



**Veterans' Trust Funds:  
A Comparison of Pennsylvania to Other States**

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## Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund

This report describes the Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund, comparable funds in other states, and the Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund Grant Program.

The purpose of Pennsylvania's Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF)<sup>i</sup> is to assist and support Pennsylvania veterans and their families. Pennsylvania's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) issues VTF grants to charitable organizations, Veterans' Service Organizations (VSOs), and county veterans' affairs offices to assist veterans in need of shelter and living necessities. In addition, the VTF funds the Pennsylvania Veterans Temporary Assistance (VTA)<sup>ii</sup> program. The VTA provides temporary financial assistance to veterans and their beneficiaries residing in Pennsylvania for items such as food, shelter, fuel, and clothing.

Pennsylvania's VTF was established in 2012 as a special, non-lapsing fund of the Pennsylvania State Treasury and is financed by the proceeds from the 2012 sale of the Scotland School for Veterans' Children, voluntary contributions made during driver's license and identification card registration, earnings from the sale of "Honoring our Veterans" license plates, monies collected from fines related to wearing of uniforms and insignia that misrepresent one's military service or honors, and other donations. During 2020-2021, the DMVA disbursed \$1,274,205 from the VTF; \$807,317 in grants and \$466,888 to the VTA.

## Comparable Funds in Other States

At least ten states have a VTF or another similar entity that provides money to assist veterans through non-profits, local governments, or direct monetary support to individual veterans in need. Illinois, Kentucky, South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin have programs that support non-profits and local municipalities, comparable to Pennsylvania's VTF grant program. Annual disbursement amounts vary significantly among the states, with Texas disbursing over \$33 million, Illinois \$1 million, and Kentucky \$429,729. Pennsylvania funded \$807,317 in grants from 2020-2021. South Carolina and Wisconsin's disbursement amounts are unknown.

Delaware, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, and Missouri also have programs that support the temporary financial needs of individual veterans, and those programs are similar to Pennsylvania's VTA program. Again, annual disbursement amounts vary significantly among the states, with Michigan disbursing \$1,303,008, Maryland \$230,829, and Delaware approximately \$100,000. Pennsylvania funded \$466,888 in temporary assistance during 2020-2021. Iowa and Missouri's disbursement amounts are unknown. In addition to supporting individual veterans, the Michigan Veterans Trust Fund contributed \$565,000 in FY2021 to community organizations by funding Habitat for

Humanity, an emergency food program, and an entrepreneurship lab. The tables below describe each state's program, annual expenditures, and source of funds.

**Table 1***States that Provide Grants to Non-Profits and Local Municipalities*

<b>State</b>	<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Expenditures/ Year</b>	<b>Source of Funds</b>
Pennsylvania	The Veterans' Trust Fund supports charities, VSOs, and county directors of veterans' affairs to assist veterans in need of shelter and living necessities.  VTF money also funds the Veterans Temporary Assistance (VTA) program. The VTA is described in Table 2.	VTF - \$807,317 (2020-2021)  VTA - \$466,888 (2020-2021)	Proceeds from the sale of the Scotland School for Veterans' Children and veterans license plate sales, voluntary contributions during driver's license/ID card registration, fines, and donations
Illinois	Veterans' Cash Lottery Grants <sup>iii</sup> support government agencies, non-profit organizations, VSOs, and other tax-exempt entities currently providing or wishing to provide veterans' assistance.	\$1,000,000 (2023 grant amount)	"Veterans' Cash" lottery proceeds
Kentucky	The Veteran's Program Trust Fund <sup>iv</sup> supports charities, organizations, or events that support veterans' causes. It funds projects and programs that help veterans for which other funds are not available.	\$429,789 (2020-2021)	Veterans license plates and other donations
South Carolina	The Veterans' Trust Fund <sup>v</sup> supports charitable organizations, VSOs, and county directors of veterans' affairs to improve assistance and support to veterans and their families. Funding areas include emergency assistance, health and safety, medical supplies, housing, and other activities that benefit veterans and their families.	Unknown. No response to inquiries.	Donations
Texas	The Fund for Veterans' Assistance <sup>vi</sup> supports charitable organizations, VSOs, cities, and county directors of veterans' affairs. The fund supports four grant programs - General Assistance Grants, Housing for Texas Heroes Grants, Veterans Mental Health Grants, and Veteran Treatment Courts Grants.	\$33,430,000 (2021-2022 grant amount)	Proceeds from a Veterans' Assistance lottery game, donations from vehicle registration and drivers' license renewals, license to carry renewals, hunting and fishing license renewals, gifts, and grants contributed to the fund
Wisconsin	The Veterans Trust Fund <sup>vii</sup> supports non-profit organizations, county veteran service offices, VSOs for claims assistance, transportation assistance, and other direct services to veterans.	Unknown. No response to inquiries.	Special taxes from liquor and tobacco, interest payments from loan programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, state general fund appropriations, and surplus money from the State Veterans' Homes.

