

Local Church Mission Projects

A guide to applying for financial support

Purpose

This booklet is to help churches apply for financial support for any local church mission initiatives that are not covered by the “Small Grants for Mission” facility or the provision of grants by the Youth Executive.

Projects typically involve either building work or the employment of a specialist worker, but other forms of mission project that cannot be accommodated within the small grants schemes may also be supported. All projects must be addressing a clear mission opportunity.

The booklet summarises the Synod policy (agreed at the March 2016 Synod Meeting with changes approved in November 2017) for providing financial support, explains how to work with the Synod officers in preparing a proposal and describes the application process. The flow charts at the end show the differing processes for different types of financial support.

Where your project involves building work you should also read the booklet ‘***Building work to church property - A guide to gaining the necessary consents***’ since this contains some additional information.

Applying for a grant

You are strongly encouraged to work with your Development & Support Officer, Children’s and Youth Development Officer or Property Officer as appropriate. The officers are able to advise on projects from the very start and will then provide you with the necessary application form and guide you through the grant application process.

Your formal application should be submitted once you have fully developed and costed plans for your project which should be capable of commencement within 12 months. New grant applications are considered at three Trust meetings each year and should be submitted at least three weeks before the meeting date; your contact officer will let you know the relevant dates.

Where the Trust agrees to make a grant or loan this commitment will last for 12 months; project work will be expected to commence within that period of time. When this is not possible, you may ask for an extension based upon evidence that the project is proceeding well.

However, for larger building projects you quite reasonably may wish to understand the level of financial support likely from the Trust before committing a great deal of effort and expense to detailed design work. In addition, your success in applying for external funding

will be enhanced by having a clear indication of Synod support. For this reason, you may also make a 'provisional' application when you have defined the initial project scope, obtained indicative costings and completed a realistic assessment of the sources of funding. This is explained in more detail below.

How much is available?

All grants are made by the Wessex Trust from the funds they hold on behalf of the Synod. The first priority of trustees is to maintain sufficient assets to allow the operational costs of the Synod to be met without asking for contributions from the churches. Assets in excess of this are gradually released to the Church Mission Fund to be distributed to churches as grants. At present the trustees approve grant commitments of around £200,000 each year towards projects costing less than £100,000. Applications for larger building projects are also considered, but are taken from a separate Special Reserve Fund.

Decisions are taken based on the individual applications but may be constrained by the availability of funds. **The main criterion for any grant is the potential effectiveness of the grant in terms of mission opportunity.**

A number of factors are taken into account in considering whether to make a grant and the level of grant; advice is taken from those with knowledge of the church in assessing these. The factors include:

- The size of the grant requested.
- The history of the church in making requested Ministry and Mission Fund contributions.
- The commitment made to the proposed project by the congregation.
- An estimate of the medium range viability of the congregation.
- The measure of "mission mindedness" evident in the priorities and commitments of the congregation and in the project.
- The nature of the project
- Whether a realistic projection of external funding has been assumed

The trustees will also consider whether the church can provide strong project leadership and risk management in implementing the project. They will also assess whether the church is making a realistic contribution to the total costs from their church assets and congregational contributions. In general, churches with higher levels of reserves will be expected to make a larger financial contribution to their projects, but it is recognised that (a) there may be good reasons for a high level of reserves, perhaps as savings for future anticipated repair works, and (b) all worthwhile mission projects across the Synod deserve some level of financial support when funds are available. Decisions will be made on the facts of each application.

Grants are available to Local Ecumenical Partnerships on the same basis that they are available to United Reformed Churches, taking into account the extent of URC participation in the LEP. For example, the grant may be reduced to the proportion of the URC involvement in the LEP as indicated or implied by the Sharing Agreement.

Building projects – general considerations

In accordance with the URC Acts, the Trust (and the Synod except where the works will not substantially alter its character, appearance or value) must approve any work where the buildings on the premises are to be altered, enlarged, improved, rebuilt, supplemented or demolished. The application process for financial support incorporates granting of these

consents. Where a building is listed or in a conservation area further considerations apply; your Property Officer will guide you through the process of obtaining the necessary consents through the Synod's Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. As mentioned above, the booklet **'Building work to church property - A guide to gaining the necessary consents'** provides some additional information.

Separate provisions cover the installation or upgrading of audio-visual facilities in church sanctuaries/worship areas and are described in a later section.

Building projects which rate highly on the criteria described above might typically be offered 25% of the total project cost, subject to the availability of funds. Projects that include ways of resolving access difficulties to the church premises or other requirements from Disability and Equality legislation may gain a higher percentage grant. All projects will need to have a realistic project funding plan using church resources, congregational giving/pledges and external grant funding. Loans may also be granted where congregational giving or other income will enable them to be repaid within 5 years.

