

Partnership, Innovation and Research funding

Funding guidelines

1. Background

In 2023-25, the Triennium Funding Working Group has recommended allocations of £13m to partnerships and for national infrastructure and research, learning and innovation, summarised as grants under People and Partnerships Funding (PPF). The original figure was developed from scaling the previous budget for Innovation Funding, Research, Evaluation and Dissemination, and R&R programme funding to the level of the new funding programme.

Overall, the funding line recognises that there are specific priorities which will support the Vision and Strategy's bold outcomes which are best addressed through national cross-cutting investment. The funds should be seen as part of the whole investment in the Vision and Strategy at national level, alongside funding to support dioceses, and funding to develop leaders also held nationally.

There are specific gaps where the sum of diocesan efforts will be insufficient to achieve the bold outcomes or where there are significant barriers to achieving the outcomes. This element will fund partners and networks to scale up or innovate, to better support the local church in delivering the bold outcomes. Using research and evaluation to share learning will further enable the Church's Vision & Strategy to become a reality in local parishes and communities. The approach builds on lessons learned from innovation funding pilots and from investments made through SDF which have invested in the capacity of non-diocesan partners (e.g. HeartEdge, The Society), and funding for data infrastructure (lay ministry survey, Church Development Tool).

2. Funding Strategy

Supplementing the investment directly available for dioceses, Partnership and Innovation funding will fund partners and networks to scale up or innovate, to better support the local church in delivering the bold outcomes, and enable the Church's Vision & Strategy to become a reality in local parishes and communities.

Partnerships funding element - The specific purpose of this funding is to address a gap or barrier that currently inhibits delivery of the Church's Vision and Strategy. This funding will expand, scale, or replicate an approach already developed successfully ('**Partnership**');

Research, Innovation and Learning element – The specific purpose of this funding is to support experimentation and learning in overcoming critical missional challenges, that inhibit the delivery of the bold outcomes. This funding will try a new approach, based on a clear methodology explaining how the inputs and activities will lead to the proposed outcomes ('**Innovation**');

The **principles** which govern the programme are as follows:

- *Relational & supportive* – Active partnership with external partners' and local church leaders, working together to enhance programme plans and being Spirit-led
- *Transparent & honest* – Openness about decision-making processes to maintain trust, and a commitment to share the lessons of funding (successes and failures) to maximise its impact

- *Intentional* – Funding is linked to a plan setting out what change is anticipated and how it will be achieved
- *Empowering* – Those receiving funding are helped to build capacity so they are in a better position to lead and sustain frontline mission
- *Evidence-based and realistic* – Respecting local knowledge, decisions about funding are based on high-quality evidence integrated with practitioners’ understanding of their context
- *Humility, recognising this is God’s work* – Recognising success is dependent on God, excited and curious to learn what God will do, and trying to share our own skills with humility

3. Accessing Funding

There will be three types of proposal under this funding:

a. Partnerships funding

In the triennium 2023-2025, it has been agreed by the Archbishops’ Council (paper AC(22)68) that funding granted to external partnerships by the new Board will prioritise partners supporting the bold outcome around young people, with a limited number of partners asked to submit proposals in response to specific challenges identified through the Vision and Strategy process prioritising partnerships which:

- a) Develop and scale approaches which significantly grow existing or start new church communities which reach a worshipping community of 25 or more young people, aligned to our target of 3,000 such churches nationally.
- b) Build up and equip a significantly greater number of volunteer leaders for children and youth ministry, aligned to our target of 27,000 new volunteer leaders by 2030.
- c) Develop and scale approaches which enable parishes with no young people at all, or none within the 11-18 age group to develop plans and approaches to reach young people in their context. At least 38% of parishes have no young people in their worshipping communities in this age group.
- d) Enable the discipleship and formation of young people online and in person though excellent resources for young people and their leaders.
- e) Enable the starting of new worshipping communities to reach young people in the most deprived contexts.

