

NOTICES
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
Program Policy for Veterans Service Officer Grant Program

Change Log

September 2025:

- Definitions: Added “Accredited veterans service advocacy staff,” “Public event,” “Appointment-based event,” and “Training.” Modified “Veteran Interaction.”
- Review Committee: Changed section name from “Fund Committee.” Moved from section 8 to section 9.
- Application Procedures: Moved from section 9 to section 8. Changed language regarding administrative rejection from “will” to “may.” Updated components of application.
- Eligible Expenses: Added workers’ compensation premiums, FICA, outreach travel, business cards, and shredders. Added clarification on equipment versus supplies. Added “in advance” to requirement for DMVA approval on training and travel requiring overnight accommodation.
- Ineligible Expenses: Removed workers’ compensation premiums, FICA. Added additional ineligible expenses.
- After-Action Reviews: Added that AARs do not need to be submitted monthly to DMVA. Changed file retention from 2 years to 7 years. Added designees of DMVA as parties allowed to audit AARs.

NOTICES

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Program Policy for Veterans Service Officer Grant Program

1. *Purpose.* The purpose of this program policy is to describe the use of funds under 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304 (relating to grants to veterans service officer programs) to award grants to designated veterans service organizations to support veterans service officer programs. In general, the goals of the program include improvement of the coordination and distribution of veterans' benefits, maximization of the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars, and increasing veterans' participation in available benefits programs. Grants are used solely to support accredited veterans service officer staff and the associated costs, including wages, benefits, other compensation and related personnel costs; training provided by accredited veterans service advocacy staff; and equipment to be used by accredited veterans service officer staff.
2. *Definitions.*
 - a. "Accredited Veterans Service Advocacy Staff" means professionals who (a) hold credentials or accreditation in a specific area of expertise that benefits veterans and (b) are able to conduct training in that area of expertise for the purpose of improving the services VSOs offer to veterans.
 - b. "Adjutant General" means the Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs with the powers and duties described in 51 Pa. C.S. § 902.
 - c. "Appointment-Based Event" means the planned visits in locations outside VSO offices to meet with veterans and their families who have scheduled appointments to work with a VSO. Examples include, but are not limited to, legislative offices and VA offices.
 - d. "Deputy Adjutant General" means the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs with the powers and duties described in 51 Pa. C.S. § 1712.
 - e. "DMVA" means the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, an executive department of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
 - f. "Eligible Organization" means veterans organizations that are members of, and active participants in, the State Veterans Commission and are designated to receive grants under the Veterans Service Officer Grant program.
 - g. "Grant Activity Period" means the period in which the Grantee must perform the work outlined in its grant application and expend all the grant funds awarded for that application. The Grant Activity Period usually reflects the fiscal year, July 1 to June 30.
 - h. "Grant Agreement" means a legally binding agreement between grantor and grantee/sub-grantee that defines the terms and conditions of a grant.
 - i. "Grant Award" means money allocated to eligible Organizations for the purpose of fulfilling the goals of the VSO grant.

