

STATEWIDE VETERAN SERVICE PROVISION GRANT GUIDANCE

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA) is accepting applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2026 Statewide Veteran Service Provision Grant (SVSPG).

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 goal of surpassing the national average in benefit connection rates and grant performance objectives through Veteran Service Officer operations. Veteran Service Officers provide management, monitoring, and quality assurance of applications submitted to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) on behalf of Michigan veterans and their family members as they seek to connect to the benefits for which they are eligible.

AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism: Grant

Anticipated Total Available Funding: \$4,041,500

Length of Project: Up to 1 fiscal year, depending on fund availability

Cost Sharing/Match Required: No

Continuation Funds: Contingent upon appropriation funding

Purpose: To support congressionally chartered veterans service organizations, or a coalition of such organizations, in their efforts to help the MVAA achieve its goal of exceeding the national average in benefit connection rates. This involves enhancing the connection between veterans, eligible dependents, and survivors with the federal veteran benefits that they may not have accessed before. In an effort to optimize the reach and effectiveness of this grant program, grantee(s) will be selected based on their proven capacity to provide comprehensive service provision throughout the State of Michigan. The organization(s) will need to demonstrate a robust understanding of Michigan's ten prosperity regions and articulate their operational strategies in a way that specifically addresses their plans to bridge the gap where connection rates to federal veteran benefits have historically lagged. Through these strategic efforts, the MVAA anticipates a significant improvement in benefit connection rates across Michigan. By leveraging the expertise and reach of congressionally chartered veterans service organizations, or a coalition of such organizations, the goal of exceeding the national average in connection rates becomes not just a possibility, but a probable outcome.

TIMELINE

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| April 4, 2025 | Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and Letter of Intent (LOI) to Apply announced |
| April 18, 2025 | LOI due to MVAAGrants@michigan.gov by 5pm EST |
| April 21, 2025 | Applications and grant guidance sent to those that submitted LOI |
| May 1, 2025 | Application technical assistance webinar |
| June 2, 2025 | Applications due to MVAAGrants@michigan.gov by 5pm EST |
| July 1, 2025 | Award letters/grant agreements sent to grantees for signature |
| September 1, 2025 | Signed grant agreements due to MVAAGrants@michigan.gov by 5pm EST |
| October 1, 2025 | FY26 grant cycle begins |

The time of receipt by MVAA is determined by the time stamp provided by the State of Michigan's e-mail system. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their application in advance of the due date to avoid any delays in electronic mail delivery. There will be no extensions of the deadline.

Applications received by MVAA beginning at 5:01PM EST on June 2, 2025, and thereafter may not be considered for funding.

DEFINITIONS

Categorical Allocation Definitions

Training: Veteran Service Officer (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, certain insurances, and utilities. Essentially, F&A 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.

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.

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.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

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 the plan into practice).

While writing the Project Narrative be mindful that the service-connected claims must be with new veterans, not veterans connected to a disability rating. The proposed plan and expenditures must be described in detail and include how the organization plans to enhance the connection between veterans, eligible dependents, survivors and the federal benefits they may not have accessed previously.

The questions in the application should be attached in a separate document included in the application submission.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

All applications must have a detailed Budget Justification that explains the expenditures broken out by budget category. The Budget Justification must support the basis of each proposed expenditure in the budget and how that cost was calculated. The Budget Justification must match the costs identified in the Item and Service Request and Salary and Fringe Budget Request forms provided, equal the requested total grant amount, and support the Project Narrative.

All budget calculations must follow the prescribed format on the Budget Request Form and establish a statewide budget that meets the following criteria:

- Service provision must be a minimum of 90% of the award with remote work not being more than 20%
- Training is not to exceed 3% of the award
- Facilities and Administration (F&A) is not to exceed 7% of the award.

If operational/programmatic changes are needed during the award period, a Project Amendment form must be submitted for prior approval to MVAAGrants@michigan.gov. The subject line should state, “FY26 SVSPG Amendment X.” If the change also requires moving funds from one line item to another, an updated Budget Request Form must be completed and attached. All MVAA grant reporting forms will accompany the grant award agreement.

