

 THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST



Ministry
of Defence

Armed Forces Families Fund

Early Years Programme

PROGRAMME GUIDANCE



2024/25

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

ARMED FORCES FAMILIES FUND

Early Years Programme 2024/2025

For nurseries and childcare facilities with a minimum of 50% Service children* option available for those with less than 50% on roll, [please read below](#)

PROGRAMME GUIDANCE

Under this programme the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust will award grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 on behalf of the MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years programme, towards projects lasting up to two years, which help enhance early childhood education and childcare settings, to meet specific needs of young children from Armed Forces families.

Contents:

[Why are we running this programme?](#)

[About aims and needs](#)

[What types of projects are we looking for?](#)

[Who will benefit?](#)

[What do we mean by beneficiaries and how might they be calculated?](#)

[Showing the change that your grant will make](#)

[How much funding can you apply for?](#)

[Ethics](#)

[Our assessment criteria](#)

[Which organisations are eligible to apply?](#)

[Working with other organisations](#)

[Preparing your project budget: What can and what can't funds be spent on?](#)

[Timetable](#)

[How to apply – the application form](#)

[After you submit your application](#)

[Checks we may carry out](#)

[Decisions and what happens next](#)

[What happens next if we award you a grant?](#)

Why are we running this programme?

The Armed Forces Families Fund (AF3) supports projects that meet the aims of the Armed Forces Families Strategy. Under this programme, we want to help Armed Forces families access good quality early childhood education and childcare provision that is located close to where they are living or serving.

We would like to support projects that directly address problems that Armed Forces families are currently having in accessing good quality childcare for their children.



About aims and needs

For this programme, early childhood education and childcare settings should have a significant proportion of children from Armed Forces families, and you should tell us more about their numbers, needs and Armed Forces profile in your application.

Applications can only address the needs of children who are from **currently serving Armed Forces families** and who are aged 0-5 years and are not yet in primary school education.

We recognise there may be young children who use your setting that do not come from Armed Forces families. We expect any benefits from your project to be highly focused on meeting the needs of the children from Armed Forces families and that any benefits to the other children are incidental.

You should be able to show us why your project is needed and how young children from Armed Forces families would benefit from it.

What types of projects are we looking for?

MOD's AF3 Early Years programme will look at addressing specific needs that you highlight to us throughout your application.

If we receive more strong applications for funding than we can support, we may give priority to projects that help ensure that Armed Forces families located across the UK and in each of the Services can benefit from this programme.

There is more information in the eligibility section of this guidance.

What can you apply for?

The programme guidance has changed from 23/24, when we asked you to apply under one of three themes.

This year we want you to look at **outcomes**.

We would like your project to aim to achieve one of the following outcomes.

- **Increased capacity at the setting to allow more Service children to attend.**
- **Have provided better learning environments for Service children (DIO should not be involved).**
- **Provided appropriate training and development of staff to support Service children.**

Achieving these outcomes requires collaboration, and consultation with families, be these informal chats or perhaps staff observations of children making choices. We will ask you in your application to explain what you have done so far, and to explain how you know the project is needed.

If your application is successful, we will also expect ongoing evaluation to enable you to deliver informed reporting back to the Trust. By focusing on these goals, you can create a positive impact on the lives of Service children and enhance their educational experiences.

If you have less than 50% Service children on roll

If, as an individual setting, you have less than 50% Service children on roll, you may apply as part of a 'cluster'. This would include working with two or more settings in your area who have small numbers of Service children on roll.

Settings applying as a cluster can only be part of one application.

Those forming a cluster can apply for:

- **staff training with an Armed Forces focus**
- **funding for a shared resource, for example a peripatetic (moves from place to place) Armed Forces Early Years Support Worker.**

We would expect any funded activity to **mainly benefit** Service children; and for you to be clear about what the specific benefits to the Service children are.

You will need to identify who is in your cluster and the number of Service children on roll across all settings in your application.

Our Trustees may prioritise funding for those projects in a cluster application that demonstrate the most significant or far-reaching impacts for Service children.

For a cluster application, one nursery setting, or the local authority, would need to be the lead applicant. They would need to take responsibility for the delivery of any grant awarded, which would include signing our Terms & Conditions of grant and providing all reporting requirements. There is more on partnership working further in the guidance.

