



# 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?**

2022-23 Freedom Grant applications will be available online April 1 at 12:01 AM Central Time. Applications will close on April 15 at 11:59 PM Central Time. Recipients will be announced in mid-May. Applications must be detailed, complete and follow all grant guidelines.

### **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. Lodges must choose the size of Freedom Grant to apply for on the Grants Dashboard when the application is started. Submitting the application before other Lodges does not guarantee a grant.

### **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. There will be 200 grants available for the Classic option, and 400 grants available for the Spark option.

### **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.

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

We encourage Lodges that are planning less active projects to apply for a \$1,000 grant. Keep in mind that Freedom Grants are competitive. If you apply for a donation for \$3,000, it is very unlikely you will be approved.

### **What if my Lodge needs to revise a Freedom Grant Classic?**

If revision becomes necessary after the grant is awarded, you will have the opportunity to propose changes in the same way as previous years if the new grant plan meets all guidelines for the Freedom Grant Classic. 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.

### **Why are you changing the Freedom Grant process?**

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.

### **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.

Ideally, every aspect of your project will involve direct service to veterans. As a rule of thumb, at least 50% of your project must involve direct service to veterans for your Lodge to have a chance at receiving a Freedom Grant Classic.

**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 would I do if my Lodge was planning a 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 and seek additional funding through Lodge events or combining with other grants.

**Right now, there are still volunteer restrictions in place at my local VA facility. How can I handle that when planning ahead?**

Guidelines are different everywhere right now, and we know it's hard to plan too far ahead without knowing when restrictions will be lifted. We encourage you to work with the local VA staff to discuss both what the veterans' needs are, and what kind of events are possible. If your Lodge isn't able to plan something active with veterans at this time, it's probably best to consider a Freedom Grant Spark for \$1,000.

**Will I be able to use a Freedom Grant Classic for the same project that was approved last year?**

Usual Freedom Grant guidelines were suspended last year due to COVID. We expect Lodges to return to more active projects now that many COVID protections have ended. Additionally, Lodges have all had plenty of time to plan adapted projects that serve veterans safely.

**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 addresses the needs of veterans and/or military members
- How the Lodge will budget the grant, with specific details about why the funds are needed

**How were the five areas of need identified?**

We know that Elks 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, or to purchase alcohol or tobacco products.

**My Lodge is planning to combine the Freedom grant with Welcome Home Kit funding, and/or another grant. How should I handle that?**

Please include these details on the application when you are describing your project. If your Lodge is planning to supplement Welcome Home Kits with Freedom Grant funding, please be clear about what will be covered by the Freedom Grant and what will be covered by Welcome Home Kit program. The budget should only include what the Freedom Grant will be used for.

Similarly, if you are combining your Freedom Grant with an ENF grant, please mention that on your Freedom Grant application. (Please note that you must submit separate applications.) Again, ensure that the Freedom Grant application budget only reflects what the Freedom Grant funds will be used for.

**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.

**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.



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## **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.

## **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 Elks National Foundation Grants, like the Gratitude Grant or the Spotlight Grant. The ENF's Community Investments Program is now \$15.7 million a year! Visit [elks.org/cip](http://elks.org/cip) for more information on how your Lodge can apply for grant funds to serve the community.

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](http://elks.org/vets) to learn more.

*For the complete guidelines, please visit [elks.org/vets](http://elks.org/vets) or contact the ENVSC Office at [vets@elks.org](mailto:vets@elks.org) or 773.755.4736.*