



## Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) 2024–25 Grant Opportunity Guidelines

<b>Opening date:</b>	16 January 2024
<b>Closing date and time:</b>	9:00 pm AEDT on 29 February 2024
<b>Commonwealth policy entity:</b>	Department of Veterans' Affairs
<b>Administering entity</b>	Community Grants Hub
<b>Enquiries:</b>	<p>If you have any questions, contact Community Grants Hub Phone: 1800 020 283 (option 1) Email: <a href="mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au">support@communitygrants.gov.au</a></p> <p>Questions should be sent no later than 5:00 pm AEDT on 22 February 2024</p>
<b>Date guidelines released:</b>	16 January 2024
<b>Type of grant opportunity:</b>	Demand Driven

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# 1 Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST): grant processes

**The Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program is designed to achieve Australian Government objectives.**

This grant opportunity is part of the above grant program, which contributes to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) *Program 1.4 - Assistance and Other Compensation for Veterans and Dependents*. The Department of Veterans' Affairs works with stakeholders to plan and design the grant program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 \(CGRGs\)](https://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines.pdf)<sup>1</sup>.



**The grant opportunity opens**

We publish the Grant Opportunity Guidelines on [GrantConnect](http://www.grants.gov.au/)<sup>2</sup>.



**You complete and submit a grant application**

You complete the application form and address all of the eligibility to be considered for a grant.



**We assess all grant applications**

We assess the applications against eligibility criteria and notify you if you are not eligible. If you are eligible, we then apply the BEST calculation on your eligible application using a formula that calculates each organisation's workload as a percentage of the work undertaken nationally in the previous (2023) calendar year. This percentage is then applied to the available BEST monies to calculate each eligible applicant's grant offer.



**We make grant recommendations**

We provide advice, through the DVA Grants Advisory Committee, to the decision maker on the merits of each application.



**Grant decisions are made**

The decision maker (Minister for Veterans' Affairs or the authorised DVA official) decides which applications are successful.



**We notify you of the outcome**

We advise you of the outcome of your application. We may not notify unsuccessful applicants until grant agreements have been executed with successful applicants.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.finance.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/commonwealth-grants-rules-and-guidelines.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.grants.gov.au/>

### **We enter into a grant agreement**

We enter into a grant agreement with you if successful. The type of grant agreement is based on the nature or complexity of the grant and will be proportional to the risks involved.



### **Delivery of grant**

You undertake the grant activity as set out in your grant agreement. We manage the grant by working with you and making payments.



### **Evaluation of the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program**

We evaluate your specific grant activity and the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program as a whole. We base this on information you provide us and that we collect from various sources.

## **1.1 Introduction**

These guidelines contain information for the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program.

**Please note:** There have been changes to the BEST program for 2024–25, including changes to the BEST funding formula, a requirement for wellbeing support officer information and the collection of wellbeing workload statistics.

This document sets out:

- the purpose of the grant program and grant opportunity
- the eligibility criteria
- how grant applications are considered and selected
- how grantees are notified and receive grant payments
- how grantees will be monitored and evaluated
- responsibilities and expectations in relation to the opportunity.

This grant opportunity and process will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

## **2 About the grant program**

The BEST program forms part of the Australian Government's commitment to support the role of ex-service organisation (ESO) wellbeing and compensation advocates, who provide advice and assistance to the veteran and defence communities. It also links closely to the [Advocacy Training and Development Program](#)<sup>3</sup> (ATDP), which provides the essential skills for claims, advocacy and wellbeing work.

The program will run over one year in the 2024–25 financial year.

The program is funded through DVA's Program 1.4 – Assistance and Other Compensation for Veterans and Dependents, and the Advocacy Grants and Support program.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/consultation-and-grants/advocacy-training/advocacy-training-and-development-program>

The program is intended to assist the veteran and defence communities by providing support and resources to ESOs for compensation and/or wellbeing advocacy. It assists ESOs by providing a contribution to the work of their advocates and support staff. It does not fully fund an organisation.

Grants under this grant opportunity must assist in meeting the objectives and outcomes of the program.

The objectives of the program are to assist ESOs to:

- improve the quality of claims received by DVA at the primary determining level
- reduce the rate of appeals to the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)
- promote the provision of wellbeing services to the veteran and defence community.

The intended outcomes of the program are to ensure:

- the veteran and defence communities are able to benefit from having better informed ESO advocates who can ensure claims lodged with DVA are of a high standard and contain all required information to enable timely and quality decisions
- ESO advocates will assist in improving claims assessment efficiency
- the veteran and defence communities will have access to appropriate compensation and wellbeing advocacy services.

The Community Grants Hub and DVA administer the program according to the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 \(CGRGs\)](#).

## **2.1 Changes in the BEST program for 2024–25 include:**

- In addition to providing details of advocates, ESOs will be required to provide an attachment with the details of their wellbeing support officers, including their names and their average weekly working hours
- The workload of Wellbeing Support Officers will be collected separately to the workload of ATDP qualified Wellbeing Advocates
- The split in funding for Salary and Administrative/Equipment expenses will be adjusted from a 60/40 split to a 70/30 split respectively. This split aligns more closely with the funding totals being requested collectively by BEST applicants
- The supplementary administrative funding pool has been removed with the \$200,000 allocation being returned to the standard Salary and Administrative/Equipment funding pool
- To recognise the workload associated with preparing VRB and AATs a new work type has been created. ESOs without appropriately qualified advocates may now claim 'VRB/AAT preparation work' associated with claims that progress to the full VRB or AAT hearing. ESOs claiming the preparation work must nominate the organisation that they refer these cases to for the hearing. ESOs with advocates qualified to represent veterans at these hearings are not able to claim the preparation work as it is included in the weighting for the full VRB or AAT

## 2.2 Important information regarding COVID-19

### DVA's response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Australian Government information and advice for limiting the spread of COVID-19 is available on the [Department of Health website](#)<sup>4</sup>.

COVID-19 has been impacting the community since 2020. Where appropriate you are encouraged to adapt proposed service delivery to allow for social distancing and ensure the safety of advocates, veterans and their families.

## 3 Grant amount and grant period

### 3.1 Grants available

This grant opportunity is funded under the Advocacy Grants and Support program within DVA's [Portfolio Budget Statement](#)<sup>5</sup>. The Australian Government announced a total of \$26,001 million over 4 years from 2023–24 to 2026–27 for the Advocacy Grants and Support program.

For this grant opportunity, a total of up to \$4.731 million (GST exclusive) is available for the 2024–25 financial year. There is one BEST funding round each year.

The grant amount available for each organisation will be determined on the basis of the total funds available and the workload information provided in your application (see section 7.2 for details of the grant funding calculation at Appendix B for more information).

### 3.2 Grant period

The maximum grant period is one year.

## 4 Eligibility criteria

The decision maker can choose to waive the eligibility criteria, however, they must be made aware of the risks. The waiver may be used to ensure that applicants are not excluded solely on the basis of entity type, particularly if there are applicants that may otherwise be considered suitable. Clear evidence will be provided to the delegate to enable a decision on whether eligibility criteria should be waived.

### 4.1 Who is eligible to apply for a grant?

To be eligible you must be an ex-service organisation (ESO) and have an eligible entity type as listed below to apply in your own right. See section 4.2 below for more information.

