SOUTH WEST PENINSULA DISTRICT
The Methodist Church

FIRST STEPS TO A COMPELLING GRANT APPLICATION

A clear, written project outline is the best start-point for raising funds. It doesn't need to be long. Indeed, short and succinct is usually better.

The headings for a project outline below are based on the questions that many grant funders ask. Each grant funder will have their own specific requirements and questions, but if you have a project outline in place at the outset, it is a great start to deciding which funders to approach and having answers ready when you complete application forms.

Introduction to the project

A summary of the project in a paragraph This may be easiest to write at the end.

What is your project?

Outline the details of the overall project you are seeking funding for. For example, a space refurbishment for a youth initiative, a new missional development, a community support project. If it's part of or a phase of a larger project, please also provide an outline of the overall project.

Why your project is important

This is the foundation of your application. What needs will be met (missional, community, heritage or all)? How does your project contribute to your church's or organisation's overall aims, ambitions, and plans? If the grant funder gives you the funds, what difference will the grant make to, for example, worship, the life of church, welcoming new believers, people's wellbeing, alleviating poverty, supporting the arts, improving mental health, reducing loneliness etc.?

A short church or organisation mission and community engagement statement is a great help in identifying why the project is important.

Grant funders are increasingly interested in outcomes. For example, 20 more people will be helped off the street, 50 more families will receive food parcels, 20 new people will receive counselling, 30 people will feel less lonely by attending community lunches, 30 people will attend Sunday morning breakfast for the first time, and 10 new people will join church worship [these are invented as examples].
Outcomes are easier to define towards the end of your planning when you have in mind what your project is and why it's important overall.

Who?

Who will be responsible for what? Relevant background and experience of the key people. How will management and governance operate? Who will undertake day to day tasks? Draft job descriptions can be a useful aid to convincing funders that a project proposal is fully thought through.

Timescales

What is likely to happen and when? If you're not certain at this stage, provide your best estimates. The key thing is to be realistic; there are few projects that don't take longer than expected.

Cost estimates

Best estimates are fine at the outset to start your thinking and planning. Grant funders, however, will be looking for specific, accurate cost information for the elements against which the grant is being sought. Usually this will be required at the time you submit your application.

Costs may be capital (e.g. building, boiler), revenue (e.g. part-time youth worker salary), or both. Some grant funders only offer grants for capital, and others only for revenue.

Funding

Develop an overall funding plan. You won't know at the outset where all the money will come from. However, it's good to have an idea of which grant funders you may approach, how much the circuit or church may be able to put forward, or how funds can be raised from other activities. Most grant providers are happy to see other grants alongside their own. Indeed, most prefer it as it leverages the value of their own funds.

Approvals

Will planning permission, listed building consent, Methodist District, Circuit or Connexion approvals be needed?

Environmental outcomes

Grant providers increasingly seek environmental improvements as part of their grant-making. Ideally, this is in terms of outputs (what the improvements will achieve, e.g. better insulated windows, reduced fuel consumption) and outcomes (e.g. amount of fuel saved, reduction of carbon footprint).

Budgets

The level of detail required in budgets and forecasts is usually related to the scale and complexity of the project. Funders are usually looking to understand the applicant's proposals for future financial and organisational sustainability as well as project specific costs. This also relates to the nature of the project.

To discuss your project, possible sources of funding and application processes, please contact: Alison Gill, District Grants Officer Email: grants@swpmethodist.org.uk
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