



Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

“Support Our Troops”

Grant Application Instructions

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement: This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities. For this and for other information on disability rights and protections, contact the MDVA Agency ADA Coordinator at: 651-548-5961.

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of the Request

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) “Support Our Troops” Program is seeking proposals for grants from \$1,000 - \$100,000 from eligible applicants to provide services with the purpose of supporting and improving the lives of Veterans and their families. Projects/Activities of special interest for this grant cycle include:

- **Priority** - Veteran mental health, homelessness, and suicide prevention programs
- New or innovative Veteran programs

IMPORTANT: “Veteran” is defined by MN Statute §197.447. Grant Awardees are required to collect and submit to MDVA Veteran’s Certificate of Release or Discharge (DD214’s) in order to ensure that SOT Projects/Activities funded by the SOT grant serve Veterans as defined by this Statute.

This grant opportunity is intended to serve the entire Veteran community in Minnesota. By default, Veterans represent a diverse population and include, but are not limited to, all cultures, races, colors, ethnicities, genders, sexual preferences and both able bodied and differently abled groups.

Projects/Activities that will not be considered are:

- Construction (brick & mortar) and/or maintenance projects
- Building development or structural improvements
- Fundraisers

To be considered for the current grant period, Grant Applications and all required documentation must be uploaded to the secure MDVA SFTP site by:

- **Friday, January 3, 2025 (4:00 pm)**

Complete submission instructions are located in Section III – Grant Application Process. Required forms are located in Section VII - Application Package.

This RFP does not obligate the State to award a grant or complete the project, and the State reserves the right to cancel the solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest. All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the Grant Applicant.

B. Eligible Applicants

“Eligible Applicants” must be an organization, nonprofit or for-profit, whose SOT Grant Application proposal is for a Program/Activity that supports and improves the lives of Veterans and their families and does not receive any legislatively-named funding through the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

All funding contained in this RFP will be distributed through a competitive review process. Organizations must submit verification that the business entity has filed with the Minnesota Secretary of State and is authorized to conduct business in the State of Minnesota.

<https://mblsportal.sos.state.mn.us/business/search>

After the Grant Application review process, organizations recommended to receive the SOT grant must also be approved by the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Potential awardees will be contacted by phone or email and invited to meet in-person at MDVA. Additional Applicant information may be required at that time.

C. Ineligible Applicants

Entities and persons ineligible to apply for the SOT Grant include:

- Employees of the State of Minnesota (see Minn. Stat. § 43A.38),
- Entities designated as departments of the state, including ombudsperson offices (see Minn. Stat. §15.01),
- Boards, committees, councils, or legislative commissions (see Minn. Stat. § 15.012),
- Task Forces (see Minn. Stat. §15.014), and
- Federal agencies (see 5 U.S Code § 101).

D. Duration of Funding and Period of Performance

Grant Applicants may request a grant period of up to 36 months (3 years). Applicants are encouraged to address the sustainability of their Grant Application in their Grant Application and should not make the success of their proposed grant Program/Activity dependent upon receiving on-going “Support Our Troops” funding. Though generally discouraged, Grantees, (Grant Applicants selected by MDVA to receive funding) may apply for successive SOT Grants but may not apply if the Grantee has a current MDVA SOT/competitive grant in-process.

II. Grant Application Format

The Grant Application is in fillable PDF format. **Data entry fields are intentionally limited.** To be eligible for consideration, Grant Applicant responses must conform to the space provided in the forms. The forms must not be modified. Furthermore, the Grant Applicant must follow all instructions, conditions, and requirements identified in the Grant Application. Failure to observe the Grant Application instructions, conditions, and requirements will result in disqualification of the Grant Application for unresponsiveness.

III. Grant Application Process

A. Grant Applicant's Questions (MDVA Website – Grant Page “Q&A Addendum”)

All Grant Applicants are required to read the Questions and Answers (Q&A) Addendum page on the MDVA Website – Grant Page at:

<https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/federalresources/grants/q-a-addendum.jsp>

Questions not addressed in the Q&A Addendum may be submitted directly in writing by email to: MDVA Grant Administrator at: GrantProgram.MDVA@state.mn.us until **Monday, December 23, 2024.** Grant Applicant's questions and MDVA's responses will periodically be updated throughout the Grant Application submission period until **Thursday, December 26, 2024.**

Note: The only authorized MDVA personnel to discuss this RFP is the MDVA SOT Grant

Administrator. Contact regarding this RFP with any other State personnel could result in disqualification. The State will not be held responsible for oral responses to Grant Applicants.