- j. “Grantees” means Veterans Service Organizations that are awarded Grant Awards.
 - k. “Organizations” means Veterans Service Organizations.
 - l. “Outreach” means efforts to provide information or services to veterans and their families where they live, work, or spend time. It includes activities designed to locate veterans and their families who need assistance with and/or advice about accessing federal, state, local, and community veterans’ benefits and programs. It includes providing them with assistance applying for or enrolling in those benefits and programs. It also includes raising awareness among them (and the general public) about other federal, state, local, and community programs, benefits, and services available.
 - m. “Program” means the Veterans Service Officer Grant Program established by 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304.
 - n. “Public Event” refers to events conducted to provide information or services to veterans and their families where they live, work, or spend time. Examples include, but are not limited to, giving a presentation about benefits at a local senior center, tabling at the Farm Show, or hosting an informational event about benefits and claims for Veterans Day.
 - o. “Referral” means an exchange of information from a VSO to a Veteran or Family Member regarding specific veterans programs leading to a potential benefit for the veteran or eligible family member at the county, state, and/or federal level. Oral referrals are acceptable; however, the preferred methods, for accurate tracking and measurement, are email, Microsoft Teams, VetraSpec Communications, VETPro Interactions and Reminders, and/or other claims management software.
 - p. “Veterans Service Officer” and “VSO” mean an individual who received and maintains a current accreditation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) as a service officer to assist veterans in submitting applications for benefits and assistance in accordance with 38 USC 5904 and 38 CFR 14.629. Accredited VSOs must pass all required examinations and complete all continuing education requirements in order to maintain their accreditation. The term also includes individuals without the required accreditation who obtain accreditation within one year from the date that the individual is first employed as a VSO.
 - q. “Veteran Interaction” refers to communication, either in person or via telephonic/electronic means with a Veteran or Family Member, in which information is provided or received. Examples include walk-in meetings, 1:1 conversations at a legislator's office, phone calls, or appointments.
3. *Program Goals.* In accordance with 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304(b), the Program goals are:
- a. Improvement of the coordination and distribution of veterans benefits;
 - b. Maximization of the effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars; and
 - c. Increasing veterans' participation in available federal, state, and local benefits programs.

4. *Use of Grants.* In accordance with 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304(c), Organizations receiving funding from this Program must use their Grant Awards to improve the administration and delivery of services to Pennsylvania's veterans and meet the Program Goals by:
 - a. Increasing interaction between the veterans service organizations and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in order to enhance the delivery of services to Pennsylvania veterans.
 - b. Increasing the number of initial claims filed with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of Pennsylvania veterans for service-related disabilities or pension benefits.
 - c. Developing methods to increase rates of recovery paid by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to Pennsylvania veterans.
 - d. Expanding training opportunities for designated veterans' service organizations and veterans' service officers.
 - e. Increasing either the number or percentage of Pennsylvania veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system.
 - f. Improving coordination among the veterans' service organizations and with the department to assure an integrated approach to claims processing.
 - g. Improving outreach services to veterans throughout Pennsylvania and each of its counties.

5. *Performance Goals.* In addition to the Program goals established by 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304(b), DMVA seeks to improve Outreach to the veteran community through this Program. As a result, DMVA sets performance goals that Grantees are required to achieve.
 - a. DMVA sets performance goals annually.
 - b. Performance goals are detailed in each fiscal year's Request For Applications.

6. *Eligibility.* In accordance with 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304(d), the following Organizations are designated to receive grants under this Program:
 - a. The American Legion
 - b. AMVETS
 - c. Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
 - d. Disabled American Veterans
 - e. Additional Pennsylvania Organizations designated by DMVA as eligible to receive grants under the Program in accordance with § 9304(d)(5). Any such additional Organization must be a member of the State Veterans Commission listed in 51 Pa. C.S. § 1702(b), serve as an active participant in the State Veterans Commission, and abide by the statutory rules and guidelines.

7. *Maximum Amount of Assistance.* All funding is subject to the Governor's Office of the Budget, Comptroller's Office certification of the availability of the funding. The maximum amount available is determined year-to-year and awards are based on:
 - a. The number of applications received,
 - b. Scoring rubric used in evaluating grant applications,
 - c. VSOs employed, and
 - d. Reports (contained within the application materials) received from the Organizations.

