

VETERAN AND FAMILY WELL-BEING FUND

- Veterans Affairs Canada fosters strong collaboration and supports innovation through the Veteran and Family Well-being Fund.
- The Fund provides \$3 million annually in grants and contributions to organizations striving to improve the well-being of Veterans and their families through innovative projects, initiatives and research.
- Eligible organizations include private, public, academic and Indigenous organizations.
- Budget 2024 provided an additional \$6 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, for the Veteran and Family Well-being Fund. A portion of the funding will focus on projects for Indigenous, women, and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans.
- The 2024-2025 Call for Applications for the Veteran and Family Well-being Fund occurred from 27 May 2024 to 12 July 2024, and resulted in 210 applications for funding.
- Part of this funding, \$500,000, will support a new project led by Sistema New Brunswick at the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown.

- Additional projects will be announced over the coming months.

WHEN PRESSED:

Q1 – How much funding has been awarded since the implementation of the Veteran and Family Well-being Fund?

Between 2018 and 2023, the Fund has awarded over \$42.6 million to 123 projects focused on various Veteran themes including: homelessness, mental health, military sexual trauma, Indigenous Veterans, women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans, families, transition and employment and research.

Q2 – How does VAC choose which organizations received funding, and which do not? What is the criteria?

All applications undergo an evaluation against fund criteria including the impact of the project, how the project is innovative and addresses unmet needs, how equity-deserving groups are supported, and cost-effectiveness. Organizations must show that projects are self-sufficient if they plan to continue operating after VAC funding has ceased.

Q3 – What are the reporting requirements for organizations that receive funding?

Organizations are expected to measure the success of their project. If an organization is awarded funding, they are required to provide quarterly progress reports, as well as a final project report once the project is completed. The Department's primary interest is ensuring that these projects are directly benefitting Veterans and their families.

Q4 – How will Veterans Affairs Canada determine the success of the program?

Organizations that receive funding are required to provide quarterly and final reports. These reports provide information on how successful the Fund is at enabling organizations to address the well-being of Veterans and their families. Organizations may also be called upon to present their work and share best practices.

Q5 – There was a recent news article alleging misappropriation of VFWF funds regarding an Organization located in Summerside, PEI. Can you please share any details?

Veterans Affairs Canada learned of the criminal charges laid against an individual who was part of the Lest We Forget Committee via the published media article. Officials from the Department contacted the Police, who performed the investigation and the President of the Organization. Both confirmed that the charges laid were not in relation to the VFWF funds that the Organization received.

Before awarding VFWF Funds, recipients must clearly describe the financial controls that are in place to ensure cost-effectiveness of the project and mitigation of financial
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risk within the organization. The recipient must also demonstrate they have sufficient resources to deliver the project and are adequately prepared for the complexity and duration of work. Finally, recipients must demonstrate a low level of dependency on external factors in order for the project to succeed.

Prior to funding, recipients must provide an in-depth project description, which is included in their signed funding agreement. Recipients are also required to provide a progress activity report 30 days after the end of each quarter and a final report 60 days following the project completion date. The final report summarizes the project scope, describes the results achieved, and explains any discrepancies between the results and the planned or expected results.

Q6 – Which organizations received VFWF funding this year?

Sistema New Brunswick is the first funding recipient of the Veteran and Family Well-being Fund to be announced for 2024-2025. We will announce the other recipients in the coming months as funding agreements are signed.

Q7 – Why didn't VAC announce the full list of recipients on 4 November?

The department will announce successful projects as funding agreements are signed. You can expect these announcements over the coming months.

BACKGROUND

Each year Veterans Affairs Canada receives numerous requests and proposals for funding from outside organizations in support of initiatives and projects that are aimed at improving the health and well-being of Veterans and their families. Many times, these proposals seek funding to conduct research or to develop, test, and implement new and innovative programs and services that focus on various sub-groups of Veterans Affairs Canada's target populations.