EXPENDITURES

Consistent with the best practices of USDVA and MVAA, all proposed expenditures must be reasonable, allowable, allocable, and necessary for the supported activity. Failure to obtain prior written approval from DMVA/MVAA may result in an expense not being authorized or reimbursed. Funds expended without prior MVAA approval will not be reimbursed.

Allowable costs are charges incurred by a MVAA grantee that are consistent with State of Michigan legislation and the guidelines established in the grant agreement. Therefore, these charges can be reimbursed when provided in an approved application/budget, serve programmatic intent and are reasonable/allocable under CFR Part 200, Subpart E.

A cost is reasonable if it does not exceed an amount that a prudent person would incur under the circumstances prevailing when the decision was made to incur the cost. In determining the reasonableness of a given cost consideration must be given to the following:

1. Whether the cost is generally recognized as ordinary and necessary for the recipient's or subrecipient's operation or the proper and efficient performance of the award.
2. The restraints or requirements imposed by such factors as sound business practices; arm's-length bargaining; Federal, State, local, tribal, and other laws and regulations; and terms and conditions of the award.
3. Market prices for comparable costs for the geographic area.
4. Whether the individuals concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances considering their responsibilities to the recipient or subrecipient, its employees, its students or membership (if applicable), the public at large, and the Government; and
5. Whether the cost represents a deviation from the recipient's or subrecipient's established written policies and procedures for incurring costs.

A cost is allocable to an award or other cost objective if the cost is assignable to that award or in accordance with relative benefits received. The standard is met if the cost satisfies any of the following criteria:

1. Is incurred specifically for the award.
2. Benefits both the award and other work of the recipient or subrecipient and can be distributed in proportions that may be approximated using reasonable methods; or
3. Is necessary to the overall operation of the recipient or subrecipient and is assignable in part to the award as a direct cost.

Unallowable costs are charges incurred by a MVAA grantee that do not meet the criteria established by the State of Michigan legislation or the grant agreement. Therefore, these charges cannot be reimbursed.

See Attachment A for additional guidance on allowable and unallowable expenses.

POST AWARD

All grantees must be registered to do business with the State of Michigan. Registration is available at the following website: <https://sigma.michigan.gov/PRDVSS1X1/Advantage4>

The State of Michigan will not accept Signature Pages without the entire Grant Agreement. A complete signed copy of the Grant Agreement must be returned to MVAA no later than 60 days after the award letter is received.

When communicating with MVAA regarding your grant award, the grant award number or organization name must be included in the subject line of the e-mail.

There will be a mandatory post award training for Organization Authorizing Officials and Organization Directors to learn correct reporting formats. If one or more parties fails to attend, the grantee is still required to adhere to all grant standards.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Weekly activity reports and e-mail addresses collected for customer service surveys are due to the MVAA by 5pm EST on Friday.

Monthly reports to include the following are due by 5pm EST on the 11th of each month (except for reports for the period of September 1 through 30 which are due by 5pm EST on October 5th):

- Invoice for monthly reimbursement of actual costs to include salary, fringes, training and administrative costs.
- Supportive activities (i.e., special populations, file reviews, personal interviews, etc.)
- Total number of applications for all federal veterans benefits through the USDVA.
- Number of unique service-connected disability compensation claims submitted.
- Number of healthcare enrollments submitted.
- Number of all claims submitted.
- Number and type of claims originated by an organization other than the Grantee and submitted by the Grantee to the USDVA, and if a VSO Grantee, report claims received from a county and for those that were transitioned to a VSO and submitted to the USDVA by that organization.
- Daily time trackers for all grant funded personnel, including Directors.

MONITORING

All Grantees will be subject to grant monitoring of performance, including data collection according to a form and format prescribed by the Grantor. Grant and performance monitoring will be conducted by MVAA. If the Grantor determines, by audit or otherwise, that a Grantee expended the grant funds received for purposes other than veteran service operations, the Grantor shall reduce the grant disbursement provided to the Grantee in the succeeding month and/or fiscal year by an amount equal to the total of all amounts improperly expended. The Grantor reserves the right to require payment of misspent funds if funds are not appropriated, or the Grantee does not apply for appropriated grant funding, in the subsequent year.

