

Case for support guidance for churches



Regardless of which funder or donor you approach, you will need to have a clear and compelling case for support. This will act as a foundation for all your fundraising and is key to achieving successful applications. This guidance will take you through the essential steps to write your case for support and highlights specific things to consider when applying for funding.

Why a case for support is so important

Your application will need to be persuasive and show how this financial support will make a difference, to help give your application the best chance of success.

It is important to create a narrative about your church and its work that inspires potential donors. The case for support should also provide detailed information about the specific projects that need funding.

Your case for support will form the backbone of your approaches to all major donors, funding bodies, and the local community, so it is well worth investing time and resource to get it right. It should draw on the voices of key people in your church and be a live document that evolves and is regularly updated.

Developing your case for support: the basics

As a simple guide, you can position your case around three basic questions:

- ✓ What is the need?
- ✓ What is the solution?
- ✓ What will the outcome be?

These questions can be used to create a quick and punchy fundraising message on your donation forms, newsletters, fundraising posters and crowdfunding pages. They will also provide the background when you write your detailed case for support.

A case for support is usually between four and six pages long and should include any key facts, financials and summary plans that you have. It helps bring it to life if it includes pictures, personal testimonials and quotes.

Developing your case for support: the detail

The following questions will help you think about how to articulate your case for support; some of the possible responses provided may not be applicable to your church but they should give you some ideas to work from. Although funders' questions will vary, they are typically based on the following areas:

Why should funders and donors support your church?

- ✓ Make it clear that you are at the **heart of your community** above and beyond your congregation whatever type of church you are (e.g. an inner-city neighbourhood, a dispersed rural community, a suburban area, or a small village).
- ✓ Talk about any **community action projects** that help your church to contribute to the local area. If your church provides practical support for the current issues that local families face, clearly outline these. For example, your church may provide or support a great service for local people and communities, such as:
 - tackling poverty
 - creating community cohesion
 - reducing loneliness and isolation and/or
 - supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

- ✓ Is your church connected to people locally through a **wider network** in addition to connections through your congregation? If you are, then emphasise these links. Having a wider network highlights how you are able to have a deep impact and create continuity. For example, you may be linked to:
 - local schools
 - social clubs for older people or young parents
 - disability support groups
 - civic activity groups
 - different generations of local families.
- ✓ Highlight your **track record**. Your church has an established and successful way of supporting people that can be scaled up given the right support from funders. Explain that your church has the network, the potential scale, the building and/or the resource to make a funder's contribution or a donor's gift go far.
- ✓ Emphasise **why you need support now**. Vulnerable and disadvantaged people, already dealing with isolation and poverty, are being hit hard by the pandemic. Right now, your church community action project is more important than ever.

Why your church, over other local causes?

- ✓ Talk about what makes your church **unique**. It could be that you are the only church in your community that works with a youth support service, holds a foodbank, or reaches out to isolated people. You may be the only local hub that is still running a regular support service when other local services have had to close down or reduce activity.
- ✓ As well as the practical support that your community action projects provide, your church is also a **hub of connectivity** because you are plugged in to a wide network covering all ages and backgrounds. Highlight the fact your church has long-standing and meaningful relationships with local families, groups and individuals – there is trust and co-operation between your church and them.
- ✓ Emphasise that your church provides **moral and spiritual support**, much-needed during these difficult times, and can connect people through a trusted and familiar community presence.
- ✓ Your church may be an **established community presence**, so highlight to the potential funder how you are likely to be able to create a lasting legacy from a donation.

Who benefits from your work? How do they benefit? How can you demonstrate this?

- ✓ Flesh out the detail of the **particular groups of people** that you support:
 - What is their age group?
 - What is their particular need?
 - Are they from your immediate locality or from a wider area?
- ✓ You should then **explain how they benefit from your work** and give examples to evidence this. For example, your beneficiaries may be a group of young families struggling on low income; they live across a number of different local neighbourhoods or wards. The foodbank that your church helps to run means these families don't go hungry or get into debt to buy food.
- ✓ **Be specific** about how many people use the service; has the number of referrals from social services grown? Can you say numbers have grown recently and is there evidence this is due to economic conditions? If so, highlight these points.
- ✓ If it is possible to get **testimonials or quotes** from people you support, include them as anonymised supporting quotes in your case.