DIO should not need to be involved at all in your project, either for permissions or undertaking work - you should seek external suppliers.

Your application will need to show that:

- ✓ **Your project is needed and targeted:** You should be able to clearly explain how the need for this project has been identified, how the project will meet the need, and how you will target the Service families who have the greatest need for support.
- ✓ **It was developed with people from Armed Forces communities:** Show us how the idea for your project has been shaped by the people it will benefit. This can include evidence of Armed Forces families being consulted, formally or in regular feedback, and the children being observed.
- ✓ **It does not duplicate and is complementary to existing provision:** Please show us how your project fills a gap in support.
- ✓ **It will support longer-term change:** This means there should be a wider impact to your work, which will endure beyond the life of your grant. Your project should show that it offers a positive benefit to members of Armed Forces communities. If you are awarded a grant, you will be expected to demonstrate this impact when you report to

us on your project.

- ✓ **Funding is not available anywhere else, for example through the local authority.**

We also need to be able to see that you have the skills and experience necessary to carry out your project within the agreed timescale. You can work together with other organisations as part of your project. There is more information on working with others later in this guidance.

It is important that the projects we award funding to complement one another, rather than duplicate provision. You'll be asked in your application form how you will ensure this.

Project examples (these are for illustrative purposes only):

A nursery is located **near an Armed Forces base**, and **70% of the children at the nursery are from Armed Forces families**, where parents have been on frequent deployments. The nursery has identified that some of these children can be withdrawn and lack confidence. There is a waiting list of families from Armed Forces families that would like to access the nursery for high quality childcare provision.

The nursery applies for funding for **training for key staff** to increase their ability to support children from Armed Forces families who may have additional needs. In order to keep the ratios, the permanent staff attending training are backfilled by part time staff with an uplift to their hours.

They also request some funding to **increase two staff posts from part time to full time for 6 months**. This will enable them to **provide additional capacity** in two areas of the nursery where there is the most pressure for places. In the longer term, the increased staff cost will be met from nursery fees charged to parents.

While there will be incidental benefits to all children at the setting, the nursery ensures that all children from Armed Forces families are directly supported.

A nursery in a town with a **significant Navy population** is aware that families with children under five can struggle with **childcare during school holiday periods** as their regular childcare may not be available. They apply for funding for a **holiday scheme to run through holiday periods** and will include provision on bank holidays to meet the needs of serving personnel with children aged 0-5.

Applicants must be able to clearly:

- **show how many** children from Armed Forces families are accessing your early years provision - in figures and as a percentage of your setting's total numbers
- **explain the needs** that these children have and how you have identified them
- **show why** your proposed project will meet the needs that they have identified

- **demonstrate a good relationship** with the local Service community
- **provide evidence** of waiting lists for places for Service Children, or information about anticipated increase of Service families in the area if you are looking for funds to expand current provision. This could include evidence from the community needs analysis, conducted by the local chain of command, or information from the local authority sufficiency team
- **explain what difference** you are expecting for the children, and how you will know if your project has made a difference
- **tell us how** you know your proposal will be good value for money
- **show plans for sustainability** beyond the funded period
- **tell us why you need a grant** to enable better access to childcare for Armed Forces families (and why you need help to deliver the project that you wish to undertake).

Who will benefit?

Your project must clearly benefit Armed Forces families with a child aged 0-5 years, by enhancing their access to high quality childcare.

This could be done by increasing the capacity in your provision to meet an already known, or anticipated, increase in demand, or to fund additional training and resources that will provide a clear benefit to children from Armed Forces families who are aged 0-5, and not yet in school.

You should tell us how you will measure this in your application.

What do we mean by beneficiaries and how might they be calculated?

The project beneficiaries are those who will benefit from your project. They are the people whose circumstances are changed by implementing your idea. They can be affected directly or indirectly by your project.