8. *Application Procedures.* Eligible Organizations may apply for grants under this Program by submitting a VSO Grant Application Form to DMVA.
 - a. Application forms are available online at DMVA's website:
<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dmva.html>
 - b. Applications must be signed and include the following components to be considered complete and eligible for review:
 - i. Section A: Organization Information. The Organization shall provide identifying and contact information.
 - ii. Section B: Application for Grant. The Organization shall complete and sign a statement that identifies their requested funding amount, acknowledges understanding of the requirements after funding is approved, and certifies that application information is correct.
 - iii. Section C: Spending Plan and Program Budget. The Organization shall complete budget worksheets to show how they plan to spend the grant, as stipulated by law.
 - iv. Section D: Attachments
 1. Program Narrative. The Organization shall explain in writing how the Organization will use the grants allocated to it to accomplish the Program goals.
 2. Past Performance. The Organization shall evaluate their past performance and explain how it will inform their future work.
 3. IRS Form W-9. The Organization shall complete and submit this form.
 - c. Applications shall be submitted digitally via email to RA-MVDMVAGrants@pa.gov.
 - d. Applications that are unsigned or do not include all required components may be administratively rejected without review.

9. *Review Committee.* The Deputy Adjutant General of Veterans Affairs will appoint a chair for a Review Committee consisting of DMVA staff appointed by the Adjutant General to review grant applications.

- a. The composition consists of representatives of the Office of Veterans Affairs.
- b. Additional committee members can be added as appointed by the Adjutant General.

10. *Evaluation Procedures.*

- a. All complete and signed applications for the Grant Activity Period will be reviewed concurrently. Incomplete and/or unsigned applications will be rejected after administrative review.
- b. *Preliminary Review.* The Review Committee will conduct a preliminary review of all complete and signed applications to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses and to seek clarification, as needed, from the Organizations.
- c. *Tentative Determination.* The Review Committee will meet and review all complete and signed applications, including applications that were revised following the preliminary review, and identify a tentative grant award amount.
 - i. The tentative amount of the award is based on the application submission and the Organization's past Program performance.
 - ii. The tentative grant award amount is determined before the state budget for the Grant Activity Period during which it is enacted. As a result, grant award amounts are subject to change based on the appropriation for this Program in the enacted state subject.
- d. *Final Determination and Adjustment of Awards.* After the state budget for the Grant Activity Period has been enacted, the Review Committee will conduct a final review of the applications.
 - i. The Review Committee may recommend adjustments to the grant award amounts based on the availability of funds. The Review Committee will adjust the final awards as necessary.
 - ii. The Review Committee will send the final funding recommendations to the Adjutant General, who has final approval authority for awarding grants.

11. *Evaluation Criteria.*

- a. The Review Committee will evaluate all complete and signed applications received by DMVA.
- b. DMVA may update and revise evaluation criteria annually.
 - i. Evaluation criteria may address, but are not limited to, increasing interagency cooperation and coordination, increasing benefits claims, expanding training, and improving outreach to veterans.
- c. Evaluation criteria will be articulated annually in the Request For Application to ensure transparency with applicants.

12. *Appeals.* Any applicant aggrieved by a staff decision with respect to a grant application may appeal the action of the staff to The Adjutant General in writing within ten (10) days of receiving the decision. The appeal will be under provisions of 1 Pa. Code § 35.20 (relation to appeals from actions of the staff). The appeal shall state the reasons for the appeal and describe the requested relief. The Adjutant General shall review the appeal and make a final decision concerning any appeal.

13. *Payment Terms.*

- a. *Method of Payment.* Grantees must participate in the Pennsylvania Electronic Payment Program. Banking information must be entered into the secure vendor portal to issue payments via electronic funds transfer.
- b. *Disbursement of Funds.* DMVA will disburse the Grant Award to Organizations in three installment payments:
 - i. *First Payment.* DMVA will disburse 50% of the Grant Award upon the full execution of the agreement.
 - ii. *Second Payment.* DMVA will disburse 25% of the Grant Award upon receipt, review, and approval of the Organization's quarterly report for the first and second quarters of the fiscal year for which the grant was awarded.
 - iii. *Final Payment.* DMVA will disburse the remaining 25% of the Grant Award upon receipt, review, and approval of the Organization's quarterly report for the third quarter of the fiscal year for which the grant was awarded.
- c. *Decrease Payment Amount.* DMVA may decrease the amount of a payment if DMVA determines a Grantee is not complying with the Grant Agreement or the payment amount exceeds the amount required to complete the project.
- d. *Withholding of Payment.* DMVA may withhold payment if DMVA determines that the Grantee has failed to fulfill its obligations under a prior Grant Agreement or other contract between the parties. Upon the Organization's fulfillment of the obligation, the DMVA will resume payment.
- e. *Interest-Bearing Account.* Upon receiving grant funds, the Organization will promptly deposit the funds in a separate, interest-bearing account in a bank or other financial institution insured by the FDIC, FSLIC, NCUA or equivalent governmental insurer. Proof of this separate account must be submitted to the DMVA upon request.
- f. *Eligible Expenditures.*
 - i. Wages, benefits, other compensation, and any related personnel costs, accounting for no less than 80% of grant funding. Eligible personnel expenditures include:
 1. Earnings

