



Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) 2024–25

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) 2024–25 grant opportunity.

Assessment of applications was in accordance with the procedure detailed in the grant opportunity guidelines (the guidelines) and outlined in the selection process below.

Overview

The application submission period opened on 6 January 2024 and closed on 29 February 2024.

The objective of the BEST program is to assist ex-service organisations (ESOs) to improve the quality of claims received by the department at the primary determining level, reduce the rate of appeals to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) and promote the provision of wellbeing services to the veteran and defence community.

The intended outcomes of the program are to ensure:

- the veteran and defence communities can benefit from having better informed ESO advocates who can ensure claims lodged with the department are of a high standard and contain all required information to enable timely and quality decisions
- ESO advocates will assist in improving claims assessment efficiency
- the veteran and defence communities will have access to appropriate compensation and wellbeing advocacy services.


Selection process

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) undertook the initial screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the guidelines. This information was provided to the department's grant opportunity delegate for the final decision on whether an application met the eligibility and or compliance criteria.

The department assessed and considered all eligible and compliant applications through a demand driven grant process.

The grant advisory committee (the committee) established by the department, comprised of subject matter experts who assessed applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate.

The grant amount offered to each eligible applicant was calculated using a formula which was determined in conjunction with the ESO community. The formula was applied uniformly to all eligible applications. If an organisation met the eligibility criteria, they were considered for a grant.



The funding formula considered:

- the amount of salary and administrative grant funding requested
- compensation and wellbeing workload information provided in the completed application form
- the total amount of funding available for the grant funding round
- the total number and combined workload of all eligible applicants.

Following preliminary assessment by the department using the formula, all outcomes were referred to the committee, who made funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate.

The committee made recommendations regarding:

- the overall objectives for the program
- conformance with eligibility criteria
- the outcome of the application, based on the funding formula.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs approved the funding to the successful grant recipients.

For applications which did not meet the requirements outlined in the guidelines, applicants were notified of the outcome in writing.

Selection results

ESOs which were funded demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility and compliance requirements outlined in the guidelines.

General feedback

This feedback is to assist grant applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application for this grant opportunity and provide guidance in completing the application form for future rounds.


The successful applicants were eligible organisations and met the objectives of the program. As per section 7.2 of the guidelines, the grant amount offered to eligible applicants was calculated based on:

- an applicant's requested grant amount and workload information provided in the completed application form
- total funding offered in the grant round
- the BEST funding formula.

Read the supporting information before applying

- It is important to read all available information provided about BEST grants when applying for funding, especially the grant opportunity documentation provided in full on the [Community Grant Hub's website¹](https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/) when the round is open.
- The grant opportunity documentation is specific to each BEST grant round and contains important information about the purpose of the program, changes since the previous round, eligibility and compliance requirements, timeframes and how to apply.


¹ <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/>

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- The application form included helpful information relating to mandatory information which was required by the department for the selection process.
 - Applications from sponsored organisations had to be completed and signed by the sponsoring organisation. A current Letter of Declaration had to be signed by both the sponsored and sponsoring organisation and uploaded as supporting documentation.
 - As BEST funding is distributed using a funding formula, the full amount of funding available was shared among all eligible and compliant applicants. It is important the reporting of workload is consistent among applicants to ensure the distribution of funding is fair.
 - VRB and AAT appeals which were referred to other organisations to complete should not have been included. Some organisations claimed VRBs and AATs without appropriately qualified CL3 or CL4 ATDP advocates. While the outreach work is often initiated at lower levels, the item should only have been claimed by the organisation representing the veteran at either the VRB or AAT. This was to avoid the same work being counted by two applicants. Organisations providing outreach for VRB and AAT cases were able to count that as VRB or AAT preparation workload in their application form. This was a new work type introduced in the 2024-25 BEST round.
 - Workload completed by trainee advocates should not have been included. This workload had to be attributed to the ATDP qualified mentor.
 - Applicants had to include all the requested attachments:
 - Evidence of professional indemnity insurance was mandatory. Certificates for public liability or quotes for insurance were not sufficient for this purpose.
 - An attachment requesting information on Wellbeing Support Officers was introduced in 2024-25. This was a mandatory attachment to enable the department to quantify the associated Wellbeing Support Officers workload. Applicants should not have included Wellbeing Advocates on the attachment. Wellbeing Advocates were required to be listed on the application form itself.
 - When considering your Wellbeing hours, the DVA Website - [Workload Definitions | Department of Veterans' Affairs \(dva.gov.au\)](https://www.dva.gov.au/workload-definitions) provided a definition on the wellbeing activity workload.

