

Approved 5DEC2014

**Board Minutes
November 24, 2014**

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, 6848 S. Revere Parkway, Centennial, CO 80112

Robby Robinson, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 0930 hours. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our POW, MIA, soldiers, sailors, and airmen in battle or harm's way and all service members.

There was no Roll Call of Members and Introduction of Staff as there were no guests present.

Board Members Present:

William "Robby" Robinson, Chairman
Dana Niemela, Vice-Chairman
Rene Simard, Secretary
Kathleen Dunemn, Member- Not Present
Christopher Holden, Member
Wendy Sue Chiado, Ph.D., Member – Joined through Teleconference at 09:34am
Duane Dailey, Member

DMVA Staff Present:

Mickey Hunt, DMVA, Deputy Director
Reuben "Ben" Mestas, CDVA Director
Tamara Edmond, CDVA Admin. Asst.
Gail Hoagland, DMVA VAG Administrator

Guests Present:

There were no guests present.

Discussion/Action: Changes to Procedures to Veterans Trust Fund

1. Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) versus Veterans Assistance Grant (VAG)- difference in programs

Robby Robinson: We need to discuss the changes in procedures to the Veterans Trust Fund. The first consideration; the Veterans Trust Fund is administered by the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs (CBVA) and the Veterans Assistance Grant is administered by the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. VTF is established through Colorado Legislation and there is now statutory language which establishes the VAG. Ray Z. Dissinger had the view to make these grants both sort of the same. In my view, the Legislature had a different view in that these grants serve a different purpose. Applicants can not apply to both grants at the same

time. They can either apply for the VTF or the VAG. If they are a Veterans Service Organization they can apply for the VTF and if they are a non-profit 501C-3 they can apply for the VAG.

Gail Hoagland: Previously, that may be the way it was written, but with the new rules it is not the same. If a VFW Post is a 501C-3 then they can apply for the VAG.

Robby Robinson: The Department says that there can be no duplication. Should the two grants be totally separate in terms of what they fund?

09:34 Wendy Chiado joined the meeting through teleconference.

Robby Robinson: Considering the example of mental hygiene, a VFW post could contract to have 40 hours of counseling for a veteran in need for VTF grant or a 501C-3 provides direct mental health services to veterans under a VAG grant. Another possibility, Project Sanctuary could pay for a counselor to go to a retreat that would go to VAG.

Ben Mestas: As far as administering the grant a clear directive would be helpful as far as short-term versus long-term.

Robby Robinson: For short-term, a homeless shelter program provides a bed for a veteran for a night; for long-term a 501C-3 would provide rental assistance for three months of rent.

Ben Mestas: If a Veteran Service Organizations gave money to a veteran for boots or a coat, this would be emergency services.

Robby Robinson: A long-term example would be if VOA gave a veterans organization money for a pipe-welding course that lasted 6 months in a program to help the veteran get an education. In my mind, there is a difference between the two grants.

Dana Niemela: In general, VSO's are more appropriate for applying one-time emergency grant needs. The American Legion or VFW is more appropriate for getting connected to the veteran. I would not be opposed, for example, if Idaho Springs requested money for a veteran to get counseling for 6 sessions with a provider the veteran has a relationship with in the community. So there is a place for the mental health and hygiene. If that was taken out it would be eliminating an opportunity for rural communities. If non-profit organizations want to provide counseling and a VFW wants to provide counseling, then I would rather award to the non-profit through the VAG.

Gail Hoagland: We have a lot of grantees who do both.

Dana Niemela: In that case, the community needs to say, here are the needs in our community and here are the resources we need to meet.

Duane Dailey: It is on CDVA to integrate where these grants are going and have the County Veterans Service Officers identifying the needs. I envision a whole group of Veterans Service Organizations trying to meet the criteria of the grants with the needs of their veterans.

Ben Mestas: A lot of these grants are where both the County Veterans Service Officers and the Veterans Service Organizations work together to collaborate.

Duane Dailey: From my experience, many of the CVSO's and the Veterans' Service Organizations are not even aware of each other.

Ben Mestas: By the time the County Veteran Service Officer becomes a CVSO, and then the Veterans Service Organizations have to sign-off on who the CVSO is, so there is awareness as well as a relationship.

Duane Dailey: I service several counties. There is a disconnect between the Veteran Service Organizations and what the CVSO's do to help Veterans is very apparent.

Robby Robinson: There is an opportunity to strengthen the position of the CVSO by writing in that it has to go through the CVSO.