RESOURCES

The following sites may be of assistance in researching and developing your grant application.

The 2023 Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures (GDX) Report:

<https://www.va.gov/vetdata/Expenditures.asp>

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund:

<https://www.michigan.gov/mvaa/quality-of-life/emergency-assistance/panel-content>

Michigan Travel Rates:

<https://www.michigan.gov/dtmb/-/media/Project/Websites/dtmb/Services/Travel/Travel-Rates-FY2025-and-High-Cost-Cities-effective-1-1-2025.pdf?rev=6e16aff7dc9d4877b86927a92b3be98f&hash=F1EE3E66F633004365D41F106AD5153B>

ATTACHMENT A

Purpose

To list common cost categories for Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency's (MVA) grant programs and provide guidance on whether they are allowable or unallowable. This section is not intended to be all-inclusive. If grantees have questions after reviewing this section they should contact the applicable Grant Analyst.

Definitions

Allowable Costs: Charges incurred by a MVA grantee that are consistent with State of Michigan legislation and the guidelines established in the grant agreement. Therefore, these charges can be reimbursed when provided in an approved application/budget, serve programmatic intent and are reasonable/allowable (CFR Part 200, Subpart E).

Unallowable Costs: Charges incurred by a MVA grantee that don't meet the criteria established by State of Michigan legislation or the grant agreement. Therefore, these charges cannot be reimbursed.

Reasonable Costs: A cost is reasonable if it does not exceed an amount that a prudent person would incur under the circumstances prevailing when the decision was made to incur the cost.

Allocable Costs: A cost is allocable to an award or other cost objective if the cost is assignable to that award or in accordance with relative benefits received.

