

# ENVSC 101

Serving Our Nation's Veterans

# Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure that veterans thrive by providing Elks volunteers with tools and resources through community service and engagement.

We know our members are busy. The purpose of the ENVSC is to provide Elks with the resources and the information needed to best serve the veterans in Elks communities. To make the most of our resources and your time, we aim to focus on serving veterans in need.

Our ultimate vision is a nation of strong communities meeting veterans' ever-changing needs.

# Today's Veterans

**Volunteers are our greatest asset! Our goal is to provide Elks with the information, tools and resources needed to take action.**

Projected U.S. Population of Veterans: **21,999,000**

Approximately **9.8 million** Veterans used at least one VA benefit or service in 2017, which means more than half of veterans in the U.S. don't use VA services.

**45%** of all VA users received benefits or services from multiple programs.

**45.23%** of Veterans are aged 65 or older

*Understanding today's veteran population and their needs will help us serve them better.*

Learn more: 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

## Veterans in different regions will have different needs.

For example:

- Alaska has the highest percentage of veterans ages 20-34 (17%).
- More than half of the veterans in New Jersey are 65 and older.
- 1 out of 5 homeless veterans lives in California.
- Veterans in rural areas may have a harder time accessing services at the VA and may rely more on tele-health centers.

You can find information about veterans in your area at [va.gov/vetdata](https://va.gov/vetdata).

- Click on **State Summaries**: it will take you to a page where you can access detailed information about the veteran population in your state.

