



Innovation Fund Grants

Introduction

1. As the pace of change in our society grows, we are seeking to tap into and support the ideas and innovation coming out of our parishes with a new fund. We are seeking to help to foster an environment where new ideas are developed and tested and further answers found to the challenges facing the Church.
2. Innovation Funding aims to help find creative approaches to challenges facing the Church of England today. The Diocesan Vision and Strategy calls us to be a Christ-centred and outward-focused church. We hope that the Innovation Funding will encourage and nurture further innovation that advances mission and supports the Vision and Strategy of the Diocese and Church of England. Some of these, where they are having a significant impact, are likely to become Hub or Resourcing Churches in the Diocese.
3. Those applying for Innovation Funding will need to demonstrate creativity and innovation with the confidence that projects have the potential to create a step change in missional growth, with the learning processes in place necessary to benefit others in the Diocese and potentially the wider Church.
4. Some of these applications may have been germinated and tested via grants from the Fresh Expressions of Church (fxC) fund or Area Mission grants. We welcome applications to these sources to help to find potential projects that may, with some small grants, develop to the point where they will be eligible for Innovation Funding.
5. This document sets out the aims of the Innovation Funding, as well as the application process and detailed guidance to the application form.

Innovation Funding: Aims

6. In line with the Diocesan Vision and Strategy, the aim of the Innovation Funding is to support limited scale projects which will **generate learning about 'good growth'**, i.e. growth which
 - a. increases the number of new disciples,
 - b. enhances the quality of discipleship,
 - c. grows the impact of the Church's social engagement work.
7. Innovation Funding aims to **test the assumptions** we make about how or why growth may or may not occur. Applications will need to demonstrate how their proposal will provide the learning necessary to ensure these assumptions are fully understood, so that they can be confidently applied to future projects, leading to growth beyond the project in question.
8. **Evaluation will be a critical part of proposals** - we will need to be clear what mission methodology is being tested in the project; and measure not only the desired outcomes of the project but whether learning is being effectively captured and disseminated.

9. In practice, we expect that this will involve funding projects seeking to:
 - a. Try a new approach, based on a clear methodology explaining how the inputs and activities will lead to the proposed outcomes;
 - b. Adapt an approach already developed successfully in a different context (e.g. from one church tradition to another, or from city centres to estates);
 - c. Scale up a model already developed successfully at small scale.
10. The Diocese, along with the Church of England's Vision and Strategy has set strategic priorities for the church to become younger and more diverse, a church of missionary disciples and a church where mixed ecology is the norm. In the light of this Innovation Funding will support projects which focus on at least one of the following groups among whom church engagement is low:
 - a. Younger people and children
 - b. In lower income communities
 - c. UKME/GMH populations communities
11. Recommendations on applications for Innovation Funding will be made by an Innovation Funding group led by the Director of Mission overseen by the Diocesan Secretary. The Diocesan Secretary will take any recommendations to the Diocesan Bishop for a decision.

Eligibility

12. Parishes and Deaneries within the Diocese of Southwark will be eligible to apply for these grants.
13. We have £250k every third year for the Innovation Fund itself with grants from £100k - 250k.

Before parishes apply

14. Any parish proposing to apply for Innovation Funding should discuss their ideas at the earliest opportunity with either Canon Will Cookson, Director of Mission or Revd David Cundill, Pioneer Development Officer, to enable the wider Innovation group to provide support, advice and guidance as required; and to avoid nugatory effort and disappointment. Applications which have not been discussed prior to their submission will not be considered.

Application process

15. For the Innovation Fund there is a two-stage application process. There will be one funding round every third year. Applications will be considered in comparison with each other by the Innovation Funding group. There is no guarantee applications will be successful. Parishes will first be asked to submit a one-page outline of the proposal. If the idea has potential and it is shortlisted by the Innovation Fund panel then the Parish, Team or Deanery will be asked to provide a full application with the backing of their PCC or Deanery Synod. The first tranche of funding will be awarded in 2025 with first draft applications submitted by the end of February 2025.

Timeline	Dates
Area events held to publicise funding and what is required	November 2024
Outline proposal Submitted	End February 2025
Shortlisting meeting and parishes notified	Mid March 2025
Full Submission	Mid June 2025
Parishes notified of outcome	End June 2025

Outcomes

16. For the Innovation Fund we are looking for new models that are developed that can have a significant impact in the Diocese. We see that the success of Bubble Church as an example of new models that we believe we can see developed and shared widely.
17. The hoped for outcome is that the Innovation Fund will create low-cost simple models that can easily be replicated and adapted elsewhere. We hope that they will develop more widely and become Hub churches (churches that have models of mission and ministry that other churches can adopt and adapt) - recognised by the Diocese as churches that will bring missional energy to other parishes - or even Resourcing churches.