

 THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST



Ministry
of Defence

Armed Forces Families Fund

Early Years Programme

PROGRAMME GUIDANCE



2025/26

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust
The Armed Forces Families Fund
Early Years Programme 2025/26
PROGRAMME GUIDANCE

Programme overview

Grants available: £5,000 - £80,000

Funding on behalf of: The Armed Forces Families Fund

Project length: up to two years

Programme aim(s): to enable early childhood education and childcare settings to meet the specific needs of young children from serving armed forces families.

Application closing date(s): Round 1 – 12 noon 4 June 2025
Round 2 – 12 noon 8 October 2025

Application form link: [Apply to the Early Years Programme](#)

Terms and conditions to grant: [Standard terms and conditions to grant](#)

Will grant holders be required to use the Impact Hub? No

How to use this guidance

It's important that you **read all sections of this guidance document** when completing your application. This information covers everything you need to know about applying for funding from the Trust. We'll ask you to confirm you have read this document as part of your application.

Contents

The programme

[Why are we running this programme?](#)
[How much funding can you apply for?](#)
[timetable](#)

Your organisation

[Who is eligible to apply?](#)

Your project

[What types of projects are we looking for?](#)
[Application routes](#)
[What should your application show us?](#)
[Who should benefit from your project?](#)
[Showing the change your project will make](#)
[Working with other organisations](#)

Considerations when applying

[Our assessment criteria](#)
[ethics](#)
[What financial information should you include in your application?](#)
[Preparing your project budget](#)
[Subsidy Control Act 2022](#)
[How to apply](#)
[After you submit your application](#)
[Checks we may carry out on your organisation](#)
[Decisions about your application](#)
[What happens if we award you a grant?](#)

The programme

Why are we running this programme?

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust will award grants on behalf of the MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund (AF3). The Armed Forces Families Fund supports projects which meet the aims of the [Armed Forces Families Strategy](#). Under this programme, we want to help armed forces families to access good quality early childhood education and childcare provision close to where they are living or serving.

Projects should directly address barriers they may experience in accessing good quality childcare for their children.

How much funding can you apply for?

You can apply for a grant of between £5,000 and £80,000 towards a **standalone project** being delivered over a period of up to two years.

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

We can support a time-limited expansion to staffing costs if this will directly lead to the provision of more childcare for young service children.

We will only award funding where it is clearly needed to deliver the project and does not include business as usual costs.

Timetable

There will be **two** deadlines for applications this financial year:

- If you apply by **midday on 4 June 2025**, you'll receive a decision before the end of August 2025.
- If you apply by **midday 8 October 2025**, you'll receive a decision before the end of December 2025.

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.

[Back to top](#)

Your organisation

Who is eligible to apply?

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

1. **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% service children** (unless applying as a cluster) on roll as a minimum. You must 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

2. **A local authority**

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.

Local authorities

- Organisations that fall within this category cannot apply for statutory local government delivery work, or for work that has a core focus on the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant/Duty.

CICs

- Your organisation must have been incorporated in the UK for at least three years and you must have submitted three years' of accounts to Companies House at the time of applying.
- 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. Please note that Company Secretaries cannot be considered as one of your three Directors, unless they have been registered separately as a Director as well.
- You will need to attach a copy of your most recent, full accounts (including an income and expenditure statement and balance sheet – not just abbreviated accounts as submitted to Companies House) with your application form.
- We will carry out extra governance checks. You may not be considered for funding if your Articles of Association do not have nominated beneficiary organisation/s in the Asset Lock clause. If this section in your articles is blank or 'to be confirmed' your application may not be regarded as eligible.
- CIC Directors must confirm that none of the Disqualification rules (that prevent people from holding senior or trustee positions in a charity) apply to them. The Disqualification Rules can be found [here](#).
- At our discretion, the Trust may look more favourably on applications from CICs that are governed in similar ways as charities i.e. with equal responsibility shared among the Directors, with no single director registered as a person with significant control.

Private Ltd companies

- You must have been incorporated, and you must have submitted at least three years' of accounts to Companies House at the time of applying & have been working in the Early Years sector for at least three years.
- You cannot budget for contributions to management or overheads costs (or profit/investment) in your application.
- You will need to attach a copy of your most recent, full, independently audited or examined accounts (these must include an income and expenditure statement as well as balance sheet) with your application form. We may ask to see bank accounts and other evidence of your finances.
- We may also request additional information regarding directors and other key individuals, and financial arrangements.

