
UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES SUSTAINABILITY INNOVATION SCHEME

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q 1: Can the scheme be used for building improvements, maintenance, or repair work?

A: NO – The Challenge Scheme will only make grants to congregational partnerships for recruitment, training, remuneration (salary or fees) and associated overheads of the people they need for up to five years.

Q2: Can the scheme be used for employing a Minister?

A: YES – e.g. A group of congregations investing in a new team Ministry, finding a common purpose that will allow a Minister to work with the strengths of each community, building energy and capacity, and moving towards financial sustainability in the role within five years.

Q3: Can the scheme be used for employing an Outreach worker?

A: YES e.g. A group of congregations investing in a community outreach worker to build relationships with local stakeholders and discover the ways in which the congregation and chapel building can serve local needs in a way that is aligned to their purpose.

Q4: Can the scheme be used for supporting existing Ministry or administration costs?

A: NO – however we do encourage the fund to be called on to support the costs of ministry, but this must be a change to or development of a current appointment, with a clear story of what changes you expect to see as a result

Q5: Can the scheme be used for employing an Administrator.

A: YES e.g. A group of congregations investing in a development administrator and systems to help Trustees efficiently manage governance and accounting tasks or rental activity that can share the local chapel buildings with local stakeholders while bringing in new revenue that can enable a richer programme of activities to be offered.

Q6: Can the scheme be used for paying Consultants.

A: YES. for short term research or project management e.g. a group of congregations developing an 'artist in residence' scheme that can bring creative practice into the communities, expressing Unitarian stories in new ways.

Q7: Can a single Congregation apply for a grant?

A: Priority will be given to collaborative bids between two or more Congregations with District level support

Q8: Who can help our Congregation scope and prepare a grant application?

A: The scheme will be run by a Programme Manager who will be funded by the GA and report to the Chief Officer. As well as administration, their role will include supporting and encouraging potential projects to successful applications, and funded projects to successful completion.

UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES SUSTAINABILITY INNOVATION SCHEME

Q9: How do we apply?

A: An outline bid (maximum 1,500 words) should be submitted to the Programme Manager describing the congregation(s), summarising the project's aims, describing the proposed activities and explaining their intended impact. It should include a summary budget and information about who will be overseeing the implementation. If approved, you will be invited to submit a full bid to the Assessment panel

Q10: Who will assess our application?

A: Every full application will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel of three people, randomly allocated from a pool of Assessors to be recruited from across the Unitarian movement, and perhaps also from beyond.

Q11: Can we get funding to help develop a grant application?

A: YES - If the Programme Manager or the Assessment Panel agrees that a proposal is strong but needs more preliminary work (e.g., to develop a job description, or undertake community research, or run a pilot to test a hypothesis) then the Programme Manager may approve a one-off Development Grant of up to £5,000. Awarding a development grant does not bind the Assessment Panel to approve an application for a full grant.

Q12: How will the Grant work in practice?

A: Once a grant is approved, 10% of the total grant will be payable within 28 days. Thereafter, projects must submit a quarterly report showing progress against the agreed criteria, and a drawdown request accompanied by receipts for eligible outgoings. Quarterly reports will be approved by the Programme Manager within 14 days of receipt, and payment will be made by bank transfer within 14 days of the approval.

Q13: What happens if the original plan doesn't work out?

A: Recognising that circumstances change, the scheme allows the Programme Manager discretion to agree reasonable changes to plans, indicators, and budgets, or to agree to an early wind-down of the project so resources can be deployed elsewhere.

Q14: What other obligations are there?

A: Primarily keeping good records and sharing your learning and experience with the rest of the movement.

Q15: When can we apply?

A: There will be an online or paper based application form (see the full proposal appendix 2 for the current draft).

We are hoping to receive the first cohort of applications in late 2024 however you should identify a potential bid, talk to potential collaborators and your District and start to prepare your proposal NOW. A good bid will probably take three to six months to develop.