director | Kaleb.Sutherland@elca.org

Ann Hightower

Program Manager | Ann.Hightower@elca.org

Our team also frequently uses the email address GlobalScholars@elca.org to communicate with scholarship applicants and companion churches/institutions.

[This document continues on the next page.]

APPENDIX

Using ELCA GrantMaker

ELCA scholarship applications are submitted online through the **ELCA GrantMaker** system. Applications must be completed by the advertised due date, which is typically in October.

To ensure that your experience with ELCA GrantMaker is as smooth as possible, we have prepared the simple reference below to guide you through each step of the application process. Please read these instructions thoroughly and use them as you navigate the system. Please contact us via email at GlobalScholars@elca.org if you have any questions.

The first section (Step 1) is a quick reference guide to help you register for an account in the ELCA GrantMaker system. You must request an account and be approved by the program staff before you can access the application forms. Please begin this step as soon as possible. **If you have already registered and accessed ELCA GrantMaker in the past, you do not need to complete this step a second time; simply log in using your previous username and password.** If you forgot your password, you can reset it from the login screen.

The second section (Step 2) is a quick reference guide to help you access and complete a scholarship application. Please read these instructions very carefully before beginning your application. We also encourage you to read the entire application form before you start filling it in. There are many requirements for a complete application (including documents that will require input from other people), and so reading the entire application will help you complete the requirements in time for the deadline.

Note on language: Although English is the primary language used in the ELCA application process, applicants are welcome to submit the application in another language of their choice. In most cases, program staff will rely on online automated translation to read applications in languages other than English. If the applicant's academic program will be conducted in English, then the applicant *must* complete the application form in English. Applicants can choose to translate the application form itself (the questions and instructions) into the language of their choice using language translation tools available in many internet browsers, though this is an automated translation service that may not be fully accurate.

If you have any difficulty accessing the application process, please email us immediately at GlobalScholars@elca.org. We are committed to ensuring that all interested applicants can successfully submit an application, even in locations with limited internet access. We are able to make accommodations for those who cannot access the online system, and such individuals are encouraged to email us to request assistance.

Please read the rest of this document carefully. **We look forward to receiving your application by the due date.**

Step 1

How to register using GrantMaker

Follow these steps to complete an ELCA GrantMaker registration request. **If you have already registered and accessed ELCA GrantMaker in the past, you do not need to complete this step a second time; simply log in using your previous username and password and skip to Step 2. If you forgot your password, you can reset it from the login screen.**

[Click here to watch a brief instructional video on how to complete the registration process](#)

1	Access the ELCA GrantMaker login page at https://elca.fluxx.io/ We recommend using the Google Chrome browser.														
2	Click “Create Account Now” Create Account Now														
3	Respond to the provided questions according to the table below. This ensures that you access the correct grant application type. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Question</th> <th>Answer</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Will the applicant receiving funds be based Domestically (United States and Territories) or Internationally?</td> <td>International <i>[Choose this option regardless of where your proposed study program is located]</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Which ELCA grant class will you be registering for today?</td> <td>ELCA Scholarships</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Which ELCA Scholarship will you be registering for?</td> <td>International Leaders Program Scholarships</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Which International Leaders Program Scholarship will you be applying?</td> <td><i>Select the correct scholarship type from the list based on the nature of your request. Refer to the “Scholarship application types” table above for guidance.</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>How did you learn about this grant/scholarship?</td> <td>Email from ELCA or any other relevant option</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Are you applying as an individual or on behalf of an organization?</td> <td>Individual</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Question	Answer	Will the applicant receiving funds be based Domestically (United States and Territories) or Internationally?	International <i>[Choose this option regardless of where your proposed study program is located]</i>	Which ELCA grant class will you be registering for today?	ELCA Scholarships	Which ELCA Scholarship will you be registering for?	International Leaders Program Scholarships	Which International Leaders Program Scholarship will you be applying?	<i>Select the correct scholarship type from the list based on the nature of your request. Refer to the “Scholarship application types” table above for guidance.</i>	How did you learn about this grant/scholarship?	Email from ELCA or any other relevant option	Are you applying as an individual or on behalf of an organization?	Individual
Question	Answer														
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Are you applying as an individual or on behalf of an organization?	Individual														