The following restrictions may apply:

- Organisations cannot apply more than once per funding round to this programme unless this is for programmes of work in different places (e.g. 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 are not up to date.
- Your grant may be withdrawn if you are found to have less than the 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.

Who cannot apply?

The following types of organisations are not eligible for funding from the Early Years Programme.

- Sole traders or partnerships, including childminders.
- 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.
- 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.
- Training providers, although you could work as a delivery partner with a setting or local authority
- An Academy Trust - you cannot apply for an overarching project across your academy chain, though individual schools can apply.
- A newly registered charity or CIC
- Other public sector organisations - but you could work with one of the types of organisations listed above, as a delivery partner.
- A charity or CIC that is based overseas.
- Community organisations that do not fit any of our eligibility criteria, such as a sports organisation which is not a charity or CIC.
- Not-for-profit organisations that are not registered as either a charity or CIC.
- An organisation that has charitable status but is an Exempt Charity.
- A private or for-profit company.

[Back to top](#)

Your project

What types of projects are we looking for?

Applications can only address the needs of children who are from currently serving armed forces families. Children must be aged birth to five and not yet in primary school education.

There may be young children who use your setting that do not come from armed forces families; however, we expect any benefits from your project to be focused on meeting the needs of the children from armed forces families and any benefits to other children are incidental.

Projects should aim to address and target the current and emerging needs that you highlight to us throughout your application.

Projects should look to address **at least one** of the four programme outcomes depending on the number of service children at your setting.

- Expanded capacity in early years settings, allowing more service children to attend.
- Enhanced learning environments that better support the educational development of service children. DIO should not be involved.
- Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.
- Establishing collaborative networks and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.

Your project will need to meet at least one of these four outcomes:



Expanded capacity in early years settings, allowing more service children to attend.



Enhanced learning environments that better support the educational development of service children. DIO should not be involved.



Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.



Established collaborative networks and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.

To achieve these outcomes, you will need to consult and work together with service families.

In your application, we will ask you to explain what you have done so far, and how you know this project is needed. If your application is successful, we will also expect you to use your existing monitoring tools to enable you to deliver evidence-based reporting back to the Trust.

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.

Application routes

There are four ways to apply to the Early Years Programme.



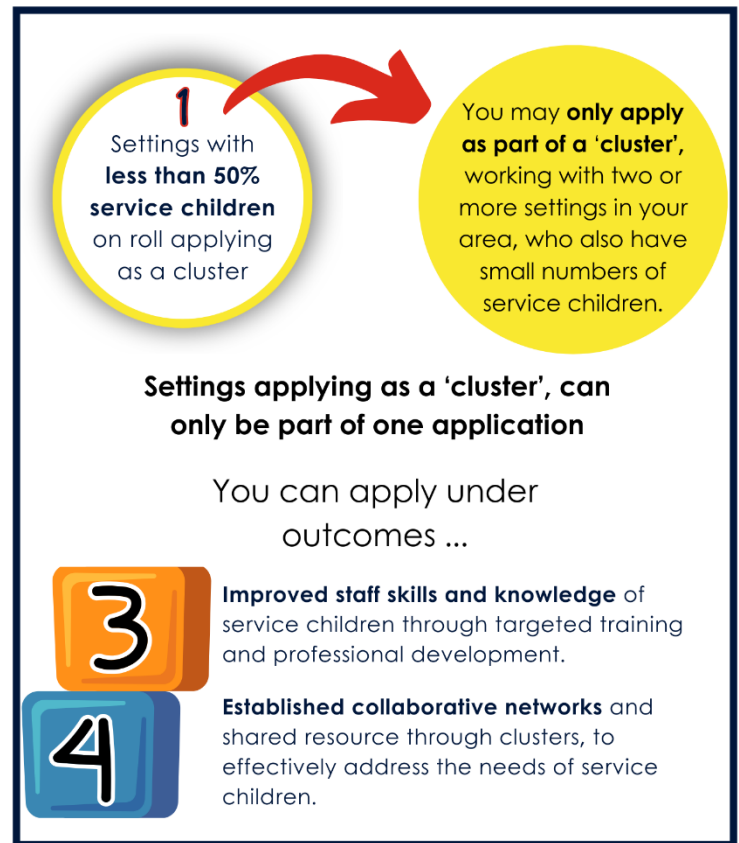
1. Settings with less than 50% service children on roll

If your setting has less than 50% service children on roll, you can apply to this programme as part of a **cluster**. This would involve working with two or more settings in your area who also have smaller numbers of service children.

