

Equip: How churches can receive grant funding

January 6, 2026

Churches should think of grants as a different type of fundraising, a type provided by foundations. This article will help small churches understand funding from local and community foundations and corporate support.

First Baptist Church, Elm Mott

First Baptist Church of Elm Mott, about 10 miles north of Waco on Interstate 35, needed funds for a repair project after part of the ceiling in the activities center collapsed.

Pastor Jeb Barr said the small church couldn't afford this unexpected expense. Money for major repairs wasn't available. Could a grant be the answer to repairing the building?

They started looking for funds to cover the cost of materials and labor to replace the entire ceiling. That's when they heard about a grant known as the Oldham Little Church Foundation.

The church contacted the Oldham Little Church Foundation and was encouraged to write a brief letter of inquiry. After their letter was accepted, a representative from the Oldham Foundation visited the church. Soon, First Baptist Elm Mott received permission to write a full application.

From the time of writing the letter of inquiry to being funded took about four months.

With the success of obtaining this first grant, they are encouraged to look for other grants to cover some additional needs of the church.

“This grant has benefited First Baptist and enabled the church to expand its ministry. Next, the church would like to replace carpet, replace pews, and have a new church sign installed,” Pastor Barr said.

General suggestions

Churches should avoid government grants. Although they offer large amounts of money, they are too competitive and usually require a paid staff member to administer the funds. Some churches will see government grants as a breach of church-state separation.

Churches and schools, as nonprofits, only need a federal tax identification number and not full 501c3 status, when applying for many grants.

Some businesses and industries do not support Christian organizations. Knowing this information before submitting will save you time and effort.

A grant-writing committee in the church can discover a gap in what is available and what is needed for programs or projects. It also can make a difference in securing funds to meet these needs.

How to apply and receive grant funding for church programs

Use the following suggestions in approaching foundations:

1. Become highly visible in your community. Networking is vital. Contacts made through the chamber of commerce, volunteer activities, fundraising events for charities, church or other religious memberships—all offer opportunities to network with people in the business community.
2. Check with your local chamber of commerce for a listing of local

businesses that are part of a national franchise.

3. Identify local plant managers, CEOs and community resource personnel. Call and make an appointment to visit and discuss your church's needs. Email, if a visit isn't suggested.

Identify their funding priorities. Your church's priorities must meet the grant maker's priorities. As an example, if a foundation supports senior adult programs and you need a church van, don't write a grant to pave the church parking lot.

4. Most foundations have an online form for the grant application. If not, ask if answering this simple set of application questions will be acceptable?

- What does your church want to do?
- How are you going to do it?
- Who do you plan to serve?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How will you spend the money?
- How will you give a final report of the grant?

Key areas of the application

Always follow the prescribed format and place the required information within the appropriate section. The four major areas of every grant include:

1. Objective: What are you trying to do?
2. Implementation: How will you do it?
3. Evaluation: How will you measure your success?
4. Budget: How will the money be spent?

Larger grants may require additional information, such as:

- a cover letter
- title page
- summary
- introduction
- needs or problem statement
- goals
- objectives
- implementation or methodology
- evaluation
- future funding
- budget
- budget narrative

Tips for being funded

1. Authorized personnel should sign the grant.
2. Check the titles of former funded grants. Did they use a catch title or a more generic one?
3. Honor the deadline. If a grant arrives late, it will not be read.
4. Follow the exact guidelines. All grants have the same basic format, but each is unique.
5. Use the most recent data. Place all this information for your church in a file for future applications. Update it annually.
6. Avoid percentages without numbers. For example, say 25 percent or 100 members of 400 attend Wednesday night Bible study.
7. Personal contacts make a difference. Ask for advice before the application is submitted.

8. Foundations may request a letter of inquiry before asking for a full proposal. This saves time for both the grantee and grantor.

9. After the grant(s) has/have been awarded, write a thank-you letter, whether you received funding or not. If you were not funded this period, say you will apply for the next funding period.

10. Before submitting, read over the application. Did you include all the required information?

Many factors determine which churches receive funding. Identifying the need, finding the right foundation, and working together as a church group make for a successful proposal.

Carolyn Tomlin writes grants for her church as part of her Christian ministry. She publishes for the Christian market and teaches the Jackson Christian Writers Fellowship. Her book Writing Grants for Faith-Based Organizations and Community Non-Profits is available on Amazon. The views expressed in this resource article are those of the author.