**Mersey Synod Mission Fund**

**Mission Fund Procedural Guidelines – for Large Grant Applications only**

***With your application form please make sure that you have completed the Local Church Safeguarding Checklist Form P5 which is at the end of this application.***

**1. Receiving Applications**

The Mersey Synod Mission Fund is open to applications from United Reformed Churches and Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEP’s) which are part of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church. For LEP’s we encourage you to explore the possibility of funding from your partner denomination.

Unfortunately, applications cannot be accepted from churches which have failed to put into place up-to-date safeguarding policies, or which are in arrears or in debt to the Synod over other payments. Neither can applications be accepted from churches which have received grants but then failed to submit the required report and accounts detailing how the grant has been used.

Applications should be submitted to the Missional Discipleship Enabler (MDE) in the first instance who will liaise with the Mission Fund Panel which is a subgroup formed from representatives of the Synod. This group will normally only consider grants of £25,000 and under.

Grants could be for staff costs, materials or other expenses that would help the project fulfil its outcomes but would not be for building improvements. Building improvements would be considered, as before, by Resources.

Grant applications would need to state clearly the **mission outcomes** the grant would help to achieve.

Churches would be given help in considering and writing their grant application by the MDE and/or others from Synod, however, this does not extend to writing the application on your behalf. We want to be able to say “yes” to churches who have thought through what they want to do and achieve.

**Each application will be considered on its own merits.**

**2. Making and Recording Decisions**

The Panel will assess each application against the agreed criteria. This Criteria is outlined below and will be published on the Synod website.

The Panel will seek to make a unanimous decision by consensus but reserves the right to make a majority decision if agreement cannot be reached.

The Panel can agree to award a grant, defer a decision while further information is sought, refer an application back for more work, or reject an application. It is also possible the Panel may decide to reject an application for the current year because there is not enough money in the fund. Churches may re-submit an application at a future date.

In agreeing to award a grant, the panel may make it conditional upon any number of factors, such as the applicant securing the balance of funding, report progress to the panel or approving a job description.

The Panel decision will be recorded together with the reasons for the decision. Where an application is rejected, referred back or referred to another fund, a record of the precise reasons for the decision with reference to the criteria will be given.

The Panel may decide to spread an award over a period of time.

Panel members will withdraw in the event of a conflict of interest (eg if the member’s church has submitted an application).

**3. Informing the Applicants**

The Panel will write to each applicant as soon as possible after the meeting telling them of the Panel’s decision, the reasons for it and any conditions attached to the grant award.

**4. Disbursing grant**

Grants will be dispatched as soon as possible and once the church has agreed in writing to any conditions attached to the grant award.

Where a grant is spread over a period of time, the applicant must submit a report on how the grant has been spent when they request the next tranche of the grant. The panel will approve the payment of the next tranche on the basis of the report received.

**5. Reporting**

It is a condition of all grants from the Mission Fund that all successful applicants will be required to submit a report and accounts showing how the grant has been used at the anniversary of the grant being awarded. Where funding is given for more than one year this report and accounts are due annually thereafter for each year that is funded, and subsequent payments are conditional upon a satisfactory report being received before the payment is made.

Please note that once a grant has been made to a church no further grants to that church can be considered unless a satisfactory report and accounts relating to the previous grant have been received within the timeframe previously stated.

**6. Managing the Grant Fund**

Grants will be paid from this fund according to the schedules agreed by the Panel. Any monies unallocated or not yet disbursed at the end of the financial year will be carried forward in the Mission Fund.

**Mersey Synod Mission Fund**

**Guidance Notes for applications of more than £2,500**

All applications must be submitted on the form to enable the Mission Fund Panel to assess them accurately against the agreed criteria (attached).

Synod aims to encourage, enable and support local churches.

**Applicants are advised that seeking advice from the Mission Fund Panel at an early stage and before submitting an application is more likely to result in a successful application.**

**Name of Church**

If the application is made by a separately constituted project, please give the name of the sponsoring church and explain the relationship between the project and the church.

**Name of Project**

Please provide a brief project name to enable the Mission Fund Panel to identify it easily.

***The numbering below correlates with the numbering on the application form.***

**1. Your Project**

Describe your project clearly and simply and explain how it arises from the life of the church as set out in your Pastorate Profile/Being Church. Tell us how many years you expect your project to last, even if you are only asking for a grant for one year or for a one-off cost. If your project is already running, please provide a report on the work to date and explain how the grant would help you to develop the project. Please note that funding cannot be provided retrospectively.

