

Missionaries Raising Money?

The Genesis of the Network Supported Missionary Model

Updated May 2016

WHITE PAPER SYNOPSIS

The current involvement of missionaries in establishing and building relationships with funding partners prior to deployment traces its roots back to at least 2002. Owing to cultural and economic shifts both in the United States and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod since the end of World War II, and by the economic recession following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the decision was made to bring missionaries closer to their funding partners prior to deployment. The economic shifts included the erosion of purchasing power by inflation, recessions, rising health care and regulatory compliance costs for the congregations and other entities of the Synod as well as the decline in denominational membership as it affects giving locally. The cultural shifts included the change from giving unrestricted charitable contributions to designating donations for specific use, a pattern which goes beyond the LCMS.

The Network Supported Missionary model (NSM), adopted by the LCMS Board for Mission Services in 2008, following a period of study and testing in the wake of a recall of missionaries in 2002-03, is working. Its chief benefit is placing donors closer to the beneficiaries of their contributions. Its primary function is to ensure the identification of financial sponsors for each missionary ahead of the actual deployment of that missionary to the field. That said, the involvement of missionaries in building relationships with the church goes back as far as the 1920s and '30s.

Concerns that missionaries do not receive any help or support from the national headquarters of the Synod are common, but do not match the facts. The NSM model for the LCMS is a coordinated effort involving the Office of International Mission (or Office of National Mission), LCMS Communications, Mission Advancement, and the individual missionary or missionary family. Funds raised or received are the result of a coordinated effort involving missionaries, Synod employees and resources, and the network. The primary purpose of the NSM approach is not to raise dollars only but rather to build a network of partners capable of sustaining financial support for a missionary over the long haul, ideally until the natural conclusion of his or her service, and to provide accountability and joy to the sponsors who voluntarily offer charitable funding.

Audited financial statements for Fiscal Year 2015 are used in the White Paper to graphically lay out the Synod's national office financial operation in terms of both unrestricted (undesignated) and restricted (donor-designated) income, and how those types of dollars are spent by the Synod to fulfill and balance the expectations laid on it by both church and state. Several missionary- and fund-raising-related questions are addressed.

Two resolutions passed at the 1981 and 2013 Synod conventions provide additional context for how the Synod's national office has formally adapted to cultural and economic shifts over time in terms of funding its missionaries.

The White Paper, "Missionaries Raising Money? The Genesis of the Network Supported Missionary Model," is publicly available as a downloadable PDF document at www.lcms.org/missionarysupport

LCMS Network Supported Missionary Model Quick Reference

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Fiscal Year	NSM Funding Expectation (Budget)	Actual Raised/Given
FY2013	\$ 6,653,580	\$ 9,266,823
FY2014	\$ 8,489,245	\$11,515,796
FY2015	\$10,010,928	\$11,988,557
FY2016	\$17,645,795	<i>TBD</i>
FY2017	\$16,580,222	--

Strategic Issue

In addition to recruiting and deploying LCMS missionaries to the field (international and domestic), how can the LCMS financially sustain its treasured missionaries in the field until the natural conclusion of their service?

History

The Network Supported Missionary (NSM) model was adopted by the LCMS Board for Mission Services on April 16, 2008, after 28 missionary positions were cut in 2003. The adoption of NSM followed a successful pilot trial run of the new model in 2006. The official encouragement of donor-designated contributions to support for specific missionaries goes back to at least 1981.

Synod, Inc. Involvement in the NSM Model

- LCMS Communications – *materials, resources, consulting, promotion of missionaries*
- Mission Advancement – *materials, monitoring, training and consulting, scheduling, research, active fundraising, renewal fundraising, gift processing and receipting, network analysis, donor (sponsor) records management*
- Synod Accounting – *monitoring, reporting, donated funds management*
- Office of International Mission/National Mission – *Recruiting, calling/appointments, training and orientation, monitoring, policies, oversight, deployment authorization*

Deployment Benchmarks

- Broad network base evident (multiple sponsors, multiple giving levels)
- Good balance of single (annual) gifts, multi-year pledges and automatic recurring gifts
- Field is ready for the missionary to deploy; all required papers in order (visas, work permits, etc.)
- Cash and pledges equal to 70 to 75 percent of annual position costs in place within the first six months

Costs and Revenue Policies

- 100 percent of donated funds are credited to the selected missionary's unique NSM account (fund)
- Missionary NSM account bears a small portion of the costs of advancement services; other donors/revenues fund the rest of advancement services costs (total is around 10 percent of position financial profile)
- Surplus funds given to support an active missionary are carried over into the next fiscal year
- Internal policies govern the use of any surplus designated funds after a missionary concludes his or her service

Benefits

- Donors (network sponsors) are directly connected to a missionary; provide prayer support
- Accountability for donated funds delivered directly back to the network sponsors
- Missionaries come to know those who supply necessary financial resources and prayers
- Missionaries (re)assured the Synod is committed to their service over the long haul

Risks/Challenges

- Expectation that the missionary will provide accountability for the financial support given
- Possible delayed deployment in cases where a strong network is difficult to establish
- The model depends almost entirely on tightly restricted (donor-designated) contributions
- Loyalty between donor and missionary means missionaries prematurely leaving the field could take network sponsors with them or leave sponsors disgruntled