Level 3 Grants

Guidelines for Applicants

# Introduction

**Level 3 Grants are available up to a *maximum* award of £40,000/year with an initial maximum of three years and possible extension to five years.**

**Please understand that the figures given for maximum Seeds for Growth grants are the upper limits for both amount per year and duration and not the average grant. You can request funding for lower amounts per annum and for less than the maximum three years initial funding period if you wish. In order to encourage sustainability, Seeds for Growth will often award grants which decrease in value in years two and three of a project.**

# Support for applicants

Online training sessions will be offered to support the making of applications to **Seeds for Growth**. We can answer questions about the form; however, we cannot review draft applications. Dates of these sessions will be available by emailing [grants@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:grants@churchofscotland.org.uk)

For help discovering new outreach opportunities that suit your setting we recommend to you a free training programme called Culture of Innovation. This fun and informal programme works through missional thinking and ‘how to try’. It helps you assess your own context, imagine possibilities and quickly bring together plans. Culture of Innovation has film snippets from some talks by Father Lorenzo Lebrija followed by group activities. It breaks down into 5 sessions

1. Future thinking
2. ‘What if’ wonderings
3. Generating insights
4. Developing ideas
5. Trying

It can be found on Church of Scotland Learning using this link: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/church-of-scotland-learning>

**Filling in the application form**

We would advise that you:

* Read through this guidelines document, then the application form, then the guidelines again
* Fill in the form
* Leave it for a few hours up to a couple of days and come back to it
* Ask somebody unconnected to the project to read through your completed form to be able to objectively point out little mistakes or to tell you that something is unclear
* Ask somebody aware of the project to read through your completed form to be able to add another perspective.

Make sure you **fully answer all the questions**. The following guidelines provide some notes designed to help you understand the sort of information we are looking for.

**It will help you in completing your application to follow these Guidelines closely. Don’t be afraid of repeating yourself in the application – if you think a particular piece of information is important in your answer to more than one question then by all means, (keeping within any word limit that is specified) put it in.**

When assessing your application, **Seeds for Growth** will be asking themselves the questions:

* Is this project going to lead to the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church of Scotland?
* Have the people of this project thought carefully about their work, and why they do what they do?
* Has this project demonstrated that it going to succeed?
* Is there a good plan for sustainability – including financial sustainability?
* Will this project be run with good governance in place?

A good application is one which enables committee members to confidently answer “yes” to these questions.

# Section 1: Who you are

Application forms are usually completed by a Church of Scotland congregation or presbytery. However, groups of congregations or presbyteries can also work together but please contact us initially to discuss your ideas. Partnership and ecumenical working are strongly encouraged. If you are a parish or presbytery grouping then you could record that here but it is likely that one church/presbytery will need to stand as the lead on behalf of the group.

Please note that we are unable to award any grant to a project which does not sit within the governance of a Church of Scotland congregation or presbytery. Where a project relies on some form of external partnership, a formal partnership agreement will need to be in place before any grant monies can be paid (see section 6). This is in keeping with **Seeds for Growth’s** overall purpose which is to support the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church of Scotland.

Neither of the contacts/signatories named here should be someone whose role will be funded should this application be successful and they should be unrelated both to each other and to any such person (by unrelated we mean people who aren’t family members, such as siblings, parents and children, married couples or civil partners or people living at the same address).

Should the person filling in the form become an employee of the project during its lifetime (or another individual with whom they are in a close personal relationship does so), please inform **Seeds for Growth**, and we will ask you for the name of another key contact.

# Section 2: Summary of Application

This section is critical in enabling our committee to understand your project, and why it is that you are seeking a **Seeds for Growth** grant.  
  
It will help us if you include the following:

* The story of your project so far (including any previous projects which led to where you are today).
* What is it that your project does?
* Who is it for?
* What you have achieved so far (it is very unlikely that **Seeds for Growth** will award a Level 3 grant to a project for which no preparatory work has yet been done. Please look at applying for Level 1 or 2 grants if you are in the early stages of your project’s life)
* What is exciting and inspiring about your project?
* Where have you seen God at work?
* What successes and failures have you experienced?
* Who is involved in your project at the moment, and what do they do?
* Why you need a **Seeds for Growth** Grant.