When two or more churches amalgamate and a property is sold, every effort will be made to be more generous than usual to enable the remaining property to be adapted to maximise the mission potential of the united church.

Local churches are responsible for keeping their buildings in a good state of repair from their own resources. Therefore, you will normally not receive a grant towards projects that are largely formed of maintenance and repair work, although loan support is available where emergency repairs are necessary. Exceptions to this approach might be considered when an unexpected event, such as heavy weather conditions, damages otherwise well-maintained property.

Building Applications

Your Property Officer will advise you on whether your project is large and complex enough to be considered under the 'provisional' application process or if you should simply submit a 'final' application. As a guide, that might be where the total project might cost over £200,000.

Provisional applications

A provisional application may be made when you have defined the project scope, obtained indicative costings and completed a realistic assessment of how you will finance the works. The provisional application may include a request for financial support for the subsequent reasonable costs of detailed project design and planning for the project on a 50:50 basis.

To help you to evaluate your options and prepare a provisional application your Property Officer may make a grant available to cover up to the first £2,000 of costs of a feasibility study which they will help you to arrange through one of our trusted architects. Any further costs will be charged to your church. This is funded from a separate budget and is in addition to any grants that may subsequently be granted.

Where the Trust makes a provisional offer, this will be subject to the further submission of a 'final' application containing a firm project definition, an implementation plan, full costings and full financing details within 12 months. If progress is slower than expected and you need an extension to this period you should submit a written request with an explanation to

the Trust. Extensions will normally be granted provided the Trust see clear evidence that the project is progressing well towards its original objectives.

Final applications

Where a provisional application has already been approved, a final application should contain firm project details and all the supporting information requested in the application form. Apart from explaining the rationale for your project and providing some background to your church, you will be asked to submit:

- A church meeting resolution supporting the development and application
- Planning permission and Building Regulations approval
- If your building is listed, your latest quinquennial inspection report and evidence that the LBAC have approved the plans
- Asbestos management plan
- Fire risk assessment
- Insurance policy summary
- Drawings/photographs/plans
- Programme of work
- CDM compliance details
- Summary budget and summary supplier quotations
- Last full inspected church accounts
- A pro-forma summary of the last 3 years' church accounts
- Details of how the project will be funded

All of this information is also required for smaller projects where a provisional application has not been made. However, where your Property Officer agrees, you may submit your application before you have obtained final planning permission, tendered for a contractor and planned your CDM compliant programme of work. These items may be submitted to your Property Officer after Trust and, where required, Synod Executive approval. The work may not begin until the Property Officer has seen and approved all the information required. Applying for a grant before all the costs have been identified does, of course, increase the risk that the assumed costing will not prove to be sufficient.

Audio-visual projects

In November 2017 Synod agreed to introduce a new category of grant provision to support all churches with any projects to install or replace/upgrade sound and visual projection or display systems, including loop systems, within a church sanctuary/main worship area. This is not intended to extend to audio-visual provision in other areas of the church buildings; grant applications for such installations will be considered in line with the 'other mission projects' section below.

Subject to the availability of funds, a grant of 100% of the costs of new loop systems (where there is none at present) will be offered.

All other audio-visual installations will be offered a grant of 50% of the costs.

Grants to any one church for audio-visual works will be limited to a maximum total of £5,000 in any five year period.

Projects supporting a church worker

Your DSO or CYDO will work with you in developing your project. The Synod Employment Adviser must also be involved in preparing for the employment role including agreeing the job description, appointment process and terms of employment.

The Trust will consider applications to support the employment of a church worker with seed financing to help establish a genuinely new permanent role. The application should therefore make a convincing argument that the employment is sustainable beyond the period of support.

Where your project rates highly on the criteria described above, a grant may be made as a reducing percentage of the total annual costs. A typical offer might be to meet 50%, 45%, 40% for the first three years. In that case, it would therefore be sensible for you to limit the employment contract to an initial three years. Short annual reports to the Trust would be expected at the end of each year of the project.

The Trust will consider extending the support for a further two years after an assessment by the Synod Officers of progress towards establishing a sustainable role in the first 2½ years. If the grant is extended to years 4 and 5 a typical grant might be 30% then 20% of total annual employment costs.

