



Grants Programs

Building Excellence in Support and Training

Overview

This Factsheet explains the Department of Veterans' Affairs **Building Excellence in Support and Training** (BEST) program. BEST aims to improve the quality of pension and compensation claims by contributing funds to ex-service organisations (ESOs) to assist members of the veteran and defence communities access pension and other entitlements. BEST also assists ESOs in assisting clients to access a range of welfare services. BEST grants are available to provide salary assistance for advocates, pension and welfare officers and support staff, and for computers, software, hardware, consumables and ongoing running costs. A BEST grant is intended to be a contribution to costs incurred, not a full cost model.

What is BEST?

BEST provides funding to ESOs for pensions, compensation and welfare work, to assist veterans, their dependants and past and present members of the Australian Defence Force, and their families.

BEST aims to promote access to a range of welfare services and to improve the quality of pension and compensation claims.

What is eligible?

Funding is available:

- to assist with salary costs of advocates, pensions officers, welfare practitioners and ESO support staff,
- for computer software and hardware, and
- for consumables and ongoing running costs.

A BEST grant is intended to be a contribution to ESO costs in providing services to the veteran and defence communities. It is not to offset all costs and ESOs are expected to provide in-kind or other support to their pension, advocate and welfare officers, where they have the capacity to do so.

What is not eligible?

BEST funds will not be provided for rental, electricity or other utility costs.

Applicants cannot receive funding if they:

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- have received a current grant from another source which fully funds the same purpose,
- are charging for services undertaken for the veteran and defence communities; and
- use grant funds for other than claims or welfare related work.

Who can apply?

ESOs that provide welfare, advocate and pension assistance to veterans, their dependants, and past and present members of the Australian Defence Forces and their families, can apply for funding under BEST. ESOs must be incorporated under the relevant State or Territory legislation or be sponsored by an incorporated ESO to be eligible for funding.

The Department encourages ESOs operating in the same region to adopt a co-operative approach to providing services to clients. This increases both their efficiency and effectiveness and enables the Government to better target areas of high need. The Department is aware that, particularly in regional or remote areas, it is not always possible to establish co-operative arrangements. Therefore, each application is considered on its merits in the context of published funding priorities. These funding priorities can be found on the DVA Website at:

http://www.dva.gov.au/ex-service_organisations/grants/Pages/index.aspx

How does BEST link in with the Training and Information Program (TIP)?

The Training and Information Program (TIP) provides training and information for welfare, advocate and pensions officers who are working within ex-service organisations (ESOs). TIP training is delivered to enable them to provide the best possible advice to veterans and former serving members of the defence forces seeking their services. Practitioners, especially if they are funded through BEST, are required to undertake the appropriate levels of TIP training or an acceptable equivalent form of training.

What other community assistance can DVA provide?

Saluting Their Service

Supports projects and activities that directly commemorate Australia's servicemen and women who served in wars, conflicts and peace operations.

Veteran and Community Grants

Provides seeding funds for projects that support a healthy, quality lifestyle for members of the veteran community. The program also funds initiatives that reduce social isolation, support carers and improve access to community care services.

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Veterans' Health Week

Veterans' Health Week is held in October each year. It encourages the veteran community to think about their health needs and make positive changes to live stronger, healthier and happier lives.

In partnership with local ex-service organisations, community groups and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a range of events and activities are held during Veterans' Health Week which aims to raise awareness about health related issues across capital cities and major regional centres.

Non – DVA Grants

There are many State and Territory local government grants available. The relevant government website should assist in identifying what is available. However, a Federal Government grant that may be of interest is:

Volunteer Grants – Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs administers a Volunteer Grants program. These Grants are between \$1,000 and \$5,000 each and enable organisations to contribute towards the costs of training courses for volunteers and to undertake background screening checks for their volunteers. Funding is also available to purchase small equipment items to help volunteers and to contribute towards fuel reimbursement for their volunteers, including those who use their cars to transport others to activities, deliver food and assist people in need.

How to apply

The BEST program Guidelines, which now includes the Guide to Completing the Application Form, and the Application Form, (form no. D2727) are available on the DVA website:

http://www.dva.gov.au/ex-service_organisations/best/Pages/BEST.aspx

Applications for 2012-13 will be open from mid January 2012 and will close mid February 2012.

When is funding available?

There is one BEST funding round each year. Funding is for the period of the next financial year. Payment of grants is subject to previous funding being acquitted as required.

How are applications assessed?

Applications are assessed by DVA staff who make recommendations to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. Applicants are notified in writing of the Minister's decision.

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What are the funding priorities?

A set of priorities are used to decide which eligible applications can be funded. The funding priorities for Round 13 (2011/12 financial year) are to support ESOs that:

1. can demonstrate a reasonably clear link between the funding sought and the demographics, geographical location and service needs of the veteran population to be assisted;
2. do not seek more funding than the total amount approved in the last Round of funding granted - with the possible exception of a salary increase to current Australian Public Service (APS) rates;
3. have a co-operative approach to service delivery; and
4. can demonstrate that support from an ESO, an ex-service club or from other sources (either financial or 'in-kind') is being provided or is being sought.

What happens if a grant is approved?

If the Minister approves a grant, the applicant is informed in writing of the funding amount. The applicant will be required to sign documentation defining the terms and conditions of accepting the grant.

The signed documentation must be received by the DVA before the grant can be paid.

The method of payment is by direct payment into the applicant's bank account.

Organisations are required to acquit the grant following the conclusion of the grant year. An acquittal form and guidelines will be provided for this purpose. Information about all successful grants is published to the DVA Website within seven (7) days of the grant agreement being signed by both parties. This information can be found at:

Website: http://www.dva.gov.au/ex-service_organisations/grants/Pages/index.aspx

If a grant is not approved, a letter of explanation is provided, inviting the applicant to discuss the reason for rejection in more detail, if required.

Other Factsheets

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:

- TIP 01 - Training and Information Program
- GS 12 - Veteran and Community Grants
- GS 14 - Overview of Saluting Their Service

All DVA Factsheets are available on request from any DVA office or on the DVA website at <http://factsheets.dva.gov.au/factsheets/>

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA relating to complex or important matters.

More information

For further information, contact DVA on:

133 254 - metropolitan callers

1800 555 254 - non-metropolitan callers.

Note: *If you use a mobile phone, calls may be more costly. You are advised to use a normal phone (a landline phone) when ringing these numbers.

Website: http://www.dva.gov.au/ex-service_organisations/grants/Pages/index.aspx