

Renewal & Reform: evaluation and dissemination of learning from Strategic Development Funding

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National Church Institutions

- £24m per annum available to dioceses from national funds
- Aim is to make a significant difference to dioceses' financial and mission strength, in line with their strategic plans
- Two-stage application process: a short initial application followed by a project plan
- Builds on experience of previous schemes: proposals need to be based on evidence or clear logic, with clear measures
- Monitoring and evaluation part of the on-going process
- Typical application is around £1m+, over 4-5 years

What sort of projects?

- 24 projects awarded funding – 17 more in pipeline
- Across the Diocese
 - Parish development - Natural Church Development in Coventry
 - Leadership training - Missional leadership for growth programme in Durham
 - Young leadership college in Southwell and Notts
- Re-shaping existing Ministry
 - Children & families mission - Birmingham, Worcester, Hereford
 - Parish turnarounds & interim ministry - Chelmsford, Carlisle
 - Growing the rural church - Exeter, Carlisle
- Investing in the growth of new churches
 - Resource churches - Derby, Southwell and Notts
 - Church planting strategies - London, Chichester, Birmingham
 - Pioneer ministry and fxC - Leicester, Portsmouth, Southwark

What sort of measures?

- Lag measures (mostly outcomes)
 - Attendance, new disciples, congregational demographics (age groups)
 - Training outcomes (licenced ministers, incumbents)
 - New fxC (numbers)
 - Financial measures eg increased giving, improved parish share collection
- Lead Measures (mostly outputs, some outcomes)
 - New churches/worshipping communities planted
 - Explorers' / Discovery courses run
 - Participants in early stages of training
- Proxies for those difficult to measure items...
 - Discipleship growth – personal giving, taking on leadership, volunteer numbers, small groups, prayer opportunities, occasional office take-up
 - Survey data – Resource Churches, Natural Church Development

Developing a learning culture - I

- Ensuring we capture **learning** as well as **data**
- Format of monitoring and evaluation asks:
 - What was done (activity, outputs)
 - What was achieved (outcomes)
 - What went well / less well
 - What aspects of the approach were changed
 - What key lessons were learned / what advice would you give others?
- As important to record what did not work – and ask why?
- Things may work in one context and not in others – why?
- We need to be able to take more risks and accept “good failure”
- “Ownership” of measures is important

Developing a learning culture - 2

- Ensuring the evaluation outputs can be used
 - Applied research rather than theoretical (good practice, new models)
 - Good measures can help clarify the project: “How will we know if our prayers are answered (what are we praying for?)”
 - Good measures can improve the methodology: “How will the activity deliver its outcomes?” (eg numerical growth requires intentional evangelism)
- Learning is about more than just the activities
 - A lot of learning is about implementation – how to do things well
 - Project skills and long-term planning already highlighted
 - The importance of focus
 - Even the application process can be developmental, in the right spirit!

Developing a learning culture - 3

- Diocesan Peer review
 - Encouraging self-reflection (in confidence)
 - Captures wider lessons and context
 - Mutual Accountability by Peers
- Learning Communities
 - Structured discussions on strategy / planning for change
 - Good environments to share, challenge, reflect and learn (if well run)
- Continuous learning
 - Plan, do, measure, respond
- Learning ideally needs to feed into training / development

Dissemination

- Dissemination in our diffuse structures is vital – but not easy
- Need to think about audiences
 - New Philanthropy Capital project: who is going to use the output – and how?
 - Visionaries, Champions, Gatekeepers – eg senior leadership
 - Deliverers - mostly practitioners
 - Reflections on how we develop/champion ideas (we're not very methodical)
- Types of material
 - Short, pithy material - to alert and to influence wide range of audiences but senior leaders especially eg presentations, papers, videos, case studies, web material
 - Practitioner-to-practitioner learning through seminars, events, training, web-learning
 - Developing inter-diocesan opportunities (and using existing opportunities better)

- It's still early days and we're on a learning curve
- But we are learning already, and often in areas we weren't expecting...
 - ...this includes the application process of SDF itself
 - ...how we champion and develop ideas – and put them into action
 - the importance of addressing communication and culture change
- If we take more calculated risks, we should expect some 'good' failures
- We need to be prepared to act on learning (ie do things differently)