B. Grant Application Submission

1. To apply, organizations must contact the MDVA Grant Administrator and explicitly state that the organization intends to apply for the SOT grant by sending an email to:

GrantProgram.MDVA@state.mn.us no later: **Monday, December 30, 2024**

Applicants should use the format as shown below in the email Subject Line:

Subject: Organization Name – SOT Application “Project/Activity Name”

(Ref. “Project/Activity Name” named by Applicant in the SOT Application)

The Applicant will be provided by return email from the Grant Administrator:

- An email from the State SFTP server with instructions to create a Password which will allow the Applicant to securely upload the SOT Grant Application and other required documents to a State operated SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol) server:

Password Instructions

- Minimum password length: 8 characters
- Must contain at least 4 characters from the following categories:
 - ✓ Uppercase
 - ✓ Lowercase
 - ✓ Numeric
- Must not contain 3 or more characters from the user name
- Must not contain 3 or more repeating characters

- Once an Applicant has created an account, Grant Applicant documents may be uploaded to the folder anytime by entering the URL <https://filetransfer.mn.gov/> into the browser:
 - User I.D. (Applicant’s email)
 - Password

2. Grant Applications (and all required documentation) must be uploaded to the SFTP (Secure File Transfer Protocol) server by the Grant Application deadline no later than **Friday, January 3, 2025 (4:00 pm)** to be considered for funding.

Note: SFTP Login credentials will be invalid after this date and time.

3. Late Notifications or Grant Applications will not be considered. Faxed, mailed or hand delivered Grant Applications will not be accepted.

4. It is the sole responsibility of each Grant Applicant to ensure that the Grant Application is uploaded to the SFTP server, in the specified format prior to the deadline for submission. **Failure to abide by these instructions for submitting Grant Applications will result in disqualification from consideration.**

IV. Grant Application Evaluation and Selection

A. Overview of Grant Application Evaluation Methodology

1. All responsive Grant Applications received by the deadline will be evaluated. The evaluation will be conducted in three phases:
 - **Phase I** – Minimum Mandatory Requirements Review (pass/fail)
 - **Phase II** – Veterans Future Action Committee (VFAC) Evaluation of Grant Applications
 - **Phase III** - Selection of the Successful Grant Applicant(s)
2. During the evaluation process, all information concerning the Grant Applications submitted, except Grant Applicant’s identity, will remain non-public and will not be disclosed to anyone whose official duties do not require such knowledge.
3. Grant Applications that are not selected for funding indicates that: 1) the Application did not meet the minimum, mandatory Phase I requirements, 2) another Grant Application(s) was determined to be more advantageous to the State or 3) the State has exercised its right to reject any or all Grant Applications.
4. At its discretion, the State may perform an appropriate cost and pricing analysis of a Grant Applicant's Grant Application, including an audit of the reasonableness of any Grant Application.

B. Evaluation Team “Veteran’s Future Action Committee” (VFAC)

1. The VFAC evaluation team consists of members of the Veteran community who are knowledgeable of Veteran’s needs, issues, activities and community resources.
2. The MDVA grant team will assist the VFAC evaluation team by managing the evaluation process. This assistance will include, but is not limited to, the initial mandatory requirements review, contacting of references, and answering technical questions from evaluators. However, VFAC members alone will evaluate and score the Phase II Grant Applications and make grant award recommendations to the MDVA Commissioner.
3. The State reserves the right to alter the composition of the evaluation team and their specific responsibilities.
4. All final grant award decisions are subject to the approval of the MDVA Commissioner.

C. Grant Application Evaluation Phases (I – III)

At any time during the evaluation phases, the State may submit a list of detailed comments, questions, and concerns to one or more Grant Applicant. The State may require said responses to be written, oral, or both. The State will only use written responses for evaluation purposes. The total scores for those Grant Applicants selected to submit additional information may be revised as a result of the new information.

Phase I: Minimum Mandatory Requirements Review

The specified documents will be evaluated on a pass or fail basis. Grant Applicants must "pass" each of the requirements specified in Phase I to be evaluated by the VFAC Committee in Phase II.

The following will be considered on a pass/fail basis:

- Grant Applications must be submitted electronically according to the instructions outlined in Section: III.B. Grant Application Process.
- All information requested in the Grant Application Forms is provided and all required Forms and Attachments are submitted (Ref: Table 1 below).
- Grant Applications must be received on or before **Friday, January 3, 2025**.

Phase II: VFAC Evaluation of Grant Applications

Only the Grant Applications found to be compliant under Phase I will be considered in Phase II.

- VFAC members will review the components of each Phase II Grant Application submitted. Applications will be evaluated based upon the Grant Applicant's understanding of Veterans' need(s), the quality of the Project/Activity proposal and the completeness of the Grant Application.
- After reviewing the Grant Applications, the VFAC members will score each Grant Application.
- VFAC member scores for each Applicant will be combined and divided by the number of Applicants to determine an average score.
- Grant Applicants will be ranked according to their average score.

