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Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) Program

Feedback for applicants

Overview

The Veteran and Community Grants (V&CG) Program (the program) forms part of Program 2.4 Veterans' Community Care and Support in the Department of Veterans' Affairs' (the department) Portfolio Budget Statement.

The objective of the program is to maintain and improve the independence and quality of life for members of the Australian veteran community by providing funding for projects which sustain or enhance health and wellbeing.

The intended outcomes of the program are to deliver projects which:

- are sustainable and have an ongoing benefit for members of the Australian veteran community
- increase opportunities for members of the Australian veteran community to engage in social and community activities and/or improve health behaviours and support healthy places.

The grant opportunity application period opened on 9 December 2021 and closed on 20 January 2022.

The grant opportunity received over 150 applications. Following the Decision Maker's decision, 56 applications were approved for funding, to a value of \$2.505 million (GST exclusive).

There was a strong interest in the program and successful applications were of a very high standard. Applications were assessed according to the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines and outlined in the selection process below.

This feedback is provided to assist grant applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application and the content of quality responses to the assessment criteria for this grant opportunity. Each unsuccessful applicant has also received individual feedback.

Selection Process

The department used a targeted competitive selection process to recommend 56 organisations to deliver the V&CG program.

Applications were screened for eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Eligible applications were assessed by the department's Grants Advisory Committee on merit, based on:

- how well an application met the criteria
- how an application compared to others
- whether an application provided value for money.

The DVA Grants Advisory Committee assessed whether the application represented value for money by taking into account:

- the relative value of the grant sought
- the quality of the project proposal and activities
- the proposal's fitness for purpose in contributing to Government objectives
- whether the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the applicant and Government's outcomes being achieved
- the applicant's relevant experience and performance history
- the geographic distribution of funds when awarding grants, to take into account the distribution of veterans across Australia and those communities most in need.

Each applicant was required to address the following selection criteria:

- Criterion 1: Project need and suitability – Describe your project and why it is needed.
- Criterion 2: Achieving outcomes – Describe how the target group will benefit and how you will achieve program outcomes.
- Criterion 3: Ability of organisation to deliver – Describe your organisation's experience delivering projects that benefit the target group.

Preferred applicants were identified based on the strength of their responses to the selection criteria and their demonstrated ability to meet the grant requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

Selection results

Fifty six organisations were selected to deliver the V&CG program.

The selected organisations provided strong responses to the selection criteria and demonstrated their ability to meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. Further detail about what constituted a strong response to each criterion is provided below.

Criterion 1 – Project need and suitability

Describe your project and why it is needed.

A strong response addressed the following:

- what activities will you undertake, and how many people do you expect will participate in the activities (what will you do)
- who is the target group and why does your target group need this project? Provide data, research, community feedback, surveys, and such (who will it help)
- how will the activities address the particular needs of the target community (how will it help).

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate what activities would be undertaken, and how many people were expected to participate in the activities.	The applicant described in detail their project activities such as team building and group learning workshops and why they are needed by the target group. The application provided details of who would facilitate the activities and expected participant numbers, and provided data to substantiate the expected participant numbers in the activity.
Strong applications were required to describe the target group and why the target group needed this project.	The applicant described the target group as veterans and their families, and provided details of their project offerings such as social, physical, individual and group activities for participating families. The application demonstrated the need for the project to build better familial relationships to help manage trauma as well as the impacts of service on families. The applicant provided references to relevant research to support their project activities and intended outcomes.
Strong applications were required to describe how the activities address the particular needs of the target community.	The applicant described the need as support for veteran families who manage multiple stressors, including managing various impacts from service on family members. The application demonstrated via research and modelling how their project activities would meet the needs of the target community.

Criterion 2 – Achieving outcomes

Describe how the target group will benefit and how you will achieve program outcomes

A strong response addressed the following:

- describe what outcomes you expect to achieve from your project, and how these relate to the V&CG Program outcomes (why is it important and what will change). The V&CG program outcomes are to deliver projects that:
 - are sustainable and have an ongoing benefit for members of the Australian veteran community
 - increase opportunities for members of the Australian veteran community to engage in social and community activities and/or improve health behaviours and support healthy places.
- how will you know the project has been successful (how will you evaluate).

Strength	Example
Strong applications needed to clearly demonstrate how the outcomes will be achieved.	Outcomes were described to a high level within the application. Outcomes could be clearly identified and included building closer connections between veterans and their children, improved parental emotional competence, increased parental connections, reduced parental burnout peer connections, reduced internalising/externalising behaviours in children, reduced parental load, a change to the emotional climate of the family, improved relationships and communication, deeper bonds. There was a clear line drawn from the identification of the outcomes to how they will be achieved.
Strong applications were required to clearly demonstrate how the project will be sustainable and have an ongoing benefit for members of the Australian veteran community.	Sustainability was clearly described and the ongoing benefits were addressed. Ongoing support and follow up to be provided via tele-sessions. Participants to be linked to employment and education teams as part of their ongoing support. Monthly ongoing group online sessions to be facilitated by a Psychologist.
Strong applications were required to outline how the project will be evaluated.	The application described in detail how the project will be evaluated using qualitative and quantitative measures. The application went on to describe the research based analysis from their pilot program which had positive social and behavioural outcomes as well as feedback which reflected 'deeper bonds and connections after they have completed the course'. In line with the guidelines a quote was provided for a professionally sourced program evaluation.

Criterion 3 – Ability of organisation to deliver

Describe your organisation’s experience delivering projects that benefit the target group

A strong response described:

- your organisation’s past performance or experience in delivering similar projects, including the outcomes achieved (what your organisation offers)
- your organisation’s community knowledge, links, networks and partnerships and how you will leverage these capabilities to successfully deliver the project (how your organisation is connected to the community)
- how your organisation will engage suitably qualified and experienced people to undertake the project
- the project risks and how you will manage them (how your organisation plans for success).

Strength	Example
Strong applications were required to demonstrate past performance and/or experience in delivering similar projects including the outcomes achieved.	The application strongly described the design and delivery of a pilot program for veterans and families. The data demonstrated the success of the program which supports their capability to move from a pilot program to deliver a high level program.
Strong applications need to describe links within the community, networks, and partnerships, and how these links will help deliver the project.	The application identified recent participant growth of 30.4% in 2021, strong engagement and continued anticipated growth. The applicant identified their growing base of strategic partnerships with Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs). The application demonstrated their successful track record of exceeding deliverables for Department of Veterans’ Affairs grants and other funding bodies. In relation to leverage, the applicant provided a good level detail, noting they create referrals to the ESOs to link participants with appropriate support for their needs. The application provided details on the organisation’s links and partnerships including how they would leverage the capabilities of these networks to deliver the proposal.
Strong applications needed to demonstrate qualified and experienced people will undertake the project.	The application provided a high level of detail about the qualified/experienced people to undertake the project within this criterion response. The application outlined psychologists and their trauma informed veteran support programs team would facilitate the activities.



Strength	Example
<p>Strong applications were required to explain any risks to their proposal which might apply to the project and how the risks will be managed.</p>	<p>The applicant provided details of their risk management plan which included a COVID-19 risk plan. The applicant has considered compliance with health guidelines, transport, venue and accommodation choice, staffing and possible quarantine requirements. The delivery method can be adapted to meet the COVID-19 environment.</p>