Your application should contain firm project details and all the supporting information requested in the application form. Apart from explaining the rationale for your project and providing some background to your church, you will be asked to submit:

- A church meeting resolution supporting the application
- Job description and terms of employment
- The yearly project budget
- Last full inspected church accounts
- A pro-forma summary of the last 3 years' church accounts
- Details of how the project will be funded

Any grant may only be used to support an employee fulfilling the specified role. If the original employee leaves service and a new worker is appointed to the same role the grant will continue in line with the original commitment, except that no grant will be given for any gap between the two periods of employment. If the church wishes to change the role being performed by the employee, it should seek prior approval from the Trust who may wish to consider this as a fresh application.

Other mission projects

Other mission projects exceeding the limit of the small grants scheme, which may include temporary employment or other costs, will also be considered for one-off grants but not annual support. There is no guideline percentage for such projects; they will be considered on their facts against the principle that the local church should make whatever contribution they can reasonably afford. Your DSO or CYDO will work with you in formulating your proposal.

Cost Increases

All applications for grants should be based upon firm costings with an allowance for inflation and a suitable contingency margin applied to cover unexpected costs. In managing the project, you are expected to keep within these costs and not unnecessarily expand the size

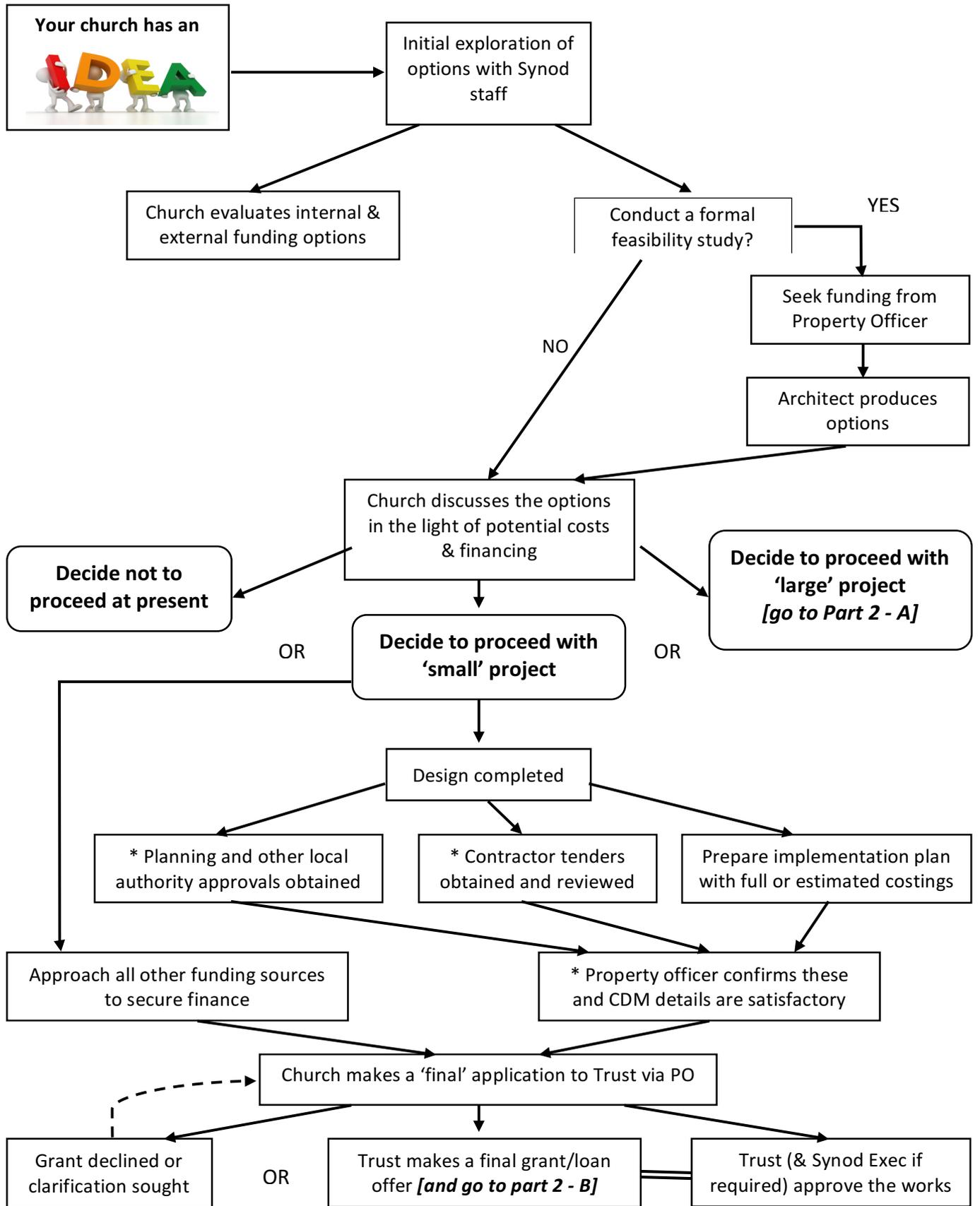
of the project. If unavoidable cost increases in excess of the contingency margin occur, further application for support may be made by letter with full supporting information. If granted, this may be in the form of a loan or a grant.