If you are an ESO and may or may not have an eligible entity type as listed below, another ESO with an eligible entity type can apply on your behalf as a sponsor. **It is imperative that the sponsor complete and submit the application.** If the sponsored organisation completes and submits the application instead, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not progress. See section 4.3 below for more information.

If you are not an ESO, you are not eligible to apply for a grant (either in your own right, or if you have a sponsor apply on your behalf).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/government-response-to-the-covid-19-outbreak>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/about/accessing-information/what-can-i-access/corporate-information-access/budgets/budget-2023-24>

**Please note:** successful applicants in the 2023–24 BEST grant opportunity with current grant agreements and no outstanding acquittals are eligible to apply for 2024–25 BEST grant funding.

### Definition of an ESO

For the purposes of BEST grants, an ESO is considered to be an organisation that satisfies ALL of the below points:

- has membership consisting primarily of Australian veterans, past and present members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and/or their dependants
- is established primarily to provide compensation and/or wellbeing advocacy to Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants and
- does not operate as a business or charge any fee for acting on behalf of Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants in the provision of claims or wellbeing services.

**Please Note:** To be considered an ESO for the purposes of BEST, you must have at least one ATDP-qualified advocate in your organisation. All ESOs are required to be registered on the [Accredited Advocate Register](#)<sup>6</sup> and ensure their details are up to date.

The applicant organisation's website should have a clear pathway for wellbeing or compensation advocacy support.

### Applying in your own right

To be eligible to apply in your own right, you must be an ESO and one of the following entity types:

- Company<sup>7</sup>
- Cooperative
- Corporate State or Territory Entity
- Incorporated Association
- Indigenous Corporation
- Statutory Entity.

If you are applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust<sup>8</sup>, the Trustee and Trust must be ESOs and the Trustee must have an eligible entity type as listed above.

## 4.2 Applying as a sponsor on behalf of another ESO

Whether or not an ESO has an eligible entity type, another eligible ESO may apply as a sponsor on their behalf. Funding is managed by the sponsor but any recommended grant amount will be assessed on the basis of the sponsored organisation's activity as provided in the application. A sponsor may apply on behalf of more than one ESO. The sponsor must submit a separate grant application for each sponsored organisation.

**The sponsor must complete and submit the application.** If the sponsored organisation completes and submits the application instead, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not progress.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.advocateregister.org.au/>

<sup>7</sup> Company is a company incorporated under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

<sup>8</sup> Trusts are not legal entities in their own right – to be eligible, only the Trustee for the Trust can apply by providing the signed Trust Deed and any subsequent variations with the application form. Trustees must be an eligible entity type as stated in section 4.1. Both the Trust and Trustee's details will be collected in the application form.



To be eligible, a sponsor must be an ESO and one of the following eligible entity types:

- Company
- Cooperative
- Corporate State or Territory Entity
- Incorporated Association
- Indigenous Corporation
- Statutory Entity.

### **Responsibilities of the sponsor**

The sponsor's responsibilities are to:

- bear executive management responsibility and be accountable to DVA for the appropriate use of grant funds by the sponsored organisation in accordance with the terms of the grant
- take responsibility for the receipt and distribution of grant funds
- take responsibility for the collection, collation and provision of all audit, reporting and acquittal documentation for the grant
- provide the contact information and the contact person for the sponsored organisation in the application where required.
- complete a current 2024 signed Letter of Declaration on the mandatory template provided, ensuring it is signed by both the sponsored organisation and the sponsor.

## **4.3 Additional eligibility requirements**

To be considered for a grant, you must also meet the following:

- All identified advocacy workload is undertaken by appropriately qualified ATDP advocates.  
**The workload relating to TIP-trained advocates is ineligible for funding.**
- Commit to meeting the 'Service Standards for Claims Advocacy' (see Appendix C). This commitment includes demonstrating or providing evidence to DVA (if requested) of the actions you are undertaking or have initiated to meet these service standards. Organisations found of major non-compliance against the Service Standards may not be eligible for a grant until they become compliant.
- All previous DVA grants have been acquitted (if applicable). We cannot fund applications from an organisation that has outstanding acquittals for any previous DVA grant funding at the closing date and time for this grant opportunity.  
**Please note:** this only applies to outstanding acquittals. If you have a current DVA grant agreement with an acquittal due date after the closing date and time for this grant opportunity, you are eligible to apply.

## **4.4 Who is not eligible to apply for a grant?**

### **Applying in your own right**

You are not eligible to apply in your own right if you:

- are not an ESO, as defined in section 4.1 above
- are one of the following entity types:
  - Corporate Commonwealth Entity
  - Non-corporate Commonwealth Entity
  - Non-corporate Commonwealth Statutory Authority

- Commonwealth Company
  - Non-corporate State or Territory Entity
  - Non-corporate State or Territory Statutory Authority
  - Local Government<sup>9</sup>
  - International Entity
  - Sole Trader
  - Person<sup>10</sup>
  - Partnership
  - Unincorporated Association
- are included on the [National Redress Scheme's website](#)<sup>11</sup> on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
  - are named as currently non-compliant under the [Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012](#)<sup>12</sup> (Cth) by the closing date and time of this grant opportunity
  - receive funding from another government source that will entirely meet the costs of the project proposed under this grant opportunity<sup>13</sup>.

### **Applying as a sponsor**

You are not eligible to apply as a sponsor if:

- the sponsor is not an ESO, as defined in section 4.1 above
- the sponsored organisation is not an ESO, as defined in section 4.1 above
- the sponsor is one of the following entity types:
  - Corporate Commonwealth Entity
  - Non-corporate Commonwealth Entity
  - Non-corporate Commonwealth Statutory Authority
  - Commonwealth Company
  - Non-corporate State or Territory Entity
  - Non-corporate State or Territory Statutory Authority
  - Local Government
  - International Entity
  - Sole Trader
  - Person
  - Partnership
  - Unincorporated Association

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<sup>9</sup> Includes New South Wales local governments created as Body Politics.

<sup>10</sup> A person is a natural person, an individual, a human being.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.wgea.gov.au/>

<sup>13</sup> You may be contacted to provide further information on any items funded for the same purpose as the project proposed under this granting opportunity.

- you and/or the sponsored organisation are included on the [National Redress Scheme's website](#) on the list of 'Institutions that have not joined or signified their intent to join the Scheme'
- you and/or the sponsored organisation are named as currently non-compliant under the [Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012](#) (Cth) by the closing date and time of this grant opportunity
- the sponsored organisation receives funding from another government source that will entirely meet the costs of providing advocacy support as outlined under this grant opportunity.

**Please Note:** The above list of entity types is not definitive. If the entity type of an applicant applying either in their own right or as a sponsor is not listed in section 4.2 above, the applicant is not eligible to apply and the application will not be assessed.

#### 4.5 What qualifications, skills or checks are required?

It is an ESO's responsibility to identify risks associated with activities and ensure your staff have the appropriate qualifications and skills required for advocacy and wellbeing support work undertaken by your organisation.

It is the responsibility of your organisation to ensure anyone working directly with children and/or vulnerable people complies with the relevant state or territory legislations, including:

- Working with Children checks
- Working with Vulnerable People registration
- Mandatory reporting.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure you comply with any regulatory mandatory reporting requirements that apply to your organisation, for example with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission or with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (if relevant).

