

VALOUR Recognised Centres Development Fund

Round Two Guidance

Stage One – Expressions of Interest

Stage Two – Full Application

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Programme overview for Round Two

Awards available:

Development funding of either **£200-500k or £501k-1m** is available over three years. Decisions will prioritise regions where there remains the greatest geographical need. In areas where a VRC already exists, applicants must consider how they will complement the provision and collaborate with providers funded in Round One.

Project length: 3 Years

Funding on behalf of: The Office for Veterans' Affairs

Round Two of the programme will follow a two-stage process; Stage One is an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** stage where applicants will be able to share an overview of their proposed project, followed by a Stage Two, the **Full Application** stage only for organisations invited to progress further in the process.

Programme aim(s): Veterans will be better supported across the UK through the provision of place-based VALOUR Recognised Centres (VRC). Each will provide a welcoming physical space to all veterans and can identify and address their needs as presented. Through strong developed networks each VALOUR Recognised Centre will harness the knowledge, experience and capability available across their locality to ensure a timely, safe and pro-active response with a no wrong door approach. Further information is included in this guidance, but it is crucial that applicants demonstrate how they will deliver the range of services mandated (including health, housing and employment guidance and support); collaboration with statutory and non-statutory organisations in their area; ensure their centre is available to other parts of the VALOUR system and OVA teams as required; comply with data requirements and take account of where VRCs have already been set up through Round One.

This is the second of two rounds of funding for this programme, and it is essential that applicants consider, in areas where VALOUR Centres have been awarded in Round One, how they will work and collaborate with providers to complement the provision and geographies already funded in Round One. We would like to invite all organisations to apply and encourage consortium applications, including in London and East of England, where no awards were made in Round One. More information about consortiums is on page six of this guidance.

Expressions of Interest are sought by well-networked organisations with a physical engagement in, and a clear understanding of, the geographic area they plan to serve.

Successful applicants must be able to provide physical centres for veterans to attend, which should be open a minimum of 4 days a week for the duration of the funding, and with clear pathways to support those needing assistance outside of these days in place. They should be aware of and connected into other services in their locality and be prepared to work with the rest of the VALOUR system to ensure the best possible support is provided to veterans. Gathering and sharing data / information on veterans accessing the Centres will be a key requirement. Successful applicants will be required to work closely with the Office for Veterans' Affairs. You will also be required to offer support and services to the wider Armed Forces community in their catchment area from the second year of the project.

Application closing dates

Stage One: Expressions of Interest must be submitted by **12:00 midday 15 June 2026**.

Stage Two: Successful Stage One applicants will be invited to submit a full application in July 2026, with a deadline to submit a full application by **12:00 midday 26 August 2026**.

We highly recommend you submit your application before the deadline in case you have any unexpected problems with technology.

So that we're fair to all applicants, we can't advise you on whether your proposed project is a good idea, or whether it is likely to be funded. We can only offer technical advice. We strongly recommend reading this guidance in full.

We can't accept late applications. Please refer to our [late application policy](#).

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

The programme

Why are we running this programme?

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) in the Ministry of Defence has asked the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) to administer a programme to fund VALOUR-recognised Centres (VRCs) across the UK. These VRCs will provide in-person support to veterans, and the wider Armed Forces Community as soon as they are able to and no later than the end of the second year of the three-year funded projects and help reduce the postcode lottery that too many experience when accessing support services across the UK.

VRCs will need to operate collaboratively with other statutory and non-statutory support services within their region and follow 'no wrong door' approach (i.e. they must help individuals connect with the best support available). Collaborating with the rest of the VALOUR system will be key, as well as close working with statutory and non-statutory organisations locally.

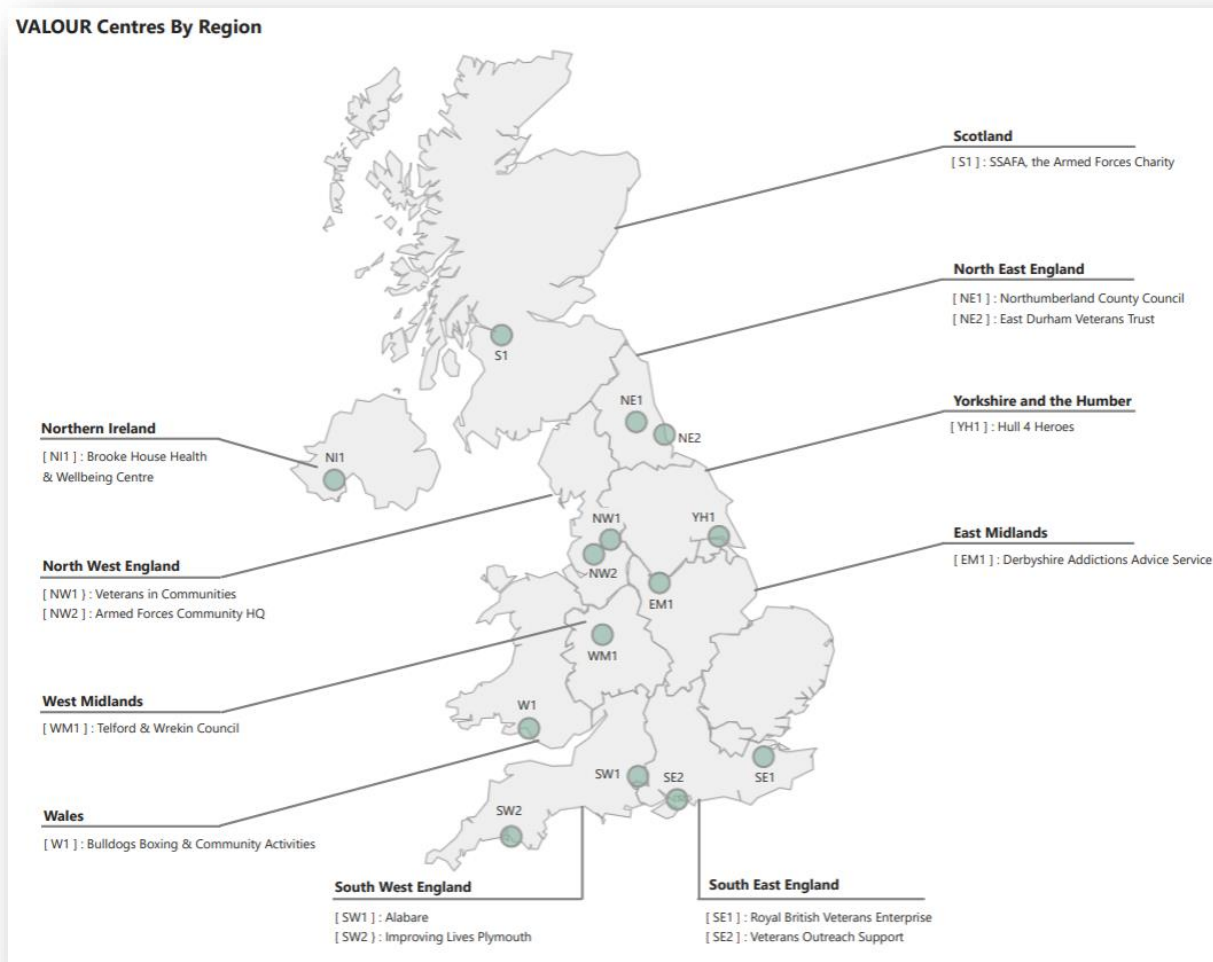
The overarching outcomes OVA hopes to deliver through the VRCs will be to help reduce the postcode lottery by delivering more equity of access and a level of consistency in service quality.

