

## **Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years programme 2022/23**

Helping support young children from Armed Forces families to have great places to learn and develop



**Programme Guidance**

# **The Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years programme 2022/23 PROGRAMME GUIDANCE**

Under this programme the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust will award grants of between £20,000 and £80,000 on behalf of the MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund towards projects lasting up to two years which help enhance Early Years learning environments to meet specific needs of children from Armed Forces families.

**Applications must be received by midday Monday 5 December 2022.**

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## **What are we looking for?**

Applicants must be able to clearly:

- show how many children from Armed Forces families are accessing their Early Years provision
- explain the needs that these children have
- show why their proposed project will meet the needs they have identified
- demonstrate a good relationship with the local Service community.

For this programme, we are focusing support on Early Years provision that is either located on an Armed Forces base or unit or within five miles of an Armed Forces base or unit.

Your Early Years setting 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 that there may be young children who use your setting that do not come from Armed Forces families. We expect any benefits from the project to be highly focused on meeting the needs of the children from Armed Forces families

## Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years programme

Helping support young children from Armed Forces families to have great places to learn and develop



Your project must meet specific needs of children from Armed Forces families

Grants of £20k-£80k to enhance early years learning environments

Projects must be in Early Years settings on or near Armed Forces bases or units

Your project can run for up to 2 years

You need to include a letter of endorsement from a senior person from your local base or unit

**Successful bids will demonstrate a good relationship with their Service community.**



Your application needs to include a supporting statement from an **Armed Forces sponsor**

The Armed Forces sponsor should be:

- a uniformed serving member of the Armed Forces
- not below the rank of Captain (Army/RM), Lieutenant (RN), Flight Lieutenant (RAF) and could be, for example, the Station/Unit Commanding Officer or the Unit Welfare Officer
- if a uniformed, serving member of the Armed Forces is not available, a civilian equivalent sponsor with sufficient knowledge of the garrison/area may be used.

**The Armed Forces sponsor's supporting comments should not single out individual Service children (including their own if they are a parent).**

#### Providing Context



Engagement with an Armed Forces sponsor can be vital as they can give context to the Service community, type of units and expected training and operational tours. They will also be able to refer to any known rebasing plans which may impact on Early Years education needs.

#### Understanding Impact



This information will assist assessors in understanding the Service impact on the Early Years education setting and evidence of this engagement may be considered if there is competition for funds.

#### Building relationships



Applicants will be expected to have shared their application with their Armed Forces sponsor before submission and are required to include the Armed Forces sponsor's name and contact details on the application form as the third contact. A question is asked in the application form about this relationship and the opportunity is given to provide a supporting statement. If you have not engaged with a military sponsor, you should explain why.

#### Sharing your success



Successful applicants will be expected to confirm that they have received a grant with their sponsor soon after notification.

### Example

A nursery is located near an Armed Forces base, and 40% 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. They would like to be able to offer enhanced Forest School provision to enhance confidence and resilience skills within children from Armed Forces families. The supporting statement from the base Commander highlights that parents may be asked to go on deployments at short notice and s/he knows that serving personnel worry about the impact on their young families.

The nursery applies for funding for training for key staff to access Forest School qualifications, and outdoor equipment designed to be used with young children to build confidence and resilience through active play.

While there will be incidental benefits to all children at the setting the nursery ensures that all children from Armed Forces families that would benefit from Forest School provision can access it, and they monitor the progress of these children. For the children from Armed Forces families who lack confidence, the opportunities to play with children from civilian families on the outdoor equipment as part of a structured programme of support has a positive benefit, and helps to prepare the children for starting their primary education

### Example

A nursery is located on an Armed Forces base. Parents are happy with the care provided but say that the facilities are dated and do not give a vibrant learning environment. The base Commander's supporting statement says that more families are due to move to the base in the next year, and that it is important that high quality childcare facilities are available.

The nursery works with the parents to plan improvements to the facility that meet children's needs. With an influx of new children expected, the nursery applies for funding for new outside learning environment to be used in all weathers with adventurous play equipment. The environment is designed to be exciting to young children and enable play both independently and co-operatively, giving children that are new to the setting space to develop friendships and co-operative skills with peers. A modest budget is also requested for internal repainting to improve the look and feel of the setting.

The nursery monitors the impact of the project with feedback from parents, and observations of children's key skills development. They use the outdoor learning environment to support personal, social and emotional development, encouraging children to make positive relationships, build self confidence and awareness and better manage their feelings and behaviours. Parents appreciate the increased facilities and benefits and are confident about extending the hours their children spend there, thus enabling non-serving parents additional opportunities for paid work or study.

## Who can apply?

We invite applications from the following organisations.

