

25th January 2021

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/EOI2004: Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre

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, now The National Lottery Community Fund. The Trust is required to have 'spent out' its endowment by November 2031. 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. For more information about FiMT please visit www.fim-trust.org. For more information about the FiMT Research Centre, please visit <https://www.vfrhub.com/fimt-research-centre/>.

Context

3. During the development of the Forces in Mind Programme, which resulted in the establishment of Forces in Mind Trust at the end of 2011, one of four business strands was a 'Veterans Research Foundation'. In November 2014, three parties agreed: 'To provide an accessible, contemporary and authoritative repository of UK and International research-related resources and literature on military veterans and their families, including their transitions to civilian lives, that informs and stimulates research, policy development, improved service delivery and journalistic enquiry, which is financially sustainable and which, it is proposed, is free at the point of access.' The parties concerned were FiMT, Anglia Ruskin University and The Cayo Foundation, the organization through which Lord Ashcroft (then the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Veterans' Transition) conducts charitable activities, and the project was titled the 'Veterans Research Hub'. FiMT contributed £100,000 initially, and a further £40,000 to maintain continuity as the project developed into the current FiMT Research Centre.

4. In September 2017, FiMT established a Research Centre alongside the Veterans and Families Institute in Anglia Ruskin University under a 5-year grant agreement with the University. Central to the Research Centre is the 'Veterans and Families Research Hub', whose origins can be traced directly back to the November 2014 Veterans Research Hub.

5. FiMT intends to continue funding a Research Centre for a further 5 years, after which it expects the Centre (or elements of it) to become self funding in order to endure beyond the lifetime of the Trust.

Scope

6. The FiMT Research Centre has four functions:

- a. Curation, management and development of the Veterans and Families Research Hub.
- b. Provision of advice and support to FiMT staff and others as directed.
- c. Production of specified research outputs, both primary and secondary.
- d. Planning and management of an annual conference and awards.

7. Details on the specific activities and an indication of their scale are at Annex A. The method of delivery of these outputs, and the organizational framework and personnel structure, are not specified, and FiMT would welcome innovative as well as continuity approaches. In addition, metrics for the next five years have not been developed, and FiMT also welcomes ambitious but achievable proposals, using current targets as a starting point. A robust governance structure and an academic component are essential. Implicit within the requirement is the need for the Research Centre to conduct extensive and measurable engagement and information activities both to grow its reach and to increase its influence.

8. At the end of the 5-year period, FiMT is unlikely to be able to continue to fund the Research Centre. An integral part of this project, therefore, is the transition of those capabilities provided by the Research Centre which have an enduring value and utility, to a model of financial self-sustainment. As part of the scope of this Expression of Interest, a viable plan for such a transition should be included.

Timescale

9. The timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

- Deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest: 2359 hours on Monday 1st March 2021
- Invitation to Tender issued: 15th March 2021
- Deadline for submission of Tenders: 16th April 2021
- Selection panel interviews: May 2021
- Preferred bidder announced: June 2021
- Project awarded: September 2021
- Project starts: September 2022
- Project ends: September 2027

Approximate value of the award

10. The award is expected to be up to £2,500,000 for a 5-year period (including VAT where chargeable) but is subject to negotiation. Because of the requirement for the Research Centre to evolve into a self-funded organization, the payment profile will be tailored accordingly, and FiMT welcomes innovative approaches.

Transference

11. The current grant agreement includes details of how the existing resources would be transferred in the event that a third party were to provide the FiMT Research Centre for a subsequent period. Key points for transition arrangements are at Annex B.

Application process

12. All Expressions of Interest will be assessed by the deadline stated above. Any response received after this deadline will not be considered. Following an initial assessment, a detailed Invitation to Tender will be sent to all those organisations invited to tender for this research/project.

Selection Principles

13. FiMT will use the following selection criteria to determine which organizations will be invited to tender:
- The overall quality of the Expression of Interest. Effective delivery of the Research Centre outputs research is the primary selection criteria.
 - The clarity of the Expression of Interest in setting out how the Research Centre outputs will be delivered.
 - The proposed governance arrangements.
 - The opportunities identified to innovate and to exceed the scope, within budget.
 - The quality of the plan to transfer from the current agreement.
 - The quality of the plan for the end-of-project transition into a sustainable financial model.
 - The credibility, experience and expertise of the organization(s) seeking to deliver this project.
 - The experience and knowledge of the Armed Forces community and its associated environment.

Feedback on unsuccessful Expressions of Interest will be at FiMT discretion.

Information to be included in the Expression of Interest and deadline for submission

14. FiMT expects the Expression of Interest to be a maximum of 8 pages and to contain the following information:

- Expression of Interest reference number and title.
- Name and details of lead organisation, including: postal, email and website addresses, type of organisation (public, private, voluntary and community sector or other) with any registration numbers, telephone numbers, and details for the person point of contact.
- Name and contact details of any other organisation involved.
- An outline of how the scope as described at Paragraphs 6 to 8 would be met.
- A broad allocation of costs.
- Any opportunities to innovate and to exceed the scope, within budget.
- Any plans to transfer from the current agreement.
- Examples of other work you have experience of in this area and your expertise in this field.

Expressions of Interest should be submitted in electronic version only via applications@fim-trust.org by 2359 hours on Monday 1st March 2021; an acknowledgement will be sent. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of this research/project prior to submission, please contact the FiMT Executive Assistant Louisa Dominguez at ea@fim-trust.org to schedule a call.



Ray Lock CBE
Chief Executive
Forces in Mind Trust

Annexes:

- A. Detailed activities.
- B. Transition arrangements.