Dana Niemela: When foundations are awarding grants, they give the organizations additional points for working with another organization. For example, if VFW is collaborating with other organizations in the community, they would get higher points than those who don't demonstrate partnerships with other organizations.

Chris Holden: If you add in another layer of vetting an organization before it comes to us, then you would have to add in an appeals process for the grant applicants to keep the process fair.

Dana Niemela: It would not be a vetting of the applicants per se, just the applications would have to go through the CVSO so they were aware of what the Service Organizations were applying for, and to see what needs were going to be addressed. It would be building a foundation for a partnership to develop through the years.

Duane Dailey: I agree with Dana, we have to build it in over several years.

Chris Holden: My concern is in some counties that could be construed as favoritism or playing politics and not benefit the veterans in need.

Wendy Chiado: In a place like Colorado Springs, there are so many Veterans Service Organizations; I would not even know who to go to.

Robby Robinson: What I hear you saying is that we need to involve the County Veterans Service Officers in some way?

Chris Holden: Why do that? I never see any County Commissioner coming here to say there is a problem.

Duane Dailey: I would say there is not a problem everywhere. It is not to say you have to be working together. Involving the County Veterans Service Officers would raise their level of awareness of who the CVSO is and what they are doing.

Mickey Hunt: There are County Veterans Service Officers who work with the Service Organizations and other County Veterans Service Officers who do not. In one county the CVSO did not have a good relationship with the VFW, so they did not work together. In another county, the County Veterans Service Officer does not have a good relationship with the student veteran community so he is missing out on serving those younger veterans. There's Jim Tackett in El Paso County, who works with many of the Veterans Service Organizations.

Wendy Chiado: I don't even know who that is.

Mickey Hunt: There needs to be more coordination with the County Veterans Service Officers.

Dana Niemela: Any Federal grants or foundation grants require the applicants to show coordination with service delivery. Who is involved with that is less important but we can encourage it to building partnerships in the community. We could require the applicants to have a Memorandum of Understanding to show who they are working with. Perhaps this could be assigned one point to show they are building partnerships.

Rene Simard: This brings up the scoring guide, would this be in the other participants category?

Robby Robinson: If I heard that right there is a consensus that we need to involve the County Veteran Service Officers to tell the County Veteran Service Officers that the Veterans Service Organization is applying for a grant to meet a specific need in their community?

Ben Mestas: The County Veterans Service Officers are appointed by the County Board of Commissioners.

Chris Holden: We could put that in the evaluation criteria, "Did the applicant send a copy to notify the County Veterans Service Officer?"

Robby Robinson: As far as the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs is involved, I am comfortable with the grant applicants sending a copy to the County Veterans Service Officer. The other thing that I heard is that we need to have some organizational differences between the two grants. A 501C-3 cannot use the VTF money.

2. VTF Letter/Criteria

Robby Robinson: We need to take a look at the Policy Letter. We meet back with the Audit Committee in January. On 1 B – Grant Programs to be funded: Short Term Emergency Assistance, Job Training/Education/Assistance, Homeless Prevention/Shelter Operations, Mental Health and Hygiene, Medical Transportation, Veterans Stand Downs, and Special Programs.

It is important to look at the unique requirements of a particular community. Are there any comments on the list of priorities?

Dana Niemela: I agree with the list of priorities. On number 7, instead of requirements, it should read unique to the identified needs of a particular community. On number 3, I would say, “temporary housing assistance.”

Robby Robinson: If we add the assistance to 3, then let’s take temporary rent out of number 1 so it is not duplicated.

Dana Niemela: With a comment about mental health and hygiene funding through VSO’s with emphasis on a rural community. If there is not a service provider in a rural community, then I would like to leave it in the VTF for emergency assistance.

I also think we should use bullets instead of numbers because it looks like we are prioritizing the criteria.

Gail Hoagland: I have a question. When the Auditors wrote their report, did they want the criteria put into a list of priorities?

Robby Robinson: It did say prioritize but for rural communities, I will take the hit for that.

Dana Niemela: I would say, Gail, there is probably more of a need in a rural community like Las Animas for particular services than in a metro area.

Chris Holden: It would be helpful for me to have a list of the Veterans Assistance Grant priorities.

(Gail passed out several copies of the Veterans Assistance Grant priorities to CBVA members.)

Robby Robinson: To differentiate between the different types of organizations that apply for the grants, should we say VTF is more short-term and VAG is more long-term? For example, Crawford House has been getting money from VFW or AL through VTF. Now that Crawford House is a 501C-3, it should apply directly to the VAG grant and not for the money dispensed through VTF.