You may wish to include a video or small selection of photographs to support your application. If you do want to send us such files you can use [https://wetransfer.com/](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fprotect.checkpoint.com%2Fv2%2Fr02%2F___https%3A%2F%2Fwetransfer.com%2F___.YzJlOmNodXJjaG9mc2NvdGxhbmQ6YzpvOmQxN2JhYzY5MmM0MTgzMzQ3ZDA4N2YzNjVlYWQ0ZWRiOjc6ZjQ5MzplZGUwMzk5NTQ2YjEzYWU2M2I1MmUzYTUyNjM4NmFlOGZmNWU5ZTczZjUzMWRmNzg2ZDFmZjRlNTgzMjgzZmUxOmg6VDpO&data=05%7C02%7Cdwilliams%40churchofscotland.org.uk%7Cddf2d5f2d27f499d795208dd3c5bf580%7Cbb19877f627347e3ad98019d8f394fef%7C1%7C0%7C638733087826707190%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=hQyxieXMSzzQHc5bThYV3TpwhdHujswrKc6aEkADAcA%3D&reserved=0)

The final question in this section allows us to begin to match your work to our criteria. Successful applications will be for projects that support at least one of the following criteria for fundable projects:

To support the numerical and spiritual growth of the Church of Scotland through:

1) Developing mission through new worshipping communities

2) Developing and nurturing faith in those under the age of 40

3) Fostering discipleship and revitalisation within established congregations, with the aim of growing the existing congregation or developing a new worshipping community.

You only need to meet one of these criteria to qualify for a grant, but successful projects often meet more than one.

## New Worshipping Communities

If your application relates to the establishment of a new worshipping community, we will expect you to have some degree of clarity as to what form of New Worshipping Community you will seek to establish (and likely building on previous research and engagement).

The following “Pioneer Spectrum” (developed by the Church Mission Society) is a helpful representation of various approaches.

A diagram of a church

Description automatically generated with low confidence

*Figure 1 The Pioneer Spectrum. Used with permission of the Church Mission Society.*

The spectrum shows the range of pioneer ministry activities and how these activities relate to the intention of planting churches and to the concept of fresh expressions of church.

* Replicate: taking an existing model of church and trying it in a new place
* Adapt: modifying ideas used elsewhere for a local context. Note that though the diagram shows “Messy Church” as an example, we would not fund applications where “Messy Church” is the only activity – for Level 2 and 3 applications we would expect to see a broader approach involving different ages of young people, and also developing faith amongst the carers of young people.
* Innovate: pushing the boundaries of what church is and seeking to find new ways to connect with people who do not currently go to Church.

Seeds for Growth will support any one of these forms of pioneer ministry.

Note: The fifth circle on the diagram – “Kingdom oriented social enterprises” – currently falls outwith the scope of **Seeds for Growth** funding but we are interested in any ideas you have in this area.

New Worshipping Communities usually exhibit the following five qualities. You may wish to show how these are present in your New Worshipping Community:

* **Missional** i.e. the focus is on people beyond existing congregations;
* **Contextual** i.e. their format, culture and activities are shaped by the particular setting;
* **Consistency** i.e. a community is developing, with some of the same people participating regularly;
* **Ecclesial** i.e. it sees itself as part of, and is developing connections with, the wider church;
* **Formational** i.e. participants are encouraged to grow in Christian faith and character.

We are often asked “How new is “new”?” We usually look to support New Worshipping Communities which have been established in the last five years but will consider applications from older communities if there is a good case that additional funding will lead to sustainable growth.

## Working with Young People

If you are seeking funding for developing faith-based work amongst young people, we will be looking for the following aspects of your work, that it:

1. Has, at its heart, an emphasis on enabling young people to grow in faith.
2. Will include spaces where young people are able to be with their peers.
3. Will integrate with a wider number of groups where overt exploration of faith is not a key part of their purpose (e.g. drop-ins, activity-based clubs, personal development courses).
4. Includes intergenerational spaces: connection with an existing congregation and/or a focus on building faith within families. Home can be the primary context for discipleship particularly if supported by a wider church family.
5. That young people have significant scope to shape and lead the work.
6. Includes times where young people participate in and lead worship – this may be part of an established congregation, the creation of a new kind of Church service, or the formation of a new worshipping community.