A small amount of the partnerships funding will support building national infrastructure and develop critical networks, experts or digital platforms where they have specific expertise fundamental to the bold outcomes - such as in the Estates Evangelism network or on Everyday Faith. The Vision and Strategy will work with others to identify potential partners to scale and develop effective approaches to recommend to the Board in moving towards those bold outcomes.

b. Innovation funding

A process is under-way to create a learning framework which will support the identification of key missional challenges that currently inhibit the realisation of the bold outcomes, for which there is no established solution. The Board will agree which critical mission challenges are strategic for this funding, based on this work. The approach to addressing these missional challenges, will be a mix of building innovation processes e.g. Innovation challenge with the Estates Evangelism Network, and either co-creating critical experiments or spotting external agencies/networks processes being

developed with the Church, front-line ministries and dioceses. Complementing this funding, will be targeted **research** to generate new thinking in addressing these challenges.

c. Research, evaluation and learning.

This part of the funding will be team budget for the Funding and Learning Team, to support consultancies or service providers. The most important aspect of this will be to integrate learning from the implementation of strategic plans in dioceses funded through the Diocesan Investment Programme, with learning under this funding stream.

	Scaling up	Innovation/ R&D
External partners (e.g. independent or church-based networks & agencies)	Partnerships funding	Innovation funding
Internal budget to commission	National infrastructure	Research, evaluation and learning

The scope of the funding should exclude approaches which are primarily about developing lay ministries, incumbents, or senior leadership, as these will have separate funding.

4. Funding expectations

For this funding, there will not be an open application process. Instead, the Vision and Strategy Team, in consultation with other stakeholders, will develop a strategy for partnerships and innovation over the next three years. This will identify gaps where additional work from national partners is required. All initial funding proposals and the strategy once drafted, will be approved by the new Board.

For this area of funding, no specific guidance on how funding should be allocated across the various types of funding described above, beyond initial modelling described in the background. This breakdown is therefore illustrative:

Partnerships funding (incl. national infrastructure)	£7.25 m
Innovation funding	£4.75 m
Research, evaluation and learning	£0.9m
Total	£12.9m

*Of innovation funding to date a 1/3 are instigated by diocesan staff, so would be funded going forward through the Diocesan Investment Programme.

The proposal is:

- For any one proposal to range between £50,000 and £1m in value, and to cover up to three years.
- Envisage this resulting in five to eight significant partnerships in 2023-25, plus national infrastructure funding totalling £7-8m

- Envisage this resulting in the development of at least a further four innovation processes against critical missional challenges and potentially specific proposals drawn from networks/agencies supporting experiments in the CofE that offer the potential of real scale. This totals £4-5 M.

5. Proposal assessment and development

Any funding proposal from an external partner should be accompanied by the organisations overall strategy, with the proposal demonstrating how it supports delivery of the Church's Vision for the 2020s and their organisations strategy. The level of planning should reflect current thinking and be commensurate to the amount of funding requested.

The funding proposal will be assessed by the SMMI Board using the following criteria:

a. Criteria

To begin the assessment funding proposal. Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

i) Does the proposal have a significant strategic impact aligned with the Church's Vision & Strategy?

- Partnership funding – assess to what extent this proposal addresses a clear gap or barrier that can be overcome, that currently inhibits delivery of the Church's Vision and Strategy.
- Innovation Funding – assess to what extent this proposal addresses a critical missional challenge with no obvious solution, and currently inhibits delivery of the Church's Vision and Strategy.

For both, assess whether the scale and phasing of the resources requested reflects the predicted strategic impact.

ii) Do the plans (mission, people and financial) give confidence that they will effectively deliver the proposed programme of work?

- Assess whether any elements of the plans, or how they work together to scale up work or create wider change, need further development.

iii) Does the overall capacity described give confidence in delivery?

- Assess whether the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to deliver the proposed plans.
- Assess whether there is a convincing plan to be time-bound with an agreed exit plan.

Given that we are working with external organisations or networks, that range from informal networks with limited formal capacity or organisation through to mature charities, there will be a 'deeper dive' in terms of an organisational review, to test their capacity to deliver. This should establish delivery capacity, clarity on an exit plan once the 'time-bound' work is complete and enabling mutually beneficial ongoing monitoring. This is not a pass or fail exercise, rather building a partnership where this organisation can succeed.

