

Developing a Building Project

By now you will hopefully have a very clear vision for the project, an established project team and a project architect appointed.

Plan your building project

You now need to start on the more detailed planning of the project and this will be done in conjunction with your architect. At this point you will begin to establish specific deadlines for when certain aspects need to be in place such as drawings, fundraising, faculty and other permissions. It is tempting to think that everything can be done really quickly but the reality is that things often take longer than you expect, so when setting deadlines, be realistic as to what can actually be achieved with the team that you have.

What form the actual plan takes will depend on the type of project, but the important thing is that it is in a format that everyone who is involved with the project can understand. It may be appropriate to produce simplified plans for a wider audience.

Keep everyone informed

It is important for every project to make sure that the wider church are kept informed of how the project is developing. People can sometimes become negative towards a project if they feel that only a small number of people know what is going on. This can also then lead to fewer people wishing to engage in fundraising activities.

How you keep everyone informed will depend on the type and size of the project but some ways this can be done are:

- Regular update meetings
- Project noticeboard in the church hall
- Article in a church newsletter
- Updates on the church website or possibly a separate website if it is a wider community project.
- Updates on social media or during regular services.

Make sure that all parties within the wider church community are kept informed as you may need their support.

Write a business plan

We are not going to go into detail about writing a business plan as the detail required will depend on the nature of the project. In its simplest terms the business plan may take the form of a project budget but for larger projects you will need to consider capital costs, revenue costs, predicted income, staffing, marketing, etc.

Raise the funds

As part of your business plan you will have hopefully identified the total cost of the project both in terms of capital costs and possibly ongoing running costs.

You may be fortunate enough to have some reserves that you can use to kick start the project but this isn't essential. The important thing is to have a realistic plan as to where the funding will come from. Possible sources include the following:

- Reserves
- Bequests – someone may have left the parish a legacy that can be used for the project
- Donations from the congregation – how much can you realistically expect to receive?
- Fundraising activities – these can be a good way of engaging the community as well as income.
- Small loans from the congregation – these can sometimes be very useful to get you over the line.

- External loans – these should be considered with caution and how they will be repaid will need to form part of the business plan.
- Grants – these may be able to provide you with a significant part of the total cost.

Apply for grants

Most grant funders will expect detailed proposals of the work before they will consider an application and some grants will only support certain types of work. e.g. community focussed projects. This is why it is often difficult to do the grant applications earlier in a project as you will probably not have all the information that is required. Grant applications vary in their format from a simple letter explaining what is proposed to a large online application with multiple supporting documents.

You will also find that some grant funders will not consider an application until a certain percentage of the costs have already been raised and therefore you may want to consider which grants you apply for first. Some grants also have specific application windows each year so it is important that you consider this when planning which grants you will apply for.

Depending on the nature of the project you may want to establish a small fundraising/grant team to go bring this all together.

Finalise your plans

As the project has developed and discussions have taken place with various stakeholders, it is likely that the design will have been modified a number of times. It is important that everyone understands the proposals and that these are communicated clearly to all members of the church and if appropriate the wider community. Whilst small changes can be made beyond this point it can become time consuming to make amendments to planning permission and faculties if significant changes are required. This is also a good point to check that the proposal actually meets the vision that you started with.

Get any permissions in place

For virtually every project certain permissions need to be in place before the work starts and it is important that these are planned in the project plan to make sure that they do not delay the project.

If the work is on to the church building or hall linked to the church building it will generally require a faculty from the Chancellor before the work can commence. The length of the faculty process may be dependent on the complexity of the proposal and the impact that it will have on the historic fabric of the building. For most projects you need to allow for at least 3 months from submission to the faculty being issued but this can take significantly longer. The DAC Secretary will be able offered more detailed advice on individual projects but it is always good to engage the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) at an early stage. If the work is to a listed building and is not reversible then it may well require external consultation with statutory bodies before the DAC can give their formal advice to the Chancellor. This will add at least two months onto the process. Normally faculty applications are made by the parish but in some cases, parishes engage their architect in the faculty submission.

If the work is going to change the external appearance of the building it is likely that planning permission will be required. This can also take quite a few months to obtain, so it is worth clarifying this with the planning department early in the project. The submission of a planning application may form part of your agreement with your architect.

Most building work will require compliance with relevant building regulations and you may need to appoint a building inspector or apply to the local authority to have the work inspected at relevant stages in the construction. Again, this is likely to be something that you would want you architect to organise.

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