Annex A – Detailed activities

(a) Curate and Manage the VFR Hub.

Task/Responsibility	Component	Activity/Output
Hub management & development	Contract with web development/ hosting company	Negotiate/manage contract
		Liaison with management
		Liaison with technical support
	Site operation & maintenance	Reporting faults/issues
		Manage faults/issues
		Manage control panel
		Report usage metrics/issues
	Manage content	Upload/manage content
		Link to other resources
	Site enhancements	Identify development requirements
Liaison with technical support		
Research gap identification & analysis	Identify under-researched topics	Search material across a variety of sources
		Analyse/discuss/report
Hub content growth	Research material	Conduct web searches
		Complete item upload
		Write/commission/check lay summaries/synopses
		Encourage external participation
	Online discussions	Start discussions
		Contribute to discussions
Encourage external participation		
Online moderation	Research material	Check submission
		Upload submission
		Reject submission/provide feedback
	Online discussions	Moderate discussions
		Encourage external participation

Table 1. Tasks relating to the Curation & Management of the VFR Hub

Outcomes for 2027

- The VFR Hub has become the primary destination for those seeking evidence on Veterans and their Families. Politicians and their advisers, public sector officials, the private and voluntary sectors and media across the United Kingdom engage with the VFR Hub to support their decision making.
- The VFR Hub has become a focus for academia, a trusted source of evidence and identifier of gaps, and a key node for discussion and engagement.
- The VFR Hub has enhanced collaboration and improved common situational awareness across the Armed Forces Charities sector by proactively stimulating and supporting informed debate.

Current target (2017 to 2022)

Research content	3000 items
Site visits	150,000 over 5 years
Quality site visits (pages browsed, interactive content accessed)	20,000 over 5 years
Registered users	1200

(b) Provide Advice and Support (to FiMT and others).

Task/Responsibility	Component	Activity/Output
Relationship/network development	Identify/engage with relevant others	Networking
		Communication/messaging
	Conference attendance	Presenting papers and workshops
		Networking
	Collaboration/ collaborative working	Identify opportunities
		Promote opportunities
		Contribute to journal editing
		Peer review academic outputs
	Social & professional media (Twitter, LinkedIn, Blog, targeted newsletters)	Contribute material
		Manage media feeds
Research support	Advice/information to FiMT	Research direction, themes & topics
		Support commissioning
		Bid/research/service evaluation
		Expert reference groups and boards
	Advice/information to charities/services	Cobseo Research Cluster
		Others as agreed with FiMT
Research influence & impact on policy/service provision/ opinion	Measurement of effectiveness	Design/manage metrics
		Use metrics
Stakeholder organisations	Membership of/support to/ liaison with management/ stakeholder bodies	FiMT Board and Programmes Committee
		Cobseo Research Cluster (as Secretary)

Table 2. Tasks relating to the Provision of Advice & Support

Outcomes for 2027

- The Research Centre has become the primary destination for those seeking support and advice on researching Veterans and their Families.
- The Research Centre has enhanced collaboration within the Cobseo group of Armed Forces Charities by its innovative and comprehensive management of the Cobseo Research Cluster.

Current target (2017 to 2022)

Advice and support to FiMT	100 over 5 years
Advice on grant applications	100 over 5 years
Cobseo Research Cluster meetings	2 per year

(c) Produce Specified Research Outputs.

Task/Responsibility	Component	Activity/Output
New summary material	Production of new media/synthesis	Collate material
		Write/contribute to desktop reviews
		Produce/contribute to graphics/animations
		Produce quarterly digest
Original research	FiMT-directed	Produce/contribute to original research (where resourced)
	Self-identified (in accordance with strategic direction)	Produce/contribute to original research

Table 3. Tasks Relating to the Production of Specified Research Outputs

Outcomes for 2027

- The Research Centre summaries are consistently considered and referenced by politicians and their advisers, public sector officials, the private and voluntary sectors and media across the United Kingdom.
- Original research delivered by the Research Centre has gained a reputation for credibility, relevance and impactfulness. Identification of research gaps by the Research Centre consistently results in projects being undertaken.

Current target (2017 to 2022)

Snapshots	18 over 5 years
Animations	9 over 5 years
Directed research	10 over 5 years

(d) Plan and Manage the Annual Conference and Awards.

Task/Responsibility	Component	Activity/Output
FiMT Research Centre conference & awards	Conference	Plan conference
		Manage conference
		Lead conference
	Awards	Plan awards
		Administer awards

Table 4. Tasks Relating to the Planning & Management of the Annual Conference & Awards

Outcomes for 2027

- The Conference has become a ‘must attend’ event for politicians and their advisers, public sector officials, the private and voluntary sectors and media across the United Kingdom as well as interested academics.
- The annual awards are recognized for their credibility and prestige, and the work of award winners is widely sought.

Current target (2017 to 2022)

Annual attendance	200 by 2022
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Annex B – Transition arrangements

1. The current agreement between Forces in Mind Trust and Anglia Ruskin University sets out arrangements for transition in the event that a third party is awarded funding to continue the Research Centre. Whilst the terms of this agreement are subject to contractual confidentiality, for the purpose of this Request for Expressions of Interest, the following key points can be assumed.
2. There would be a lead-in period of six months during which time Anglia Ruskin University would provide reasonable assistance in order to ensure continued availability of the Research Centre and VFR Hub.
3. An electronic database of VFR Hub users would be shared.
4. Domain name registration and their operation, and access website codes would be transferred.
5. Depending upon the operational model adopted by the third party, Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 or otherwise might apply in respect of current Research Centre employees.