# 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.

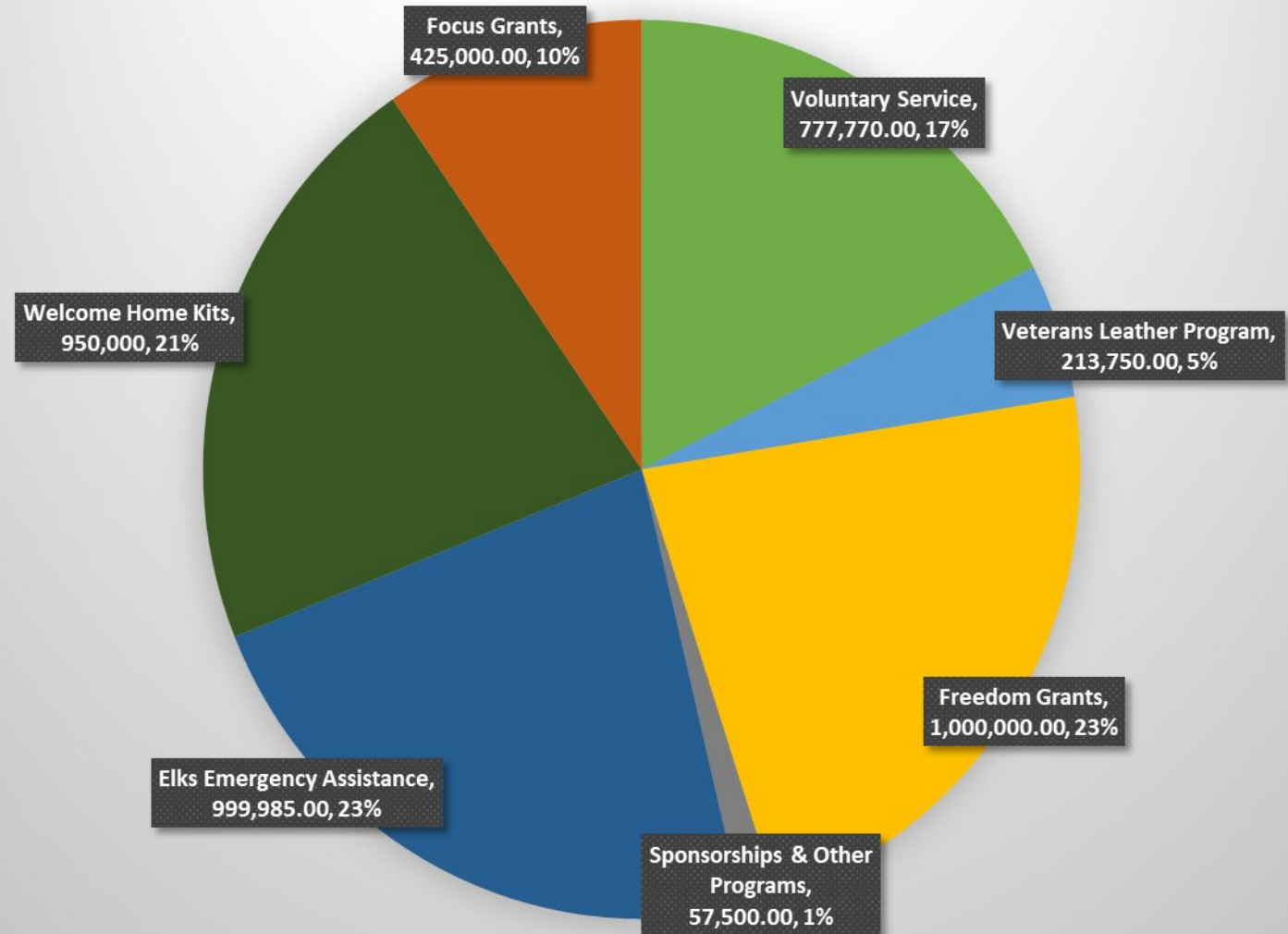


# 2023-24 Program Overview

*This is a snapshot of our largest programs.*

*Sponsorships includes support of several National Adaptive Sports Events for Veterans, as well as programs like Bugles Across America and Playing Cards for Veterans.*

*We also have several programs and partnerships which do not receive national funding, including Adopt-a-Veteran and Army of Hope.*



# Elks Voluntary Service

**The cornerstone of the ENVSC**, this facility-based volunteer program is aimed at providing reliable and consistent support to hospitalized and recovering veterans.

- We station Voluntary Service Representatives and Deputy Representatives at veterans facilities and provide them with monthly stipends to help fund activities and support for veterans at their facility.
- Volunteers are required to be certified by the national ENVSC office and undergo training and registration at their local facility.
- Thanks to the large number of Elks volunteers in VA facilities, the Elks are on the Executive Committee for the national VAVS program.
- The Elks Voluntary Service Program expanded upon the VA's idea and stations volunteers at State Veterans Homes and community veterans facilities as well.

