

Strategic Development Funding

Application Process

Questions and Answers

We have provided below some answers to some commonly asked questions about the Strategic Development Funding, which we hope are helpful.

We are very happy to discuss any of the points below or other queries that you may have: please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Overview

What is the aim of the Strategic Development Funding?

The Strategic Development Funding aims to make a significant difference to dioceses' long-term mission and/or financial strength. It complements the formula-based Lowest Income Communities Funding, by providing an injection of money to support investment in plans for growth and change, in line with dioceses' strategies.

The Strategic Development Funding was introduced in 2014. The Resourcing the Future strategy (www.churchofengland.org/renewal-reform/resourcing-the-future.aspx) set out the thinking behind the changes, which have now been incorporated in the Renewal and Reform process. As from 2017, 50% of the national funds available for dioceses are earmarked for the support and development of mission in the lowest income communities; and 50% of the funds are available for dioceses as strategic development funding for investment in new growth opportunities across the country.

Who can apply for Strategic Development Funding?

All dioceses are eligible to apply for Strategic Development Funding.

Can we apply for funding jointly with one or more other dioceses?

Yes, dioceses may make joint applications for funding for regional projects. We suggest this is best done by appointing one diocese who will act as the lead and be responsible for putting in the application (and responding to any questions we might have).

Why do you operate a two-stage application process for Strategic Development Funding?

Our aim is to reduce the burden on dioceses by having a comparatively short first-stage application process. This reduces the risk that dioceses will spend time and resources on an unsuccessful application. We can provide early feedback to dioceses and discuss with them the further development of their proposals if they are invited to proceed to the second stage. We can also provide advice to those re-thinking their applications (possibly for a different approach) for a subsequent tranche of funding, if their first-stage application is not successful.

What advice is available to my diocese in making an application for Strategic Development Funding?

If you are thinking about putting in an application, please speak to us first about what is involved in making an application.

If, having discussed your thoughts with us, you decide to proceed with an application, we are available at any stage to discuss your diocese's developing thinking, either in person or on the phone, and to look at your diocese's (first or second stage) application in draft before you finalise it. This does not guarantee the application's success, of course, but we will do our best to advise from experience and give an honest view as a 'critical friend'.

What is the process for awarding SDF grants and who is responsible for making the decisions?

At both stages, proposals are assessed first by a staff group, whose recommendations then go to the Strategic Investment Board¹ for consideration. The Board must take account of the staff group's recommendations but they are not bound by them.

The staff group comprises: the National Mission & Evangelism Adviser; the Director of Ministry Division; the Director of the Strategy & Development Unit; and the Head of Funding. Other colleagues may be asked to contribute depending on the specific proposals.

If a member of the Board has professional or personal links to a diocese making a SDF application, s/he will not take part in the assessment of the application for funding.

I am concerned that my diocese does not have sufficient expertise to put a SDF application together. What should I do?

Please talk to us first. The process is not about submitting an application that is 'polished' enough: recommendations and decisions on SDF grants are based solely on the content of the application, and not on its style.

If you have more fundamental concerns about strategic capacity, you may wish to discuss the possibility of applying for funding to help develop strategic capacity, prior to making a SDF application.

Do we have to provide "match funding" for the project?

No - not in the sense of matching exactly the amount of funds applied for. However, it is expected that your diocese will make at least some financial contribution to demonstrate its commitment to the project. In general, the greater a diocese's resources, the larger the financial commitment it will be expected to make, but there is no formula about what amount each diocese should contribute.

¹ The Board's members are: John Spence (Chair (Chair of the Archbishops' Council's Finance Committee)), (from 1/11/17) Loretta Minghella (First Church Estates Commissioner), Cherry Vann (Archdeacon of Rochdale, Archbishops' Council member), James Harrison (Archbishops' Council member), Matthew Frost (Archbishops' Council member) Bishop of Manchester (Church Commissioner), Ian Watmore (Church Commissioner), Viv Faull (Dean of York), Katherine McPherson (Strategy & Marketing Director, FieldFisher LLP).

Can my diocese apply for SDF during an episcopal vacancy?

Yes, but we would encourage you to think carefully about the extent to which your diocesan strategy is fully developed and embedded across the diocese. It may be preferable to wait until a new diocesan bishop is in place so that s/he can help to shape the diocese's future strategy and any potential application for SDF. Staff from the Strategy & Development Unit will be very happy to discuss the timing of your application with you.

My diocese wishes to apply for a SDF grant but the proposal will cover some highly sensitive issues. Can our application be considered in confidence?

Yes. We fully recognise that there will be occasions when it will be necessary for staff and the Strategic Investment Board to consider applications and make decisions in confidence.

How long can we seek funding for?

The funding period will depend on the type of project that you propose: it is crucial to ensure that there is a realistic timetable. The projects that have been supported to date are being funded typically for between 3 and 5 years but there is a lot of flexibility (albeit up to a maximum of 6 years). We will be happy to discuss the funding period with you.

