# Grant and Per Diem Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA)

## Per Diem Only and Transition in Place

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Revised 02/17/2020**

## General Topics:

### Overview

1. *new* **What are the funding opportunities?**
   VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program is offering a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for funding of per diem only (PDO) for organizations providing transitional housing or service centers to support homeless Veterans and Veterans at risk for homelessness.

   Applicants who wish to apply for both transitional housing beds and for a service center(s) must submit one application for transitional housing beds and must submit a separate application for a service center(s).

   GPD also is offering a NOFA for funding of per diem for organizations providing the Transition in Place (TIP) bed model to support homeless Veterans and Veterans at risk for homelessness. A separate application is required for TIP.

   Refer to the GPD website to access any open NOFAs and/or other technical assistance materials: www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp.

2. *new* **Which transitional housing bed models can I apply for under these NOFAs?**
   PDO NOFA: Applications may include a combination of one, some or all of the following transitional housing bed models: Bridge Housing, Low Demand, Hospital-to-Housing, Clinical Treatment or Service-Intensive.

   Applications for service centers may be submitted under this NOFA but they must be submitted as a separate application from applications for transitional housing bed models.

   TIP NOFA: Applications for TIP must be submitted separately from applications for other PDO transitional housing bed models and separately from applications for service center(s).

3. *new* **Can my agency apply for more than one grant?**
   Yes, with conditions, including:

   Applications are limited to up to one transitional housing application per VA medical center (VAMC) catchment area per applicant's Employer Identification Number (EIN) for any combination of one, some or all of the transitional housing bed models.

   Applications are limited to up to one service center application per VAMC catchment area per applicant's EIN for a service center(s).

   Applications are limited to up to one TIP application per VAMC catchment area per applicant's EIN for TIP housing beds.

4. *new* **Does my agency have to apply for each housing model in a separate application?**
   No, not necessarily.

   PDO NOFA: Any bed model(s) that an applicant wishes to apply for must be combined into one application. If you are applying for a service center(s), then any service center(s) must be combined into one application separate from any application for transitional housing beds.

   TIP NOFA: All TIP beds per VAMC catchment area per applicant's EIN must be requested in one application.

   Refer to the previous question for additional information.

5. *new* **How many beds and centers are expected to be awarded under this NOFA?**
   PDO NOFA: Approximately 11,500 transitional housing beds and approximately 20 service centers are expected to awarded under this NOFA.

   TIP NOFA: Approximately 450 beds are expected to awarded under this NOFA. Each application must request at least five beds and no more than 20 beds.

6. **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.

**Eligibility**

7. **Who can apply for this NOFA?**
   - 501(c)3 or 501(c)19 non-profit agency
   - State or Local Government
   - Indian Tribal Government

8. **Can I apply for this NOFA 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 Indian Tribal governments, can apply.

9. **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 NOFA?**
   No. The non-profit status must belong to the applicant.

10. **Does my organization have to be a current GPD provider to be eligible to apply?**
No.  Eligible entities are listed above.

11. **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.

## Dates

12. **What is the due date for the NOFA?**
Applications are due no later than by 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the date stated in each NOFA.

13. **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.

14. **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 2020.  The announcement will be made via news release and will be posted on the GPD website at www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp.  Following the news release, GPD will notify successful applicants and as well as unsuccessful applicants.

15. *new* **What is the award period?**
PDO NOFA:  Funding will be for a period of one year beginning on October 1, 2020, and ending on September 30, 2021, with options for VA to offer up to two additional years.

TIP NOFA:  Funding will be for a period of three years beginning on October 1, 2020 and ending on September 30, 2023.

16. **If funding is for one year, how can my organization support a Veteran for two years?**
There is no requirement for Veterans to remain in GPD transitional housing for two 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.

## Forms and requirements

17. *new* **How do I complete the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)?**
General instructions for the form are available at:  https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Specific instructions related to the NOFAs 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:
    - PDO NOFA: **VA-GPD-PDO-FY2020**
    - TIP NOFA: **VA-GPD-TIP-FY2020**
- Question 12, Funding Opportunity Title:
    - PDO NOFA: **GPD Per Diem Only Grant Program (PDO)**
    - TIP NOFA: **GPD Transition in Place Grant Program (TIP)**
- Question 13, Competition Identification Number/Title: **N/A**
- Question 17, Proposed Start Date: **10/1/2020**
- Question 17, Proposed End Date:
    - PDO NOFA: **9/30/2021**
    - TIP NOFA: **9/30/2023**
- Question 18, Estimated Funding:
    - PDO NOFA: **Should be the estimated amount for 1 year**
    - TIP NOFA: **Should be the estimated amount for the total 3 years**
- Question 19, Executive Order 12372: **Only applies to governmental organizations**

18. **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.

