

Grant and Per Diem (GPD)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) – Special Need
Frequently Asked Questions
03/04/2021

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Overview

1. What is the funding opportunity?

VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program is offering a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for funding of per diem payments to organizations facilitating housing stabilization for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and who are in one of the special need populations (i.e., chronically mentally ill, frail elderly, individuals who care for minor dependents, terminally ill or women).

This funding will provide assistance to cover operational costs including costs that would not otherwise be incurred, but for the fact that the recipient is providing supportive housing beds in private rooms with private bathrooms for a homeless Veteran population with special needs.

Applicants who wish to apply for the special need program, must submit an application for transitional housing beds that are discreet from transitional housing beds already funded under any other GPD grant, such as a GPD per diem only (PDO) grant. Requesting support for a bed under both a GPD PDO grant and a GPD special need grant is not allowed.

2. Can my agency apply for more than one grant?

Yes, but only in limited circumstances when the following condition is met:

Applications are limited to up to one (1) special need application per VA medical center (VAMC) catchment area per applicant's Employer Identification Number (EIN).

3. How many beds are expected to be awarded under this NOFO?

Approximately 135 beds across approximately 10-15 grants are expected to awarded under this NOFO.

NOTE: This is a small funding opportunity with limited ability to fund beds and grants. Applicants should consider carefully if this opportunity is a good fit for their organization and invest their time and resources accordingly.

4. Where is the VA medical center near me?

See the VA website for a list of VA medical centers by state:

<https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/allstate.asp>.

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Eligibility

5. Who can apply for this NOFO?

- 501(c)3 or 501(c)19 non-profit agency
- State or Local Government
- Recognized Indian Tribal Government

6. Can I apply for this NOFO if I am an individual or a for-profit organization?

No. Only non-profit agencies who have an IRS tax letter that shows their tax-exempt status along with their EIN, as well as State, Local or recognized Indian Tribal governments, can apply.

7. Can I use another non-profit agency's 501(c)3 or 501(c)19 non-profit tax-exempt status letter to apply for the NOFO?

No. The non-profit status must belong to the applicant.

8. Does my organization have to be a current GPD provider to be eligible to apply?

No. Eligible entities are listed above.

9. If my organization is a current GPD provider, are we guaranteed funding?

No. This is a competitive process. The highest scoring applications will be awarded based on a variety of factors including funding availability. Applications must score at least 750 out of 1000 to be eligible to be considered for funding.

If an applicant is a current GPD provider, and wishes to apply for the special need program, the applicant must request beds that are discreet from any transitional housing beds already funded under any other GPD grant, such as a GPD per diem only (PDO) grant. Requesting support for a bed under both a GPD PDO grant and a GPD special need grant is not allowed.

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Dates

10. What is the due date for the NOFO?

Applications are due no later than by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the date stated in the NOFO.

11. Will late applications be accepted?

No. The deadline is firm as to date and hour. Late applications are ineligible for consideration. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit early to avoid unexpected delays or problems.

12. How soon will grantees hear back from the VA on the status of their awards?

GPD expects to announce awards in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2021. The announcement will be made via news release and will be posted on the GPD website at www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp. GPD will notify successful applicants and as well as unsuccessful applicants.

13. What is the award period?

Funding will be for a period of three years beginning on October 1, 2021 and ending on September 30, 2024. VA reserves the right to award an initial period of one year with options for up to two additional years, or to award all three years at once.

14. If funding is for one year at a time, how can my organization support a Veteran for two or three years?

There is no requirement for Veterans to remain in GPD transitional housing for two or three years. In fact, the average length of stay in GPD is about six months. GPD providers are expected to transition Veterans into permanent housing as quickly as possible and appropriate.

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Forms and requirements

15. How do I complete the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)?

General information about the form is available on the GPD website:

<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp>

and also at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>

Specific instructions related to the Special Need NOFO are provided here:

- Question 1, Type of Submission: **Application**
- Question 2, Type of Application: **New (even if you have a GPD award currently or have had one in the past)**
- Question 11, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: **64.024**
- Question 11, CFDA Title: **VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program**
- Question 12, Funding Opportunity Number: **VA-GPD-SN-FY2021**
- Question 12, Funding Opportunity Title: **GPD Special Need Grant**
- Question 13, Competition Identification Number/Title: **N/A**
- Question 17, Proposed Start Date: **10/1/2021**
- Question 17, Proposed End Date: **9/30/2024**
- Question 18, Estimated Funding: **Should be the estimated amount for the total 3 years not to exceed \$1,100,000**
- Question 19, Executive Order 12372: **Only applies to governmental organizations**

16. What type of signature will be accepted on the SF-424?

The SF-424 must be signed by a person at the applicant organization who is authorized to make commitments on behalf of the organization. The signature on the SF-424 must be digital or hand-written. A blank signature field or a "signature" that is manually typed will not be accepted. Any application received without a signature or without an acceptable signature will be rejected at threshold and will not be reviewed or considered for funding. VA reserves the right to communicate with an applicant about the signature field, as needed, prior to making threshold decisions.