2. Retirement
 3. Health Insurance
 4. Dental Insurance
 5. Vision Insurance
 6. Prescription Insurance
 7. Workers' compensation premiums
 8. Federal Insurance Contributions Act
 9. Outreach travel per guidance as established by the [Commonwealth Management Directive 230.10 as revised, Commonwealth Travel Procedures Manual](#)
 10. Meals related to authorized travel per guidance as established by the [Commonwealth Management Directive 230.10 as revised, Commonwealth Travel Procedures Manual](#)
- ii. Training provided by accredited veterans service advocacy staff, accounting for no more than 10% of grant funding. When available, virtual attendance is encouraged. Examples of eligible training expenses include:
1. Attending training at PAVETCon
 2. Any training pursuant to continuing education for VSOs
 3. Conferences, only when training is provided by accredited veterans service advocacy staff
 4. Training travel costs, when VSO staff use personal vehicles, following guidance as established by the [Commonwealth Management Directive 230.10 as revised, Commonwealth Travel Procedures Manual](#)
- iii. Equipment to be used by accredited VSO staff, accounting for no more than 10% of grant funding. Equipment is durable and long-lasting property owned by the organization. Equipment does not include office supplies, which are consumable and quickly depleted. An organization shall submit a written request to the DMVA grants team to purchase equipment or supplies not listed in the below eligible equipment. If the equipment is purchased before the request is reviewed, the organization should be prepared to cover the cost of unapproved equipment with another source of funding in the event the request is denied. Eligible equipment expenses include:
1. Laptops
 2. External card reader for PIV card
 3. Work cell phones or a mobile Wi-Fi hotspot
 4. Printers, paper, and ink cartridges

- 5. User license fees for claims management software or essential document-processing software, including Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat
- 6. Business cards
- 7. Shredders
- 8. External memory/storage devices (for records retention)
- iv. Program audit by a certified public accountant detailing an accounting of grant expenditures awarded under this program for the awarded Commonwealth fiscal year.
- v. Any training or travel requiring overnight accommodation must be approved in advance by the DMVA VSO grants team.
- g. *Ineligible Expenditures*. Including but not limited to:
 - i. Construction projects
 - ii. Property maintenance and upkeep
 - iii. Property rent
 - iv. Property insurance
 - v. Purchase or lease of vehicle(s)
 - vi. Vehicle maintenance and upkeep
 - vii. Advertising and marketing
 - viii. Training provided by unaccredited staff
 - ix. General and administrative expenses, excluding items needed for accredited VSO staff
 - x. Subscriptions, excluding user license subscriptions for claims management software or essential document-processing software
 - xi. Equipment insurance
 - xii. Utilities
 - xiii. Meals unrelated to authorized travel, per guidance as established by the [Commonwealth Management Directive 230.10 as revised, Commonwealth Travel Procedures Manual](#)
 - xiv. Bonuses
 - xv. Stipends
 - xvi. Penalties, late fees, and fines

14. *Reporting Requirements.*

- a. *Monthly Report.* Grantees must submit a monthly budget, progress, and activity report to DMVA for each month of the Grant Activity Period.
 - i. Organizations must utilize the standard reporting template; no changes to the template are permitted.

