



CONSIDERATION ITEM
TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION
August 15, 2024

AGENDA TOPIC: Fund for Veterans' Assistance 2025-2026 Request for Application (RFA)
DATE: August 15, 2024
DEPARTMENT: Fund for Veterans' Assistance
PRESENTED BY: Elaine Zavala, Director

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

To ensure the effective operation of the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) grant program, revisions are implemented to the Request for Application (RFA) and the governing documents associated with it. The FVA program awards reimbursement grants to eligible charitable organizations, local government agencies, and veterans service organizations that provide direct services to Texas veterans, dependents, and surviving spouses. A thorough review of these documents ensures that the grants process aligns with program goals, adheres to legal and regulatory standards, and supports the mission of providing critical services to our Texas veterans.

The purpose of this agenda item is to seek the Commission's approval for the 2025-2026 Request for Application (RFA) and governing documents associated with it.

For reference, the outline below lists the proposed changes found in each document.

Request for Applications (RFA)

- Page 1 – Title Page
 - Opening Date: Updated to Thursday, September 12, 2024.
 - Closing Date: Updated to Wednesday, November 12.
- Page 4
 - Funding Goals: Added findings from the Needs Assessment.
- Page 5
 - Meal Services: Removed the limitation that clients need to be homebound or have a service-connected disability.
 - Homeless Veteran Support: Removed the term "supportive services" to avoid confusion with a similarly named subcategory.
 - Employment Support: Renamed to "Skill-based training support" and clarified the difference between TVC services and skill-specific resources.
 - Transportation Programs and Services: Renamed to "Organizational Transportation Fleet" to differentiate between transportation provision and assisting with bus passes or car repairs.
 - Housing for Texas Heroes: Removed "very low" from the title; clients only need to meet low-income requirements.

- Page 6
 - Veteran County Service Officers: Can apply for and be awarded up to 3 grants, one for each grant program, plus a total of 4 if including the VTC grant.
 - Grant Management Standards: Removed federal regulations and will follow the state's grant management standards.
 - Removed federal regulations of 2 CFR 200, adopting Texas GMS instead.
- Page 7
 - Grant Period: Extended from 12 months to 14 months to align with the fiscal year and improve money management and performance reporting.
 - Grant Renewal: Sections 3.9.1 through 3.9.6 now provide more detailed information on grant renewals, offering greater transparency.
 - Renewal Criteria: Extended the cutoff date for performance data collection from February to March due to the 14-month grant period. Organizations must still achieve 60% of their grant performance.
- Page 8
 - Grant Reporting: Changed from quarterly to period-based reporting due to the 14-month grant. Organizations are expected to meet 20% of the target each period.
- Page 9
 - Amendment Deadline: Extended to May 31st from March 31st to accommodate the 14-month grant period. This extension allows non-renewed organizations to request a 6-month extension.
- Page 11
 - Total Funding Available: \$31 million expected for the upcoming grant cycle, including the Service Dog Program, VCSO Funding, and grant renewals.
 - Term of Grant: Extended from 12 months to 14 months.
- Page 12
 - Grant Applications: Organizations can apply for and be awarded a maximum of 3 grants per grant program, with County Governments eligible for up to 4 grants, including a VTC grant.
 - Opening and Closing Dates: Reflect the updated RFA timeline.
- Page 13
 - Funding Amounts: Increased to up to \$400k and \$600k.
 - Nonprofit Verification: FVA checks the IRS website to verify nonprofit status and tax returns, ensuring they can maintain 2 months of services. FVA staff may request additional information to ensure financial stability.
- Page 14
 - Audit Requirements: Removed specific audit requirements. Audits will still be reviewed via the federal audit clearinghouse, with notes on significant findings.
- Page 15
 - Risk Determination: Moved from application status to post-award status.

Annex A – Terms and Conditions: No Changes

Annex B – Grant Program Requirements

- Page 3
 - Changed titles from "Employment Support" to "Skill-Based Training Support" and from "Transportation Programs and Services" to "Organizational Transportation Fleet."
- Page 4
 - Veteran County Service Officers can apply for up to 3 grants per grant program, with County Governments eligible for up to 4 grants including a VTC grant. This change also applies to VSOs and nonprofits.
 - Removed federal regulations and will now follow state grant management standards.
- Page 5
 - The grant period is extended to 14 months, allowing the grant period to match the agency's fiscal year reporting timeline. Therefore, 15 monthly reimbursement requests are allowed.
- Page 6
 - The 14-month grant period ends on August 31, extending the closeout date to October 31.
- Page 8
 - Grantees are now required to charge all service costs and fees to the TVC grant, rather than charging clients on a sliding scale based on income.
- Page 11
 - Clarified the definitions of "Dependent Child" and "Spouse" to ensure organizations understand the differences.
- Page 13
 - Consolidated home weatherization, modification, and repairs into a single category called "Home Projects."

Appendix 1 – General Assistance Grant

- Pages 1-2:
 - Changed titles: "Skill-based training support" (formerly "Employment Support") and "Organizational Transportation Fleet" (formerly "Transportation Programs and Services").
- Page 4:
 - Assistive Technology: Now available to all clients, not just dependents and surviving spouses, recognizing veterans' need for faster access than the VA can provide.
 - Meal Services: Removed the requirement for clients to be homebound or have a service-connected disability.
- Page 5:
 - Homeless Veteran Support: Removed the term "supportive services" to avoid confusion with a similarly named subcategory.
- Page 6:
 - Employment Support: Renamed to "Skill-based training support," with a clarified distinction between TVC services and skill-specific resources.

- Page 8:
 - Transportation Programs: Renamed to "Organizational Transportation Fleet" to clarify the difference between transportation provision and assisting clients with bus passes or car repairs.
 - Added dependents as eligible beneficiaries, which was not previously allowed.
- Page 9:
 - Veteran Small Business Support: Expanded to include additional non-financial small business services.

Appendix 2 – Housing for Texas Heroes Grant

- Page 3:
 - Removed the term "very low" so that clients only need to meet "low-income" requirements.
 - Removed the requirement for a physical disability to be service-connected, acknowledging the needs of aging veterans.
- Page 5:
 - Increased the threshold for organizations to obtain a quote from \$10,000 to \$15,000

Appendix 3 – Veterans Mental Health Grant

- Page 2:
 - Services can now be provided by or under a licensed mental health professional.
- Page 4:
 - Added dependent spouses as eligible beneficiaries.
- Page 5:
 - Removed the word "Pilot" from the Service Dog Program title.

Appendix 4 – Veterans Treatment Court Grant: No Changes

BENEFIT(S):

The revisions to the Request for Applications (RFA) and associated documents enhance clarity, flexibility, and efficiency in the grants process. Key improvements include extending the grant period to 14 months, allowing the grant period to match the agency’s fiscal year reporting timeline. The updates also broaden eligibility criteria, simplify definitions, and increase funding limits to align with actual needs.

LONG-TERM FINANCIAL & BUDGETARY IMPACT:

The current Fund for Veterans’ Assistance (FVA) budget can support the proposed increase in grant limits due to the extension of the grant period from 12 to 14 months.

LEGAL ANALYSIS:

These governance documents are presented to the Commission, which oversees all policies and regulations governing the awarding of FVA grants.

RECOMMENDATION/PROPOSED MOTION:

I move that the Commission approves the 2025-2026 Request for Application (RFA) and associated governance documents as presented.