This guidance should be read in full even if you have read the Round One guidance as a number of details have been changed.

Background

In March 2026, the Minister for Veterans and People awarded funding of £13,255,777 through the VALOUR Recognised Centres Development Fund to 14 applicants across the UK.

Round One Awards



No awards were made in East of England or London in Round One and applications for Round Two are actively encouraged in these regions. Organisations operating in areas with lower existing coverage are encouraged to apply, even if they feel they may not fully meet all requirements. Applications will be considered where there is clear potential to develop and deliver against VALOUR requirements.

Where applications relate to areas near a Round One centre, applicants are advised to make contact to ensure that proposed provision is complementary and will not duplicate existing services.

VALOUR Countries/Regions

The aim is to ensure strong UK-wide coverage. When applying to Stage One (submitting your Expression of Interest), you will be asked to specify the counties or regions where you plan to work and indicate your VRC footprint (i.e. the areas your centre can reach.). Please be realistic in your assessment of the reach your centre can have as you will be asked to evidence your expectation at Stage Two if invited to apply.

- North East England
- North West England
- Yorkshire and The Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East England
- South West England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

Grants of **£501,000 to £1,000,000** will be made available to established and well-connected organisations and consortiums. Applications of this size for delivery in the East of England or London - from organisations who are able to work at pace to deliver a VRC which brings together a wide range of community engagement - are actively encouraged; ideally, a consortium approach would be preferable in these regions. Grants of this size may also be offered to meet well-evidenced need in places which are not covered by Round One centres.

Grants of **£200,000 to £500,000** will be made available to community organisations delivering locally accessible support who can demonstrate a track record of collaborative and multi-partner working, and a good knowledge and demonstrable experience of supporting veterans and ideally the wider Armed Forces community in the identified catchment area. We are especially keen to welcome applications in this funding bracket and consortiums are also encouraged to apply.

Bids for lower funding levels must still meet requirements although it is understood that scale of delivery may be lower than for bidders seeking higher funding.

Consortiums

By 'consortium' we mean a group of organisations coming together to work cohesively to deliver the required programme outcomes.

A consortium can be a collection of different organisations, for example both VCSE Sector and statutory organisations working together. Local government led consortiums including VCSEs are encouraged to apply, as would applications from several local government bodies coming together in partnership to lead a consortium to cover a dedicated area, perhaps providing more than one VRC across a region within their application.

A consortium can include private companies if they provide a service which is integral to delivering the programme outcomes, but as they are not eligible to apply for funding in their own right, they will not be able to lead the consortium.

There may be funded and unfunded partners in a consortium. Funded partners will be delivering key elements of the project whilst unfunded partners may take the form of good working relationships that help build referral and service pathways for veterans attending a VRC and requiring a service. For example, a VRC could provide a space for consortium members to hold dedicated surgeries in, such as welfare and benefit support, wellbeing support, further education support and space for local councillors to meet their veteran constituents. Applications should not re-grant funds outside of consortium arrangements without prior discussion with AFCFT and agreement from the OVA.

Whilst a consortium must identify a main physical VRC for their designated location, they can also partner with and deliver local hub sites as part of the programme in order to provide better geographical reach for veterans. The application should also identify if there is a digital /online element to the proposal however this must be additional to, and cannot take the place of, a physical centre.

The lead organisation will be responsible for building the consortium, working in collaboration with interested locally based organisations and for reporting back to the funder on all activities undertaken across the consortium.

A successful Consortium Lead will already:

- Be an established charity, eligible CIC or local government body with experience of delivering complex projects
- Have good mechanisms for governance of complex projects, experience of multi-agency working and have robust and experienced mechanisms in place for gathering data which can be shared with the Office for Veterans' Affairs.
- Be able to demonstrate strong knowledge of the needs of the veteran community and a good understanding of the wider armed forces community
- Have clear governance and financial processes in place
- Have clear policies and processes in place around safeguarding and community safety.
- Have clear governance and processes in place to ensure veteran data is collected, managed and stored in line with data protection and regulatory compliance.
- Have strong, sophisticated approaches to inclusion and equity, in how support is delivered to veterans as well as an understanding of the needs of underrepresented groups and how to ensure they are engaged and supported
- Have a physical space which will act as the VRC for veterans and the wider Armed Forces community to attend.