You can only be part of one cluster. This means you cannot submit your own single application or be part of another cluster application.

If you are applying via this route, you can **only** apply for the following project-related activity:

- Staff training with an armed forces focus.
- Funding for a shared resource, or shared resources, for example a peripatetic (moves from place to place) Armed Forces Early Years Support Worker.



Example:

Three nurseries, each with fewer than 50% of children from service families on roll, will collaborate on a project aimed at enhancing early literacy and numeracy skills while also supporting the personal, social, and emotional development of service children.

The project will prioritise specialist staff training to deepen understanding of the unique needs of young service children.

A peripatetic Armed Forces Early Years Support Worker will oversee the implementation of the project across all three nurseries, ensuring consistent support and tailored learning experiences.

2. Settings with more than 50% service children on roll, applying as part of a cluster

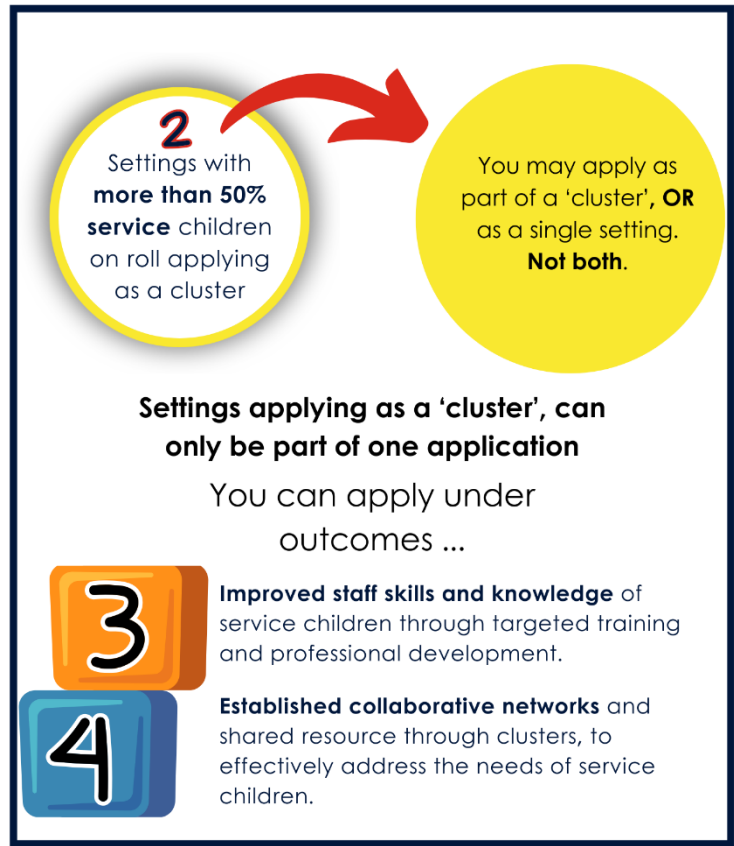
If your setting has more than 50% service children on roll, you can apply to this programme as part of a **cluster**. This would involve working with two or more settings in your area.

You can only be part of one cluster.

This means you cannot submit your own application as well, or be part of another cluster application.

If you are applying via this route, you can **only** apply for the following project-related activity:

- Staff training with an armed forces focus.
- Funding for a shared resource, or shared resources, for example a peripatetic (moves from place to place) Armed Forces Early Years Support Worker.



Example:

Four nurseries, each with more than 50% of children from service families, will collaborate on a project aimed at enhancing the personal, social, and emotional development of service children.

The project will include specialist staff training to deepen understanding of the unique needs of young service children. A peripatetic Armed Forces Early Years Support Navigator will oversee the implementation of the project, across all four nurseries, ensuring consistent support, tailored learning experiences, and emotional well-being initiatives.

Regular networking meetings between the settings will encourage collaboration, share best practices, and ensure the project is effective in supporting the needs of young service children.

