

National Lottery Heritage Fund: Advice for Places of Worship



Do you have a project that could involve more people in heritage? Could it improve your local area, develop skills or even boost the local economy? If so, The National Lottery Heritage Fund's (HF) Grants for Heritage could be just what you need.

'Grants for Heritage' is back, although not quite as we know it. In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the HF's has revised its approach to what it will fund in 2021/2022. Applicants are advised to read all the supporting information carefully.

If you had submitted (or had drafted) an enquiry, expression of interest or full application when the Heritage Fund closed in March 2020, please do not simply cut and paste this into the new form and submit it - you must ensure your project reflects the HF's new focus and priorities.

While the strategic priorities of the HF are unchanged (nature and landscapes, community heritage and heritage at risk), some of the outcomes have been given higher priority than others, which means applicants will need to think more creatively about how to approach a capital repair project.

The process for application, award and monitoring remains the same.

HF website - <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/places-worship>

Summary of the key changes

What has Changed?

The HF has nine outcomes for projects to focus on. These were reviewed and six were felt to be of greater importance in light of the pandemic. The HF is, therefore, prioritising the following during 2021/2022 (projects don't have to meet all of these):

- **inclusion:** 'a wider range of people will be involved in heritage' (mandatory outcome)
- **economy** including job creation: 'the local economy will be boosted'
- **wellbeing:** 'people will have greater wellbeing'
- **local areas:** 'the local area will be a better place to live, work and visit'
- **skills:** 'people will have developed skills'
- **organisational resilience:** 'funded organisations will be more resilient'

In addition, **all** projects will have to demonstrate that they are environmentally responsible and are integrating environmental measures into their projects.

The other three outcomes are:

- heritage will be in better condition
- heritage will be identified and better explained
- people will have learned about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

Projects which only focus on these outcomes may still be funded but will be less of a priority. For example, a project which only delivers 'better condition' and the mandatory inclusion outcome, is less likely to be supported.

The Audience is Key

All projects must meet the mandatory outcome to involve a wider range of people in heritage. This does not mean that you must dramatically increase visitor numbers; the focus is on who you are involving not on the total number.

It cannot be stressed enough that the audience is key to success with the NLHF – you must know and provide evidence about who they are, which new groups you will engage with and how you will evaluate your success.

The wider range is proportional to where you are, so if you have a small population, you do not necessarily need to seek out more people from far and wide. You, must, however, have data on who you are currently engaging with and who you are not and then find ways to involve the latter. Formal audience development and community consultation are particularly important on larger projects.

What about Capital Works?

Repairs and renovations to church buildings will still be supported, but they are not a priority. Your project will be assessed on how well its meet the priority outcomes.

Capital works, particularly repairs can be used to meet some of these outcomes, such as training volunteers in how to re-point a wall; inviting schools to meet people working in heritage such as lead workers, carpenters, architects to learn about careers in the industry; creating jobs by employing local people and firms to carry out work etc... Repairs works could, therefore, meet the outcomes, which when added to a programme of other activities would give your project a strong focus on the priority areas.

What proportion of our project should be capital works?

In the past the HF have given an indication on roughly how much of a project should be capital works and how much should be spent on 'other' activities. They are no longer doing this and advise you to forget any percentages you may have been given in the past. Projects will be assessed on how the priority outcomes will be delivered and whether the panel feel sufficient money is being spent to deliver them effectively to a high standard. In particular, they will be looking at how you are going to involve a wider range of people in the heritage - What is it going to take to get your new audiences in?

You will still need to ensure that repairs are done to a high standard and follow best practice in conservation, but you also need to keep the costs as low as possible. To do this, focus on the works which are the highest priority; this might mean you have to phase the project into smaller chunks and seek funding from other organisations for some of the smaller elements. It is, however, important to note that you don't just have to focus on the most urgent works, for example, if you do need to do some urgent repairs to the roof, think about what other minor repairs are worth

doing while you have the scaffolding up – the HF do appreciate that scaffolding is expensive and it is often best to make the most of it.

What does this mean for church repair projects?

Grants from £3,000 to £10,000

Very little has changed. Small projects will need to focus heavily on the priority outcomes and not capital works, for instance, you could ask for funding to help re-point a wall as long as the project involved training for volunteers from the local and wider community in re-pointing and general maintenance.

Read the guidance and submit your application when ready. There is no pre-application stage at this level, but you can contact the HF regional team if you have any question before applying.

There are still no deadlines for application, with decisions made in about 8 weeks.

Grants from £10,000 to £250,000

Read the guidance carefully and put together a project that meets the mandatory outcome and at least one other. Remember that the outcomes “heritage will be in better condition” and “heritage will be identified and better explained” are no longer priorities, so a project that focuses on repairs with other activities, like a guidebook will not be successful. **Your project must have a strong focus on the priority outcomes.**

The key is to understand who your current audiences are, so you can then identify new audiences to target and deliver appropriate activities. The HF also want to see more partnership working, so it is equally important to identify groups, other organisations, other churches etc... who you can work with to deliver the outcomes.

Always submit a project enquiry before you make a full application. HF staff will give you feedback on your project’s strength and weaknesses and suggestions on how to develop it.