This should be captured as a note for on-going reference, and should as a minimum be developed from a specific meeting with the senior management team on this topic, and for anything over £500 k also meeting a member of the Board and operations/finance team. These meetings should cover:

- What is the strength Team, Leadership and Governance capability for the organisation and programme – discuss how they handled a previous crisis or major challenge?
- Is there a realistic plan of delivery, setting out milestones linked to budgets, skills and capacity? – discuss what will happen on completion of the work and funding, critically to understand implications in terms of ongoing sustainability.
- What is the track record of the organisation in delivering funded programmes of work, including in respect of learning and continuous improvement? – discuss their top three learnings that formed this work, how they adapted managing funds from previous experience and any concerns with this funding.
- Have the risks attached to the programme been assessed and mitigations put in place? – raise any other issues that seem pressing from an external perspective and agree how we create ongoing monitoring of the programme going forward.

An independent financial check should be undertaken in line with our procurement policy (where appropriate).

b. Proposal assessment

The decision-makers on the distribution of funding, is the new Board. In May 2022, the Council approved high level proposals for the distribution of the new Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment programme and for the creation of a single Board as a committee of the Council to distribute the funding on the Council's behalf. The Council invited staff to bring more detailed proposals to it at a future meeting.

In line with the principle of simplicity, there will be a single stage Board assessment of proposals. A summary of the funding proposal (**see appendix A**) and a brief PowerPoint telling the story of the proposed work will be the basis for the Board's assessment. The Board will then consider the proposal against the criteria above. There will be an expectation that plans on implementation, how partners oversee this work and how they engage stakeholders will have been or will be developed. For large and complex proposals, partners will attend the Board (virtually) for a brief Q&A session.

The Board will decide whether or not to approve the proposal and if any conditions should be attached to the grant award. Authority may be delegated to the Vision and Strategy team to assess the detailed delivery plans relating to the proposed investment and any conditions agreed by the Board.

The table below summarises the process:

Proposal development	Vision and Strategy teams spot, discern and develop funding proposals with partners, in the light of overall strategic alignment.
Further proposal development	Potential concepts are reviewed by Vision and Strategy staff working with relevant NCI staff, to test initial thinking, access early learning or advice to refine the concept or innovation process. In most instances the Churches and Networks team will lead on concept development for Partnership Funding, supported by the Funding and Learning Team and other relevant NCI staff, to develop a full proposal with the partner. Innovation processes are likely to be co-created with partners, with the Funding and Learning Team ensuring effective innovation processes.

Review group	Review the funding proposal in the light of the funding criteria, effective grant-making and existing evidence on approaches being proposed within the programme design, to make recommendations to the Board.
SMMIB – single stage decision-making	SMMIB assess proposals in the light of the funding criteria, taking account of the Review Group’s recommendations and where needed a Q&A session with the partners leadership team. The Board will decide whether or not to approve the proposal and if any conditions should be attached to the grant award.
Detailed delivery planning	The partner finalises detailed delivery, governance, and stakeholder plans, taking account of any conditions imposed by the Board. The Head of the Funding and Learning Team, with other colleagues from the Vision and Strategy team, assess the plans on behalf of the Board.
Funding released	The external partner or network starts to implement plans, supported by the lead from the Vision and Strategy Team.

Three of the Board’s meetings a year will be dedicated to assessing funding proposals, allowing proposals to be brought forward at the start, middle or end of the year.

- For both types of funding, there will be a single-stage application process.
- There is no guarantee that applications will be successful.

6. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

The monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) relating to grants under PPF will be led by the Funding and Learning team, reflecting best practice from the on-going work of developing Learning and Outcome Frameworks. The projects team normally led by the Churches an Networks team, will facilitate ongoing self-assessment of the progress of the partner’s programme for reporting to the Board and the Annual Reviews.

- Changes to activities or posts within a programme which do not alter its overall outcomes will be agreed between the programme leads and the V&S lead. Major resets of programmes which involve changes to their agreed plans, closing specific parts of a programme of work and potentially altering mutually agreed outcomes will need the approval of the Board; the Board can delegate approval of relatively modest resets to the Head of Funding and Learning.
- The table and learning questions in **appendix A** will form the reference point to enable effective monitoring.
- The Annual Review of programmes will focus on three aspects:
 - The main concern will be to refine and ensure effective delivery;
 - Capture learning on why something has or has not worked as expected, having assessed progress in delivery against outcomes and key milestones agreed at the outset; and
 - Clarify next year’s annualised budget based on previous years’ payments and financial management.