## 5 What the grant money can be used for

### 5.1 Eligible grant activities

The program funding is available to support the work of military compensation advocates, wellbeing advocates and wellbeing support officers. Administrative assistants supporting the work of compensation advocates can also be funded. Further information on workload definitions are available on the [DVA Website](#)<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Military compensation advocates**

A military compensation advocate assists veteran and defence community members and their dependants to prepare and lodge compensation and benefits claims with DVA.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/about-us/overview/consultations-and-grants/building-excellence-support-and-training-grants/workload>

Advocates must maintain appropriate levels of training under the ATDP. They must also be authorised by their ESO. As the reported workload is for ATDP qualified advocates the claims prepared by advocates under training is to be attributed to their mentor. Military compensation advocates with higher-level ATDP training (CL3 or CL4) may also be involved in representing veterans before the VRB and/or the AAT. Organisations without a CL3 or CL4 level advocate are able to include VRB or AAT preparation work in their reported workload where the work results in a hearing.

Military compensation advocates are required to be listed on the [Advocate register](#)<sup>15</sup>. Advocates who are not listed on this website will need to provide further evidence of their ATDP qualification.

When recording advocate workloads, ensure each claim is counted as a single claim regardless of the number of conditions. For example, if a claim is submitted for 6 conditions, record it as 1 claim only. It is important all applicants use this method to ensure consistency in workload reporting.

**Please note:** the formula takes into consideration the volume and complexity of the work through workload ratings at Appendix B.

### **Wellbeing advocates**

A wellbeing advocate provides veteran and defence community members with information on, and assists with, access to health, housing, bereavement support and other community services and benefits. A wellbeing advocate must also maintain appropriate levels of training under the ATDP and be authorised by their ESO.

ESOs requesting a BEST grant must provide workload statistics for paid and volunteer advocates for the previous (2023) calendar year. These workload statistics provide the basis for calculating grant offers.

When documenting the hours for ATDP wellbeing advocates this is to be recorded as **weekly hours**.

Wellbeing advocates are required to be listed on the [Advocate register](#)<sup>16</sup>. Advocates who are not listed on this website will need to provide further evidence of their ATDP qualification.

Examples of wellbeing advocacy include:

- visits to home, hospital, aged care facility visits for emergencies, support and professional assistance
- bereavement/funerals – to provide support and assist with funeral arrangements
- housing/accommodation – including providing assistance on issues related to rentals, ownership, care facilities, emergencies, income and assets
- problem/crises – including providing referrals for medical, financial, legal and police matters and providing assistance on simple resolutions
- transport services – eligibility advice or referrals.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://advocateregister.org.au/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://advocateregister.org.au/>

## Wellbeing support officers

A wellbeing support officer provides companionship to veterans, makes home and hospital visits, and undertakes other non-advisory support tasks. BEST grants can no longer be provided to organisations who report wellbeing support officers without the support of ATDP qualified advocates in their broader organisation.

Wellbeing Support Officers must be listed as an attachment to the grant application with the average weekly hours worked. This will assist DVA in assessing the reasonability of the claimed wellbeing support officer hours.

When recording the weekly hours for wellbeing support officers, the workload is for the relevant activities of visits and transporting veterans. All other wellbeing workload should be attributed to ATDP qualified wellbeing advocates.

Examples of wellbeing support include:

- visits to home, hospital, aged care facility visits for emergencies and general support
- transporting veterans.

## Administrative assistants

An administrative assistant provides general secretarial and administrative assistance and/or office management services to support the work of compensation and wellbeing advocates and wellbeing support officers.

Contribution towards salaries for administrative assistants can only be calculated against the work completed for compensation advocates. See section 5.2 for further information.

## 5.2 Eligible expenditure

You can only spend the grant on eligible expenditure you have incurred on eligible grant activities (see Appendix A).

Grant assistance is available for 2 categories of expenses incurred by ESOs undertaking compensation and wellbeing work:

- salary assistance
- equipment and administrative expenses assistance.

These categories are outlined below.

### Salary assistance

BEST salary assistance is provided as a contribution to the salary of full-time and part-time military compensation advocates who help with claims for compensation or benefits. Salary assistance may also contribute to employee on-costs such as superannuation, leave entitlements, redundancy payments or other salary related expenses. Salary assistance is also available as a contribution to the salary of administrative officers who support advocates undertaking military compensation work. Salary assistance is calculated using compensation workload only and does not take into consideration wellbeing advocacy. See *Equipment and administrative expense assistance* for funding that supports wellbeing advocacy.

Military compensation work consists of the following claim types:

- primary level DVA compensation claims
- VEA Applications for Increase Veterans' Entitlement Act Section 31 Review applications
- reconsiderations under the *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988* (DRCA) or the *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA)

- Outreach and preparation work leading to VRB and AAT hearings
- review applications to the VRB
- appeals to the AAT.

Each ESO is responsible for determining how it remunerates its paid advocates.

### **Equipment and administrative expense assistance**

BEST administrative expense grants are provided to assist with the purchase, and ongoing expense, of capital equipment, office consumables and domestic travel, including to attend compulsory ATDP training or assessment, where it is not possible for advocates to attend training or assessment online, by video, or in the local region. Other forms of training can be undertaken but it must be related to skills that directly support wellbeing or compensation advocacy. You should calculate local travel by multiplying total local kilometres travelled by 41.8 cents. Domestic travel costs beyond the local district where the organisation operates or has its usual place of business are also eligible.

**Please Note:** that any personal travel (including personal travel that may encompass purposes for which the grant is sought) is not eligible.

### **All administrative expenses claimed must be attributable to the provision of compensation advocacy and wellbeing advocacy or support.**

Unlike salary assistance, grants to support administrative expenses are available for items supporting compensation and/or wellbeing work. Grants for these items will therefore be calculated based on an organisation's compensation AND wellbeing workload.

### **Eligible equipment items**

BEST funding is available as a contribution to expenses that can be shown to be directly related to the support required by compensation and/or wellbeing advocates in providing advice to the veteran and defence communities.

Examples of expenses that would be eligible for BEST funding include:

- computer hardware, computer peripherals, televisions/monitors, scanners, tablets, appropriate computer software
- white boards, printing and printer supplies
- office furniture, such as, bookcases, brochure holders, filing cabinets, compactus, chairs, tables or desks.

For information on eligible and ineligible expenditure, see Appendix A. We may update the guidelines on eligible and ineligible expenditure from time to time. If your application is successful, the version in place when your grant agreement takes effect will be the version that applies to your project.

Grants must be acquitted against the funding amounts provided toward administrative/equipment expenses and salary expenses. As the calculation of grant amounts takes into consideration the amounts requested under these categories, it is not appropriate to reallocate these funds unless there are exceptional circumstances (see section 11.4).

### 5.3 What the grant money cannot be used for

Administrative expenses which would **not be eligible** for funding include:

- Honoraria
- utility costs covering electricity, gas, water, and so on.
- the cost of leasing premises (including rent) or purchase of property
- council rates
- office expenses and fees including insurance, advertising expenses, accounting, audit fees and bank fees
- legal consultation costs, including litigation
- functions such as commemorative and social activities
- meals, gifts, flowers or prizes
- air conditioning units and refrigerators
- accommodation associated with travel
- attendance at conferences
- training courses that are not primarily supporting the provision of advocacy or wellbeing support
- any administrative, equipment or training expense not primarily attributable to the provision of compensation advocacy, or wellbeing advocacy or support. Please see Appendix A.

