

**Navajo Nation Veterans Administration
Office of the President and Vice President**

**Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund
Financial Assistance Program Policies**

I. Authorities

Pursuant to its Plan of Operation, Resolution No. HEHSCN-16-20, the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration, (hereinafter "NNVA") may provide financial assistance to qualified Navajo veterans, surviving spouses, and Gold Star Parent through veterans programs funded by the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund (Hereinafter "Veterans Trust Fund").

Pursuant to 12 N.N.C §1172 & 1176, the NNVA may provide financial assistance to individual Navajo veterans or other eligible individuals, *see* Section VI, and grants to Chapter Veterans Organizations (Hereinafter "CVO") from the Veterans Trust Fund based on the current veteran population, to include surviving spouses, and Gold Star Families.

II. Background

The Navajo Nation Council established the Veterans Trust Fund pursuant to Resolution CJY-46-98 with an initial appropriation of \$6.0 million. Resolution CN-55-06 amended the Veterans Trust Fund by authorizing an annual transfer of 4% of all projected revenues of the Navajo Nation to the Veterans Trust Fund. CS-48-13 approved amending the 4% set-aside to be split and allot 2% to the Financial Assistance Program and 2% to the Veterans Housing Program. CJY-2-18 amended 12 N.N.C to provide calculations used to determine the amount of funding available for various veterans programs within a given fiscal year.

III. Purpose

The Veterans Trust Fund will provide funds for veterans programs, projects, services and activities which include but are not limited to program/project development, community/economic development, housing, training and employment opportunities, leveraging or matching funds for exemplary projects, protection and advocacy services, benefits-related services, education and scholarship, and survivor's benefits for eligible surviving spouses of deceased Navajo veterans as well as Navajo Gold Star Families.

The Financial Assistance Program is intended to provide supplemental financial resources to qualified applicants in a limited capacity that resets at the beginning of each new fiscal year. The assistance is intended to serve as a stop-gap, and not as

supplemental income. The assistance provided is based strictly on the availability of funds for applicants who meet the eligibility criteria.

IV. Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act

This Program Policy is adopted consistent with the requirements of the Tribal General Welfare Exclusion Act, P.L. 128 Stat. 1883 (“TGWEA”), and related IRS guidance. Consistent with the TGWEA, need is deemed presumed for tribally enrolled members of the Navajo Nation, specifically veterans eligible for assistance under this policy. This Program is available to all Navajo Veterans, Gold Star Parents and Surviving Spouses of Navajo Veterans who meet the eligibility criteria.

V. Definitions

A. MILITARY SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES - The armed forces of the U.S. Government consisting of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard, active duty or reserve/guard components. Such service does not include the Merchant Marines, Red Cross, IHS or any other organization not part of the United States Department of Defense.

B. NAVAJO - A person who is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and whose name appears on the Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) or Navajo Nation ID card issued by the Navajo Nation.

C. SPOUSE - The legal domestic partner of the Navajo veteran (marriage license, common law, etc).

D. VETERAN - A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and whose character of discharge is Honorable, General Under Honorable Conditions, General Under Other Than Honorable, or Bad Conduct as documented by an unaltered, valid copy of a DD-214 or Discharge Certificate/Letter. This definition explains that any individual that completed a term of service not less than 180 days for any branch of the armed forces classifies as a veteran as long as they were not dishonorably discharged.

E. WIDOW or WIDOWER - A surviving spouse who was legally and validly married to and lived with a veteran continuously from the date of marriage to the date of the veteran’s death and is not remarried.

VI. Eligibility Criteria

A. Financial Assistance may be provided to a Navajo veteran, a surviving spouse of a deceased Navajo veteran, or a Navajo Gold Star Parent, upon approval and eligibility

determination by the respective Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Agency Office, and subject to the availability of funds.

Grants will be awarded to CVOs based on the recommendations of the Agency Veterans Organization Commanders and with a supporting resolution from the respective Agency Veterans Organization, based on the availability of funds in the respective accounts.

B. Eligible individuals and Veterans Organizations must meet the following eligibility criteria by having the following documents on file with the NNVA:

1. Is a Navajo veteran whose character of discharge is Honorable, General Under Honorable Conditions, General Under Other Than Honorable, or Bad Conduct as documented by an unaltered, valid copy of a DD-214 or Discharge Certificate/Letter; or
2. Is a surviving spouse of a Navajo veteran as documented by a valid copy of the Navajo veteran's death certificate, a corresponding marriage certificate, official Navajo Nation document from a Navajo Nation program authorized to verify marital status, or a valid court order, and, if the veteran is not registered with the NNVA at the time of their passing, a valid DD-214; or
3. Is a Navajo Gold Star Parent, determined by a valid copy of a U.S. Department of Defense official notification via Report of Casualty DD Form 1300 that their son or daughter was killed in action.

