



VETERANS NAVIGATION NETWORK

Facilitating Veteran Success in our Community

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2173 Overland Ave
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Subject: Emergency Financial Assistance Funds for Veterans

Mr. John Ostlund
Mr. Mark Morse
Mr. Mike Waters

Board of County Commissioners
Yellowstone County
316 N. 26th Street, Room 3108
Billings, MT 59107

Dear Commissioners.

I am writing on behalf of the Veterans Navigation Network (VNN) to respectfully request \$10,000 in funding to support justice-involved veterans and those at-risk of being homeless as they navigate critical challenges integrating into society. Through this initiative, VNN aims to provide targeted assistance to approximately 6-20 veterans facing crises, offering them the essential resources needed to stabilize their lives and integrate successfully into their communities.

The veterans we seek to assist often grapple with immediate barriers to housing, transportation, and basic utilities, increasing their risk of recidivism and/or homelessness. Each veteran would be eligible for between \$500 - \$1,500 in financial assistance for these critical expenses, enabling them to secure stable housing, maintain utilities, access reliable transportation, and seek necessary treatment. With your support, we can provide a lifeline that reduces the likelihood of re-incarceration or homelessness and sets these veterans on a path toward stability and self-sufficiency.

To accomplish this, each veteran receiving aid will benefit from the dedicated support of a VNN Resource Navigator. Over the course of six months, our navigators will provide tailored case management and mentorship, with a goal that at least 90% of participants will avoid reentering the justice system or becoming homeless during this period. By meeting veterans' immediate

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needs and offering consistent follow-up, we not only mitigate the risk of recidivism but also contribute to healthier, more resilient communities.

Our approach combines financial assistance with comprehensive support services, addressing not only economic challenges but also service-related disabilities, mental health needs, and connections to employment and educational resources. We are committed to honoring our veterans' service and ensuring they have access to the tools and guidance needed to build productive, fulfilling lives.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and would welcome the opportunity to discuss how your support can make a transformative impact on the lives of justice-involved veterans. Thank you for your commitment to our shared mission of fostering stability and hope among those who have served our nation.

Warm regards,



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Enclosure: Proposal for Emergency Financial Assistance Funds for Veterans



VETERANS NAVIGATION NETWORK

Facilitating Veteran Success in our Community

Veterans Navigation Network

Proposal for Emergency Financial Assistance Funds for Veterans

The Veterans Navigation Network (VNN) is requesting \$10,000 in funding to provide essential support to veterans experiencing the need for emergency financial assistance. This initiative aims to help approximately 6-20 veterans facing crises, ensuring they have the resources needed to stabilize their lives. Through targeted assistance, we can help prevent veterans from returning to incarceration or experiencing homelessness by addressing their immediate needs for housing, transportation, and basic utilities.

Each veteran in crisis could receive between \$350 - \$1,500 to cover critical expenses that promote stability and self-sufficiency. This support will allow them to secure safe housing, maintain utilities, access transportation, and obtain necessary treatment. By meeting these essential needs, we reduce the risk of repeat offenses, giving veterans the stability they need to build healthier, more productive lives. Additionally, each veteran receiving aid will be supported by a VNN Resource Navigator who will follow their progress for six months. Our goal is that 90% of these veterans will avoid reentering the justice system or becoming homeless within this period.

This funding will serve as a critical lifeline for at-risk veterans, helping them overcome the immediate challenges that often lead to re-incarceration or homelessness. By providing this support and consistent follow-up, we invest in their potential to lead successful, independent lives, reducing the burden on the criminal justice system and strengthening our communities.

Purpose: VNN is committed to assisting veterans as they navigate the challenges of re-entering society after being justice-involved, those who are currently homeless, or those at risk of becoming homeless. This policy outlines the criteria and procedures for the allocation of financial assistance from VNN to veterans.

Providing Flexible, Targeted Financial Assistance to At-Risk Veterans:

1. **Facilitating Reintegration and Stability:** Veterans leaving the justice system or experiencing homelessness often face unique challenges due to past service-related trauma, mental health issues, or a lack of support networks. Financial assistance helps cover essential expenses such as housing, food, and utilities, reducing the likelihood of homelessness or financial crisis.
2. **Reducing Recidivism:** Financial support can lessen the temptation or necessity to engage in criminal behavior for economic survival. By stabilizing veterans' lives,

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this assistance helps decrease their chances of re-offending, promoting safer communities and reducing costs associated with repeated incarceration.

