

The District Partnership Fund

July 2019

Preamble

As a result of the conversations in churches and circuits during the autumn, there have been commitments to be part of the fund from about half of the circuits in the district and a similar number of churches. This gives sufficient for the fund to be able to operate at the most basic level of service, a help desk that can signpost people to advice and can offer support by phone or email. This is the first level of service shown in the illustration from TCC at the end of this document.

There was also a lot of very helpful feedback from churches and circuits as part of the conversations in the autumn, as a result of which there have been some significant changes to the way in which the fund will operate.

First, we now hope to launch the fund from Easter 2018 and therefore, if the proposal is approved by the district trustees, will invite contributions from 1st April 2018.

Second, Churches and Circuits may elect to join the fund at two points during the year: on 1st April or on 1st October, but the commitment will still be for three years from the date of joining.

Third, we have noted the concern from a number of churches that, for various reasons, a contribution of 1% of funds held might cause significant difficulties, but the church or circuit would still want to be partners in the fund. We can see several reasons why this might be the case and this needs to be taken account of. There was already provision for this in the original proposal, but we want to emphasize that in cases such as this the church or circuit may enter into discussions with the district to make a special arrangement for a different level of contribution.

Finally, we believe that TCC (Transforming Churches and Communities) is probably the best agency to deliver the services offered by the District Partnership Fund and they can offer two levels of service through the DPF:

Information, advice and guidance through a dedicated telephone line and email address;

A basic service of on-site support, which may involve training or mentoring.

A consultancy service is also available from TCC, but this would be funded, as now, through a partnership between the district and church or circuit and not through the DPF.

Registered Office:
Unit 8,
The Wesley Centre
Royce Road
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Manchester M15 5BP

Charity Registration no: 1135459



1. Purposes of fund

The district partnership fund will exist to aid contributing church councils and circuit meetings, as the case may be, in the carrying out of their basic governance and legislative functions, including training, a help desk and mentoring.

The fund will provide a help desk, with phone and electronic access to give advice, support and mentoring to church and circuit officers in the areas listed below:

- a. Provide support for treasurers in meeting professional standards in accounts presentation
- b. Assist with regular processes of health and safety risk audits and property management
- c. Offer appropriate advice, assist with compliance in areas of employment such as contracts and pensions, where it is beyond the scope of the district lay employment secretary
- d. Assist with initial project development e.g. Fresh expression of church, staff, buildings etc.

Advice and support may be available in other areas by consultation with the help desk.

2. Contributions to the fund

- a. A church council decides to become a member of the fund on behalf of the roles and funds that are the responsibility of the Church Council. Circuit Meetings will decide to become a member of the fund on behalf of the funds held by the roles and funds that are the responsibility of the Circuit Meeting. Local ecumenical partnerships (LEPs) in the district are free to become full members of the fund regardless of the denominational trusts involved. If an Ecumenical Church Council decides that it wishes to become a member of the fund it would need to contribute based on the total funds held by the Ecumenical Church Council, regardless of which denominational body they are held with.
- b. Church Councils and Circuit Meetings may opt to become partners in the fund for a three-year period with effect from 1st April or 1st October in any calendar year. Partners may not terminate their partnership prior to the third anniversary of their joining the fund, except if the church council or circuit meeting closes.

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Note: For the purposes of this fund a circuit meeting will be deemed to have closed if it is the subject of a change in its composition under standing order 501. Any new circuit meetings formed will have the opportunity to become members of the fund from 1st April or 1st October in that or subsequent years.

- c. The District Partnership Fund shall be effective from 1st April 2018 unless the District Synod or its successor resolves to close the fund.
- d. An annual contribution will be made to the fund by 5th January each year for those joining the fund in October and 5th July for those joining in April. The contribution to the fund will be equivalent to 1% of the total cash funds declared on the balance sheet of the standard form of accounts to the preceding 31st August, whether examined or not. This calculation will be made based on restricted, unrestricted and designated funds, but the payment will be made from unrestricted funds.
- e. In the rare case that the contribution causes difficulty in relation to the funds available, or in some other way, a special case may be made to the district trustees who will deal with the matter on a case by case basis
- f. An annual report on the fund will be issued to all members of the fund for the spring synod in relation to the previous financial year. This will include the accounts for the fund during that financial year, which will be incorporated into the full District accounts.
- g. If the fund closes, any remaining balance shall continue to be used for the support of the work of the churches and circuits who were members of the fund at the date of the fund's closing.