What types of projects are we looking for?

Overview

VALOUR is a new initiative funded by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) within MOD, which will look to provide veterans and the wider Armed Forces community with easier access to in-person essential guidance and support.

It is crucial that applicants demonstrate how they will deliver the range of services mandated (including health, housing and employment guidance and support); collaboration with statutory and non-statutory organisations in their area; ensuring their centre is available to other parts of the VALOUR system and OVA teams as required; and complying with data requirements.

Core aim and base service level

The prime aim will be to reduce the postcode lottery that some veterans and members of the wider Armed Forces community face when accessing support services, by funding a number of place-based VRCs in order to bring service quality to the highest of standards. Each centre will have a set of fixed services they provide. As a base service level, veterans should be able to access guidance and support in areas including:

- health
- housing
- employment

It is recognised that a number of organisations will already be operating programmes which have several of the components VRCs require.

Delivery model and access

VRCs will be required to:

- be open at least four days a week;
- offer in-person guidance and support to veterans and the wider Armed Forces community.

Applicants should outline how they will ensure that individuals looking to access their services on days the VRC is physically closed will be supported and where necessary safely and efficiently referred on to other services in a timely manner.

Applications that also explain how they will undertake outreach activities via digital / online means are strongly encouraged although it must be remembered that these cannot take the place of a physical VRC that beneficiaries can attend.

Funding can be used to update websites to support VRC activity, but it is unlikely we will support any funding request to develop an App.

Organisations should explain in their applications how they will offer guidance and support in other areas, ideally including, but not limited to:

- finance
- wellbeing
- welfare
- integration into society
- other cross-cutting needs

Collaboration and referrals

Applicants will need to demonstrate how they will:

- work collaboratively with other statutory and non-statutory organisations in their identified region in order to provide wraparound care to veterans and members of the wider Armed Forces Community;
- ensure there is a seamless journey so that beneficiaries are fully supported either within the VRC or through warm and managed referrals to other support services within the VALOUR network and beyond;
- collaborate with the rest of the VALOUR network, including VRCs funded in Round One, through facilitating regular collaboration with MOD Veterans Services (formerly Veterans UK) who will offer VRCs support, and to this end VRCs will need to help provide a space for them to work as required.

Accessibility and inclusion

Proposals should demonstrate an understanding of the diverse needs and experiences of the veteran community, including how services will be accessible, inclusive and responsive to female veterans and other underrepresented groups.

Successful applicants should also consider how other local actors can use their facilities when they need to have a space to interact with veterans; for example, you may wish to:

- invite a local veterans' focussed activity group (art, photography, yoga etc) to use the VRC
- offer a designated space for a local councillor to run a veteran surgery

These are optional and should only be considered where it does not impact on the daily running of your centre.

Strong consideration will be given to applications that commit to take part in regional /national opportunities to discuss best practice in supporting veterans and the Armed Forces community.

VALOUR collaboration

The aim will be to develop a network of collaborative VRCs based across the UK, which will be complemented by and integrated with the VALOUR structure within the OVA, which will look to establish better coordination and coherence between regional and national services.

VRC requirements

The VRCs **must** be static, physical spaces which can be accessed by veterans and the wider Armed Forces Community needing support. Additional mobile centres can also be included.

Applicant organisations are not required to own these buildings but will be required to provide confirmation, and may be asked for evidence, that they can reasonably expect to be located in these premises for the duration of the project.

Service user voice

It is important that VRCs are informed by the voices of those they are looking to serve. Applicants will be asked to outline:

- how they know the services they provide are needed in their region;

- how they will ensure that the services are reviewed and continue to be relevant over time.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have:

- a mechanism to engage their service users' voice throughout the programme;
- the agility to flex as required to meet real time needs.

Capital expenditure

Applicants can request some funding for small costs to make an existing centre more serviceable such as:

- ramps for disabled access
- a refurbished kitchen
- new IT equipment as necessary for delivering the VRCs work etc.

Please note if you are applying to undertake any capital/refurbishment work to the building, you will need to provide evidence that:

- you either own the property or have a lease for a minimum of 3 years which allows you to undertake such work;
- this work can be carried out at pace.

Any Capital Expenditure should form a minimal amount of the total request.

Sustainability and legacy

Applicants will be required to outline how funding will create:

- longer term sustainable benefits that will have an ongoing legacy after the end of the funding;
- how developed pathways, relationships, skills and services will be sustained beyond the funding period.

Mandatory requirements for successful applicants

Successful applicants will be required to provide:

- i) Regular monitoring reports through the AFCFT portal, and a full list of reporting and contingent payment dates will be provided in the Offer Letter and discussed in an initial set up meeting;
- ii) Individual data about some beneficiaries (see Data Collection section below); and,
- iii) VRCs will be required to support requests from the OVA Assurance Leads and Evaluation Team and liaise with VALOUR HQ including through engagement with Regional Field Officers.

Applicants should be aware that these are mandatory requirements for this funding and must be confident they can meet these before applying. This will form part of your grant Terms and Conditions if you are successful in being awarded a grant.

Funding will be unlocked in stages, and failure to meet requirements will result in funding being paused or withdrawn.

VRCs will be required to also use graphic elements for comms and promotional purposes as directed by OVA.

Track record and policies

Organisations applying for funding must have a track-record of delivering high-quality support to veterans and ideally the wider armed forces community too or can demonstrate their ability to scale up and do this. All applicants must have robust safeguarding, data protection and other appropriate policies in place.

Data Collection

Data collection will be paramount within this programme, and a range of different data collection processes will be required. This will include regular reporting to the Trust on project progress through the AFCFT Grant Portal, and at a regularity identified in the Offer Letter and Post Award Meeting if successful.

Successful applicants will also be required to collect beneficiary data for service delivery purposes and must be willing to share this data by fixed dates throughout the funded period with the VALOUR Hub for analysis in order to generate insight for future policy making, and for operational performance management and evaluation purposes.