3. **Addressing Service-Related Disabilities:** Many veterans in the justice system struggle with physical injuries or mental health conditions like PTSD or traumatic brain injuries (TBI), which can hinder their ability to find employment. Financial assistance helps bridge gaps as they seek VA benefits or other support services, ensuring they don't fall into poverty.
4. **Connecting to Resources and Services:** Financial assistance programs often include or lead to case management, employment resources, mental health services, and peer support. This holistic approach helps veterans build sustainable paths toward self-sufficiency, improve their quality of life, and reconnect with the community.
5. **Recognizing Their Service:** Offering financial assistance is a way to honor veterans' service and sacrifices. By providing targeted support, society can help veterans build stable, productive lives and address the challenges they face upon re-entry.

Eligible Expenses and Verification

VNN will utilize funding to assist 6-20 veterans with up to \$1,500 in emergency financial assistance, when none is available through other means (federal VA and local partner organizations). Our aim is to support those who don't generally qualify to receive assistance from conventional agencies/emergency financial assistance organizations so that they can begin to build sustainable paths toward self-sufficiency.

Assistance will be used for the following expenses:

- Utility Bills – Gas, Electric, Water
- Primary phone/service
- Rent payment
- Auto loan payment
- Auto repair
- Vehicle gas for medical appointments or job interviews
- Other expenses deemed appropriate by the VNN Executive Director

Expenses Not Covered:

- Federal, state, or local tax payments, including property tax payments, past-due child support payments, fines/legal fees associated with a civil or criminal offense
- Credit card bills or bankruptcy payments, luxury goods/services of any kind
- Cosmetic or investigational medical procedures & expenses
- Furniture, electronic equipment, or vehicle rentals
- Any other expenses not determined to be a basic life need

Process

As part of our intake/screening process, any veteran assisted by VNN must complete an intake/screening form, participate in one-on-one resource counseling, case management, and, if needed, a peer mentorship program.

If a veteran needs emergency financial assistance, the process starts at intake. VNN staff will assess the need, complete an emergency financial assistance request form, and submit it to the VNN Executive Director for consideration. If the request is approved, VNN staff will inform the veteran and coordinate payment to the applicable company. Payments will be made directly to vendors, and all paperwork, including receipts, will be uploaded to the veteran's case file in our secure case management system.

Eligibility

- The applicant must be a Montana service member or a veteran currently residing in Montana (subject to verification) who is working to put the justice system or homelessness behind them.
- Veterans cannot have a Dishonorable Discharge (Bad Conduct Discharges considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the reason for Court Martial).
- VNN staff will require documentation, such as billing statements or repair estimates, to verify the expense before payment is made.

Payment

- Emergency funds will be disbursed directly to the vendor/service provider.
- Payments will be processed within three business days after verification.

Assistance Amounts

- Between \$350 - \$1,500 per veteran.

Follow-up and Accountability

Veterans in the program will be required to participate in the VNN mentor program, which includes goal setting and regular follow-ups. The program will track progress in areas such as:

- 1. Employment and Income Stability:**
 - Employment status and salary changes
 - Job training or certification completion
- 2. VA Benefits and Compensation:**
 - Compensation/pension claim outcomes
 - Enrollment in VA programs
- 3. Housing Stability:**
 - Housing status and stability

- Impact of financial assistance on securing housing
- 4. **Education and Skill Development:**
 - Completion of educational programs or certifications
 - Acquisition of new skills
- 5. **Physical and Mental Health:**
 - Ongoing access to healthcare services
 - Mental health and substance use outcomes

Evaluation

- **Outcome Metrics:** Benchmarks for success include:
 - Veteran housed stably after 6 and 12 months
 - Veteran employed after 6 and 12 months
 - Veteran connected to VA healthcare
 - Veteran connected to USDVA compensation or pension (if eligible)
 - Veteran enrolled in a college/trade program or improved employment
 - Veteran does not re-offend within 6 and 12 months
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Regular reviews of outcome data ensure that assistance programs are meeting intended goals, allowing for adjustments as needed.

By following this policy, VNN can ensure that financial assistance not only provides immediate relief but also leads to measurable and sustainable improvements in veterans' lives over the long term.

Please address any questions to:

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