

Gov. Evers: DVA announce applications open for grants for community-based organizations supporting veteran mental health

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Secretary James Bond, announced today that applications are now being accepted for the Veteran Mental Health Community-Based Organization Grant program. Gov. Evers initially announced the grant funding as part of a [\\$10 million investment](#) directed by the governor and supported by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support veteran services across the state.

The Veteran Mental Health Community-Based Organization Grants are open to nonprofit organizations that promote positive mental health through activities, programs, and services that enhance the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of Wisconsin veterans. Each nonprofit can receive up to \$50,000 to support its efforts in providing mental health support for veterans. Applications must be received by **4 p.m. on Wed., May 31, 2023.**

“I am proud of my administration’s work over the last four years to support our state’s veteran community, especially when it comes to addressing mental health and substance use disorders,” said Gov. Evers. “These challenges far too often stand in the way of our veterans being successful when returning to civilian life, and this new grant program will provide community-based solutions to address veterans’ unique needs, because our veterans should have the support and resources that they’ve earned and deserve.”

“As a grateful nation, we have a duty to be there for service members when they’ve

returned home,” said DVA Secretary Bond. “Supporting accessible and well-rounded mental health care for Wisconsin veterans is fundamental to fulfilling this duty. These grants will support a component of mental health that can be overlooked—programs and services that create a sense of community, connection, and sense of self.”

Gov. Evers and the Evers Administration are committed to ensuring Wisconsin veterans have the tools and resources they need to thrive in their civilian lives. In his [2022 State of the State address](#), Gov. Evers [announced](#) that he would be signing an executive order creating a [Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity](#) to develop new, innovative initiatives to support the more than 300,000 veterans who live in Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, Gov. Evers [signed Executive Order #157](#) to create the Commission and charged the Commission with identifying gaps in existing services, areas in need of robust investment, and reducing barriers to economic security, including efforts to expand access to higher education and job training, address housing insecurity, and increase mental and behavioral health support and substance use disorder treatment.

Gov. Evers’ Blue Ribbon Commission gathered input from stakeholders, conducted listening sessions, consulted experts, and built sound and innovative recommendations to build a better Wisconsin for veterans. Following the [release](#) of the Commission’s final report in September 2022 and based on the Commission’s recommendations, Gov. Evers [announced](#) the \$10 million investment. The \$10 million investment included:

- \$4.5 million to support veteran mental health initiatives, including supporting community-based programs, increasing access to emergency services, and investing in peer support programs.
- \$2 million to create a rental assistance program for homeless veterans. This was also a recommendation from the Interagency Council on Homelessness’ [“Welcoming Wisconsin Home”](#) report.
- An additional \$1.5 million for the Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (VORP), which provides case management and support to veterans and connects veterans to community services, including substance use treatment, housing, education, and mental healthcare. This investment is intended to fund seven additional positions to serve veterans across the state.
- An additional \$1.5 million for county veteran services offices (CVSOs) and Tribal veterans service offices (TVSOs), which help veterans connect to benefits, preventative programming, and family engagement activities. The

funding will increase allocations to CVSOs and TVSOs by 100 percent, ensure TVSO payments are not being prorated, and increase payments to part-time CVSOs.

- An additional \$500,000 for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Developments' Hire Heroes Program, which provides services to veterans with high barriers to employment and reimburses employers for certain costs when hiring veteran employees.

The 2023-25 biennial budget proposed by Gov. Evers would have built upon these investments recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Veteran Opportunity, providing ongoing state support for these critical initiatives. Unfortunately, yesterday, the Joint Committee on Finance met for the first executive session of the budget process, and Republican committee members voted to remove [more than 540 provisions](#) from the governor's budget, including several aimed at expanding mental and behavioral healthcare and supporting veterans across the state such as expanding the Veterans Property Tax Credit to support more veterans and their families and supporting job training opportunities for veterans, among other provisions. Additional information regarding the governor's proposed budget initiatives to support Wisconsin's veterans is available [here](#).

For additional information about the Veteran Mental Health Community-Based Organization Grant, including evaluation criteria, application materials, and tips for applying, please see the [DVA Grants Page](#). Questions about the grant application process should be directed to DVA Grants Unit by emailing vetsbenefitsgrants@dva.wisconsin.gov.

An online version of this release is available [here](#).