The data collected will vary by types of interaction with beneficiaries for example:

- **Informal interactions**, such as breakfast clubs or peer groups. Personal information is unlikely to be collected so the VRC will collect data on uptake and feedback.
- **Referral interactions**, such as directing a veteran to statutory or charity provisions. The VRC would collect personal information to understand the characteristics and support needs of veterans, details of the referral and identifiers to integrate datasets across the VALOUR network.
- **Support provision**, such as where the VRC can directly provide the support needed by the veteran. The VRC would collect information on the veteran, their need, the support provided, and the outcomes achieved.

MOD will develop the VALOUR Data & Insight Hub with mechanisms to transfer data securely. This is expected to include data file uploads (such as csv formats) with options for APIs (application programming interface) where integration can be achieved. VRCs will need appropriate processes to collect, manage and store veteran data (anonymised and personal identifiable) securely. MOD will provide access to upload data to the VALOUR Data & Insight Hub where data will be held securely in-line with Government Secure by Design. Personal data will not be shared externally, and analytical outputs will be aggregated with disclosure controls to ensure privacy.

VALOUR will be subject to continuous evaluation from the outset of delivery. In addition to routine reporting to the AFCFT, a separate evaluation process will be led by the OVA Evaluation Team (and possibly an external independent evaluation partner). Participating centres will be required to engage fully with this process and provide additional data or evidence requested in support of the evaluation activities. The detailed evaluation framework will be developed collaboratively with successful applicants.

All personal data collected must be protected with appropriate data security measures and privacy notices in place. Personal identifiable data is not required by the VALOUR Hub in the first year of the VALOUR programme but will be required during years two and three and all data requirements will continue to be reviewed over time. Applicants will be required to upload copies of their current Data/IT Policy and Safeguarding Policy for review.

Organisations must be willing to work collaboratively with VALOUR HQ within the Office for Veterans' Affairs and other VALOUR partners to align data collection and casework practice.

Grant recipients will also need to engage regularly with VALOUR Field Officers, Veterans Services Field Team Managers, and other statutory providers to discuss support for veterans and the wider armed forces community in their area. Applicants should demonstrate how they will do this when applying for funding.

What Do VRCs Look Like?

A VRC must first and foremost be a physical welcoming space for veterans with a no wrong door approach. Ideally the centre should be accessible through local transport links and reasonable provision can be made in the application budget for a small transport fund to support financially vulnerable veterans who may need assistance to attend set appointments; this should however be a proportionate ask, and you should ensure you have suitable accounting structures in place to support and evidence this fund usage if you are asked at any point during the funding period.

Applicants should explain in their applications how their centre could also facilitate access to a wide variety of other services such as (but not restricted to) breakfast clubs, social groups/peer support, welfare guidance, education and wellbeing support.

Ideally VRCs will also provide a range of outreach services, understanding that not all veterans will be able, or wish to attend a centre. This could be through outreach visits, a telephone support service, online supports or through good partnership working with other agencies etc.

VRCs need to be well connected to other veteran and armed forces services in their locality, and particularly well-connected to other parts of the VALOUR system, especially MOD Veterans' Services. Good referral and support links with other charities and CIC's as well as strong referral pathways into statutory services are vital. Where the VRC is to be run by a Local Authority then clear support and working relationships with the wider third sector is mandatory.

Ideally a VRC should be able to show good active relationships with agencies such as NHS bodies, DWP, armed forces networks, emergency services, lead armed forces organisations in the region, housing associations, debt advice agencies, regional and local community services, nationally active specialist organisations for employability issues, and regional branches of national organisations who support veterans.

Applicants are also encouraged to consider a process that allows them to invite entrepreneurial veterans in their area to use their centre to share their experiences or seek volunteers for initiatives.

The aim is to achieve equitable coverage across the UK with the VRC s and so applications should clearly show the area (footprint) they will be able to support from their centre. You must identify in your application where the physical VRC will be based (you will be required to provide the full address in your application) as well as the specific footprint that your centre will cover and the number of beneficiaries supported. In the application you will be asked for the counties that the centre will cover.

Where applying as a consortium, you will need to clearly show what services each member provides and the part of your region they will be covering. If you are providing online support as part of your support services you will be asked to outline this, explaining how this will complement the VRC. You will also be required to explain, where appropriate, your processes to ensure appropriate due diligence and safeguarding checks on any services your VRC will refer beneficiaries to. Please note however that an online service cannot replace the need for a physical centre that veterans can attend in person.

VRCs should contribute to the wider VALOUR programme outcomes:

1. Equity of access
2. Consistent quality of experience
3. Cross-sector coordination
4. Informed and empowered community
5. Data-driven resource allocation
6. Unlocking potential, in particular through enterprise, employment and innovation
7. A clear government framework for support delivery, performance measurement and partnership.

Supporting the wider armed forces community

An expectation of this programme is that VRC s must be able to provide support to the fuller armed forces serving community as soon as possible and no later than the end of the second year of three-year funded projects. This could take the form of providing dedicated services and guidance. For example, if providing educational support, this could be through identified experts in the community who hold a regular surgery at the centre each week, or indeed elsewhere but the access and warm referral to the service is provided through the VRC.

Applicants will need to be aware that this is a non-negotiable expectation of being a VRC and should consider their current Memorandum and Articles of Association. If applicants don't currently have the option to support both veterans and the wider Armed Forces community, then this will need to be amended, and any small costs associated with making this change can form part of the requested budget. It is expected that applicants seek advice from their Trustees/Directors before committing to this so as to ensure there will not be challenges further down the line. You will be given the opportunity to outline this in your application.

How to apply

Round Two of the programme will follow a two-stage process:

- Stage One is an **Expression of Interest (EOI)** stage where applicants will be able to share an overview of their proposed project, followed by
- Stage Two, a **Full Application** stage, **only** for organisations invited to progress further in the process.

