

Guidance for Major Grants Programme 2026



The Veterans' Foundation (VF) operates an open Grants Programme for charitable organisations that provide direct support for the UK armed forces community. Our funding is directed towards work that serves our end beneficiaries - **specifically serving armed forces personnel, veterans, operationally qualified seafarers and their immediate families.**

Introduction

In our 10th Anniversary year, we are launching a new Major Grants Programme designed to help generate sector-wide learning and build strategic partnerships around key issues led by the Armed Forces sector. We know that innovation rarely occurs in isolation, and without it we are unlikely to see the positive changes that will improve outcomes for beneficiaries facing long-term challenges. As such, our new Major Grants Programme intends to encourage and fund work which has a partnership element.

We are approaching this new funding opportunity as a chance to **learn, test, and refine our approach** to supporting Major Grants. Because this is a new approach, some elements of this guidance may feel less defined than our more established programmes.

Overview

We want to fund **collaborative** ideas and projects that provide us with the greatest potential to learn. Through this new programme, our Major Grant funding seeks to fund such work as action learning feasibilities, impact research or cross-sector partnership working. All funded projects will be supported by an **independent learning partner** – providing a 'critical friend' role to support grant holders – and extend the learning towards published findings (see 'Grant Monitoring' on Page 7 for more information). We expect these findings to **help inform our knowledge** and future responses to key issues. We also hope to disseminate our learning for the benefit of those serving the armed forces, veterans and their families.

Each Major Grant award should **demonstrate partnership-driven service innovation or learning**. Applications should be submitted by an eligible lead organisation, in partnership with at least one other delivery organisation. As with all our Grant Programmes, the VF prioritises organisations that are directly involved in the **provision of support to those in need among our beneficiaries** - serving armed forces personnel, veterans, operationally qualified seafarers and their immediate families.

We encourage applicants to bring forward **bold, innovative, or complex ideas** - even if they don't fit neatly within our typical funding criteria. If any aspect of this guidance is unclear, or if you are unsure whether your proposal could be considered within this new Major Grants opportunity, please get in touch. We are keen to explore ideas with you and to learn alongside applicants as we shape this new opportunity.

Major Grant Themes & Priorities

This Major Grants programme intends to strengthen innovation and sector-wide learning through collaboration. It is important that funded projects create opportunities for the VF to learn and use these insights to help inform our future strategic direction. As with previous Major Grants programmes, a two-stage application process will be used to identify projects that test, deliver or build key learning across our five thematic priorities:

Community & Relationships

Most veterans do well after leaving the military, but many lack the sense of connection and want to feel supported – which also matters to their families and communities. It's about helping everyone feel they belong, feel secure, and recognise how military life affects those around them. Participating in activities that support connections and reduce isolation - including physical activity, arts groups, or breakfast clubs - can all have a positive impact on our beneficiaries. We also fund support for carers, bereavement and other family support services.

Employment, Education & Skills

The transition to civilian life can be unpredictable - despite the existing support already in place, many ex-service men and women may struggle to find secure work. We value activities and services that create opportunities and pathways for veterans to achieve their full potential after leaving the military. This may be through participating in further training, volunteering, entrepreneurial programmes or supported employment.

Health & Wellbeing

Sometimes our beneficiaries require additional support to maintain their physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Through our Health & Wellbeing theme, we fund a diverse range of impactful initiatives, including clinical services such as counselling, non-clinical approaches like befriending programmes and sport-based interventions; providing a positive focus, building community and reducing isolation to aid recovery.

Housing & Homelessness

There are many reasons why veterans may find themselves without a home. While it's vital to tackle rough sleeping and help our beneficiaries access safe shelter, we also recognise that homelessness often stems from deeper, interconnected issues - such as mental health challenges, addiction, and lack of support. We fund charities and organisations that help homeless veterans get the support they need to secure stable housing and rebuild their lives.

