

Are You Ready to Apply for Grants?

It can be tempting to start applying for grants as soon as you have a clear project in mind with indicative costs. Applications can take time after all, and with limited sums of money available you might find yourself having to apply to multiple funders. So, the sooner you start the better, right? Not necessarily.



Grant giving organisations prefer not to take risks and often need money to be spent asap, so your project may need to be further along that you anticipated.

Consider the following before starting any applications.

Is the Quinquennial Inspection Report in date?

If your last Quinquennial inspection was carried out close to or more than 5 years ago you will need to organise a new one before making applications. Possible exceptions to this:

- An interim or supplementary survey has been carried out in the last two years by your architect.
- You are applying for a specific element of work which has had a separate survey or report carried out in the last few years.

If you are unsure, check with your architect and the grant-giving organisations you intend to apply to.

Do you know how much money you can realistically raise?

It is important that, before you start spending any money on additional surveys, specifications or go out to tender, you work out just how much money you can realistically raise and how long it will take.

- Look at all the grants on offer, pay close attention to the eligibility criteria, requirements for partner/match funding, deadlines, decision dates etc... Many organisations like to be the 'final funder'; some will specify a percentage you must secure before applying to them (this ranges from 5% to 75%), whilst others simply request that you apply towards the end of your fundraising campaign. Many grants are oversubscribed, so prepare for awards being smaller than the amounts advertised, but always ask for what you need.
- How much can you raise locally, including asking organisations, businesses or individuals for donations?

Having reviewed all the available opportunities, you might find you need to phase your project into smaller packages of work. Discuss this with your architect. There is money available, but not enough for all the worthy projects, so pace yourself, be realistic about what you can achieve and try not to spend anything until you have a clear plan in place.

Have all the relevant surveys been completed?

Some works require additional surveys/investigations, these include structural surveys, conservation reports, asbestos surveys, bats and other wildlife surveys. The results of these can impact when work can place, the duration and the costs, thus they must be completed before applying for grants and be no more than 2-3 years old. You may also need specific licenses/permits to carry out work, particularly in the case of bats.

Do you have all the relevant permissions in place?

You must secure all the necessary consent for your project before applying for grants. This will be either List B Archdeacon's Consent or a Faculty. It might also include planning permission from the local authority.

Do you have at least three quotes for the work?

Funding bodies need to know how much a project will cost. Estimates from your architect, a builder or even QS figures are often not enough; you need to have tendered for the work and have at least three quotes (or evidence that you have tried to get three quotes).

Contractors can get tender fatigue if you keep going back to them to revise figures, they also need assurances that your project will go ahead so they don't miss out on other work if yours is delayed.

Managing a project is a difficult balancing act at times; the process and different requirements of those involved are not as flexible and complementary as they could be. Try your best to plan ahead, keep everyone informed of progress and don't be pushed into making decisions or entering into contracts that you are not comfortable with.

Do you have support from the community?

Many funders focus on how a project will benefit the whole community, not the worshipping community. Applications to these organisations will need to focus on how the building is used, or the plans for use, by the wider community. Having evidence of this will help, this could include details about past events and activities; referring to a Facebook page or other place where activities are advertised; letters of support from individuals and local groups; a parish survey; or numbers and comments from a visitors' book. Local fundraising activities are also a way of demonstrating support, even if the amounts raised are relatively small.

Are you confident you can manage the cashflow on your project?

Grant payments don't always arrive when you need them, but invoices still have to be paid. Ensure you have a buffer of money, perhaps a general reserve account, that you can use to manage the cashflow. We do not advise taking out any loans to fund projects, but there may be some available to help manage cashflow – please contact us for details (see below).

Further Information and Support

Website resources

There are a range of resources available on our website including:

Under Parish Resources – Church Buildings: Faculty Consent and the Registry

Quinquennial Inspections of Church Buildings

Under Parish Resources – Church Buildings - Guidance Notes and Policies:

Fundraising | Grants | Project Management | Maintenance

Contacts

For DAC matters contact Geoffrey Hunter and John Morgan via the main DAC email: dac@elydiocese.org

Or call:

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John Morgan – Assistant DAC Secretary

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For grants advice and anything not relating to consent for works, please contact:

Holly Robinson - Historic Church Buildings Support Officer:

07948 350211 / 01353 652720 or email holly.robinson@elydiocese.org