

# Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program

## FY 2025 Funding Opportunity – Special Need (renewal)

### Frequently Asked Questions

February 2024

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#### Overview

##### 1. What funding opportunity is available?

VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem (GPD) program is offering a renewal Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Any currently active special need grantees may apply for renewal funding to continue their projects beyond the current end date of September 30, 2024.

Renewal grants will provide funding to defray the cost of facilitating transitional housing and supportive services 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). Renewal grants funded from this NOFO will offset 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.

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

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

Applicants are limited to up to one special need renewal application per VA medical facility catchment area per applicant's Employer Identification Number (EIN) per currently active special need grant.

Organizations that do not have a currently active special need grant are not eligible to apply.

Applicants who have a currently active special need grant and who wish to apply for renewal funding are expected to continue the same project that was previously approved. Renewal projects should involve minimal, if any, changes (e.g., same special need population, VA medical facility catchment area, bed numbers, site addresses, service area).

##### 3. How many beds are expected to be awarded?

VA anticipates awarding approximately 16 special need renewal grants for a total of approximately 100 special need beds nationwide.

##### 4. Where is the VA medical facility near me?

See the VA website for VA medical facilities by state: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/allstate.asp>.

## 5. Where can I find other technical assistance materials related to this NOFO?

On the GPD website (<https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>) is where the technical assistance materials are available. Be sure to review the recorded webinar during the application process for instructions and tips about the application.

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## Eligibility

### 6. Who can apply?

Only currently active special need grantees may apply for renewal funding to continue their projects beyond the current end date of September 30, 2024.

Organizations that do not have a currently active special need grant are not eligible to apply.

A list of active GPD special need grant recipients is available on the GPD website:

<https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>.

### 7. 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.

### 8. If my organization is a current GPD provider, do we have to apply again if we want to continue?

Yes. All current special need grantees are in their final year of the active grant, meaning their grant awards end on September 30, 2024. Therefore, all current special need grantees must reapply if they wish to be considered for a special need renewal grant starting on October 1, 2024.

Applicants who have a currently active special need grant and who wish to apply for renewal funding are expected to continue the same project that was previously approved. Renewal projects should involve minimal, if any, changes (e.g., same special need population, VA medical facility catchment area, bed numbers, site addresses, service area).

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## Dates

### 9. 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.

### 10. 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.

VA will treat any application received after the deadline as ineligible. For example, usually at 4:01 p.m. Eastern Time on the due date, the online system will stop accepting applications. Applicants will not be able to submit applications once the due date and time pass.

### 11. Will GPD answer questions from applicants about the NOFO?

Yes. Although GPD does not assist in writing applications, GPD commits to providing technical assistance to applicants who have procedural questions during the NOFO open period. Response times can vary. Applicants should plan ahead and allow at least 2-3 business days to receive responses. Applicants are welcome to follow-up after that to inquire about the status of a pending

response if needed. We encourage applicants to prepare and submit early to avoid unanticipated difficulties close to the close date and time.

**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 2024 (i.e., July-September 2024). The announcement will be made via news release and will be posted on the GPD website at [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp). GPD will notify successful applicants and unsuccessful applicants.

**13. What is the award period?**

VA anticipates that the grants will be for a period of two years starting in fiscal year (FY) 2025 on October 1, 2024, and ending September 30, 2026.

VA reserves the right to award an initial period of one year with options for VA to offer up to one additional year, or to award both years at once.

**14. If funding is for one year at a time, how can we support a Veteran for two years or more?**

There is no requirement for Veterans to remain in GPD transitional housing for two years or more. 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 obtain a copy of the SF-424 Family of forms?**

The SF-424 forms relevant to your application(s) are available on the GPD website [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp) and on the Grants.gov website, under the Forms tab, under the SF-424 Family section: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

DO NOT open the forms from the websites. You MUST save locally to your computer before opening.

SF-424 forms require Adobe Reader 8. For further assistance, please visit <https://helpx.adobe.com/ca/acrobat/kb/cant-open-pdf.html>.

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

General instructions are available at: <https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/sf-424-family>.