Mickey Hunt: Crawford House is a rehabilitation facility that is for veterans with addictions. I toured the facility several years ago and thought they were doing a great job. The veterans are

admitted to the program and have to go through rehabilitation and stay clean and sober to be in the program. After the first, three and a half weeks they graduate to a facility with a shared room, and then get integrated into a program where they are sharing a room and they start sharing the work load. Then they graduate up to a house and work. The program lasts a total of 2 years.

Duane Dailey: A Step 13 program for veterans.

Mickey Hunt: They can also house females.

Duane Dailey: Bartol from Teller County wanted to integrate community services to bring in veterans. Is that something that can qualify for the VAG?

Mickey Hunt: Any of the funds requested for either the VAG or the VTF have to go to veterans.

Dana Niemela: If a community service organization requests funds they have to show that they serve veterans and the funds are only going to go to the veterans in their program.

Discussion of community service organizations serving veterans and the proof required to document number of veterans served.

Dana Niemela: I do have a question about the difference between short and long term services on the application and the on-going outcomes. There are difference immediate needs that can be met with the short-term grant. For the counties, VSO's sometimes the output is okay to put such as, "Did you solve homelessness for this veteran? Or did you help this veteran find a bed to sleep in a shelter for the night?" I know there are some cases that benefit from on-going case management but not every case requires it. The VTF and the VAG can help meet a need by providing one-time assistance. For example, if you can't pay there is usually an issue with money management and if Denver County is providing rental assistance then they would also provide a referral to the Financial Empowerment Center.

Gail Hoagland: How can we look to the outputs? The applicants could say here are the types of differences we are making for veterans and give a list.

Robby Robinson: It is important to maintain the difference between the VTF and the VAG.

Wendy Chiado: On #1, the part with "necessary requirements" can we take that out, it is too nebulous?

Gail Hoagland: We may not anticipate every type of need that may exist but we might provide a way to meet the needs that we have not thought about.

Chris Holden: I remember one where the women in the program needed feminine hygiene products and the "necessary requirements" descriptor fit this appropriately.

Discussion about other situations or examples where “necessary requirements” fit an emergent need that one would not usually anticipate.

Robby Robinson: Does anyone have any other comments about the criteria? On page 2, of the Policy Letter, the bold print is not new is has been reordered and underlined for emphasis. On page 3, the bold print, is more of the Ray Z language, bolded for emphasis. Any comments on page 4. Gail, are you okay with this document?

Gail Hoagland: Do there need to be some review of criteria in ways grants are reviewed?

Discussion about the scorecard used to weigh the criteria in awarding grants.

Dana Niemela: Each one should have a scoring criteria assigned to it or a scoring mechanism attached to each one of the criteria.

Gail Hoagland: We also need to add to this list CVSO notification.

Robby Robinson: On 1B, it was not clear to me in #5 qualitative and quantitative.

Gail Hoagland: In the application narrative, it asks what kinds of outputs/outcomes in types of services are expected. We also have to consider the different types of performance from the grantees. It asks about previous performance and we document past performance.

Robby Robinson: We keep 5 and 8 in the document.

Dana Niemela: If someone who was a past performer and they did well, it puts them at a higher priority than a new grantee. We do look at previous performance of prior grants and use that in determining awards or award amounts. Is that the intention?

Ben Mestas: Isn't that covered in the numbers of veterans served?

Dana Niemela: What was the intent?

Gail Hoagland: I don't think necessarily that that is the real intent. The reason we look at past performance is that if a previous grantee did not perform well, then they would score lower on that one.

Rene Simard: We actually use the past performance in awarding the grants.

Gail Hoagland: The Auditors were very clear that they wanted everyone including the grantee to know clearly how they were ranked. The past performance is used in determining who to award and the next determinant would be the amount of the award. An example of this would

be if they scored 86 or below then they would not be funded. We wanted to put in specific criteria.

Dana Niemela: I would suggest that we consider previous administrative performance on grants, i.e. VOA has a strong reputation for high performance on administration of grants.

Gail Hoagland: If it is not one of our grants then how would we know what the performance record has been?

Ben Mestas: For new grantees, if they can meet the criteria of 1, 2, 3, and 4 then they are going to score higher.

Robby Robinson: For number 7, Special Programs, should it say priorities for statewide and/or regional needs?

Gail Hoagland: We can take #2 out that was an audit concern as far as a big picture of what the needs are.

Ben Mestas: The big picture does look at the impact on that area whether the need is regional or specific to the community.

Robby Robinson: For #3 it could be rolled into #4. The number of veterans served is a measure of effectiveness.

