

Discipleship Development Fund Large Grant Awarding Group operating policy



1. Introduction

1.1 Mission Council in March 2021 approved the revised Discipleship Development Strategy and its complementary discipleship development fund policy and operation. This document aims to add more detail to the outline policy approved by Mission Council. It is expected that this will be a living document informed by the experience of operating the Large Grant Awarding Group.

2. Large Grants

2.1 Large grants will be given using the DDF capital. The URC is prepared to deplete the DDF within a decade. Consequently, the total value of grants in one year will be limited, on average, to 10% of the present value of the fund i.e. £85,000. The expectation is that most grants would not exceed £5,000 pa.

2.2 How will the grants be awarded? An application form detailing purpose, outcomes, plans and assessment will be assessed by a group convened by the Deputy General Secretary, Discipleship. The form is shown in Appendix 1. The group will consist of representatives from the Synod Moderators, the Faith in Action Committee, Ministries Committee, Equalities, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Sub-Committee and will meet virtually four times a year. Conflicts of interest will be avoided by group members with an interest in a grant application being excused from the debate and the vote. The decision of the group will be final. A quorum of four, including the convenor, is in operation.

2.3 The grant awarding process consists of five key stages:

1. Group eligibility check
2. Proof of group/Synod/Assembly Committee approval
3. Application completeness and cohesiveness check
4. Application approval in principle
5. Defining size of the award and supplementary conditions

2.3.1 Group eligibility check. The text agreed by Mission Council is as follows:

2.3.1.1 'Any recognised group in the URC, including local churches, Synods or Assembly Committees, can apply. Should a group that isn't a Synod or Assembly Committee apply they will need to have their application endorsed by the relevant Synod or Assembly Committee. For example, if the Youth Executive wanted to apply for a grant, they would need to get the endorsement of the Children & Youthwork Programme Enabling Group.'

2.3.2 Proof of group/Synod/Assembly Committee approval. An application for a group should be accompanied by evidence that the application has the formal approval of the group, and their sponsoring body if necessary (Synod or Assembly Committee). For example, if a local congregation applies for a grant, approval from the Church Meeting and their Synod will be required.

2.3.3 Application completeness and cohesiveness check. All parts of the form need to be completed. In addition, all the contents of the form should be mutually supportive and not contradictory. The request must include the following elements:

- the purpose of the grant
- the names of the people responsible for delivering the application, eg the sponsor, project manager and team members

- the target(s) of the application
- what the application is aiming to achieve
- a simple plan covering the full lifecycle of the application
- a statement of the costs and how they will be met
- a statement of how its impact will be measured and reported
- any further documentation that demonstrates the discipleship development aspect of this application
- where appropriate, a job/role description
- for a church, a set of recent audited or Independently Examined accounts

2.3.4 Application approval in principle. Six criteria will be assessed for approval:

1. Is it in line with the aims of the URC's Discipleship Development Strategy?
2. With the grant, is the application viable? Have all of the resource needs been fully identified and sourced? It is particularly important to consider the human resource needs of the project.
3. Is the application sustainable? Does the award of a grant carry with it the implication of further grants being needed in the future?
4. Is the application credible? Is it deliverable and likely to achieve its aims?
5. Does the application add sufficient 'value' to justify its cost? Value will have a number of dimensions. In this regard one key dimension is the number of disciples impacted by this initiative. With experience, a guide (but not benchmark) such as cost per disciple can be developed.
6. Does the application have any innovative elements, and if so, will they be shared to enhance the URC's overall capability? Note that not being innovative will not prevent a grant being awarded, but innovative applications are more likely to be funded.

2.3.5. Defining size of the award and supplementary conditions. The size of the award will take into account factors such as the 'value' of the application, the novelty and replicability of the scheme, the total value of awards already awarded to the Synod or Assembly Committee and the expected number of applications in the year. Some conditions may be attached to the award at the discretion of the LGAG. For example, if the grant will be used to purchase third party products or services three independent quotations may be required.

2.4 What is provided? A grant will be made to cover some or all of the expected costs for the lifetime of the project, subject to a usual limit of £5000 pa. Grants for partially funded projects will be subject to the other funds being received. For multi-year projects the total grant will be made in principle but will be paid out annually, according to the plan which is to be updated annually. Multi-year awards will normally be made for no more than three years.

2.5 What can this money be used for? The DDF is intended to contribute to the development of lay people and therefore the purposes for which it can be used are as broad as can be generated by creativity and vocation, in line with the aims of the URC's Discipleship Development Strategy (DDS), which are to equip the people of the United Reformed Church to:

- Create opportunities for everyone to encounter the living God, whether they already identify themselves as followers of Christ or not.
- Encourage everyone in their prayer life and relationship with God to enable them to live as disciples of Jesus.
- Encourage everyone to make the most of education opportunities that are relevant and appropriate for them in their discipleship journey.

The eligible costs would include, without being restricted to:

- National or denominational learning events, conferences or programmes developed in-house
- Personnel costs
- Courses (at any level) at any of the United Reformed Church Resource Centres for Learning or other suitable learning providers
- Books, equipment and resources related to a particular topic or activity
- Attendance at Synod learning events
- Travel costs for attending learning events

2.6 The activity can be within the church, the community or an institution in which they are serving. Activities can be face-to-face or virtual, live or recorded, or a combination of the above.

2.7 Are there any restrictions? The grants would not be expected to cover the cost of 'normal' operations or to replace money that would usually be provided through the usual denominational or synod budgeting processes. In addition, it is not expected, at least in the short term, to award multiple grants to the same group or project. These awards are fundamentally aimed at Lay Discipleship Development and not intended to have mission as their main focus and priority.

2.8 How are applications made? Applications will be made using a simple form and sent to the Deputy General Secretary (Faith in Action).

2.9 How are grants paid? For a project which has a plan of less than a year the grant will be paid in full at the beginning. Once the project has been concluded a report of the project [aims, outcomes, participant feedback and expenditure, including receipts] must be sent to the Deputy General Secretary (Faith in Action). For multi-year applications the grant will be paid annually and can be tapered to allow for 'pump priming'. The second and subsequent tranches of the grant will be paid once the end-of-year account and an updated plan has been received by the Deputy General Secretary (Faith in Action).

Deadlines for applications: 31 March, 30 June, 30 September, 31 December

Decisions notified by: 30 April, 31 July, 31 October, 31 January