We will be very unlikely to fund work whose purpose appears to be the ongoing survival of an established faith community and which does not evidence a commitment to change, or shared leadership with young people.

## Fostering discipleship and revitalisation within established congregations, with the aim of growing the existing congregation or developing a new worshipping community

Projects which match this criteria are about equipping and inspiring existing congregations to share their faith and to grow. **Seeds for Growth** will support such projects where:

* This is new work, or a significant development of existing work.
* The work can be defined as a project: that it can be planned, monitored and evaluated.
* There is a strong emphasis on connecting with, sharing faith and making disciples of those who do not currently take part in the life of your congregation. In particular, this will mean that there is a strong emphasis on the first two of the five marks of mission, namely “to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom” and “to teach, baptise and nurture new believers”.
* There is a strong likelihood that this work will lead to growth in your existing congregation, the establishment of a new worshipping community, or both.

Note that within its criteria, the priorities of **Seeds for Growth** are:

* + Developing mission through new worshipping communities and church planting
  + Engaging in intergenerational approaches to and participation in worship

If required to make choices between different applications, these priorities will be applied.

# Section 3: Preparation

Many successful **Seeds for Growth** applications involve long years of preparation, community consultation and engagement, research and the launching of pilot initiatives before the application form is filled in. Please tell us about the work you have done to get to this point.

Please tell us as well about the prayer that has happened to get to where you are now. The importance of this stage of the work is huge. Many church planters, for example, speak of spending years praying, often focussed on a particular area, before they planted a church (for more on this, see Chapter One of “How to Plant a Church” by Ric Thorpe).

# Section 4: Project Objectives

This is a key section in assessing your application. This will help us to work out if:

* Your project matches our criteria (building on your answer in section 2)
* You have a clear plan
* You have set realistic and measurable objectives.

We ask that you describe your key project objectives. Most successful applications tend to have 4-5 of these, but feel free to add as many as you wish.

We would expect some of your key changes to relate to what are sometimes called “gateway activities”. These activities are about making new connections and relationships. We would also expect to some of your changes relate to faith-based work in smaller groups; very often these groups would include opportunities to explore faith more deeply, to make a faith commitment, and to be discipled.

For each of your key changes we ask that you describe the following:

## Description of change

Please be as specific as you can about the changes you want to see happen through your proposed work. It can be tempting to remain very open at this point, both because you can’t predict the future and because you want to be responsive and reflective. We value the need to be responsive, but our experience tells us that this is most effective when held with a clear sense of purpose. Therefore, strong answers to this section will usually contain a *change* word and by that we mean a word like *increase, decrease*, *reduce*, or *improve*. They should describe the ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ of change. For example, if we had an outcome that was ‘new parents will feel more confident in praying’, the ‘who’ is new parents, ‘what we are hoping to change’ is how confident they feel in praying to God, and how do we hope that will change is ‘more’. The ‘how’ refers to the *direction* of change rather than *how will we change it*. The direction of change is the *increase, decrease, more, less*.

## The work you will do

This is what you will do in delivering your initiative: it could be events or activities. Tell us what you intend to do, and how you intend to do it. You might also want to talk about the frequency of these activities, where they take place, and who they will be for.

Projects which are clear on how they are going to focus their effort are likely to be more effective than those whose work and energy becomes too diffuse.

## How will you evaluate the effectiveness of this work?

In this section we are asking you to tell us two things

* What you will measure
* The method you will use to measure it

The most common measure in **Seeds for Growth** projects is “participant numbers”: how many people take part in a particular activity. We know that this measure does not tell us everything, but it can be good general indicator of how your work is leading to “spiritual and numerical growth”.

You may choose to measure other aspects of your work, such as the numbers coming into leadership; or how people describe their journey in faith (you can speak to us about how other projects have sought to measure this).

Other common methods include conducting surveys and hosting evaluation sessions with participants. We are particularly interested in projects which want to experiment with new ways measuring the effectiveness of their work.

## What specific objectives you hope to achieve?

We ask projects to be specific about these objectives. We recognise that the future can’t be predicted, and faith-based work will often involve periods of waiting. But our experience is that being specific about our objectives will direct and focus our work, and also bring clarity to our evaluation.