NOTE:

- a. The qualified Navajo veteran must be deceased in order for the surviving spouse to qualify as a surviving spouse and to become eligible to apply for financial assistance.
- b. Once the surviving spouse remarries, they are no longer eligible to apply for financial assistance.
- c. The NNVA will recognize any marriage recognized by the Navajo Nation.
- d. A surviving spouse's eligibility is based on the qualifying veteran. If the veteran passes after the start of a fiscal year, and has already utilized some or all of their potential assistance, the surviving spouse is only eligible to apply for the remaining amount of financial assistance their qualified veteran would have been able to receive. This will reset at the beginning of the next fiscal year.
- e. The NNVA recognizes an individual using the title of "Gold Star Parent."

f. The NNVA will only recognize one Gold Star Parent. This individual must be the same individual for the duration of a fiscal year.

g. The service member must have passed away while on active duty, or under active orders if a reservist/guard, as a result of combat or terrorist action.

h. Service Member must be unmarried at the time of death.

C. Individual applicants must:

1. Be an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, as documented by a valid copy of their Navajo Nation Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB) or Card; and
2. Must provide a current copy of a valid government photo identification; and
3. Must provide a valid social security card; and
4. When applicable, a copy of marriage or divorce documents.

D. Veterans Organizations must:

1. Be duly organized with an approved resolution from the chapter (for Chapter Veterans Organizations only) and an approved plan of operation; and
2. Have duly elected or appointed officers who meet the eligibility criteria as outlined above.
3. Pro Tempore officers meeting the eligibility criteria above are eligible to apply for stipends. Pro Tempore officers may only serve two consecutive meetings then must either be officially elected, or replaced.
4. Surviving Spouses and Gold Star Parents, who are not also veterans, may serve as the CVO secretary only and are eligible to apply for meeting stipends.

E. For purposes of this paragraph only, the term “veteran” is defined as a veteran, a surviving spouse, or a Gold Star Parent. Non-veterans may serve as a CVO secretary ONLY provided that:

1. The CVO is not able to elect a veteran member due to lack of interest or availability;
2. The non-veteran member is in good standing within the community and the veterans organization;

3. The non-veteran member is selected by the CVO during a duly called meeting and is properly documented in the meeting minutes;
4. The non-veteran secretary is eligible to receive meeting stipends.

F. Active duty, Commission Corps and Reserve/Guard service members are not eligible to apply for assistance under this policy. Reserve, National Guard, and Air National Guard members must provide their discharge certificate/letter to become eligible to apply for financial assistance under this policy. All potential applicants must be able to provide documentation that their required service is complete prior to being able to apply for financial assistance.

G. Surviving Spouses and Gold Star Parents who are also Veterans are not eligible to also claim benefits under the heading of Surviving Spouse or Gold Star Parent for their deceased spouse or son/daughter.

H. NNVA employees who are Navajo veterans are eligible to apply for assistance from the Veterans Trust Fund in accordance with this policy. Any requests for assistance from the NNVA employee must be approved through the NNVA Executive Director. These are the only requests that are to be approved by the Executive Director.

I. True and accurate copies of all documentation must be presented to the respective NNVA Agency Office and maintained in the Veteran's file. It is the responsibility of the veteran to ensure that their file is accurate and up to date. No changes to the veteran's file will be made after death, with the exception of the addition of the death certificate, without a court order.

J. Prior to submitting a request for financial assistance, the applicant shall notify their respective CVO commander in person at a CVO meeting, or, if the applicant is not able to attend in person, they shall notify the commander of their intent to submit a request for assistance via other means. This notification may be in person during, before, or after a duly scheduled/called CVO meeting, via telephone, text message, teleconference, email, or standard mail. The CVO commander shall have their contact information available to all veterans of the respective CVO. This is not for the applicant to receive approval or permission to submit a request, but for the CVO to maintain accurate accounting of the balances of their allocated trust funds amounts. Applicants shall annotate on the financial assistance application the date, time, and method used to notify their CVO commander of their intent to submit the request.

