**PROCUREMENT FOR THE SUPPLY OF RESEARCH SERVICES –**

**TACKLING LONELINESS EVALUATION**

**Clarification Document**

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| Ref | Question | Response |
| 1 | We wanted to check something with you: the brief states the following:  The Contractor and its delivery team shall, as a minimum, have experience delivering research and evaluation projects relating to armed forces families.  We have lots of other relevant experience, including in conducting evaluations, research into interventions to tackle loneliness, and qualitative and quantitative research with a wide range of audiences – patients, carers, ethnic minorities, health professionals, members of the general public, stakeholders across private and public sectors, to name a few). While some of our projects have included respondents from armed forces communities, our experience in this area is limited.    The statement from the brief cited above suggests we therefore would not qualify to bid for this work or even if we did, would be at a disadvantage. While we’d be really interested and keen on this project, it would not be practical to commit our time to putting together a good proposal if this requirement would mean we would be significantly marked down. We’d appreciate more clarity on this to help us decide whether to apply. | Bidders’ experience will be evaluated as part of question 1 of the ITT. The question has a weighting of 40% of the overall marks available.  We would not discourage organisations from bidding for the contract. However, a Bidder that can demonstrate strong experience in delivering research and evaluation projects relating to armed forces families and veterans are likely to score higher marks for question 1 than a Bidder that cannot demonstrate this experience. |
| 2 | Do you know what proportion of projects are using the Impact Hub to report their data? If so, is it possible to share this approximate %? | More than 90% of the projects are planning on using the Impact Hub to gather beneficiary impact data. However, we cannot guarantee that all these projects will use the Impact Hub. |
| 3 | Is there an expectation that we will collect and analyse outcomes data outside of that collected by the Impact Hub? (e.g. for those projects not using the impact hub or who may be collecting other impact data as well as the surveys) | Some projects will have additional evaluation data outside of the Impact Hub. Bidders should consider how they will collate and use this data, and explain this in their proposals. |
| 4 | Will we have access to the raw data from the surveys for analysis? In what format will this be shared? | The successful bidder will be able to receive exported data from the Impact Hub in Excel of CSV format, subject to a data sharing agreement being in place |
| 5 | Will all the expected surveys be completed in the timescales of the evaluation? | The Impact Hub encourages measurement in stages of pre and post intervention to measure improvements in wellbeing. Data gathering will be in line with overall project delivery of the 60 projects, but data collection will occur at the points that is most reasonable within each individual project which will vary. The Trust will work with the successful provider to provide overview information on the 60 projects. |
| 6 | Regarding the Multi-Media Resources in Clause 2.5: “The Contractor shall collate high quality examples of good practice resources which have been developed by Grant Holders; and will deliver a multimedia collection for inclusion in the Trust’s Knowledge Network”  For 100% clarity, do you want us to work with grant holders to develop multi-media resources out of this evaluation budget – or are we to support them to do this themselves out of their resources? | Grant Holders will have examples of good practice that are of use to other organisations. The Contractor will need to collate this information from Grant Holders, but ensure that it is in a format that can provide value to a wider audience, and is easy to use and understand.    Proposals that include insights from people from Armed Forces communities about what has worked well for them on this programme to address complex or long standing loneliness would be of interest. |
| 7 | Is it possible to provide an idea of how many multi-media resources you are looking for? | Examples of multimedia resources could include documents, checklists, how to guides, videos, audio files or eLearning training    Proposals that focus on the quality of the output, in terms of assisting other organisations to understand and apply good practice when working with isolated members of Armed Forces communities would be preferred. We do not have a set number of resources in mind. Bidders will need to specify the multimedia resources and number they will look to provide. |
| 8 | Please could you confirm the requirements for format of submission or any word/page limits? | There are no formal requirements concerning format or word count save for the certificate of tender and charges summary |
| 9 | Does the Wellbeing Index used by the Trust contain the four Office for National Statistics (ONS) personal well-being questions? (satisfaction with life, feeling whether the things they do in life are worthwhile, happiness, and anxiety - all on a 0-10 response scale) | No, the Wellbeing Index (WBI) is not based on the ONS personal wellbeing questions. The WBI is designed to assess status, functioning and satisfaction across four key life domains: education/employment, finances, health and social relationships. The Veterans and Families Institute at Anglia Ruskin University and the Trust have developed an anglicised version of the WBI to use with their beneficiaries. It provides an assessment tool for clinicians to pin point areas in which veterans may need support. As such the WBI covers a wide range of ideas and areas, unlike previous measures of well-being, that have tended to focus on a specific approach to well-being (i.e. mental well-being). |