Specific instructions related to the FY 2025 special need renewal NOFO are provided on the GPD website: [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp) where you will find an annotated SF-424 with instructions.

If instructions are not provided for a particular form field here in the FAQs, or in the resources linked in the previous paragraphs, then applicants should enter information in that field specific to their application, or should enter N/A or leave the field blank as appropriate.

**17. 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 (e.g., President, Executive Director, Chief Executive Officer). 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. VA reserves the right to reject at threshold any application received without a signature or without an acceptable signature. Rejected applications will not be reviewed or considered for funding. VA also reserves the right to communicate with an applicant about the signature field, as needed, prior to making threshold decisions.

## **18. What is the estimated funding (Question 18a)?**

In the Estimated Funding field 18a on the SF-424, you would enter an amount based on the estimated cost of per diem for the number of beds and services being proposed in the application over two years. Per diem is calculated based on the estimated cost of care and not to exceed the current maximum per diem rate. Current maximum per diem rates are available on the GPD provider website:

[https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD\\_ProviderWebsite.asp](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD_ProviderWebsite.asp).

Field 18a is for the amount being requested from VA-GPD. Fields 18b through 18f would be for project costs being supported from other sources. Most applicants leave fields 18b through 18f blank.

## **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](http://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. Instructions are available on the SAM website: [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov).

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

The SAM-generated UEI is a relatively new data element. It is the official entity identifier used for Federal grants. It replaces the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) numbers as of April 2022.

Applicants must have a UEI prior to applying. For information refer to: [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) or [www.FSD.gov](http://www.FSD.gov).

## **22. What if I 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 documentation is submitted separately from the original package, it cannot be added to the application package. Refer to the GPD website for additional resources: [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp).

## **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 the link and for additional resources: [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp).

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## **Application content**

### **24. 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. The text boxes in the online application usually allow for double the suggested limit. Applicants are strongly encouraged to provide complete responses while also being as clear and concise as possible.

### **25. Is there a minimum or maximum service area expected to be covered?**

Applications do not have to include coverage for the entire VA medical facility catchment area in the application. The coverage area, however, must not exceed the VA medical facility 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 required service areas.

Applicants for renewal funding are expected to continue the same project that was previously approved. Renewal projects should involve minimal, if any, changes (e.g., same special need population, VA medical facility catchment area, bed numbers, site addresses, service area).

**26. How do I find out the VA medical facility catchment area?**

If you do not know your VA medical facility 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.

**27. How many beds can I apply for?**

Applicants for renewal funding may request up to the number of beds approved under their currently active GPD special need grant (start date October 1, 2021). Applicants may request fewer beds but may not request more.

Applicants should tailor their requests to their abilities and to the needs of the community.

**28. How many special need populations can I apply for?**

Each application may request one and only one special need population. The population is expected to be the same as was previously approved.

**29. 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 C.F.R. part 61](#)) which can be found on the GPD website [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://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.

**30. 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.

**31. The NOFO talks about demonstrating low barriers to access. What is a low barrier approach?**

For Veterans who are determined to be appropriate for the project, "low barrier" refers to a general approach to admissions in which there are no or minimal requirements for entry. By focusing on reducing harm, a low barrier approach encourages Veterans experiencing homelessness to seek resources by eliminating obstacles. It also means expediting the time it takes for an eligible Veteran to be admitted into housing (i.e., same day access from the point of identification or referral to the GPD project, or within no more than 72 hours).

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. Low barrier means that providers are willing to work with Veterans who relapse, without immediately discharging them from the program. A low barrier approach to housing is expected for all applicants.

### **32. 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 spaces for Veterans who are vulnerable. It means working on relapse issues with Veterans in a manner that preserves the safety of others in the program. It means having 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 recreating homelessness for that individual.

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## **Budget**

### **33. How much funding can I request?**

Applicants may request up to an amount that equals 100% of the daily cost of care minus other sources of funding and not to exceed the maximum per diem rate. For information about maximum per diem rates, refer to the question above in the [Forms and requirements](#) section: “*What is the estimated funding (Question 18)?*”

The estimated amount should be calculated using the number of beds proposed for Veterans. Consider your expected occupancy rates and other factors such as indirect costs.