- **Direct beneficiaries** in this instance refer to the Armed Forces families, and children who will benefit directly from the project or activity.
- **Indirect beneficiaries** refer to other individuals, who are not the direct target of your project and activities, but may be indirectly affected and benefit from the activities undertaken by the direct beneficiaries, such as the extended family of the Service children.
- **'Incidental beneficiaries'** will be non-Service children who might also experience a benefit by virtue of staff receiving high quality training. We would expect applicants to clearly show that the project is focused on the Service children and that incidental beneficiaries will neither be numerous nor benefitting to the same degree as the Service children.

Showing the change that your grant will make

We are looking for projects that can deliver sustainable changes. This means that we want to know what evidence you have to support the approach that you seek to take, and crucially, **how people from Armed Forces communities have helped to shape this**.

We also want to know what changes will take place as a result of your project. This means that we would like to know what the difference will be, as a result of your project, in two to three years' time, after your project ends; and why you think your project will achieve these improvements.

There are different ways in which sustainable benefits can be achieved.



Why is your project the best way to support people from Armed Forces communities with these needs?

What exactly is the activity or service that you will be delivering?

How have you involved the people who would benefit in planning and shaping your project?

How do you know that people will take part?

How do you know that this does not duplicate other help that's available for these individuals?



What will the project achieve?

What will be different by the end of the project?

What does this change look like?

What's the wider legacy, in terms of tangible improvements that the people benefiting from the project have gained, or ongoing collaborations that have been developed?

At the end of your funded project, people who have benefited from the project should be in a far stronger position than they were at the beginning of the project. It's important to have clear plans on how you will measure the impact of your project, and how it will be sustained in the long term.

Some projects might look at the evidence they have developed about families within the Armed Forces community who have needs that might not be well understood, or who don't access services that are available.

In the Early Years programme we would not expect to fund projects that focus solely on research, but we would be keen to understand the longer-term implications for your work and how it meets Armed Forces families' needs.

We will ask you about sustainability in the application form.

Types of sustainability: how will your work sustain beyond the life of your grant?

Ongoing improvements for project beneficiaries

Some projects may focus on the legacy value for the people who take part in their projects; looking to address complex issues or engage in effective preventive work targeted at those who might be at risk of crisis. At the end of the grant, people who have taken part in these projects would be in a far stronger position than they were at the beginning of the project; and more able to live the life that they want to have.

Accessing funding for ongoing delivery

Some projects might be carrying out a pilot project or might be planning to keep running their project or service in future; raising funding from donations, grants or local commissioning

Ongoing partnership and collaboration

Some projects might seek to build a long term legacy through better collaboration between organisations to improve how people from Armed Forces communities access support now and in the future. For projects like these, we would expect to see evidence of changes in practice and collaboration that extend beyond the life of the grant.

Improved knowledge and evidence

Some projects might look at the evidence they have developed about the needs of a specific group of people within the wider Armed Forces community, who have needs that might not be well understood, or who don't access services that are available. This evidence base might help to ensure that Armed Forces communities in future could have access to better support that meets their needs.

How much funding can you apply for?

MOD's Armed Forces Families Early Years programme invites applications for grants between £5,000 and £50,000.

If you are applying for staffing costs, these must be in addition to your usual or regular costs of providing childcare.

Under this programme we can support a time-limited expansion to staffing costs if this will directly lead to the provision of more childcare for Armed Forces families

We will only award funding where it is clearly needed to deliver the project that you set out within your application. We will not fund business as usual costs.

Ethics

Our work supports the Armed Forces Covenant through funding projects that deliver real change to Armed Forces communities. The projects we support need to be carried out to the highest possible ethical standards.

We therefore need to know that you:

- have the skills and experience to work with the groups of people that your project focuses on
- can ensure that they are kept safe
- that you take an ethical approach to your work.

Our ethical values are Respect, Competence, and Integrity.

We have a Code of Conduct and free online training to explain our approach to ethics. We will ask you to confirm in your application form that you will run your project in line with our Code of Conduct. If your organisation has its own Code of Ethical Conduct, then you will need to explore whether your Code is compatible with ours, and tell us about this.

You can access our ethics resources [here](#).

No personal data relating to children should be included in your application or subsequent reporting or correspondence with us.

Our assessment criteria

Our criteria are set out below. We will consider each application to see how well it meets these criteria and fund those that we believe will best achieve the programme aims.