ALLOWABILITY OF COSTS & ACTIVITIES

| Cost Category | Affected MVA Grant Program(s) | Explanation of Allowable Costs |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Advertising & Marketing | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for radio, newspaper, television, direct mail, billboards or electronic/computer transmittals. |
| Air Travel | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable when in travel status, consistent with Department of Technology, Management and Budget's (DTMB) Standardized Travel Regulations (STR) for the current Fiscal Year (FY), Department of Military and Veterans Affairs' (DMVA) Travel Policy, and at the lowest rate available. |
| Alcohol/Beverages | All | Unallowable |
| Apparel | All | Unallowable |
| Bonuses | All | Unallowable |
| Buildings and Land Construction | MIVHPG | Allowable for the acquisition of buildings or land to make improvements, modifications, replacements, renovations or alterations to an existing building. This also includes construction and construction related materials such as wood, nails, concrete, asphalt, roofing, gravel, sand, paint, insulation, drywall or plumbing. |
| Business/Travel Insurance | All | Unallowable |
| Conferences | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable if the conference fulfills the purpose of a grant program's legislated purpose. Allowable conference costs may include rental of facilities, speakers' fees, costs of meals (see meals for restrictions), refreshments, local transportation and registration fees. If renting a building or room for training, the grantee should use the most cost-effective facility. |
| Contractual/Consulting/Professional Services | All | Allowable in an approved application/budget. |
| Contributions or Donations | All | Unallowable |
| Dental Services | CVSF | Allowable in an approved application/budget and in accordance with grant-supported project/initiative. |
| Dues or Memberships Fees | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for costs of business, technical and professional organizations when in an approved application/budget. Unallowable for civic or community organizations. |
| Entertainment | CVSF | Unallowable including amusement, diversion and social activities (e.g., bands, dance groups, tickets to shows) except where specific costs have a programmatic purpose (e.g., Modern Warrior Live production). |
| Fees | All | Allowable for Emergency Services only (e.g., late fees, fees associated with delinquent taxes for approved initiatives). |
| Fines or Legal Settlements | All | Unallowable |
| Food Cards/Vouchers | CVSF | Allowable |
| Fringe Benefits | All | Allowable to include, but not limited to, the costs of annual/personal or sick leave, holidays, employee insurance, and unemployment benefits. |
| Fuel | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for rental vehicles only. |
| Fundraising | All | Unallowable |
| Furniture | CVSF/MIVHPG | Allowable in an approved application/budget for office use or to furnish permanent or temporary shelter (e.g., desks, desk chairs, tables, beds, dressers). |
| Gas Cards | CVSF | Allowable |
| Gifts or Prizes | All | Unallowable |
| Infrastructure | CVSF/SVSPG | Unallowable |
| Legal Services | CVSF | Allowable in an approved application/budget and in accordance with the grant-supported project/initiative. |
| Lobbying | All | Unallowable |
| Lodging | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable when in travel status, consistent with DTMB's STR's for the current Fiscal Year (FY), and reasonable. |
| Lottery | All | Unallowable |
| Maintenance and Repair Costs | All | Allowable for Emergency Services in an approved application/budget. |
| Meals | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for meals consumed while in travel status and consistent with DTMB's STR's established meal reimbursement rates for the current FY and DMVA's Travel Policy. Unallowable for meals consumed while not in travel status and/or amounts exceeding DTMB's STR's established meal reimbursement rates for the current FY, grocery items (e.g., loaf of bread, lunch meat, lettuce, mayonnaise and mustard to make a "meal"). |
| Meal Tips | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable with sit-down meals. Maximum 20%. Unallowable on take-out or at fast food restaurants. |
| Mileage | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for organizational or privately owned vehicles for business, based on actual miles traveled consistent with DTMB's STR, local policy prevails. Unallowable between home and official or remote work locations. |
| Office Equipment | All | Allowable for purchase or rent, the rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle (e.g., copiers, computers, laptops). If replacing equipment previously purchased with the grant, greater than \$5,000, a depreciation schedule must be submitted to demonstrate the equipment has surpassed its useful lifespan. |
| Office Rent/Mortgage | All | Unallowable |
| Office Supplies | All | Allowable |
| Organizational Cell Phones | All | Allowable |
| Payroll Taxes | All | Allowable |
| Per Diems | CVSF | Allowable for applicable staff attending committee meetings in an approved application/budget. |
| Pre/Post-Award Costs | All | Unallowable for expenses incurred outside of the grant cycle. |
| Printing and Publications | All | Allowable for informational brochures, flyers, manuals and publications relating to an approved project. |
| Promotional Items | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for marketing activities directly related to the funded project (e.g., signs, table tents, t-shirts, hats, coasters). |
| Recreational Therapy | All | Unallowable |
| Rental/Mortgage Assistance | CVSF/MIVHPG | Allowable |
| Salaries & Wages | All | Allowable as part of employee compensation for personnel services in relation to the amount of time an employee devotes to the grant-supported project/program. Unallowable for staff who devote time to activities that do not meet the legislated intent of the grant program. |
| Sales Tax | All | Unallowable |
| Service/Emotional Support Animals | All | Unallowable |
| Service Charges | All | Allowable for charges that are unavoidable (e.g., credit card processing fee) |
| Snacks/Refreshments | All | Allowable consistent with DMVA's Group Meetings Policy. |
| Software Licenses | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable consistent with the Office of Financial Management guides's expense cut off. |
| Sponsorships | All | Unallowable |
| Stipends | All | Unallowable |
| Subscriptions | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable for business, technical and professional services. Unallowable for civic or community organizations. |
| Tobacco | All | Unallowable |
| Training | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable when meeting the legislative intent of the grant program and in an approved application/budget. |
| Transportation Services | CVSF | Allowable in an approved application/budget and in accordance with the grant-supported project/initiative. |
| Travel | CVSF/SVSPG | Allowable when in travel status, consistent with DTMB's STR's for the current FY, and reasonable. |
| Utility Assistance | CVSF/MIVHPG | Allowable for Emergency Services in an approved application/budget. |
| Vehicles | All | Allowable to rent while in travel status. Unallowable to purchase. |
| Warranties | All | Unallowable |