What size of grant can we apply for?

Awards have varied in size from just over £0.6m upwards. Clearly the exact amount will depend on the project itself, and how much towards the overall project costs the diocese is able to contribute. Larger sums will, of course, be subject to appropriate scrutiny.

Can we apply for more than one grant at a time?

Only one application can be made per funding round. However, we hope that dioceses will think in terms of a "pipeline" of applications over a number of rounds to help deliver their strategies. This could include expanding or repeating work that had proved particularly fruitful.

Can we apply for funding if we are already in receipt of Strategic Development Funding?

Yes. We encourage you to apply regularly for SDF, irrespective of how long it will take to spend out any funding you receive. When you put forward a funding application, don't think of it as a one-off but, rather, as one of a long-term pipeline of applications to help your diocese take forward its strategy. You may apply for funding in consecutive funding tranches. In time we hope that SDF will be supporting more than one project or activity at a time in most dioceses – although dioceses will need to ensure they have the capacity to manage effectively more than one large-scale project or activity at a time.

Use of the Funding

Does the National Church set specific themes for the use of the Strategic Development Funding?

There are no set themes for the use of the Strategic Development Funding because the intention is to support dioceses in delivering their individual strategies for increasing their long-term mission and/or financial strength.

That said, the Archbishops' Council has expressed the hope that a good number of proposals will seek to address the pressing need for the Church to engage with children, young people and young adults.

Can you give some examples of the kinds of approach that might be supported by SDF to make a significant difference to mission strength?

These could include, for example:

- Investment in church planting and the creation of new congregations (e.g. through Fresh Expressions of Church)
- Development of Resource Churches in city or large town centres
- Realising mission opportunities in areas of historic under-investment
- Restructuring current ministry patterns for growth
- 'Turn-around' ministry
- Mission to under-represented groups, eg children, young people, young adults and families
- Tackling other obstacles to growth (e.g. building issues)
- Clergy/lay training and development

What sort of projects is SDF currently supporting?

SDF is supporting a wide range of projects covering children's and families work; church planting and fresh expressions of Church; developing leaders for growth; digital evangelism; pioneer ministry; mission to young adults; turnaround work and interim ministry; whole-life discipleship for growth; youth work.

Summaries of all the projects supported by SDF can be found on the Renewal & Reform pages on the Church of England website [here](#).

Do we have to put forward a proposal that is completely new and innovative?

Whilst we welcome innovative and creative approaches, there is no presumption in favour of the innovative or the 'new' in preference to approaches which are rooted in experience. For every project, we would expect there to be evidence or clear logic as to how the project will deliver its desired outcomes.

Can we apply for funding for posts that already exist?

No. The key principle of SDF is additionality – i.e. the funding that a diocese needs beyond its own resources to take forward its strategic plans. Reductions in a particular area of the diocese’s expenditure may be relevant to the content of a SDF application. For example, the currently anticipated reduction in clergy numbers may create headroom in a diocese’s budget to enable it to meet some of those costs itself, but the precise situation will vary between dioceses. If in doubt, please talk your plans through with us first.

Can we apply for funding for administration and other support costs, as well as for frontline mission and ministry costs?

Yes.

Can we include a project manager as part of the costs?

Yes. Such posts are often crucial to the success of a major project and an early appointment in the project planning stages can assist preparedness if and when SDF funding is awarded.

The Strategic Investment Board have made some funding from SDF available for dioceses to develop their strategic capacity. The aim is to help dioceses ensure that the right combination and depth of skills, knowledge and experience are in place to deliver the activity, and includes, but is not limited to, project management. Further information on Strategic Capacity Funding is available [here](#).

Can our funding proposal include a capital element, e.g. to support the costs of a new, or works to an existing, church building?

SDF is not primarily a capital grant scheme. Proposals which include a capital element should be integral to the proposal for funding and will be assessed on the outcomes that your diocese anticipates will be achieved by the activity to be supported.

Can we apply for funding for a project to support mission in new housing areas?

Yes, but your strategy would need to demonstrate how the diocese is tackling the key challenges which it faces in existing areas of population (for example, low attendance per capita in existing parishes or areas of historic under-investment) as well, and not just those presented by new housing areas. Your application should reflect the learning from the national Church’s 2008-10 funding stream to support mission in new housing and other development areas, a summary of which can be found [here](#).

Can we apply for funding for education projects?

So long as there is a clear link to mission and growth, projects relating to education can be considered – and will, as in all cases, be assessed on the outcomes your diocese anticipates from the activity to be supported by the application.

Can we apply for additional curacies?

This will depend on the proposal. In some cases, additionality may be relevant – ie the anticipated fall in the number of stipendiary clergy may create headroom in diocesan

budgets to fund additional ordination training and curacies, but we recognise that this will not always apply. If in doubt, please talk your plans through with us first.

Strategy & Development Unit
Church House
London SW1

August 2017