



Serving our Nation's Veterans



Our Mission

So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them.

The mission of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission is to take this pledge and put it into action, to back this pledge with hours of not just service but service that makes an impact.

Because it's not enough to simply remember our veterans: it's the ENVSC's job to serve those veterans.

And when there are so many veterans in need, it's our job to focus on those veterans.





General Guidelines

If Lodges are using ENVSC funds to serve veterans and military members in need, the project must focus on one of these five areas of increased need.

- Employment
- Homelessness and Housing
- Military Families
- Health (including mental health)
- Educational Support

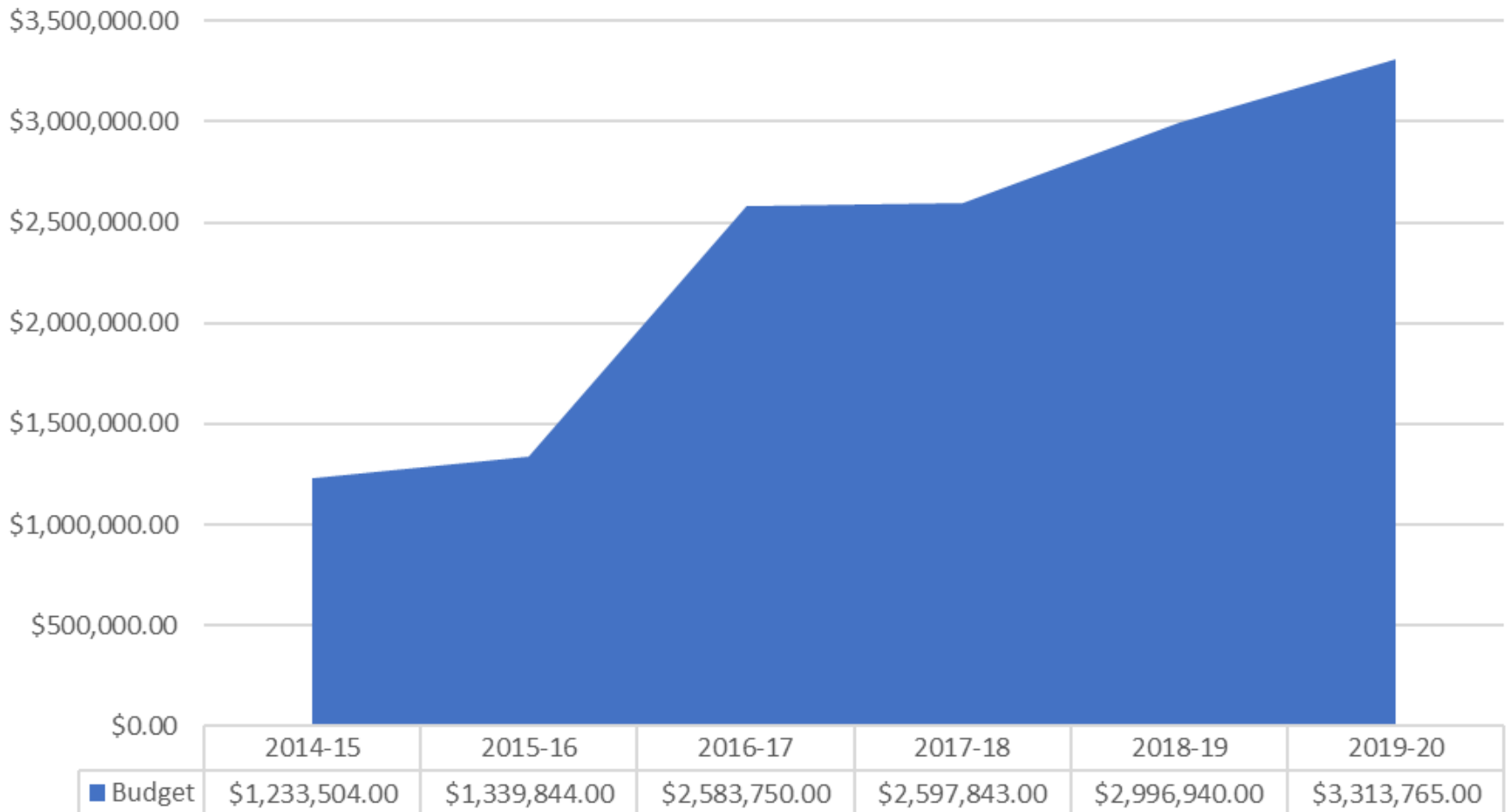
WHY THESE 5 AREAS?

