

Approaching funders



If you are seeking funding for a building or repair project you will almost certainly need to approach external funders.

The good news is that there are plenty of funders out there - you just need to ensure your project aligns with the aims, values and investment principles of the funder. The bad news is that your application won't be the only one landing on their desk this week. Be intelligent in your approach - it's better to submit five well-written and well thought through applications to funders whose goals match yours, than fifty speculative applications that will end up in a slush pile.

It's all about the research

The time you put in to researching potential funders now will pay dividends later. Be clear on what you are fundraising for, as this will allow you to target specific funders with an interest in your area of need. Ideally, this is a task for 2-3 people, because the more you collaborate with others at this stage, the more likely it is you'll make informed and targeted choices.

It's OK to think outside the box at this stage. Don't forget, your project isn't just about saving a historic building. It's about the benefit it will bring to others in the future. So don't get hung up on just faith-based or heritage organisations. Broaden the scope of your search to include organisations who fund community projects too.

Let a database do some of the work

Have you heard of Cornerstone? If not, it's about to become your new best friend! Cornerstone was developed by the National Giving Team as an online generosity and fundraising tool for parishes. But most importantly for novice fundraisers, it has a free to access grants database that is easy to use and can be filtered depending on your project aims. To sign up, email the Cornerstone team on cornerstone@churchofengland.org, or contact the [Parish Support](#) team in the Diocese.

There are several other grant-funding databases online that you can use for your funder search. Some of these will require you to register, even if the database is free to use. Others are subscription only, so you will need to weigh up whether the benefit outweighs the cost. The best ones are:

[Grants Online](#)

[Heritage Funding Directory](#)

[Finding the best funders for churches | Church Grants](#)

[Welcome | My Funding Central](#)

Create a shortlist

Make a list of funders whose funding priorities best match the priorities of your project. Then do the following:

- Familiarise yourself with their website and get a feel for the organisation, the average size of grants they award, and the work they do - or if it's a small trust with no online presence you can find out about them on the Charity Commission website: [Search the register of charities](#)
- Double check their aims and objectives (sometimes called 'investment' or 'funding' principles). Do they align well with the aims of your project?
- Read their grant criteria, guidelines and any notes for applicants. Always follow the rules!
- Contact them for an informal discussion - it's also fairly common now for funders to provide an 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) form on their website for applicants to fill in, which allows them to sift applications at an early stage without you spending time on a full application.
- Note any deadlines they have for applications - some trusts only have one or two rounds of grant giving a year.



Positive planning

If you need a large capital grant from Historic England or the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it's worth completing that application first. Not only is the lead time for a response usually fairly long, but you can utilise the waiting time by approaching smaller funders in the interim. You'll also need to produce a fully costed, fully planned project for these organisations - which means you'll have ample resources to hand when you apply to smaller trusts.

Create a spreadsheet so you can keep track of progress. Include information such as who have you applied to, when, their criteria, how much you have asked for, and when you might find out. Record the names of anyone you have spoken to at the funding body, and what you talked about.

Remember:

- Successful fundraising **is a team activity**
- Don't rush in, **do your research first**
- Always triple check a funders **aims, objectives and criteria**
- Stay positive, but realistic - **grant fundraising doesn't happen overnight**
- The diocesan [Church Buildings Team](#) is always happy to provide advice on your project.

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