Dana Niemela: Are we going to be able to award a VSO that is going to serve fewer veterans because of geographic proximity?

Gail Hoagland: There is a difference between outputs and outcomes. It is important that the grantees know we are looking for outcomes.

Dana Niemela: Whatever is on this list should be on the scoring tool. When we are weighing each one of these criteria, we are assigning a priority to it.

Robby Robinson: For the scoring tool, Serving Individuals, New Grant, Rural Areas will continue to be on there. Other Participants and In Kind Match, what do you think? In Kind Match is on there from back in Marvin Meyers' time when they would have matching grants from other community sources to help them meet their financial goals.

Gail Hoagland: On the application, we ask them to identify other sources of funding.

Dana Niemela: With that we are prioritizing unmet needs.

Gail Hoagland: Should it be identify other sources of funding for this project?

Dana Niemela: I would think where there are no other sources of funding it would be a higher priority.

Robby Robinson: We also look at statewide regional need.

Dana Niemela: 2-8 are criteria that we decided to keep.

Gail Hoagland: It would be 2-9 that we decided on.

Robby Robinson: Do you want to put CVSO partnership under number 2?

Dana Niemela: "In Kind" could also be a good place to put partnership.

Gail Hoagland: It might also fall under budget appropriate services.

Dana Niemela: Are there any of the categories that should be weighted more than the other categories?

Robby Robinson: Of these categories, what is the most important? Probably number 4?

Dana Niemela: I would say number 2 is pretty important.

Robby Robinson: How about 15 points for number 2 and 15 points for number 4.

Wendy Chiado: If you put more emphasis on number 3 does it penalize the rural communities?

Robby Robinson: That is a valid point and we do take that into consideration when we look at rural versus metro communities. On page 5 and 6 are there any other changes?

General discussion assigning points to prioritize the categories.

Dana Niemela: I just have an observation. Throughout the document there were dates and then the last 2 pages, the year was put in where just putting the dates would be sufficient.

Robby Robinson: It looks like with the date in then it needs to be looked at every year.

Dana Niemela: We do look at it every year. We need to look at what the funds will be based on and the available funds.

Robby Robinson: Do you want it to say, "Grant funding available based on number of applicants?"

Duane Dailey: We need to define better what funds are available.

Robby Robinson: So, it should say, total funds available, total funds requested, and total number of grantees?

Dana Niemela: We also have been known to not fully fund grantees and need to be able to explain why.

Gail Hoagland: During the application process, we try to encourage the applicants to fully justify their budget requests. This could be where we ask, is the budget appropriate for number of veterans served?

General discussion of total funds available versus funds requested and number of veterans served. This would also take into account the geographic distribution and be documented on the scoring tool and in the policy letter.

Robby Robinson: I move that the Administration Guidelines and Procedures falls in Gail's expertise and that we let her take care of that.

Gail Hoagland: Several changes still have to be made to the application, especially where it says VAG and should say VTF.

General discussion of the application checklist.

Robby Robinson: Are there any additional comments?

Gail Hoagland: I am fine with approving this with the changes we have discussed today.

Rene Simard: I move that we proceed with the changes we have discussed.

Chris Holden: I second that motion.

Robby Robinson: All in favor say "aye." Any opposed? That was **unanimous** to proceed with the changes. Is there any other business?

Mickey Hunt: What is the status of the Governor's Report?

Robby Robinson: We have received all requested agency letters. The report will be the main subject of the December 5th meeting. We will get any other Board input at that meeting.

Mickey Hunt: I want to know who all is attending the CCI meeting on December 2nd. Do we have to get on a list or register?

Discussion of CCI event on December 2nd in Colorado Springs. Mickey Hunt, Ben Mestas, Diane Ricci, and Duane Dailey are scheduled to attend and Mr. Dailey will check to make sure everyone is registered.

*Chris Holden left the room at 11:00am due to business commitment.

General discussion of the Veterans Choice Card, outreach from the VA Regional Office in Denver, and the VA being more proactive in rural communities.

Robby Robinson: For December, we will have the DMV from Colorado Springs to discuss the different license plates and the processes in place.

Ben Mestas: One of the problems is that each county clerk implements the processes for the DMV. It would be nice for the Department of Revenue to implement a standard.

Mickey Hunt: The Department of Revenue does have a standard in how they train their personnel for the DMV.

Discussion of DMV and special license plates for veterans.

Future Meetings

5 December 2014, 0930, American Legion HQ

9 January 2015, 0930, TBA

6 February 2015, 0930, Colorado Springs (Location TBA)

Meeting adjourned at 11:43am.

