

4th December 2020

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/EOI2003: Our Community, Our Covenant 3: Examining the impact of the Armed Forces Covenant

FiMT Background

1. Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) was established at the start of 2012 with a £35 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund. FiMT's vision is that all ex-Service personnel and their families lead fulfilled civilian lives. The mission of FiMT is to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful and sustainable transition into civilian life, and the Trust's strategy is to provide an evidence base that will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery. By funding high quality, credible research where there is an identified gap in relevant understanding, and by then exploiting the findings, FiMT effects positive change.

2. FiMT has been developing its change model to help shape its commissioning work which supports programmes in the areas of: Housing; Employment; Health; Finance; Criminal Justice System; Relationships. A seventh programme, the Enabler Programme, was recently added to reflect FiMT's work in supporting organizations across the Armed Forces charities sector. This project cuts across many of our Programmes but falls primarily under the Enabler Programme. For more information about FiMT please visit www.fim-trust.org.

COVID-19 update

3. FiMT is committed to supporting the Armed Forces Community throughout and beyond COVID-19. Following consultation with stakeholders, and a clear response that this research is needed sooner rather than later, FiMT has decided to proceed with the commissioning of this project. By moving forward now, insights can be provided to public sector organizations before the Government's decision to further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into law is fully implemented. The research will provide an evidence base for organizations to better understand the impact already achieved by the Armed Forces Covenant on reducing disadvantage for the Armed Forces community, the challenges encountered by organizations in trying to deliver the Covenant, and it will highlight examples of good practice. By conducting the research during the pandemic, insights can be captured on how COVID-19 has impacted public sector organizations, their ability to carry out services, and their current and future priorities. FiMT will work closely with the Local Government Association and the project team to minimize the burden placed on individuals and organizations taking part in the research.

Context

4. The Armed Forces Covenant¹, hereafter the 'Covenant', was introduced in 2011 and is "a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly". The Armed Forces Community should therefore face no disadvantage compared to civilians, and in some appropriate circumstances, such as those who have been injured, may be given special consideration. However, some members of the Armed Forces Community can find themselves at a disadvantage and challenges can arise as a result of the demands of serving. Frequent moves in service can make it harder to

¹ <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/>

find housing after leaving, particularly if settling in a new area from where they last served, and a lack of a consistent formal address can affect credit ratings. Ex-Service personnel may also be injured, physically or mentally, during their time in service or as a result of service, which can require ongoing support from public health services. The Covenant therefore seeks to address any potential disadvantage, to give special consideration in appropriate circumstances, and it focuses on several areas including education and family wellbeing, housing, employment, healthcare and financial assistance. This research will focus on the Covenant and the ex-serving community (including their families) and, in particular, the work of key public sector organizations including local authorities and the NHS.

5. All local authorities in Great Britain, and four Northern Ireland councils, have pledged to uphold the principles of the Covenant and over 4,000 organizations have signed the Covenant.² While there is no set formula to follow, organizations who pledge to uphold the principles of the Covenant should ensure that the Armed Forces Community are treated fairly, not disadvantaged, and that this policy is integrated into all services, support and engagement with the local community. In January 2020, the Government's commitment to incorporate the Covenant further into law was announced but currently it is not known how and when this will be done or what it will mean for organizations. However, it is anticipated that this research project will be the last one conducted under the framework of a wholly voluntary pledge.

6. In 2016, in partnership with the Local Government Association, FiMT published the first edition of [*Our Community, Our Covenant*](#) which examined how local authorities were delivering pledges under the Covenant, what was working well and any improvements that could be made. The report also identified examples of good practice. The research found that while 87% of councils considered that they had a good or moderate understanding of the Covenant and 81% of the Armed Forces Community were aware of the Covenant, there was evidence of uncertainty about what the Covenant meant in practice. For example, there was apparent confusion amongst some members of the Armed Forces Community about whether the Covenant gives individuals a right to enhanced access to services, as opposed to not being disadvantaged compared to others. The research also found that 38% of the Armed Forces Community who had taken part in the research felt that they had been disadvantaged as a result of their service at least once, and nearly a quarter of respondents felt that their council did not fully understand their needs.