General information about applying as a cluster

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 childcare setting will need to be the lead applicant.

They will need to take responsibility for the delivery of any grant awarded, which would include signing the grant terms and conditions and providing all reporting requirements. There is more on partnership working further in the guidance

3. Settings with more than 50% service children on roll, applying as a single setting

If your setting has more than 50% service children on roll, you can choose to apply to this programme as a single applicant.

If you are applying via this route, you can apply for the following project-related activity:

- Staff training with an armed forces focus
- Projects that would expand capacity, allowing more service children to attend.
- Funding to enhance learning environments to better support the development of young service children

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



Example:


A nursery located near an armed forces base has a high proportion (70%) of children from service families, where parents frequently experience deployments. Based on parental feedback and informal assessments, the nursery has identified that some children would benefit from additional support to promote their personal, social, and emotional development in response to recent parental deployments.

To enhance staff knowledge and understanding of the unique needs of young children from armed forces families, the nursery is applying for funding to provide specialist training. This training will enable the development of a service-child-centred support programme, fostering emotional resilience, confidence, and secure relationships. As part of this initiative, the nursery will introduce a deployment role-play area, allowing children to explore and process their experiences through imaginative and collaborative play.

4. Applying as a local authority


If you are a local authority, you can apply for the following activity:

- To support settings with staff training with an armed forces focus.
- For a shared resource, such as an early year's support worker, working across multiple settings.




4
Applying as a
local authority

If you are applying as a local authority, you can apply under outcomes...



3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.



4

Established collaborative networks and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.

What should your application show us?



Your project is needed and targeted: You should be able to clearly explain how the need for this project has been identified, this could include utilising your existing monitoring tools, informal assessment or discussions with families to demonstrate how this project will meet the need.



It does not duplicate and is complementary to existing provision: Please show us how your project fills a gap and is in addition to any existing support.



It will support long-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 young service children and their families.



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 be able to carry out your project within the agreed timescale



Your project proposal should focus on a **stand-alone initiative** (not a request for repeat funding) and must demonstrate lasting impact. Priority may be given to projects that can operate independently without ongoing funding and have a clear plan for sustainability and long-term benefits

Who should benefit from your project?

Your project must primarily focus on young service children aged 0-5 years.

The project beneficiaries are those who will **directly** benefit from the project. For example, young service children.

Incidental beneficiaries are non-service children who may indirectly benefit from the project. Your incidental beneficiaries should be limited in number and applicants must demonstrate that the project is primarily focused on service children.

Showing the change your grant will make

We are looking for projects that can deliver sustainable benefits. Please describe the benefits and changes your project is expected to deliver. Specifically, outline what differences will be evident in the years after the project concludes and explain why you believe these improvements will be achieved.

Measuring impact

It's important to have clear plans for how you will measure the impact of the project. This might include looking at the evidence you have gathered during your project about the needs of your beneficiaries. The application form will ask questions about how you will measure and evidence the impact of your project.

Sustainability

We want to fund projects with sustainable benefits. This means that we are interested in what will happen in the long term, after your funded project has ended. The application form will ask questions about sustainability which are relevant to the individual grant programme.

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



Ongoing improvements for project beneficiaries

Your project might look 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

Your project may be a pilot project, or you might be planning to keep running your project or service in future. In which case you may plan to raise funding from donations, grants or local commissioning.



Ongoing partnership and collaboration

You may 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

You might look at the evidence you have gathered through your project about the needs of a specific group of people within the wider armed forces community. This evidence base might help to ensure that armed forces communities in future could have access to better support that meets their needs.

Working with other organisations

We encourage you to work with other organisations as part of your project. Working with other organisations is a criterion of some of our programmes.

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.

If any of the organisations that you will be working with meet this definition, you need to read our guidance below on delivery partners.

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 deemed to be compliant (with our terms and conditions) by us and finalised prior to us releasing any funding. 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.

[Back to top](#)

Considerations when applying

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 and how you know that they will use it. • How well you have engaged with local 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.

Ethics

Our mission is to fund projects that support the delivery of the nation's Covenant promise our armed forces, veterans and their families. 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](#)

What financial information should you include in your application?

The application form will ask you to give details of your project budget.