| 10 | Are the questions in the Wellbeing Index taken from national data / existing data sets so as to offer a national control group? | No, as the Wellbeing Index was designed and developed for use with veterans in the US. The WBI was developed and validated in six phases with four groups of US military veterans. Definition and core ideas were initially reviewed and revised by military veterans, subject matter experts and civilian researchers specialised in veteran research. It has now been completed by thousands of veterans in the US. It has been refined for a UK veterans audience. |
| 11 | In paragraph 1.8, the ITT specifies that Grant Holders have been ‘strongly advised’ to use the Outcomes Measurement Framework. Are you able to confirm the proportion of Grant Holders who are not using the Impact Hub to demonstrate the impact of their project? To what extent are Grant Holders able to adapt their alternative approach / tools for data collection, or capture partial data for each beneficiary? | We anticipate that only 10% (or less) of grant holders will not be using the Impact Hub for data collection. Grant holders need to agree this with their grant manager and the Trust Policy team to ensure that their existing method of impact measurement meets the Trust’s requirements.  Current exemptions include grant holders who have been using an impact measurement system that has been in place for a number of years and would capture all or similar information that the Impact Hub requires. We will liaise carefully with these grant holders to ensure that they are meeting the Trust’s requirement for impact data collection and would work with the successful contractor to facilitate this. |
| 12 | Given that Grant Holders will be mid-way through the delivery of their project (as specified in paragraph 1.3) by the contract end date of June 2022 (as specified in 2.8), there will be limitations to commenting on the impact of the projects at this point in their delivery. Therefore, can we confirm if you are commissioning this piece of work as a process, or interim evaluation of the Tackling Loneliness programme? | We are commissioning this piece of work as the final evaluation of the Tackling Loneliness programme, not an interim one. It is Trust practice to commission evaluations to be conducted alongside the programme, so evaluators can see how the projects evolve and establish themselves over a period of time. We are aware that the contract end date is before the completion of some of the projects |
| 13 | Regarding the ‘multi-media collection of good practice tools’ (paragraph 2.2), will the Contractor be responsible for developing these tools, or is the focus on collating and reviewing examples shared by Grant Holders? Do you have any examples of similar resources you would be looking for the Contractor to produce? E.g. videos, audio recordings, infographics. | Grant holders will have examples of good practice that are of use to other organisations. The provider will need to collate this information from grant holders but ensure that it is in a format that can provide value to a wider audience and is easy to use and understand. A proposal could therefore curate the content, including the production of new resources that combine elements of grant holder content  Proposals that include insights from people from Armed Forces communities about what has worked will for them on this programme to address complex or long-standing loneliness would be of interest.  Examples of multi-media resources could include documents, checklists, how to guides, videos, audio files or eLearning training  Proposals that focus on the quality of the output, in terms of assisting other organisations to understand and apply good practice when working with isolated members of Armed Forces communities would be preferred |
| 14 | The contractor’s articles of association do not extend to pursuing the interests of other organisations therefore the contractor could not agree to promote the Trust’s interests as set out in clause 3.2 of the contract. Please could you confirm that this requirement may be removed from the contract? | This is confirmed. |
| 15 | Please can you clarify that where a contractor’s proposal is accepted by the Trust, that the contractor’s proposal will form the specification for the work? | This is confirmed. |
| 16 | Please can you clarify that the contractor’s background IP will not be transferred to the Trust under clause 9.2 of the contract? | This is confirmed. |
| 17 | Please can you confirm that the contractor’s staff may be freely dismissed in accordance with the contractor’s HR policies without reference to the Trust? | This is confirmed. |
| 18 | What is the ratio of Mentors to Grant Holders? i.e. is the relationship 1:1 or 1:many? | The relationship is 1:many – each Tackling Social Isolation mentor is assigned a portfolio of grant holders with which there is common ground, and that Mentor will be the first point of contact for all of their mentees queries. However, each grant holder is given a pack containing information about all the mentors, including information about their organisation and what their strengths/USPs are. If they feel they would benefit from the experience of another mentor, they can ask their primary mentor to introduce them. Therefore the relationships between mentors and grant holders are not rigid and defined. |