VII. Allowable Expenditures

All financial assistance and grants from the Veterans Trust Fund are contingent on the availability of funds. The following specific types of needs, services and activities may be approved for financial assistance or grants. Financial assistance is awarded to individuals and grants are awarded to CVOs and AVOs.

A. Available assistance for Navajo veterans, surviving spouses and Navajo Gold Star Parents:

1. Emergency Assistance for food and/or vehicle fuel, not to exceed \$400 (four hundred dollars) per assistance. This assistance is limited to one time per quarter, but two times per fiscal year. Only foodstuffs (i.e. dry goods, canned goods, or consumable liquids, dining facilities, etc.) are permitted under this line item. Alcohol is expressly prohibited.

a. Applicants are not required to request the full amount available.

b. Payments will be made for the amount requested, up to the item limit.

2. Energy Assistance for heating costs including firewood, coal, pellets, or utilities for one month and propane not to exceed \$400 (four hundred dollars). This assistance is limited to one time per quarter, but two times per fiscal year.

a. For assistance with utilities:

i. A current utility statement/bill must be provided;

ii. Statement must be in the name of the applicant;

iii. Assistance may only be for the amount of one month of utilities; and

iv. Payment will be made directly to the utility provider.

b. For assistance with propane:

i. A quote must be provided;

ii. The quote must be in the applicants' name;

iii. Payment will be made payable to the vendor.

3. Self-Help for home improvement costs for items such as, but not limited to, water heater, appliances, pellet or wood burning stove, building materials, tools, and supplies (for repair and maintenance only), septic tank clean-out, and chimney pipe cleaning for up to \$1,000 (one thousand dollars). This assistance is limited to one time per fiscal year.

Note: Individuals living in rental units must provide a copy of a rental agreement that specifies tenant responsibility to maintain the rental property in order to be able to apply for assistance.

4. The number of approved requests made within a year takes precedence over the dollar amount requested. If a veteran does not request for or get approved for the maximum amount authorized, the remainder does not carry over to the next request.

B. Assistance for Navajo veterans only:

1. Vehicle fuel costs, meals and lodging directly related to traveling to medical facilities for treatments and appointments, **not to exceed** \$150 (one hundred and fifty dollars) in a fiscal year.

- a. This line item requires the submission of appointment documentation.
- b. This line item may be claimed multiple times so long as the combined total does not exceed \$150 within a fiscal year.
- c. This line item may be claimed pre or post appointment but must have supporting documentation.

2. Educational expenses limited to items such as books, course fees, lab fees, and supplies **not to exceed** \$500 (five hundred dollars) per fiscal year. The following supporting documents must be provided with each request:

- a. This assistance must have submission of acceptance letter from an accredited university, college, or technical/trade school; and
- b. Course and class schedule; and
- c. This line item may be claimed multiple times so long as the combined total does not exceed \$500 within a fiscal year.

3. Travel expenses **not to exceed** \$100 (one-hundred dollars) for individual Navajo veterans to attend veterans issues-related workshops, and conferences in a fiscal year. This line item may be claimed multiple time so long as the combined total does not exceed \$100 within a fiscal year.

4. Traditional Healing assistance **not to exceed** \$400 (four-hundred dollars) for individual Navajo veterans to receive traditional healing services. This line item may be claimed multiple time so long as the combined total does not exceed \$400 within a fiscal year.

Note: Applicant **MUST** notify their respective CVO Commander prior to requesting this assistance. This will require the CVO to meet and discuss a budget transfer as funds are not normally placed within the object code for this line item. The CVO must approve a budget transfer, and that transfer must be processed by the Office of Management and Budget before a request for this line item can be approved.

C. Grants for Veterans Organizations only:

Chapter Veterans Organizations and Agency Veterans Organizations may apply for a financial grant from the Navajo Veterans Trust Fund provided the following eligibility criteria are met:

1. For CVO's:

- a.** The CVO has an approved resolution from the chapter stating the creation of the CVO as a sub-committee of that chapter. This resolution may back-date the establishment of the CVO to the date that it was originally established.
- b.** The CVO has an approved Plan of Operation that follows the laws, rules, and policies of the Navajo Nation.
- c.** Approval authority of the CVO Plan of Operation shall rest with the CVO members, unless otherwise specified in the Chapter Resolution.
- d.** The Plan of Operation may not place additional restrictions on veterans to apply for ANY assistance provided by the NNVA.
- e.** The Plan of Operation may not assume roles or responsibilities reserved for the NNVA.
- f.** A copy of the CVO Plan of Operation must be provided to the respective agency office to be kept on file.
- g.** The CVO has a proper resolution clearly stating the purpose, amount, and approval by the CVO membership for the grant request.