The difference that your project is making	
What are we looking for?	<p>That the project is addressing a specific need for young Service children and their families, and that it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to make a significant difference to young Service children and their families. • Be able to show that the grant will have longer term sustainable benefits. • That there will be an ongoing legacy, after the end of the grant. • Does not duplicate existing statutory or other services. • Cannot be funded by another funding source.
What do you need to show us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exactly what your project is. • How this would specifically help Service children and their families. • How Service families have shaped this project or service; and how you know that they will use it. • How well you have engaged with local chain of command to identify the need to increase provision (if applicable). • How many Service children/families this is likely to help. • What difference this will make. • What the long-term benefits will be?

Delivery of your project	
What are we looking for?	<p>That you have the skills and experience to run your project and that the approach to running your project would be likely to lead to the long-term legacy that you are seeking to have.</p>
What do you need to show us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That your organisation is well run and well managed. • That you'll be able to start your grant activity quickly. • That you can keep people on your project safe. • That your project will be delivered in line with our ethical values. • A breakdown of costs. • Why your project offers good value for money. • Whether you will be working with others to achieve your aims, and how you will do this. • How you will measure the impact of your project. • Your plans to ensure a long-term legacy of your work that will continue after the end of the grant.

Which organisations are eligible to apply?

To be eligible for this funding, you must be one of the following:

An early childhood education and childcare provider operating where Armed Forces families live or work

Your setting must offer group-based childcare, and have 50% of Service children (unless applying as a cluster) on roll as a minimum and be registered with, and inspected by, one of the following

- Ofsted (England),
- Care Inspectorate (Scotland),
- Care Inspectorate (Wales)
- Early Years Teams within Health and Social Care Trusts (Northern Ireland).

OR

A local authority that wishes to supply specific training to early childhood education and childcare providers supporting Service children aged 0-5 years.

OR

An appropriately constituted organisation (see below) which provides training for setting staff to support Service children.

The following additional eligibility requirements also apply.

- Applicant organisations must be based in the UK.
- Applicants must be a registered charity, a CIC, or a company limited by guarantee, or a local authority in one of the four countries of the UK).

Charities

Your organisation must have been registered in the UK (with one or more of the charity commissions for England and Wales, or Scotland or Northern Ireland) for **at least three years at the time of your application** and able to provide published accounts for all three years if requested.

Your organisation must have a **minimum of three unrelated trustees at the time of applying** and, if successful, throughout the life of your grant. This must be verifiable at all times on the relevant charity regulator's website.

CICs

Your organisation must have been **registered in the UK for at least three years at the time of your application** and able to provide published accounts for all three years if requested.

Your organisation must have a **minimum of three unrelated directors at the time of applying** and, if successful, throughout the life of your grant, and this must be verifiable at all times on the Companies House website.

You will need to attach a copy of your most recent, full, accounts - that must include an income and expenditure statement as well as balance sheet, not just abbreviated accounts as submitted to Companies House - with your application form.

CICs will be subject to additional governance checks and may not be considered for funding if their Articles of Association do not have nominated beneficiary organisation/s in their Asset Lock clause. If this section in your articles is blank or 'to be confirmed' your application may not be regarded as eligible.

Private limited companies

Applications from private limited companies that have been **registered, and been working in the Early Years sector, for at least three years** may be considered. **They will be subject to additional eligibility and monitoring checks** to evidence that any grant will be fully expended on direct costs of the proposed project. They cannot budget for contributions to management or overheads costs (or profit/investment) in their application. If you are a private limited company, you will need to attach a copy of your most recent, full, independently audited or examined accounts with your application form. These must include an income and expenditure statement as well as balance sheet. We may ask to see bank accounts and other evidence of your finances. Additional information regarding directors and other key individuals, and financial arrangements, may also be requested.

Who is ineligible?

The following types of organisations are not eligible for funding under this programme.

- Commercial organisations aiming to charge for services to childcare providers - for example, an organisation could not be awarded a grant to develop a training course which it then charges schools to attend.
- Sole traders or partnerships.
- Organisations delivering childcare that do not hold a valid OFSTED or equivalent regulatory registration.
- Unincorporated or voluntary community groups.
- Schools, universities, or colleges (whether private or publicly operated), unless operating nursery education that meets the definition above.