| 19 | Is there an expectation to engage with end users? | The relationship is anticipated to be with the grant holder, although methodologies could include end beneficiaries within the evaluation approach. There will be the expectation that the grant holder will provide all end user data to the contractor to facilitate evaluation of the project. Where there is engagement with end users e.g. surveys, this is normally done via the grant holder and/or the Trust. |
| 20 | Other than the wellbeing indices, are any other loneliness measures used within the programme? | Some of our grant holders use additional measures such as the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and a grant holder is using the General Anxiety Disorder Assessment questionnaire (GAD-7) as part of their overall evaluation tools. |
| 21 | Can the funder provide further information on the way(s) in which loneliness is described within ARU’s framework? i.e. is loneliness currently measured against the four basic questions, or are other factors taken into consideration? | The Wellbeing Index (WBI) is the primary survey tool which the Trust plan to use to measure the impact of the projects i.e. relieving loneliness on the beneficiaries. The WBI is designed to assess status, functioning and satisfaction across four key life domains: education/employment, finances, health and social relationships. The Veterans and Families Institute at Anglia Ruskin University and the Trust have developed an anglicised version of the WBI to use with their beneficiaries. It provides an assessment tool for clinicians to pin point areas in which veterans may need support. As such the WBI covers a wide range of ideas and areas, unlike previous measures of well-being, that have tended to focus on a specific approach to well-being (i.e. mental well-being). |
| 22 | Can the funder provide more information on the what percentage of the budget should be ring-fenced for this activity? | The tender response gives information on the scoring methodology |
| 23 | To what extent is the contract an exact reflection of the likely terms and conditions of the funding, or might the terms of the eventual contract be negotiable? | This is not negotiable |
| 24 | As the university’s principal raison-d’etre is to publish all research, can you confirm that the university would be at liberty to do so after the date the project and associated contract terminates? | The Trust would be happy for the approved evaluation report to be published by the University. Any additional research undertaken that does not form part of the evaluation report would need prior approval from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust Board of Trustees to be published as it contains information about our funded projects. |
| 25 | Can the funder give an indication of the funding conditions, including eligible costs, overheads, Full Economic Costs, etc.? | Details of this are set out within the draft contract. The tender response will need to make it clear as to how these have been calculated |
| 26 | Will any of the participants be serving members of the armed forces and, if so, will there be a requirement to seek ethical approval through the MoDREC? | It is up to each individual tender response to consider the ethical approvals and considerations required for their work; however it is not anticipated that serving members of the Armed Forces will be participants. |
| 27 | We are intending to respond to this ITT and have a couple of queries.    In sections 1.8 and 1.9 of Schedule 1 (Services Specification), it states:    (1.8) The Trust has strongly advised that the Grant Holders use the Outcomes Measurement Framework (known as the Impact Hub) to measure the impact of their project. If an organisation does not use the Impact Hub, they need to demonstrate to the Trust that their existing impact measurement system is robust…(1.9) The Impact Hub is a web-based tool developed in conjunction with Anglia Ruskin University…’    Please could you advise, a) whether the Impact Hub was developed in conjunction with ARU and previous grant holders or whether it is new to this round of projects, and b) whether grant holders were trained in its use as part of the recommendation to use it. | 1. The Impact Hub was designed by Anglia Ruskin University in conjunction with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Since its inception in 2018. It has been used with previous Trust funding programmes, so it is not a new method of impact data gathering to the Trust. The Trust have invested in a project of continuous improvement co-ordinated through the Trust’s Policy team. We also are committed to including the grant holders in this process, and have regular consultation and user groups in place to ensure that the Hub is meeting their needs.   Access to data gathered through the Hub will be through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, following the implementation of an appropriate data sharing agreement.   1. The Trust has invested resources to ensure that all grant holders recommended to use the Hub receive high-quality training on its use, and that a Trust staff member is available to provide advice and support on a day to day basis. The Trust also work closely with the Tackling Social Isolation mentors and have provided a “train the trainer” training course for them so they will be the Tackling Loneliness grant holders’ first line of communication if they have any issues or queries with using the Hub. |
| 28 | Can you please share more information about the grant application process and what the decision-making framework was? | Please find attached a copy of the Tackling Loneliness grant application guidance which gives you further information on the grant application process and how decisions are made. |
