



InstaGrants

Veteran Grants Edition

Lodge Grants provide opportunities for Elks to get to know veterans in the community and to show continuing support to those in need. If your Lodge is applying for a grant to serve veterans but you're not sure how to do it, here are a few ideas to get you started.

Project #1 Stand Down: This event provides a central location to distribute supplies and services to veterans experiencing homelessness. Veterans come to Stand Downs to receive food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, haircuts, and dental exams. At some events, providers also offer referrals to further forms of assistance such as health care, housing, employment, and counseling.

How to get started.

Contact your nearest VA and other community veteran organizations to find out if a Stand Down is planned in your area. If an event is not already planned, look for a location where your Lodge can establish one. Determine what needed supplies or services your Lodge could provide and designate Elks to purchase, organize, and prepare them for the day of the event.

How to make this project a success.

Do your research! Talk to other volunteers about what they've learned from participating in past Stand Downs. Keep in mind that some items, like dress shirts or extra-large clothing, are often donated less frequently.

How to make it your own.

Distribute supplies in a reusable backpack or tote bag with your Lodge's name on it. To offer continued support, include invitations to meals or other events that your Lodge will provide for veterans in need.

Elks in Action: Eugene, Ore., Lodge No. 357 joins area Lodges and their community to provide glasses, dental care vans, clothing, and supplies for their local Stand Down. Elks serve breakfast and lunch during the Stand Down, volunteer to set up the event, and check in attending veterans. This huge gathering of services for veterans provides plenty of opportunity for Elks to participate.

Project #2 Welcome Home Kits: When veterans transition into permanent housing, they often don't have the basic items needed to set up a household. Welcome Home Kits are a great way to provide cleaning supplies, bedding, small appliances, and kitchen items that will help veterans to be prepared and feel comfortable in their new homes.

How to get started.

Look for veteran housing programs in your community that will refer your Lodge to veterans in need of new home supplies. Find out if you will be able to deliver supplies directly to the veterans, or if you'll need to distribute kits through your partner organization.

How to make this project a success.

Plan to have a secure place to store household items you're collecting for donation. Consider if you'll need to rent a truck or find volunteer Elks to transport large items. If the need in your area exceeds the amount of a grant, consider making additional kits and submitting the receipts to be reimbursed through the ENVSC Welcome Home Kit Program.

How to make it your own.

When it's time to deliver the kits, throw a housewarming party for the veterans. If the kit recipients are anonymous, Lodge members could create hand written letters of appreciation to include with the donated items. Establish an Adopt-A-Veteran program with your lodge to offer continuing support for veterans in their new homes

Elks in Action: Lakewood, Colo., Lodge No. 1777 supports transitioning veterans with a versatile approach, from providing furniture and household supply Starter Kits for veterans moving into new apartments to offering Street Packs of personal supplies for veterans who are living outdoors. Elks collaborate with the local Veterans Court, the Valor Point transitional home, and other partner organizations to find the best ways to help veterans in need.

Project #3 Job Fair: Assisting veterans and transitioning servicemembers with their search for employment is an important way to show support. Elks can help by gathering resources that will save time and energy for veterans going through the job search.

How to get started.

Find partner organizations and service providers that can offer a variety of resources that relate to veterans who are seeking employment. Seek out companies that have made a commitment to hiring veterans. Don't forget to prepare enough tables, chairs, and parking for the expected number of participants.

How to make this project a success.

In addition to offering information about job openings, make the most of the event by offering concrete resources such as clothing appropriate for employment, assistance with transportation, and job interview practice sessions.

How to make it your own.

Elks could share their own specialized skills, or Lodge space could be used for future training events with partner organizations. Some veterans may appreciate assistance with resume writing or filling out job applications.

Elks in Action: Billings, Mont., Lodge No. 394 holds a Job Fair and Career Mini-Summit, as well as hosting six weekly employment workshops to help veterans develop resumes, learn computer skills, get tips for job interviews, and put together portfolios. These events are made possible in part by their strong community partnerships with employment and small business organizations. Elks set up meeting space for planning and the day of the events, as well as follow up meetings with their partners to improve the project each year.

Project #4 Activities for Military Families: When a military member or veteran is part of the family, extra support from Elks makes a big difference. Many families could use a hand collecting supplies for new babies or kids going back to school. Activities at the Lodge are a great time to welcome them into the Elks family and distribute these supplies.

How to get started.

Get acquainted with the military families in your area to find out what kind of supplies are needed. Contact local service organizations, and if you live near a military base, contact the Family Readiness Group to ask about what type of support Elks can provide. Not every family will have the same needs, so try not to make assumptions when deciding how to plan your project.

How to make this project a success.

When inviting families to events, make sure there is adequate transportation and something offered for all ages of family members. Consider ways to show continuing support after your grant program has ended by inviting families to regular Lodge events or holding a food and clothing drive to cover needs that come up later in the year.

How to make it your own.

If there are families with children in your Lodge, host a field day or an art project where they can interact with military kids in the community. If you're providing school supplies

or meals, try to gather a list from families before shopping so that you can personalize your selections.

Elks in Action: Sahuarita, Ariz., Lodge No. 2851 is supporting new parents in military families by delivering baby supplies through a nearby National Guard Family Readiness Unit. Elks are also providing ingredients for meals that older kids in the family will enjoy. In addition to shopping and packing the family baskets, Elks volunteer to distribute resources to families of deployed servicemembers, at Camp Corral for military children, and an annual Movie Night.

[Looking for project partners? Not sure how to connect with local veterans in need? Check out this guide on how your Lodge can get started!](#)