

# VETERAN PROJECTS FUND GRANT GUIDE

---

## From Idea to Lasting Impact

*A practical guide to developing thoughtful projects  
that create lasting impact for veterans.*



 AMERICAN  
**LEGION**  
AUXILIARY  
FOUNDATION

# A MESSAGE FROM THE ALA FOUNDATION

Every project begins with a question.

## WHAT IF WE COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

That question has inspired American Legion Auxiliary members for generations. Every day, ALA entities identify challenges in their communities and find meaningful ways to serve veterans. The term “veterans” includes members of the military, as well as those who have been discharged. The Veteran Projects Fund exists to help turn those ideas into reality.

This guide was created to do more than explain a grant application. It was designed to help you develop thoughtful projects, tell meaningful stories, and confidently navigate the Veteran Projects Fund process from your first idea to your final submission.

Along the way, you'll learn directly from the ALA Foundation through practical guidance, examples of funded projects, and insights from reviewers about what makes an application successful.

Whether you're applying for the first time or refining an idea you've been developing for years, we hope this guide gives you the clarity and confidence to move forward.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of veterans. It is our privilege to support ALA entities that see a need, develop thoughtful solutions, and create lasting impact in their communities.

We're excited to see where your next idea leads.

— The American Legion Auxiliary  
Foundation

# How to Use This Grant Guide

---

The Veteran Projects Fund Guide is designed to take you step-by-step through the process of developing a thoughtful project and preparing a strong grant application.

Each chapter builds on the one before it, so we encourage you to read the guide in order, even if you've applied for a Veteran Projects Fund grant in the past.

Along the way, you'll find recurring features designed to help you think like a project developer, understand the review process, and strengthen your application before you submit it.

## **Funded Project Spotlight**

See how ALA entities have successfully turned thoughtful ideas into funded projects. Each spotlight highlights a real Veteran Projects Fund grant and explains what made the application strong.

## **Read It Like a Grant Reviewer**

Step into the role of a "grant reviewer." These pages show excerpts from successful applications with notes explaining what reviewers notice and why those details matter.

## **Pause and Reflect**

Pause and reflect before moving to the next step. These short exercises are designed to help your team discuss ideas, strengthen your project, and build confidence before continuing.

## **Common Pitfall**

Learn from the challenges we see most often. These quick reminders highlight common issues that can weaken an application, and how to avoid them.

## **Reframe It**

Sometimes a small shift in perspective makes a big difference. These moments help you think about your project the way reviewers do, turning good ideas into stronger proposals.

By the time you reach the final page, you'll have more than a completed application. You'll have a thoughtful project, a clear story, and the confidence to bring your idea to life.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## SIX STEPS

**01.** START WITH THE PROBLEM

---

**02.** MAKE SURE IT FITS

---

**03.** DEVELOP YOUR SOLUTION

---

**04.** TELL YOUR STORY

---

**05.** SUBMIT WITH CONFIDENCE

---

**06.** BRING YOUR PROJECT TO LIFE

---

# STEP ONE: START WITH THE PROBLEM

The strongest projects don't begin with a purchase.

**They begin with a need.**

Every successful Veteran Projects Fund application starts by identifying a challenge facing veterans, and developing a thoughtful solution to address it.

Before thinking about equipment, supplies, or budgets, spend time understanding the problem you're trying to solve. A clearly defined need becomes the foundation for every decision that follows.



Every  
innovative  
project begins  
with someone  
who sees a  
problem and  
believes it can  
be solved.



# GREAT PROJECTS START HERE

Imagine your project is already complete.

What has been changed?

Who benefits?

What challenge has been addressed?

How are veterans better served because your ALA entity chose to act?

Those answers matter far more than the equipment you're requesting.

The ALA Foundation funds purchases and projects that make immediate and long-lasting impact.

# FROM NEED TO SOLUTION

One of the most common mistakes applicants make is starting with what they want to buy. Instead, begin by describing the problem your project will solve.

Think about the difference between these two statements:

## **Instead of...**

"We need a commercial freezer."