The Veteran and Family Well-being Fund (VFWF) provides a strategic approach to ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada has the capacity to support innovation in Veteran health and well-being, to prevent duplication of service and program delivery, as well as fill gaps.

The Fund has been in place since 2018. It provides grants and contributions for organizations to conduct research and implement initiatives and projects that support the well-being of Veterans and their families.

An example of success is Team Rubicon's *The Veteran Pandemic Recovery Project*. This project was funded in 2020-2021 by the VFWF to engage Veterans and their families in the service of others who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters. This project aims to reduce the emergency management skills gap by building an enduring, prepared, Veteran-led humanitarian force with a total of 726 Veteran Volunteers as of March 2023.

Another success story is The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness's project *Built for Zero Canada - Scaling to End Veteran Homelessness in 10 Communities* which was also awarded VFWF funding in 2020-2021. This project aims to create 10 Built for Zero Canada communities with the goal of achieving functional zero Veteran homelessness in those communities by March 2025. Their approach focuses on helping communities identify and document the needs of every homeless Veteran in each community and develop processes to maintain real-time, person-specific data on these Veterans. As of March 2023, six communities (Fort McMurray, Kingston, Moncton, Fredericton, Saint John and St. Thomas-Elgin) have reached a functional zero threshold and are working through quality assurance standards to achieve their confirmation status.

Budget 2021 provided \$15 million in grants over three years to fund projects that support Veterans during the post COVID-19 recovery. The Fall 2021 call for applications focused on this theme, which included addressing homelessness, employment, retraining, health challenges, and women and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans. Twenty percent of the funding from this call was awarded to projects that assist women and/or 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans. The Fall 2022 call for applications also focused on projects dedicated to supporting equity-deserving Veteran groups including women, 2SLGBTQI+ and Indigenous Veterans, as well as those faced with housing challenges. Between April 2022 and March 2023, VAC's Audit and Evaluation Division conducted an evaluation of the VFWF program covering the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March

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2022. This is the first evaluation of the grant and contribution program since its inception. The evaluation focused on program relevance and performance.

This evaluation had three main recommendations:

1. Seek opportunities to increase core funding levels and/or staffing capacity for the fund, and modify the fund objectives, if determined necessary to align with program evolution and departmental priorities and to maintain the overall workload of the program.
2. Share guidance and information for applicants and recipients on the development and achievement of measurable project outcomes.
3. Enhance data tracking of the fund, for more efficient internal reporting, decision-making and performance management.

Budget 2024 funded an additional \$6 million over three years, starting in 2024-25. Thirty percent of this funding will focus on projects for Indigenous, women, and 2SLGBTQI+ Veterans. The 2024-2025 Call for Applications was launched on 27 May 2024 and closed on 12 July 2024, and resulted in 210 applications for funding.

Overview of funding Percentage by Theme per FY:

Themes	Percentage per Fiscal Year				
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Women and LGBTQ2+ Veterans	2.8%	6.1%	8.9%	31.0%	5.3%
Indigenous	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	4.4%	8.3%
Retraining/Employment	4.6%	14.0%	18.8%	13.7%	21.7%
Homelessness	18.2%	30.7%	15.1%	14.0%	15.8%
Mental Health	20.7%	42.9%	23.6%	11.8%	28.9%
Research	48.8%	5.6%	25.3%	2.1%	11.7%
Families	4.8%	0.7%	7.1%	22.9%	8.3%

2018-2019 Call for Applications: 155 applications received and 21 projects were awarded \$7.6 million over 5 years.

2019-2020 Call for Applications: 114 applications received and 22 projects were awarded \$7.2 million over 5 years.

2020-2021 Call for Applications: 142 applications received and 23 projects were awarded \$10.4 million over 5 years.

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2021-2022 Call for Applications: 98 applications received and 36 projects were awarded \$11.3 million over 3 years.

2022-2023 Call for Applications: 120 applications received and 21 projects were awarded \$6 million over 3 years.