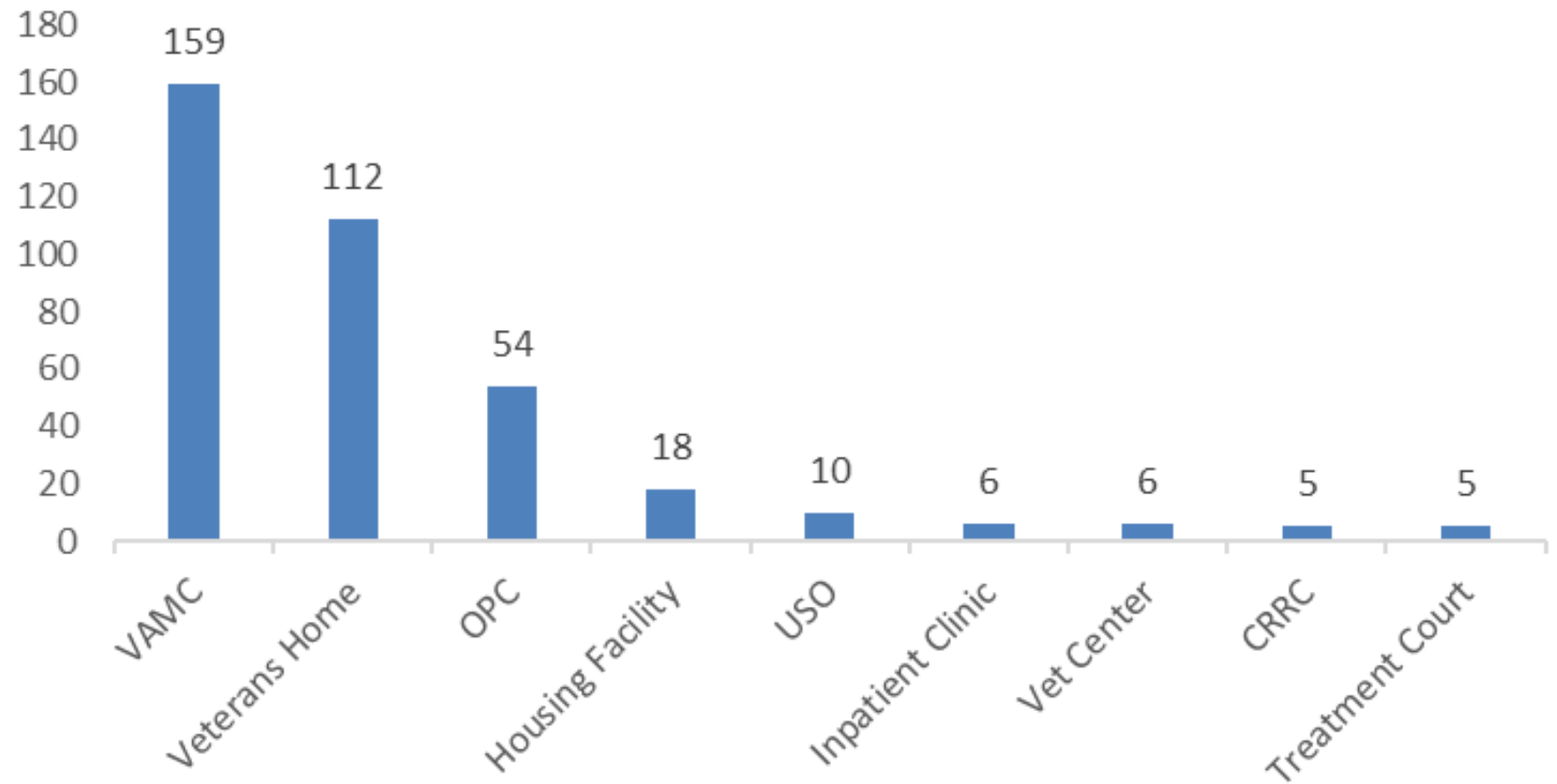


## Elks Voluntary Service

Program volunteers provide valuable social support for thousands of aging and hospitalized veterans, improving their lives and their health.

- Representatives visit their facilities at least once a month to spend time with veterans. They plan events, recruit volunteers, handle the monthly stipend and submit monthly online reports to the ENVSC.
- Deputy Representatives provide additional support to the veterans, assist the Rep and fill in as needed.
- 75% of our Representatives serve in VA Medical Centers or State Veterans Homes.

Elks Voluntary Service Facilities





# Elks Representatives in Action!

- David Hassen provides guitar lessons and music equipment to veterans at the VA in Togus, ME. The veterans always look forward to weekly music class!
- Venita Collier provides supplies for the ceramic arts program at the Valor Point transitional home in Lakewood, Colorado. Veterans learn to create and paint clay art. She also gives veterans the opportunity to attend shows at the local theater.
- Leonard Mills creates hygiene kits for veterans experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, Washington. Elks in his Lodge work together with a local high school's volleyball team to assemble and distribute the kits.
- Thomas Kramin partners with the St. Cloud and Willmar Lodges to hold a Flag Day ceremony and meal for veterans from the St. Cloud VAMC.
- At the DJ Jacobetti Home for Veterans in Marquette, Michigan, Robert Wellman plans and supports activities for veterans' families like the Blueberry Festival, an annual Carnival, and a Woodstock anniversary picnic.



# Freedom Grants

In 2023-24, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission will award Freedom Grants to 600 Lodges! All Lodges are eligible to apply. Grants are awarded to the Lodges that hold projects that best serve local veterans and/or military members in need.

Lodges may apply for one of these two options:

- a \$3,000 grant (Freedom Grant Classic) to hold an active project that directly serves veterans in need
- a \$1,000 grant (Freedom Grant Spark) to hold a smaller project with more flexibility

We are offering two types of Freedom Grants so that we can continue to support Lodges that hold large, ongoing projects that connect Elks directly with veterans in their communities. At the same time, we want to help smaller and more rural Lodges meet the needs of local veterans in ways that may not always allow for direct service.

Grants must focus on one of the 5 areas of increased need.





# Successful Freedom Grant Projects

**Jackson, Missouri Lodge No. 2652** partners with the VA's HUD-VASH coordinator to provide beds, bedding, and household items for veterans transitioning into housing. Elks deliver supplies and visit with veterans to help build strong relationships with them and their community.

**Fayetteville-Springdale, Arkansas Lodge No. 1987** hosts fishing trips twice a month for veterans living at the Fayetteville Nursing Home. Veterans enjoy an outdoor adventure and a chance to exchange stories with Elks.

**Davenport, Iowa Lodge No. 298** provides meals, clothing, and health supplies at the local Veterans Outreach Center. Elks are on site to serve meals and distribute hygiene items that have been collected at the Lodge.

**Boca Raton, Florida Lodge No. 2166** hosts trips to the Dolphin Care Center for veterans with disabilities. Veterans have the chance to interact with dolphins under guidance of trained therapists, and enjoy a dinner at the Lodge afterward.





# Welcome Home Kits

Most formerly homeless veterans move into new homes with nothing. Elks can help! Here's how to get started.

## 1. Find out what the veteran needs.

- Start with a standard list of what a new home would need, and then tailor the kit to the needs and preferences of the veteran.

