Community Impact Grants (CIG): Guidance for Applicants

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Programme overview

Benefact Trust's Community Impact Grants programme supports projects that empower Christian organisations in the UK and Ireland to have a positive and transformative impact on lives and communities. It is open to applications from churches, cathedrals, denominational bodies, Christian charities, and schools and theological educational institutions with a clear Christian ethos.

The programme can support direct capital and/or revenue costs for new or expanded activity, and funding is available under the following four Programme Objectives:

1. Growing congregations and Christian communities
2. Addressing social challenges facing communities
3. Enabling wider community use of church buildings
4. Schools and educational institutions

Who can apply

The Community Impact Grants programme is open to applications from churches, cathedrals, denominational bodies, Christian charities, and schools and theological educational institutions with a clear Christian ethos (N.B. Schools and theological educational institutions can only apply under Objective 4: Schools and educational institutions).

Please note that we are only able to provide funding to organisations which are registered as charities in the UK or Ireland (unless the organisation applying has 'exempt' status, which is restricted to churches and educational establishments).

What we can fund

All funded projects must contribute to one or more of the Community Impact Grants programme objectives):

(1) Growing congregations and Christian communities

Projects which focus on growing church congregations and communities by encouraging numerical growth and growing faith and spirituality across all ages. Typical areas of support are likely to include:

- Outreach and wider engagement focused on mission, growth and faith development
- Projects aiming to engage more young people with faith and the church community
- Church planting projects
- Construction of new chapels for hospices or other charities

(2) Addressing social challenges facing communities

Projects focusing on addressing, or building the capacity of Christian organisations to address, the following types of issues:

- Food poverty
- Debt / financial issues
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Children and families
- Young people
- Older people's needs

- Homelessness
- Refugees & asylum seekers
- Offenders / Ex-offenders
- Addiction / substance misuse
- People with disabilities
- Modern Slavery / human trafficking
- Inclusion

(3) Enabling wider community use of church buildings

Projects resulting in a clear increase in use of church buildings by the wider community (beyond the immediate congregation). Please note that requests for essential building improvements should come through our Building Improvement Grants programme unless they are a small part of a larger project clearly focused on enabling wider community use.

The types of projects likely to be supported include:

- Redevelopment, expansion or improvement projects resulting in new or improved facilities for wider community use or community benefit beyond the immediate congregation
- Re-ordering of existing church facilities to enable increased community use
- Other activities or resources to support a sustainable transition to increased community use (e.g. a new staff member to undertake programming/coordination of community spaces)

(4) Schools and educational institutions

For schools and theological educational institutions with a clear Christian ethos, the following types of projects will be considered:

- New spaces or facilities to improve collective worship or spiritual reflection among students (e.g. chapels, outdoor worship spaces, prayer gardens, etc)
- Repairs/refurbishment of a chapel or other worship space used by students for worship or spiritual reflection

We can support a range of capital and revenue (e.g. salary costs) as long as these are directly relevant to the delivery of your project. All costs included in your budget should clearly deliver additional value to your existing work, through new or expanded activity. We will not fund the continuation of business as usual or indirect costs, such as overheads and existing staff costs. For more detailed guidance on cost eligibility, see our Cost Eligibility Guidance in the Appendix.

It is possible to apply for funding for one year or for a multi-year project (up to three years). In the case of multi-year projects, it will need to be clear how a longer funding period will help to enhance the impact and sustainability of your project.

We do not normally make retrospective grants for projects or work already undertaken. If you are planning to apply for a project that has already started, please contact us first for a discussion.

How often can I apply?

Once you have received funding for a project under the Community Impact Grants programme, you cannot make another application to the same programme for two years after receiving your final payment from us. If you have received funding under our Transformational Grants programme, you will also need to wait two years before making an application under Community Impact Grants.

You may make an application to one of our other grant programmes during this time, as long as the application relates to a different project (we cannot fund the same project under more than one programme).

How much can I apply for?

When completing your application, you will be asked to present the total costs of your project and details of the other funding you have secured, rather than requesting a specific grant amount.

If your project fits the programme criteria, the size of your grant will be calculated by our Grants Officers based on your project costs and our assessment criteria. We will also take into account deprivation levels where your project is taking place and may apply a deprivation uplift when determining the size of your grant. Typically, grant sizes will range between 10% and 30% of your total eligible project costs, and projects with a national scope my receive more. The average grant size under Community Impact was £23,000 in 2024.

A recommendation for a grant award will then be made to our Trustees. Trustees are keen to support as many projects as possible which align with programme criteria.

Other funding

All applicants will be expected to have secured funding for at least 30% of their total project costs before making an application (it is not possible to submit an application form until this level of funding has been secured). We receive a large number of applications, and this policy helps to ensure that we prioritise our support for projects that are likely to go ahead. Applicants should also have a clear plan for how the remainder of the other funding for the project will be secured (i.e. It should not be assumed that Benefact Trust will cover the entire funding shortfall – we will only provide a contribution towards this amount).

How to apply

Please ensure that you have read this guidance document in full before starting your application form. You may also want to refer to the guidance when you are completing your application form.