19. **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.

20. *new* **What is the estimated funding?**
PDO NOFA: 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 or service center(s) being proposed in the application over one year. The current maximum per diem rate for transitional housing (as of the date of this FAQ document) is $48.50 per day. The maximum per diem rate for a service center is $6.06 per hour.

TIP NOFA: 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 all three years combined. For Transition In Place, the per diem payment will be at a rate not to exceed 1.5 times the current maximum per diem rate.

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

21. **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

22. **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.

23. **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 NOFA.  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

24. **What if my agency left out information from the submitted application?  Can we submit it separately?**
    No.  An application must be submitted through the GIFTS 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.  Refer to the GPD website for additional GIFTS resources: www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

25. **Can I mail, email or fax my application?**
    No.  The application must be submitted through the GIFTS electronic grants portal https://www.grantrequest.com/SID_5937?SA=AM

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

**Letters of coordination**

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

    GPD provides to the medical centers a standard format that medical centers may use for providing letters of coordination to applicants when requested.  The standard format prompts the medical center to include information such as the proposed number of beds and/or services, the proposed transitional housing model(s) or service center(s), and 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.  Letters of coordination should be uploaded with the application through the GPD GIFTS online application portal.  Do not send coordination letters to the GPD Office as they will not be added to your application package.

27. **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 types of models 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 model(s) and configuration that aligns with the needs of the community.

For example, if a community's by name list/master list has 12 active Veterans experiencing homelessness with an average inflow of two Veterans per month and with most Veterans needing bridge or service intensive housing, then applying for 40 clinical treatment beds would not appear to align with the community needs and would be unlikely to be scored favorably.

28. **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.

29. **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.

30. **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.

31. **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.

NOTE: For applicants requesting transitional housing beds under the Hospital-to-Housing model, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the applicant and the local VA medical center <u>is required</u> or the Hospital-to-Housing beds will not be eligible for funding.

32. **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.

## Application content

33. **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.

NOTE: Word counts apply regardless of the number of models or services being proposed. Applications with fewer models or fewer services would be expected to use less space than the suggested limit.

34. **Is there a minimum or maximum service area expected to be covered?**
Applications for transitional housing beds and applications for service center(s) 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.

35. **What if my agency's transitional housing and/or service centers are located in two different VAMC's catchment areas?**
Applicants must submit separate applications for sites that fall under a different medical center's catchment area.

36. **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.

37. ***new*** **Are there any free resources available related to case management approaches that are strengths-based, evidence-based, multidisciplinary, multiphasic, structured, flexible in intensity, and integrated with personal networks and with the VA or mainstream community?**
   Yes, applicants are encouraged to search for available resources.

   Although GPD does not endorse any resource over another, a few publicly available options are included here.

   > Center for the Advancement of CTI
   > www.criticaltime.org

   > Facebook
   > Critical Time Intervention (CTI) Global Network

   > CTI Self Assessment
   > https://www.criticaltime.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2014-dec-9-CTI-Implementation-Self-Assessment-FINAL.pdf

38. ***new*** **How many beds can I apply for?**
   PDO NOFA:  Applications must include a minimum of five transitional housing beds per the requested bed model in a transitional housing application.  There is not a maximum number of beds that can be requested (except for Service-Intensive, as noted in the next paragraphs).  Applicants should tailor their requests to their abilities and to the needs of the community.

   Applications for the Service-Intensive (SITH) bed model must include a minimum of five SITH beds and may request a maximum of up to 15 SITH beds per application.  If more than 15 SITH beds are requested within the same application, then at least 60 percent of the additional beds beyond 15 must be for a transitional housing bed model(s) other than SITH.

   > For example, an applicant applying for 50 total beds must allocate at least 21 of those beds to a housing model(s) that is not SITH (i.e., 50 total beds requested minus 15 Service-Intensive beds = 35 beds times 60 percent = 21 non-Service-Intensive beds, leaving 14 beds out of the total 50 beds for additional Service-Intensive beds and/or other bed models at the applicant's discretion).

