

DISTRICT ADVANCE FUND

SUMMARY

This document defines the agreed policy for the District Advance Fund and includes the provision of guidance on making applications to the fund by individuals, churches, Circuits and District groups who wish to avail themselves of these financial resources, the operating procedures for administering the fund, and the criteria upon which grants may be made.

Presented for adoption by Representative Synod April 2016

DISTRICT ADVANCE FUND

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The District Advance Fund (DAF) is a financial resource that is available to support growth and development of Circuits and churches within the District as they seek to engage in God's mission and Christ's ministry.

The District is committed to encouraging and enabling Circuits, churches and District groups to grasp mission opportunities, by supporting them with grant aid where it is appropriate and possible.

The District Advance Fund is primarily for 'development' rather than 'maintenance' and is an example of the Methodist principle of connexionalism, whereby resources are shared in order to help and support those with least resources of their own.

2. POLICY PRINCIPLES

2.1 Engagement with the connexionally agreed framework for a Discipleship movement.

Schemes for which support from the DAF is sought must engage with the connexionally agreed framework of *'Our Calling; Priorities for the Methodist Church'* and the principles of the General Secretary's Report received by the Conference in 2011 *'Contemporary Methodism: a discipleship movement shaped for mission.'* The latter report sought to discern and describe a vision of the direction of travel of the life and work, worship and mission of the Methodist Church as it responds in loving obedience to the gracious prompting of the Spirit; and to set an emphasis on the Methodist Church as a discipleship movement shaped for mission.

The District welcomes grant applications that are in line with this report, and expects that the project for which a grant is sought:

- A. Assists resourcing discipleship and mission i.e. personnel rather than property schemes, except in those cases where it can be shown that a property scheme enhances discipleship and mission. If a Property scheme, that it is accessible to the whole community, not just the able bodied; contains multi-use flexible spaces 7 days a week; provides space for either a congregation that is growing or for several congregations to share.
- B. Assists schemes being carried out in partnership with other churches, denominations or organizations.

2.2 Schemes are expected to meet the following three criteria: Sustainability; Viability and involve Mission and Outreach, preferably with identifiable SMART outcomes (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound).

2.3 Other financial resources will be taken into account. These will include funds currently held in the Model Trust Funds of the Local Church and Circuit. Any funds which are committed but not being used will be particularly scrutinized.

2.4 When awarding a grant, the District will wish to direct resources to those parts of the District with less financial resources in order to attempt to address issues of poverty and inequality.

2.5 Engagement with climate change.

In 2009 the Methodist Conference received the report '*Hope in God's Future: Christian Discipleship in the Context of Climate Change*'. The report recommended that individuals and churches address the carbon footprint of their activities and reduce carbon emissions.

The District welcomes grant applications that are in line with this report. All such applications must be accompanied by a cost benefit analysis, to assist in:

- A. Identifying appropriate and realistic approaches to assessing carbon output.
- B. Making improvements to buildings which reduce carbon emissions.
- C. Identifying any other measures that may be required to adequately respond to the report.

2.6 The District expects that SOs 605 (Minimum size of a society) and 612 (minimum size of a Church Council) will be properly implemented.

Note: Representatives from the District Property Consents Group and District Grants Group are available to visit churches at an early stage to offer support and expertise in developing schemes.

3. APPLICATIONS

An application for a DAF grant may be made for the support of ministry, property schemes, ecumenical work and purchase of equipment within the South-East District.

Grants may be awarded as a single lump sum or spread over the term of the project (subject to a maximum of 3 years).

Note:

- A. Grants are not normally awarded to support ongoing work, unless the scope of the work is expected to change significantly. However, in appropriate circumstances the District will consider an extension of support to grants initially made for 2-3 years, for up to a further 2 years, if an application for extension is made in the final year of the initial grant.
- B. An application made for a District Grant to support a new Diaconal appointment may ask for any grant awarded to be spread over a period of 5 years. The application will be considered subject to the Connexional criteria for the appointment of a new deacon being met and to the approval of the District Council.

The DAF is administered by the District Grants Group on behalf of the District Council by delegated authority.

Each application should be made on the appropriate DAF Grant Application Form as follows:

If the application is for a grant to a Circuit or local church for training, the applicant should complete DAF Training Grant Application Form: DAFGAF2.