17. What are the Applicant Identifier, Federal Entity Identifier and Federal Award Identifier?

These questions on the SF-424 are not applicable, respond by placing N/A or leaving blank.

18. What is the estimated funding?

In the Estimated Funding field on the SF-424, you would enter an amount based on the estimated cost of per diem for the number of beds being proposed in the application over the total three-year period being requested. The current maximum per diem rate for special need beds (as of the date of this FAQ document) is the cost of care or up to two times \$49.91 per day, whichever is less. Refer to the GPD website for the most up-to-date information on rates.

As stated in the NOFO:

- The maximum amount of per diem requested must not exceed the cost of care or \$1,100,000 total costs for the entire 3-year grant period, whichever is less, based on

variables such as the average number of beds to be provided as stated in the grant application and the current per diem rate maximum.

- Applicants may request no more than the cost of care or \$110,000 total costs per bed over the entire 3-year grant period, whichever is less, based on variables such as the average number of beds to be provided as stated in the grant application and the current per diem rate maximum.

19. Applicants must have an active registration with the System for Award Management (SAM). Where can I find information about how to register for SAM?

The process to register with SAM can take time. Plan your grant application timeline accordingly. Registration instructions are available on the SAM website: www.sam.gov

20. What if my agency's SAM registration will expire before award decisions are made?

SAM registrations must be updated annually. Do not apply if your registration has expired or will expire soon after applying. Update your registration promptly when needed.

21. What is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in SAM?

The SAM-generated UEI is a new data element assigned by SAM. SAM records that have already been assigned Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) numbers prior to the completion of the transition to UEI will retain the DUNS for historical purposes. Organizations already registered in SAM automatically will be assigned a UEI which will be displayed in SAM.

A UEI is not required to apply for this NOFO. If your organization has not yet been assigned a UEI by SAM, leave this field blank on the grant application.

More information is available at: gsa.gov/entityid

22. What if my agency left out information from the submitted application? Can we submit it separately?

No. An application must be submitted through the electronic grants portal as a complete package. If the agency submits documentation separately from the original package, it cannot be added to the application package.

23. Can I mail, email or fax my application?

No. The application must be submitted through the electronic grants portal.

Refer to the GPD website for additional resources: www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

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Letters of coordination

24. What is a letter of coordination?

A letter of coordination is a written means by which an applicant can demonstrate ongoing coordination with community partners including your local VAMC regarding your proposed grant project.

Medical centers typically include information such as the proposed number of beds and/or services as well as the medical center's past experience with the applicant organization regarding planning or operating of a related project or regarding participation in community-wide planning.

It is important to note that if you plan to seek letters of coordination, do not wait until the last minute. Medical centers, Continuum of Care (CoC) and other partners have limited resources and may be responding to multiple requests from multiple organizations. We recommend proving at least 30 days or more, if possible.

Remember your applications must be submitted as a complete package. If you include a letter(s) of coordination, upload it as part of the application through the online application portal. Do not send letters to the GPD Office as they will not be added to your application package.

25. Can you describe the coordination that is expected?

Applicants should proactively engage in strategic planning dialogue with the VAMC, CoC, Veteran Working Groups, or other community partners including existing GPD grantees, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantees and Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Contracted Residential Services (CRS) grantees to fully understand needs. This dialogue can help applicants identify what housing needs, services, and configuration would best support the community's efforts to end Veteran homelessness.

Applicants should be responsive to the needs articulated by the VAMC, CoC and other community groups. Applicants are encouraged to apply for a special need population and configuration that aligns with the needs of the community.

26. What tools are available to better understand the community's need?

Applicants are encouraged to use a robust, dynamic, strategic combination of tools to best understand need. Applicants who are involved with local Coordinated Entry Systems (CES) will have the best understanding of community needs and planning efforts.

From a system perspective, applicants can review data from the community's master list/by name list/active list; data from the Homeless Information Management System (HMIS); other CoC data; the community's progress towards the Federal Criteria and Benchmarks (FCB); Community Solutions' Functional Zero; the CoC Gaps Analysis Tool (which can be provided by the local VAMC); the VA, HUD, and USICH Community Planning Survey submission; and the VA and USICH Transformation of GPD: Considerations for Communities.

These are just some of the tools applicants may use to understand the community's current work towards ending Veteran homelessness. These tools also may be useful in creating common language when working with VAMCs and CoCs.

Additionally, applicants may use information from their past experience providing services within the community. For example, past performance, statistics, demographics, point-in-time reports, etc. can provide useful information about the community's need.