## 6 How to apply

Before applying, you must read and understand these guidelines, the terms and conditions, sample grant agreement, and questions and answers.

These documents are found on [GrantConnect](#). Any changes to grant documentation and addenda<sup>17</sup> are published on GrantConnect. By registering on this website, you will be automatically notified of any changes. GrantConnect is the authoritative source for grants information.

**Please note the requirements specific to each applicant type:**

#### **Applicant in your own right**

If you submit more than one application in your own right, only the latest accepted application will progress. If you are applying in your own right you can also apply as a sponsor (that is, sponsoring another ESO) in a separate grant application.

#### **Applying as a sponsor**

The sponsor must pass on the full value of the grant to the sponsored organisation. If you are applying as a sponsor, you can also apply as an applicant in your own right.

The sponsor must submit a separate grant application for each sponsored organisation. If the sponsor submits more than one application sponsoring the same organisation, only the latest accepted application will progress.

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<sup>17</sup> Addenda can include changes to existing grant opportunity documentation and/or publishing additional documents. Changes include but are not limited to: corrections to currently published documents, changes to close times for applications and system outage notices.

It is imperative that the sponsor complete and submit the application on behalf of the organisation/s they are intending to sponsor. If the sponsored organisation completes and submits the application instead, the application will be deemed ineligible and will not progress.

To apply you must:

- complete the online application form on [GrantConnect](#)<sup>18</sup>
- provide all the information requested
- address all eligibility criteria
- include all necessary attachments
- provide contact details, including a contact person at the sponsored organisation
- submit your application to the Community Grants Hub by 9:00 pm AEDT on 29 February 2024.

We will not provide application forms or accept applications for this grant opportunity by fax or mail.

The application form includes help information. You are responsible for making sure your application is complete and accurate.

**Please Note:** that the workload information in the form is essential to the accurate calculation of grant amounts. Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence under the [Criminal Code Act 1995](#)<sup>19</sup> and we will investigate any false or misleading information and may exclude your application from further consideration.

If you need more help about the application process, submitting an application online, have any technical difficulties or find an error in your application after submission, but before the closing date and time, you should contact the Community Grants Hub immediately on 1800 020 283 (option 1) or email [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au). The Community Grants Hub does not have to accept any additional information after the closing time.

**You cannot change your application after the closing date and time.**

If we find an error or something missing, we may ask you for clarification or additional information. This will not change the nature of your application. However, we can refuse to accept any additional information from you that would change your application after the closing time.

You should keep a copy of your application and any supporting documents.

You will receive an automated notification acknowledging the receipt of your application.

## 6.1 Attachments to the application

The following supporting documents must be attached to your application, if requested. Templates are provided for your use with the grant opportunity documents as specified:

- Evidence of your organisation's current Professional Indemnity Insurance.
- If applying as a sponsor: Letter of Declaration confirming sponsorship – **mandatory** template provided. A 2024 letter for every grant round is to be completed by the sponsored organisation and signed by both the sponsored organisation and sponsor demonstrating that BOTH organisations are aware of, and agree to, the arrangement.
- Advocate List – **optional** template provided for use if additional space is required to list additional advocates/trainees.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://help.grants.gov.au/>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/cca1995115/sch1.html](http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol_act/cca1995115/sch1.html)



- Wellbeing Support Officer List – **optional** template provided if you are including the workload of wellbeing support officers.
- Trainees List – **optional** template provided for use if additional space is required to list additional trainees.
- Trust deed and any subsequent variations, if applying as a Trustee on behalf of a Trust.

If a mandatory template is not used your application will be considered non-compliant and will not proceed to assessment.

You must attach supporting documentation according to the instructions provided within the application form. You should only attach requested documents. We will not consider information in attachments we have not asked for.

**Please note:** There is a 2 MB limit for each attachment.

## 6.2 What financial details are required

Whether you are a new or existing grant recipient you may be contacted by the Hub seeking additional information to support the verification of your bank account details.

The bank account name must be in the name of the organisation applying, in the case of sponsoring the account must be in the name of the sponsoring organisation applying.

## 6.3 Timing of grant opportunity processes

You must submit an application between the published opening and closing dates.

### Late applications

We will not accept late applications unless you have experienced exceptional circumstances that prevent the submission of the application. Broadly, exceptional circumstances are events characterised by one or more of the following:

- reasonably unforeseeable
- beyond your control
- unable to be managed or resolved within the application period.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered on their merits and in accordance with probity principles.

### How to lodge a late application

Applicants seeking to submit a late application will be required to submit a late application request to the Community Grants Hub. The request should include a detailed explanation of the circumstances that prevented the application being submitted prior to the closing time. Where appropriate, supporting evidence should be provided to verify the claim of exceptional circumstances.

The late application request form and instructions for how to submit it can be found on the [Community Grants Hub website](#).

Written requests to lodge a late application will only be accepted within 3 days after the grant opportunity has closed.

The Delegate or their appointed representative<sup>20</sup> will determine whether a late application will be accepted. The decision of the delegate will be final and not be subject to a review or appeals process.

Once the outcome is determined, the Community Grants Hub will advise you if the application is accepted or declined.

### Expected timing for this grant opportunity

If you are successful, your activity will start around July 2024.

Activity	Timeframe
Application period	Open: 16 January 2024 Close: 9:00 pm AEDT on 29 February 2024
Assessment of applications	Within 5 weeks from the closing date
Approval of outcomes of selection process	Within 11 weeks from the closing date
Notification of outcomes to applicants	Within 13 weeks from the closing date
Negotiations and award of grant agreements	Within 19 weeks from the closing date
Earliest start date of grant activity	July 2024
End date of grant activity	30 June 2025

## 6.4 Questions during the application process

If you have any questions during the application period, contact the Community Grants Hub on 1800 020 283 (option 1) or email [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au).

The Community Grants Hub will respond to emailed questions within 5 working days. Answers to questions are posted on [GrantConnect](#).

The question period will close at 5:00 pm AEDT on 22 February 2024. Following this time, only questions about using and/or submitting the application form will be answered.

## 7 The grant selection process

### 7.1 Assessment of grant applications

We will review your application against the eligibility criteria. Only eligible and compliant applications will move to the next stage (the grant calculation referred to in section 7.2).

There is one BEST funding round each year. Grants are not guaranteed in any year. An ESO should not consider that any funding received is ongoing or indicates a likely outcome for subsequent applications. All applicants must reapply for funding in each funding round.

The grant amount offered to each eligible applicant will be calculated using a formula, which has been determined in conjunction with the ESO community, through the ESO Round Table (ESORT).

This formula is applied uniformly to all eligible applicants. As long as an organisation meets eligibility, their application will be included in the calculation and considered for funding.

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<sup>20</sup> This may be the Department of Veterans' Affairs Delegate or nominated staff member at the EL2 level or above.

The formula takes into account:

- the amount of salary and administrative grant funding requested for the upcoming activity period
- compensation and wellbeing workload information for the previous calendar year provided in the completed grant application
- the total amount of funding available for the grant funding round
- the total number of eligible applicants.