If the application is for an individual grant for training, the applicant should complete DAF Training Grant Application Form: DAFGAF3 (lay) or DAFGAF4 (presbyter or deacon).

If the application is for any other form of grant for a Circuit, local church or District Group project, the applicant should complete DAF Application Form: DAFGAF General.

An application for a training grant may be submitted to the District Grants Secretary at any time of the year.

An application for a grant for any other scheme should be submitted to the District Grants Secretary at least four weeks in advance of a meeting of the District Grants Group, the dates of which will be advised to the Synod.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 PERSONNEL AND ECUMENICAL GRANTS

A. PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION AND THE AWARD OF A GRANT

The applicant must complete the appropriate DAF Grant Application Form and send one copy by email and one (with signatures) by post to the District Grants Secretary, who will register all grant applications on the DAF Application Summary.

Note:

- A. Every application, even when on behalf of a local church, must be made by, and have the approval of the Circuit Meeting.
 - B. Where an application is for a local church, the approval of the Church Council is also required.
1. The District Grants Secretary will send the Application Summary to the members of the District Grants Group together with the individual application forms.
 2. The District Grants Group will consider the scheme, assess its mission potential, decide on the priority of the various schemes and is empowered to approve an amount to be granted and the timing of any such grant.
 3. The Superintendent of the Circuit (or a nominated substitute) from which a grant application originates has the right to attend the District Grants Group meeting at which the application is to be discussed and to speak and answer questions.
 4. The District Grants Secretary will inform the applicant of the decision, and if a grant is approved, how it can be claimed.
 5. If the application is unsuccessful the applicant may appeal to the District Council for the decision to be reviewed. On all matters relating to the DAF, the decision of the District Council is final.

B. GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION FORM

A Grant will be made only if:

1. The application form is completed in full. Note: in addition to providing detailed information about the project, applicants must provide all of the financial information required in relation to the project, the church and / or Circuit and in particular disclose all financial reserves.
2. The Church/Circuit Mission Policy has been reviewed in the last 5 years. This should include specific reference to staffing and to the viability of buildings and societies and potential for developments in new housing areas.
3. The annual Statistics for Mission have been completed for the church.
4. The annual property returns have been completed for the church.
5. All works required in the most recent quinquennial (which should have been within the last 5 years) have been undertaken.
6. Projects that involve the employment of a lay person under a contract of service have had the appropriate employment documentation approved by the District Lay Employment Secretary before submission of the application.
7. Projects that involve the employment of a lay person to work with children and young people have been developed in consultation with the Connexional Children and Youth Team. (The District Grants Secretary will advise on who should be contacted.)
8. The application demonstrates a clear aim for the work for which grant aid is sought and include objectives, an action plan and details of the monitoring and evaluation process.
9. The application is accompanied by a copy of the local church and Circuit mission policy statement, with an indication of when the statement was approved.
10. Where appropriate, the application must show a strategy for sustaining the work on a self-funding basis at the end of the grant period.
11. The application is submitted for consideration by the District Grants Group before the project begins. Retrospective grants will not be made, unless specific agreement to consider a grant retrospectively has been given by the Chair of District and the Grants Secretary.

4.2 PROPERTY SCHEME GRANTS

Introductory Note: The District Property Consent website provides the means for Managing Trustees to apply for consent for property projects. Managing Trustees are able to create new projects and progress

projects through the website from church to Circuit to District. For church and Circuit property the District Consent Giving Body will be required to give final consent to projects.

Whatever the nature or content of the project, consent will always be required if there is a Methodist grant included in the funding arrangement.

Procedure for submission of and application and the award of a grant

1. The applicant must complete the DAF Grant Application Form and send one copy by email and one (with signatures) by post to the District Grants Secretary at least one month prior to the meeting of the Group at which the applicant wishes the application to be considered. The District Grants Secretary will register all grant applications on the DAF Application Summary.
2. The District Grants Secretary will send the Application Summary to the members of the District Grants Group together with any supporting documents.
3. The District Grants Group meets three times a year in Autumn, Spring and Summer, the dates of which can be found on the District Website. Only in exceptional circumstances are grants awarded between meetings.
4. Subject always to the availability of funds the District Grants Group will decide on the priority of the various schemes and is empowered to approve an amount to be granted and the timing of any such grant.
5. The Superintendent of the Circuit (or a nominated substitute) from which a grant application originates has the right to attend the District Grants Group meeting at which the application is to be discussed and to speak and answer questions.
6. The District Grants Secretary will inform the applicant of the decision and if a grant is approved from either the DAF or, if applicable, the London Mission Fund, how it can be claimed.
7. If a grant application is unsuccessful the applicant has a right of appeal to the District Council for the decision to be reviewed. On all matters relating to the DAF, the decision of the District Council is final.

A. GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

A Grant will be made only if:

1. The application form is completed in full. Note: in addition to providing detailed information about the project, applicants must provide all of the financial information required in relation to the project, the church and / or Circuit and in particular disclose all financial reserves.
2. The Church/ Circuit Mission Policy has been reviewed in the last 5 years. This should include specific reference to staffing and to the viability of buildings and societies and potential for developments in new housing areas.

3. The annual Statistics for Mission have been completed for the church.
4. The annual property returns have been completed for the church.
5. All works required in the most recent quinquennial (which should have been within the last 5 years) have been undertaken.
6. The scheme has been given permission/consent by the District through the online District Property Consents system.
7. When grants are awarded they are valid for three years from the date granted by the District Grants Group. If building work is not commenced within this time span, then the grant will automatically lapse and a fresh application will need to be made. If property consent is withheld for whatever reason, then the right to the grant will be terminated and the grant will fall away.

4.3. TRAINING GRANTS.

Please see the separate policy on the District website.

5. CRITERIA FOR AWARDING A DAF GRANT

When considering an application for a grant, priority will be given to:

1. schemes that are part of a clear strategy directed towards fulfilling God's mission through the local church/ Circuit and are consistent with District policy
2. schemes that make good use of resources by working in an ecumenical context, and where appropriate, in partnership with other Circuits and/ or organisations
3. schemes that have identified a need both in the Church and the wider community and have developed a way to respond effectively
4. schemes that encourage involvement with the gospel priority for the marginalised and poor and with those who are disadvantaged within the community
5. schemes that have considered the needs of various age groups, especially taking into account young people and young adults
6. schemes that incorporate the potential for providing new ways of being Church ('Fresh Expressions') or improving on existing practice
7. assisting churches and Circuits which have insufficient resources to achieve their mission.

6. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A GRANT HAS BEEN AWARDED

1. **Personnel and Ecumenical Grants.** When the scheme is underway (e.g. when employment has begun), the Grant should be claimed from the District Grants Treasurer who will instruct the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to make the transfer.
2. **Property Grants.** Subject always to the scheme being formally approved by District Consent Giving Body, a DAF grant should be drawn down through the Property Consents System; London Mission Fund grants are requested from the London Committee office.
3. DAF Grants are subject to monitoring by the District Grants Group at its Spring meeting. Monitoring forms will be sent to Superintendent Ministers and the Contact person named on the application in September for completion by the end of the calendar year. An interim report must be submitted annually until the project is completed when a final report must be provided. Failure to provide an interim report may cause payment of further instalments of any grant awarded to be deferred until this requirement has been complied with.
4. DAF Grants which have not been taken up within three years will normally lapse.
5. A DAF Grant made for a personnel or ecumenical project that is part of the *Fresh Expressions* initiative and which is to be drawn down over a period will be subject to the project continuing to adhere to the Policy Principles set out in Section 2. In the event that the project ceases to have any link with the Methodist Church then from the date of that event any instalment(s) of the grant awarded which have not been drawn down will lapse.

7. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. No grant will be awarded automatically. It must not be assumed that a project will definitely get a grant because it matches the grant criteria. The funds available to the DAF to be allocated as grants change from year to year, as do the applications for grants. It may well be **need** relative to others that determines how much grant aid a project receives from the DAF.
2. Circuits and churches are expected to make effective use of their own financial resources for the support and development of mission and ministry. DAF assistance is intended to 'bridge the gap' between what is available and what is required.
3. The District uses a 'commitment on approval' basis for grant-making. This is consistent with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 2005. SORP 2005 requires reserves to be in hand to cover formal (i.e. legally contracted) future commitments, regardless of future expected income flows.