What difference does a donation or grant make?

- ✓ A larger grant from a major funder **could be the difference** between your church continuing and potentially developing a service, or having to close it down completely.
- ✓ It helps to **spell out what might happen if you don't get support from the funder**. For example: 'without support from funders and donors, we would not be able to provide a lifeline for isolated and vulnerable people; we would not be able to prevent the isolation that people in our community face'.
- ✓ Don't forget to **emphasise the difference that a donation will make** on donation forms intended for individuals, remind them that whatever the size of donation, big or small, it will make all the difference and go directly towards supporting people.

How might a gift be acknowledged/what do donors get in return?

- ✓ **Saying thank you is so important** regardless of the size of donation. Make sure you thank people for their donation as soon as possible, be it by email, phone call, or letter. It helps to establish a positive relationship and encourages people to give again. Take any opportunity you can to thank your donors throughout the life of the project they have supported.
- ✓ For **larger grants** from national funders, or larger trusts and foundations:
 - You could include their logo on your project-supporting materials, on your website and annual reports.
 - An annual grant update report is a standard requirement for most major funders; they will give you the detail about when and how to report back to them at the point they award you a grant.
 - Consider inviting major donors and funders to events associated with the project they have funded. Obviously, this will not be appropriate if social distancing measures are in place, but the point is to keep your major donors informed and involved in your project wherever possible.
 - Depending on the size of gift in relation to the overall cost of your project, it may be appropriate to consider a plaque or donor board in your church building.
- ✓ For **smaller funders**:
 - You could consider producing an update report to tell them what a difference their support made to your church.
 - You could produce a project newsletter-style report (or other informal format) to distribute to individual donors. Consider gathering email addresses to avoid postal costs.

How do donors know that you will look after their funding and achieve maximum value from their gift?

- ✓ **Be transparent** about your project costs, the amount of funds already raised, what income you already receive, and what the shortfall is.
- ✓ **Explain clearly** how a larger grant or donation will be spent and be prepared to provide financial statements to back up your narrative.
- ✓ Highlight early in your case if you work with **partner agencies** such as Christians against Poverty, Parish Nursing Ministries UK or The Trussell Trust.

How can you demonstrate that you are working towards financial sustainability?

- ✓ When applying for emergency funding, it is not going to be so important to answer this question. However, a good case for support would normally cover this point and you should still be able to articulate how your project is sustainable.
- ✓ If there are areas where you are less confident about sustainability, **have a plan** in place that you are prepared to share. For example, if the costs of running a volunteer support group for isolated older people should substantially increase due to the cost of living crisis, you should be able to show how you plan to mitigate this.

What different aspects of the project are available for funders to support, and what are their related 'ask' amounts?

- ✓ You should develop a '**shopping list**' to break down your project costs into easily identifiable chunks to be funded. This should detail the cost of individual items such as:
 - plates or food items needed to run a lunch club for families facing poverty
 - cost of petrol to keep a 'shop-and-drop' service running for isolated older people
 - replacing a window
 - fixing a leaking roof.
- ✓ By equating their donation with a **specific and tangible benefit**, potential donors can feel their support will make a real and material difference.

Bringing together your case for support

Considering the questions above will help you to develop your case for support.

Once you have developed your case for support, you can then use it as a starting point for applications to donors and funders. It is important to bear in mind that each funder has different areas of interest, so you should adapt and tweak your case to fit with each funder's interests and requirements.

Remember to regularly review and update your case as your fundraising progresses. This will help you to present a more successful case for support to potential funders.

Want to find out more?

A dedicated helpline has been set up to help support churches with the fundraising hub.

If you or your church would like support with our online resources please request a call back via the church fundraising helpline on **0345 601 9959** or the online form on the fundraising hub and we will be in touch.

And don't forget to keep checking the fundraising hub for more updates.

www.ecclesiastical.com/churchfundraising

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