

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency
Fiscal Year 2024 Statewide Veteran Service Provision Grant
Notice of Funding Availability

AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism: Grant

Anticipated Total Available Funding: up to \$4,250,000

Anticipated Number of Awards: 1

Award Amount: Varies by Region

Length of Grant: 1 year

Anticipated Project Start Date: October 1, 2023

Cost Sharing/Match Required: No

Eligible Applicants: Congressionally chartered veterans service organizations or a coalition of those organizations. Eligibility is subject to the boilerplate language within the FY24 enacted Appropriations Bill.

PURPOSE

The MVAA is accepting applications for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Statewide Veteran Service Provision Grant (SVSPG).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) is housed within the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) and is the central agency responsible for the coordination of efforts in the State of Michigan providing advice and assistance to Michigan's veterans and eligible family members. The DMVA is an accredited state department of veterans affairs recognized by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), Office of General Counsel for the purpose of preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the USDVA, pursuant to 38 United States Code subsection 5902(a)(1) and 38 Code of Federal Regulations subsection 14.628(b).

The MVAA is responsible for communicating benefit information and providing outreach services, ensuring consistent and accessible compensation and advocacy outreach services to Michigan veterans and eligible dependents, and connecting veterans to USDVA benefits and health care.

The Michigan Legislature authorizes an annual appropriation for grants to congressionally chartered veterans service organizations or a coalition of those organizations, to aid those entities in their efforts to assist the MVAA in achieving its veteran service provision goals and performance objectives through Veteran Service Officer operations. Veteran Service Officers provide management, monitoring, and quality assurance of applications submitted to the USDVA on behalf of Michigan veterans and their family members as they seek to connect to the benefits for which they are eligible.

The MVAA is seeking to increase the number of veterans receiving their service-connected disability compensation benefits. The goal is to elevate Michigan into the top one-third of states with veterans receiving a service-connected disability compensation benefit. Realizing the success of a service-connected disability compensation application cannot be predetermined. The MVAA will, nevertheless, progress toward this goal by achieving a minimum of a 1.5 percent increase in the number of disability compensation applications submitted annually for a period of four years, meaning an increase of 8,175 applications per year. The MVAA is also looking to move Michigan into the top third of states in the percentage of veterans enrolled in the USDVA health care system. To achieve this goal Michigan will need to realize an annual enrollment increase of 1.3 percent or 4,646 new enrollments each year over a similar 4-year period. The SVSPG will assist grant recipients in their efforts to aid the MVAA in achieving these goals.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible grant recipients are those organizations that either are recognized by the USDVA, Office of General Council, hold a congressional charter, and can employ state accredited Veteran Service Officers, to prepare, present, and prosecute claims under the laws administered by the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA). Eligibility is subject to legislative changes and is to be in accordance with the enacted Appropriations Bill for the grant period covered by this announcement.

Successful Grantees must have the capability and capacity for initiating and managing veteran applications throughout the entire lifecycle of the claim process, to include selection as an applicant's representative/Power of Attorney at the time of preparation. Grantees must prepare benefit applications and gather evidence to support the applications. The application process includes preparation and submission of applicable USDVA forms for the benefit(s) being sought, gathering evidence to validate both qualifying periods of service and character of discharge requirements, and required medical evidence confirming diagnosis and chronicity of the disability being sought. The Grantee must also be capable of managing an application throughout the entire lifecycle of a claim to include an appeal process.

PROGRAM GOALS AND REQUIREMENTS (3rd Year of a 5-year plan)

- Increase the number of veteran applications submitted for service-connected disability compensation by 8,175, the number of USDVA health care enrollment applications by 4,646, and the number of all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report by 7,723, in FY23.
- Establish and maintain consistent service provision days and times at provided locations where grant funded personnel will guarantee availability, and
- Provide excellent customer service. Receive an 80 percent or greater excellent and good customer service rating. No more than 10 percent of overall ratings will be poor. Rating options will include excellent, good, fair, and poor.
- Participate in all required MVAA meetings and attend a post grant award training.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must complete and a Letter of Intent to Apply no later than 5pm. EST, April 28, 2023, indicating the organization is planning to apply for this grant. Send communication to mvaagrants@michigan.gov. A separate Letter of Intent to Apply is required for each Prosperity Region in which the organization is planning to apply.