Tackling Disadvantage

Tackling disadvantage involves overcoming barriers that can hold our beneficiaries back in life - some of these may be fixed, some can be changed. By supporting work that addresses the root causes of the challenges that our beneficiaries may face, we can help promote equity, recovery and achieve social justice. We fund prevention and treatment approaches to a wide range of issues including addiction, welfare support, disability, criminal justice and access to emergency support (such as food/clothing banks, etc).

As mentioned previously, we want to fund collaborative ideas and projects that provide us with the greatest potential to learn. Through this new programme, our Major Grant funding seeks to fund such work as action learning feasibilities, impact research or cross-sector partnership working. All funded projects will be supported by an independent learning partner – providing a ‘critical friend’ role to support grant holders – and extend the learning towards published findings (see ‘Grant Monitoring’ on Page 7 for more information). We expect these findings to help inform our knowledge and future responses to key issues. We also hope to disseminate our learning for the benefit of those serving the armed forces, veterans and their families.

We welcome applications from **both new and existing partnerships**. Partnerships do not need to have been created specifically for this Major Grants opportunity. However, if you are applying as an established partnership, your proposal must focus on activity that is **additional to any current funding, commissioned work, or existing delivery commitments**. Applications from established partnerships should clearly show how Major Grant funding will deliver **additionality**. This may be reflected in different ways, such as enabling partnerships to:

- **Expanding or enhancing existing work**
- **Protecting services or activities at risk of being lost**
- **Extending reach to widen impact for beneficiaries**

We expect all proposals to be informed by prior research, robust evidence, or a deep understanding of the needs and lived experiences of your beneficiaries or end-users.

All applicants should make clear how Major Grants funding will create opportunities to:

1. **Test or trial new or alternative approaches**
Piloting improved models of delivery or supporting beneficiaries in new or more effective ways.
2. **Generate insights**
Work that deepens understanding of people, communities, challenges, or systems in order to inform future service design or innovation.

Through this approach, Major Grants funding aims to foster innovation, support learning, and enable organisations to **explore solutions that can lead to meaningful, long-term impact**.

The fund is open to formal or informal partnerships that include organisations of any size; however, the lead organisation must be a Registered Charity or CIC Ltd by Guarantee with an annual income exceeding £100,000. Major Grant funding should complement, rather than duplicate, any existing funding towards projects.

We anticipate Major Grant awards to be between £200,000 and £500,000 for partnerships of more than two organisations, over a 12 - 24 month period.

If your partnership is successful in securing a Major Grant from the Veterans’ Foundation, each eligible organisation will still be allowed to apply for other grant programmes for the duration of your Major Grant period. However, the nature/purpose of any existing or future requests should differ from your funded Major Grant project.

Organisations that are eligible to apply for a Major Grant

Applications can be made by either a formal or informal partnership. This requires each partnership to have a collaborative agreement in place – such as a memorandum of understanding - between two or more organisations, that are joining forces to pursue a common goal or project aligned to our priority areas. **Each partnership should have a nominated lead organisation that is a registered UK charity or CIC Ltd by Guarantee* and has a minimum annual income of £100,000.** Applications must be made by a lead organisation on behalf of the partnership.

The remaining partner organisations, other than the lead applicant, may be of any legal form - including Statutory Bodies - unless they fall within the limited exceptions outlined below;

- Individuals
- CICs Ltd by Shares
- Private Companies
- Cadet Groups - unless the grant purpose is to specifically support the activities of veterans' who are associated with the Cadets.

While we will accept Major Grant applications from partnerships that include organisations that do not exclusively support Armed Forces' beneficiaries, the work that the partnership is applying for should be clearly targeted and demonstrate value to our beneficiaries - rather than serving the general population or beneficiaries out with the armed forces community.

In summary, to be eligible to apply for Major Grants your partnership should;

- have a collaborative agreement, between two or more organisations, that are joining forces to pursue a common goal or project;
- have a nominated lead organisation that is a registered UK charity or CIC Ltd by Guarantee*, and has a minimum annual income of £100,000;
- ensure all organisational partners are **not** one of the listed exceptions above.