We also suggest that you set objectives for each year of your project. Those who work in planting new worshiping communities tell us to expect slower growth in year 1 of a project, and you might want to reflect that in your numbers. Your objectives will also reflect the nature of the work. For example, we know that contact – based work with young people (such as running a drop-in) will grow relatively quickly, whilst faith-based work will take longer to grow.

This example is based on how one congregation listed their specific objectives:

**Year 2**

Intergenerational worship has 10 families in regular attendance

10 young people involved in “Intro to Faith” study groups, attending Christian residential camps, and reporting growth in faith.

Tuesday lunchtime drop-in continues to attract 100+ young people

**Year 3**

Inter-generational worship has 15 families in regular attendance

25 young people involved in “Intro to Faith” Study Groups, attending Christian residential camps, and reporting growth in faith. Contact maintained with 10 young people who have become too old for other groups.

Tuesday lunchtime drop-in continues to attract 100+ young people

# Section 5: Resources – Finance and People

**5.1 Sustainability**

The “Level 3 Financial Resources Spreadsheet” covering income and expenditure is a key part of your proposal.

**Seeds for Growth** is committed to funding sustainable projects. This means that in the long-term, projects must seek to generate income through a combination of:

* Congregational giving
* Support from presbytery
* Giving from those taking part in the work you do
* Support from local business
* Community enterprise
* Other grants

The additional “Sustainability Vision Timeline” Excel spreadsheet provided as part of the application form pack may be helpful in planning the potential income from your current congregation and potential new members.

A **Seeds for Growth** Grant can provide time for your project to develop new sources of income that continue after the time of the Seeds for Growth grant. We have increasingly come to see the importance of giving from participants in your work – particularly if you are seeing people come to faith, as this is part of their discipleship.

Our experience is that:

* New Worshipping Communities will see an increasingly large amount of their income coming from those who become members of the community. The learning of some experienced Church planters is that a New Worshipping Community should become financially self-sustaining within 7 years. We understand that in some contexts this may not be possible (e.g. where the members of your New Worshipping Community do not have a large disposal income such as Priority Areas parishes), but this remains a good aspiration.
* Work with young people will attract grant funding but we would caution against this being your only source of income. We are looking for a balance of giving from those in congregations, participants and from other sources such as local businesses.
* Work to revitalise congregations should become self-sustaining within 3-5 years.

Please be as accurate and realistic as you reasonably can with your figures and **double check** all the totals just before you finally submit the application – it’s easy to make changes and not adjust all the totals. Your expenditure should tie up with your required income from all sources, not just **Seeds for Growth**, for the project.

A key part of many applications’ expenditure is on salaries. We will look to see that you have set your salary scales appropriately (relating to the skills and responsibilities you will require of any postholder). These should also include appropriate associated costs such as employer’s pension contributions and training.

Some of the most effective New Worshipping Communities have bi-vocational leaders – i.e. leaders who work part-time for the project and have another job or vocation. This can benefit the leader in that they have another perspective they can bring to their work, necessitates greater sharing of leadership and also means the community requires less income in order to become financially self-sustaining.

It is likely that in the later years of its life, the New Worshipping Community will make some contribution to the Church of Scotland’s Giving to Grow scheme. The details of this are yet to be finalised, and we will keep you informed when these decisions have been made.

**What can and cannot be funded?**

We are willing to fund training, salaries, equipment or hire of space as long as you can show that this is essential to the aims of your project.

It is reasonable to include a contribution to the overheads of any parent congregation or organisation (sometimes known as full cost recovery) but we want to see that this is proportionate to the size of this project and appropriate to what the organisation is putting into the project. In other words, if this project will employ one worker in your organisation’s staff team of five, then it could be appropriate to include one fifth of your telephone costs.

Please be as straightforward and transparent as you can be and explain anything which is unusual or unclear.

**Awards cannot be used for:**

* Church repairs
* Covering retrospective costs
* Making up shortfall in existing congregational income.

**5.2 and 5.3** **Employees**

Please give brief details here and attach relevant documents as requested in the checklist in Part Eight.

**Please note:** Church of Scotland MDS roles cannot be “topped up” by **Seeds for Growth** grants.

Any role supported by **Seeds for Growth** funding needs to be on a local contract.

If an MDS staff member applies to work in any such job as an additional role to their current one this will need to be done through the normal processes (see below).

