

Grant Seeker Guidelines

The Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF) of South Carolina is a non-profit fund. It is a creative, cost-effective and tax-efficient way for people to invest in their military community. The VTF resources come from donations made by individuals, companies, foundations, and charitable organizations. These donations are used to create charitable Funds, which provide resources for grant making and help make a positive difference in the military community.

Unrestricted donations from donors to VTF distributed through the Grants Program, a competitive process designed to help nonprofit organizations meet changing needs in the state of South Carolina for Veterans and the Military Community. Following an evaluation process, the VTF awards grants based on identified veteran issues and the relative merit of the proposals received.

1. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

The VTF considers grant applications from organizations that:

- Are determined as charitable nonprofit by the Internal Revenue Code. Public entities or other charitable, educational or cultural organizations that focus on our Veteran and Military Community.
 - Provide programs and services to the state of South Carolina for Veteran and Military Community.
 - The VTF will accept only one application per organization per year.
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2. WHAT IS THE RANGE OF GRANTS?

The VTF does not set a minimum amount for grant awards.

3. IS THERE A MATCH REQUIREMENT FOR FUNDS RECEIVED?

It is preferred that funds granted by The VTF are to be matched by funding from other sources, but not a requirement.. Organizations are to submit only one (1) grant application to The VTF per calendar year.

4. WHAT DOES THE VTF SUPPORT?

Currently, The VTF considers and funds applications in the following eight major program areas specifically applied to our Veteran and Military Community:

- Arts/Cultural
 - Children/Family Services
 - Civic Affairs
 - Community Development
 - Education
 - Environmental
 - Health
 - Human Services
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5. WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD APPLICATIONS EMPHASIZE?

The VTF looks for proposals that impact our Military Community which:

- Has a program/project that will positively impact veterans and military community.
- Develop competencies and skills enabling veterans and their families to live fuller, more productive lives;
- Addresses a significant need affecting a broad segment of the region's military population;

- The ability to leverage other funding through the use of matching grants;
- Promote the cooperation of two or more agencies to avoid duplication of services and to coordinate resources and programs;
- Demonstrate the capacity to provide the necessary services using good administrative and financial management;
- Demonstrate support from outside the organization to sustain programs with volunteers and in-kind resources;
- Promote systems or approaches which can prevent individual, family or community problems.

When evaluating requests, The VTF also considers the balance of geography, needs and resources in the community.

6. WHAT ACTIVITIES TYPICALLY DO NOT RECEIVE FUNDING?

The VTF discourages applicants from submitting applications in support of the following:

- Grants for individuals;
 - Capital campaigns;
 - Deficit financing and debt retirement;
 - Endowments;
 - Political organization or campaigns;
 - Lobbying legislators or influencing elections;
 - Special fundraising events/celebration functions;
 - Marketing endeavors and personal research;
 - Core operating expenses for public and private elementary and secondary schools and public and private colleges and universities;
 - Projects that are typically the funding responsibility of federal, state or local governments;
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7. ARE NEW ORGANIZATIONS AND OPERATING SUPPORT ELIGIBLE?

The VTF will consider the funding of new organizations for start-up or operating support, and smaller organizations for operating support. However, because The VTF is interested in funding work that continues to address veterans and military community needs long after the grant funds are depleted, these requests are reviewed carefully on a case-by-case basis and must make a convincing case that:

- The condition the proposal addresses is significant and can be measured;
 - The applicant has the organizational ability to address the problem, is aware of other organizations that are working in the same area, and is the best organization to do this work;
 - The organization and its program are likely to achieve the outcomes described in the proposal; and
 - The organization has plans in place to ensure that its programs will continue to operate once grants funds are expended.
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8. CAN ORGANIZATIONS APPLY FOR CONTINUED FUNDING?

Normally, The VTF does not support organizations on an on-going basis, preferring to distribute its currently limited funds among many organizations. When The South Carolina Veterans Trust Fund receives a request for repeat funding, decision-makers carefully review proposals for other sources of funding and evidence of long-term financial strength. Generally, a project receives funding for one year. If an organization has received funding from The South Carolina Veterans Trust Fund for the past two consecutive years, the organization 's request may be denied. However, organizations are encouraged to apply for grants the following year.