The EOI form has been designed to be more light touch than a full application form. Should your organisation be successful at the EOI stage, you will have additional time before submitting your full application to further develop and consult on your project ahead of sharing detailed plans with us.

EOIs will only be accepted where they have been submitted on the Trust's online Application Portal. A link to the form is [here](#). To support applicants with preparing their answers, a Word version of the form has been made available, but we are unable to accept these in lieu of submitting your form on the portal.

Please note that due to the high level of demand for VALOUR funding, it is anticipated that there will be significant competition at both stages of the process and that an invitation to submit a full application does not guarantee that your organisation will be awarded funding.

When to apply



The key criteria

Stage One Expression of Interest

You will be required to demonstrate:

- ✓ How well your proposed overall project addresses the aims of the VALOUR programme
- ✓ Your experience of supporting veterans and knowledge of their needs as well as providing confirmation that you will be able to also work with members of the wider

armed forces community. (If your current constitution does not allow this you will need to confirm that you are able to amend your constitution in order to meet this mandatory expectation).

- ✓ Your ability to demonstrate a track record of collaborative and multi-partner working.
- ✓ That you have carried out or begun a local consultation process. (You will be required to provide information from this if you are invited to Stage Two).
- ✓ Your ability to deliver, as a minimum, a physical space open to beneficiaries a minimum of 4 days a week and deliver the mandated services for a VRC of housing, health and employment support.
- ✓ That you have considered where existing VRCs are from Round One and confirm you're your project will complement rather than duplicate existing provision, including working with VRCs funded through Round One of the programme.

Stage Two Full Application

If invited to Stage Two, you will be required to provide:

- ✓ A detailed operational plan, outlining how you will deliver the VALOUR Recognised Centre
- ✓ Confirmation that you own or have access to a consistent physical space from which to run the VRC from, for the three -year duration of the programme.
- ✓ A full operational budget and milestone document demonstrating why your project represents good value for money
- ✓ Copies of up-to-date IT and Safeguarding Policies
- ✓ A clear overview of how you will expect your project to work, e.g. where it will be based, how often your service will be open, what support will be available to beneficiaries when the VRC is closed etc.
- ✓ How the project will look to support the geographic gaps in current provision without duplicating areas or services being delivered in Round One.
- ✓ An understanding of the importance of working with the OVA's VALOUR Data & Insight Hub as referenced in this document, and of the need to work collaboratively with other VRCs.
- ✓ Optional: Letters of support, including for your MP. More information will follow for Stage Two applicants.

Who can apply?

You may be able to apply to this fund if you have experience of delivering complex projects and collaborating with other organisations; and are either:

- A registered charity which can demonstrate relevant experience and engagement in the provision of services to veterans
- A CIC that has been established more than three years so that evidence of governance, financial and operational management can be provided, and that can demonstrate relevant experience and engagement in the provision of services to veterans
- A local government body.

The following additional eligibility requirements also apply:

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.
- You must ensure that your organisation's charitable objects are sufficiently broad enough to allow you to run all elements of your proposed project, regardless of whether you are engaging with a delivery partner or not.

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 governing document and 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. Your application will not be complete without these documents.
- 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.

Local authorities

- Organisations that fall within this category cannot apply for statutory local government delivery work.

Who cannot apply?

- An individual.
- A charity or CIC which doesn't have at least three years' experience of supporting armed forces communities
- 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.
- Exempt charities, which are not otherwise constituted as one of the eligible organisations listed above.
- Not-for-profit organisations that are not registered as either a charity or CIC.
- A private or for-profit company.

This list is not exhaustive, only those organisations listed in the “Who is eligible to apply?” section above are eligible to apply under this funding programme.

The following restrictions may apply:

- We generally receive more good applications for funding than can be supported. The panel may prioritise applications from organisations which have evidenced experience of delivering collaborative and sustainable programmes in the past or based on geographic coverage/need or in order to ensure a range of organisations are supported within this programme.
- Applications may be declined from current Trust grant holders if the reporting requirements for existing grants from the Trust are not up to date.

What should your application show us?

You'll need to clearly show us that you have the skills and experience necessary to carry out your project. This should include working in collaboration with other organisations - there is more information on working with others later in this document.

You should be able to demonstrate good mechanisms for governance of complex projects and experience of multi-agency working. You should also be able to demonstrate a strong knowledge of the needs of the veteran community and a good understanding of the wider armed forces community.

You must have clear governance and financial processes in place, as well as clear policies and processes around safeguarding.

Successful applicants will have strong, sophisticated approaches to inclusion and equity, in how support is delivered to veterans / wider armed forces community as well as an

understanding of the needs of underrepresented groups or specific cohorts (for example, Gurkhas) and how to ensure they are engaged and supported.

We won't fund projects which duplicate existing provision. So, you'll need to show us how your project complements other work taking place and how you know there will not be duplication.

You will need to think about your geographic footprint, the area you will cover and the organisations you would look to engage with. You will be asked to offer an indicative estimate of the direct and indirect beneficiaries you will expect your project to support.

You'll also need to show us what evidence you have to support the approach you seek to take and, crucially, how people from armed forces communities have helped to shape this.

As part of your application, we'll ask you to show us that your project:

is needed and targeted	You should be able to clearly explain how you've identified the need for this project and how you will target the people who have the greatest need for support.
is user-led	This means your project may stem from the results of consultation. Your organisation may be led by people who are from your beneficiary group, and you should have recent relevant experience of working with the target group. You may have a service-user steering group. Show us how the idea for your project has been shaped by the people it will benefit.
has lasting impact	This means there should be a wider impact to your work, which will endure beyond the life of your grant. Your project should show that it offers a positive benefit to members of Armed Forces communities.

Useful questions to ask yourself
when completing your application:

Why is your project
the best way to
support your
beneficiaries?

How have you
**involved your
beneficiaries** in
planning and
shaping the
project?

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

How do you know
this work **doesn't
duplicate** existing
provision for your
beneficiaries?