The following restrictions may apply

- Organisations cannot apply more than once per funding round on this programme unless this is for programmes of work in different places (eg charities that run nurseries in two eligible locations).

- We generally receive more good applications for funding than we can support. We may prioritise organisations which have not previously received a grant under the Early Years programme.
- Applications may be declined from current Trust grant holders if the reporting requirements for existing grants from the Trust are not up to date.
- Your grant may be withdrawn if you are found to have less than the 50% minimum requirement of Service children on roll during the life of the grant, except in exceptional circumstances which you will need to be able to evidence.
- Your grant may be withdrawn if you use funding for anything other than what is agreed and or on any other cohort.
- We may also take into account funding trends in this programme over a period of time.

Working with other organisations

You can work with other organisations as part of your project. If any of the organisations that you will be working with will receive part of your grant, then you need to read our guidance below on delivery partners.

A delivery partner is an organisation which is either:

- receiving part of the grant OR
- their involvement in the project, through providing resources or some other means, is critical to the delivery of the project.

Role of the lead organisation

The organisation that submits the application is the lead organisation.

It will have legal responsibility for all funding we award and will be financially accountable for any funds that may be distributed by the lead organisation to delivery partners.

Delivery partnership agreements

If we award you funding and you plan to work as a cluster, or with one or more delivery partners, it will be a term and condition of your grant offer that you have a formal signed partnership agreement with them.

If you're successful, the draft delivery partnership agreement must be deemed to be compliant (with our terms and conditions) by us and finalised prior to any funding being released. We may request changes to the draft agreement before it's finalised. You can find guidance on what a delivery partnership agreement should include on our website.

Preparing your project budget

What can funds be spent on?

We can pay for most of the things you'll need for your project or activity, whether it is people's time, costs of delivering work online or buying/hiring equipment.

We understand that currently the real value of your income may have dropped due to inflationary pressures of running your organisation. You may have also found the rising cost of living has increased demand on your services. The Trust will consider applications that include a reasonable contribution to overhead/core costs. We would expect to see this reflected within your budget breakdown.

Your project might include the following costs.

- ✓ Temporary uplift in staff hours (in line with current legislation) to support more Service children being able to access the setting.
- ✓ Training opportunities for staff.
- ✓ Temporary use of agency staff or uplift from part time to full time to enable permanent staff training opportunities that benefit the Service children.
- ✓ Staff time for this fixed-term project. This could be direct project work or for admin or to manage volunteers that may be involved in your project.
- ✓ Sessional staff or freelancers that you may need to run your project and activity.
- ✓ Reasonable travel costs including fares or mileage for project staff and volunteers to enable participation in the project (this would not include the costs for Service children to attend the Early Years setting).
- ✓ Purchasing items that can enable activities to take place.
- ✓ Reasonable overheads, which reflect the cost to your organisation of delivering this project, taking account of recent cost increases.

What can't funds be spent on?

There are several things **we can't pay for**, either because they're not in the spirit of the Fund, or because of relevant legislation or tax rules.

- ✗ Funding for existing staff posts. If staffing costs are included the applicant must be able to evidence that this is a new activity to benefit Service children, e.g. a part time person goes to full time whilst they grow their numbers to sustain additional wages.
- ✗ Where funding is not benefiting people from the Armed Forces community.
- ✗ Large scale refurbishments, changes to infrastructure or projects that would be classed as having capital costs.
- ✗ Projects that do not clearly meet the aims of the programme.
- ✗ Projects that are not targeted to the young children from Armed Forces families, or that provide benefits to ineligible beneficiaries that are more than incidental.
- ✗ Where money only benefits one person. By this we mean where your whole project

would only benefit one person.

- × Making grants or donations of money or items of value to individuals or families.
- × Repeat or regular projects that require a source of uncommitted funding.
- × Endowments (to provide a source of income).
- × Topping up existing grants and aid from a government department.
- × Investments.
- × Fundraising costs, including organising fundraising events and activities.
- × Paying for ongoing costs of existing partnership activity.
- × Projects, activities or services that the state has a legal obligation to provide.
- × Retrospective funding for projects that have already started or taken place.
- × Excessive management or professional fees or contingency costs.
- × Purchasing or leasing of vehicles.
- × Purchase of any live animals or insects, for example worms for a wormery.