**Table 2***States that Assist Individual Veterans*

<b>State</b>	<b>Program Description</b>	<b>Expenditures/Year</b>	<b>Source of Funds</b>
Pennsylvania	The Veterans Temporary Assistance (VTA) program provides temporary financial assistance to veterans and their beneficiaries who reside in Pennsylvania for the necessities of life (e.g., food, shelter, fuel, and clothing).	VTA - \$466,888 (2020-2021)	Proceeds from the 2012 sale of the Scotland School for Veterans' Children, voluntary contributions during driver's license/ID card registration, proceeds from Veterans license plate sales, fines, and other donations
Delaware	The Veterans Trust Fund <sup>viii</sup> assists individual veterans with reintegration, housing, utilities, and incidental expenses for health and welfare. Grants are paid to service providers, not the veterans directly.	Approximately \$100,000 (2021-2022)	\$100,000/year in state funding and donations
Iowa	Veterans Trust Fund <sup>ix</sup> money is used for unemployment or underemployment assistance due to service-related causes, assistance with vision, hearing, dental care, durable medical equipment, and prescription drugs; counseling and substance abuse services; vehicle repairs; housing repair; and transitional housing in an emergency.	Unknown. No response to inquiries.	Interest from the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund and lottery proceeds
Maryland	The Veterans Trust Fund <sup>x</sup> assists with temporary financial challenges facing veterans or widows/widowers of veterans. Grants are paid to service providers.	\$230,829 (2020-2021)	Donations and VSO casino slot machine revenue
Michigan	The Veterans Trust Fund <sup>xi</sup> helps veterans overcome unforeseen situations causing a temporary or short-term financial emergency.  It also funded Habitat for Humanity, an emergency food program, and an entrepreneurship lab.	\$1,303,008 (Individual assistance)  \$565,000 (Community programs)	The fund was started in 1946 with \$50 million in reserve post-WWII funds
Missouri	The Veterans' Trust Fund <sup>xii</sup> serves veterans within State Veterans Homes.	Unknown. No response to inquiries.	Donations

## Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund Grant Program

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) provided the information in this section through a "Right to Know" request. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness (Clearinghouse) requested 1) the process used to award Veterans' Trust Fund grants, 2) the application scoring criteria or rubric, 3) the make-up of the selection committee or the person making the grant decision, 4) the reports that grantees submit at the end of the grant period and 5) the list of 2022 grant recipients. The Clearinghouse received the 2021-2022 Veterans' Trust Fund Notice of Grant Announcement and Guidelines, the Scoring Rubric Template, reports from 21 grant-funded organizations, and the 2021 and 2022 grant recipient lists. The Veterans' Trust Fund Notice of Grant Announcement and Guidelines contained the grant award process and job titles of selection committee members.

According to the 2021-2022 Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund Notice of Grant Announcement and Guidelines, the grant is "for new, innovative and expanded programs or services that increase or improve services to veterans in their county, region or across the Commonwealth." During this grant cycle, a total of \$1,000,000 was available. Of this, up to \$800,000 was designated for VSOs, and other veteran-serving non-profit organizations, awarded in grant amounts of up to \$50,000. Up to \$200,000 was designated for individual counties, to be awarded in grant amounts up to \$20,000. During this award cycle, \$800,000 in grants were awarded, \$650,000 to 20 VSOs or non-profits, and \$150,000 to 8 County Veterans' Affairs offices.

### Veterans' Service Organizations and Non-Profit Funding Priorities

Funding priority is given to VSOs and non-profit organizations whose programs target the following needs: (1) Employment and Education, (2) Behavioral Health Initiatives, and (3) Other. The priority of funding is determined by the DMVA and listed in the Notice of Funding Agreement. A detailed description of each funding priority is provided below.

#### *Funding Priority 1 - Employment and Education*

- Initiatives that support veterans to prepare for, secure, and maintain employment.
- Initiatives that utilize business connections, career pathways, and best practices to support veteran placement in long-term careers.
- Initiatives to support the veterans' community at institutions of higher learning.