[Note: the calculation of contributions includes designated reserves, for whatever purpose, to ensure equity across contributors to the fund.]

3. Operation of the fund

- a. The fund will become a restricted fund within the district accounts, for the purposes of assisting the churches and circuits, as is the case, to carry out essential governance related tasks.
- b. The district trustees (district council) will delegate the day to day operation of the fund to a small group of people – the partnership fund management group.

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- c. The fund will be used to secure the services of appropriately qualified and/or experienced people to advise and support the church councils and circuit meetings of the district. This may be by employing people on a full time or part time basis, by retaining professionals to provide services when necessary or by using an agency such as TCC (Transforming Church and Communities) or some combination of these.

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TCC as a means of delivering the support



DISTRICT PARTENRSHIP FUND

Introduction:

As we are all aware, looking after our resources is a major undertaking by the Methodist Church. This can often be seen as a burden to delivering Mission, although this extract taken from the Managing Trustees and Methodist Money advice sheets demonstrates that it should be seen as an important part of Church life:

The Bible tells us that a gift in administration is a gift from the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12.28) and it is within that context that the financial and administration work that is done for the Church is done in God's name to promote God's kingdom throughout the world.
Managing Trustees and Methodist Money (5)

Transforming Churches and Communities, over the years, has provided a range of information, advice and guidance to Circuits/Churches and Church projects, particularly in the area of buildings and associated activities.

For example;

1. We have supported Church or Circuit building developments, ensuring all consents, planning and project management are in place to reduce the potential liability of Church Council or Circuit Meeting Managing Trustees.
2. We have delivered risk assessments, financially and operationally in areas such as Health and Safety and Red, Amber, Green (RAG) ratings looking at the whole of the governance and operations of the Church or Circuit, again to make sure that Churches do not embark on major financial or operational decisions without being fully informed.
3. With most of the support we have carried out in building related issues, we have provided significant follow up work identifying funding opportunities to support the Church in delivering the project.

This report intends to provide an analysis of the functions relating to the District Property Function and how it may be delivered in the light of the current situation. TCC understands that it is a challenge to deliver this work and we are suggesting a partnership that will support the District in adhering to its responsibilities in supporting Circuits and Churches.

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We have recently been successful in providing support to the Manchester and Stockport District in delivering its treasury function as the District had been unable to recruit a new Treasurer, most citing the increasing amount of work and time commitment to deliver the role effectively as a reason for not applying. TCC will be providing the District with the mechanics of the day to day finances and reporting with the new Treasurer having oversight of the functions and signing off accounts and reports.

We would see this working in partnership as an extension of our work in supporting the Districts across the North West.

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DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP FUND

The Functions:

As with the standard sermon, we feel that there are three main aspects to the support that TCC could offer in terms of the District Partnership Fund.

➤ **Information, Advice and Guidance**

We would suggest that there needs to be an effective information sharing function to support the great work Churches/Circuits carry out but are sometimes in the dark about changes to legislation and where to go for specific areas of expertise.

1. Provide a point of contact for the Fund.
2. Create an online presence for general queries and direct requests for information; this would be a forum type online presence and a telephone/email 'hotline'.
3. Work in partnership with current or new structures; Resourcing Mission Enablers, Property Secretaries for example, in using TCC's Customer Relationship Management software to store and share information on interventions with Circuits and Churches, without duplicating the work.

For all these, it is necessary to be mindful that Churches and Circuits will not engage with all but should engage with some of the ways to get in touch.

➤ **Basic**

Once the Church Council/Circuit Meeting has decided that they need to move on in their work, TCC or the District worker can then visit to identify what support is required and who can provide it.

