

# Innovation Funding

## Guidance Note

### Introduction

1. 2020 has seen the development of the Vision and Strategy for the next ten years for the whole of the Church. This has happened as over the course of the last 12 months the Church has shown resilience and innovation in the light of Covid-19, for example with trends towards digitalisation accelerated. The challenges facing the Church today require new and innovative solutions, alongside tried and tested approaches, in order to advance mission among people across the whole of the country. The Strategic Investment Board hopes that the launch of this funding will encourage and nurture further innovation that supports mission and growth as new ideas are tested and further answers found to the challenges facing the Church.
2. Those applying for Innovation Funding will need to demonstrate creativity and innovation alongside strong project management disciplines to provide the Board with the confidence that projects have the potential to create a step change in missional growth, with the learning processes in place necessary to benefit the whole Church.
3. The Strategic Investment Board has agreed that £4.8m of Strategic Development Funding (SDF) should be put aside in 2021-22 to support innovation. Grants will be of the order of £100,000-£250,000 and awarded for periods of up to three years.
4. This note sets out the aims of the Innovation Funding, as well as the application process and detailed guidance to the application form.

### Innovation Funding: Aims

5. In line with the Vision and Strategy, the aim of the Innovation Funding is to support limited-scale projects which will **generate learning about 'good growth'**, i.e. growth which
  - increases the number of new disciples,
  - enhances the quality of discipleship,
  - grows the impact of the Church's social engagement work.

**or**

  - increases and diversifies the number of leaders in the church
6. Innovation Funding aims to test the assumptions we make about how or why growth may or may not occur. Applications will need to demonstrate how their proposal will provide the learning necessary to ensure these assumptions are fully understood, so that they can be confidently applied to future projects, leading to growth beyond the project in question.
7. **Evaluation will be a critical part of proposals** – we will need to be clear what mission methodology is being tested in the project; and measure not only the desired outcomes of the project but whether learning is being effectively captured and disseminated.
8. In practice, we expect that this will involve funding projects seeking to:
  - Try a new approach, based on a clear methodology explaining how the inputs and activities will lead to the proposed outcomes;
  - Adapt an approach already developed successfully in a different context (e.g. from one church tradition to another, or from city centres to estates);
  - Scale up a model already developed successfully at very small scale.

9. In addition, where a project is already funded from other sources and meets the criteria set out above, the Board will consider applications for additional monitoring and evaluation activities to further support growth across the Church.

10. The Church of England's Vision and Strategy has set strategic priorities for the church to become younger and more diverse, a church of missionary disciples and a church where mixed ecology is the norm. In the light of this Innovation Funding will support projects which focus on at least one of the following groups among whom church engagement is low:

- Younger people and children
- In lower income communities
- UKME/GMH populations communities

11. Decisions on applications for Innovation Funding will be made by the Strategic Investment Board<sup>1</sup>, on behalf of the Archbishops' Council.

## Eligibility

12. Dioceses and non-diocesan organisations (such as mission agencies) are eligible to apply. Funding will not be made available to support activities which dioceses could reasonably fund themselves. To ensure projects come under the appropriate episcopal authority, a parish receiving funds must do so through an application from the diocese, and finances will be transferred to the diocese rather than a parish directly.

## Before you apply

13. Any organisation proposing to apply should discuss their ideas at the earliest opportunity with a member of the Strategy and Development Unit, to enable the Unit to provide support, advice and guidance as required; and to avoid nugatory effort and disappointment. Applications which have not been discussed with the SDU prior to their submission will not be considered.

## Application process

14. There is a single-stage application process. There will be one funding round in 2021 and two funding rounds in 2022. Applications will be considered in comparison with each other by the SIB as it is possible that demand for funding will exceed the funding available. There is no guarantee that your application will be successful. The first tranche of funding will be awarded in the autumn of 2021. The timetable for applications in 2021-22 is below.

Deadline for application submission	Dioceses notified of outcome
12 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	9 <sup>th</sup> December 2021
15 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2022
23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2022	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2022

15. The application process is described below. We have also produced some **question-and-answer guidance** to provide some answers to commonly asked questions.

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

## Learning & Evaluation

16. Capturing learning is a vital part of any project as the aim of the funding is to try new ideas and find answers to challenges facing the Church. To support you in making sure that insights are being recorded and to help inform decisions you make throughout the project we will help you to develop a measurement framework.

17. The Strategy and Development unit will support you throughout the life of the project by regular contact with their SDU Delivery Lead. This will include informal updates, and project board attendance, as well as a formal annual review, and end of project evaluation report to capture the learnings and to inform any further funding applications for similar projects. You will also be expected to share learning with other interested stakeholders. Projects tackling similar issues or working across similar demographics will be encouraged to participate in learning hubs to strengthen design and provide an additional mechanism for learning to be applied.