** If you are a CIC Ltd by Guarantee that is the partnership lead for the Major Grants programme, please ensure that you meet our minimum eligibility standards on Page 8 of this guidance.*

Application Process

As with our previous Major Grants Programmes, we are operating a two-stage approach:

Stage 1 - Expressions of Interest: If your partnership is eligible to apply, the first step is to complete the Stage 1 Expression of Interest (EoI) form online. Once this has been reviewed you will be advised of the outcome and if successful, invited to engage in our Stage 2 Application Development process. If you are unsuccessful at this stage, we will explain why.

Stage 2 – Application Development: If you are invited to apply for a Major Grant at Stage 2, we will award you a small 'Development Grant' of up to £10K. This is to help the partnership create the time to convene and develop their application and project proposal further. Successful partnerships must be able to demonstrate the funding will deliver meaningful outcomes and provide clear beneficial impact to the Armed Forces Community in need. At Stage 2, there is an expectation for you to participate and engage in a facilitated Theory of Change workshop – coordinated by the VF - to help develop a logic model for your proposal. This will help your partnership define goals, activities, and expected results, and demonstrate how resources will translate into impact - ensuring everyone understands the project's logic and aligns their efforts.

We will send you an e-mail with an on-line link to the Stage 2 application form. Please note that an invitation to apply, and participating in, Stage 2 of our Major Grant programme is not confirmation that you will receive a grant. You will be advised after the Stage 2 review whether your application has been successful or not (Please see 'Timeline' on Page 6).

While you are completing the application form, you can save and resume your application at any point by clicking the 'Save and Resume' link at the bottom of every application page. A link will be generated which you can use any time within 30 days to resume answering questions on the form. The link will be e-mailed to you by entering your e-mail address when prompted.

Please note that you must use the latest link e-mailed to you each time you exit your application, without the link the data you have entered cannot be retrieved and you will have to restart the application form. Upon visiting the Save and Resume link, file uploads and signatures will need to be reloaded.

What the VF is unlikely to fund

We are keen to hear from a wide variety of partnerships to better understand the issues that you feel are important for the sector and our shared beneficiaries. We understand that some project approaches may differ from what we would expect through our open-grants programme. However, there are some limited exceptions to what we can fund under this Major Grants Programme, including;

- Startup costs for organisations that do not yet have a track record of service delivery, and that have not yet produced annual accounts.
- Any costs where external funding has already been awarded/secured.
- Overseas trips.
- General appeals or applications requesting donations.
- Gap years and study trips or fundraising expeditions.
- Retrospective funding requests - i.e., for activities that have already taken place or money that has already been spent.
- The repayment of loans or debts.
- Armed Forces Day celebrations.

While this list is not exhaustive, we would expect all associated costs to relate to the proposed partnership project being applied for, and not duplicate any funding already secured.

We want to do more to save organisations from spending precious time applying to us when it is unlikely we will fund their work. We are planning to hold a **Major Grants Pre-application Q&A Webinar on Tuesday 3rd March 2026** for organisations interested in applying for this Major Grants opportunity and who have questions about our application process or guidance. To sign up, please email us at grants@veteransfoundation.org.uk.

Additional information required

The lead applicant will be required to provide their most recent Annual Accounts with the Stage 1 EoI. If you are successful with your EoI, we will request the following additional information as part of the due diligence process of your Stage 2 application:

- All organisational partners will be required to provide their most recent Annual Accounts.
- Management accounts for the current financial year to date and for the previous financial year. Including Profit & Loss Account, Balance Sheet and Cash Flows.
- Current Business or Strategic Plan or equivalent.
- Names of all trustees and/or Directors.
- Safeguarding policies for all organisational members of the partnership.
- Job descriptions and person specifications if you are requesting a grant for salary costs.
- Project Plan & Budget - a detailed plan relating to the project which you are seeking funding for to include a delivery plan, timescales, budget, staffing model/resource plan, outcomes/KPIs or equivalent, and a learning/evaluation plan to demonstrate how you will measure impact.
- Results from the Cobseo Governance Tool - if you are a Cobseo member or equivalent for non-Cobseo members (if available).