For example, by;

1. the provision of good practice guidelines and templates for documents, such as; health and safety risk assessments, policies and procedures and governance, including support for producing financial end of year accounts.
2. visiting the Church to ensure that any practical or legal issues are addressed in the area of work they have chosen to undertake, within the limits of the Partnership Fund.
3. creating a database of 'Trusted Traders', similar to those that are detailed on most Local Authority websites, but specifically for Churches and Circuits. This would include general maintenance and perhaps, solicitors and surveyors.

➤ **Consultancy**

This would be a continuation of our current consultancy work and would be supported by the funds committed by the District for such work but would not be part of the remit of the District Partnership Fund.

The consultancy work would be to walk alongside the Church/Circuit to be a 'critical friend', questioning the appropriateness of decision making and ensuring effective business/project plans are in place and being followed.

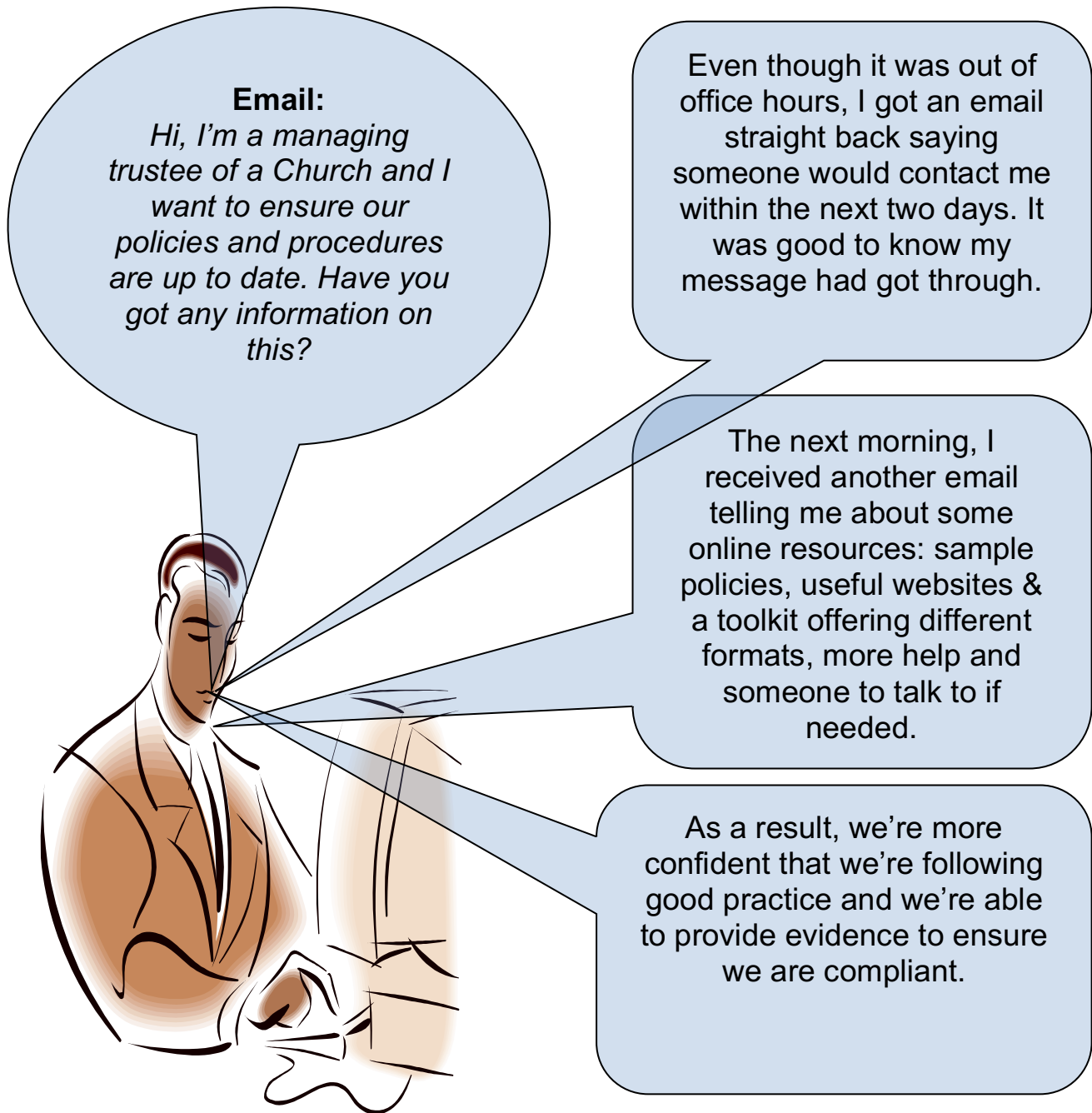
As TCC is outside the normal District structures, we are normally seen as 'independent' and as such can be more challenging to the Churches and Circuits who may have not fully considered all the necessary issues that may impact on their work. Also, when the work or projects do not turn out as planned, we can support the project in getting back on track.