7. *Our Community, Our Covenant* also created a toolkit for local authorities which has proved to be particularly useful for both the Ministry of Defence and local authorities in describing what good implementation of Covenant pledges looked like and the development needed to get there. Over the last three years significant progress has been reported from local authorities, several follow-on projects have taken place, both FiMT-funded³ and through the Covenant Fund, and Local Authority Covenant Guides⁴ have been created. Challenges do remain however, particularly in the current financial, legislative and political environment within which local authorities operate, and it can be difficult to allocate significant resources to the delivery of the Covenant pledges. The multi-agency nature of how local authorities and public organizations operate can also add a further layer of complexity.

Scope

8. This project should follow on from the *Our Community, Our Covenant* report and examine the work of public sector organizations across the UK in the delivery of Covenant pledges. The primary aim of the research is to examine the impact of the Covenant in reducing disadvantage for the Armed Forces Community and how the work of public sector organizations, under the Covenant, has achieved this. This research should also consider the impact of COVID-19 (such as higher unemployment rates and returning to a period of recession)

² <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/get-involved/who-has-signed-the-covenant/>

³ <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/20191030-Bringing-the-Armed-Forces-Covenant-to-Life-FiMT-funded-CMR-training-and-consultancy-evaluation-FINAL.pdf>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655596/Booklet_-_Local_Authority_Guide_-_Overview.pdf

on the Armed Forces Community as well as the ability of public sector organizations to address any existing or new disadvantage and any changes to their role or remit. The research should not be seen as an audit of effectiveness of individual organizations in achieving the Covenant aims, but should focus on the actions taken by public sector organisations in reducing disadvantage, the progress made, the challenges encountered and examples of good practice.

9. The organizations included in this research should cover those which are involved in the delivery of key public services including, but not limited to, education, health and social care, employment support and housing. Bidders are asked to consider how each area should be explored, taking into account the resources needed to cover large areas such as health services. The research should also take a holistic approach, recognising the multi-agency context in which public services are delivered and consider the work of formal committees or forums such as Health and Wellbeing Boards in England and Wales and the equivalent in each of the devolved nations. Employment in the private sector is out of scope for this project having been the focus of the 2019 [Benefit not Burden](#) report.

10. The research conducted for *Our Community, Our Covenant* excluded Northern Ireland, which has a unique environment and was subject to a project conducted by Ulster University⁵. For this research we expect the whole of the United Kingdom (ie Great Britain and Northern Ireland) to be included.

11. The research should seek to examine the impact of the Covenant including:

- The extent to which the Covenant is delivering its objective of ensuring those who serve or have served face no disadvantage.
- Where disadvantage exists, what the causes are and what it looks like.
- Where disadvantage has been reduced, how this has been achieved and what lessons can be learnt from this, including how other organization can benefit from the lessons.
- What the challenges faced by organizations in delivering Covenant pledges are and what the causes of those challenges are.

The research should also seek to examine:

- The use of the existing Toolkit by local authorities. Bidders should consider whether and how the Toolkit is currently being used by local authorities and whether the Toolkit requires updating. Bidders should also explore whether a similar toolkit or approach would be useful for non-local authority public sector organizations. If an update or new toolkit is needed, the design should be built into the project.

Finally, the research should examine:

- The impact of COVID-19 on public sector organizations, the services they deliver, their priorities and, ultimately, their ability to deliver the Covenant both now and in the future.

12. The research should identify and promote examples of good practice and highlight any challenges while also capturing the views of organizations on how these challenges can be best addressed. Finally, the research should offer recommendations on how any challenges can be met and how examples of success can be replicated on a larger scale.

⁵ <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/VETERANS-REPORT-NIVHWS.pdf>

Timescale

13. FiMT is seeking to commission this research project by the spring of 2021 and, although there is no specified completion date, the Trust expects it to be completed and published within 12 months of commencement. The proposed timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

- Deadline for submission of EOIs: 2pm on Friday 15th January 2021
- Invitation to tender issued: late-Jan 21
- Deadline for submission of tenders: late-Feb 21
- Interviews: Mar 21
- Project start: Summer 21

Approximate value of the award

14. The award is expected to be up to £200,000 (including VAT where chargeable) but is subject to negotiation.

Methodology

15. A systematic literature review of UK published material relating to the Covenant and Covenant pledges since 2016.

16. A comprehensive survey of stakeholders involved in the Covenant and delivery of Covenant pledges across the UK. Stakeholders should, at a minimum, include representatives from local authorities and public sector organizations, relevant Armed Forces champions and organizations that work with the public sector and the Armed Forces Community on Covenant matters.