It is fine to show these in categories where relevant, for example 'IT Equipment', rather than listing every item of the IT equipment you require.

However, you will need to give us sufficient information to assure us that you have fully considered how much the work will cost and 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.

Some useful points to consider include:

- If you are applying for training costs, state what training this is and for how many people.
- If you are applying for staff costs, show us how many hours we'll be paying for, ensuring these are new or additional, and at what rate of pay.
- If you are requesting funding for sports equipment, tell us what equipment this is and how many items you intend to purchase.

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. This includes 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.

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.

Any grant that we award under this programme must be in line with our charitable objectives. As a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) we cannot fund any lobbying activity.

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.
- ✓ Refurbishment of a space only where this will lead to an increase in spaces being available for service children

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

What costs can't you apply for?

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.

 <p>Where money only benefits one person. By this we mean where your whole project would only benefit one person.</p>	 <p>Making grants or donations of money or items of value to individuals or families.</p>	 <p>Repeat or regular projects that require a source of uncommitted funding.</p>	 <p>Endowments (to provide a source of income).</p>
 <p>Topping up existing grants and aid from a government department.</p>	 <p>Investments</p>	 <p>Fundraising costs, including organising fundraising events and activities.</p>	 <p>Paying for ongoing costs of existing partnership activity.</p>
 <p>Projects, activities or services that the state has a legal obligation to provide.</p>	 <p>Retrospective funding for projects that have already started or taken place</p>	 <p>Excessive management or professional fees or contingency costs.</p>	 <p>Projects with budgets that are dominated by capital costs - unless this is a capital programme.</p>

In addition, we cannot support the following costs under this programme:

- ✗ 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.
- ✗ Purchasing or leasing of vehicles
- ✗ Purchase of any live animals or insects for example worms for a wormery
- ✗ Business as usual costs; including but not limited to. replacing cots or tables and chairs.

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.

Defining capital costs

When formulating your budget, it is useful to understand where costs sit in relation to the maximum amount available for capital and non-capital funding, within a specific programme. **While the Trust's programmes may allow non-capital costs, some capital costs – or both – it's important to note that any costs we support must be related to a defined project. We cannot support ongoing revenue costs (sometimes described as 'core costs').**

Here is a guide to allocating your cost headings:

Capital costs: These are the costs of buying equipment, furnishings, premises or other items that cost a significant amount and will last beyond the project duration. They can cover one-time large purchase, refurbishment, extension, or build of a fixed asset that will be used for a long period of time. This includes buildings, and can also include fixtures and fittings, and equipment. **Note that many of these items are specifically excluded under many of our funding programmes. Do check the individual Programme Guidance for this information.**

Examples of Capital costs

- New buildings and repairs, refurbishment to existing buildings, extension of existing buildings.
- Purchasing computers or other IT infrastructure
- Alteration of Land, or purchase or alteration of outside space, playgrounds, sports grounds and equipment.
- Alteration or refurbishment of indoor space, village/community halls, offices, equipment.
- Professional fees for architects, quantity surveyors, feasibility studies etc.

Non-capital costs: The day-to-day costs of a project and the activities that take place during the project can be considered revenue costs. This includes salaries, utilities, and events. For consumables, such as small IT equipment, deciding to categorise the item as revenue or capital funding depends on the scale of the purchase and its purpose within the project. Consider if the item(s) will be used where there is no lasting asset. For example, will it appear on an asset register or on a balance sheet for depreciation? If it does, it is probably a capital cost.

Examples of non-capital funding

- Salaries and on costs, sessional staff.
- Training, project running costs such as travel.
- Project activities and events outlay
- Purchase of consumables, such as IT equipment for the project team.
- Management/overheads (This may include a contribution to management time and to overheads such as utilities, rent, stationery etc)

These are examples only and you should categorise each item as appropriate to your project and check the specific Programme Guidance for eligibility.