Phase III: Selection of the Successful Grant Applicant(s)

- After receiving the VFAC Grant Applicants listed according to the ranking of the VFAC's scores, the MDVA Commissioner will make the final determination of successful Grant Applicants.

D. Grant Negotiations, Award Notifications and Non-selected Applicant Notice

Selected Grant Applicants will be notified by phone of the State's interest in pursuing Grant Agreement Contract negotiations, usually within one month of the Grant Application deadline. However, all submitted Grant Applications remain eligible for selection by the State, until the State successfully completes grant agreement negotiations with the selected Grant Applicant(s). Please note that this is a reimbursement grant.

Time is of the essence. Selected Grant Applicants must be responsive during the Grant Agreement negotiation process in order to have an executed Grant Agreement by **March 2025**, within three months of the Grant Application Deadline. In the event grant agreement contract negotiations are unsuccessful with the selected Grant Applicant(s), the VFAC evaluation team may recommend another Grant Applicant(s).

Non-selected Grant Applicant(s) will be notified at which Phase (I - III) their Application was disqualified, usually within two months of the Grant Application deadline.

Consistent with Minnesota Statute 13.591, subdivisions 3(b) and 4, Grant Applications and evaluative data will be available upon request.

E. Grant Applicant – Important Dates To Remember

SOT Grant Cycle BEGINS – Applications Accepted	Monday, December 2 nd
Grant Applications Questions for the Q&A Addendum DEADLINE	Monday, December 23 rd
MDVA Final Posting of Online Q&A Addendum Update	Thursday, December 26 th
Grant Applicant Request for SFTP Log-in Credentials DEADLINE	Monday, December 30 th
SOT Grant Application (& supporting docs uploaded) DEADLINE	Fri., January 3 rd (4:00pm)

F. Support Our Troops (SOT) Grant Awardee Publicity

The content and timing of SOT Grantee Award publicity (inc. SOT Grantee articles, website announcements, and Press Releases etc.) is to be determined solely at the discretion of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Grantees must submit all SOT grant publicity references to MDVA for pre-approval prior to publication.

V. Required Grant Agreement Terms and Conditions

Grant Applicants must be familiar with the State’s standard Grant Agreement Terms and Conditions and MDVA Grant Program requirements when preparing their Grant Application. Grant Applicants may view a Sample Grant Agreement and the MDVA Grants Manual by visiting the MDVA Website - Grants Webpage at:

<https://mn.gov/mdva/resources/federalresources/grants/>.

Most of the requirements defined in the Sample Grant Agreement and MDVA Grants Manual are required by Minnesota statute. However, if a Grant Applicant chooses to take exception to any of the terms, conditions, or language in the Sample Grant Agreement or in the MDVA Grants Manual, the Applicant must indicate those exceptions in their Grant Application (Form 6 Section E - Narrative). Grant Applicants should note that certain exceptions may result in the Grant Application being disqualified from further review and evaluation. Only those exceptions indicated in the Grant Application will be available for discussion or negotiation.

VI. State’s Rights Reserved

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, the State reserves the right to:

- A. Reject any and all Grant Applications received in response to this RFP;
- B. Disqualify any Grant Applicant whose conduct or Grant Application fails to conform to the requirements of this RFP;
- C. Have unlimited rights to duplicate all materials submitted for purposes of RFP evaluation, and duplicate information in response to data requests regarding the Grant Application;
- D. Select a Grant Application other than that with the highest evaluation score.

- E. Consider a late modification of a Grant Application if the Grant Application itself was submitted on time and if the modifications were requested by the State and the modifications make the terms of the Grant Application more favorable to the State, and accept such Grant Application as modified;
- F. At its sole discretion, waive any non-material deviations from the requirements and procedures of this RFP;
- G. Negotiate as to any aspect of the Grant Application with any Grant Applicant and negotiate with more than one Grant Applicant at the same time;
- H. Extend the grant contract, in increments determined by the State, not to exceed a total contract term of three (3) years.
- I. Cancel the RFP at any time and for any reason with no cost or penalty to the State; and
- J. Correct or amend the RFP at any time with no cost or penalty to the State. If the State should correct or amend any segment of the RFP after submission of Grant Applications and prior to announcement of the successful Grant Applicant, all Grant Applicants will be afforded ample opportunity to revise their Grant Application to accommodate the RFP amendment and the dates for submission of revised Grant Applications announced at that time. The State will not be liable for any errors in the RFP or other responses related to the RFP.

Table 1 – Required Grant Application Contents

Instructions – Forms are in fillable PDF format and must be completed in entirety!