#### *Funding Priority 2 - Behavioral Health Initiatives*

- Programs that establish or expand veteran peer support programs to improve social connectedness and networks for veterans.
- Initiatives that support military competency training to physicians, caseworkers, counselors, and veteran-serving organizations (VSOs) around topics that are unique to military service.
- Programs that implement “caring messages” initiatives designed to keep service members, veterans, and their families connected within the community.
- Programs that provide long-term relief for homeless veterans in support of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs initiative to end veteran homelessness and address supportive services to address acute and chronic conditions underlying the veteran’s homeless status. The programs should address the material or unmet financial needs of veterans. The expected outcomes/impacts include enhanced self-sufficiency and economic stability, increased access to healthcare, stable housing and supportive services, increased food security, and overall well-being.

#### *Funding Priority 3 - Other*

- Programs or services that address unmet needs of veterans and their families.

### County Directors of Veterans’ Affairs Funding Priorities

Funding priority is given to County Directors of Veterans’ Affairs requests targeting the following areas: 1) Veteran Outreach Initiatives, 2) Veterans’ Courts, and 3) Training and Capacity Building. The priority of funding is determined by the DMVA and listed in the Notice of Funding Agreement. A detailed description of each funding priority is provided below.

#### *Funding Priority 1 - Veteran Outreach Initiatives*

- Initiatives that implement or improve veteran outreach within Pennsylvania at the community, county, regional, or statewide level.
- Enhance veteran service officer, county staff, and advocate capabilities across a region or the Commonwealth.

#### *Funding Priority 2 - Veterans’ Courts*

- Initiatives that provide support to county or regional veterans’ courts, such as administration, transportation, mentorship programs, or training.

#### *Funding Priority 3 - Training and Capacity Building*

- Training and capacity building among partners to better identify and refer veterans and their families through DMVA’s regional outreach program, PA VETConnect.
- Initiatives that complement or enhance veteran programs and services to the veteran community.

## Grant Process and Funded Organizations

Grant applications were evaluated by a committee made up of the Chairman of the State Veterans' Commission, the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans' Affairs, the Deputy for Administration, or their designee; and other members appointed by the Adjutant General. The DMVA did not provide additional details on the award committee make-up. The committee used a rating scale to score each application for experience, planning, administration, budget, mission to serve veterans, and partnerships. Applicants were required to have a mean score of at least 70 out of 100 to be considered. A weight was added to the application's final score based on the application's designated funding priority category. For both types of grants, Funding Priority 1 applications received 15 additional points, Priority 2 received 10 additional points, and Priority 3 received 5 additional points. The final score was the mean of the committee members' total scores plus the priority category weight. Grant applications and scoring rubrics were not provided to the Clearinghouse and therefore were not reviewed. The tables below list the organizations that received grant money and the funded amounts.

**Table 3**  
*Veterans' Service Organizations and Non-Profit Grant Recipients*

<b>Veterans' Service Organizations and Non-Profits</b>	<b>Amount Funded</b>
3P Ride, Inc	\$49,900
Alpha Bravo Canine	\$10,132
Building Bridges Foundation at Anderson Farm	\$25,000
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank	\$50,000
Clinical Outcomes Group, Inc. *	\$47,840
Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County	\$32,762
Dog T.A.G.S. Program *	\$49,995
Meghan's Shortt Wilent Foundation	\$11,100
Montgomery County Community College Foundation *	\$28,575
Operation Troop Appreciation	\$45,000
Outreach Center for Community Resources	\$34,100
PA Lions Beacon Lodge	\$22,845
Pennsylvania Outdoor Veterans, Inc. *	\$23,356
Robin's Home, Inc	\$23,750
Steven A. Cohen Military Family (Univ of Pennsylvania)	\$49,490
Travelers Aid Society of Pittsburgh Inc	\$50,000
United Disabilities Services Foundation *	\$19,000
Valhalla Veterans Services	\$50,000
VALOR Clinic	\$12,155
Victory Therapeutic Horsemanship	\$15,000
<b>VSO/Non-Profits Total</b>	<b>\$650,000</b>

Note: An \* indicates the Clearinghouse did not review the organization's report.



**Table 4***County Veterans' Affairs Office Grant Recipients*

<b>County Veterans' Affairs Offices</b>	<b>Amount Funded</b>
Bedford County Veterans Affairs Office	\$20,000
Cambria County Veterans Affairs Office	\$17,416
Fayette County Veterans Affairs Office	\$20,000
Franklin County Veterans Affairs Office	\$20,000
Mercer County Veterans Affairs Office	\$20,000
Montgomery County Veterans Affairs Office *	\$8,176
Northumberland County Veterans Affairs Office *	\$20,000
Snyder and Union Counties Veterans Affairs Offices	\$24,408
<b>County Veterans' Affairs Total</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>

Note: An \* indicates the Clearinghouse did not review the organization's report.