- ii. Organizations must include evidence of expenditures, including but not limited to time sheets, receipts, and bank statements, with every monthly report.
 - iii. Organizations must submit their monthly reports no later than 20th calendar day after the end of the applicable month.
 - iv. All fields of the standard reporting template must be completed. Monthly reports that contain empty or incomplete fields will be returned to the Grantee for completion and will be deemed late if they are not completed and resubmitted by the 20th calendar day of the applicable month.
 - v. The Organization's Adjutant, designated program manager, or representative must submit all monthly reports electronically via e-mail to RA-MVDMVAGRANTS@pa.gov.
- b. *After-Action Reviews*. Grantees must complete an After-Action Review (AAR) at the conclusion of each Public Event that they participate in or conduct.
 - i. AARs must be in the format set forth in the AAR template provided to Grantees. No changes to the AAR template are permitted.
 - ii. Organizations do not need to submit AARs monthly. AARs should be kept on file and available upon DMVA request.
 - iii. Organizations must maintain a copy of each AAR in its files for a period of 7 years after the event.
 - iv. AARs are subject to audit by DMVA or its designees.
- c. *Quarterly Reports*. Grantees must complete a quarterly report for each quarter of the Grant Activity Period.
 - i. Organizations must utilize the standard reporting template provided to them; no changes to the template are permitted and the template must be completed fully.
 - 1. DMVA reserves the right to update reporting templates and request usage by Organizations.
 - ii. Organizations must submit their quarterly reports by the last weekday of the month after the quarter closes.
 - iii. All fields of the standard reporting template must be completed. Quarterly reports that contain empty or incomplete fields will be returned to the Grantee for completion and will be deemed late if they are not completed and resubmitted by the last weekday of the month after the quarter closes.
- d. *Annual Report*. In accordance with the requirements set forth in 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304(h), Grantees must submit an annual report to DMVA by October 1 immediately following the end of the Grant Activity Period. The Annual Report must contain the following additional information:
 - i. A single integrated accounting of the metrics outlined in each monthly report submitted to DMVA during the Grant Period; and

- ii. An accounting of which objectives set forth in the Organization's Program Narrative for the Grant Period were achieved.
 - iii. A copy of the final project audit.
- e. Grantees must participate in calls on an as-needed basis to address programmatic concerns and quarterly meetings with DMVA staff to review grant progression, share best practices, ensure integration within DMVA's PA VETConnect program, and receive technical support.
- f. DMVA reserves the right to use delinquent reports (i.e., late reports, incomplete reports, etc.) as non-compliance evidence and during the scoring of the next application.
- g. DMVA may request, at any time, additional reports as it deems appropriate.

15. *Audit Compliance Requirements.* In accordance with the requirements set forth in 51 Pa. C.S. § 9304, DMVA will monitor the performance of Organizations. Performance monitoring may include, but is not limited to, financial audits, performance audits, additional data collection, and additional reporting requirements.

- a. Grantees must maintain their financial books and records.
- b. DMVA, the Commonwealth Auditor General, the Commonwealth Attorney General, or their duly authorized representatives, may conduct reasonable inspections and audits of Grantees during the Grant Activity Period.
- c. At the conclusion of the Grant Activity Period, Grantees must submit an audit of all expenditures of project grant funds.
 - i. Grantees must submit a copy of the project audit with their annual report to DMVA, chairs of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees, the Adjutant General, the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs, and the Chairperson of the State Veterans Commission.

16. *Changes and Amendments.* Grant Agreements may be modified or amended after execution.

- a. *No-Cost Grant Agreement.* Grant Agreement extensions are not available.
- b. *Budgetary Adjustments.* Adjustments to the budget may occur by a written notice signed by the Grantee and DMVA to reallocate funding between existing budget categories.
- c. *Assignment.* Grantees may not assign or transfer Grant Agreements without the prior written consent of DMVA.
- d. All other amendments or modifications to Grant Agreements will be accomplished through a formal written document signed by the parties. Amendments will only be accomplished by mutual consent of the Grantee and DMVA.