## **7.2 Grant calculation**

The grant amount offered to eligible applicants is calculated based on:

- an applicant's requested grant amount and workload information provided in the completed grant application
- the total amount of funding available
- the BEST grant calculation formula.

A review of each organisation's workload and wellbeing hours will be conducted by DVA based on the number of qualified advocates and wellbeing support officers at the ESO and the reported workload. Grant offers are determined by applying the grant calculation formula to each applicant's workload statistics.

The formula calculates each organisation's workload as a percentage of the work undertaken nationally in the previous calendar year. This percentage is then applied to the available BEST monies to calculate each eligible applicant's grant offer. It is not possible for a grant to exceed the funding amount requested by each applicant.

As the formula is based on workload, it provides a transparent, equitable, and repeatable way to calculate grants. Applicants must meet a minimum workload calculated through the formula to be offered a BEST grant. The workload formula and how it is applied is explained in detail at Appendix B.

## **7.3 Who will assess and select applications?**

Once eligibility checks have been undertaken, we will apply the grant funding formula to each eligible and compliant application. The outcome of the calculations will inform the deliberations of the DVA Grants Advisory Committee.

The DVA Grants Advisory Committee, comprised of senior DVA staff, will review the composition of applicants and formula outcomes and will make final recommendations to the decision maker. The DVA Grants Advisory Committee may seek additional information about the applicant or application, which may delay completion of the selection process. This may be done from within the Commonwealth, even if the sources are not nominated by you as referees. The DVA Grants Advisory Committee may also consider information about you or your application that is available through the normal course of business.

The DVA Grants Advisory Committee will make recommendations with regard to the:

- overall objectives for the program
- conformance with eligibility criteria
- outcome of the grant calculation formula.

The DVA Grants Advisory Committee recommends to the decision maker which applications to approve for a grant.

#### 7.4 Who will approve grants?

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs or authorised representative (the decision maker) decides which grants to approve, taking into account the recommendations of the DVA Grants Advisory Committee and the availability of grant funds for the purposes of the grant program.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including the:

- approval of the grant
- grant funding amount to be awarded
- terms and conditions of the grant.

**Please Note:** There is no appeal mechanism for decisions to approve or not approve a grant.

The grant funding requested is often greater than what is available. The formula at Appendix B ensures that all applicants and their requested funding are treated equitably and that distribution is based on each organisation's eligible expenses and percentage of the national workload.

## 8 Notification of application outcomes

We will write to you about the outcome of your application. If you are successful, you will be advised of any specific conditions attached to the grant.

### 8.1 Feedback on your application

A general feedback summary will be published on the Community Grants Hub website to provide all organisations with easy to access to information about the grant selection process and the main strengths and areas for improving applications.

Individual feedback will be available if requested by the applicant. The process for requesting individual feedback will be included in the general feedback summary.

## 9 Successful grant applications

### 9.1 The grant agreement

We have introduced streamlined grant agreements and grantee obligations to reduce the administrative impost on grantees.

You must enter into a legally binding grant agreement with the Commonwealth. We will offer successful applicants a Letter of Agreement or a Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement for this grant opportunity.

We use 2 types of grant agreements for this grant opportunity. The type of agreement offered will depend on the approved funding amount and associated risks.

A Letter of Agreement will be offered to successful applicants for grants of \$50,000 and under, except for high risk organisations and activities that include indirect or less-than incidental contact with children.

A Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement will be offered to successful applicants:

- for grants of more than \$50,000
- if the activity involves indirect or less-than incidental contact with children
- for high-risk organisations.

Each agreement has grant conditions that cannot be changed. Sample grant agreements are available on [GrantConnect](#) as part of the grant documentation. We will use a schedule to outline the specific grant requirements.

We must execute a grant agreement with you before we can make any payments. We are not responsible for any of your expenditure until a grant agreement is executed.

Your grant agreement may have specific conditions determined by the assessment process or other considerations made by the decision maker. These are identified in the agreement.

We may manage the grant agreement through our Grant Recipient Portal. Accepting the agreement through the Grant Recipient Portal is the equivalent of signing a grant agreement. After you have accepted it, we will execute the agreement. Execute means both you and the Commonwealth have entered into the grant agreement. We will notify you when this happens and a copy of the executed agreement will be available through the portal. The agreement will not become binding until it is executed.

The Commonwealth may recover grant funds if there is a breach of the grant agreement.

### **Letter of Agreement**

We may send you a Letter of Agreement and the corresponding grant conditions providing you with an offer. You accept the offer by signing and returning the Letter of Agreement to us within 10 business days from the date of a written offer (as stipulated in the grant agreement). The grant agreement is not considered to be executed until both you and the Commonwealth have signed the grant agreement.

### **Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement**

Alternatively, we may send you a Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement and the corresponding grant conditions and supplementary terms providing you with an offer. You accept the offer by signing and returning the Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement to us within 10 business days from the date of a written offer (as stipulated in the grant agreement). The grant agreement is not considered to be executed until both you and the Commonwealth have signed the grant agreement.

The offer may lapse if both parties do not sign the grant agreement within this time. Under certain circumstances, we may extend this period. We base the approval of your grant on the information you provide in your application.

The grant agreement will also note that:

- funds cannot be used for purposes other than those specified in the agreement
- unspent funds must be returned to DVA within a reasonable time and in line with the set acquittal period for expending grant funds
- you must ensure that all advocates have professional indemnity insurance available through the Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association Inc. (VITA), or a similar insurance provider

**Please Note:** In 2017, VITA advised their members they cannot provide professional indemnity insurance cover beyond 31 December 2021 for TIP-trained advocates who have not gained an equivalent ATDP qualification.

- the grantee should ensure that advocates in its organisation and organisations it may be sponsoring will:
  - undertake and maintain the appropriate ATDP qualification
  - abide by the ATDP Code of Conduct
- DVA may request information from you regarding advocates providing services for your organisation.

## 9.2 Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

The Australian Government has a commitment to effectively support cultural change in Australian workplaces and drive improved gender equality outcomes. Requirements have been implemented for fairer and more consistent measures to ensure the Government only deals with organisations who comply with the [Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012](#)<sup>21</sup> (the WGE Act).

Applicants may need to satisfy a requirement to be compliant with the WGE Act.

- Applicants with 100 or more employees who are registered with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) and have been issued with a compliance letter are eligible to apply for a grant.
- Applicants with 100 or more employees who are **not** registered with WGEA will need to register to be issued with a compliance letter prior to applying for a grant.
- Applicants with less than 100 employees across their entire structure are not required to submit a report to WGEA; however, you are required to complete the registration form on the login page of the [WGEA Portal](#)<sup>22</sup>. WGEA will use the details provided in the registration form to issue your organisation with a tender letter, which must be attained prior to applying for a grant.

For your grant application to be deemed compliant:

- your organisation must not be included on the WGEA website on the non-compliant list or
- you must be able to provide your compliance or tender letter to the Community Grants Hub when requested.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00095>

<sup>22</sup> <https://client-portal.wgea.gov.au/s/>

If you are unable to provide your compliance or tender letter and appear on the non-compliant list, you will be deemed non-compliant and withdrawn from the grant process. DVA will not enter into any agreements with applicants who are non-compliant under the WGE Act.

More information regarding reporting requirements can be found at the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency website](#)<sup>23</sup>.