## **Think about it this way...**

"Our food pantry frequently turns away donated food because we don't have adequate freezer storage. Expanding our storage capacity will allow us to preserve more food and serve additional veterans throughout the year."

Notice the difference?

One describes a purchase.

The other explains the need and the impact.



## **Common Pitfall**

Beginning your application with the item you want to purchase instead of the problem you're trying to solve.



## **Reframe It**

Instead of asking:

**"What do we need to buy?"**

Ask:

**"What problem are we trying to solve?"**



# Funded Project Spotlight

## Wisconsin

**Grant Awarded:** \$4,000

**Project:** Camp American Legion  
Kayaks

**What Made This Application Strong:**

Instead of focusing on the equipment itself, the applicant clearly explained how the project would increase recreational opportunities and improve accessibility for veterans. Every part of the proposal connected back to the people being served. That made it easy for reviewers to understand the project's purpose and its potential impact.

 **Read It Like a Reviewer**

This applicant...

- ✓ Explained the need before discussing equipment.
- ✓ Clearly identified who benefits.
- ✓ Connected every purchase to the overall project.
- ✓ Focused on impact rather than items.

# PAUSE & REFLECT



Before moving to Step Two, discuss these questions with your team:

- What specific need have we identified?
- Who is experiencing this need, and how do we know it exists?
- How are veterans affected by this need?
- Are we focused on solving the need or have we already jumped ahead to a solution?

If your team can clearly describe the need without talking about what you want to purchase, you're ready to determine whether your project is a good fit for the Veteran Projects Fund.

## **TURN THE PAGE →**

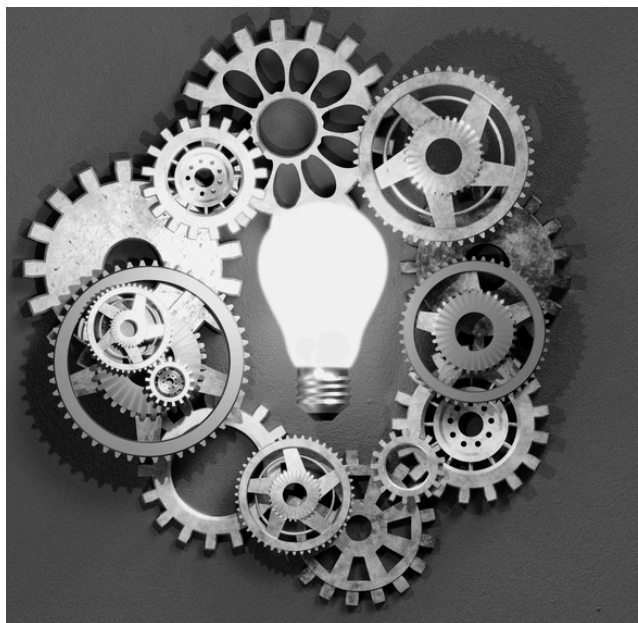
You've identified the need. Now let's make sure your project is a good fit for the Veteran Projects Fund.

# STEP TWO: MAKE SURE IT FITS

Not every meaningful project is the right fit for the Veteran Projects Fund and that's OK.

Before investing time in an application, take a moment to make sure your project aligns with the Fund's purpose and eligibility requirements.

This chapter will help you determine whether your project is a good fit before you begin the application process. A few minutes of planning now can save hours later.



## Eligibility Requirements

Before you begin your application, make sure both your ALA entity and your project meet the Veteran Projects Fund eligibility requirements.

### The Applicant Must:

✓ Be an American Legion Auxiliary tax-exempt entity in good standing with the ALA and the IRS.

✓ Submit a project that can be completed within 12 months.

✓ Request no more than \$10,000 in Veteran Projects Fund grant funding.

✓ Provide a minimum 20% cost share toward the total project cost or complete the cost share waiver.

### What is a 20% Cost Share?

Veteran Projects Fund grants are intended to partner with ALA entities, not fully fund projects.