The grant application period will open May 2, 2023. Grant Guidance and Grant Application will be **made available** to applicants who submitted a Letter of Intent to Apply to mvaagrants@michigan.gov.

Completed Grant Applications MUST be received at mvaagrants@michigan.gov no later than 5pm EST on **June 16, 2023**. **A separate Grant Application is required for each Prosperity Region in which the organization is planning to apply**

Each of the Prosperity Regions has unique performance metrics, requiring a separate application, including a Project Narrative Budget Justification, and Excel budget request forms provided by the MVAA. An applicant is permitted to apply for grant funding in multiple regions, however, a complete and distinct application is required for each Prosperity Region.

All grant activities must be reflected in a Project Narrative and include an Implementation Plan (a documented process, in detail, of the steps necessary to put your ideas into practice). All applications must have a detailed Budget Justification that explains the expenditures broken out by budget category.

The Budget Justification must be concrete and specific. It must provide support for the basis of each proposed expenditure in the budget and how that cost was calculated. The proposed costs must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary for the supported activity. The Budget Justification must match the costs identified in the Item and Service Budget Request and Salary and Fringe Budget Request Forms provided and must equal the total cost and support the Project Narrative.

Example Expenditures:

Allowable: salary/fringes, training, office supplies, office equipment, software licenses, travel for training, mileage for the purpose of providing service provision to locations outside of assigned work location(s), advertising, marketing materials related to outreach events, organizational cell phones, errors and omission insurance, and Mobile Asset Vehicle.

Disallowable: legal fees, per diems, bonuses, settlements of any kind, mileage between employees' homes, remote work locations and official workstation, building rental fees, fraternal organization business, alcohol, tobacco, lottery, furniture, personal cell phone stipends, business insurance, all extended warranty plans, taxes, and donations

These lists are not all-inconclusive. If an expenditure is not on the Allowable List, organizations must obtain approval prior to purchase or expenditure will not be reimbursed.

AWARD AMOUNTS

All grant awards are disbursed as reimbursements for approved and paid expenditures. Grantees may seek approval to receive a one-time advance of 10 percent of the total grant fund for startup costs. Decision on advances will be based on expressed need and the decision of the MVAA is final.

Budget award amounts and categorical allocation requirements are provided for your convenience in developing your grant submissions and are based on the individual needs of each Prosperity Region. Budgets must be within the parameters listed and cannot exceed the total award amount listed per Prosperity Region.

Region 1 (counties Baraga, Ontonagon, Houghton, Iron, Gogebic, Keweenaw, Alger, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, Delta, Schoolcraft, Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac)

Award Total: \$198,529.62

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (5,061 service hours).

Goal: 409 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 232 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) system.

Goal: 386 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 2 (counties Antrim, Benzie, Emmet, Charlevoix, Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Manistee, Missaukee, Wexford)

Award Total: \$175,373.46

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (4,251 service hours).

Goal: 572 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 325 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 541 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 3 (counties Alpena, Alcona, Cheboygan, Presque Isle, Otsego, Montmorency, Crawford, Oscoda, Ogemaw, Iosco, Roscommon)

Award Total: \$154,164.86

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (4,049 service hours).

Goal: 327 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 186 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 309 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 4 (counties Mason, Lake, Osceola, Oceana, Newaygo, Mecosta, Allegan, Barry, Ottawa, Kent, Ionia, Montcalm, Muskegon)

Award Total: \$679,418.80

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (15,182 service hours)

Goal: 1,226 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 697 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 1,158 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 5 (counties Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Midland, Gratiot, Saginaw)

Award Total: \$283,801.06

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (8,097 service hours).

