Advice on Some Aspects of the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Grants for Places of Worship


This advice highlights the importance of the Grants for Places of Worship, deals with some frequently asked questions and includes points made by the HLF and Historic England.

HLF Grants for Places of Worship is a key source for major repairs to listed churches

- Grants from £10,000 to £250,000 are given for critical structural repairs (work needed now or in next two years)
- Up to 95% of project costs are funded with a minimum of 5% ‘partnership funding’ required which may be covered by reclaiming the cost of VAT
- The grants can fund modern repairs and the replacement of modern/stolen roofs if they have reached the end of their lifespan
- Repairs are the most important element of the scheme but projects must also engage the wider community and increase its understanding of heritage
- Up to 15% of grants are given for these community benefits which can include new facilities such as toilets and kitchens but not internal reordering
HLF Grants for Places of Worship - stages and some points to consider

- Stages: First-Round Application, Development Phase, Second-Round Application, Delivery Phase
- Need to know what the project consists of and have a reasonable level of information before making the First-Round Application, but don’t need to do research and other work which should be carried out in the Development Phase
- You can apply for funding for surveys/investigation works in the First-Round application to be carried out in the Development Phase
- The Development Phase is up to 12 months long – it can be challenging to obtain the necessary consents and complete some other investigation/preparatory work in that time
- Good applications which are well written, easily understandable, clearly meet grant criteria, and successfully make and illustrate the case with a good selection of photos are key to success
- The grants are competitive and not guaranteed so you may have to bounce back and make a second or third application before being successful
- Ask for and learn from feedback from the HLF or other grant bodies and churches that have made successful applications e.g. Baldock, Turvey and Dunton

Answering some common questions

**How should the church approach the grant application?**

The HLF wants to see that the church is approaching the grants process and repairs as a project with a small project team and plan. This is realistic given the challenges involved and the different skills that are needed (making a good application, financial/fundraising and project management). It also shows that the church’s efforts are robust and won’t be sunk if one person leaves or is sick.

The project team may draw in people from outside the worshipping community because of their skills, experience and commitment to the aims of the project. The project team will report to the PCC which will have responsibility for the project and make and be the contact for the grant applications.

**How is a professional advisor (architect/surveyor) commissioned?**

The HLF requires an accredited advisor to be used for identifying, specifying and supervising grant-aided works.

That advisor must be selected against a written brief and following a competitive tendering process with three quotes. Selection is made in terms of ‘best value’ and includes factors such as knowledge of a building or type of case and works, a successful record in supporting grant applications, and ability to work well with the parish as well as cost. Such a process is not needed for the development and delivery of a grant application if the same process has
been conducted to select a professional advisor (for example to produce the quinquennial inspection report or for the same project) in the last five years.

The grant will cover the professional fees of the advisor at the Development and Delivery Phases. It will not cover fees for work done for the First-Round Application which would typically include a brief up-to-date and illustrated report on condition and repairs and a breakdown of costs, which are linked to the last quinquennial inspection. The professional advisor will consider what level of fee to charge, if any, on the basis of their ongoing relationship with the church and the potential for future fees to be grant-aided if the application is successful.

**How serious do the repairs have to be to have a chance of getting a grant?**

The repair works identified in the application must be ‘critical’, that is required now or certainly in the next two years. They should not be diluted by including other works which are less urgent apart from say repairing a few slates or tiles which can be accessed from the scaffold.

The architect/surveyor must make the case clearly and starkly that the works are ‘critical’, giving the specific time within which they need to be carried out e.g. now or in twelve months (saying that they are ‘urgent’ is not sufficient). The case is best made with the First-Round Application in a punchy 3-4 page report supported by illustrations, which links to the QI report, includes a summary of costs and says what the (dire) consequences of not acting will be.

**How important are the community benefits to a successful application and what should they include?**

The community benefits are given less weight than critical structural repairs in assessing applications but are still important and can be a deciding factor between applications for projects involving equally serious repairs.

Community benefits should engage more and a wider range of people. You should think what you want it to achieve – how will it engage the local community and what will it give it - and what story you want to tell about the church. What is special about the church and how is it part of the history and community of the town or village?

Community benefits can be delivered quite simply, for example by providing a web page on an existing site, a guide to the church (which could be a children’s guide or have a particular theme), or a small pop-up display. (Publications, guides etc. should be designed to a professional standard which the grant will pay for; the HLF gives advice on typical costs.)

