



Arapahoe County

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Legislation Text

File #: 23-057, **Version:** 1

To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Katherine Smith, Director, Community Resources

Prepared By:

Courtney Stryker, Division Manager, Senior Resources and Veteran Services

Presenter: Courtney Stryker, Division Manager, Senior Resources and Veteran Services

Subject:

3:30 PM *Division of Military and Veteran Affairs Veterans Assistance Grant RFP Grant Request

Purpose and Request:

The purpose of this request is to obtain approval from the Board of County Commissioners to apply for the 2023-2024 Veterans Assistance Grant thru the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

Background and Discussion: In 2014, the Veteran Assistance Grant Program was established by the State General Assembly to enhance the health and well-being of veterans who live in Colorado. These funds are to be used for services that increase over-all well-being, such as mental health services, family counseling, job training, employment, housing for homeless veterans and other types of assistance. Nonprofit organizations and governmental entities that serve Colorado veterans are eligible to apply for funds.

We are requesting the maximum amount of assistance from the Colorado Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Office for \$100,000. The request details are broken down by dollar amount in the attached budget.

The following categories are the new services that, if approved the Arapahoe County VSO Office will be able to provide veterans they interact with.

1) Psychological Evaluation - in order to submit a claim to the VA for Veteran Disability or other benefits the

Veteran applying must undergo a Psychological Evaluation to determine their “level of disability” as defined by the VA. Currently the VSOs work with The Sturm Center at the Denver University who is certified to complete the full assessment and allow the veteran to obtain the “diagnosis” needed to submit a claim. Some veterans are not able to pay for this evaluation if they have not had it before and this funding would allow for the County VSO to pay for this for 12 veterans. The VSO is also working to increase partnerships with other community health centers like Doctors Care, and this will also increase this accessibility for this service.

2) Document Recovery Assistance - this service will provide funds so that veterans working with the VSO can obtain or apply for necessary documents for their VA Disability Claim. These include Marriage Certificates, Death Certificates, Drivers Licenses, Divorce Decrees, Education Records, etc. By assisting with funding to obtain these necessary documents we anticipate being able to also submit claims faster.

3) Transportation Assistance - Currently RTD only provides free rides on public transportation for active military, we will be requesting funds to have at least 1,000 bus tickets available for non-active veterans working with the VSO needing transportation assistance to travel to and from appointments, with the VSO and other requirements like the DMV or a psych eval until their claim is approved.

4) Emergency Assistance - Other current assistance available is for gas and grocery gift cards, capped at \$50. This service item will focus on the more significant requests like funds towards housing deposits, vehicle repairs, medical expenses and home repairs. This assistance will be capped at \$2,000 per veteran, per incident until the funds are depleted. We will work to stagger approval so it can last the entirety of the grant year.

5) Mental Health - In partnering with WarriorNow we will provide funds for veteran families seeking/needing therapy support during transition times or as needed.

6) Physical Health - The VSO has worked with Planet Fitness to create a package for veterans to help support their physical health, providing a yearly membership for the veteran where they can also bring a guest with them and attend any group classes. This will help support physical health and address veteran isolation by encouraging peers/mentors/friends to participate in activities with the veteran and build trusting relationships.

7) Admin Expense - This current grant allows for 10% of the request to be used for Admin expenses. We intend to use these funds for the current BAIII position who will oversee the grant and work with veterans applying for any of the services and who are referred to the BAIII from the VSO they are currently working with. This time will be cost allocated to the grant directly based on time spent.

Fiscal Impact: With this \$100,000 request, there is no fiscal ask of the county as there is no match requirement. If approved, we will require a budget supplemental for the VSO budget to allow for use of funds towards the services discussed.

Alternatives: The Board of County Commissioners may choose not to allow the Veteran Services Division to apply for new funding, eliminating these increased service options designed to support Veterans in the community and may make recommendations for other funding sources.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- ☒ Be fiscally sustainable
- ☒ Provide essential and mandated service
- ☒ Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: The staff agrees with this recommendation for funding.

Concurrence: N/A.