Appeals

If a church is dissatisfied with a grant decision, it should firstly engage in a conversation with the convener or deputy convener of the Trust to explore the reasons for the decision. The church may request, giving their reasons in writing, that the trustees reconsider any decision at a meeting which representatives of the church may attend.

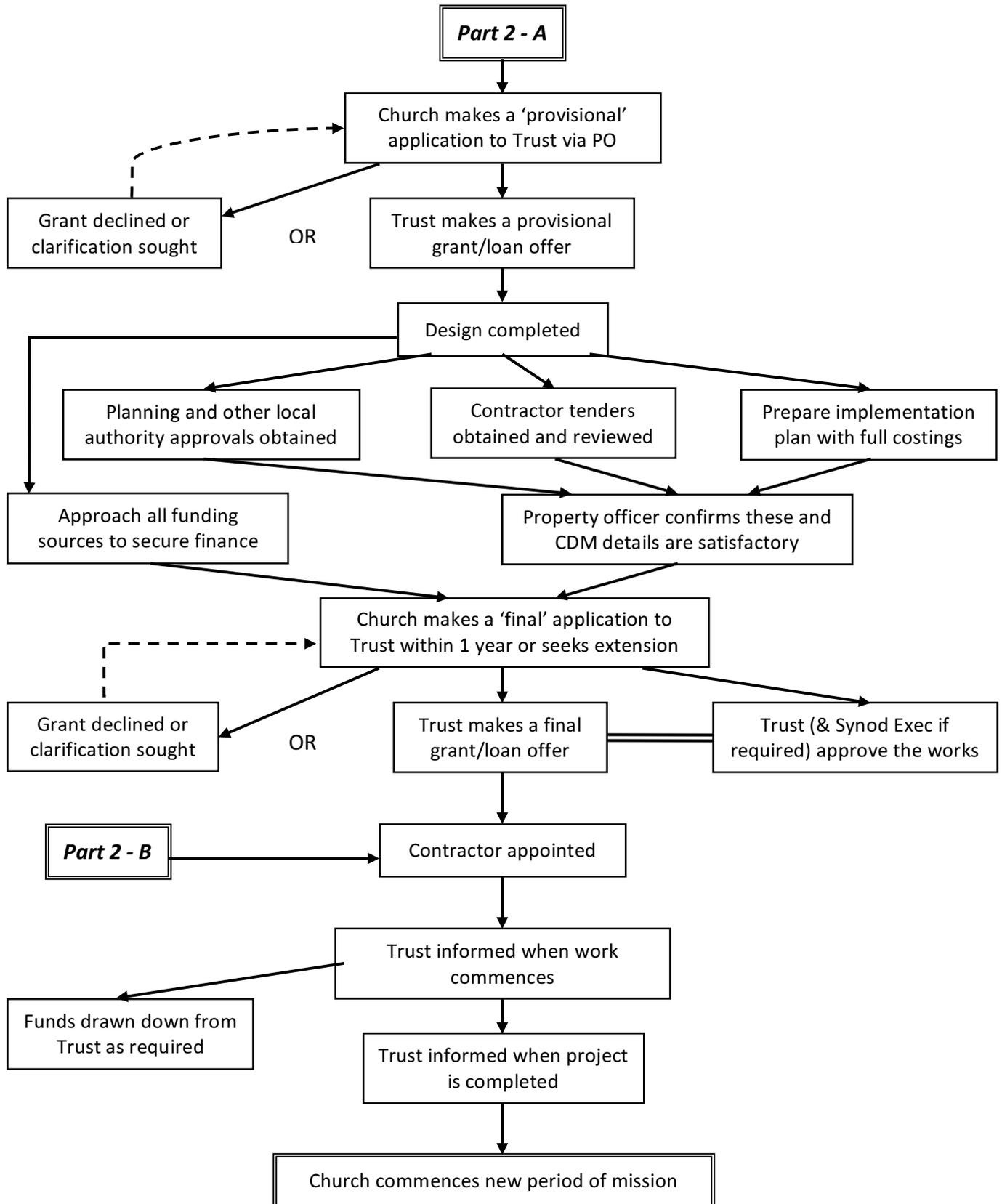
If the church remains dissatisfied and believes the trustees have not properly followed the Synod's Grant Policy, they will be given details of the Synod's appeals process. Note that while the appeals procedure applies to decisions made by Synod committees it cannot be used to commit the Synod or Trust to specific expenditure. However, any recommendations made under the appeals procedure will be carefully considered by the trustees and given due weight in further reconsidering any decisions.