17. *Non-compliance.* Organizations who do not meet the terms of the Grant Agreement or who misuse funds are considered in a state of non-compliance.
- a. Not meeting the terms of the Grant Agreement includes, but is not limited to, failing to complete and/or submit reports to the required parties within the stated timelines, using the required templates, and/or in the required amount.
 - b. The misuse of funds includes, but is not limited to:
 - i. Using funds for ineligible expenditures.
 - ii. Spending more than 10% of funds on training.
 - iii. Spending more than 10% of funds on equipment.
 - c. Being in a state of compliance can be accomplished by:
 - i. Submitting required reports on time,
 - ii. Returning funds spent on ineligible expenditures, and/or
 - iii. Returning funds expended in excess of the allowable amounts for training and/or equipment.
 - d. Until they have completed requirements and are in compliance with the terms of the Grant Agreement, Organizations found out of compliance could be impacted in the following ways:
 - i. A reduction in disbursed funds, in an amount determined by the Review Committee
 - ii. A delay in quarterly funds disbursements
 - iii. Deemed ineligible to apply for the following year's grant funding
18. *Violations of Grant Agreement.* In the event that the provisions laid out in the executed Grant Agreement are unmet or violated, the Grant Agreement may be temporarily suspended or terminated at any time during the Grant Activity Period at the discretion of DMVA.
- a. *Temporary Suspension.* At any time during the term of the Grant Agreement, DMVA may suspend part or all of the activities performed or services provided under this Grant Agreement. DMVA can do this by providing written notice of suspension to the Grantee.
 - b. *DMVA Discretion.* The grounds for suspension include the following:
 - i. the Grantee's violation of applicable laws and regulations, audit exceptions, misuse of funds, failure to submit required reports, or when responsible public officials or private citizens make allegations of mismanagement, malfeasance, or criminal activity against the Grantee; or
 - ii. when, in the opinion of DMVA, the activities supported by the grant cannot be continued in such manner as to adequately fulfill the intent of statutes or regulations; or
 - iii. an act of God, strike or disaster.

- c. *Effect of Suspension.* During the term of suspension, DMVA and the Grantee shall retain and hold available any funds previously approved for application to the activities. During the suspension period, the Grantee may not expend any grant funds, except expenditure authorized pursuant to an order of a court of competent jurisdiction. The Grantee may cure any default or other circumstance that is the basis for suspension of the Grant Agreement within a reasonable period of time.
 - d. *Complete Performance.* The Grant Agreement is also conditioned upon complete performance by the Grantee of past agreements or contracts between DMVA and the Grantee. Complete performance includes the Grantee's timely submission of the required final audit of past agreements or contracts, to DMVA. In the event DMVA determines that there has been incomplete performance of past agreements or contracts by the Grantee, DMVA, by giving written notice to the Grantee, will suspend payments under the Grant Agreement until such time as the Grantee has fulfilled its obligations under past agreements or contracts to the satisfaction of DMVA. When the Grantee has fulfilled its obligation under past agreements or contracts to DMVA's satisfaction, DMVA will resume payments under the Grant Agreement.
 - e. *Termination.* DMVA may terminate the Grant Agreement, at any time, by providing written notice of termination to the Grantee. Any notice of termination must specify the effective date of the termination. The Grantee may terminate this agreement by providing 60 days written notice of termination to DMVA.
 - f. *Return of Unused Grant Funds.* No later than July 30, or 30 calendar days after the effective date of termination, whichever is sooner, the Grantee shall return all unused grant funds and all interest earned from the grant funds, minus any anticipated costs for the Project Audit required in Section 10.f.iv., to DMVA.
19. *Effective Date.* This policy will take effect once approved by the Adjutant General of Pennsylvania. This policy will apply to all grant applications submitted on or after the effective date and all grant applications pending on the effective date.