Information, Advice and Guidance:

Developing and ensuring the upkeep of information would be mainly online and telephone/email queries, and delivering an event is quite specific.

- Telephone/email advice line responding to all enquiries within 2 working days
- Development or sharing of online tools and resources for Churches/Circuits
- Self-assessment tools; risk assessment for example.
- News and general updates on legislation and other developments

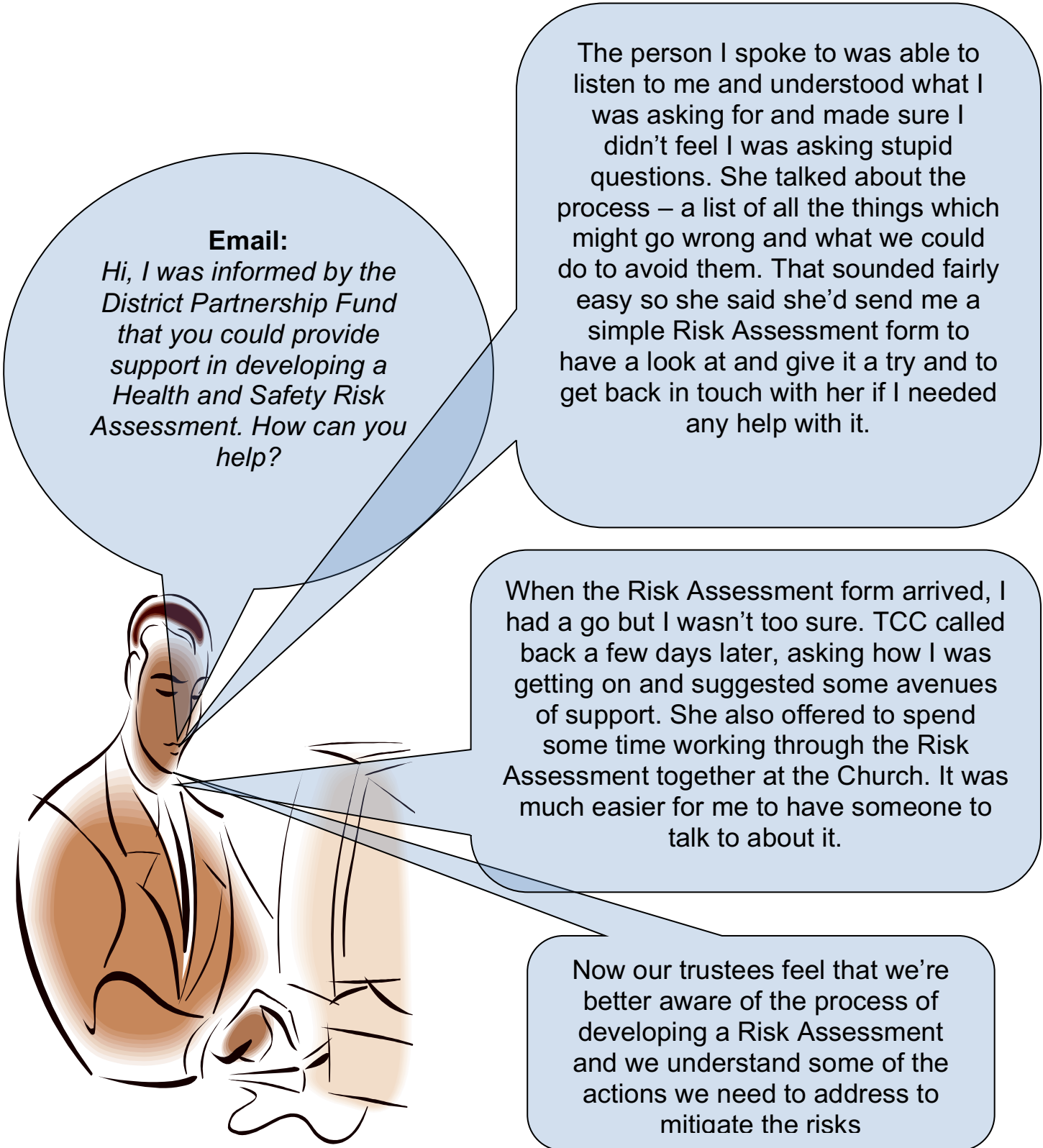
Setting up a Trusted Trader process would come under the online presence costs.



