The 2011-12 Freedom Grants were very popular. Due to the demand, we have increased the number of $2,000 Freedom Grants to be awarded from 75 to 100.

Grant applications will be judged by their completeness, the extent of Lodge support, and its predicted impact on those it is intended to benefit. Lodges which pledge their own resources, either in terms of volunteers or finances, will be given extra credit towards approval of their application.

Lodges which have failed to return a Final Report form for any Lodge grant or which are not in compliance with GL Statute 16.010 are ineligible to apply for the Freedom Grant or any other Lodge grant.


A Freedom Grant may fund more than one activity. For example, $500 could be used for care packages, $1000 to purchase Christmas gifts, and $500 could be used for Thanksgiving dinner at a veterans hospital or nursing home.

Freedom Grants awarded by the Elks National Service Commission may be combined with grants from the Elks National Foundation to make even larger programs having a greater impact. However, the grants must be applied for separately, and there is no guarantee that both the Elks National Foundation and the Elks National Veterans Service Commission will award grants to the same Lodge for the same purpose.

Policies & Guidelines
A Freedom Grant project must:
- Address a need identified for our Active Duty Military or Veterans.
- Have significant Elks-funded Program leadership involvement and visible Elks identification. The Elks-funded Program must be the driving force in the planning and implementation of the project(s).
- Improve the lives of our Military, Veterans, and/or their families.

Suggested Uses of Freedom Grants (in no particular order-list is not exhaustive)
- Helping Homeless Veterans. This could mean appliances for or repairs to transitional housing, bus passes, phone cards, clothing, or helping a local hospital host a ‘Stand Down’ for homeless veterans.
- Inviting the members and or families of the local National Guard and other military bases to the Lodge for dinner. Also bringing the residents of local hospitals and nursing homes to the Lodge and arranging transportation.
- Dinners, picnics, barbeques at the local hospital, nursing home, or military base.
- Sponsoring ‘Honor Flights’
- Purchasing adaptive sports equipment for wounded warriors.
- Hunting, camping, fishing, or other outdoor activities for veterans and/or ‘wounded warriors’.
- Christmas, birthday, or ‘anytime’ gifts for hospitalized veterans or for the families of active duty military personnel.
- Purchasing materials to modify the home of a disabled veteran.
- Therapeutic or recreational equipment for a hospital or nursing home.
- Care packages to active military overseas.
- Assisting local veterans who are ‘shut in’ and are unable to travel.
- Support for Fisher House (on-site housing for the families of hospitalized military)
- Sometimes a donation to a legitimate local organization may be the only way to help veterans. One organization prepared frozen meals and delivered them to veterans who were shut in. For $30 per month, each veteran received a package of ten home-made, nutritious frozen dinners each month.

Veterans Service Grant funds **cannot** be used to:
- Purchase land or buildings.
- Give Cash Directly to Homeless Veterans
- Establish or increase an existing permanent foundation, trust, or permanent interest-bearing account.
- Directly benefit specific Elks members, unless they are part of the community served as a whole.
- Pay salaries or other personnel costs, other than necessary, one-time-only contracted technical expertise, as outlined in the grant proposal and approved by the Elks National Foundation.
- Pay individual travel expenses of any kind, unless travel is essential and integral to the project’s implementation, as outlined in the grant proposal and approved by the Elks National Foundation.
- Help any individual(s) to obtain an academic degree or professional advancement, or for any individual(s) to attend a seminar or conference.
- Reimburse the applicant for expenses associated with projects already undertaken and in progress, or for projects that are already completed. The Elks National Veterans Service Commission will only provide funds to service projects that have been reviewed and approved prior to their start.
- Replace Lodge funds already set aside for veterans’ service programs. Freedom Grant funds may be added to existing program funds, but cannot replace funds that have already been designated for Veterans.

The following are not recommended for Freedom Grants applications:
• Dinner at the Lodge to ‘honor’ veterans, without bringing anyone in from the outside such as a military base, hospital, or nursing home. A dinner at the Lodge honoring veterans may be acceptable if the Freedom Grant was used to pay for entertainment, and the event included a fundraiser expecting to raise more than the $2,000 from the grant. Any funds raised in such a manner would have to be used for Lodge veterans’ programs.

• Straight donations to a hospital or organization with no specific purpose. Hospitals and nursing homes have many specific needs and to meet these needs they rely on private donations. If there is a specific item or items a hospital needs and the Freedom Grant could be used to purchase or assist in purchasing the item(s), such a purpose is acceptable. A facility may need special therapeutic equipment, or help in refurbishing a recreation area. A Freedom Grant was awarded last year to pay for guitars and an instructor for a music therapy program which benefitted veterans suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

• Do not apply for a Freedom Grant to pay for something the Lodge can supply itself, or to offset the cost of an existing program. Freedom Grants were created to help veterans either by creating new programs, or expanding existing programs. If your Lodge was sponsoring bingo at a hospital once a month, a Freedom Grant could be used to increase bingo to twice a month.

• If your Lodge already has a Thanksgiving Dinner for the veterans of a local hospital, a Freedom Grant could be used for an additional event, like a Fourth of July picnic. Freedom Grant funds may be added to existing program funds, but cannot replace funds that have already been designated for Veterans.

• Using Freedom Grant money for a State or District project. Lodges will not be permitted to ‘pool’ Freedom Grants in order to fund a program requiring perhaps tens of thousands of dollars. Freedom Grants are to be used by the Lodge and its volunteers to help the local community. There are situations for which an exception could be made.