Flowchart for Mission Projects – Building Work Part 1

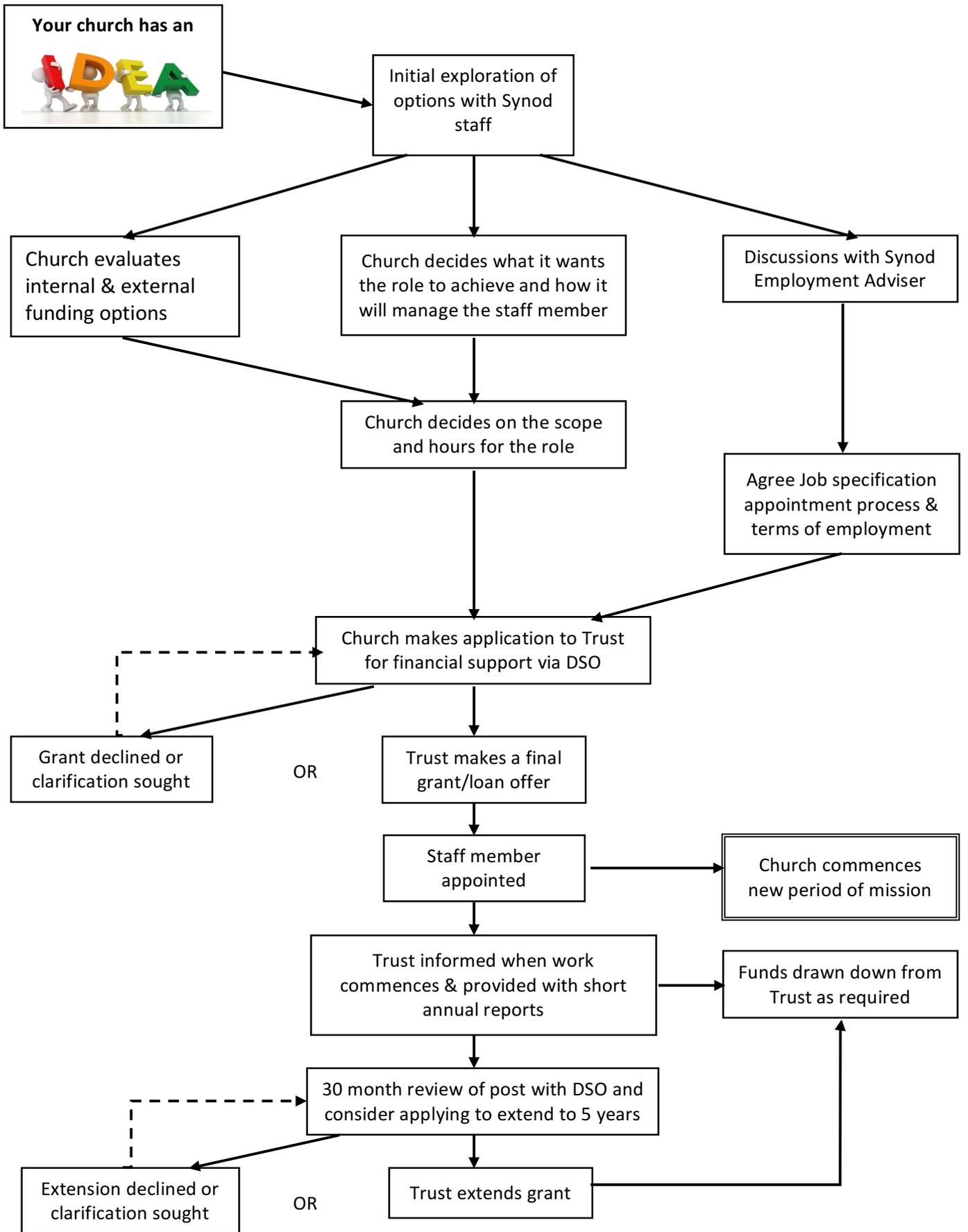


IMPORTANT NOTE – Items marked * may be completed after any grant offer and Trust/Synod approval which will both be subject to the Property Officer confirming that they are completed before work commences

Flowchart for Mission Projects – Building Work Part 2



Flowchart for Mission Projects – Supporting a Church Worker



Flowchart for Other Mission Projects