   There is not a minimum nor a maximum number of service centers that can be requested in a service center application.

   TIP NOFA:  Applications must include a minimum of five TIP beds and up to a maximum of 20 TIP beds per application.  Applicants should tailor their requests to their abilities and to the needs of the community.

39. **If I provide a total of 30 beds, and want to offer 10 Clinical Treatment, 10 Bridge Housing and 10 Service Intensive, do I have to write three grants?**
   No.  A single application would be required.  The applicant would be expected to describe the services associated with each of the three models within one application.

40. **Should I answer all of the questions regarding all of the models?**
    Not necessarily.  Answer the model-specific questions in the PDO NOFA that pertain to the specific model(s) for which you are applying.  Do not answer model-specific questions that pertain to models for which you are not applying.

41. **The PDO NOFA 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 PDO NOFA, a low barrier approach to housing is expected for all applicants.  This is not to be confused with the Low Demand model outlined in the PDO NOFA.

42. **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.

**Budget**

43. *new* **How much funding can I request?**
    PDO NOFA:  Refer to an earlier question:  **How many beds can I apply for?**

    TIP NOFA:  Each applicant may request a maximum amount of per diem not to exceed $1.6 million total costs for the entire three (3) year grant period.  Applicants may request no more than $80,000 total costs per bed over the entire three (3) year grant period based on the average number of beds to be provided as stated in the grant application.  Requested costs must be based on actual cost of care.

44. *new* **What is the per diem rate?**
    The current maximum per diem rate for PDO transitional housing (as of the date of this FAQ) is $48.50 per day.  The maximum per diem rate for a service center is $6.06 per hour.

    Per 38 CFR 68.33, applicants for transitional housing beds may request up to the lesser of the daily cost of care or the current VA State Home rate for domiciliary care.

    The maximum hourly per diem rate for a service center is 1/8 of the daily cost of care, not to exceed the current VA State Home rate for domiciliary care.  Payment for a Veteran in a service center will not exceed 8 hours in any day.

    For TIP, the per diem payment is not to exceed 1.5 times the current maximum per diem rate

    Refer to the GPD website for the most up-to-date information on rates:
    https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp

45. **Will per diem be higher for certain transitional housing bed models under this NOFA?**
No.  Per diem payments are set by law according to the state home domiciliary bed rate, the current maximum rate is available on our website: https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD.asp

See also the previous question about per diem rates.

46. **How can the grant funding be used?**
The funding can be used to offset operating costs for a program of supportive housing or service centers.

47. **Can grant funds be used to pay for staff professional development?**
Applicants and grantees are responsible for documenting their operating costs and for documenting the costs supported from grant funds.  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 allowed for PDO or for TIP, grantees should adjust accordingly.

48. **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 allowed for PDO or for TIP, 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/

49. **Can we use the grant to purchase or to lease a vehicle?**
No part of an award under this NOFA 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 and/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 allowed for PDO or for TIP, whichever is less.

50. **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.

51. **_new_ Are the dollar limits named in the TIP NOFA direct cost limits or total cost limits?**
The dollar limits named in the TIP NOFA are total cost limits. Therefore, any allowable direct cost and its associated allowable indirect cost, when combined, must not exceed the dollar limits named in the TIP NOFA.

**Review and selection**

52. **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 of review and consideration for funding.

53. **How are grant applications rated?**
To score grant applications, VA will use the rating criteria described in 38 CFR 61.32 which can be found on the GPD website www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp

54. **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.

55. **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.

56. **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.

57. **What if I commit beds to a particular model but then can't fill them?**
For those applicants that are successfully funded for multiple models under the PDO NOFA, VA will allow, without a change of scope, a flex of beds between the applicant's models within the same award. This flex will be up to five (5) beds of the total awarded bed limit. Successful applicants who seek a greater number of flex beds than what is allowed must receive prior written approval from the National GPD Program Office.

58. **_new_ What might justify an extension beyond 6-12 months for TIP?**
It is expected that Veterans will transition in place in approximately 6 to 12 months. For an extension beyond 12 months, prior written approval from the GPD Liaison would be required and extensions would be considered in increments of up to 90 days at a time and generally not to exceed a combined total of up to 24 months per veteran.

Requests for extensions will demonstrate what is needed to accomplish the transition to permanent housing, the plans for accomplishing this transition and the expected timeframe.