

Synod Mission Grants

Local Church Mission Projects

A guide to applying for financial support

1. Background and Purpose

These notes are to help churches apply for financial support for any local church mission initiatives that are covered by the funds which Southern Synod has designated for mission. There is a separate process for drawing on the Manse Fund.

Synod Together in March 2019 agreed to consolidate the Synod's discretionary resources into two main funds: the Strategic Mission Fund and the Church Buildings Fund. Applications to the Strategic Mission Fund will be considered by a Strategic Mission Fund Panel; applications to the Church Buildings Fund will be considered by the Property Committee.

2. Outline of Application Process

Applications can come from a local church, a group of churches or from Synod Council. A church with a vision for a project that might seek funding is strongly encouraged to contact the relevant synod staff member (as set out below) as early as possible in their thinking. This person can help ensure the application is handled in the most efficient and effective way; they can assist you in preparing the correct details in the application and providing the relevant documents to succeed in your request. The Synod staff are there to help you: use them!

In considering whether to apply, the following features are worth bearing in mind:

- All applications must address a clear mission opportunity as laid down in the Synod Mission Criteria.
- For any project, the local church would normally be expected to be making some financial contribution itself.
- An applicant church must be up to date with its Ministry & Mission Fund contributions and have provided its annual statistical return and previous year's audited or examined accounts to the Synod Office.
- The local church does not need to gain formal Synod Area endorsement for an application, although the Synod will normally consult with relevant officers of the Synod Area in assessing applications.
- For a Local Ecumenical Project, this process can be used to apply for URC money but the Synod will consult partner denominations before deciding its response.
- There are no fixed ceilings on the amounts the Funds can contribute in grants or loans, but for 2020 and 2021 it needs to be borne in mind that there is a total of £1m pa available from each Fund across the whole Synod.

3. The Strategic Mission Fund

The purpose of the SMF is to support projects where the money is not to be spent on church buildings.

The Synod is particularly keen to encourage projects that support new growth or work with children and young people, in the traditions of the former New Growth Fund and Turn the Tide schemes.

(a) Work with Children and Young People

The Synod staff member to approach for help is the Children's and Youth Development Officer (CYDO), Tom Hackett cydo@urcsouthern.org.uk.

The aim of the grants in this section is to promote projects that support, advocate and resource ministry with children and young people, including youth ministry posts.

- Grants are for up to £20,000 (up to a maximum of 50% of the total costs) per application per year.
- Grants are made for up to three years, after which churches may reapply for further three-year grants.
- Applications will normally be considered by the Strategic Mission Fund Panel electronically, with a response within one month.

Within one year of a grant being taken up, a report should be submitted by the local church or group of churches to the Strategic Mission Fund Panel Secretary indicating how the project has helped in local mission.

(b) Other Mission Projects

The Strategic Mission Fund can also support missional, people-focused, risk-taking projects which do not fit the criteria in (a) above. Projects might be quite small, and applications are particularly encouraged from churches which have not previously received Synod funding. Larger projects might typically involve the employment of a specialist worker.

The Synod staff member to approach for help is the Mission Development Officer, who will also act as Secretary to the SMF Panel, Martin Hayward, missionofficer@urcsouthern.org.uk

Applications for up to £20,000 will normally be considered electronically and a response given within a month. Larger applications, or ones that raise wider policy issues, will be considered at the periodic meetings of the SMF Panel.

The initial application form can be used for all applications. Where sums in excess of £20,000 are requested, applicants should also be prepared to provide:

- a clear mission statement;
- evidence of an honest appraisal of its situation within the local community in which it will operate;
- confirmation of a thorough investigation of other sources of finance, or of the financial input of partner organisations;
- a detailed and costed plan with full information on the way in which the project will be managed through its development and planning stage, its implementation and its on-going operation.

Applicants for larger grants may also be asked to make a personal presentation to the Strategic Mission Fund Panel as part of the process of seeking approval.

Within one year of a grant being taken up, a report should be submitted by the local church or group of churches to the Strategic Mission Fund Panel Secretary indicating how the project has helped in local mission. For larger projects, the SMF Panel may ask for additional monitoring and will report periodically to Synod Together.

4. The Church Buildings Fund

Applications to the Church Buildings Fund are for building works, including larger building initiatives for which grants and/or loans may be appropriate. Grants for smaller and larger building projects are considered; there is no fixed upper limit for grants or loans. Decisions are taken based on the individual applications but may be constrained by the availability of funds. The main criterion for any grant is the potential effectiveness of the grant in terms of mission opportunity.

The Synod staff member to approach for help is the Synod Property Officer, Colin McCracken property@urcsouthern.org.uk

A number of factors are taken into account in considering whether to make a grant and the level of grant. The factors include:

- the nature of the project;
- the size of the grant requested;
- the commitment made to the proposed project by the congregation;
- an estimate of the medium range viability of the congregation;
- whether a realistic projection of external funding has been assumed.

In general, churches with higher levels of reserves will be expected to make a larger financial contribution to their projects, but it is recognised that (a) there may be good reasons for a high level of reserves, perhaps as savings for future anticipated repair works, and (b) all worthwhile mission projects across the Synod deserve some level of financial support when funds are available. Decisions will be made on the facts of each application.

Applications for up to £20,000 will normally be dealt with electronically by the Property Committee. If approval has already been given by the Committee for the relevant works, the response to the grant and/or loan request should be available within a month. Larger applications, and others that raise wider policy issues, will be considered by the Property Committee at its quarterly meetings. In all cases the Committee will work within the overall CBF resources as agreed with the Finance Committee.

In addition to the normal application process, each church will be allocated £2,000 from the Fund at the beginning of 2020 and 2021 to be claimed against receipts for works carried out to the church property. Receipts should be retained by the church and submitted to the Property Administrator either by post or electronically at the end of the year or when £2,000 has been reached. Monies not claimed by receipt in the year of spend can be carried over to the following calendar year.