Research by the VA, the Department of Defense, Blue Star Families, IAVA, VFW and other VSOs show that statistically these are the 5 areas that veterans and military members need and request the most help with.



ENVSC Growth Over the Past 6 Years

Budget





Today's Veterans

- Projected U.S. Population of Veterans: **21,999,000**
- Approximately **9.8 million** Veterans used at least one VA benefit or service in FY 2017.
 - Which means more than half of veterans in the United States don't use VA services.
- Forty five percent of all VA users received benefits or services from multiple programs.
- **45.23%** of Veterans are aged 65 or older
- *And there are more surveys everywhere!*
 - **DAV:** <https://www.dav.org/veterans-pulse-survey/>
 - **IAVA:** <https://iava.org/survey2019/#step-0>
 - **Blue Star Families:** <https://bluestarfam.org/survey/>
 - **Wounded Warrior Project:**
<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/mission/annual-warrior-survey>





Think Local

- Think local.
 - **442,579** veterans in Missouri.
 - One-fifth of homeless veterans live in California.
 - Alaska has the highest percentage of veterans aged 20-34 at 17 percent.
 - More than half of the veterans in New Jersey are 65 and older.
 - Veterans in rural areas may have a harder time accessing services, and rely more on tele-health centers.
- You can find information about veterans at ***va.gov/vetdata***.
 - Click on State Summaries, and it will take you to a page where you can access detailed information about the veteran population in your state.





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Stay Informed to Stay Relevant

***“It is not necessary
to change. Survival
is not mandatory.”***

- W Edwards Deming







Change is Inevitable





Finding Local Veterans in Need

“Our Lodge wants to help, but we can’t find any veterans in need.”



Sound familiar? Our office fields this question from time to time, particularly in areas without a VA facility nearby.





VA: The Obvious Answer



- The VA operates thousands of facilities, and not all are hospitals.
 - Housing facilities for formerly homeless veterans, offsite clinics,
 - Benefits offices
 - Vets Centers.
- The VA has dozens of outreach programs in each facility.
 - Adaptive sports programs
 - Skills-based classes
 - Whole Health program
 - Caregiver support programs
 - Social Workers
 - Vets Center Counselors
- Keep an open mind, and research where the needs are, even if it means leaving your comfort zone and changing what your Lodge has done in the past.





Caregiver Support

Recently, Ashland Lodge No. 944 shared a national VA Spirit award with the staff members at the Southern Oregon VA, in recognition of an exciting new program they've partnered on.

Elks work with the VA to plan and organize monthly recreation outings for older veterans, offering these veterans a chance to get outside their homes and engage with the community, and providing these veterans' caregivers with much-needed respite.

VA Voluntary Service Specialist Jessica Majano accepted the award on behalf of the VA staff and thanked the Elks, saying, "We are so honored to be working with our local Elks who have such dedication for our Veterans."





Find Community Partners!

The IRS reports that there are more than 45,000 nonprofits in the United States that serve veterans and military members. There are likely some in your community that you don't know about!



- Search online, ask your friends, read the paper, etc.
- Pay attention at Stand Downs and other veterans events.
- Don't forget about local businesses.
- Forge new partnerships!
 - Some food pantries near bases have military family nights.
 - Some minor-league baseball teams offer discounted tickets.





The Usual Suspects



- Many large nonprofits, like the Salvation Army, Volunteers of America and even the YMCA have programs specifically for veterans, military members and their families. Reach out to these groups and see how your Lodge can work together with them.
- Don't forget about more traditional outreach organizations, like Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and AMVETS, to name just a few.