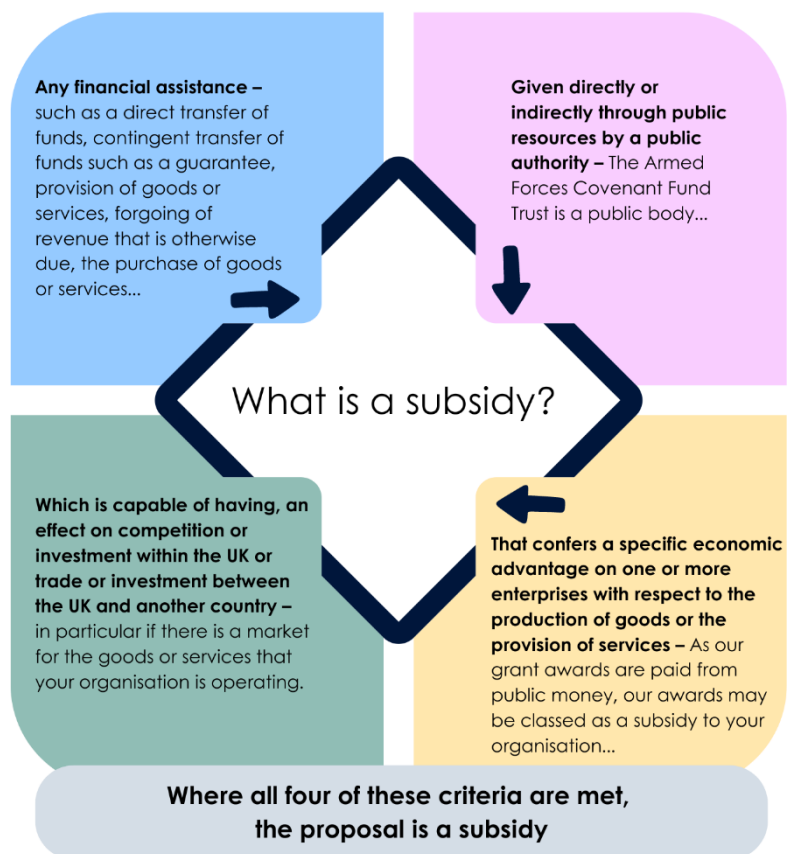
Subsidy Control Act 2022

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 [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 specific 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.

How to apply - the application form

You need to apply using our online application form which you can access via our website, via each programme page and [at the top of this document](#). The questions on the application form may be different for each of our programmes.

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.

To apply to some programmes, we may require you to attach documents to the application form. Please read the Programme Guidance carefully to check what these might be.


You do not need to send any additional information once you have submitted your application. We will not consider any additional information received unless specifically asked for by our assessors or Trust staff.



You must make sure that the trustees/directors/ senior staff within your organisation know that you are submitting this grant application. We recommend making a trustee or director your second contact on your application.

Do not send your application by email or post to the Covenant Fund Trust – we will only consider applications submitted via the online form.

Community Interest Companies (CICs)

If you are a CIC, please ensure that you upload your governing document and a copy of your most recent accounts. These should include a profit and loss account, not just your balance sheet. Your application will not be complete without these documents. You do not need to


TOP TIPS
for completing your application form

- 1** Complete your application in a **Word document**, save it locally as you work on it. When it is complete, cut and paste the answers into our online form.  You will find a Word document with a list of the project related questions on our website
- 2** **Don't use any formatting**, such as tables or numbered lists, in your Word document. The online form may not accept this formatting and you might have trouble submitting the form.
- 3** **Save your online form** every 10-15 minutes while completing it, to avoid the risk of it 'timing out'.  If either contact changes, do let us know as soon as you can
- 4** You'll need to **provide two contacts from your organisation** on the application. At least one should have an organisation email address. At least one must hold the relevant authority (CEO/ CO or equivalent) to authorise any grant contract and bank account if successful.
- 5** You will be emailed when you both save and submit the application. **Check the 'Submitted Applications' tab** on your grant portal, to ensure your application has been fully submitted.  We can only consider applications that have been fully submitted

send any additional information once you've submitted the application. We won't consider any additional information sent unless our assessors or Trust staff specifically request it.

By applying for our funding, CIC Directors must confirm that none of the Disqualification Rules (that prevent people from holding senior or Trustee positions in a charity) apply to them. The Disqualification Rules can be found [here](#).

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in completing application forms

We understand that AI is a powerful tool that can help organisations work in more efficient ways, one of those may be in supporting you in generating your application form.

Whilst we will consider applications that have been partially generated using AI, there are some important factors to be aware of. We would strongly recommend that you review the application ahead of submitting it to ensure it: reads properly and makes sense; is factually accurate; and is an accurate representation of the project you are intending to deliver.