| 29 | On the back of the question above, what role did demographics, age and geography play in the decision-making for the 60 chosen grant holders? Would it be possible to have a map of the grant holders? | Information on this is contained within the Tackling Loneliness grant application guidance. You can find the list of successful Tackling Loneliness grant holders on our website here: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/tackling-loneliness-programme-projects-weve-funded/> which shows their geographic location. |
| 30 | We understand that there are two grant programmes: 'Tackling Loneliness' and 'Tackling Isolation'. Are both grant types in scope for this project? | We can confirm that both the Tackling Loneliness and Tackling Social Isolation grants are included in the scope of this evaluation. |
| 31 | Can you please confirm who the 7 mentors for the 'Tackling Loneliness' project are? | You can find further information on the Tackling Social Isolation mentors on our website: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/tackling-loneliness-programme-projects-weve-funded/> |
| 32 | What are the 'Knowledge Hub' capabilities; do you have an early prototype to share at this stage? | We can confirm that the Knowledge Network will be launched live on our website on 31 May 2021 |
| 33 | Will the project be focused around the 4 nations as per the grant holder locations, or are oversea audience groups to be considered as part of the  sample matrix? | We can confirm that no overseas audience groups are involved in this programme. |
| 34 | Is it possible to have some more information (IE. Reports) on the 'Strategic Pathway' project model to better understand its successes and the approach in  practice? | As the Strategic Pathways programme is very much in progress, there have been no formal evaluation reports completed to date. You might wish to refer to our 2019/2020 Annual Report which is available on our website: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/FINAL-ANNUAL-REPORT-201920-FOR-WEB-NS180920.pdf> which gives further information on the Strategic Pathways programme and its success to date. |
| 35 | Can we gain access to the Impact Hub to better understand the user journey as part of the proposal development process? Can you also tell us about what people can capture on the Impact Hub, other than access to the survey tools? | We cannot give tenderers access to the Impact Hub at this stage as there is live data contained within that is subject to data protection laws. The successful tenderer will be granted access to data gathered through the Hub through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, following the implementation of an appropriate data sharing agreement.  As well as the survey responses, the Hub captures demographic information about the beneficiary, including personal information such as age, disability, gender, as well as information about their military service. It is important to note that beneficiary participation works on consent, and as such a respondent is free to answer as many or as few questions as they wish. |
| 36 | Who was the incumbent to the prior analysis work? For this particular research project are you seeking an academic partner? | You have asked the question about incumbent research partners, we have interpreted this question to be regarding the Impact Hub and the data within. The Trust has worked in conjunction with Anglia Ruskin University to develop the Impact Hub. The successful tenderer will be granted access to data gathered through the Hub through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, following the implementation of an appropriate data sharing agreement. |
| 37 | Please confirm your expectations with regards to ‘multimedia resources’ and the desired outputs and quantities. | Grant holders will have examples of good practice that are of use to other organisations. The provider will need to collate this information from grant holders,but ensure that it is in a format that can provide value to a wider audience, and is easy to use and understand. A proposal could therefore curate the content, including the production of new resources that combine elements of grant holder content. Proposals that include insights from people from Armed Forces communities about what has worked will for them on this programme to address complex or long standing loneliness would be of interest. Examples of multi media resources could include documents, checklists, how to guides, videos, audio files or eLearning training. Proposals that focus on the quality of the output, in terms of assisting other organisations to understand and apply good practice when working with isolated members of Armed Forces communities would be preferred |
| 38 | With your desired timings, come February 2022 the grant winners will only be a year into the two-year project: are you open to reviewing the timeframe to ensure there is enough data and experience to measure impact adequately? | We do not wish to review the project timeframe; it is Trust practice to commission evaluations to be conducted alongside the programme, so evaluators can see how the projects evolve and establish themselves over a period of time. We are aware that the contract end date is before the completion of some of the projects. |
| 39 | Will there be a chance to present our proposal to your team, should we be shortlisted? | No, we do not require presentations from tenderers. Further information on the tender process is contained within the ITT. |
| 40 | What format do you expect the team CVs to be in? | Please submit your team’s CVs in a format that best reflects their skills and experiences in accordance with the tender requirements. |
| 41 | What date will the questions responses be returned? | We have responded to your request for ITT clarification within 24 hours. |