Connect with Student Veterans

- Be aware that younger veterans are less likely to be a part of traditional veterans groups and may be harder to connect with.
 - Groups like the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, The Mission Continues and Team Rubicon rally younger veterans to meet in their communities for service activities and social gatherings. Check their websites to find the local contact in your area.
- You may also want to reach out to student veterans near you. If there is a community college or university near you, they may have a student veterans group or staff member responsible for veterans outreach.





Build on your Strengths

What do you have?
Where can you go from there?

- If you have young families in your Lodge, consider hosting events to support military families.
- If you have strong local connections, consider hosting a job training and resume-building program.
- If you have a lot of volunteers, consider planning monthly events at a local facility.





Outreach to Rural Veterans

- Stay in contact with local VSOs (Veteran Service Officers) so you can remain aware of the needs of local veterans.
- Ask DAV drivers (and other shuttle drivers) what veterans need on the way to clinics. A snack or other services could help make a long ride more comfortable.
- Don't forget about your local outpatient clinics and Vets Centers.
 - Provide gas gift cards for veterans who are driving to the clinic.
 - Bring decks of cards, fidget spinners, stress balls, puzzle toys, or other things to do for patients in the waiting room.
 - Set up phone charging stations for veterans to use while they wait.
 - Host a barbeque or other event to help make veterans aware of the clinic and its services.
 - Distribute gloves from the Leather Program to veterans who use wheelchairs.
 - Set up a suggestion box to find out what requests the veterans have.
 - Ask your contact at the clinic what items or services are needed most. Each clinic may have different needs.
 - Provide coffee, bottled water, and snacks for the waiting room. Sugar-free items or healthy options may be required by the clinic.





John Day, Oregon, Lodge

- Lodge began holding weekly meetings for veterans in the community, which slowly grew in popularity.
- Counselors from the nearest Vets Center began to attend once a month to provide confidential counseling and to meet with the group.
- The community started to support the events, providing free haircuts and other supports.
- Word spread, and the local VFW began to hold their meetings at the Lodge.
- A fly-fishing/fly-tying program now meets at the Lodge twice a month.
- The VA now wants to partner with the Lodge to offer telehealth services to the veterans at the Lodge.





Building Good Working Relationships

- Above all go in with a positive attitude. Smile. Be upbeat. Your heart shares their heart, in the love of service to veterans.
- Ask open ended questions to develop a dialogue. Find as much common ground as you can; family, children, activities, veterans in the family, etc.
- Don't take up a great deal of their time at the onset. Thank them for what they do.
- Don't give up! First or even second impressions may not be a true indication of future working relationships.
- Be truthful, be consistent, be prepared.
- Try to always take the high road on any contentious discussion, or better yet avoid them completely. We are guests in their house.
- Be complimentary. Find no fault in their operation, it's their space. You are a guest in their house.
- Do they have a wish list? Tell them you have Elks members just waiting to help their veterans.

These tips worked for me for many years as a funeral director/embalmer and manager.

- Darrell Quinley, VAVS Representative





Trends In Volunteering

- **Episodic volunteering**
 - For example, if someone volunteers at your Lodge's Thanksgiving event, write down their name and invite them again next year!
- **Short-term projects**
 - Easier for people with busy schedules to commit to.
- **Family volunteering opportunities**
 - Invite kids to help with packing supplies, making blankets, collecting supplies, etc.
- **Evenings and weekends**
 - More people are working full-time and can't help with weekday activities.
- **"Virtual" volunteering**
 - Example: have someone take photos of your events and put them on your webpage, or on your social media accounts.





Volunteer Outreach

Volunteers are our greatest asset! Our goal is to provide Elks with the information, tools and resources they need to stay engaged and take action.

- **Visit www.elks.org/vets to get the latest news!**
- While there, sign up to get our monthly e-newsletter. (Lodge Veterans Chairs and VAVS Reps and Deps already receive this.)
- The Elks Volunteer Resource Center has links to leather and glove order forms, Playing Cards order forms, Freedom Grant reports, resources lists for veterans in need, instructional guides, and more.
- Connect with your State Veterans Chair and volunteers in your state.

Follow us on social media!



Facebook/com/ENVSC



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