### **9.3 Commonwealth Child Safe Framework**

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlighted the need for organisations to adopt child safe practices including appropriate screening of staff, mandatory reporting and adoption of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The Australian Government committed to a new Commonwealth-wide framework to protect children and young people it is responsible for – the [Commonwealth Child Safe Framework](#)<sup>24</sup> (CCSF).

A child safety clause will be included in a grant agreement where the Commonwealth considers the grant is for:

- services directly to children
- activities that involve contact with children that is a usual part of, and more than incidental to, the grant activity.

A child safety clause will also be included in the grant agreement if the Commonwealth considers the grant activity involves children more broadly.

The successful applicant will be required to comply with all child safety obligations included in the grant agreement published with this grant opportunity or notified to the successful applicant prior to execution of the grant agreement. Irrespective of the child safety obligations in the grant agreement you must always comply with state and territory legislative requirements for working with children and mandatory reporting.

### **9.4 Indigenous organisation type classifications**

All Australian governments are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their communities, organisations and businesses to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) at the national, state and territory, and local levels. The National Agreement identifies 4 priority areas for reform within government. One of these is Priority Reform 2, building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://help.grants.gov.au/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/what-we-do/lead-commonwealth-child-safe-framework>

To assist government with improving and reporting on the level of community grant funding going to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, changes have been made to the way organisation data is collected. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations will now be classified into 3 tiers and asked to self-identify which group they fall under. The 3 tiers and their definitions are:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled organisation	These are organisations that are incorporated, not for profit, at least 51% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and at least 51% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled (Board members or equivalent).
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Operated and Controlled organisation	These are organisations that are at least 51% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and at least 51% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled (Board members or equivalent).
Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation	These are organisations that are at least 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned OR at least 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled (Board members or equivalent).

## **9.5 Specific legislation, policies and industry standards**

If you are successful, relevant personnel working on the grant activity must maintain Working with Children checks and Working with Vulnerable People registration (if applicable).

Whilst you are required to be compliant with all relevant laws and regulations, you will be asked to demonstrate compliance with the industry standard that all advocates have professional indemnity insurance cover for the grant period. You must declare in your application if you comply with these requirements.

You may be required to demonstrate that you are meeting the 'Service Standards for Claims Advocacy' – see Appendix C. This includes producing appropriate documentation/examples if requested by DVA. Failure to meet these service standards may result in ineligibility to receive BEST funding in subsequent grant funding rounds.

## **9.6 How we pay the grant**

The grant agreement will state the maximum grant amount to be paid.

We will not exceed the maximum grant amount under any circumstances. If you incur extra costs, you must meet them yourself.

The grant agreement will state the timing of the payment.

We will pay 100% of the grant at the start of the grant agreement. You may be required to report how you spent the grant funds.



## 9.7 Grant payments and GST

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) advises that DVA grants are considered a Financial Assistance Payment and so they are not subject to GST. In accordance with that advice:

### Organisations registered for GST

- are required to calculate the GST-exclusive component of the cost of any item or service purchased for their activity.
- provide the final total GST exclusive amount in their grant application
- can claim an input tax credit through their BAS Statement to the ATO, for the GST component of purchased items or services.

### Organisations NOT registered for GST

- are not able to request an input tax credit from the ATO for the GST component of purchased items or services
- are required to provide the final GST inclusive amount in their grant application.

If you have any queries in relation to the transactions you enter into with third parties as a result of a grant received under the BEST program, you may wish to speak with the ATO or your financial advisor about the effect of receiving a grant before you enter into a grant agreement. You can also visit the Australian Taxation Office website for more information.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek assistance from the [Australian Taxation Office](https://www.ato.gov.au/)<sup>25</sup>. We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

**Please Note:** If you are sponsoring an organisation that is registered for GST, provide the GST exclusive amounts for requested expenditure. If you are sponsoring an organisation that is not registered for GST, please provide the GST inclusive amounts.

## 10 Announcement of grants

If successful, your grant will be listed on the [GrantConnect](https://www.best.gov.au/) website no later than 21 calendar days after the date of effect as required by section 5.3 of the [CGRGs](https://www.best.gov.au/).

## 11 How we monitor your grant activity

You must ensure that all BEST funded equipment is:

- used primarily for compensation and/or wellbeing work
- secured in a suitable and safe manner
- configured to ensure the confidentiality of any client information or files stored on or in that equipment
- insured by the grantee
- listed on an equipment register which is available to DVA on request.

After the grant period, any capital equipment purchased under the funding agreement belongs to the ESO. The ESO is responsible for this equipment, any ancillary operational costs, and any ongoing costs or repairs to that equipment.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.ato.gov.au/>

You will also be responsible for:

- meeting the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and managing the activity efficiently and effectively
- complying with record keeping, reporting and acquittal requirements as set out in the grant agreement
- participating in any grant program evaluation where specified in the grant agreement.

## 11.1 Keeping us informed

You should let us know if anything is likely to affect your activity or organisation.

We need to know of any changes to your organisation or its business activities, particularly if they affect your ability to complete your grant, carry on business and pay debts due because of these changes.

You must also inform us of any changes to your:

- name
- addresses
- nominated contact details
- bank account details.

If you become aware of a breach of the terms and conditions under the grant agreement, you must contact us immediately.

## 11.2 Reporting

BEST grants funding may be issued under a Letter of Agreement or a Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement.

### **Other reports – advocate information**

You may be required to provide a report regarding the individuals providing advocacy services for your organisation.

### **Other reports – expenditure report**

You may be required to provide an expenditure report. An expenditure report must include evidence that the amount of the grant received to date has been spent in accordance with the grant project.

### **Final report**

Where we use a Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreement, you must submit a final report at the completion of your grant activity and on the template provided.

Final reports must:

- include evidence of your completion of agreed activities and outcomes
- show the total eligible expenditure incurred to date
- be submitted by the report due date stipulated in your grant agreement
- under a sponsorship arrangement the sponsor must submit a separate final report for each organisation they have sponsored.

You must tell us of any reporting delays with us as soon as you become aware of them.

### **11.3 Financial declaration**

Where we use a Letter of Agreement, we may ask you to provide a financial declaration that the grant money was spent in accordance with the grant agreement and to report on any underspends of the grant money.

Whereas for the Commonwealth Simple Grant Agreements, a financial declaration must be submitted.

Underspent funding must be returned to DVA.

### **11.4 Grant agreement variations**

Any variations offered are very limited. These may include changes to trading names or contact names.

The program does not allow for:

- an increase to the agreed amount of grant funds or changes to the grant period
- reallocations of funding between administration and salary.

As this is a formula-based assessment, any changes to the original funding may disadvantage other organisations.

You should not assume that a variation request will be successful. We will consider your request based on provisions in the grant agreement and the likely impact on achieving outcomes.

### **11.5 Compliance visits**

DVA may visit you during or at the completion of your grant activity to review your compliance with the grant agreement. We will provide you with reasonable notice of any compliance visit.

### **11.6 Record keeping**

DVA may also inspect the records you are required to keep under the grant agreement.

All ESOs that receive BEST funding are required to record and maintain information supporting the details they provide on their application and their use and expenditure of grant funds.

This information must be made available upon request from DVA. It may be required for the purposes of departmental or external audit or evaluation of the BEST program.