How do you
know your
beneficiaries will
take part?

Who should benefit from your project?

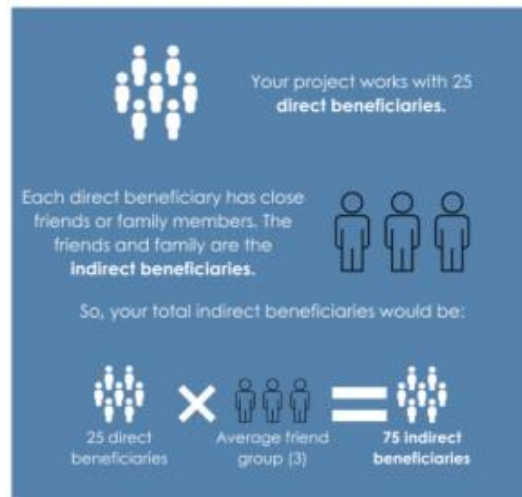
You will be asked in the application to offer an indicative number of beneficiaries you expect to support. Please note this should be a realistic estimation outlining briefly how you arrived at this figure.

Direct / Indirect Beneficiaries

Your direct beneficiaries are usually the people you are directly targeting with your work. For example, Veterans of the UK armed forces. They are the people who will access the services or participate in activities paid for by VALOUR funding.

However, others outside of your target group(s) may also benefit from your project. These are called indirect beneficiaries. For example, the family members of veterans aged 45-60 years.

The following illustrations can help with understanding how to calculate your direct and indirect beneficiaries:



Showing the change your funded work will make

We want to know what changes will take place because of your work. This means that we would like to know what will be different when your project ends and why you think your work will achieve these improvements.

At the end of your funded project, the people who have taken part should 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. You should be able to point to increased local relationships with both statutory and non-statutory providers and have a stronger network in place to support your work. You should ideally have more robust referral routes and pathways to support your beneficiaries and a process in place to continue identifying and developing these links.

Measuring impact

If we fund your project, we'll ask you to submit regular progress reports to tell us how your work is going. This helps us to learn from every award we make and to see where funds are most effective at reducing disadvantage for the armed forces community.

Both as part of the grant monitoring process, and to maintain your status as a VRC, access to the centre will need to be provided to OVA Assurance Leads (AL). Grant recipients will need to be available to meet regularly with ALs and demonstrate the work the centres are doing. ALs will report back into VALOUR HQ and the AFCFT on performance but also offer an opportunity to raise issues and concerns, share best practice, and strengthen the wider VALOUR networks.

Working with other organisations

Your VRC will need to be able to work well in partnership with other agencies, statutory services, other charities etc. It is important that you ensure that each working partnership is well managed, appropriate and safe for the beneficiary.

It may be that your application identifies some funding to support the delivery of a piece of work by a partner organisation and as such they are:

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

In such a case you are required to ensure a Partnership Agreement is in place to ensure both parties understand what is expected of them and to safeguard funds.

Where the application is made by a consortium, the Lead Applicant is responsible for ensuring a partnership agreement or MOU is developed for all delivery partners in their consortium. 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 funding 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.

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?	That the project is addressing a specific need for veterans (year one) and the wider armed forces community (year two and three) and • That you have a physical centre for beneficiaries to attend • That your centre will be accessible a minimum of 4 days a week and you have processes in place to support beneficiaries when the centre is not open • Be able to make a significant difference to people's lives, and meets the requirements set out above • Be able to show that the award will have longer term sustainable benefits that will have an ongoing legacy after the end of the funding
What do you need to show us?	• Where your Centre will be situated, how often it will be open and the services it will provide. • How you plan to reach those that may not easily be able to access the main centre. • How your service will help the communities you look to serve • How people from Armed Forces communities have shaped this project or service; and how you know that they will use it • How many people this is likely to help, and what difference this will make • What the long-term benefits will be? • Data sharing capabilities/knowledge

Delivery of your project	
What are we looking for?	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 bring about.
What do you need to show us?	• That your organisation is well run and well managed • That you'll be able to start your activity at pace and provide a timeline for key deliverables • That you can keep people on your project safe

	• That you will deliver your project in line with our ethical values • That your budget is accurate and well-costed • 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 funding • That you agree to meet all reporting requirements in a timely manner and to work closely with relevant OVA/MOD staff, and that you will support their data requirements, understanding that failure to do so may result in part of your grant being withdrawn.
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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.

The Trust has an Ethics Advisory Panel, which includes Trustees and independent experts, which provides guidance and leadership on ethical issues. This includes activities and interventions proposed in funding applications where necessary.