- Armed Forces bases, stations or units that provide onsite childcare.
- Nurseries operated by charities or Community Interest Companies (CICs) that are located on or within five miles of an Armed Forces base. Charities and CICs must be able to evidence that they have at least three unrelated trustees/directors at the time of application.
- Nurseries operated by local authorities that are located on or within five miles of an Armed Forces base.
- Nurseries operated by private limited companies that are located on or within five miles of an Armed Forces base. Private limited companies 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, and they will not be able to budget for contributions to management or overheads costs (or profit/investment) in their application.
- Schools that are providing onsite nursery education for pre-reception aged children located within five miles of an Armed Forces base.

## Who is ineligible?

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

- Colleges of higher education or further education (excluding those that meet the definition of a sixth form college above).
- Commercial organisations or those that would seek for their solution to be provided to a school, for example, an organisation could not be awarded a grant to develop a training course which it then charges schools to attend.
- Early Years childcare or education delivered by sole traders or partnerships.
- Organisations that do not hold a valid OFSTED or equivalent regulatory registration.
- Unincorporated community groups.
- Schools, universities or colleges (whether private or publicly operated); unless operating nursery education that meets the definition above.

## What sorts of projects are we keen to support?

As long as the needs of the Service children are identified and evidenced in the application, a variety of projects/activities could be supported. Your application could include the following.

- Additional training to enhance Early Years learning (such as training in Forest School provision, supporting children with attachment needs, or other specialist training to meet specific needs of children from Armed Forces families).

- Enhancements to settings such as outdoor learning environments to enable Armed Forces children to develop skills that meet their specific needs.

## What costs can you apply for?

You can apply for a grant of between £20,000 and £80,000. We anticipate that most grants will be at the lower end of this range. You will need to complete your project within two years of any grant award. We expect that this programme will be competitive and that we will not be able to support all the applications we receive.

Your application should clearly be able to show why children from Armed Forces families will benefit from your proposal, and why this offers good value for money.

You can apply for:

- reasonable staff costs for your project (though you need to show how this would be in addition to the regular staffing that you have)
- the cost of sessional workers to deliver specific interventions for children from Armed Forces families
- the costs of training for skills enhancements for staff to deliver specific interventions for children from Armed Forces families
- resources such as arts and crafts and other learning materials
- enhancements to the learning environment such as smaller scale refurbishments, such as adapting current spaces, and indoor and outdoor equipment, where this offers a clear benefit to meet specific needs of children from Armed Forces families
- reasonable overheads that are directly related to the project/programme of activities.

**Staffing costs:** Any successful application that requires the hiring of staff should ensure that all parties are aware they are being employed by the successful applicant and not by the Trust or the MOD.

## What costs you can't apply for

Projects should not be seeking funding for existing posts. If funding for staffing is to be considered, you must be able to evidence that this is new activity to benefit Service children, not just paying for normal staffing. Additional services (such as creative therapy provision) that meet a defined need for Armed Forces children could be included within a project.

Contributions to substantial capital projects that are the responsibility of the MOD or local authority.

Regular staffing costs for your Early Years settings.

Projects that are not targeted to children from Armed Forces families, or that provide benefits to ineligible beneficiaries that are more than incidental.

More than one project - applicants can make one individual bid each.

Purchase or lease of any vehicle (e.g. school minibus).

## What your application should tell us

Your application should clearly tell us:

- what proportion of children from Armed Forces families are within your Early Years setting
- what needs these children have and how you have identified them
- why your project will meet these needs
- what difference you are expecting for the children, and how you will know if your project has made a difference
- how you know your proposal will be good value for money
- about plans for sustainability beyond the funded period.

## 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; and 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.**



## Our assessment criteria

Our criteria are set out below. They are important, as we consider each application against these criteria and fund those that we believe will best achieve the programme aims.

<b>The difference your project is making</b>	
What are we looking for?	<p>That the project is addressing an identified need for Service children in a specified school or schools and that it will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be able to make a significant difference to the children/families</li> <li>• have longer-term sustainable benefits that will have ongoing legacy after the end of the grant</li> <li>• have the support of an Armed Forces sponsor</li> <li>• not duplicate existing statutory or other services.</li> </ul>
What do you need to show us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What your proposed project will do.</li> <li>• How this will help Service children/families.</li> <li>• How this need has been identified.</li> <li>• How you know that Service children/families will participate and benefit.</li> <li>• Who supports the project, and why they support it.</li> <li>• How many children/families this is likely to help.</li> <li>• What difference this will make.</li> <li>• What the long-term benefits will be.</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery of your project</b>	
What are we looking for?	<p>That your proposed project is feasible, that your organisation has the skills and experience to run your project and that the approach you have proposed would be likely to lead to the impact that you are seeking to have.</p>
What do you need to show us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That you can manage your project.</li> <li>• That you'll be able to start your grant activity quickly.</li> <li>• That you can keep people on your project safe.</li> <li>• That your project will be delivered in line with our ethical values.</li> <li>• Why your project offers good value for money.</li> <li>• How you will measure the impact of your project.</li> <li>• Your plans to ensure a long-term legacy of your work that will continue after the end of the grant.</li> </ul>

## Preparing your project budget

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.

Your project might include the following costs.