Goal: 654 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 372 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 618 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 6 (counties Genesee, Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Lapeer, St. Clair, Shiawassee)

Award Total: \$410,262.86

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the total award.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the total award.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (8,603 service hours).

Goal: 695 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 395 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 657 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 7 (counties Ingham, Clinton, Eaton)

Award Total: \$188,331.71

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (4,048 service hours).

Goal: 327 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 186 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in VHA system.

Goal: 309 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 8 (counties Kalamazoo, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Van Buren, St. Joseph)

Award Total: \$371,326.77

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (9,109 service hours).

Goal: 736 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 418 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 695 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 9 (counties Monroe, Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Washtenaw)

Award Total: \$417,968.81

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (10,121 service hours).

Goal: 817 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 465 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 772 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Region 10 (Oakland, Macomb, Wayne)

Award Total: \$1,370,822.05

Training: Proposed budget not to exceed 3% of the award total.

Facilities and Administration: Proposed budget not to exceed 7.5% of the award total.

Service Provision: Proposed budget must be at least 90% of the award total or greater (27,973 service hours).

Goal: 2412 disability compensation applications for veterans not previously connected to a disability compensation benefit within the VBA.

Goal: 1,370 enrollments for veterans previously not enrolled in the VHA system.

Goal: 2,278 submissions - all other USDVA claims required to be reported on the monthly activity and recoveries report.

Categorical Allocation Definitions

Training: VSO accreditation and continuing education training for veteran advocates to establish or maintain a working knowledge of federal, state, and local veteran benefit programs and services. VSO training is also to ensure veteran advocates are, or remain, proficient in their role of assisting veterans and eligible family members with the preparation and presentation of claims/applications for benefits.

Facilities and Administration: Facilities and administrative costs, often referred to as indirect costs or F&A, are those costs that are acquired in support of grant programs and project activities such as operating and maintaining buildings, purchasing and utilization of office equipment, building leases, certain insurances, and utilities. Essentially, Facility and Administration costs are expenses that are incurred through the day-to-day support of programs, events, and activities, to include compensation and benefits paid to employees who strictly hold an administrative role.

Veteran Service Provision: Providing services for the purpose of assisting veterans in this state and providing advice, advocacy, and assistance to veterans, servicemembers, dependents, or survivors by an accredited veteran service officer to obtain USDVA health, financial, or memorial benefits for which they are eligible; this includes support staff and management necessary to support the claims process.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applicants will be required to respond to the following questions:

Each of the following questions must be answered for each Regional Grant in the Project Narrative. Be sure to include the Required Activities listed above in developing responses. In writing the Project Narrative be mindful that the service-connected claims must be with new veterans, not veterans already connected to a disability rating.

- 1. Describe your organizational experience (including years of experience, qualifications, certifications, and relevant training) in providing management, monitoring, and appeal services for claims that are produced and submitted on behalf of veterans and their family members seeking benefits from the USDVA. This includes listing the names and Office of General Counsel accreditation numbers of each Veteran Service Officer that will be providing advocacy services. Include a current position description. If the position is vacant attach a proposed position description.**
- 2. Describe how your organization will accomplish connecting the required number of veterans not previously connected to disability compensation benefits. Include days/hours/locations of Veteran Service Officer(s), outreach activities, and/or advertising campaigns.**
- 3. Describe how your organization will accomplish enrolling veterans into the VHA. Include any outreach and/or advertising campaigns.**
- 4. Describe your organization's quality assurance plan to ensure claims are submitted accurately and on a timely basis. Describe the quality assurance process and include how often quality assurance checks are completed. Include how claims will be monitored to prevent lengthy processing times and how applicants will be apprised of the status of their claim.**
- 5. Describe your organization's experience performing the following tasks: completing and submitting applicable USDVA forms for benefit(s), gathering evidence to verify a veteran has a qualifying period of service, qualifying character of discharge and required medical evidence confirming diagnosis and chronicity of a specific disability.**
- 6. Describe your organizational process for assisting diverse and special population veterans including the aging and elderly (70+), incarcerated (if applicable), and women veterans. Describe the outreach efforts to connect with these veterans.**
- 7. Describe how your organization will incorporate the availability of emergency grants through the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund, available resources through the Michigan Veteran Resource Service Center, and mental health care resources into daily operations to all veterans and eligible family members.**
- 8. Describe in detail your organizational experience with appealing a decision made by the USDVA that a veteran or eligible dependent does not agree with. This includes a review of Statements of the Case from the USDVA regarding denials of claims and how you would assist veterans with the preparation of responses.**
- 9. Describe your organizational experience assisting and representing veterans either virtually or in-person before the Board of Veterans Appeals.**