Costs are expected to be the same as previously approved with few, if any, changes.

### **34. What is the per diem rate?**

The current maximum per diem rates are available on the GPD provider website, under *Per Diem Rate Request Information*: [https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD\\_ProviderWebsite.asp](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/GPD_ProviderWebsite.asp).

### **35. How can the grant funding be used?**

The funding can be used to offset the operational costs of providing care to Veterans experiencing homelessness. Refer to the NOFO for more details.

### **36. Can grant funds be used to pay for staff professional development?**

Applicants and grantees are responsible for documenting their operating costs. Any costs, such as staff professional development, should be treated consistently regardless of whether the costs are being supported from the grant or from other sources. If professional development is not a normal operating cost or if cost calculations exceed the maximum per diem rate, grantees should adjust accordingly.

### **37. Can we pay for Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) licenses? Is 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. Successful applicants will be required to submit a per diem calculation. At that time, if HMIS costs result in a rate that exceeds the normal maximum rate, limited flexibilities will be provided.

For special need grantees, using HMIS is not required; it is optional.

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/>.

### **38. Can we use the per diem funds to purchase a vehicle?**

No. Per diem grant funds provided under these NOFOs may not 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.

### **39. Can grant funds be used to support indirect costs?**

Yes. 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 C.F.R. part 200](#) and if they provide a [Certificate of De Minimis Indirect Cost Rate \(va.gov\)](#). All other allowable costs will only be considered only if they are direct costs.

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## **Letters of coordination**

### **40. 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 the local VA medical facility regarding the proposed grant project.

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

It is important that if you plan to seek letters of coordination, do not wait until the last minute. Medical facilities, Continuum of Care (CoC) and other partners have limited resources and may be responding to multiple requests. 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 portal. Do not send letters to the GPD office as they will not be added to your application package.

### **41. Can you describe the coordination that is expected?**

Applicants should proactively engage in strategic planning dialogues with the VA medical facility, 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 configurations would best support the community's efforts to end Veteran homelessness.

Applicants should be responsive to the needs articulated by the VA medical facility, CoC, and other community groups. Applicants are encouraged to apply for the housing models, configurations, and/or services that align with the needs of the community.

### **42. What tools are available to better understand the community's need?**

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

Applicants may review data from a variety of places including but not limited to:

- 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 VA medical facility)
- The VA, HUD, and USICH Community Planning Survey submission
- The VA and USICH Transformation of GPD: Considerations for Communities

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.

#### **43. What if information in my application is different from the 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. Be sure to provide detailed and accurate information to the VA medical facility, 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 VA medical facility, 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 and detailed.

#### **44. How is coordination with the local VA facility and CoC taken into account in our application?**

There is a regulatory requirement for the applicant to demonstrate coordination with the local VA medical facility. 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.

#### **45. Are letters of coordination required?**

Letters of coordination with the VA medical facility 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.

#### **46. Can the GPD Liaison at the VA medical facility 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 obtaining a letter of coordination from the local medical facility Director.

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

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

**48. How are grant applications rated?**

To score grant applications, VA will use the rating criteria described in the NOFOs and in the GPD regulations ([38 C.F.R. part 61](#)) which can be found on the GPD website [www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp](http://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. In this way, VA provides 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. What happens to my historical GPD capital grant if I don't get an FY 2025 special need grant?**

If the applicant for a special need renewal grant is the recipient of an historical GPD capital grant (i.e., a capital grant awarded in FY 2020 or before) with an ongoing period of obligation and if that capital grant was used for the facility(s) that houses the special need beds, then that applicant must maintain an active special need grant at least until the expiration of the minimum period during which VA could seek recovery ([38 C.F.R. § 61.67](#)).

VA will seek recovery for awarded capital grant funds on a prorated basis if at any time during the minimum period of obligation a grantee no longer has an active GPD special need grant or if a grantee does not maintain bed numbers and occupancy levels.

**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.