

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 overall goal of the Strategic Development Funding is to support dioceses' investment in the growth of the Church. The Funding supports major change programmes which:

- Fit with dioceses' strategic plans; and
- Make a significant difference to their mission and financial strength.

In 2020-22, the Strategic Development Funding will support projects which are in line with the goal above and

- Are targeted on promoting church growth within the largest urban areas; and one or both of younger generations and deprived communities;
- Involve numerical growth and growth in discipleship and social impact;
- Are genuinely additional to what the diocese can currently afford; and
- Have plans to sustain and multiply growth over time.

Who can apply for Strategic Development Funding?

All dioceses are eligible to apply for Strategic Development Funding. However, funding in 2020-22 is being targeted to tackle some of the Church's key strategic challenges. As a first step, please discuss with us whether your diocese should apply for the work it has in mind.

The Strategic Investment Board (which is responsible on behalf of the Archbishops' Council for distributing the Strategic Development Funding) warmly welcomes applications from dioceses for projects involving every Church tradition.

How is 'largest urban areas' defined?

The areas with a population of over 100,000 as listed on the website [here](#) would all be considered for funding. There may be cases where an area (e.g. a group of large deprived towns or outer estates of significant deprivation) fall outside one of the named urban areas listed. We are happy to discuss these with you.

In targeting the funding towards large urban areas, the Board will consider funding for other areas, but only if a particularly strong case is made. We are happy to discuss this with you.

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

In principle, yes, we are open to dioceses making joint applications for funding for regional projects. If you are considering this, please get in touch with us at the outset to discuss your ideas.

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 to discuss your ideas. Each diocese has a nominated individual partner in the Strategic Development Unit, who will work with you as you develop your proposal, providing advice on how best to develop and present your ideas, and ensuring, as far as we can, that the content will meet all the areas covered by the assessment criteria (the criteria are listed on pages 4-5 of the overall SDF guidance [here](#)).

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 takes account of the staff group's recommendations, but they are not bound by them.

The staff group currently comprises members of the Strategy & Development Unit and senior staff from other parts of the National Church Institutions.

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 decision-making on the application for funding.

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

This is not in itself a barrier to submitting an application. We are here to help, so please talk to us about any plans that you may have.

If you have more fundamental concerns about strategic capacity, we are happy to discuss the scope for applying for funding to help develop strategic capacity. Further information on Strategic Capacity Funding is available [here](#).

¹ The Board's members are: John Spence (Chair & Chair of the Archbishops' Council's Finance Committee), Loretta Minghella (First Church Estates Commissioner), Mark Sheard (Archbishops' Council member), James Harrison (Archbishops' Council member), Matthew Frost (Archbishops' Council member) Bishop of Manchester (Church Commissioner), Lord Richard Best (Church Commissioner), Katherine McPherson (Strategy & Marketing Director, FieldFisher LLP), Deborah Rowland (Director, Still Moving Consultancy Ltd).

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 be willing to commit significant financial resources to the project which are proportionate to its historic and current wealth. Applications should provide a rationale for the level of funding included, and the Board will look at this as part of its overall assessment. 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.

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. We will be very happy to discuss the timing of your application with you.

My diocese wishes to apply for an 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 flexibility (up to a maximum funding period of 6 years). We will be happy to discuss this with you.

What size of grant can we apply for?

Awards have varied in size, as clearly the exact amount will depend on the project itself, alongside 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 funding if we are already in receipt of Strategic Development Funding?

Yes. Funding is aimed at helping your diocese take forward its strategy, and we recognise that this may be best delivered over time by more than one proposal. You may apply for funding in consecutive funding tranches.

Use of the Funding

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

Yes, in 2020-22, the funding will be targeted on promoting church growth within the largest urban areas; and one or both of younger generations and deprived communities.

What sort of projects is SDF currently supporting?

SDF is available for any kind of growth model – as long as there is evidence for and a logic to its effectiveness. To date, SDF has supported a wide range of projects, covering children's and families work; mission to young adults; work addressing deprived areas; pioneer ministry; church planting and fresh expressions of Church; developing leaders for growth; digital evangelism; turnaround work and interim ministry; whole-life discipleship for growth; youth work.

These projects have involved a variety of different Church traditions, and the Strategic Investment Board is actively encouraging more applications from dioceses for projects involving every Church tradition.

The Board is also keen that projects supported by SDF play an active part in contributing to increased diversity amongst church leaders.

A list 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 convincing logic as to how the project will deliver its desired outcomes.

Proposals which are innovative and have the potential for delivering a major strategic impact, may be eligible for **Innovation Funding**. The application criteria and guidance are currently being developed, but the aim is that this funding will support approaches which would benefit from an initial trial, further development, piloting on a wider scale or being tried in a different context.

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. 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 programme or project manager as part of the costs?

Yes. Such posts have demonstrated their value to the success of projects and are now a requirement for projects supported by the Strategic Development Funding. An early appointment in the project planning stages can assist preparedness if, and when, SDF funding is awarded.

The Strategic Investment Board has made some funding from SDF available for dioceses to develop their strategic capacity where this is needed. 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, programme or 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 should be additional (i.e. to make the building fit for purpose for a new undertaking). The proposals will be assessed on the outcomes that your diocese anticipates will be achieved by the activity to be supported.

SDF is not available for purchasing property.

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

Potentially: projects involving areas of new-build housing need to recognise the risks that can arise from delays in planning and construction, which have been an issue with some existing projects. In any such application, the new housing needs to form part of the largest urban areas and the project must be targeted on one or both of younger generations and deprived communities – and it will be important to explain how you are addressing mission to existing communities with low levels of church attendance.

We will be happy to discuss such proposals with you, based on our experience of some recent SDF projects, and the learning from the national Church's 2008-10 funding for mission in new housing and other development areas (a summary of which can be found [here](#)).

Can we apply for funding for projects involving schools?

So long as there is a clear link to mission and growth, projects involving schools and which align schools with churches and families in line with the Church's Growing Faith vision² 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 funding.

² <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/GS%202121.pdf>

Can we apply for funding for chaplaincies?

Yes, where these are additional posts fully integrated into the SDF proposal, i.e. fit with dioceses' strategic plans; and make a significant difference to their mission and financial strength.

Can we apply for additional curacies?

Yes, in some circumstances. **Strategic Ministry Funding** has been established to support dioceses with the cost of deploying additional stipendiary curates resulting from the Church-wide goal to increase the number of ordinands by 50%. Information on the Strategic Ministry Fund can be found [here](#).

However, we recognise that some dioceses will want greater flexibility around their plans and we encourage these to apply through the Strategic Development Funding process. Some examples might be a diocese appointing curates as part of a wider strategic programme for investment in line with the aims of the Strategic Development Funding or a context-focused inter-diocesan scheme for deployment in inner cities.

Sustainability Funding is available in 2020-22 for dioceses with financial difficulties wishing to undertake major programmes to provide a platform for the Church's sustainable growth. Such programmes could include additional curacies.

Please get in touch with us first to talk through your plans, to decide which is the most appropriate funding route.

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July 2019