A 20% cost share demonstrates your ALA entity's commitment to the project. If you can meet the full cost share, great! If not, complete the waiver request at the end of the application so your request can still be considered.

### Example:

Total Project Cost: \$12,500

VPF Request: \$10,000

ALA Entity Cost Share: \$2,500 (20%)

# VPF grants cannot fund:

- Reimbursements for completed projects including items/services paid for prior to receiving the grant awarded funding.
- Items intended for one-time use and/or not returned by an individual are not applicable for funding, including consumable products. Examples may include: food items, handouts and similar items.
- Projects that benefit only one individual.
- Day-to-day operating expenses of the grantee.
- Cost for maintenance, construction, repairs and/or additions of any type to a building and/or property-owned by the ALA and/or The American Legion.
- Maintenance and repair costs for government-owned facilities and/or property (e.g., U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs facility, etc.).
- Expenses related to enhancing personal property that is also used as a personal residence.
- Funding matches for government grants.
- Payment of consultant fees, administrative costs, or staff compensation, including, but not limited to, personnel expenses such as salary/wages, insurance, or other fringe benefits.
- Expenses related to seminars and training programs, including, but not limited to, lodging, travel, food, or materials.
- Expenses for The American Legion or Auxiliary office/social club/bar operations.

## Before You Begin

Before moving forward, ask yourself the following four questions.

If you can confidently answer “Yes” to each one, you’re ready to continue.

### 1. Is the applicant an ALA entity in good standing?

YES → The ALA Foundation only funds eligible ALA entities. If partnering with a veteran organization, it must be a 501(c)(3) in good standing with the IRS.

### 2. Does the project primarily benefit veterans?

YES → The Veteran Projects Fund supports projects that primarily benefit veterans.

### 3. Is your project requesting funding for a newly identified need?

YES → The Veteran Projects Fund is designed to support projects that address newly identified needs rather than ongoing operating expenses or recurring requests.

### 4. Does the project meet the Veteran Projects Fund criteria?

YES → Review the eligibility requirements before continuing. Your project may need additional planning before you’re ready to apply.

# WHAT DOES “NEWLY IDENTIFIED NEED” MEAN?

A **newly identified need** is a challenge your ALA entity has recognized that is not currently being addressed.

Sometimes the need is brand new. Other times, it's a long-standing issue that now has a thoughtful solution.

The question grant reviewers are really asking is this: Does your project represent a new response to a clearly identified need?

If the answer is yes, and your project includes a meaningful plan to improve services for veterans, it may be a good fit for the Veteran Projects Fund.

Projects that simply replace routine operating expenses or support ongoing organizational costs generally are not a good fit for the Veteran Projects Fund.

## **Common Pitfall**

Assuming every worthwhile project is automatically eligible for funding. Taking a few minutes to confirm your project's eligibility before applying can save significant time later in the process.

## **Reframe It**

Instead of asking:

**“Is this a good project?”**

Ask:

**“Is this the right project for the Veteran Projects Fund?”**



# Funded Project Spotlight

## Florida

**Grant Awarded:** \$1,852

**Project:** Washer and Dryer for  
Soldiers Freedom Outdoors

**What Made This Application Strong:**

Rather than simply requesting a washer and dryer, the applicant explained who would benefit, how the equipment would be used, and why it was needed. Veterans and active-duty military staying at Soldiers Freedom Outdoors would be able to wash their clothing after participating in outdoor recreational activities, while the facility could efficiently clean linens between guests.

 **Read It Like a Review**

This applicant...

- ✓ Clearly demonstrated that the project addressed a newly identified need.
- ✓ Clearly identified who benefits.
- ✓ Explained not only what was needed, but why it mattered.

# PAUSE & REFLECT



Before moving to Step Three, discuss the following questions with your team.

- Does our project clearly align with the Veteran Projects Fund's purpose?
- Have we confirmed that we meet all eligibility requirements?
- Can we clearly explain why this project addresses a newly identified need?
- Is there anything we should clarify before continuing?

