



Elks National Veterans Service Commission

Freedom Grant Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible to apply?

All Lodges are eligible to apply for a Freedom Grant! Eligibility is not dependent on meeting the GER's per-member-giving goal for donations to the ENF.

When will Freedom Grant applications become available?

2023-24 Freedom Grant applications will be available online April 1 at 12:01 AM Central Time. Applications will close on April 20 at 11:59 PM Central Time. Recipients will be announced in mid-May. Applications must be detailed, complete and follow all grant guidelines.

I usually stay up past midnight to submit my Lodge's application. Is this worth it?

No. Get some sleep! Any Lodge that applies between April 1 and April 20 will receive equal consideration. There is no advantage to applying early. Applications will not be evaluated until April 21, when all applications have been submitted.

How will the process work?

Grants are competitive and will be awarded to the Lodges that hold projects judged to best meet the needs of veterans and/or military members in Elks communities. Freedom Grants must focus specifically on serving the veteran and/or military community; they can't be used for general community events or projects.

How big is the Freedom Grant this year?

Lodges will have two options when applying for a Freedom Grant. Lodges can apply for a \$3,000 grant (Freedom Grant Classic) to hold an active project that directly serves veterans in need, or Lodges can apply for a \$1,000 grant (Freedom Grant Spark) to hold a smaller project with more flexibility.

Why are you offering two types of Freedom Grants?

We are offering two types 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.

Can my Lodge apply for both the Freedom Grant Classic and the Freedom Grant Spark?

No. Lodges will have the choice of applying for only one of these options. Choose wisely! Grants are competitive and once submitted, applications cannot be edited.

Think carefully and be realistic about which type of grant you apply for. Lodges which do not receive a Classic grant will not have the opportunity to reapply for a Spark.

My Lodge is planning to donate funds to a nonprofit that does great work for local veterans.

What should I know?

If you plan to make a monetary donation to an organization that serves veterans, you must apply for a Spark grant. Donations of funds are not permitted with Classic grants.

In your Spark application, explain which organization you will donate to and how the funds will be used. Provide a website or contact information if possible. This is especially important if you are donating to an organization that also serves non-veterans.

My Lodge is planning a donation of supplies but would like to spend \$3,000. Is this possible?

The short answer is no. Lodges that are planning less active projects are encouraged to apply for a \$1,000 Spark grant. Keep in mind that Freedom Grants are competitive. If you apply for a donation for a Freedom Grant Classic, it will not be approved.

What is a qualifying application?

Freedom Grant projects must serve a population in need. Projects must focus on one of these five areas: employment, homelessness and housing, military families, health, and educational support. Qualifying applications will describe in detail:

- How many Elks will be involved and what they will do
- How the project will address the needs of veterans and/or military members
- How the Lodge will budget the grant, with specific details about why the funds are needed

What level of involvement is required for the Freedom Grant Classic?

Lodges applying for the \$3,000 Freedom Grant Classic should be actively involved in the planning of the project and Lodge members should be interacting directly with the veterans the grant is serving. Donations of funds are not permitted with Classic grants.

If the project only includes involvement of Scouts/Blue Star Moms/VA Staff/VFW members, can I apply for a Freedom Grant Classic?

If your Lodge is not involved in the active steps of the project, apply for a \$1,000 Freedom Grant Spark.

What if my Lodge is planning a monetary donation that exceeds the Freedom Grant Spark?

If the project does not include direct service to veterans by Elks, apply for the Freedom Grant Spark.

How were the five areas of need identified?

We know our volunteers have busy lives, and so we've done the research to help ensure that Elks' time and grant funds are used in the most effective ways. These five areas were identified as being of the greatest need through research and data obtained from the government and Veterans Administration, through partnerships and collaboration with leading veterans service organizations, and through engagement with veterans and veterans advocates.

Are there any other restrictions?

Grants may not be used for appreciation dinners, fundraisers or general community events. Grants may not be used to distribute cash. Grants must target a veteran population in need. Dinners and events open to all veterans do not qualify.

I can't decide which type of grant to apply for. Is one type of grant easier to get than the other?

We are awarding 400 Spark Grants and 200 Classic Grants, so your Lodge has a better chance of receiving a Spark than a Classic.

Can the Freedom Grant be used to fund a project my Lodge already holds?

Like all Lodge grants, it should be used to expand the Lodge's charitable activities. Grants are not intended to help Lodges financially or to fund events that have been going on for years. Ideally, grants should be used to start new projects or expand current ones.



Elks National Veterans Service Commission

My Lodge wants to use the grant funds to hold an appreciation dinner for all community veterans. Does this qualify?

No. General appreciation dinners open to all veterans do not qualify for grant funds.

Can I split the Freedom Grant between two or more projects?

We encourage Lodges to focus on one project in order to make a bigger impact. However, Freedom Grants can be used for more than one project.

My Lodge needs to change how we use our Freedom Grant. What should I do?

Any and all changes to approved Freedom Grant activities **must** be approved by the ENVSC office in advance via email. Grant changes within appropriate guidelines can then be approved. If you have questions, feel free to contact the ENVSC office before submitting a proposal to revise the project.

What if my Lodge needs to revise a Freedom Grant Classic to something less active?

You will not be able to revise a \$3,000 Freedom Grant to a donation. If your active project is no longer possible, your Lodge will be asked to return the funds so that a grant may be awarded to a Lodge on the waitlist.

My grant activity is complete. What now?

Tell us about it! When the activity is complete and the grant funds are spent, it's time to submit a Final Report through the Grants Dashboard. The Final Report should include itemized receipts and documentation of how all grant funds were spent, as well as information about the event. Attachments, photos, thank you notes, and other information is always welcome.

What if my Lodge doesn't get a Freedom Grant?

Lodges that do not receive Freedom Grants this year are encouraged to apply for Community Investments Program Grants, like the Gratitude Grant or the Spotlight Grant. Visit elks.org/cip for more information.

And, don't forget about our other ENVSC programs! Look into using Welcome Home Kits to serve veterans exiting homelessness or partnering with your Voluntary Service Representative to serve veterans at a local facility. Visit elks.org/vets to learn more.

For the complete guidelines, please visit elks.org/vets or contact the ENVSC Office at vets@elks.org or 773.755.4736.