	*Are you applying as an individual or on behalf of an organization? ▼ Individual Organization 
4	Complete remaining registration questions by providing your name, address, phone number, and email address. Then, click “Submit Request”
5	Before you can access the application forms, our team will need to confirm your registration. You will receive a response from us within 5 business days, and likely sooner. If you do not receive a response within 5 business days, please email us at GlobalScholars@elca.org. When your registration is approved, you will receive an automated email from the ELCA GrantMaker system. This email will list your username and will give you instructions for creating a password. Your username will be the email address you used to register.
6	Once you receive the email confirming the approval of your registration, log in for the first time. To set your password, click the URL link in the email you received or visit https://elca.fluxx.io/. On the login page, click “Forgot Password.” Enter your email address and click submit. You will receive a password reset email with a unique link for setting your password. Click the link and enter your new password. Passwords must have a minimum of 10 characters, at least one lowercase letter, at least one uppercase letter, and at least one number.
7	After you set your password, you will be able to log in to the portal using your username (your email address) and password. You can access the portal any time at https://elca.fluxx.io/.

How to apply using GrantMaker

Follow these steps to complete an ELCA scholarship application. First-time users must complete Step 1 prior to Step 2.

[Click here to watch a brief instructional video on how to complete a scholarship application](#)

1	Access the ELCA GrantMaker login page at https://elca.fluxx.io/ We recommend using the Google Chrome browser.
2	Log in using the username and password you set during the registration process. If you forget your password, you can always reset it by clicking the “Forgot Password” link.
3	Read the instructions on the Grantee Portal homepage. These instructions explain how to navigate the application portal. If you wish to view the Grantee Portal in a language other than English, many internet browsers can automatically translate webpages into other languages. Please note that translations are done by an automated system and so may not be 100% accurate. As of 2026, the Google Translate button in the portal itself may not work well, so we advise you to use a built-in browser translator if you need translation. You are welcome to contact us if you have any questions about navigating the system.
4	To access the application forms, click “Applications” in the menu on the left. 
5	Click “ELCA Scholarships” to reveal information about scholarship programs. ▶ ELCA Scholarships
6	When you are ready to begin your application, click “Apply for an ELCA Scholarship” 

7	Carefully read all the instructions at the top of the application. • Make sure to select “Check box if applying as an individual.” • For the question “Which ELCA Scholarship will you be applying for?” answer International Leaders Program Scholarships. • For the question “Which International Leaders Program Scholarship are you applying for?” select the correct scholarship type from the list based on the nature of your request. Refer to the “Scholarship application types” table above for guidance. Once you select a grant type, the rest of the application will appear below. ☒ Check box if applying as an individual Which ELCA Scholarship will you be applying for? International Leaders Program Schol ▼
8	Begin filling out your application. You may complete the application in English or another language. Note that all questions in bold type are required and must be completed. The application does not save automatically. You must click the "Save" button (located at the bottom of the page) to ensure your answers will not be lost. Please click "Save" regularly while you fill out this form. After you save your application, you may leave and return to it at a later time. Your saved application will be located in the “Pending Requests” section, found on the left side of the portal. To work on a saved application, open it and then click the “Edit” button. Please note that all applications include required documents that you will need to upload before you submit. Please scroll to the bottom of the application and read the “Required Documents” section to learn more about these requirements.
9	To submit a completed application: 1. Ensure that you have completed all required questions and uploaded all required documents. If you try to submit an application that is missing required items, you will see an error message at the top of the page. 2. Click “Save and Close” at the bottom of the application 3. Click “Submit” 4. A window titled “Note for Submit” will appear. You do not need to enter a note. Just click “OK.” 5. If your application is complete, it will be submitted and will now appear in the “Submitted Requests” menu. You cannot edit your application after it has been submitted. You will receive an automated email from ELCA GrantMaker once your application has been submitted. If you do not receive the email, then your application was not successfully submitted.

Contact our team at GlobalScholars@elca.org if you have any questions or to confirm that your application has been received.