Basic:

TCC would ensure that visits would be supported and/or delivered by TCC or the District Worker, whether a worker was in place or not. The service would be specific to the areas listed in the District Partnership Fund report.

In the event that a District Worker was not in post, TCC would expect our daily rate to be paid for the work.



Consultancy:

This area of work would not be funded by the District Partnership Fund but would be supported by the district grant to TCC in the same way as is currently the case; where Churches/Circuits are presented with a proposal, from TCC, to support them in a dedicated way. It would be up to the District, Churches and Circuits to decide on the funding profile to pay for the proposed work.

Telephone:

Hi, we want to be able to redevelop our building in the near future. We have some idea of what we need to do but require support in doing this. So, what can you do?

A short while later, I got a call back from TCC; we had a chat about our Church and agreed to meet up (with a few people from Church Council) to talk about it in more depth.

The initial meeting went well. A proposal was written up and sent back to us about the way TCC could support us. It identified what we needed to work on and how much time was involved and identified the cost. We agreed and have spent the last year working with a number of people who've been helping us with different things like project planning, gathering statistics and information for a plan.

As a result, we've got our first ever Business Plan and we've just submitted an application for funding, started the online consents process. All of us feel a lot more confident.



All the governance support work in the District would be managed by TCC, in partnership with the body delegated by the District, through the online Customer Relationship Manager software programme developed for this purpose. Access would be given to those that sign up to the project.

Costs:

Worker:

The worker would be the 'second' point of contact and would be based within the District. He/she would provide basic support to property issues, providing a face to face contact through visits and attending events and meetings.

The cost for employing a worker to deliver the work in a District would be:

Annual Salary	£24,958	£12,479 for 17.5 hours (half time post)
Plus on costs (Employers NI) and 6% pension:	£4,492	£2,246
Annual cost for employee:	£29,450	£14,725

In addition, there would be other costs related to the employment, including desk charges, management and administration, insurance and so on. These come to **£3,647** based on full cost recovery.

	Full-time	Part-time
Total Cost for employee:	£33,097	£18,372

Regular reports and online presence: 15 days (£350) annually = **£5,250**

A daily commissioned rate of £350 per day for work allocated by the District Partnership Fund Management Group

Conclusion:

TCC sees itself as a valuable resource to the Methodist Church. We are a Charity and need to ensure we are not running at a loss, hence the additional costs. However, we are open to discussion in relation to the costs in the short term until we fully understand the amount of work required. TCC would normally develop a Service Level Agreement in order that both parties, TCC and the District, fully understand the detail of the work and this would happen if you wish to consider this proposal positively.

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