27. What if the information in my application is different from the information included in a letter of coordination?

Communication and transparency are critical. Inconsistent information between a letter and the rest of the application might impact the overall score.

Information contained in letters of coordination should not be a surprise to applicants because dialogue regarding strategy should occur prior to requesting letters of coordination. This includes providing detailed and accurate information to the VAMC, CoC or other partners about the plans you will propose in the application and how these plans align with needs identified by the community partners.

This is an opportunity for your organization and the VAMC, CoC or other partners to discuss plans that are tailored to your organization's abilities and to the needs of the community. The strongest letters usually are individualized, intentional and detailed. They would speak to the applicants proposed plan, their integration into systems such as coordinated entry and VA coordination, the partnership, the alignment with community needs, and experience providing the proposed services.

28. How is coordination with the local VAMC and CoC taken into account in our application?

There is a regulatory requirement for the applicant to demonstrate coordination with the local VA medical center. Applicants also should demonstrate coordination with local CoCs or other community entities who serve the homeless by responding to the required questions within the application.

29. Are letters of coordination required?

Letters of coordination with the VAMC and/or with the CoC(s) are not required. The inclusion of a letter(s) and/or the content of a letter(s) can impact the overall score of an application.

30. Can the GPD Liaison at the VAMC assist with the application?

No. This is not allowed. However, the liaison can provide performance data, information about current GPD and HCHV transitional housing and help obtain a letter of coordination from the local Medical Center Director.

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Application content

31. How strict are the word counts for each section?

The word counts are suggested maximum limits. Most applicants will use less than the suggested limit. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide complete responses while also being as clear and concise as possible.

32. Is there a minimum or maximum service area expected to be covered?

Applications do not have to include coverage for the entire VAMC catchment area in the application. The coverage area, however, must not exceed the VAMC catchment area identified in the application. Applicants are encouraged to tailor their proposed coverage area to factors such as their own ability and the particular needs of the community.

Applicants are required to demonstrate the need for this resource in their community and to indicate the counties they plan to serve in the application. The scoring of the application will include an evaluation of the scope of services proposed. If the grant is awarded, the areas noted in the application would be the service areas.

33. What if my agency's transitional housing is located in two different VAMC's catchment areas?

Applicants must submit a separate application for sites that fall under a different medical center's catchment area.

34. How do I find out the VAMC catchment area?

If you do not know your VAMC catchment area, you can contact the local medical facility: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/allstate.asp> and ask to speak with the Homeless Program.

35. How many beds can I apply for?

Applications must include a minimum of five (5) beds and a maximum of ten (10) beds per application. Applicants should tailor their requests to their abilities and to the needs of the community.

36. How many special need populations can I apply for?

Each application may request one and only one special need population.

The special need populations include:

- chronically mentally ill
- frail elderly
- individuals who care for minor dependents
- terminally ill
- women

For details, refer to the NOFO and the GPD regulations (38 CFR Part 61) which can be found on the GPD website www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

NOTE: GPD discourages applicants from requesting the population: individuals who care for minor dependents. This population is able to be supported under the per diem only grants starting in fiscal year 2021. Therefore, GPD encourages applicants to propose one of the other special need populations to be supported from the special need grant. However, applications proposing to support individuals who have care of minor dependents are allowed under this NOFO and will not be penalized.

37. How are the special need populations defined?

GPD's regulations include definitions and requirements for the special need populations.

For details, refer to the NOFO and the GPD regulations (38 CFR Part 61) which can be found on the GPD website www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

Definitions of populations provided in the GPD regulations must be demonstrated within the application and must be enforced during the grant award period if selected for funding.

38. How will responses to the special need application questions differ from response to a per diem only application question?

Application content for a special need grant must demonstrate not only how grant assistance will support operational costs that normally would be incurred for normal supportive services and transitional housing beds, but also demonstrate how the grant will support additional costs that would not otherwise be incurred but for the fact that supportive housing beds and services are proposed for a homeless Veteran population with special needs.

Applicants are reminded that the special need beds proposed to be supported from this grant must be in private rooms with private bathrooms.

39. The NOFO talks about demonstrating low barriers to access. What does a low barrier approach entail?

In a low barrier approach, a Veteran would be able to enter GPD expediently and without a long assessment process or period of sobriety. Providers are expected to help Veterans access services quickly and in a manner that is flexible and understanding of their needs. It

means that providers are willing to work with Veterans who relapse, without immediate discharge from the program. With this NOFO, a low barrier approach to housing is expected.

40. Does low barrier mean that I cannot discharge someone for drinking or using street drugs?

It means that providers should be able to provide safe space for Veterans who are vulnerable and to work with relapse issues with Veterans in a manner that preserves the safety of others in the program. This would include policies and procedures that support continued engagement of Veterans who drink or use while in services. When discharge is necessary, appropriate arrangements should be made to minimize the chance of re-creating homelessness for that individual.