17. Qualitative research with the above stakeholders involved in the Covenant and delivery of Covenant pledges.

18. A survey of members from the Armed Forces Community.

19. Identification of good practice, and the presentation of those practices, with a view to helping organizations to improve their performance. Case studies should cover a range of organizations considering factors such as location, political balance and type of organization.

20. Bidders should consider how the data captured in this research will be comparable to previous data gathered in the original *Our Community, Our Covenant* project.

Impact and Influence

21. In line with the move by the Forces in Mind Trust to an impact approach, this research should identify how any results or conclusions could be developed into a plan to effect change in (or development of) current or new services and support. Consideration should also be given on how to best engage stakeholders with the research and subsequent findings.

Governance

22. This project will be co-led by FiMT and the Local Government Association (LGA) and any output will need to be approved by both organizations before publication. A project group will be created and co-chaired by FiMT and the LGA to oversee the project.

Intellectual Property

23. In commissioning this research, the title to all intellectual property rights created or developed during the course of this research (“Foreground Intellectual Property”) will pass to FiMT. FiMT will grant the researcher a royalty-free license (and sub-license if required) to use and exploit the Foreground Intellectual Property.

Communication of findings

24. FiMT expects that any findings from this project would be made available in the public domain. This will include posting the final report on FiMT’s website and the Veterans and Families Research Hub as a minimum, but may also include other written outputs such as a standalone executive summary, fact sheets, infographics or online blogs specifically targeted to a relevant, non-academic policymaker or service provider. This could include oral presentations at conferences and meetings with relevant stakeholders. The bidder should also consider how best to present the research given the range of public sector organizations involved in the research and the multi-agency context of public services.

25. FiMT would expect that local and national stakeholders are involved throughout the project to ensure that findings and recommendations can be effectively communicated and acted upon. This should include, but not be limited to, the LGA and MOD.

Lead organization and named participants

26. FiMT welcomes applications from registered charities and registered companies as well as partnerships between such companies or charities. The credibility, experience, and expertise of the lead organisation and associated partners are critical to the success of this project, both in terms of access to subjects and the final output.

Application process

27. All Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will be assessed by the deadline stated below. Any EOIs received after this deadline will not be considered. A detailed Invitation to Tender (ITT) will be sent to all those organizations invited to tender for this research/project.

Ethics

28. FiMT expects all research to be carried out in an ethical manner and bidders must be able to demonstrate how this will be achieved.

COVID-19

29. Bidders should include a statement on the possible impact of COVID-19 on the project and have contingency plans in place where possible.

Selection Principles

30. FiMT will use the following selection criteria to determine which organizations will be invited to tender:

- The quality of the EOI; robust and thorough research is the primary selection criteria.
- The clarity of the EOI in setting out how the research will be carried out.
- The likelihood of the EOI’s impact and influence proposal to make long-term and sustainable impact.

- The credibility, experience and expertise of the organization(s) seeking to deliver this project, both in terms of delivery and also in the exploitation of the subsequent findings.
- The experience and knowledge of public sector organizations and the transition process from the UK Armed Forces.
- Ethical credentials.

Feedback on unsuccessful EOIs will be at FiMT discretion.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

31. FiMT expects the EOI to be a **maximum of 8 pages** and to contain the following information:

- EOI reference number and title.
- Name and details of lead organization, including: postal, email and website addresses, type of organization (public, private, voluntary and community sector or other) with any registration numbers, telephone numbers, and details for the point of contact.
- Name and contact details of any other organization involved.
- An outline of how the research would be carried out or the programme delivered. This should include how access to a cohort/cohorts would be expected.
- An indication of how UK-wide relevance or applicability would be ensured.
- Examples of other work you have already carried out on this subject or in this area and your expertise on this subject.
- An indication and broad allocation of costs.

EOIs must be submitted via applications@fim-trust.org by 2pm on Friday 15th January 2021. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of this research/project prior to submission, please contact Isabel Summers at eo@fim-trust.org.



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