

Paper D1

Discipleship Development Fund

Education and Learning Committee

Basic information

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Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 21 Discipleship Development Fund (DDF) small grants funding available to Synods should increase from £2,000 pa to £4,000 pa.</p> <p>Resolution 22 The amount available to individual projects under the large grants scheme of the DDF should remain unchanged at £5,000. Normally, this grant will be available for up to three years, as before. However, a fourth year of funding may be given where clear succession planning is shown.</p> <p>Resolution 23 A new category of awards from the DDF will be made available. A sum of £20,000 will be set aside annually for spontaneous discipleship development opportunities which arise at denominational level. Applications should be made to the Discipleship Development Fund Large Grant Awarding Group (DDFLGAG).</p> <p>Resolution 24 Ongoing changes to the detail of the grants available through the DDF will now be delegated to the new Faith in Action Committee on the advice of the DDFLGAG.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Discipleship Development Fund. To enable more effective use of the Fund.
Main points	The sum of money available in the DDF is growing despite significant disbursements. These resolutions seek to make the available funds more accessible to local, Synod and national discipleship initiatives.

Previous relevant documents	Paper D3: Education and Learning Committee: Revising the Discipleship Development Strategy and the Discipleship Development Fund policy and operation, Mission Council March 2021 Paper D1: Education and Learning Committee: Discipleship Development Fund update, General Assembly July 2021.
Consultation has taken place with...	DDFLGAG Education and Learning Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	No additional administrative costs for the denomination. The DD Fund is spent down.
External (eg ecumenical)	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Despite awarding £263,595 since September 2021, the DDF has grown from £850,000 to £964,000 as of April 2025. The intention to use the whole of the fund is not being realised.
- 1.2 At Youth Assembly the possibility of holding a worship leading weekend for young people was considered. Under present arrangements this would be difficult to fund from the DDF. Discussion has followed about how the fund might be adapted to meet such creative and exciting initiatives arising outside Synods or local churches.
- 1.3 Changes to the structure, management and sums available are proposed to address these matters.

2. History of the DDF

- 2.1 The DDF was established to provide funding for churches and individuals to engage in projects that stimulate growth in discipleship. Funds from the sale of the Windermere Centre (at that time £860,000) enabled the establishment of the fund. Its current format was agreed in August 2021, with the intention of spending down the whole fund in ten years, with £86,000 granted per year. An earlier version failed to disburse significant sums of money as it was only using the interest from the fund (www.urc.org.uk/new-grant-to-support-lay-discipleship-development-launched)

3. Administration of the DDF

- 3.1 There are currently two types of grants made from the fund:
 - Small grants administered by Synods and accessed through Synod Training and Development+ Officers for individual discipleship development;
 - Large grants administered by the DDFLGAG, with application forms available on the URC website.
- 3.2 Grants are awarded for anything which contributes to the development or discipleship of people in, or connected with, the URC.

- 3.3 Small grants, of up to £200, are awarded from the sum of £2,000, available to each Synod.
- 3.4 Large grants, of up to £5,000, are made for up to three years. Applications are scrutinised by the DDFLGAG, meeting four times each year.
- 3.5 Any recognised group can apply, but if the group applying is not an Assembly committee or a Synod, it will need to gain approval for its application from its Assembly Committee or Synod.
- 3.6 Applications for large grants come from churches in a diverse range of communities. Augustine United Church in Edinburgh were recently awarded £2,050 to support their Visitor and Heritage Ministry Team to engage with visitors through urban pilgrimages. Marginalised and minoritised families from Yorkshire have been enabled to attend the Holiday Forum. Rainbows and Brownies from The Bay URC in Birchington, Kent, received funding for their recycling project and the flourishing churches initiative in North Western Synod has been supported. In all, 70 projects supporting the discipleship of children, young people and adults have been granted funding through large grants from the DDF.
- 3.7 As the URC seeks to enable discipleship across all our churches it would be good for more funds to be available across the whole range of church life.
- 3.8 Further information about current arrangements for the DDF can be found at **www.urc.org.uk/your-faith/developing-your-faith/discipleship-development-fund**
- 3.9 Funding for creative and imaginative short-term projects is also available from the Legacy Fund (**www.urc.org.uk/your-church/guidance-support-for-churches-synods/church-finance/the-legacy-fund**).

4. Proposed changes

- 4.1 The current two-tier structure of small grants awarded through Synods and large grants awarded through the DDFLGAG will be changed to a three-tier system by adding a further tier. The third tier will make grants at denominational level to support opportunities for spontaneous new initiatives. These grants will be administered by the DDFLGAG. £20,000 annually will be set aside for this purpose. In order for these initiatives to receive swift consideration, it is proposed that they be considered via email if a DDFLGAG meeting is not in the next two weeks.
- 4.2 Funds available to each Synod for making small grants are increased from £2,000 to £4,000 pa.
- 4.3 Large grants will remain at a maximum of £5,000 pa for up to three years. A discretionary further year of funding may be made available to projects clearly demonstrating succession planning.
- 4.4 To facilitate further changes, should this prove necessary, guidelines for disbursement may be altered by the new Faith in Action Committee on the advice of the DDFLGAG.