If you're unsure about any of these questions, reach out to the ALA Foundation before submitting your application.

We're here to help.

## **TURN THE PAGE →**

You've confirmed your project is a good fit. Now let's build a solution that grant reviewers can clearly understand.

# STEP THREE: DEVELOP YOUR SOLUTION

You've identified a need.

You've confirmed your project is a good fit for the Veteran Projects Fund.

Now it's time to build a thoughtful solution.

Strong projects don't happen by accident. They take planning, collaboration, and a clear understanding of how each piece works together to create meaningful impact.

This chapter will help you move from an idea to a project that is realistic, well planned, and ready to bring to life.



## From Idea to Impact

Every successful project follows the same basic path. The details may change, but the planning process remains the same.

The strongest applications clearly answer these questions before they ever begin writing.

### The Project Planning Framework

#### 1. Identify the Need

What problem are you trying to solve?

#### 2. Define Your Solution

What will your project do to address that need?

#### 3. Determine What You'll Need

Think beyond equipment. Will you need...

- Supplies?
- Partners?
- Volunteers?
- Training?
- Transportation?
- Professional services?

Every successful project includes more than a shopping list.

#### 4. Measure Success

How will you know your project made a difference?

What will success look like six months after the project is complete?

# WHY PLANNING MATTERS

The strongest applications don't simply describe what they hope to accomplish.

They demonstrate that the project has been thoughtfully planned from beginning to end.

When grant reviewers can clearly understand your plan, they can more confidently consider funding.



## **Common Pitfall**

Jumping straight to the budget before developing the project.

A strong budget supports a strong plan. It doesn't create one.



## **Reframe It**

Instead of asking:

**"What should we include in our budget?"**

Ask:

**"What resources will help our project succeed?"**



# Funded Project Spotlight

## Kansas

**Grant Awarded:** \$5,912

**Project:** Lucynt Interactive System

**What Made This Application Strong:**

This applicant demonstrated thoughtful planning from beginning to end.

The applicant clearly explained the need, identified the solution, and described how the project would improve services for veterans. Every requested expense supported the project's overall purpose, making it easy for reviewers to understand how the pieces fit together.

### Read It Like a Reviewer

This applicant...

- ✓ Connected every expense to the project's goals.
- ✓ Demonstrated thoughtful planning.
- ✓ Explained how the project would be implemented.
- ✓ Helped reviewers understand exactly how the project would create impact.

# PAUSE & REFLECT



Before moving to Step Four, discuss these questions with your team:

- Can we clearly explain how our project solves the identified need?
- Have we thought through every part of the project — not just the purchases?
- Does the budget contain eligible expenses to support the overall project?
- How will we measure success?

If your team can confidently answer these questions, you're ready to begin telling your story.

## **TURN THE PAGE →**

Your project is taking shape. Now let's tell its story in a way that helps grant reviewers understand why it matters.

# STEP FOUR: TELL YOUR STORY

You've identified a problem.

You've developed a thoughtful solution.

Now it's time to tell your story.

A strong application isn't about using impressive words or writing long paragraphs. It's about helping reviewers clearly understand your project, why it matters, and how it will improve the lives of veterans.

The strongest narratives are clear, specific, and focused on impact.



## **Every Project Has a Story**

As you write, make sure your application answers these questions:

### **What problem did you identify?**

Describe the challenge your project will address.

### **Why does it matter?**

Help grant reviewers understand why this need is important for veterans.

### **What will your project do?**

Clearly explain your solution. What difference will it make? Describe the impact your project will have once it's complete.

# WHY YOUR STORY MATTERS

Our grant reviewers don't experience your project in person.

They experience it through your application.

A thoughtful narrative helps reviewers understand not only what you're requesting, but why your project deserves support.

When your story is clear, your project becomes memorable.

## **Common Pitfall**

Assuming reviewers already understand your project.

**They don't.**

Write as though someone unfamiliar with your community is reading your application for the very first time.