## 2. Shop for the items.

- Look for deals. Ask Lodge members if they have items to donate. Hold a supply drive to collect common items.

## 3. Assemble and deliver the kit!

- Deliver the kit to the veteran or project partner. Stay in touch with the veteran if you can!

## 4. Submit your receipts to the ENVSC online at [www.elks.org/vets/kits](http://www.elks.org/vets/kits).

- The ENVSC will reimburse your Lodge up to \$300 for each Welcome Home Kit you provide, and up to \$600 for each kit that also includes a bed.
- New in 2023-24, Lodges can now spend up to \$50 per kit on food.



# Focus Grants

Lodges in the 12 metropolitan areas with the highest number of homeless veterans\* are eligible for additional Focus Grant funding of up to \$10,000 for large-scale, Elks-run, direct service projects. Applications are available online April 1.

Here are some examples:

Food baskets and monthly dinners for newly housed veterans.

Supplies, a dental care van, and volunteer support at a Stand Down.

Partnership with AmVets to provide beds and bedding supplies for veterans moving into homes throughout the year

Monthly cooking workshops, meals, and support at a veterans housing facility.



\*These 12 areas are: Chicago; New York; Washington, D.C.; Seattle; Miami-Dade; San Diego; Los Angeles; Loma Linda; San Francisco; Las Vegas; Phoenix; Orlando-Tampa



# Elks Emergency Assistance Program

Run out of the ENVSC office in Chicago, this program provides emergency financial assistance directly to veterans to help them exit or prevent homelessness.

- Veterans registered with and receiving services from the Department of Veterans Affairs in the 12 areas\* with the highest number of homeless veterans can apply for one-time monetary assistance to prevent homelessness or secure a home.
- Uses include rent, security deposits, and utilities.
- Veterans must be referred by a VA social worker; application forms must be signed by the veteran and by a VA employee.

A study from the University of Notre Dame says that “people who received financial assistance ‘are 76 percent less likely to enter a shelter within six months. . . *And significantly less likely to become homeless.*’

Not only do targeted prevention programs work, they also can save the community money.”



After the loss of a job, a car accident and his wife's illness hit the family all at once, Phil, a US Air Force veteran, applied for and received emergency assistance.

“You extended a hand through this program and lifted us up through the mud and mire,” Phil says. “We were able to stand on our feet again. As a vet who served my country, I love that people like the Elks exist to try to help vets, like myself and other vets, stand on our feet again.”

# Veterans Leather Program

The Veterans Leather Program relies on the charity of hunters across the nation to donate hides.

- Elks and hunters donate hides which are tanned and finished into leather to be used for wheelchair gloves and therapy kits for veterans.
- Elks donated 16,229 hides in 2022-23!
- Representatives can order gloves and craft kits for veterans they serve.
- Lodge Veterans Chairs can order craft kits for veterans they serve, free of charge, thanks to the Elks leather donations to Help Heal Veterans (HHV).
- All forms available at [www.elks.org/vets/leather.cfm](http://www.elks.org/vets/leather.cfm).







# Adaptive Sports Events

Through these events, the VA and other partners offer veterans the chance to improve their health through sports and art, learn new skills and socialize with other veterans.

The ENVSC assists by sponsoring 6 of these events. Local volunteers often volunteer, host dinners and provide their own support.

Leather Program volunteers also attend to distribute gloves, and veterans wear them when they compete!

## Sponsored by the ENVSC:

- Veterans Winter Sports Clinic
- Veterans Wheelchair Games
- Veterans Creative Arts Festival
- Veterans Golden Age Games
- Veterans Summer Sports Clinic
- Veterans TEE Tournament



# Partnerships & Programs

## **Bugles Across America**

This organization provides veterans and their families with a formal recognition of their service by providing live taps at veterans' funerals. The ENVSC provides financial support to help recruit, train and organize buglers across the country. Many Elks are volunteers!



## **Playing Cards for Veterans Program**

For many veterans in hospitals, VA homes, nursing homes and care centers, time can move slowly between visits from family and friends. Veterans are often looking for ways to stay engaged and upbeat. Playing cards can offer an engaging and social activity to fill spare time. ENVSC volunteers can order playing cards for veterans.



## **Make the Connection / Veterans Crisis Line**

These two organizations focus on mental health resources for veterans. Make the Connection is an online resource center. The Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-9255) serves veterans who are at-risk or in need of emergency assistance.

# Read all the latest ENVSC News!

- **Visit [www.elks.org/vets](http://www.elks.org/vets) to get the latest news!**
- Read more about all our programs.
- Sign up to get our monthly e-newsletter.
- Check out 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.

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