**5.4** **Recruitment**

We expect posts funded with **Seeds for Growth** grants to be publicly advertised and an appointment made on the basis of a transparent and fair recruitment process; please ensure that you make it clear to us if there is any deviation from this.

Note that we will want to see the job description, person specification and (and also, if you have got to this stage, the contract) for any post intended to be funded by the Grant.

Note that Presbytery has responsibility to make sure any locally employed post is feasible at the local level so please send them the job description, person specification and contract as recruitment begins. (at the time of writing, this is covered in section 5.3 of the Presbytery Mission Plan Act (Act VIII 2021, as amended)).

## Line Managers

Line managers should be unrelated to those they manage (by unrelated we mean people who aren’t family members, such as siblings, parents and children, married couples or civil partners or people living at the same address).

There is growing evidence that providing coaching for people engaged in pioneering/missional work can drastically increase the efficacy of that work.

# Sections 6–8

These sections all relate to the structures, policies, processes and other bodies which support your work. If you are unclear about any of the questions here, please do not hesitate to contact us. All of these questions are extremely important in ensuring the good governance of your project.

**How will you promote the health and safety of everyone involved in your project?**

Who will be responsible for overseeing this area? How will you assess risks? Some projects may require specific policies in this area because of the nature of their work, for example a Lone Working Policy.

**What insurance cover will your project require, and is this in place?**

Contact your present insurer/broker to check whether your project is covered by your current policy or to discuss what insurance is needed.

**How will you handle and record the project’s day-to-day finances? How will the oversight of your finances by managed?**

Please describe, in brief, your internal controls or systems for handling money transparently and responsibly. For example, who can sign cheques or authorise payments; will there be a petty cash system; who records money coming in and out; how is this information gathered and reported; who will handle payroll to ensure staff and HMRC are all paid correctly; who will prepare reports for OSCR or for funders?

**NOTE that you are required to show the project in your accounts as a Restricted fund – please ensure that your Treasurer is aware of this.**

**Questions relating to Safeguarding:**

If you are conducting regulated work with children, young people or protected adults, please confirm that you are adhering to the Church of Scotland Safeguarding policies and practices in this regard, and in particular, that all workers and volunteers have undergone the safer recruitment process, have been cleared by the Safeguarding Service, and have attended safeguarding training prior to undertaking any regulated work. **If this is not the case, then any award may be delayed.**

Please confirm that your congregational Safeguarding Register is up to date and been submitted to the Safeguarding Service in December 2023 or prior to the submission of this application. **If this is not the case, then any award may be delayed.**

# Section 9: Additional Information

Please use this space to give us any information not supplied so far which you think is important – this might be additional context, further details about your plans or methodology or it might be a story, image or person which captures something significant about the essence of your project.

**Checklist**

If you have enclosed all of the required documents your application will go forward for support from Presbytery. If you haven’t enclosed all the required documents, then your application will not be considered.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DO THIS IS YOURS. WE DO NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO FOLLOW UP APPLICANTS FOR MISSING DOCUMENTS.**

**Further Guidance**

If you require further guidance, please contact a member of the **Seeds for Growth** Team:

David Williams

**Grants Manager**

T. 0131 376 5846

E. [dwilliams@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:dwilliams@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Lynne Hood

**Grants Administrator**

T. 0131 376 3682

E. [grants@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:grants@churchofscotland.org.uk)

The next closing date for submitting a Level 3 application is **5pm, 19th March 2025.**

There will be two assessment reports put forward to the **Seeds for Growth** Committee, along with your application. One will be from a member of **Seeds for Growth** staff and the other from a designated **Seeds for Growth** Committee member, who will arrange a telephone interview with the main contact person named in your application, in order to complete their assessments. The final decision will be taken by the **Seeds for Growth** Committee by consensus or, if necessary, by vote, following review of your application, assessment reports and discussion. The Committee meets to discuss grant funding in the Spring and Autumn.

If your award is below £75,000 you will receive a letter informing you of the Committee’s decision within a week of the meeting.  **If an award of £75,000 or over is recommended by the Committee then this has to be taken to the next meeting of the Assembly Trustees for their consideration and we will contact you within a week of us being informed of their decision.** If your application is unsuccessful, the reasons why we have not chosen to fund your project at this time will be indicated in an email.