## Application Form Guidance

18. The SDU will discuss your application with you, as you develop it using the following structure. Once your application has been discussed with the SDU you will be invited to attend a workshop to help you develop your application before it is submitted.

### Strategic Context

19. The section on the **strategic context** (typically about a page) needs to explain how the proposal aims to test solutions to a larger issue or question within the Church. In particular this means including:

- Some analysis that identifies the key strategic challenges being tackled by this proposal: ie what issue is the proposal aiming to address?
- the key areas and demographics that it is hoped to reach, highlighting how these align with the strategic priorities of growing the church in large urban areas, among younger generations or in deprived areas and also highlighting any additional focus on other priority groups (e.g. UKME/GMH or those who are disabled).

### Proposal

20. The **proposal section** should include:

- A clearly articulated Mission Theory/Theory of Change and the assumptions to be tested.
- The type of interventions and proposed activities, and how these lead to planned outcomes.
- How the proposed project addresses the need for promoting church growth amongst groups with lower church engagement.
- What learning, evidence or experience that has informed the development of the proposal.
- A broad project timeline which provides flexibility to ensure activities are adaptive and based on the learning being captured.
- How the proposed programme has emerged from prayerful discernment.
- Where the project involves recruitment, the job descriptions for those roles as appendices.

21. A key element will be demonstrating that applicants have a clear understanding of how the proposed activities or actions have a good chance of yielding the desired outcomes (i.e. evidence and/or a clear and credible methodology).

22. As the grants in this grant scheme are of a shorter duration (1-3 years) it is vital to deliver the project within the original timescale. You will need to be able to demonstrate that your project can start promptly should funding be awarded.

## Outcomes

23. The **outcomes section** should describe the changes you hope to see and how you plan to measure them. Outcomes should be measurable and focused on mission and growth, including for example; growth in disciples, discipleship, vocations and sustainability. This section should provide a clear linkage between numerical growth and growth in discipleship, and (where appropriate) social impact, and explain how the proposed project will achieve these.

24. Please demonstrate how you will measure these outcomes during the lifespan of the project, including your milestones, measures and measurement framework.

25. How will the learning you capture be used to provide additional opportunities for growth, either through scaling up your model, or applying it to different contexts.

## What do you hope to learn from this project?

26. The Innovation Fund is intended to support the testing of ideas on a smaller scale to find solutions for the strategic challenges from the Vision and Strategy. What are the questions you are hoping to answer through this project?

## What Next?

27. How do you propose to share the learning. If your methodology proves to be effective how might your diocese or mission agency scale up or replicate the project, so that it might have wider impact. If your methodology does not prove effective how will you share your experience with others to ensure growth can occur elsewhere?

## Self- assessment

28. This section looks at whether your organisation has the experience and capacity to carry out the projected plans and interventions.

29. Please describe the governance arrangements for this project including, who will run the day to day project oversight and how the project will be held accountable.

## Diocesan Leadership Support

30. If you are a diocese applying, who in your Senior Leadership is sponsoring the project? How do they plan to support it and enable it during its lifespan?

31. If you are a non-diocesan organisation, which dioceses are you working with to implement this project (the aim of this is to provide assurance that, if the project should prove successful, there is a strong likelihood that the learning will be adopted and implemented within the Church)? This will include who in the Diocese's senior leadership is supporting your plans, and what are your arrangements for ensuring that you continue to work as a team for the life of the project.

32. Please include a budget for the life of the project.

33. If you are considering seeking support for the project from other funders we will discuss this with you.

## Assessment Criteria

34. Proposals for funding will be assessed against the criteria set out below:

- How well the proposal meets at least one of the strategic priorities for funding (e.g. mission in large urban areas, among younger generations or in deprived areas).

- The project has a clear Mission Theory/Theory of Change and has demonstrated it understands the assumptions around growth which it is making and how these will be tested.
- There is a holistic approach to mission and growth within the proposal.
- Clarity about the learning that is sought through the project, a commitment to a culture of evaluation and accountability, and a plan for how insights will be captured and disseminated.
- Where the proposal is from a non-diocesan organisation, it is actively supported by the senior leadership team in the diocese(s) in which the project will take place.
- The skills and experience of those running the project and plans for additional expertise if required.
- A proposal for how the project will, if successful, be replicated or scaled up.

35. If several projects apply with interventions to tackle similar issues, priority will be given to the application which most strongly demonstrates how learning will be captured and disseminated.

36. We will acknowledge all applications and write to each applicant as soon as we can after the assessment to let them know the outcome.

### Further Information

37. If you have any queries, or are considering developing an application, please contact Ben Keenan on 020 7898 1583 or via email at: [ben.keenan@churchofengland.org](mailto:ben.keenan@churchofengland.org).

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