This is not an exhaustive list as we feel it's more useful to focus on what you're trying to achieve and how you're going about this, than to issue long lists of eligible and ineligible costs.

Any successful application that requires the hiring of staff should ensure that all parties are aware that they are being employed by the successful applicant (setting/local authority) and not by the Trust or the MOD.

Any grant that we award under this programme would be in line with our charitable objective that seeks to removing barriers to family life for Armed Forces families.

Subsidy Control Act 2022

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust is a public body. We are required to follow specific rules under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. This law requires us to be transparent about how we use public funds, which we provide as grants.

The Subsidy Control Act is important for anyone thinking about applying for our grants. We encourage you to understand its requirements, which are outlined in the [draft guidance from the Department of Business and Trade](#). This guidance helps organisations like ours distribute funds responsibly, making sure they are used effectively and fairly, without negatively impacting competition or investment.

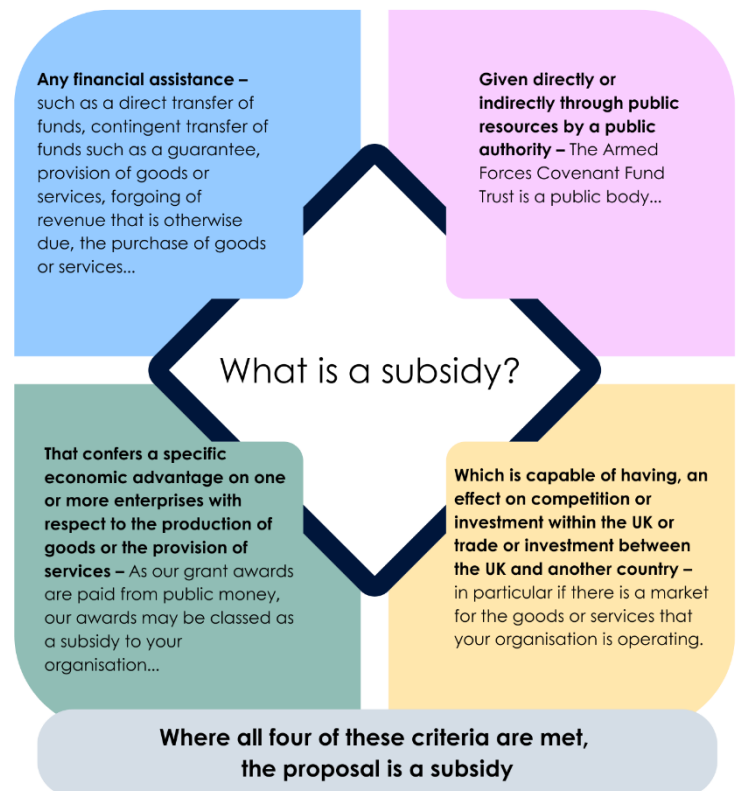
What does this mean for you?

Grants as public funding: Our grants come from government money. This means they may be considered subsidies or financial support which is different from private funding. Other organisations might need to use their own funding for similar activities, so it's important to recognise this distinction.

Publishing details of large grants: If a grant exceeds £100,000, we must publish its details on our website and on a national database managed by the Department for Business and Trade. This helps to ensure the process is open and transparent.

Your input: When you apply for a grant, please complete your application form accurately. We have designed the questions to ensure compliance with subsidy control requirements, so your main task is to provide thorough and precise answers. We may also update the terms of the grant agreement based on these principles and could add further conditions. This will only be done for transparency and accountability purposes.

We are committed to ensuring that our funding process is as clear and straightforward as possible. While we need to follow these regulations to ensure fair and responsible use of public money, we also aim to support you through the application process with clear guidance and support.



What financial information should you include in your application?

The application form will ask you to give details of your project budget, so that we can understand the costs for which you are asking for funding towards.

Whilst you can show this in categories (rather than, for example, listing every item of the equipment you require), we will need to have sufficient information to assure us that you have fully considered how much the work will cost and told us how you know this. Please remember to add VAT where this will be paid.