Eligibility and compliance

To be considered for a grant, ESOs had to ensure their application met the following requirements:

- any advocates recorded on the application form had to be listed on the ATDP register, including their correct qualifications
- trainee advocates had to be recorded in the designated trainee section of the application form and not on the ATDP advocate list
- only ATDP qualified Wellbeing Advocates are able to complete the wellbeing activities listed as wellbeing advocacy such as providing support for funerals, housing or accommodation, or assisting with a crisis. Wellbeing Support Officers



provided transport and visited veterans and they could only count the work associated with these types of support

- all reported compensation and wellbeing workload had to be undertaken by practitioners with up-to-date ATDP qualifications
- when recording Compensation Advocate workloads, applicants had to ensure each claim was counted as a single claim, regardless of the number of conditions. For example, if a claim was submitted for 6 conditions, it was recorded as one claim only. It was important for all applicants use this method to ensure consistency in workload reporting. Please note, the funding formula took into consideration the volume and complexity of the work through workload ratings
- salary expenses and equipment/ administration expenses claimed had to be for eligible expenditure as outlined in Appendix A of the guidelines
- applicants had to hold professional indemnity insurance available through the Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association Inc. (VITA), or a similar insurance provider. Applicants had to be able to provide a valid Certificate of Currency as supporting documentation
- the department cannot fund applications from an organisation which had overdue acquittals for any previous DVA grant funding at the closing date and time of the grant opportunity
- an organisation had to complete at least 30 compensation or wellbeing workload units (as calculated through the funding formula) to be eligible for a BEST grant. Please see the guidelines for more information on the funding formula.

Eligible entity types

To be eligible, an ESO had to be an eligible entity type. If an ESO was not listed as an eligible entity type, the ESO may still have been eligible to apply under a sponsorship arrangement with another ESO who was an eligible entity type. If an ESO was applying as a sponsored organisation, the sponsored organisation had to ensure the sponsor completed the application form on their behalf.

Definition of an ESO


To be eligible for a BEST grant, an ESO was considered to be an organisation:

- whose membership consisted primarily of Australian veterans, past and present members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and/or their dependants
- which was established primarily to provide pensions, advocacy and/or wellbeing assistance to Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants
- which did not operate as a business or charge any fee for acting on behalf of Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants in the provision of claims or wellbeing services.

Applicant types

ESOs could choose to apply as one of two applicant types:

1. an ESO applying in their own right for funding for their own organisation

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2. an ESO applying for funding as a sponsoring organisation on behalf of another ESO that may not be an eligible entity type.

Applying in your own right

To be eligible to apply in your own right, you had to be an ESO and one of the following eligible entity types:

- Company
- Cooperative
- Corporate State or Territory Entity
- Incorporated Association
- Indigenous Corporation
- Statutory Entity.

If an applicant applied as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust, the Trustee had to be an eligible entity type, as listed above.

Applying as a sponsoring applicant

Whether or not an ESO had an eligible entity type, another eligible ESO could apply as a sponsor on their behalf. Funding is managed by the sponsoring applicant, but any recommended grant amount was assessed based on the sponsored organisation's activity as provided in the application form. A sponsoring applicant could apply on behalf of more than one ESO. The sponsoring applicant had to submit a separate application form for each sponsored organisation.

To be eligible, a sponsoring applicant had to be an ESO and one of the following eligible entity types:

- Company
- Cooperative
- Corporate State or Territory Entity
- Incorporated Association
- Indigenous Corporation
- Statutory Entity.

Responsibilities of a sponsor

The sponsoring applicant was responsible for:

- bearing executive management responsibility and being accountable to the department for the appropriate use of grant funds by the sponsored organisation, in accordance with the terms of the grant agreement
- the receipt and distribution of grant funds to the sponsored organisation
- the collection, collation, and provision of all audit, reporting and acquittal documentation for the grant
- providing contact information for the sponsored organisation in the application form where required

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- completing the current signed Letter of Declaration using the mandatory template provided.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback can be provided for this grant opportunity.

If you are seeking individual feedback on your application, please submit a written request by emailing DVA.Grants.Operations@dva.gov.au.