There is no deadliness for applications, with decisions made in about 8 weeks. *Previously grants between £100,000 - £250,000 were subject to quarterly deadline but this is no longer the case.*

Grants from £250,000 to £5 million

This category is highly competitive so applications must be to a high standard. The HF need to prioritise where their investment will make a significant difference so you need to consider if you can deliver strongly on their priorities. Are there enough people living in, visiting your area that means you could easily reach a more diverse range of people? Perhaps there are already tourist attractions, heritage sites or a popular shopping area/local market that bring people in.

If you don’t feel you can put together a strong enough project at this time, there are other options.

Start with a smaller project

If the current priorities are a challenge, but you have a clear idea of what you want to do and feel your organisation is more than capable to deliver it, consider applying for grant to fund a smaller project. Something under £100,000 which can include **some** capital works. This will start a relationship with the HF and give them confidence that your organisation will be able to deliver a larger project. You can also cost in some activities to gather evidence for your major project (audience development) and develop skills needed to deliver it (business planning, event management, volunteer recruitment).

Focus on project development

If the idea of a large project seems a bit overwhelming and you don't have the confidence and/or experience needed, this could be a great opportunity to get some funding to help you.

The HF will support small, revenue-only projects for about £10,000 - £20,000. Such a project could include activities (and staff to deliver them) to:

- carry out community consultation to gather ideas about potential uses of/activities in the church building
- develop interest locally about the heritage of the church and develop new audiences
- undertake a skills audit of existing staff and volunteers
- review governance – looking at ways to manage and support the heritage locally, perhaps through the formation of a Friend's Group
- develop new fundraising strategies, including training for volunteers in things like crowdfunding and digital fundraising
- pilot activities
- develop partnerships with other organisations
- improve volunteer recruitment

The HF don't pay for routine maintenance, but you could be clever and develop a small project about audience development, that included a training programme for volunteers in lime pointing or general maintenance, using the church building as a demonstrator. All supervised by an expert trainer, funded under the grant.

A small group of churches/benefices could collaborate on heritage activities and governance.

What if our project isn't eligible/is unsuccessful?

Please remember that the current criteria is only for the next year, the HF will review its approach again this autumn. If you find that your project isn't eligible, or your application is rejected do not give up; use the feedback and wait until 2022 to try again.

Consider the other options outlined above under "Grants between £250,000 and £5 million".

Phase your project where possible and apply to other funders for smaller grants.

What if we don't have the resources to make an application?

The National Churches Trust Gateway Grant Programme offers grants of between £3,000 and £10,000 towards project development to support churches preparing for a major project; this includes paying for help to prepare an application to the HF. The next deadline is the 31st May with a decision in July 2021. <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/gatewaygrants>

For help with smaller projects, under £100,000, contact Holly or Sue from the Church Buildings Team (see contact details below).

Other Key Points

The HF's website contains a range of good practice guidance to help you meet the outcomes and priorities (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance>). Some key points are highlighted here, but please read the guidance in full before applying.

Environmental Sustainability

All project must demonstrate that they are environmentally responsible and are integrating environmental measures into their projects. The measure will be proportionate to the project. They must limit any potential damage and make a positive impact, for example:

Grants of £3,000 - £10,000

- Using public transport to attend offices/events
- Using compostable/biodegradable plates and cutlery for event catering
- Using local suppliers for food and materials
- Using recycled and/or low-carbon environmentally friendly materials
- Reducing their waste or eliminating it altogether
- Educating people about the environmental measures they have implemented

Grants of £10,000 - £5 million

- Built heritage projects that have increased habitats for nature
- Use solar panels or generated energy on site via wind power
- Use biomass energy/heating systems, ground source heat pumps, heat recovery systems
- Reduced energy use through introducing more efficient heating/insulation, LED lighting, better control systems, natural light wells, tubes etc...
- Reduced water use through recycling grey water, low flush WCs etc...
- Use sustainable drainage systems
- Actively set out to reduce the use of plastics
- Actively set out to reduce waste produced by the project and develop effective recycling policy
- Use locally source products and materials, such as locally quarried stone
- Create a green travel plan to encourage visitors to use sustainable transport such as walking, cycling and public services

If permission has been refused for certain things such as solar panels, mention it in your application so the HF can see what you have tried to do.

Wellbeing

Having a wellbeing activity that runs in your church is not enough to satisfy this outcome. The activity must relate directly to your heritage. You must also be able to clearly demonstrate the difference your projects makes by evaluating the wellbeing feelings and outcomes.

'5 Ways to Wellbeing' will be used to evaluate how a project meet this outcome.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Risk

Consider risk more carefully. Identify risks and develop ways to mitigate them. Mitigating these risks could actually form a key part of your project such as volunteer training, paid project staff, new fundraising strategy etc...

- Financial – availability of other sources of funding such as grants.
- Organisational – people, skills
- Economic – cost of materials may rise due to Covid, Brexit etc...
- Technical – other problems might be discovered or found to be worse than expected.
- Social – attitudes to heritage (and money spent on it) during a time of recession.
- Management – significant changes in the project team
- Legal – changes that might occur due to Brexit for instance.
- Environmental – cost and availability of special materials to deliver high quality, environmentally sustainable/friendly items

Take your time

The most important advice is to “read all the guidance and take your time”. The National Lottery Heritage Fund expects to receive a high number of applications and will need to prioritise investment where it can make a significant difference. Please thoroughly read the supplementary priorities document, application guidance and help notes, and familiarise yourself with the revised outcomes.

Contacts

Regional HF Team: Telephone: 01223 645 938 or email: MidlandsandEast@heritagefund.org.uk

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