## **Reframe It**

Instead of asking:

**"Did we include enough information?"**

Ask:

**"Would someone who has never visited our community understand why this project matters?"**



# Funded Project Spotlight

## Maine

**Grant Awarded:** \$10,000

**Project:** Handicapped Golf Cart

**What Made This Application Strong:**

Instead of simply requesting a golf cart, the applicant described the daily challenges veterans, visitors, and staff experienced while navigating the campus. By explaining how the golf cart would improve access to activities, tours, and outdoor spaces, the proposal demonstrated how one purchase could create a meaningful improvement in the lives of those it serves. The narrative focused on people first, making the purpose of the project easy to understand.

### Read It Like a Reviewer

This applicant...

- ✓ Helped reviewers visualize the problem.
- ✓ The focus was on the people, not the golf cart.
- ✓ Specific examples made impact easy to understand.
- ✓ Explained how veterans' daily experience will improve.

# PAUSE & REFLECT



Before moving to Step Five, discuss these questions with your team:

- Does our story clearly explain why this project matters?
- Would someone unfamiliar with our community understand the need?
- Have we connected the need, solution, and expected impact?
- Does every section of our application support the same story?

If your narrative feels clear and complete, you're ready to bring your project to life.

## **TURN THE PAGE →**

You've planned your project and told its story. Now let's focus on successfully bringing it to life.

# STEP FIVE: SUBMIT WITH CONFIDENCE

You've already done the hard part.

You've identified a need, developed a thoughtful solution, planned your project, and told its story.

Now it's time to bring everything together.

A strong application isn't about perfection. It's about clarity, completeness, and helping reviewers understand the impact your project will have on veterans.

Take one final look before you submit; you've earned this moment.



A complete application doesn't guarantee funding. An incomplete application guarantees questions.

# ONE FINAL REVIEW

Before submitting your application, take a few minutes to review it with fresh eyes.

Ask someone else to read it if possible. A second perspective can help identify missing information, clarify your message, and ensure your application tells the story you intended.

Small edits now can make a big difference during the review process.

Before you hit “submit,” make sure you’ve checked everything off the list.



## ANSWERED EVERY QUESTION COMPLETELY.

Provide clear and thorough responses.



## CLEARLY EXPLAINED THE NEED.

Help reviewers understand the challenge your project will address.



## DEMONSTRATED HOW YOUR PROJECT ADDRESSES THAT NEED.

Explain your solution and how it will create impact.



## INCLUDED A COMPLETE AND ACCURATE BUDGET.

Make sure every expense supports your project.



## ATTACHED ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS.

Include your W9 and any other required forms.



## PROOFREAD YOUR APPLICATION.

Check for spelling, grammar, and accuracy.

# WHY THIS MATTERS

Every application represents more than a request for funding.

It represents an ALA entity committed to making a meaningful difference in the lives of veterans.

A thoughtful, complete application allows reviewers to focus on your project, not on missing information.

When your application is clear, your project's impact becomes easier to understand.



## Common Pitfall

Submitting your application immediately after finishing it.

If time allows, step away for a day and review it again with fresh eyes before submitting.



## Reframe It

Instead of asking:

**“Are we ready to submit?”**

Ask:

**“Would a reviewer clearly understand our project and its impact?”**



# Funded Project Spotlight

## California

**Grant Awarded:** \$10,000

**Project:** Comfort & Connection in Veteran Homes

### **What Made This Application Strong:**

Strong applications do more than answer the required questions; they help reviewers fully understand the project. In addition to a complete application, this applicant submitted supporting materials that strengthened the proposal, including a letter of support explaining long-term sustainability, detailed budget documentation, and supplemental information addressing anticipated reviewer questions.

### **Read It Like a Reviewer**

This applicant...

- ✓ Answered every required question.
- ✓ Submitted a detailed, realistic budget.
- ✓ Demonstrated long-term sustainability beyond the grant period.
- ✓ Provided applicable supporting materials that strengthened the overall proposal.

