



Programme Guidance

Armed Forces Families Fund: Research Grant Programme

 **THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST**


Ministry
of Defence

Armed Forces Families Fund: Research Grant programme PROGRAMME GUIDANCE

Under this programme, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust will award grants of up to £60,000 for research projects that explore particular challenges for Armed Forces families.

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Why are we running this programme?

The Armed Forces Families Strategy addresses the challenges Armed Forces families face with mobility, deployment and separation and the implications this has for accessing good quality healthcare, education, and accommodation. It also notes the evolving nature of family life and the pressures this can place on childcare and managing the career of the partner or spouse alongside that of the Service person.

This programme seeks to fund high quality research that can help to develop understanding of key challenges that Armed Forces families can face; particularly in

relation to educational attainment for Service pupils, child welfare and the welfare needs of Service families.

What types of project are we looking for?

We are looking for projects that will contribute to the wider understanding of complex educational or welfare issues affecting Armed Forces families and propose solutions.

A strong application will be able to show how you will:

- Utilise your existing knowledge base and research to inform your project.
- Facilitate multi organisational, collaborative working, from within the community to provide 'what good looks like' examples.
- Identify sustainable outcomes and propose solutions that facilitate long term change.

This is a targeted and strategic programme that aims to develop a stronger understanding of the specific needs and challenges faced by Armed Forces families.

Your project proposal must address at least one of these following challenges:

- What are the impacts of Service life on Service children with SEND/ASN/ALN? How does access to the necessary support services compare to non-Service peers? (this topic could be explored within the UK or globally)
- What is the impact of separation of Service personnel from children in their key early years developmental stage? Can we identify evidenced based practice for early years practitioners to mitigate identified risks to support a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (UK only)?
- Do Service children achieve the highest GCSE grades (Grades 9 – 5) at a rate comparable to their non-Service (non-FSM) peers? How are their outcomes influenced by geographical location and by the parental Service (RN, RAF or Army) (England only)?
- What are the key educational risks and benefits associated with transitions between education systems for Armed Forces children? Are particular cohorts of AF children disproportionately affected by transitions between education systems (within UK & global, age and stage, socio-economic background, SEND etc)?
- Is there any evidence that serving families from the foreign and commonwealth are overrepresented in statutory social care services and single service welfare provision?
- To understand how UK Armed Forces families currently receive information from Defence; the formats in which they received it (what they receive, how

they receive it and the frequency); and to better understand any preferences that they have in how they would like to receive relevant information.

We are not defining a particular methodology for how each research theme should be explored. We are interested in your ideas about how you would explore each challenge; and would encourage collaborative approaches.

If you are awarded a grant you will need to provide monitoring information to the Trust on how your grant is progressing. Due to the specialist nature of the programme, you would also need to regularly engage with and provide updates and details of any emerging findings to the MOD.

Your application does need to be able to show that your approach will be robust and that your project has a good likelihood of developing evidence and recommendations that can propose solutions that facilitate long term change where there is evidence that this is needed.

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

We are likely to only fund one project under each research theme.

Who will benefit?

You need to show how your research project will benefit Armed Forces families.

We expect that you could potentially work with Armed Forces families in a collaborative way to inform your research project.

We are not anticipating that research projects will deliver direct interventions to Armed Forces families.

How much funding can you apply for?

You can apply for a grant of up to £60,000 in total towards a project being delivered over a period of up to 18 months. Your project could be delivered over a shorter period of time if this will provide a clear benefit to Armed Forces families.

We would expect most grants that we award under this programme to be £30,000 or less.

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.

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 adhere to relevant research ethics and ethical codes. 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 should tell us about how you will ensure that your project is delivered in an ethical way, and whether you plan to seek ethical approval for your work if we award you a grant.

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

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 will make	
What are we looking for?	That the project is addressing one of the five identified challenges, and that your project: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Will enhance understanding of the specific challenge 2. Will work collaboratively; with Armed Forces families, with organisations that support them or with other researchers 3. Will make recommendations and suggest sustainable solutions 4. Will not duplicate other existing research
What do you need to show us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What your proposed project will do ● How this would help specific Armed Forces communities ● Why this need/these communities have not previously been supported in this way ● How people from Armed Forces communities have shaped this project. ● What the long-term benefits and systemic change is hoped to be?

Delivery of your project	
What are we looking for?	That your proposed project is feasible, that your organisation has the skills and experience to deliver your research project; and that the findings and recommendations would be likely to lead to sustainable improvements.
What do you need to show us?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● That your organisation is well run and well managed ● That any results you produce will be credible and produced in a way that would be accepted by the wider Academic community ● 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 ● 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your assessment of the potential for the legacy of your research, e.g. what you would hope to see or what might change because of your findings?
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Which organisations are eligible to apply?

To be eligible for this funding, you must be either:

- A UK-based university
- A registered charity.

The following additional eligibility requirements also apply:

If you are a charity 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 two years at the time of your application and be able to provide published accounts for all two 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, and this must be verifiable at all times on the relevant charity regulators or Companies House website.

You cannot apply as an individual, or via a private limited company or CIC.

The following restrictions may apply:

Applications may be declined from current Trust grant holders if the reporting requirements for existing grants from the Trust are not up to date.

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 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 approved 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 research project, whether it is people's time, travel, costs of delivering work online or perhaps venue hire for focus groups.

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.

It is highly unlikely that we will fund projects with budgets that are dominated by capital costs. We would not expect to fund the costs of purchasing a vehicle, but we would pay for mileage costs on vehicles used by your staff and volunteers.

Your project might include the following costs.

- ✓ Staff time for this fixed-term project.
- ✓ Additional consultancy or professional support where this delivers clear value to your research 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, volunteers or beneficiaries to enable participation in the research project.
- ✓ Purchasing items that will help you to deliver your project, such as additional telephones or laptops.
- ✓ Reasonable costs for storing and transporting items, including wear and tear on private vehicles.

- ✓ 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.

- ✗ Projects that do not clearly meet the aims of the programme.
- ✗ 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.
- ✗ Projects with budgets that are dominated by capital costs. We would not expect to fund the costs of purchasing a vehicle, for example.

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 grant that we award under this programme would be in line with our charitable objectives. As such, any grant that we award will be for non-economic activities only.

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 IT 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.

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:

- The deadline for applications is **9am on Friday 6 October 2023**

We cannot accept any late applications.

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.

We expect to be able to let you know the outcome of this application before the end of November 2023.

How to apply - the application form

You need to apply using our online application form which you can access via our website, as well as 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. 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 the 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/ 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. 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. We may contact you during our assessment if there are any issues

we are unclear about – 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.

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.

Decisions and what happens next

Final decisions will be made by the 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 three 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.