

DISTRICT ADVANCE FUND

Summary

This document defines the agreed policy for the above-mentioned fund and includes the criteria and operating procedures for administering the fund, as well as providing guidance on making applications to the fund by individuals, churches, circuits and district groups who wish to avail themselves of these resources.

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Approved by Synod: *21 April 2007*

Slightly amended by District Grants Group June 2011

DISTRICT ADVANCE FUND

1. Policy Statement

The District Advance Fund is a resource 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.

Schemes must engage with the connexionally-agreed framework of *'Our Calling'* and *'Priorities for the Methodist Church'*.

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.

Applications for District Advance Fund grants may be made for the support of ministry, property schemes, ecumenical work and purchase of equipment within the South-East District. All applications should be made on the District Advance Fund Grant Application Form, and 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.

If the application is for a circuit or local church grant for training, applicants should complete the District Advance Fund - Training Grant Application Form (Circuits). If the application is for an individual grant for training, applicants should complete the District Advance Fund - Training Grant Application Form (Individuals). Applications for training grants may be submitted to the District Grants Secretary at any time of the year.

The District Advance Fund is administered by the District Grants Group on behalf of the District Policy Committee. On all matters relating to the District Advance Fund, the decision of the District Policy Committee is final.

2. Criteria for District Advance Fund Grants

When considering grant applications, priority will be given to:

- 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
- schemes that make good use of resources by working in an ecumenical context, and where appropriate, in partnership with other circuits and/ or organisations
- schemes that have identified a need both in the Church and the wider community and have developed a way to respond effectively
- schemes that encourage involvement with the gospel priority for the marginalised and poor and with those who are disadvantaged within the community
- schemes that have considered the needs of various age groups, especially taking into account young people and young adults
- schemes that incorporate the potential for providing new ways of being Church ('Fresh Expressions') or improving on existing practice
- assisting churches and circuits which have insufficient resources to achieve their mission

3. Personnel and Ecumenical grants

(a) Procedures for submission of application form

1. the applicant completes the form and sends one copy by email and one (with signatures) by post to the District Grants Secretary, who registers all grant applications on the District Advance Fund Application Summary.
Note: i) all applications, even when on behalf of a local church, must be made by, and have the approval of the Circuit Meeting.
ii) where applications are for a local church, the approval of the Church Council is also required.
2. the District Grants Secretary sends the Application Summary to District Grants Group members together with the individual application forms.
3. the District Grants Group considers the scheme, assesses its mission potential, decides on the priority of the various schemes and is empowered to approve an amount to be granted and the timing of any such grant.
4. the District Grants Secretary informs the applicant of the decision, and if a grant is approved, how it can be claimed.

(b) Guidelines

1. projects that involve the employment of a lay person under a contract of service must be approved by the District Lay Employment Secretary.
2. projects that involve the employment of a lay person to work with children and young people must also be approved by the Training and Development Officer.
3. applications must demonstrate 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.
4. applications must be accompanied by a copy of the local church and circuit mission policy statement, with an indication of when the statement was approved.
5. both termed grants (to a maximum of 3 years) and single grants are available. Where appropriate, applications need to show a strategy for sustaining the work on a self-funding basis at the end of the grant period.
6. the District will consider extension of support to grants initially made for 2-3 years, for up to a further 2 years, in the final year of the initial grant.
7. with the exception of 6. above, grants are not normally awarded to support ongoing work, unless the scope of the work is expected to change significantly.
8. grant applications must be 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 or District Grants Secretary.
9. when the scheme is underway (e.g. when employment has begun), the grant should be claimed from the District Treasurer who will instruct the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes to make the transfer.

4. Property grants

(a) Procedures for submission of application form

1. the circuit/ church completes the property schedule and sends it (together with other relevant documents) to the District Property Secretary, and sends a copy of the property schedule to the District Grants Secretary.
2. the building scheme is considered by members of the District Property Group, who are empowered to approve the scheme on behalf of the District.

3. the property schedule is processed by the District Property Secretary through to the Methodist Property Office, Manchester, except for minor schemes of less than £20,000 that may be approved within the District.
4. as soon as district approval has been given, the applicant completes the District Advance Fund Grant Application Form and sends one copy by email and one (with signatures) by post to the District Grants Secretary, with a copy to the District Property Secretary. The District Grants Secretary registers all grant applications on the District Advance Fund Application Summary.
5. the District Grants Secretary sends the Application Summary to District Grants Group members together with individual application forms.
6. the District Grants Group decides on the priority of the various schemes and is empowered to approve an amount to be granted and the timing of any such grant.
7. the District Grants Secretary informs the applicant of the decision and if a grant is approved, how it can be claimed.

(b) Guidelines

1. when the scheme has been formally approved by Methodist Property Office, the grant should be claimed directly from them. Evidence is required that the work is in progress. Funds are used in order of: church, circuit, district and connexion.
2. if work is started before formal approval has been obtained, Methodist Property Office **will not** release any funds held by Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes or Connexional grants made towards the scheme.
3. a 'Completion of Scheme' form is required once the scheme is complete.

5 Training Grants - see separate policy dated Sept 2010, also on District website

6 General Information

1. 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.
2. no grant will be given automatically. It must not be assumed that a project will definitely get a grant because it matches the grant criteria. The funds available for grant support change from year to year, as do the requests for grants. It may well be **NEED** relative to others that determines how much grant aid a project receives.
3. applicants have the right of appeal to the District Policy Committee against a decision of the District Grants Group. The decision of the District Policy Committee is final.
4. District Advance Fund grants will be subject to monitoring by the District Grants Group at its January meeting. Monitoring forms will be sent to Superintendent ministers in September for completion by the end of November.
5. circuits and churches are expected to make effective use of their own financial resources for the support and development of mission and ministry. District Advance Fund assistance is intended to 'bridge the gap' between what is available and what is required.
6. the District has adopted a system of using a commitment or approval basis for grant-making. This was a decision prompted by 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.
7. in order to avoid tying up funds unnecessarily, grants which have not been taken up within three years of approval will normally lapse.