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WDVA Bulletin No. 1034

TO: County Veterans Service Offices

SUBJECT: 2016 County Veterans' Service Grants - Supplement

In accordance with the newly revised Wis. Stats. s. 45.82, counties that meet statutory standards and employ a full or part-time County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) are eligible for a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) for the improvement of services to veterans, on a reimbursable basis. The WDVA shall twice yearly reimburse grant recipients for approved and properly documented expenses, subject to the statutory annual reimbursement limits and compliance with department procedures.

As referenced in WDVA Bulletin #1032, with the passage of 2015 Wisconsin Act 55, only the following expense [categories] are eligible for reimbursement this application period:

1. Information technology
2. Transportation for veterans and service to veterans with barriers
3. Special outreach to veterans
4. Training and services provided by the WDVA and the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA)
5. Salary and fringe benefit expenses incurred in 2015; salary and fringe benefit expenses incurred in 2016, except that total reimbursement for such expenses shall not exceed 50 percent of the applicable maximum grant; and salary and fringe benefit expenses incurred in 2017, except that total reimbursement for such expenses shall not exceed 25 percent of the applicable maximum grant

This bulletin is intended to provide further clarification of the above categories by responding to frequently asked questions by the CVSO community regarding allowed reimbursable expenses under the WDVA's reimbursement grant program.

Information Technology:

Q: Are the following information technology items reimbursable under this grant program?

1. IT hardware (e.g., desktop computer, laptop, flat panel display, printer, scanner, multifunction device {printer/scanner/copier}) and federal VA Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card reader
2. IT software/subscriptions (e.g., word processing software, spreadsheet, office suite that includes a word processor, presentation software, software that allows for creation of PDFs such as Adobe Acrobat; antivirus software, Vetraspec veterans claims management software, ActiveIdentity or ActivClient)
3. IT maintenance
4. IT equipment replacement
5. The purchase, maintenance contracts and/or license of software (e.g., Microsoft Office, Vetraspec, Vims)
6. Veteran benefit specific electronic media (e.g., National Veterans Legal Services Program Veterans Benefit Manual)

7. The purchase and/or lease of office copiers, scanners and fax machines and their consumables (e.g., ink, toner)
8. Transportation costs for staff to acquire PIV cards
9. Indirect IT costs

A: Items #1 – #7 are allowed reimbursable expenses but note these resources are for CVSO staff and not to be shared with other county employees. Items #8 and #9 are not eligible for reimbursement.

Transportation for veterans and services to veterans with barriers:

Q: Are CVSO office staff transportation costs to homebound (e.g., home, assisted living, nursing home, hospitals) veterans and survivors reimbursable?

A: Yes. In order to record the transportation costs, the WDVA will provide the CVSOs with a standardized mileage/travel log which must be utilized and filled out correctly and include the name, address and telephone number of each veteran transported confirming the expenditure.

Q: Are the following transportation methods for veterans reimbursable under this grant program?

1. Purchase of bus passes
2. Mileage reimbursement paid to volunteer drivers
3. CVSO contracted transportation services with other county agencies (e.g., Aging & Disability Resource Center)
4. Contracted and/or leased van services
5. Purchase of gas and/or gift cards
6. Purchase of gas directly from vendor using a purchase order
7. Fee (or requested donation) charged to veterans for transportation costs

A: Items #1 – #4 are allowed reimbursable expenses. Items #5 - #7 are not eligible for reimbursement. The WDVA will provide CVSOs with a standardized bus pass log which must be utilized and filled out correctly and include the veteran receiving the pass along with contact information to include name, address and phone number. The WDVA will provide the CVSOs with a standardized mileage/travel log which must be utilized and filled out correctly and include the name, address and telephone number of each veteran transported confirming the expenditure.

Special outreach to veterans:

Q: Are the following reimbursable under this grant program?

1. Facebook posting fees
2. Email blast expenses
3. Promotional items (e.g., flyers, pens, note pads)
4. Transportation and meal costs to outreach events in accordance with county reimbursement policy
5. Registration fees for booths at outreach events
6. Plaques and awards for veterans
7. Flags and holders
8. Grave markers

A: Items #1 - #3 are allowed reimbursable expenses. Promotional items must include CVSO contact information (i.e., address, phone number, CVSO website address and/or email). The purchase of plaques, awards, certificates, trophies and frames are not eligible for reimbursement regardless of the inclusion of contact information. Items #4 - #8 are not eligible for reimbursement.

Training and services provided by the WDVA and the USDVA:

Q: Do the following apply as training expenses that would be approved for reimbursement by the WDVA?

1. Training provided from organizations practicing law specific to the USDVA (e.g., National Veterans Legal Services Program, Veterans Law Group)
2. Training to meet the USDVA requirement of 38 Code of Federal Regulations 14.629 (2)(iii) provided by any source to meet the requirements of maintaining accreditation with VA approved service organizations.
3. Accreditation training by National Association of CVSOs under the requirement of 38 Code of Federal Regulations 14.629 (2) (ii).
4. Training and services provided by the USDVA Veterans Health Administration. VA regional hospitals and clinics provide CVSOs and staff training, seminars, conferences and stakeholder meetings.

A: Items #1 - #3 are not eligible for reimbursement. WDVA pre-approved formal training provided by the USDVA Veterans Health Administration (item #4) is eligible for reimbursement. However, USDVA seminars, conferences and stakeholder meetings are not eligible for reimbursement. The WDVA will offer formal accreditation training and continuing education training to CVSOs. If the WDVA training occurs during a CVSO conference, travel expenses for that day would be approved for reimbursement by the WDVA (i.e., lodging, mileage and meals).

General Questions:

Q: The application form (WDVA 0055B) states “Grant funds shall be maintained in a separate account subject to audit by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs”. Is this necessary given Counties will only be reimbursed for expenses approved by WDVA?

A: Wis. Stats. 45.47 reads in part...“Each grant recipient shall maintain records as required by the department concerning the grant recipient’s expenditures of grant money”... WDVA requires grant recipients to maintain grant funds in a separate account subject to audit by WDVA. The fact that a grant recipient may receive reimbursement from WDVA for an allowable expense does not preclude the Department from later conducting an audit of their expenditures and grant funds. The WDVA will continue to conduct audits to ensure actual expenses submitted against the grant are valid.

Q: There are two reimbursement periods referenced in WDVA bulletin #1032 and on the County Veterans Service Reimbursement Grant Worksheet: 7/1/15 – 12/31/15 and 1/1/16 – 5/31/16. The month of June 2016 is not included. Will Counties be reimbursed for proposed eligible expenses incurred during the month of June 2016?

A: Yes. When a county submits their last County Veterans Service Reimbursement Grant Worksheet on June 15, 2016, for the period of 1/1/16 – 5/31/16, proposed eligible expenses incurred June 1 – June 15, 2016 can be included. WDVA will not accept reimbursement requests after June 15, 2016 due to year end close out of our budget.

For questions regarding the 2016 CVSO Grant, please call 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387) and ask to speak with Chad McCafferty, or submit an email to VetsBenefitsGrants@dva.wisconsin.gov.

For questions regarding information on allowable purchases, please contact Kris Ward, Auditor, 608-266-3573 or email kris.ward@dva.wisconsin.gov.