If you use AI to generate any part of the application form, you will also be expected to review elements that refer to project delivery, in detail, to make sure your organisation has the skills and capabilities to run the project. We would not expect any AI generated answers relating to questions on project need; for these questions you will need to be clear on any consultation work, or otherwise, you have undertaken to demonstrate why the project is needed.

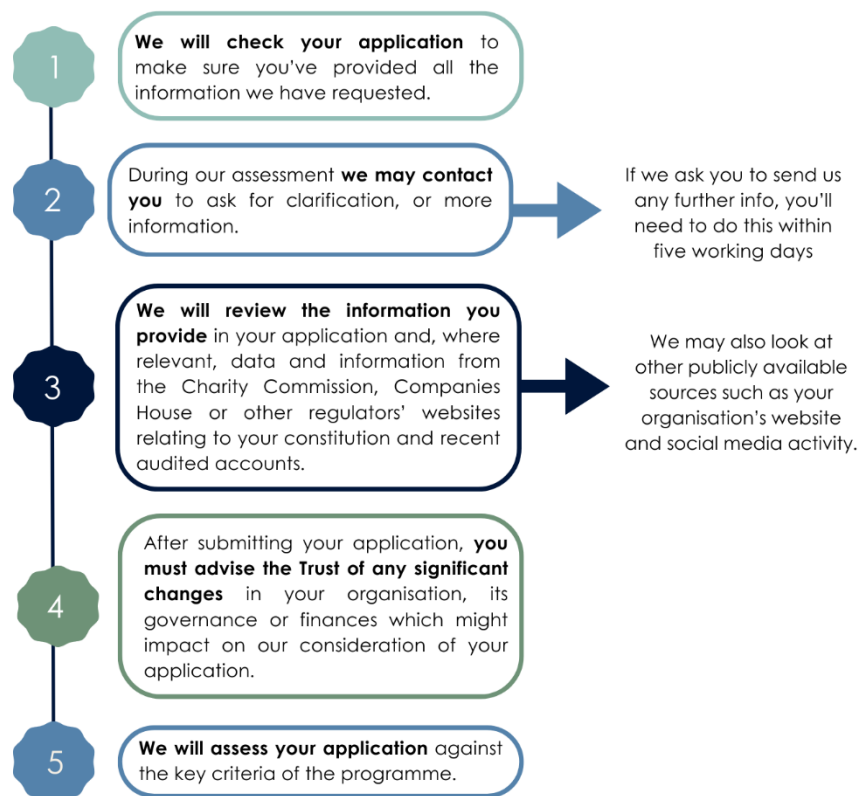
The Trust reserves the right to reject any AI generated applications if we have concerns around the factual accuracy of them.

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. Please note that this is a 'no reply' email address.

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



Please note: If your application is handled by one of our external grant assessors, you may be contacted by them from a non-Trust email address.

Be assured that our external assessors will always clearly identify their role and copy the Trust Grants Manager for the programme into their email.

However, if you have concerns after receiving an email from a non-Trust email address, you can contact us at info@covenantfund.org.uk

If you have any further queries about your application after you have submitted it, you can contact us at info@covenantfund.org.uk

Checks we may carry out on your organisation

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

This might 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. Please note, we **do not** class company secretaries as Directors of CICs, unless they are registered separately as a Director as well.

that your governing documents (such as constitutions and memorandum and articles of association) are up to date, correct and properly signed

that your governing documents allow you to undertake the activities for which you are applying (N.B. it is, however, your responsibility to ensure that your organisation would not be acting outside any constitutional restrictions if you are awarded a grant)

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 and other publicly available information, to ensure 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. We may also require the second contact from your organisation to be from head office depending on your structure

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 is held elsewhere in the public domain. We'll need you to explain any inconsistencies

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 about your application

Final decisions will be made by the Grants Committee 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 Grants Committee 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 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 have 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.

Committee members 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.

After the Committee members 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 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?

Good to know...

- If you receive a grant, you will need to **keep good records** of how you spent the funds 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 applying for grant funding, please refer to all the programme documentation for support. There is a wealth of useful information available 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

Please note: We are only able to offer technical advice to applicants. We cannot advise on whether your proposed project is a good idea, or whether it is likely to receive funding.

[Back to top](#)