The information required will depend on the components of the grant, but may include:

- records detailing the individual compensation claims and wellbeing work referred to on the application form
- evidence of ATDP qualifications
- an Equipment Register for all capital equipment purchases funded under the grant
- a Travel Log for all travel expenses claimed and funded under the grant
- invoices, receipts or other information for capital equipment purchases
- invoices, receipts or other information for any office consumables where the single purchase was \$100 or more
- if salary assistance is provided, evidence of who has been paid, the number of hours worked and in respect of what activities
- any additional information outlined in the grant agreement.

## 11.7 Evaluation

We will evaluate the BEST program to see how well the outcomes and objectives have been achieved. We may use information from your application and reports for this purpose. We may also ask you for more information to help us understand how the grant impacted your organisation and to evaluate how effective the program was in achieving its outcomes.

## 11.8 Acknowledgement

If you make a public statement about a project funded under the program, we require you to acknowledge the grant by using the following:

'This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.'

## 12 Probity

The Australian Government will make sure that the grant opportunity process is fair, according to the published guidelines, incorporates appropriate safeguards against fraud, unlawful activities and other inappropriate conduct and is consistent with the CGRGs.

These guidelines may be changed by DVA. When this happens, the revised guidelines are published on [GrantConnect](#).

### 12.1 Enquiries and feedback

#### Complaints about this grant opportunity

The [DVA Feedback Management Policy](#)<sup>26</sup> applies to complaints about this grant opportunity. All complaints about this grant opportunity, including grant decisions, must be made in writing.

Any questions you have about grant decisions for this grant opportunity should be sent to [support@communitygrants.gov.au](mailto:support@communitygrants.gov.au).

#### Complaints about the selection process

Applicants can contact the complaints service with complaints about the Community Grants Hub's service/s or the selection process.

Details of what makes an eligible complaint can be provided by asking the Community Grants Hub. You can use the [complaints form](#)<sup>27</sup> on the Department of Social Services website, by phone or mail.

Phone: 1800 634 035

Email: [complaints@dss.gov.au](mailto:complaints@dss.gov.au)

Mail: DSS Feedback, Complaints  
GPO Box 9820  
Canberra ACT 2601

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/contact/feedback>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.dss.gov.au/contact/feedback-compliments-complaints-and-enquiries/feedback-form>

## Complaints to the Ombudsman

If you do not agree with the way the Community Grants Hub or DVA has handled your complaint, you may complain to the [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#)<sup>28</sup>. The Ombudsman will not usually look into a complaint unless the matter has first been raised directly with the Community Grants Hub or DVA.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman can be contacted on:

Phone (Toll free): 1300 362 072  
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au)  
Website: [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)

## 12.2 Conflicts of interest

Any conflicts of interest could affect the performance of the grant opportunity or program. There may be a conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, if DVA and the Community Grants Hub staff, any member of a committee or advisor and/or you or any of your personnel has a:

- professional, commercial or personal relationship with a party who is able to influence the application selection process, such as an Australian Government officer
- relationship with or interest in, an organisation, which is likely to interfere with or restrict you from carrying out the proposed activities fairly and independently
- relationship with, or interest in, an organisation from which they will receive personal gain because the organisation receives a grant under the grant program/grant opportunity.

You will be asked to declare, as part of your application, any perceived or existing conflicts of interests or that, to the best of your knowledge, there is no conflict of interest.

If you think there is an actual, apparent, or perceived conflict of interest, you must inform DVA and the Community Grants Hub in writing immediately.

Conflicts of interest for Australian Government staff will be handled as set out in the [Australian Public Service Code of Conduct \(section 13\(7\)\)](#)<sup>29</sup> of the [Public Service Act 1999](#)<sup>30</sup>. Committee members and other officials including the decision maker must also declare any conflicts of interest.

We publish our conflict of interest policy on the [Community Grants Hub](#) website.

## 12.3 Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#)<sup>31</sup> and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/>

<sup>29</sup> [http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/psa1999152/s13.html](http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol_act/psa1999152/s13.html)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A00538>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2023C00347>

The Australian Government may also use and give out information about grant applicants and grantees under this grant opportunity in any other Australian Government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on [GrantConnect](#) as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by DVA would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.

## 12.4 Confidential information

Other than information available in the public domain, you agree not to give out to any person, other than us, any confidential information relating to the grant application and/or agreement, without our prior written approval. The obligation will not be breached where you are required by law, Parliament or a stock exchange to disclose the relevant information or where the relevant information is publicly available (other than through breach of a confidentiality or non-disclosure obligation).

We may at any time, require you to arrange for you, or your employees, agents or subcontractors to give a written undertaking relating to nondisclosure of our confidential information in a form we consider acceptable.

We will keep any information in connection with the grant agreement confidential to the extent that it meets all of the 3 conditions below:

1. you clearly identify the information as confidential and explain why we should treat it as confidential
2. the information is commercially sensitive
3. revealing the information would cause unreasonable harm to you or someone else.

We will not be in breach of any confidentiality agreement if the information is disclosed to:

- the DVA Grants Advisory Committee and other Commonwealth employees and contractors to help us manage the program effectively
- employees and contractors of our department so we can research, assess, monitor and analyse our programs and activities
- employees and contractors of other Commonwealth agencies for any purposes, including government administration, research or service delivery
- other Commonwealth, state, territory or local government agencies in program reports and consultations
- the Auditor-General, Ombudsman or Privacy Commissioner
- the responsible Minister or Parliamentary Secretary
- a House or a Committee of the Australian Parliament.

The grant agreement may also include any specific requirements about special categories of information collected, created or held under the grant agreement.

## 12.5 Freedom of information

All documents that the Australian Government has, including those about this grant opportunity, are subject to the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#)<sup>32</sup> (FOI Act).

The purpose of the FOI Act is to give people the ability to get information held by the Australian Government and its organisations. Under the FOI Act, people can ask for documents the Australian Government has. People may not be able to get these documents if these documents need to protect essential public interests and private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom the information relates.

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All Freedom of Information requests must be referred to the Freedom of Information Coordinator in writing.

By mail:           Freedom of Information Team  
                      Government and Executive Services Branch  
                      Department of Social Services (DSS)  
                      GPO Box 9820  
                      Canberra ACT 2601

By email:         [foi@dss.gov.au](mailto:foi@dss.gov.au)

## 13 Consultation

The formula is reviewed on a regular basis in conjunction with relevant stakeholders through the ESO Round Table to ensure that the funding provided continues to meet the needs of ESOs and the veteran and defence communities as well as aligning with overall government objectives.