- An independent evaluation will be required and should be budgeted before the conclusion of the programme of work. Partners will need to articulate how what is discerned from the evaluation will change their future work.

7. Payment

The budget will be allocated against the monitoring table in appendix A, against agreed activities or milestones (which may change over time) and **a set of anticipated outcomes the funding will support which** are **mutually** agreed upfront with the SMMI Board. Given planned work will need to adapt based on reality, there is also a need for simple, flexible processes to approve changes to the external partners' original plans and milestones in the light of ongoing experience, learning and discernment:

- Partners will commit to an annualised budget for the next year, and this will be pre-paid to them in six monthly instalments, rather than refunded against spend. (This applies to all new proposals from 2023 onwards; existing grant awards will shift to annualised budgets through annual reviews, i.e. the transition will take 12 months.)
- Where external partners' are unable to manage pre-paid finance effectively, quarterly payments will be made on spend.
- The budget should be **produced with the budget template** accompanying this guideline.

Appendix A – People and Partnerships Funding Proposal Template

This document should ideally under 8 pages long, with relevant supporting documentation that the diocese's will have produced for their own purposes on strategy, programme design and implementation plans, proportionate in size to the funding requested.

Name of Organisation and programme lead:

Previous national funding support:

Overall cost of proposal: *(this section onwards to be completed by programme lead)*

Amount requested:

1. Overview of Proposal

Please summarise each key element of your proposal and the timeframe over which the proposal will be delivered.

2. Strategic Alignment and Impact

Please summarise a) how the programme of work fits into your organisation's strategy; b) how the investment reflects the Church of England's Vision & Strategy; and c) the strategic impact which the proposal will have, in line with the funding criteria.

3. Design of programme/project to achieve the target changes

Describe a) what is the problem that is being addressed? b) what success this proposal will achieve if these problems are overcome? c) what actions are planned in the proposal to address the problem and achieve success? For funding over £250,000 detailed support material is expected.

4. Outcomes (target) of funding and how to monitor them

Outcomes and activities/milestones	Initial Value	Measurement indicators			Means of Verification (collection method + data source)
Outcome #1 (and key activities):	Jan-23	Jan -24	Jan -25	Jan -26	
Indicator 1-A*: e.g., Number of new young people					
Indicator 1-B*:					
Key project activities/milestones					

e.g., Three youth workers recruited					
Outcome #2 (and key activities):	Jan-23	Jan-24	Jan-25	Jan-26	
Indicator 2-A*: e.g., Clergy report increased confidence in growing discipleship within their worshipping community.					
Indicator 2-B*:					
Key project activities/milestones					
e.g., 50% of church congregations undertaken discipleship training and discernment					
Outcome #3 (and key activities):	Jan-23	Jan-24	Jan-25	Jan-26	
Indicator 3-A*:					
Indicator 3-B*:					
Key project activities/milestones					
Outcome #4: Lowest Income Community Funding (complete if received)	Jan-23	Jan-24	Jan-25	Jan-26	
Indicator 5-A*: e.g., Proportion of LInC funding going to 25% most deprived areas					

5. Discernment and learning

Please summarise what discernment and learning informed the programme design.

6. Assumptions and Risks

Clarify what assumptions have been made and what risks have been identified. Include how these will be mitigated in the above design.

7. Delivery Confidence

Please summarise a) key plans for your senior leadership to ensure its own and other capacity to deliver the programme of work successfully (noting track-record and where additional capacity is required); b) how the work will be sustained beyond the funding period; and c) key potential issues and opportunities to be managed, based on stakeholder

analysis. For funding over £250,000 detailed support materials are expected on stakeholder analysis and governance of the programme.

8. Future learning -

Identify what you hope to learn through this funding, identifying key questions to reflect on in check-in calls, annual reviews, and reports:	1
	2

9. Changes to meet conditions of the award, set by the board (where applicable)

Please summarise any changes made from the original proposal, to meet conditions set by the board, in order to release funding.