For example, if you are applying for staff costs, please show this as:

Staff: 1 x staff member for 39 weeks, an additional 12 hours per week, paid £11.50 per hour
£5,382

Not as

staff costs: approx. £5,400

If we award you a grant, you will need to send us a full budget, and project milestones before we can pay the first instalment of your grant.

Timetable

There will be two application deadlines this year:

- If you apply **by 12 noon on 24 July 2024**, you'll receive a decision before the end of September 2024.
- If you apply by **12 noon on 20 November 2024**, you'll receive a decision before the end of March 2025.

We highly recommend you plan to submit your application before the deadline to avoid the risk of missing the cut-off because of technological or other unexpected problems.

How to apply - the application form

You need to apply using our online application form, which you can [access through this link](#).

If you don't yet have an account for our online application portal, then you will need to create one. You will need this anyway if you are successful in receiving a grant, so that you can submit reports and receive grant payments.

On our system, you can save a draft application form to complete later or send a draft copy to colleagues. You can also access copies of the application that you've submitted at any time.

We strongly recommend that you complete your application in a Word document, save it locally as you work on it and when it is complete you then cut and paste the answers into the online form. You will find a Word document with a list of the project related questions on our website. Please don't use any formatting, such as tables or numbered lists, in your Word document, as the online form may not accept this formatting and you might have trouble submitting the form.

When you are entering data onto the online form, we suggest you **save your form every 10-15 minutes** whilst you are completing it, to avoid the risk of it 'timing out'.

You will be emailed when you both save and when you submit the application, please be aware of this when completing the application. **We can only consider applications that have been fully submitted.** Please check the 'Submitted Applications' tab on your grant portal, to ensure the application has been fully submitted.

It's important that we can contact your organisation, particularly, of course, if you receive a grant. You will need to provide two contacts from your organisation on the application. At least one of these should have an email address that belongs to your organisation. At least one contact must hold the relevant authority (CEO/ CO or equivalent) to authorise any grant contract and bank account to be used should you be successful. The main contact must have an email address that belongs to your organisation. If this is not provided, your application may be considered ineligible.

Please think carefully about who these should be, as they will need to be able to sign acceptance of the grant and use of the bank account on the Offer Letter/ Terms and Conditions if your application is successful. **If either contact changes, do let us know as soon as you can.**

Do check that you have fully answered all the questions because, if not, we might not be able to consider your application.

If you are a CIC or private limited company, please do ensure that you upload a **copy of your most recent accounts (which must include your income and expenditure details as well as your balance sheet and your governing document.** Your application will not be complete without these. You do not need to send any additional information once the application has been submitted. Any additional information sent will not be considered.

If you are not a CIC or private limited company, do not submit any other documents with your form. Any other documents will not be considered.

You do not need to send any additional information once your application has been submitted. Any additional information received will not be considered unless specifically asked for by our assessors.

Do not send your application by email or post to the Covenant Fund Trust – only applications submitted via the online form can be considered.

You must also make sure that the Trustees/Directors/ senior staff within your organisation know that you are submitting this grant application.

After you submit your application

You will get an automated email to confirm that your application has been submitted. This email will come from an address called mailuk@grantapplication.com. **This is a no reply email.** You may wish to add this email to a safe senders list on your email system to ensure that it can come through to you.

If you have not received this email, then your application was not submitted successfully. Please log back into the portal to submit it.

We will check your application to ensure that you've provided all the information we have requested. During our assessment we very occasionally contact applicants to ask for clarification, or specific questions about the organisation. This will only be if there are answers in your application form which are unclear or left blank. We will only contact you at this stage if we believe this will make a material difference to the decision about your application. If we ask you to do this, you'll need to send us this information within five working days. Please do not assume any contact or lack of contact is an indication of your likelihood of being successful or declined.

We will review the information you provide in your application and, where relevant, data and information from the Charity Commission, Companies House or other regulators' websites relating to your constitution and recent audited accounts. We may also look at other publicly available sources such as your organisation's website and social media activity.

After submitting your application, you must advise the Trust of any significant changes in your organisation, its governance or finances which might impact on our consideration of your application.

We will assess your application against the key criteria of the programme.

Checks we may carry out on your organisation

We may carry out several checks on the information you provide us with and about your organisation. This is to make sure that the information is correct and there are no significant risks we can identify when awarding grants.