Grant recipients are required to provide monthly or quarterly reports on financial obligations and expenditures, performance measures, and outcomes. The Notice of Grant Announcement and Guidelines indicated reporting frequency is based on the length of the grant period and the award amount. For grants 12 months or less, recipients can submit monthly or quarterly reports based on when the organization compiles their financial data. The Clearinghouse reviewed initial and final reports from 20 grant recipient organizations and an initial report from 1 organization that did not have a final report. The remaining seven organizations had not submitted reports to the DMVA as of September 9, 2022.

The reports did not indicate the overall purpose for each grant, but expenditures were reported for grantee activities. Examples of expenditures reported include equine therapy; food bank purchases; service dog programs; individual, group, and peer support counseling sessions; equipment purchases for outreach events; workforce development programs; outreach marketing and events; housing stabilization items; transportation to medical appointments and workforce development programs. Actual expenditures were compared to approved grant budget amounts. Except for two organizations, all grant money appeared to be spent during the performance period. The two organizations returned less than \$400 each to the DMVA. Methods of performance measurement and outcome reporting varied across the organizations. Grantees reported quantitative outputs (e.g., number of veterans served, number of veterans met at outreach events, description of supplies purchased, number of transportation trips or transit cards provided, pounds of food distributed) rather than measurable outcomes. Reports did not indicate that any program evaluation occurred to determine impact; it is unknown if the DMVA evaluates grant recipients.

## Conclusion

Several state-level veterans' affairs departments administer VTFs to provide direct monetary support to veterans and their families or support VSOs and other veteran-focused charities via grantmaking. The ideal VTF structure and the amount are difficult to pinpoint, as this determination depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs that each state VTF supports. States should consider bolstering their VTF data collection and evaluation efforts to strengthen the performance of the VTF and ensure as many needs are met as possible.

While Pennsylvania collects data on grantee expenditures, additional data is needed to determine real-world outcomes regarding how this spending impacts the program recipients. By establishing goals and collecting grantee-level data across various performance measures, the DMVA can determine how well each grantee is doing, and the statewide cumulative impact of all grantees across each priority area. Further, impact evaluations can help the DMVA understand the strengths and gaps (or emerging needs) in veteran programming provided via the VTF while ensuring the VTF fulfills its purpose of assisting Pennsylvania veterans and their families.

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<sup>i</sup> Pennsylvania Veterans' Trust Fund webpage

<https://www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/Programs%20and%20Services/Veterans%27%20Trust%20Fund/Veterans-Trust-Fund.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> Pennsylvania Veterans Temporary Assistance Program webpage

<https://www.dmva.pa.gov/veteransaffairs/Pages/Programs%20and%20Services/Veterans-Temporary-Assistance.aspx>

<sup>iii</sup> Illinois Veterans' Cash Lottery webpage <https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/programs/Pages/veterans-cash.aspx>

<sup>iv</sup> Kentucky Veteran's Trust Fund webpage <https://veterans.ky.gov/veterans-trust-fund/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>v</sup> South Carolina Veterans' Trust Fund webpage <https://scdva.sc.gov/veterans-trust-fund>

<sup>vi</sup> Texas Fund for Veterans' Assistance webpage <https://texvet.org/resources/fund-veterans-assistance>

<sup>vii</sup> Wisconsin Veterans Trust Fund news release

<https://dva.wi.gov/Documents/newsMediaDocuments/8.24.16%20-%20VTF%20condition.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> Delaware Veterans Trust Fund webpage <https://delawareveteranstrustfund.com/>

<sup>ix</sup> Iowa Veterans Trust Fund webpage <https://va.iowa.gov/iowa-veterans-trust-fund>

<sup>x</sup> Maryland Veterans Trust Fund webpage <https://veterans.maryland.gov/maryland-department-of-veterans-affairs-veterans-trust-fund/>

<sup>xi</sup> Michigan Veterans Trust Fund webpage <https://www.michigan.gov/mvaa/other-benefits-and-resources/panel-state/panel-content>

<sup>xii</sup> Missouri Veterans' Trust Fund law <https://revisor.mo.gov/main/OneSection.aspx?section=42.135>