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

Checks we may carry out on your organisation

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

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

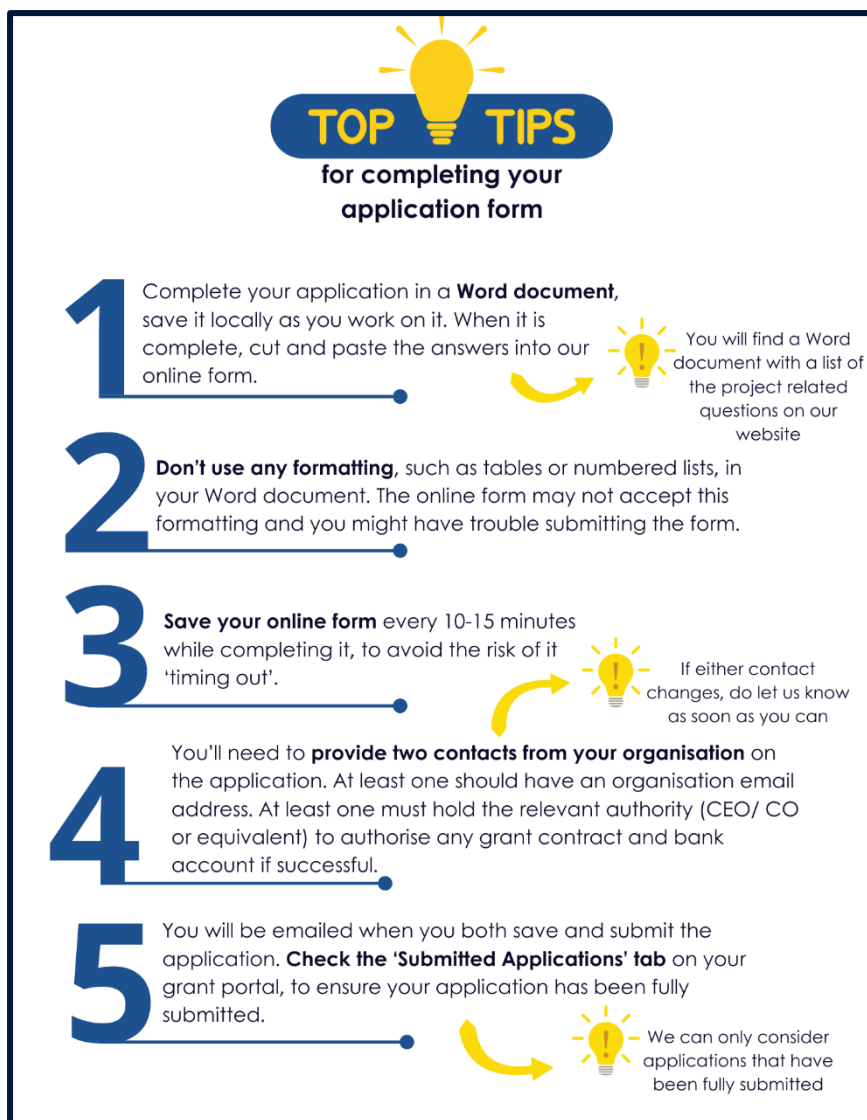
to ensure you are up to date on all reporting with any active grants you hold with the Trust

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

How to apply



You need to apply using our online Expression of Interest (application) form which you can access via our website, via each programme page and [at the top of this document](#). 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 funds, so that you can submit reports and receive 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, you may need to attach documents to the application form. Please read the programme guidance carefully to check what these might be.

You don't need to send any additional information once you have submitted your application. We won't consider any additional information unless we've asked you for it specifically.

You must make sure that the trustees/directors/ senior staff within your organisation know that you are submitting this funding 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 Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust – we will only consider applications submitted via the online form.

Endorsement and Letters of Support

VRCs will be expected to already have quality assurance processes and policies in respect of safeguarding etc and may well have charter marks or similar in respect of their support for vulnerable adults and veterans in particular.

Successful applicants will be seen as VALOUR Recognised Centres by virtue of both having initially received VALOUR funding, and thereafter through compliance with data, assurance and reporting requirements. Successful applicants will need to use provided VALOUR identity and graphic assets for comms and promotional purposes, as directed by HMG.

If successful at EOI stage, you will be able as part of your submission for the full application, to include two Letters of Support for your application. Whilst one can be from a service user, the other could be from your local MP, Councillor or an individual employed by a public body who currently works with the Armed Forces Community (for example a Local Authority employee). Where an application is being received from a local authority then a support letter from a non-statutory partner organisation should be provided.

The letters of support should indicate factors such as how well established and connected you are in the area, any insights on how well you'd be able to deliver this programme, the experiences of individuals that have accessed your services, or any other pertinent information. Please note that a letter of support does not offer any guarantee of funding.

Preparing your project budget

What can funds be spent on?

At the Expression of Interest stage, you won't be required to submit a detailed budget, but you should have a good estimate of your total project costs and what you'll need to deliver it - including your grant request to VALOUR and any match funding you're seeking from other sources. If you're invited to submit a full application, you'll need to provide a detailed budget that covers the total costs associated with delivering your project. More guidance will be provided for the second stage of the process.

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 however this must be related to VRC activity, and 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.

If you are looking to purchase a vehicle for this project you will need to outline the reason for this decision; how you will ensure it is properly insured, well maintained and used solely for the purpose of this project. You should also explain why purchasing rather than leasing a vehicle is your preferred option.

If you are looking to carry out capital works such as disability access or a kitchen refurbishment, then you will need to get a couple of competitive quotes to ensure value for money. You do not need to do this before you submit your application, but you should be able to move at pace if successful so as to ensure works are completed to benefit your project.

You can allocate a contingency budget for transport costs to support vulnerable beneficiaries attending appointments at the centre; however this should be a proportionate ask and you must have strong finance reporting mechanisms in place and keep all receipts for inspection upon request.

Your project might include the following costs:

Staff time	Staff time for this fixed-term project. 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. Appropriate clinical supervision for workers who are supporting vulnerable individuals.
Travel costs	Reasonable travel costs Fares or mileage for project staff, volunteers or beneficiaries to enable participation in the project.

Items to support your project	Purchasing items that enable activities to take place. Art materials; sports/games/outdoor equipment; supplies for breakfast or social hubs. Purchasing items that will help you to deliver your project, such as additional telephones or laptops or IT equipment.
Reasonable overheads	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.
Some Capital Costs	Direct capital costs relating to your building could include providing disability access, a kitchen refurbishment or replacement of communal furnishings. Requests should be proportionate and should not form the majority of the funding application. As is good practice a couple of quotes should be taken for any capital work undertaken.

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.

What can't funds be spent on?

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

This is not an exhaustive list and there may be specific exclusions for some programmes.

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

When to apply

There is a two-stage application process for VALOUR. The first stage is an expression of interest form which will be published on our website. If your project is invited to Stage Two, you will be asked to complete a full application form.

Stage One: Expressions of Interest

The deadline for expressions of interest is:

- **12:00 Midday on 15th June 2026**

You can submit your expression of interest before this date but our assessment and decision making dates are fixed, so that we can consider applications' relative merits together, and therefore we will not be able to give you a decision any sooner.

If you send your expression of interest to us after the deadline, we will not be able to accept it.