Form 1 – Application Package Cover Page	
Form 2 – Financial Capacity	
Form 3 – Program/Activity Capacity	Refers to staff/volunteers administering the proposed Grant Applicant’s Program/Activity <u>only</u> .
Form 4 – Collaboration, Planning and Approach	Refers to both the <u>overall</u> organization and the proposed Grant Applicant’s Program/Activity.
Form 5 – Revenue and Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section A – Revenue and Other Funding Sources • Section B – Explanation of Expenses
Form 6 – Program/Activity Budget Narrative & Logic Model Diagram	<p>Form 6 (Sections A - F) – Sections A, D – F refers to the Grant Application Program/Activity <u>only</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section A – Program/Activity Budget • Section B – Statement of Future Sustainability • Section C – MDVA Grant Agreement Terms Review • Section D – Detailed Description of Costs • Section E – Program/Activity Narrative • Section F – Logic Model Diagram

Required Financial Documents for Nonprofits (all or as applicable)

- ✓ Certified Financial Statements (Required – all organizations with annual income > \$750,000)
- ✓ IRS 990 - (includes 990-EZ & 990-PF)
- ✓ IRS 990-N and all other nonprofits that are not required to submit the IRS 990, 990-EZ or 990-PF must submit the following:
 - Nonprofit’s Bank Statements for all accounts (previous three months)
- ✓ Minn. Ch. 309-Verification of Attorney General’ Office registration or exemption of Charities and Charitable Trusts (<https://www.ag.state.mn.us/charity/>)

Required Financial Documents for For profits

- ✓ Income Tax Statement – Most recent IRS submission
- ✓ Certified Financial Statements (Required - all organizations with annual income > \$750,000).

Required Financial Documents - All Organizations

- ✓ Submit MN Secretary of State Proof of Status "Active/ In Good Standing" (Screen shot OK) (<https://mblsportal.sos.state.mn.us/business/search>)
- ✓ Balance Sheet (financial statement that reports organization's assets, liabilities etc.)
- ✓ Annual Report – Current (if available)
- ✓ Supporting documentation (e.g. brochures) for organizations that report that the organization's Grant Application Project/ Activity will exclusively serve Veteran sub-populations (e.g. minority racial and ethnic groups, differently abled Veterans, LGBTQI Veterans, Veterans residing in greater Minnesota, and Women Veterans) **Ref. Form 4 – Questions 1 & 2)**

Table 2 – Grant Application Scoring Components

S C O R E D C R I T E R I A	<p><u>Organizational Assessment (Forms 1, 2, 3)</u> (10 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization’s age, reputation, experience serving veterans, number and qualifications of staff/volunteers, and overall capacity to fulfill the purpose the Applicant’s grant proposal. Consistency of Applicant's reported financials with submitted financial documents?
	<p><u>Program Design (Forms 3, 4 & 6)</u> (25 points)</p> <p>Workplan & Deliverable Considerations: (Ref: Logic Model Diagram)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Need for Program and Funding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does Program/Activity duplicate existing State, Federal or other Veteran programs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes, does proposed Project/Activity address unmet Veteran needs? Does Applicant's grant proposal align with SOT grant funding priorities (e.g. new or innovative programs, homelessness, mental health)?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Appropriate Services for the proposed Program/Activity</u> (20 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and Clarity of Grant Application – Is the proposed Program/Activity clear? Will the proposed Program/Activity have a significant, measurable positive impact on Veteran’s lives?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Appropriate Outcomes for Target Population</u> (20 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does Applicant have a well-articulated, measurable "Evaluation Plan"? Will there be tangible, positive Outputs/Outcomes <u>within</u> the requested grant period? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the Applicant’s stated “# of Veterans to be Served” a good value for the grant \$ requested? Are the projected Outputs/Outcomes Achievable?
	<p><u>Program Revenue and Budget (Forms 5 & 6)</u> (15 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the written Narrative effectively describe how the project will be implemented (Who, What, Where, How & When)? Are there any significant unanswered questions? Is the proposed Budget reasonable? Does Applicant's reported monthly Business Expenses and submitted financial documentation align with the proposed Project/Activity budget?
	<p>Number of Statewide Geographic Locations Served (more locations/higher score) (10 points)</p> <p>Previous Grant Performance (including Grant Monitoring outcomes and Grantee Responsiveness)</p>
	<p><u>Eligible for Grant Project/Activity that <i>exclusively</i> targets Veterans representing one or more of the Veteran sub-populations listed below...</u> (10 points)</p> <p>(Minority racial and/or ethnic groups, differently-abled Veterans, LGBTQI Veterans, Women Veterans, and/or Veterans residing <u>solely</u> in greater Minnesota)</p>
B O N U S	