# PAUSE & REFLECT



Take one final moment with your team.  
Ask yourselves:

- Are we proud of the project we've developed?
- Have we clearly communicated why it matters?
- Would someone unfamiliar with our community understand our application?
- Are we confident that every part of the application supports the same story?

If the answer is yes...

**Submit with confidence.**

## **TURN THE PAGE →**

You've done the work. You've told your story. Now submit with confidence and imagine what comes next.

# STEP SIX: BRING YOUR PROJECT TO LIFE

## **Congratulations!**

If your project is selected for funding, the planning you've done will require action.

This is where ideas become reality and your work begins making a meaningful difference for veterans.

As you bring your funded project to life, thoughtful implementation, good documentation, and strong stewardship are just as important as the planning that brought you here.



## **Direct Support in Your Community Starts Here**

Receiving a grant is an important milestone, but it isn't the finish line.

It's the beginning of your project's impact.

As your project moves forward, stay focused on the people you set out to serve. The strongest projects continue to reflect the thoughtful planning that earned them funding.

Whether you're installing equipment, launching a new initiative, or expanding services, every step should move you closer to solving the need you identified.

# WHY THIS MATTERS

The Veteran Projects Fund is about more than awarding grants.

It's about helping ALA entities create meaningful change in their communities.

Every completed project demonstrates what's possible when compassionate service is combined with thoughtful planning.

Your work inspires future applicants and strengthens the ALA Foundation's mission to support veterans.

## **Common Pitfall**

Waiting until the end of your project to gather photos, receipts, and documentation. Collect these materials as your project progresses; it will make completing your final grant report much easier.

## **Reframe It**

Instead of asking:

**"How do we finish the project?"**

Ask:

**"How do we demonstrate the difference this project made?"**

# WATCH YOUR PLAN COME TO LIFE

As you implement your project, remember to:

## **Stay on Schedule**

Follow the timeline you established in your application to ensure the project is completed within one year.

## **Keep Good Records**

Save receipts, invoices, and documentation throughout your project. This will help you complete your final grant report.

## **Take Great Photos**

Capture your project in action. Show the people, the progress, and the impact. These photos help tell your story in your final grant report.

## **Celebrate Success**

Share your project with your community. Recognize your volunteers and partners. Most importantly, celebrate the veterans whose lives are being improved through your work.





# Funded Project Spotlight

## Nebraska

**Grant Awarded:** \$9,904

**Project:** Touch2Play for CNVH

**What Made This Application Strong:**

Franklin Unit 193 purchased two mobile Touch2Play systems to expand access for veterans throughout the Central Nebraska Veterans Home. The equipment provides opportunities for cognitive stimulation, independent engagement, and meaningful one-on-one interaction, reaching an estimated 75 to 100 veterans.

The applicant also planned for long-term stewardship by recognizing the ALA Foundation's support, continuing volunteer involvement, and ensuring the equipment would remain available for future residents.

### Read It Like a Reviewer

This applicant...

- ✓ Showed the completed project, not just the equipment.
- ✓ Demonstrated that the grant was implemented as proposed.
- ✓ Highlighted the people who brought the project to life.
- ✓ Reinforced that ALA Foundation funding created a lasting resource for veterans.

# PAUSE & REFLECT



As your project comes to life, ask your team:

- Are we staying true to the purpose of our project?
- Are we documenting our progress along the way?
- Have we captured meaningful photos that show our impact that we can submit with our final grant report?
- What story will our final grant report tell?

Your work doesn't end with implementation. It continues through the story you share with the ALA Foundation and the communities you serve.

**TURN THE PAGE →**

A final message for you.

# A MESSAGE FROM THE ALA FOUNDATION

## THANK YOU.

Whether your project is funded in an upcoming cycle or not, thank you.

Thank you for seeing a need.

Thank you for investing your time, creativity, and compassion in serving veterans.

Every thoughtful project strengthens communities and reflects the American Legion Auxiliary's enduring commitment to service.

We are honored to support ALA entities that continue to turn ideas into action and create meaningful impact across the country.

We can't wait to see what you accomplish next.