- 10. Describe your organization’s policies and procedures for internal controls to prevent fraud, waste, abuse, conflicts of interest, and appearances of impropriety.**
- 11. Describe your organizational capacity, processes, and procedures to timely communicate with veterans in-person, telephonically, and virtually.**
- 12. Grantees are expected to conduct customer service satisfaction surveys with a minimum of 30 percent of contacted veterans and eligible dependents (virtually, electronically, in-person) and maintain a minimum of 80 percent or greater excellent and good customer service ratings. No more than 10 percent of overall ratings may be poor. Grantees will be required to follow-up on any results that are ‘poor’, or any negative survey comments. Grantees will also be required to maintain Survey Opt-Out forms and submit them to the MVAA weekly. Describe the process in which you will use to collect email addresses. Describe the internal process that will be used in addressing poor customer satisfaction and negative survey comments.**
- 13. Describe all relevant training your organization will require related to obtaining or maintaining accreditation.**
- 14. Describe how your organization will acquire appropriate training in processing applications for benefits payable to veterans due to military sexual trauma, post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, or other mental health issues.**

The Project Narrative will not exceed 30 pages, not including any required attachments. The document must include answers to questions 1-14. The document must be double-spaced utilizing Times New Roman font, size 12, with one-inch margins.

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Project Narrative will not exceed 30 pages, not including any required attachments. The document must include answers to questions 1-14. The document must be double-spaced utilizing Times New Roman font, size 12, with one-inch margins.

- Submit invoice monthly for reimbursement of actual costs including salary, fringes, training, and administrative costs.
- Report monthly all other supporting activities (i.e., special populations, file reviews, personal interviews, etc.)
- Report monthly the total number of applications for all federal veterans benefits through the USDVA.
- Report monthly the number of unique service-connected disability compensation claims submitted.
- Report monthly the number of healthcare enrollments submitted.
- Report monthly the number of all other claims submitted.
- Report weekly on email addresses collected for customer service surveys.
- Per Public Act 166 Section 407(1)(d)(ii), submit the number and type of claims originated by an organization other than the Grantee and submitted by the Grantee to the USDVA.
- For Veteran Service Organization Grantees only, Public Act 166 will require the Veteran Service Organizations to not only report claims received from a county, but to account for claims

received from a county that were transitioned to a Veteran Service Organization and subsequently submitted to the USDVA by that organization.

- Submission of daily time trackers may be required for all grant funded personnel, including Directors.

Technical assistance will be provided to Grantees by the Grants Management Team at the beginning of each grant period and as issues are identified during the MVAA's report review process. If the assistance offered by the MVAA Grants Team is not being incorporated and/or the Grantee is unresponsive to requests for additional information, the MVAA Grants Analyst will engage the MVAA Program Director to determine a course of action to resolve open issues.

Late report submissions may result in delayed payments and termination of the agreement. Extensions may be requested and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the MVAA Grants Management Team. MVAA decisions will be final.