



Elks National Veterans Service Commission **FREEDOM GRANTS** **2014-2015 Guidelines**

The Lodge Secretary or Designated Grants Coordinator may apply for a Freedom Grant from August 1 through August 31, 2014. Applications are online only.

Grant applications will be judged by their completeness, the extent of Lodge support, and its predicted impact on those it is intended to benefit. Lodges which pledge their own resources, either in terms of volunteers or finances, will be given extra credit towards approval of their application.

Lodges which have failed to return a Final Report form for any previously awarded Lodge grants or which are not in compliance with GL Statute 16.010 (Grand Lodge annual assessment) are ineligible to apply for the Freedom Grant or any other Lodge grant. The Final Report Form, with related receipts or copies thereof, must be returned to be in compliance with the terms of the Freedom Grant. Final Report forms returned without actual receipts or copies thereof will not be in compliance. A listing of expenses without receipts is unacceptable.

Freedom Grants must be used between September 21st, 2014 and July 31st, 2015. The final report form must be turned in by July 31, 2015.

A Freedom Grant may fund more than one activity. For example, a Lodge could allocate \$500 for care packages to troops overseas, \$1000 for Christmas gifts for Veterans, and \$500 for a Thanksgiving dinner at a Veterans hospital or nursing home.

Freedom Grants awarded by the Elks National Service Commission may be combined with grants from the Elks National Foundation to create larger programs having a greater impact. The grants must be applied for separately, and there is no guarantee that both the Elks National Foundation and the Elks National Veterans Service Commission will award grants to the same Lodge for the same purpose.

If you are new to applying for grants, or need some advice, the Elks National Foundation has developed a toolkit to aid Lodges applying for any type of grant. You can find the toolkit at: <http://www.elks.org/enf/Community/toolkit.cfm>. It includes the steps to follow to best serve the veterans or active military personnel in your community.

Policies & Guidelines for Freedom Grants

A Freedom Grant project must:

- Address a need identified for our Active Duty Military or Veterans.
- Have significant Elks-funded Program leadership involvement and visible Elks identification. The Elks-funded Program must be the driving force in the planning and implementation of the project(s).
- Improve the lives of our Military, Veterans, and/or their families.

Suggested Uses of Freedom Grants (in no particular order-list is not exhaustive)

- Helping Homeless Veterans. This could mean appliances for or repairs to transitional housing, bus passes, phone cards, clothing, or helping a local VA hospital host a 'Stand Down' for homeless veterans.
- Inviting the members and or families of the local National Guard and other military bases to the Lodge for dinner. Also bringing the residents of local hospitals and nursing homes to the Lodge and arranging transportation.
- Dinners, picnics, barbeques at the local hospital, nursing home, or military base.
- Sponsoring 'Honor Flights'
- Purchasing adaptive sports equipment for wounded warriors.
- Hunting, camping, fishing, or other outdoor activities for veterans and/or 'wounded warriors'.
- Christmas, birthday, or 'anytime' gifts for hospitalized veterans or for the families of active duty military personnel.
- Purchasing materials to modify the home of a disabled veteran.
- Therapeutic or recreational equipment for a hospital or nursing home.
- Care packages to active military overseas.
- Assisting local veterans who are 'shut in' and are unable to travel.
- Support for Fisher House (on-site housing for the families of hospitalized military)
- Though donations do qualify, we encourage your Lodge to consider using its Gratitude Grant in an active way. We want you to serve your communities in ways that will raise the Lodge's profile, energize the membership, encourage former members to return to the fold, and gain the notice of people who want to be part of an organization that's doing big things.
- Freedom Grants should not be used to replace the funds for Lodge programs already in place, but the Grant could be used to expand existing programs. For example, if your Lodge already sponsors a Thanksgiving Dinner for the veterans of a local hospital, a Freedom Grant could be used for an additional event, like a Fourth of July picnic. If your Lodge was sponsoring bingo at a hospital once a month, a Freedom Grant could be used to increase bingo to twice a month..

Veterans Service Grant funds **cannot** be used to:

- Purchase land or buildings.
- Give Cash Directly to Homeless Veterans
- Establish or increase an existing permanent foundation, trust, or permanent interest-bearing account.
- Directly benefit specific Elks members, unless they are part of the community served as a whole.
- Pay salaries or other personnel costs, other than necessary, one-time-only contracted technical expertise, as outlined in the grant proposal and approved by the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.

- Pay individual travel expenses of any kind, unless travel is essential and integral to the project's implementation, as outlined in the grant proposal and approved by the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.
- Help any individual(s) to obtain an academic degree or professional advancement, or for any individual(s) to attend a seminar or conference.
- Reimburse the applicant for expenses associated with projects already undertaken and in progress, or for projects that are already completed. The Elks National Veterans Service Commission will only provide funds to service projects that have been reviewed and approved prior to their start.
- Replace Lodge funds already set aside for veterans' service programs. Freedom Grant funds may be added to existing program funds, but cannot replace funds that have already been designated for Veterans.

The following are not recommended for Freedom Grants applications:

- Proposals featuring dinner at the Lodge to 'honor' veterans, where most of the Veterans in attendance are Lodge Members or come from other fraternal organizations, will not be approved. Dinners or celebrations at the Lodge where Veterans are brought in from area hospitals, nursing homes, or other facilities such as a military base are acceptable and encouraged.
- Using Freedom Grant money for a State or District project is not recommended. Lodges will not be permitted to 'pool' Freedom Grants in order to fund a program requiring perhaps tens of thousands of dollars. There are situations for which an exception could be made-contact the headquarters of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission for guidance.
- Applications for funds to build Memorials, 'walls of honor', or other bricks and mortar applications wherein the entire Grant is used for this purpose are not recommended. Freedom Grants should help the living. It could be acceptable to use a part of the Grant for *Wreaths Across America* or a similar program, but this should not be the sole purpose of the Freedom Grant.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

If you are unsure how favorably your project will be viewed, contact the Elks National Veterans Service Commission for advice. You can e-mail us at vets@elks.org or call 773-755-4736.

Robert Hennings, Director
Elks National Veterans Service Commission