



Elks National Veterans Service Commission

Welcome Home Kit Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Welcome Home Kit? Why is it needed?

A kit is made up of an array of home supplies provided to a veteran moving into a new home after a period of homelessness, to help them with day-to-day living. The veteran will often be coming directly from a shelter and may have only the clothes on his/her back.

Generally, a kit will include kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and cleaning supplies: items like bedding, dishes, pots, pans, towels, toiletries, cleaning supplies, laundry baskets & detergent, etc. **However, a kit may not include just one or two items.** Lodges are encouraged to work with individual veterans to coordinate kit supplies. For example, some veterans may prefer a coffee maker to a crockpot, or a toaster oven to a microwave.

Who is eligible to participate?

All Lodges are eligible to participate!

How much are Welcome Home Kits worth?

New in 2023-24: The ENVSC will reimburse up to \$300 per kit, and up to \$600 per kit if that kit includes a bed.

So, I can buy a \$600 bed and call it a kit?

Not quite. A kit should always include a variety of household supplies. We ask that Lodges do their best to find deals and discounts. We recommend that beds not comprise more than \$500 of a single kit.

If we are able to provide a bed for free, can we spend the full \$600 on other household items?

Unfortunately, no. The additional \$300 for kits with beds is intended to provide beds for veterans who otherwise would not be able to afford them. The maximum amount of reimbursement per kit for non-bed items is \$300.

Do the items have to be new? Can used items be used?

Kits can be comprised of new and/or used items. Low-cost retailers such as Walmart, Target and Dollar Tree are a great way to stretch your dollar on new items. Don't forget about consignment and thrift stores for furniture and other items.

How do I find veterans who need these supplies?

We encourage your Lodge to partner with the VA or another veteran's organization on this project. Start by contacting a local VA facility and ask about their HUD-VASH department. Or connect with a local veteran's transitional facility or homeless shelter. [Click here to learn more finding local veterans in need.](#)

How many kits can my Lodge apply for?

There is currently no limit to how many kits your Lodge can put together. It is all based on local need and your volunteer capacity. Some Lodges assemble several kits a year, and others several a month. It's totally up to your Lodge.

How will the process work?

Your Lodge submits a Welcome Home Kit reimbursement form at [Elks Veterans Services](#) and includes full receipts. Our office will then review and approve the application, and send your Lodge up to \$600 in reimbursement, dependent on eligible receipts.

Forms must follow all program guidelines. Expect follow-up for applications that do not provide enough information.

Is there a timeline?

Lodges should submit receipts for reimbursement no later than 3 months from the time of purchase.



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What if I put together 3 kits at once? Do I have to submit 3 separate forms?

No. You may include multiple kits on the same form.

Are there any restrictions?

This is a very specific program. It cannot be used to fund things other than Welcome Home Kits. Kits must include an array of supplies, not just one or two large items. If you would like to meet veterans' needs for larger items, we encourage you to apply for a Freedom, Gratitude or Spotlight Grant. Each kit is intended to provide supplies for a veteran moving into a new home. Kits should be well-rounded and contain a variety of supplies; receipts for \$300 worth of several of the same item will not be accepted, even if requested by the VA, as this is not a kit. Lodges will only be reimbursed for items with receipts. The value of donated supplies is not included in reimbursement amounts.

Will this cost our Lodge any money? How much does our Lodge need to contribute?

Lodges do not need to spend any of their own funds to add to these kits.

Some Lodges hold supply drives in the community or partner with scout troops and other community or veterans' organizations to gather supplies and support these veterans.

Can I use these kits in conjunction with a Grant or other funding?

Yes. Many Lodges do use other funding sources for this program.

If your Lodge is also using a Freedom, Spotlight, or other Grant for this project, please be extremely careful about keeping the receipts separate.

Here are two examples of how to do that:

One Lodge in Washington uses their entire Gratitude Grant to make kits and submit the Final Report online. Once that is done, they then use the Welcome Home Kit program for all remaining kits as the need arises.

Another Lodge in Florida uses the Welcome Home Kit reimbursement program to buy smaller items (dishes, cleaning supplies, pots and pans, bedding, etc.) for veterans, and then uses their Beacon Grant funds only to buy beds and other large furniture items. This allows them to easily know how to classify their receipts.

Lodges submitting the same receipts for kits and Grant Final Reports will be asked to return grant funds and may be listed as out of compliance.

I'm unsure if the supplies I buy will qualify for reimbursement. What should I do?

Always call our office before buying any out-of-the-ordinary supplies. We're happy to talk about the program with your Lodge, and we want to make sure that volunteers and/or Lodges aren't left waiting for reimbursement on ineligible items.

I know a veteran who is down on his luck and could use a new refrigerator. Can I use this program to buy him that?

Unfortunately, this does not qualify. This program only exists to help Lodges compile kits of home supplies for veterans in need moving into new homes. Please investigate using Lodge Grants or other funds to meet the needs of community veterans. Don't forget about partnering with other organizations, too.



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I have some great photos from our project. What should I do with them?

Please make sure the veteran is okay with you sharing their image. Then, send these photos to us! We'll share them on our website, on social media and in our brochures. (We only ever use a veteran's first name and take extra care to protect their privacy by omitting any identifying details.)

Why are these veterans homeless?

There is no single reason why a veteran is homeless. In addition to the complex set of factors influencing all homelessness – shortage of affordable housing, unemployment or job insecurity, health or family emergencies – a large number of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse, which are compounded by a lack of family and social support networks. Additionally, military occupations and training are not always clearly transferable to the civilian workforce, placing some veterans at a disadvantage when competing for employment.

Don't these veterans have jobs?

Some of them have become recently employed. Some are living on disability. Some have medical problems that preclude them from employment. Each veteran has his/her own story as to how they became homeless.

Other than home supplies, what can I buy with this program? Can I just give out gift cards?

As with all our grants and programs, we prefer if Lodges buy items and supplies instead of gift cards. However, we realize that gift cards may be useful to veterans so we will allow Welcome Home Kits to include gift cards in the amount of no more than \$25 for anything besides food.

Food is a big need for many of these veterans, especially with the cost of groceries. Can food be included?

Yes. Starting in 2023-24, Lodges can now provide up to \$50 worth of food with a kit. However, a kit cannot include just food. Please ensure that you are also providing concrete, long-lasting home supplies along with any food items.

What about other special items?

We encourage you to tailor the kit to the needs of individual veterans. For example, TVs and radios are popular items for veterans who are not used to living alone. Please note that special requests should be handled within reason. It is not appropriate to spend \$300 on a new TV and provide no other supplies. Many Lodges are able to find affordable used TVs to include with kits.

Does an air mattress count as a bed?

Air mattresses can be helpful, especially for veterans without a place to sleep, or for veterans who have to wait a few weeks before their bed arrives. It does not count as a bed though, so kits with air mattresses will only be eligible for up to \$300 in reimbursement.

Where can I find more information about Welcome Home Kits?

Complete guidelines can be found at elks.org/vets.

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