9. HOW DOES AN ORGANIZATION APPLY FOR A GRANT?

Any nonprofit organization interested in seeking grant support should follow these steps:

- Review the Guidelines for Unrestricted Grants and determine if your organization is eligible to compete for funds. You can contact The VTF at 803-734-0203 to help you make that decision;
- Click application link, create a user account, and record your login user name and password for future logins. (This would be ideal to have an online request capability)
- Once your account has been created you will be asked a few pre-qualifying questions. You may then proceed with your application.
- You will not be able to make changes to your application once you submit.
- **Applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on (30 Sep, 31 Dec, 31 Mar, or 30 Jun) to be considered by the Board at its quarterly meeting.**

If your proposal is approved, The VTF will schedule a meeting with you to determine if the program identified in the application remains unchanged. It will also be a time to determine the appropriate distribution of the grant.

10. HOW DO I DEVELOP OUTCOMES FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION?

Through outcome measures The VTF wants to know how it's funding is stimulating positive concrete change, as well as identify promising practices. Outcome evaluation also helps organizations assess their programs as a step toward greater effectiveness. The VTF asks organizations to identify target outcomes in their grant proposal, and if funded, to report on those target outcomes in their final report.

In the Grant Application form, each applicant must:

- identify a up to three (3) outcomes that will result from the proposed project, and
- indicate the method(s) the organization will use to measure the outcomes.

Outcomes are the benefits and/or changes that occur in the military community (individuals or groups) as a result of their participation in a program or activity. Outcomes can involve knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior, performance, status or condition.

Do not confuse outcomes with broad or vague statements or with counting program activities. Statements such as "Veterans will feel more empowered," are not adequate outcomes because they are vague and too broad. Similarly, counting program activities (like the number of veterans attending a training session, or the number of meals served to military community families who are homeless) only describes the amount of services delivered. It does not indicate whether participants benefited from the program.

Remember that each outcome should have two parts (1) a prediction of results and (2) a measurement method to determine whether each outcome has been achieved. The outcomes presented by applicants will vary because they depend on the specific goals and activities of the particular program.

Here is the difference between a goal and an outcome/objective.

- **GOAL:** To help unemployed veterans find meaningful employment.
- **OUTCOME/OBJECTIVE:** Creation of a viable employment program to assist 25 Veterans a month find meaningful employment to improve their way of life and reduce their dependency upon other agencies to provide for by placing a minimum of 50% Veterans contacted in to meaningful employment opportunities and documenting the results both positive and negative in the national Brassring system.

Measurable outcomes/Objective

- The creation of what? (An employment program)
- To assist who and how many of who? (25 Veterans contacted per month)
- To do what? (Find meaningful employment)
- By how much? (50% contacted find meaningful employment)
- Using this tool? (Brassring)
- When? (After three months participation)

11. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

Once your application has been submitted it is reviewed by The VTF staff before it is assigned to the Grant Distribution and Management Committee. The Grant Distribution and Management Committee may conduct site visits or telephone interviews for proposals selected for a more extensive evaluation. The Grants Distribution and Management Committee recommendations are then presented to the VTF Board Members.

- Following its review, the Grants Distribution and Management Committee makes funding recommendations to The VTF Board Members at the Quarterly Board meeting.
 - The VTF Board Members make the final decision on grant awards at the Quarterly Board meeting. Written notification of grant decisions are sent to applicants within one week following the board meeting.
 - A grant recipient has up to 30 days following the award notification date to request the funds. If funds are not requested within 30 days of the award date the grant will be rescinded.
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13. WHAT ARE THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

After receipt of the grant funds, grant recipients are required to submit an interim report due at the request of the VTF, and a final year-end report within 30 days of the anniversary of the final distribution of funds. The final report should detail how the funds were used along with the results of the outcomes submitted in the proposal.

14. WHERE DO I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

The VTF welcomes your questions and comments. Please call the VTF office at 803-734-0203.