You may need to update your Pastorate Profile. In preparing the Pastorate Profile the 5 Marks of Mission (listed below) should be borne in mind, consideration should be given to those who should be involved in the process e.g. through a full congregational audit, and everything should be rooted in the Bible and prayer.

**2. Mission**

Mission can be expressed in many ways and in this section you can explain to what extent mission is expressed for your church through this project. Clarity of vision and purpose will help the Panel understand your project. Grant funding will be assessed against the 5 Marks of Mission as set out below. For more information on these 5 Marks of Mission please see below:

* Teach – **To proclaim the Good news of the Kingdom**
* Telling of God’s liberating love – **To teach, baptise and nurture new believers**
* Tending – **To respond to human need by loving service**
* Transforming the world by God’s love - **To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation**
* Treasuring the earth -  **To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth**

**Questions 3 and 4** provide an opportunity for you to explain the mission purpose of your project in more detail and the outcomes you hope to achieve.

**5. Management**

1. **Project Sustainability**.

**See (f) on the Application form.** Think through what could go wrong with your project and prevent you from achieving your objectives. Risks to consider might include failure to raise the full amount of money needed, a sudden increase in expenses leading to a budget overrun, resignation of key personnel, unresponsive beneficiaries, withdrawal of support by partners. You will know what the most likely risks for your project are. List them and explain how you would deal with the risks you have identified.

After 3 years, what are your projected plans?

Consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project.

You may wish to provide a formal risk assessment as a separate document.

1. **Evaluation**

**See (g) on the Application form.** Would this be done internally, for example by the management group or the Elders, Synod personnel or by an external consultant? Think about the evaluation of the project itself but also its effectiveness as mission and its contribution to the church. When you draw up your budget, remember to include the costs of the evaluation you plan.

**6. Finance**

The Mission Fund may be used as a “first funder” to help you secure other funding, but grants will be conditional upon the rest of the funding being secured. The church may match a Mission fund grant from its own resources or through applying to other grant-making bodies. Appropriate evidence of this (offer letters, bank statements etc.) will be required before the Synod issues any grant awarded.

**7. Sustaining your project**

Describe how your project will be continued after the grant has been spent. If your project will end once this grant funding ends, explain why this is the case and describe your strategy to exit from the project.

**General**

A report on how you used your grant and what difference it has actually made to your mission will be required from all successful applicants. This report and accounts showing how the money was spent will be required 12 months after the grant payment has been made, and annually thereafter for all grants that cover more than one year.

**Seek advice on completing the application form for any area where you are unsure how to answer.**

**Mersey Synod Mission Fund**

**Criteria for evaluating projects**

**Introduction**

All applications to the Mission Fund for grants will be examined according the following criteria.

Mission can be expressed in many ways.

**1. Mission**

1.1. The church has thought through and expressed the mission implications of its project.

1.2. The project demonstrates clarity of vision.

1.3. There is a clear faith purpose.

1.4. The target audience or membership of the project been identified in a way that is relevant to its mission purpose.

1.5. There is a positive relationship between the volunteers or staff of the project and the people they are trying to reach.

1.6. The application shows how sharing faith will be included in the activities of the project.

1.7. There is an understanding of how this project will enhance the life of your church/make a difference to the wider community.

**2. Leadership**

2.1. The team leadership is identified and suitably qualified or job/role descriptions are identified.

2.2. Existing volunteers/staff have experience in this area of work.

2.3. The application shows how new volunteers/staff will be recruited, trained and motivated

2.4. The life issues of the target group have been identified and appropriate measures to address them have been included.

2.5. An evaluation process is identified.

**3. Resources**

3.1. The project has been properly costed.

3.2. Other sources of income have been identified to match a Mission Fund grant where necessary.

3.3. The church and/or project accounts demonstrate that the church or other managing body for the project is able to support this work and other areas of work will not suffer in consequence.

3.4. Where the church is holding large reserves but is not putting financial resources into this project, an acceptable explanation has been provided.

3.5. Risks have been identified and measures identified to minimise or handle them.

3.6. There is clarity about how the project will be continued in future.

3.7. The church is meeting its Ministry & Mission Fund (M&M) obligations by monthly direct debit payment. (M&M contributions are the first call on a church’s income.)

**4. Project Plan**

4.1. The project plan includes adequate description, aims, strategy, management structure, expected outcomes and evaluation.

4.2. There is a plan to continue the project beyond this funding, or there is a clear exit strategy.

**5. Reporting**

5.1. The conditions on any previous grants were adhered to.

5.2 The required annual report(s) was (were) received from projects previously supported by the Mission Fund.

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