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Budget

41. What is the per diem rate?

The current maximum per diem rate for special need transitional housing (as of the date of this FAQ document) is the cost of care or up to two times \$49.91 per day, whichever is less.

Refer to the GPD website for the most up-to-date information on rates:

<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp>

42. How can the grant funding be used?

The funding can be used to offset operating costs including costs that would not otherwise be incurred, but for the fact that the recipient is providing supportive housing beds in private rooms with private bathrooms for a homeless Veteran population with special needs.

43. Can grant funds be used to pay for staff professional development?

Applicants and grantees are responsible for documenting their operating costs and documenting costs that would not otherwise be incurred but for the fact that the recipient is providing supportive housing beds in private rooms with private bathrooms for a homeless Veteran population with special needs. Any costs, such as staff professional development, should be treated consistently regardless of whether the costs are being supported from the grant and/or from other sources of funding. If staff professional development is not a normal operating cost or if cost calculations exceed the maximum per diem rate, grantees should adjust accordingly.

44. Can we pay for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) licenses? Is using HMIS required?

Any normal, allowable operating costs, including the cost of HMIS licenses, could be included in your operating cost calculations. Be sure your calculations are documented in a consistent and transparent manner. A reminder that grantees may be reimbursed for allowable costs up to the daily cost of care or up to the current maximum per diem rate for special need beds, whichever is less.

Currently, using HMIS is not required; it is optional for GPD grantees.

HMIS is a locally-administered web-based data system used to record and analyze both program and client information at the local CoC level. It is used by federal partners, including VA, to measure project performance and participate in benchmarking of the national effort to end homelessness.

Additional information about HMIS is available here:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/>

45. Can we use the grant to purchase or to lease a vehicle?

No part of an award under this NOFO may be used to facilitate capital improvements or to purchase vans or real property.

The cost of leasing a vehicle to transport program participants or to conduct outreach for the program could be an allowable cost. Similarly, an appropriate portion of associated costs such as gas, mileage or maintenance also could be allowable. Costs should be well-documented and treated consistently regardless of whether the costs are being supported from the grant or from other sources of funding. A reminder that grantees may be reimbursed for allowable costs up to the daily cost of care or up to the current maximum per diem rate for special need beds, whichever is less.

46. Can applicants support indirect costs?

Applicants who have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a cognizant federal agency must provide a copy of the agreement with their application if they wish to support indirect costs from the grant. Applicants without a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement may request the de minimis rate (i.e., 10 percent of modified total direct costs) for indirect costs if they meet the definitions and requirements of 2 CFR Part 200. All other allowable costs will be considered only if they are direct costs.

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Review and selection

47. If my application meets threshold, will it automatically be funded?

No. This is the first step in the process after which the application would move to the next step for review and consideration for funding.

48. How are grant applications rated?

To score grant applications, VA will use the rating criteria described in the NOFO and in the GPD regulations (38 CFR Part 61) which can be found on the GPD website www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

49. What if I have been doing business with the GPD Office for several years. Won't they know how my program operates and have our outcome data on hand?

Grant applications are reviewed by subject matter experts who do not necessarily know anything about your specific program or agency. This supports an unbiased review of applications. Please keep this in mind when writing your application. You should provide complete responses while also being as clear and concise as possible.

50. What if my agency leaves a section of the application blank?

Incomplete applications may be rejected at threshold. Inadequate application content may lead to low scores which might result in the application not meeting the minimum score of 750 points required to be eligible for funding.

51. Do I need to request a change of scope (COS) for my GPD PDO grant to change the bed numbers?

Applicants who wish to apply for the special need program, must submit an application for transitional housing beds that are discreet from transitional housing beds already funded under any other GPD grant, such as a GPD per diem only (PDO) grant. Requesting support for a bed under both a GPD PDO grant and a GPD special need grant is not allowed.

Therefore, applicants may request special need beds that are in addition to beds supported under a PDO grant. Or, applicants may request a bed reduction for their PDO grant in order to free up those beds to be potentially supported under a special need grant.

If a COS request is needed, you may submit the request early in order to have a response from GPD prior to your special need application submission. Or, you may explain your intent to reduce PDO beds within the special need application and submit the COS request if conditionally selected for special need funding.

If applicable, any PDO bed changes must be finalized prior to GPD approving a special need grant. GPD reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a special need grant if the bed numbers are problematic or if any outstanding bed issues are not resolved in time for award decisions.

52. How will our work be evaluated?

The grantee is expected to provide the services as stated in the grant application and to conform to GPD regulations and to any performance targets and metrics.

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