The Community Impact Grants programme is a rolling programme which is open for applications throughout the year. To make an application, you will need to register on our online application portal, which you can access via our website.

Once your application has been successfully submitted, you will receive a confirmation email.

If you are not sure which of our grant programmes is right for your project, please contact us for a discussion.

When will I find out if my application has been successful?

We aim to communicate decisions as soon as possible. The average decision time for small grants (up to £10k) is two months. Larger grants (over £10k) take between four and six months because these are considered at Grants Committee and Board meetings which are held throughout the year.

You will receive an email once a decision has been made, and you will need to log into our online application portal to read your decision letter.

If you are awarded a grant

Please note that all grants awarded by Benefact Trust are subject to our [Standard Grant Terms and Conditions.](#) For all grant beneficiaries, this includes a requirement to complete a brief Impact Survey near the end of your project to help us understand and evaluate the impact of our funding.

<u>Payments</u>

If you are awarded a grant, you will need to log into our online application portal to accept the terms of your grant and enter your organisation's bank details so that your grant can be paid. In most cases, your grant (or first payment for multi-year grants) will be paid upfront shortly after your bank details have been verified. However, your Grants Officer may discuss alternative payment arrangements with you if appropriate.

<u>Reporting</u>

If you are awarded a grant that is larger than £10k, you will be required to submit a Final Report via our online application portal at the end of your project.

If you have been awarded a multi-year grant (with more than one payment), you will also be required to complete an annual Progress Report. This must be reviewed and approved before the next payment can be made. The Trust reserves the right to delay or not make the next payment if progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Publicising your grant

The Trust publishes details of all grants awarded in its Annual Report and Accounts. In addition, the Trust publicises details of various grants on the website, social media and through other publicity material. Our communications team may contact you directly to discuss publicity of your grant.

Your grant should, where possible, be publicised by your organisation (e.g. through social media, on websites or newsletters). There are a range of resources to support you with publicity on our website.

Appendix: Community Impact Grants Cost Eligibility Guidance

Please read this guidance when you are completing the budget section of the application form.

The table below will help you to understand the types of costs which are likely to be eligible for funding under the Community Impact Grants Programme. Please note that costs will only be eligible as part of a project which contributes to one or more of the four objectives of this grant programme (as outlined above in the programme overview section).

This list is not exhaustive, and Benefact Trust reserves the right to decide whether costs are eligible for funding. If you have a question regarding cost eligibility, please contact us at info@benefacttrust.co.uk.

Cost	Eligible	Ineligible
Revenue		
Staff costs	Salary costs and direct expenses of employing new staff and/or extending contracted hours of existing staff in relation to new or expanded work	Existing salary costs, clergy posts, posts in schools or other educational institutions and staff costs not directly meeting programme objectives
Training	Training of staff and/or volunteers in relation to new or expanded work (with clear community benefits)	Training that does not have a clear community benefit or is not aligned with one of the programme objectives
Volunteer expenses	Modest expenses necessary to enable volunteers to play their role in enabling new or expanded work	Significant volunteer expenses that represent a disproportionate amount of the overall project budget or do not clearly meet programme objectives
Hire of buildings and/or equipment	Specific hire costs necessary to enable new or expanded work to take place	Costs that relate to existing overheads or represent a disproportionate amount of the overall project budget
Marketing and promotion costs	Costs that represent a proportionate amount of the project budget and relate to new or expanded work	Significant marketing and promotion costs that represent a disproportionate amount of the overall project budget or do not clearly meet programme objectives
Running costs e.g. heating, lighting, broadband, other general BAU costs	None	All
Events, conferences, travel and consumables (e.g. meals, food,	Not normally eligible. Costs that are proportionate and integral to a wider project may be considered eligible.	Items that represent business as usual or that are not clearly an integral part of delivering new or expanded work. One-off or recurring

promotional materials, etc)		events, camps, retreats conferences, etc are ineligible.
Creation of digital assets (e.g. websites, social media content, videos, online courses)	Not normally eligible. Costs that are proportionate and integral to a wider project may be considered eligible, but the creation of social media content is unlikely to be a priority.	Projects focusing mainly on the creation of digital assets are unlikely to be a priority for funding.
Capital		
Alterations, new building work and installation of new facilities	Costs with a clear and direct link with the delivery of one of the four programme objectives (see above)	Building improvements which are not linked with clear outcomes aligned with one of the four programme objectives (see above)
Building Repair work	Not usually eligible but could be eligible in the following cases: • if the repair work forms a small component of a wider project which clearly fits under the CIG programme • for schools/theological institutions applying under CIG objective 4 (e.g. chapel repair)	Most repair work. For general repair and work, please consider our Building Improvement Grants programme.
Equipment and materials	• Costs of equipment or materials necessary to enable new or expanded work to take place, including equipping staff and volunteers with what they need to carry out their role, or ensuring that facilities are appropriately equipped to ensure that project outcomes can be achieved • Reasonable quantities of AV equipment, tablets or computers that will remain in situ at the project location and will enable the new or expanded work to take place	• Tablets and phones to be given or loaned to users of new services being provided • Phones for staff or volunteers