Carrying out historic research in a local record office to give a scheme a sound basis, involving groups of local children say from schools or cubs/brownies, getting children or others to film the restoration, making links to the National Curriculum, and involving the University of the Third Age have all been part of successful applications and can be repeated.
**Is it better to seek funding for a number of packages or larger amounts of work?**

Larger applications can be preferable because they highlight the fact that the works are extensive and serious. There is no advantage in submitting an application for less than £250,000 if all the works that result in a project of that cost are ‘critical’

**How can the grants be used to fund new facilities?**

Up to 15% of grants can be used for community benefits including new facilities such as toilets and kitchens. However the cost of providing such facilities may well exceed the 15% and the HLF will not fund them if they cost appreciably more even if you can cover the remaining costs. In many cases it is better to deal with such improvements as a separate project and target your fundraising on them.

**How do you provide the ‘partnership funding’ required?**

The Grants for Places of Worship will cover the VAT costs of eligible work but the applicant will be required to reclaim this amount from the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme (www.lpwscheme.org.uk) In many cases this will provide the 5% required in partnership funding meaning that no or little other fundraising will be needed.

**How can investigative works and costs be dealt with?**

Investigative costs can be funded in the Development Phase with no particular cost limits. It is preferable if there are no significant changes in costs between the two application rounds as it makes it simpler and easier to get approval for the Second-Round application. (It is helpful if the First-Round Application is supported by realistically high contingency sums for identified items.) However, the HLF understands that investigative work carried out during the Development Phase can sometimes significantly change the cost of works.

Funding for investigative works prior to applying for a HLF grant can be part-funded by the National Churches Trust (Project Viability and Project Development Grants) http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/project-viability-and-project-development-grants or by smaller grant-giving bodies. The Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust does not normally fund standalone investigations except for archaeology.

**What else will need to be done in the Development Phase?**

Think what needs to be planned and prepared so that it can be carried out in the Delivery Phase. Pages 10 and 32 of the Grants for Places of Worship Application Guidance highlight what needs to be submitted with the Second-Round Application and therefore prepared in the Delivery Phase (file:///C:/Users/dbevan/Downloads/gpowe_application_guidance%20(3).pdf). Make sure that you don’t start delivering the project in the Development Phase.
**Are the size of community and level of deprivation taken into account?**

Including information on the size and nature of the community (e.g. number of households, whether there is a school) and deprivation (e.g. the index of multiple deprivation [http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html](http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html)) can support the case for why grant aid is needed and the degree and type of community activities that can reasonably be expected as part of the project.

**Does the church need to be open for 40 days (the grant requirement) now?**

No. This can also happen as a result of the grant-aided project.

**How is volunteer time taken account of?**

Volunteer time is counted as both income and expenditure and these do not make a net contribution to partnership funding as they effectively cancel each other out.

The cost/value of volunteer time (£) needs to be entered in 7a and 7b of the application form which cover the costs and income of the project ([file://C:/Users/dbevan/Downloads/gpowe_application_form%20(1).pdf](file://C:/Users/dbevan/Downloads/gpowe_application_form%20(1).pdf)).

Volunteer time spent before and on the First-Round Application cannot be included but that spent during the Development and Delivery Phases can. It would usually be excessive to include all of the volunteer time spent on a project, which is likely to be huge, and it is better to be selective and, for example, record that spent on particular meetings, work and events.

The HLF website gives the following costs for different types of voluntary work:

- Professional labour - £350 a day (e.g. – accountancy or teaching)
- Skilled labour - £150 a day (e.g. – administrative work, carpentry or leading a guided walk)
- Unskilled labour - £50 a day (e.g. - clearing a site or working as a steward at an event)

Examples of work in relation to church projects are:

- Doing heritage research, researching names of people on gravestones and producing a pop-up exhibition - £150 per day
- Manning an exhibition - £50 per day

**Do I need to provide information on Full Cost Recovery?**

Full Cost Recovery does not apply to churches.
**Are there any other tips on filling in an application?**

It is very helpful to follow the application guidance section by section as you fill in the application. Page 10 gives a very good overview of what is required. Answer the specific questions and bullet points with specific answers which are clear and structured in the same way.

We can help you with difficult sections and review draft applications.

**How can the Heritage Lottery Fund help?**

Churches should put in a public enquiry form to the HLF to get initial advice and dedicated case officers will help them develop their ideas in line with the grant criteria. Churches working on applications are invited to the Cambridge HLF offices three times a year to raise issues and get advice. The HLF will not give feedback on draft applications and the grant applications will not be assessed by the development case officers.

Feedback and help

Please get in touch if this advice note needs updating or if you know about another good national source of grant-aid that should be added.

For further help and advice contact:

**David Bevan, Historic Church Buildings Support Officer, Diocese of St Albans**

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