Please note: Written references are required for organisations that have not previously received a grant from the VF. References should be from organisations who work in the Armed Forces communities and who are familiar with your organisation. The reference should include information such as the outcomes of your work, your organisations' ability to deliver the project and information on how you engage with other armed forces organisations in the community.

When you have completed your Stage 2 application, if needed, you will be able to upload further documents to support your application, **one of which should be your completed logic model.** Please note during the assessment process, the Grants Team may ask for additional documents.

Please note in some cases we may require additional information to help us to consider your application/request. Particularly given the nature of these Major Grants awards being awarded to a partnership made up of multiple organisations.

Timeline

The timescales outlined below highlight the key programme milestones for information. Please note that these dates may be extended following the commencement of Stage 2 (Major Grant Application & Development), depending upon the availability of Stage 2 applicants to participate in Theory of Change (ToC) Workshops – scheduled for July/August 2026.

Open Stage 1 Expression of Interest	EOI Applications live Monday 2 nd March 2026
Closing date for Stage 1 Expression of Interest	Closing date for applications Monday 20 th April 2026
Outcome of Stage 1 Expression of Interest	Notified of outcome & payment of any associated 'Development Awards' before 30 th June 2026
Commence Stage 2 Major Grant Application & Development Programme	Early July 2026 – includes Participation in ToC/Logic Model Workshop(s), 1:1 support and live for development of Stage 2 Application
Closing Date for Stage 2 Major Grant Application & Development	Closing date of applications Monday 14 th September 2026
Outcome of Stage 2 Major Grant Application	Notified of outcome by 30 th October 2026

You will be notified of the outcome of each stage of the application process as per the dates above. If you are successful with your Major Grant application, an e-mail will be sent to the lead applicant (organisation) contact advising on how your Grant Award can be accepted and the associated terms and conditions of the grant award.

Please note that all final Stage 2 decisions are made at the discretion of the VF Trustees.

Grant Monitoring

We believe that successful Major Grant projects should hold regular partnership meetings to develop trust and ensure strategic alignment towards goals. As part of these meetings, you should anticipate attendance and support from a member of the VF Grants Team. This will help us understand how the project is operating and help the partnership overcome any challenges it may face throughout the duration of your award. Grant Monitoring will take the form of 6-monthly project updates to your assigned member of the Grants Team.

As mentioned previously, all funded projects must be supported by an independent learning partner – providing a ‘critical friend’ role to support grant holders – and extend the learning towards published findings. The costs for this should be included in your request’s budget. You have the flexibility and choice to recruit your own learning partner for the project, or you can seek support from the VF if required. We expect these findings to be collected throughout the funded period to culminate in a comprehensive learning evaluation in a suitable format for publication. This learning document will inform our knowledge and future responses to key issues relating to our priority areas. We also hope to disseminate our learning for the benefit of those serving the armed forces, veterans and their families.

Contact

If after reading our guidelines you have any questions, please contact the VF Grants Team at grants@veteransfoundation.org.uk. Alternatively, please review the FAQs in the final section of this guidance.

Minimum Eligibility Standards

We consider applications from registered CICs Limited by Guarantee that meet our eligibility, which includes:

- **Being registered as a CIC Limited by Guarantee.** If you are a CIC Limited by Shares we cannot consider an application from you.
- **Having a Governing Body (e.g. Directors) of at least three members. More than 50% of these members should be independent.** By 'independent' we mean governing body members who are not related to each other or living together
- **Directors should have shared authority over decision making requiring a majority vote, rather than allowing one person to act alone.** We understand that a casting vote of the Chairperson may at times be required and should be reflected in the Articles of Association.
 - We may look at the CICs 'Persons of Significant Control' (PSC) to help us establish this.
- **Fewer than 50% of Directors are paid for services to the CIC.** Where Directors are paid for services to the CIC, this must be clearly detailed in the Governing Document and appropriate. We would not expect Directors to be paid for their role on the Governing Body.
- **Having a named 'asset lock' clause in the Governing Document.** This shows that your organisation's assets will be distributed to a named not-for-profit organisation with similar charitable aims in the event of closure.
 - If you currently do not have a suitable dissolution clause or asset lock in your governing document, you may still be eligible to apply to us. If you are successful in receiving a grant from us, we would require this in place before we release any funds to your organisation. We may be able to offer support and guidance to help you achieve this.
- **CICs must also show that the work is focused on serving our core beneficiaries - serving armed forces personnel, veterans, operationally qualified seafarers and their immediate families.** This must be over and above the business needs of the company.