Do check that you have fully answered all the questions. If you have not, we might not be able to consider your expression of interest.

If you have any questions about completing the expression of interest form, then please contact us at info@covenantfund.org.uk.

After you submit your Expression of Interest

We will check your expression of interest to ensure that you have provided all the information we have requested. We will conduct an eligibility check within ten working days of the deadline for the receipt of expression of interest form. If your expression of interest is not eligible, we will not be able to process it any further and it will not be considered for funding. If your expression of interest is not eligible, we will write to you to let you know and we will explain our decision.

Stage One decision making

We will review the information you provide in your expression of interest, assess it against the key criteria and, where relevant, review data and information from the Charity Commission, Companies House or other regulators' websites relating to your constitution and audited accounts from the past two years.

Final decisions on which projects to invite to submit a full application will be made by the Minister for Veterans and People who will review all expressions of interest together 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 and the need to ensure the right mix of projects across the UK. Additional areas such as geographic placement will be considered.

Stage Two: Full Application

If you are invited to submit a full application, there is no guarantee that you will be funded. Projects will undergo detailed assessment and must meet high quality standards in order to be successful. The main assessment criteria are:

- Capability: How you will lead and manage the project.
- Financial viability: How you will ensure financial viability and value for money.
- Working with delivery partners: How robust are your proposed working arrangements with your delivery partners?
- Coordination of an effective consortium (if you have submitted as a consortium). How will you ensure that the consortium organisations deliver their projects?
- Additionality: How you will demonstrate that your project delivers services that are additional to those funded by Government and how far will the services and/or outcomes complement existing initiatives.
- Impact: How will you demonstrate impact and measure success?

Your application will be assessed 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.

Stage Two applications alongside assessments will then be reviewed by a panel appointed by the OVA who will use their discretion to choose which projects to consider funding, 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, we 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.

Final decisions on awarded funds will be made by the Minister for Veterans and People.

If your organisation has previously had a grant from us, we expect all reporting to be up-to-date and may consider this when considering new applications.

After the Minister has made the funding decisions, 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 successful in being awarded funds for your project. Note that this decision is likely to be embargoed for a period of time and you will need to abide by any embargo fully by not communicating the outcome publicly until it is lifted.

Our programmes are often oversubscribed and, unfortunately, we often have to turn good applications down due to lack of available funding. In Round Two priority will be given to geographical locations where there remains greatest need. If you have been unsuccessful, we will email you to tell you.

Accepting our offer

If we plan to fund your project, you'll need to accept our grant offer and the terms and conditions within **four weeks** of receiving the offer letter and, and we'll ask you to send us details of your organisation's account that you'd like us to pay the grant into.

Payments will be staged according to the type of expenditure and the project milestones and will be dependent on project progress.

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 to help generate your application form.

Whilst we will consider applications that have been partially generated using AI, we strongly recommend that you review the application ahead of submitting it to ensure it:

- reads properly and makes sense,
- is factually accurate,
- 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 need to be clear on work you've undertaken to demonstrate why the project is needed.

We reserve the right to reject any AI-generated applications if we have concerns around their factual accuracy.

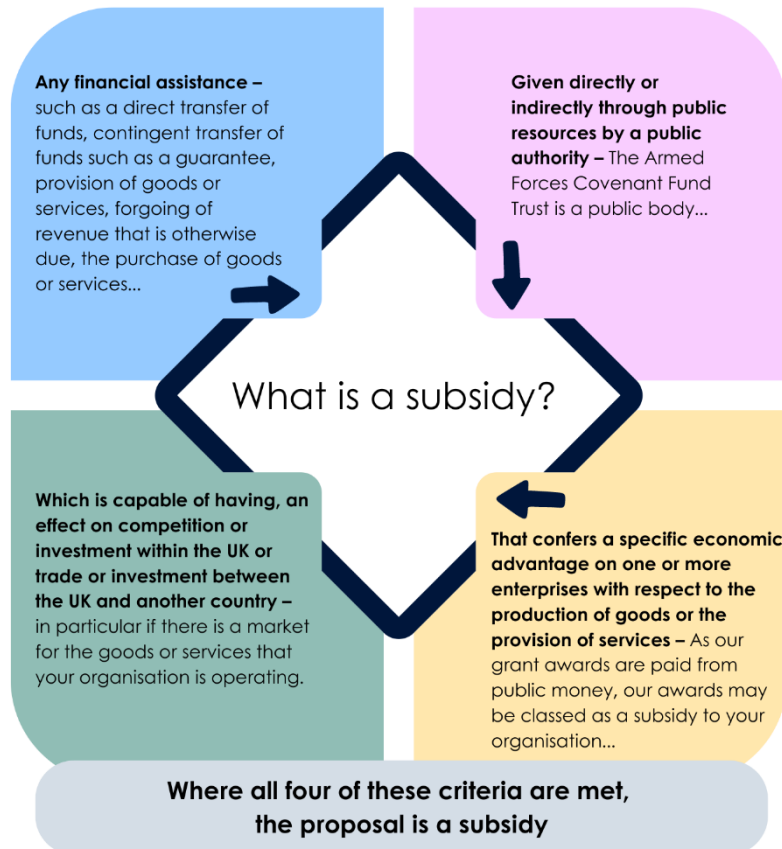
Subsidy Control Act 2022

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.

Complaints and Privacy Policy

If you are not happy with the way we dealt with your expression of interest, please contact us and we will discuss this with you.

Please note that you can only complain if you believe we have not followed our published guidance when dealing with your expression of interest. You cannot appeal against the decision.

Our Privacy Policy explains what data we collect from our fund applicants, and how we use this. Please read this before you apply: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/privacy-policy/>. This document will be supplemented by further advice from the OVA in respect of their data collection.

If you have further questions, you'll find lots more useful information on our website.

If you can't find the answer to your question in these guidance notes or on our website, please email info@covenantfund.org.uk

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.