2. For AVO's:

- a.** The AVO has an approved Plan of Operation that follows the laws, rules, and policies of the Navajo Nation.
- b.** Approval authority of the AVO Plan of Operation shall rest with the member CVO's.
- c.** The Plan of Operation may not place additional restrictions on veterans to apply for ANY assistance provided by the NNVA, or on to CVO's.
- d.** The Plan of Operation may not assume roles or responsibilities reserved for the NNVA.

e. A copy of the CVO Plan of Operation must be provided to the respective agency office.

f. The CVO has a proper resolution clearly stating the purpose, amount, and approval by the CVO membership for the grant request.

3. Stipend requirements:

a. Officers must submit a properly completed IRS Form W-9 and Navajo Nation General Claim Form only; and

b. Organization meeting agenda, sign-in sheet, and meeting minutes must be submitted to the agency office; and

c. All supporting documents must be submitted within 30 days from the date of the meeting. Documents not submitted within the 30-day window will result in the officer not being able to apply for stipend payments for that specific meeting.

d. Stipends up to \$75 (seventy-five dollars) per meeting may be paid to each officer of a CVO for no more than twelve (12) chapter veterans' meetings per fiscal year. The maximum number of officers to be compensated is three per CVO (Commander, Vice-Commander, Secretary). The secretary position may be a non-veteran (not a veteran, not a surviving spouse, or not a Gold Star Parent) and may be eligible to collect a stipend, but is excluded from all other benefits.

e. Stipends for Agency meetings, special meetings, and work sessions not to exceed \$150 (one hundred fifty dollars) per meeting may be paid for each CVO Commander OR Vice-Commander who attends. This line item may be paid to one officer from each CVO up to the amount allocated in the annual budget. Officers cannot collect multiple stipends on the same event. Non-veteran secretaries are ineligible to apply for stipends for Agency meetings. Supporting document submission requirements are the same as CVO meeting requirements.

4. Each organization shall complete a grant application that includes appropriate resolutions, meeting minutes, sign in sheets, agendas and quotes for consideration. Grant proposals will be reviewed by the Agency Commanders for final approval prior to review and processing by the NNVA. Grant applications may be for any need identified by the CVO or Agency that falls into one of the following categories:

a. Promotional items, apparel, awards and plaques for veteran activities and functions.

- b.** Office supplies and equipment such as, but not limited to pens, laptop, printer/scanner/copier, ink, toner, paper, projector, shredder for a CVO.
- c.** Food, paperware, table clothes, decorations, and other similar items used for CVO meetings and veteran functions or activities.
- d.** Matching costs for capital projects and improvements.
- e.** Equipment, food, or material used to aid veterans within the respective chapter or agency, who are the subject of extreme emergency hardship.
- f.** Reimbursement expenses to Chapters for the cost of veterans-related CVO events, up to the cost incurred by the chapter on behalf of the CVO, provided that the expense is authorized under this policy, is properly recorded in the CVO meeting minutes, and is subject to the availability of funds.

VIII. Ramifications

In the event that a Navajo veteran, Surviving Spouse, Navajo Gold Star Parent, CVO/AVO or CVO secretary (if non-veteran) is found to have misused any Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund benefits, or obtained funds through fraudulent means, the following shall be implemented:

- A.** The individual/group will be contacted and notified of any allegations and will be given thirty days from the time of notification to respond in writing to any alleged misuse the individual was accused of.
- B.** If credible evidence is found, the individual/group shall be referred to the Office of the Prosecutor of the Navajo Nation by the NNVA Executive Director to be given proper due process.
- C.** If the individual/group is found guilty, the individual shall have to repay all misappropriated funds in accordance with the order of the court.
- D.** After the determination of the courts, and the repayment is complete, the individual/group will be ineligible to apply for financial assistance benefits for the remainder of the fiscal year and for an additional fiscal year.
- E.** Upon the completion of restitution and suspension, the individual/group shall be reinstated in good standing with the NNVA, respective agency, and/or CVO.

IX. Amendments

This Policy may be amended by the NNVA after consultation with the Veterans Advisory Council and upon approval by the President of the Navajo Nation.

CERTIFICATION

After consultation with the NNVAC at a duly called meeting on September 9, 2022 and prepared by the NNVA, I accept and certify the recommended policy.

By: 
Navajo Nation President

DATE: 09-29-2022