These may include checks:

- on whether financial information on your application form matches that held by your regulatory body (Companies House, Charity Commission etc.)
- that we can see that you have a minimum of three unrelated Directors or Trustees listed on your regulator's website
- that your governing documents (such as constitutions and memorandum and articles of association) are up to date, correct and properly signed
- on your accounts that are accessible through regulatory bodies
- on any identified concerns about a person named as a contact or who has a position within your organisation
- that the signatories are valid and well informed about the project
- on your annual report and on your website/social media activity that your organisation is undertaking the activities as described in your application
- to ensure you are up to date on all reporting with any active grants you hold with the Trust
- if your organisation is a branch of a larger organisation (such as charities with regional branches or offices), as part of our due diligence checks we may be sharing key details of the application with your head office to confirm eligibility to apply for this funding
- if you are awarded a grant, that your organisational name and address on your bank statement are consistent with the details you've provided in any completed form or the information that's held elsewhere in the public domain
- if you are awarded a grant, that your bank statement shows that your account is being managed in line with your own financial procedures and our programme requirements.

Decisions and what happens next

Final decisions will be made by our Board of Trustees, who will review the applications, using balancing criteria in addition to the key criteria. The balancing criteria include the relative strength and value for money of the project when viewed as part of a national portfolio of projects.

Funds are limited. Therefore, the Board will use their discretion to choose which projects to fund, ensuring a good spread of funded projects and to differentiate between projects that are considered fundable.

Please note that in order to minimise the risk to public funds the Trust may prioritise funding those applicants which have good track records on reporting to regulators, demonstrate transparent and appropriate governance arrangements and have comprehensive published accounts. For organisations which previously had grants from us, we expect all reporting on these grants to be up-to-date and may consider this when considering new applications.

Trustees may also take the decision to part-fund proposals. This may mean you are awarded less money than was applied for. If this is the case, we will talk to you about what elements of the project were supported and why and discuss this with you.

After the Trustees have met, we will send an email to you using the primary contact email address you provided in your application. This will tell you whether or not you' have been awarded a grant.

Our programmes are often oversubscribed and, unfortunately, we often have to turn good applications down due to lack of available funding. If you have been unsuccessful, we will email you to tell you.

What happens next if we award you a grant?

If we plan to fund your project, you'll need to accept our grant offer and the terms & conditions of the grant **within four weeks of receiving the Offer Letter** or risk the offer lapsing.

Our [terms and conditions of grant](#) can be accessed on our website. If we offer you a grant, you will need to confirm that you will follow these terms and conditions of grant before we can release any of your grant to you.

We will email you in the first instance to advise you that you have been successful. This email will give you full instructions of what you need to do next in order to receive your official offer letter, how to accept the grant and what documents you need to provide.

If we offer you a grant, we may invite you to come to a briefing session for new grant holders; and we'll send you the dates for these. The briefing will be held online and explains the next stages of your grant. Alternatively, we may request a virtual meeting with you to provide you with further information and answer any questions you may have.

Your formal Offer Letter and Terms and Conditions will be sent to you after the briefing or meeting. We won't be able to pay your grant until these documents have been signed.

Once we have all the necessary documents back, we will pay the first instalment of your grant. If there are any discrepancies/queries within these documents, this will delay your payment, so please read the accompanying information we provide, thoroughly. Grants will be paid in instalments, and the number and size of these will depend on the size and duration of the grant. A small proportion of the total amount awarded will be retained pending a satisfactory End of Grant report.

If you receive a grant, you will need to keep good records of how the funds were spent and how many people you helped and how. As part of the Terms and Conditions of funding we will ask you to update us on the progress of the project, this will include detailing how the funding has been spent.

We may also expect you to take part in evaluations, impact studies or other research related to the funding you have received. We will let you know what is required and how to participate.

The Trust has a Privacy Policy which explains what data we collect from our grant applicants, and how we use this. Please read this in advance of applying:

<https://covenantfund.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

If you have any questions relating to this programme, please look at the programme information that we have on our website.

Following this, if you still have queries and cannot find the answer in these guidance notes, please email info@covenantfund.org.uk