More information is available from the Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies [here](#).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Below we have developed a short list of FAQs that we hope will help to clarify any areas that are perhaps not already clear from the earlier guidance.

Who can apply for a Major Grant?

Major Grants are open to partnerships that consist of **two or more organisations** working together toward a shared goal aligned with the Veterans' Foundation's priority areas. Each partnership should have a nominated lead organisation that is a registered UK charity or CIC Ltd by Guarantee* and has a minimum annual income of £100,000. The remaining partner organisations, other than the lead applicant, may be of any legal form - including Statutory Bodies - unless they fall within the limited exceptions listed on Page 4 of this Guidance.

What types of organisations can be part of a partnership?

Partnership members may include a wide range of organisations, including **charities, CICs Ltd by Guarantee, statutory bodies, and other non-profit organisations.**

However, some organisations **cannot** participate, including:

- Individuals
- CICs Ltd by Shares
- Private companies
- Cadet groups (unless the work directly supports veterans connected to the Cadets)

Do partnerships need to be newly formed?

No. We welcome applications from both **new and established partnerships.**

However, **established partnerships must apply for activity that is additional to their current funded work or existing commitments.** For example, we could consider funding newly formed collaborative hubs or partnerships where they can demonstrate the Major Grant Funding applied for will deliver additionality and/or new learning that would otherwise not be achieved.

What do you mean by "additionality"?

By this, we mean showing how Major Grants funding would enable new and positive impact, rather than supporting activity that was already planned or likely to happen. The funding should help the partnership deliver something that would not otherwise take place. This may be reflected in different ways, such as;

- expanding or enhancing existing work
- protecting services at risk of ending
- extending your reach or increasing impact

The work should **not** duplicate existing funding or commissioned activity.

How much funding is available?

We are committing at least £2M to this Major Grants programme. As a guide, partnerships are encouraged to apply for **£200,000 to £500,000** for projects running over **12 to 24 months**. We anticipate any award to be shared across the partnership, with payments managed by the lead agency or through the operation of a more formal partnership structure.

What types of projects will you prioritise?

Projects should enable the VF to **learn, generate insights, and support innovation** across its five priority themes:

1. Community & Relationships
2. Employment, Education & Skills
3. Health & Wellbeing
4. Housing & Homelessness
5. Tackling Disadvantage

The strongest applications will:

- Test or trial new or alternative approaches
- Generate insights to deepen understanding of beneficiaries
- Be informed by research, evidence, or lived experience

Does the project need to include innovation?

Yes. The Major Grants programme is specifically designed to **encourage innovation, sector learning, and new approaches**. This could include:

- Action learning projects
- Feasibility work
- Impact research
- Cross-sector partnership development
- Testing improved service models

Can partners still apply to other Veterans' Foundation grant programmes?

Yes. Partner organisations remain eligible to apply to other VF programmes during the Major Grant period, as long as the purpose is **different** from the Major Grant funded activity.

What monitoring and evaluation will be required?

Funded projects should hold **regular partnership meetings** with participation from the VF Grants Team. You will also work with an **independent learning partner**, whose costs should be included in your budget, to produce:

- Ongoing learning
- A final published learning evaluation

What will not be funded?

Things that we will not be considered for funding through this Major Grants programme:

- Organisational start-up costs without a track record or annual accounts
- Overseas trips
- Fundraising expeditions or gap year projects
- General appeals or donations
- Activities already completed (retrospective funding)
- Debt repayment
- Armed Forces Day celebrations

This list is not exhaustive, and **the majority of costs should relate directly to the proposed project.**