



**Community
Grants Hub**
Improving your grant experience



2025–26 Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST)

Feedback for applicants

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (the department) has provided the following general feedback for applicants of the 2025–26 Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) Program grant opportunity.

Assessment of applications was in accordance with the procedure detailed in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (the guidelines) and outlined in the selection process below.

Overview

The application submission period opened on 4 March 2025 and closed on 28 April 2025.

The BEST Program forms part of the Australian Government's commitment to supporting the role of ex-service organisation (ESO) wellbeing and compensation advocates, who provide advice and assistance to the veteran and Defence communities. It also links closely to the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP), which provides the essential skills for claims, advocacy and wellbeing work.

The objectives of the BEST Program are to assist ESOs to:

- improve the quality of claims received by the department at the primary determining level
- reduce the rate of appeals to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) and the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART)
- promote the provision of wellbeing services to the veteran and defence communities.

The intended outcomes of the BEST Program are to ensure:

- the veteran and Defence communities benefit from having better informed ESO advocates who can lodge high quality claims containing all required information, to enable the department to make timely and quality decisions
- ESO advocates can assist in improving claims assessment efficiency
- the veteran and Defence communities have access to appropriate compensation and wellbeing advocacy services.

The department and the Community Grants Hub administer the BEST Program according to Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles (CGRPs).

Selection Process

The Community Grants Hub (the Hub) undertook the initial screening for organisation eligibility and compliance against the requirements outlined in the guidelines. This information was provided to the department's grant opportunity delegate for final decisions on whether an application met the eligibility and compliance criteria.

The department assessed and considered all eligible and compliant applications through a demand driven grant process.

The selection advisory panel (panel) established by the department was comprised of subject matter experts who assessed applications and provided advice to inform the funding recommendations to the Financial Delegate.

The panel's consideration of assessed applications was based on:

- meeting the compliance requirements outlined in the guidelines
- meeting the eligibility requirements outlined in the guidelines
- compensation and wellbeing workload information provided in the application form
- the total number and combined workload of all eligible applicants
- the total amount of funding available for the grant funding round
- the outcome of the application, based on the funding formula
- the overall objectives for the program
- identified risks and the proposed mitigation strategies for the department and the Commonwealth.

Selection Results

There was a strong interest in the grant opportunity and applications were of a high standard. The eligible and compliant applications met the grant requirements outlined in the guidelines.

The department notified applicants of the outcome in writing, where their applications did not meet the requirements outlined in the guidelines.

General feedback

This feedback is to assist applicants to understand what generally comprised a strong application for this grant opportunity and provide guidance in completing applications for future rounds.

The successful applicants were eligible organisations whose applications met the objectives of the BEST Program. As outlined in section 7.2 of the guidelines, the grant amount offered to eligible applicants was calculated based on:

- an applicant's requested grant amount and workload information provided in the application form
- total funding offered in the grant round
- the BEST Program grant funding formula.

Read the supporting information before applying

- It is important to read all available information provided about the BEST Program when applying for funding, especially the grant opportunity documentation published on the [GrantConnect website](#)¹ when the round is open.
- The grant opportunity documentation is specific to each BEST Program round and contains important information about the purpose of the program, changes since the previous round, eligibility and compliance requirements, timeframes and how to apply.
- The application form included supporting information about the mandatory information that was required by the department to complete the assessment process.
- As BEST Program grant funding is distributed using a funding formula, the full amount of funding available was allocated among all eligible and compliant applicants. It is important workload reporting is consistent among applicants to ensure the distribution of funding is fair.

¹ <https://www.grants.gov.au/>

Eligible entity types

To be eligible, an ESO had to be an eligible entity type as outlined in section 4.1 of the guidelines. If an ESO was not listed as an eligible entity type, the ESO could still apply under a sponsorship arrangement with another ESO that was an eligible entity type. If an ESO applied as a sponsored organisation, their sponsoring organisation had to complete and sign the application on their behalf. A current Letter of Declaration had to be signed by both the sponsored and sponsoring organisation and uploaded as supporting documentation.

Definition of an ESO

To be eligible for a BEST Program grant, an ESO was considered to be an organisation:

- whose membership consisted primarily of Australian veterans, past and present members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and/or their dependants
- which was established primarily to provide pensions, advocacy and/or wellbeing assistance to Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants
- which did not operate as a business or charge any fee for acting on behalf of Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants in the provision of claims or wellbeing services.

In addition, to be considered an ESO for the purposes of the BEST Program, the organisation needed to have at least one ATDP-qualified advocate in their organisation. All ESOs were required to be registered on the ATDP Register and ensure the relevant details were up to date.

The applicant organisation's website also needed to demonstrate a clear pathway for wellbeing or compensation advocacy support.

Eligibility and Compliance

To be considered eligible and compliant for a grant, applicants had to ensure their application met the following requirements:

- the sponsoring organisation completed and submitted the application, not the sponsored ESO
- all the requested evidence and documentation was attached to the application to provide evidence of the organisation's reported workload
- applicants had to hold professional indemnity insurance available through the Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association Inc. (VITA) or a similar insurance provider. Applicants had to be able to provide a valid Certificate of Currency as supporting documentation. An invoice or receipt was not accepted as evidence of valid insurance
- any advocates recorded on the application form had to be listed on the ATDP Register, including their correct qualifications
- the names of any ATDP advocates listed in the application had to match the details on the ATDP Register to avoid reported workload discrepancies
- all reported compensation and wellbeing workload was undertaken by advocates with up-to-date ATDP qualifications
- only ATDP-qualified wellbeing advocates completed the wellbeing activities listed as wellbeing advocacy such as providing support for funerals, housing or accommodation, or assisting with a crisis
- any trainee advocates were recorded in the designated trainee section of the application form, and not on the ATDP advocate list
- when recording advocate workloads, applicants had to ensure each claim was counted as a single claim, regardless of the number of conditions. For example, if a claim was submitted

for six conditions, it was recorded as one claim only. The funding formula took into consideration the volume and complexity of the work through workload ratings

- any salary, equipment and administration expenses claimed had to be for eligible expenditure only, as outlined the guidelines.

Individual feedback

Individual feedback will not be provided for this grant opportunity.