- Staff time, including time required to manage volunteers that may be involved in your project. Sessional staff or freelancers that you may need to run your project and activity.
- Appropriate clinical supervision for workers who are supporting vulnerable individuals.
- Purchasing items that can enable the project's activities to take place (such as art materials, sport/games/outdoor equipment etc).
- Purchasing items that you may need to provide support, such as additional telephones or laptops. Reasonable costs for storing and transporting items, including wear and tear on private vehicles.
- Reasonable overheads that reflect the cost to your organisation of delivering this project.

### ***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.

- Where funding is not benefitting people from the Armed Forces community.
- Making grants or donations of money to individuals or families.
- Topping up existing grants and aid from a government department.
- Where money only benefits one person. By this we mean where your whole project would only benefit one person.
- Repeat or regular projects that require a source of uncommitted funding.
- Investments.
- Paying for ongoing costs of existing partnership activity.
- Fundraising costs, including organising fundraising events and activities.
- Endowments (to provide a source of income).
- Projects, activities or services that the state has a legal obligation to provide.
- Retrospective funding for projects that have already started or taken place before the decision is made on a grant
- Excessive management or professional fees or contingency costs.

This is not an exhaustive list as we feel it is 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.

## How to apply - the application form

You need to apply through our online application form. You can access the application form via our website.

If you don't have an account for our online application portal, then you will need to create one. 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.

When you submit your application, you'll receive an email confirmation. **If you don't receive this, then you have not applied.** Please remember to check your junk or spam folders.

After your application has been successfully submitted, it will show under the Submitted Applications tab on your online grants portal. Please ensure your application shows under the Submitted Applications tab. **If it does not show here, then your application has not been submitted.**

### **We cannot accept any late applications.**

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

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 with two different email addresses. At least one contact must hold the relevant authority (CEO 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 was successful.

If you have an Armed Forces sponsor you should include their contact details as the third contact.

We strongly recommend that you save an offline version of your application form.

You may also find it helpful to complete your application in a Word document and then cut and paste the answers into the online form. 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. We suggest you save your form every 10-15 minutes whilst you are completing it, to avoid the risk of it 'timing out'.

Do check that you have fully answered all the questions because, if not, we might not be able to consider your application. You do not need to send any additional

information unless you are a CIC or a private limited company [see below]; otherwise, any additional information received will not be considered.

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

If you are a CIC or a private limited company, please ensure that you upload a copy of your most recent published accounts and your governing document. The accounts should include your income and expenditure statement, not just the balance sheet. Your application will not be complete without this.

## What happens next

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](mailto:mailuk@grantapplication.com). 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.

The Trust will check your application to ensure that you've provided all the information we have requested. We may contact you during our assessment if there are any issues about which we are unclear – please do not assume any contact or lack thereof is an indication of your likelihood of being successful or declined.

We may ask you to send us additional information or answer specific questions about your organisation. If we ask you to do this, you'll need to send us this information within five working days.

Please note that in order to minimise the risk to public funds, the Trust may prioritise funding those applicants who have good track records

## Checks we may carry out on your organisation and accounts

We may carry out several checks on the information you provide us – either during assessment or if you are offered a grant. This is to make sure that the information is correct and there are no significant risks we can identify when managing grants.

These may include checks:

- on whether information on your application form matches that held by your regulatory body (Companies House, Charity Commission, OFSTED etc.)
- that we can see that charities or CICs 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 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
- that your bank statement shows that your account is being managed in line with your own financial procedures and our programme requirements
- that the signatories are valid and well informed about the project
- on your published accounts 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.

on reporting to regulators, demonstrate transparent and appropriate governance arrangements and have comprehensive published accounts. For organisations which have previously had grants from us, we would expect all reporting on these grants to be up-to-date and may take this into account when considering new applications.

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. Each application is considered on the evidence provided and is not linked to the success of a previous bid.

Final decisions will be made by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund 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 Trust will use its 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 we may also take the decision to part-fund proposals (this may involve awarding less money than was applied for).

After the decisions have been made, we will send an email to you using the primary contact email address you provided in your application. This will tell you whether you have been awarded a grant.

If we are not able to fund your project, we will write to you to tell you this.

If we plan to fund your project, 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 to receive your official offer letter, how to accept the grant and what documents you need to provide. We may also invite you to a post award webinar to provide you with further information and answer any questions you may have.

You'll need to accept our grant offer and the terms and 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. You must also make sure that the senior staff within your organisation know that you are submitting this grant application.

Once we have all the necessary documents back, and any initial conditions of grant have been met, 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 on receipt of updates on the progress of your project, 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 must keep good records of how the funds were spent and how many people you helped and how. We will ask you to report on this later and may ask for case studies to share best practice.

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, email [info@covenantfund.org.uk](mailto:info@covenantfund.org.uk)

## **Timetable**

Applications must be received by **midday Monday 5 December 2022**.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application before the end of February 2023.

Successful applicants will then be expected to start their projects before 1 May 2023.