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A02562>

## 14 Glossary

Term	Definition
AAT	<p>Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).</p> <p>The AAT is an independent review body with power to review all VRB decisions relating to claims determined under the <a href="#">MRCA</a><sup>33</sup> and the VEA. The AAT can also review reconsideration decisions made by delegates of the MRCC under the <a href="#">DRCA</a><sup>34</sup> and the MRCA and certain Repatriation Commission decisions relating to service pension and specific veterans' allowances.</p>
accountable authority	<p>See subsection 12(2) of the <a href="#">Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013</a><sup>35</sup>.</p>
administering entity	<p>When an entity that is not responsible for the policy, is responsible for the administration of part or all of the grant administration process.</p>
AFI	<p>Veterans' Entitlements Act (VEA) 1986 – Application For Increase.</p>
ATDP	<p>Advocacy Training and Development Program.</p> <p>It provides training in Military Advocacy, for members of Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) which offer advocacy services to serving and ex-serving members of the armed forces and their dependants.</p>
ATDP training or qualification levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CL1 – Compensation Advocate Level 1 Can complete a primary claim under any of the Acts while under the supervision of a more experienced advocate</li> <li>▪ CL2 – Compensation Advocate Level 2 Can assist a veteran (with minimal supervision) with a primary claim under any of the Acts and analyse a decision and determine whether an appeal may be warranted.</li> <li>▪ CL3 – Compensation Advocate Level 3 Can prepare and present a merits review in relation to compensation and entitlement decisions</li> <li>▪ CL4 – Compensation Advocate Level 4.</li> </ul>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/financial-support/compensation-claims/claims-if-you-were-injured-after-30-june-2004/who-can-claim-under-mrca>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/get-support/financial-support/compensation-claims/claims-if-you-were-injured-1-july-2004/drca/who-can-claim-under-drca>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2013A00123/latest/text>



Term	Definition
	<p>Can submit and present an appeal, under the VEA, DCRA or MRCA, before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ WL1 – Wellbeing Advocate Level 1 Can assist in obtaining the services a veteran or dependants might have an entitlement to.</li> <li>▪ WL2 – Wellbeing Advocate Level 2 Can assist with connected veterans and families with services to improve their daily lives.</li> </ul>
commencement date	the expected start date for the grant activity.
Commonwealth entity	a Department of State, or a Parliamentary Department, or a listed entity or a body corporate established by a law of the Commonwealth. See subsections 10(1) and (2) of the PGPA Act.
<a href="#"><u>Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines (CGRGs)</u></a>	establish the overarching Commonwealth grants policy framework and articulate the expectations for all non-corporate Commonwealth entities in relation to grants administration. Under this overarching framework, non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertake grants administration based on the mandatory requirements and key principles of grants administration.
completion date	the expected date that the grant activity must be completed and the grant spent by.
date of effect	can be the date on which a grant agreement is signed or a specified starting date. Where there is no grant agreement, entities must publish information on individual grants as soon as practicable.
decision maker	the person who makes a decision to award a grant
DRCA	<i>Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988</i> (DRCA)
DVA Grants Advisory Committee	provides strategic oversight, advice and recommendations to the decision maker on assessed applications from the program specific, service provider composition and service location perspectives.
eligibility criteria	refer to the mandatory criteria which must be met to qualify for a grant.
ESO	<p>For the purposes of BEST grants, an ESO is considered to be an organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ whose membership consists primarily of Australian veterans, past and present members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and/or their dependants</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ which is established primarily to provide pensions, advocacy and/or wellbeing assistance to Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants</li> <li>▪ which does not operate as a business or charge any fee for acting on behalf of the Australian veterans, past and present members of the ADF and/or their dependants in the provision of claims or wellbeing services.</li> </ul>
ESO Advocate	Refers to both ATDP qualified Military Compensation and Wellbeing Advocates.
ESORT	<p>Ex-Service Organisation Round Table.</p> <p>This forum comprises senior representatives of the Repatriation Commission, Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission and ESOs. The forum is intended to enhance the capacity of the Commissions to address issues of strategic importance to the ex-service and defence communities and assist in setting strategic directions for the medium to long term.</p>
Funding Arrangement Manager	is the officer responsible for the ongoing management of the grantee and their compliance with the grant agreement.
grant	<p>for the purposes of the CGRGs, a 'grant' is an arrangement for the provision of financial assistance by the Commonwealth or on behalf of the Commonwealth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. under which relevant money<sup>36</sup> or other <a href="#">Consolidated Revenue Fund</a> (CRF) money<sup>37</sup> is to be paid to a grantee other than the Commonwealth</li> <li>b. which is intended to help address one or more of the Australian Government's policy outcomes while assisting the grantee achieve its objectives.</li> </ol>
grant activity/activities	refers to the project/tasks/services that the grantee is required to undertake.
grant agreement	sets out the relationship between the parties to the agreement, and specifies the details of the grant.
grant opportunity	refers to the specific grant round or process where a Commonwealth grant is made available to potential grantees. Grant opportunities may be open or targeted, and will reflect the relevant grant selection process.
grant program	a 'program' carries its natural meaning and is intended to cover a potentially wide range of related activities aimed at

<sup>36</sup> Relevant money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 8, Dictionary.

<sup>37</sup> Other CRF money is defined in the PGPA Act. See section 105, Rules in relation to other CRF money.

Term	Definition
	achieving government policy outcomes. A grant program is a group of one or more grant opportunities under a single Department of Veterans' Affairs Portfolio Budget Statement Program.
<a href="#">GrantConnect</a>	is the Australian Government's whole-of-government grants information system, which centralises the publication and reporting of Commonwealth grants in accordance with the CGRGs.
grantee	the individual/organisation which has been selected to receive a grant.
MRCA	<i>Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004</i> (MRCA).
National Redress legislation	means the <a href="#">National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act 2018</a> <sup>38</sup>
Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) Program	described within the entity's <a href="#">Portfolio Budget Statement</a> <sup>39</sup> , PBS programs each link to a single outcome and provide transparency for funding decisions. These high-level PBS programs often comprise a number of lower level, more publicly recognised programs, some of which will be grant programs. A PBS program may have more than one grant program associated with it, and each of these may have one or more grant opportunities.
primary determining level	Initial or primary claims for service related illness or injury.
selection process	the method used to select potential grantees. A comparative analysis is made of all eligible applications and grant offers determined by applying the grant calculation formula to each applicant's workload statistics.
sponsor	the sponsor is the organisation who will submit the application on behalf of the sponsored organisation. For the purposes of BEST grants, this organisation must be an ESO and have an eligible entity type. Both the sponsored organisation and the sponsor must sign the Letter of Declaration included with the grant opportunity documentation.
sponsored organisation	the organisation that is being sponsored. For the purposes of BEST grants, this organisation must be an ESO.  Note: a sponsored organisation cannot submit the application in their own right. The application must be submitted by the sponsor. Both the sponsored organisation

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2021C00567>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.dva.gov.au/about/accessing-information/what-can-i-access/corporate-information-access/budgets/budget-2023-24>

Term	Definition
	and the sponsor must sign the Letter of Declaration included with the grant opportunity documentation.
TIP	<p>Training and Information Program (no longer supported for the purposes of BEST).</p> <p>TIP provided training for compensation and wellbeing advocates, TIP was replaced by ATDP on 1 July 2016.</p> <p>Note: TIP trained advocates are no longer able to have their workload included in the calculation of BEST grants.</p>
value with money	<p>refers to ‘value with relevant money’ which is a judgement based on the grant proposal representing an efficient, effective, economical and ethical use of public resources and determined from a variety of considerations.</p> <p>When administering a grant opportunity, an official should consider the relevant financial and non-financial costs and benefits of each proposal including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the quality of the project proposal and activities</li> <li>▪ fitness for purpose of the proposal in contributing to government objectives</li> <li>▪ that the absence of a grant is likely to prevent the grantee and government’s outcomes being achieved and</li> <li>▪ the potential grantee’s relevant experience and performance history.</li> </ul>
VEA	<i>Veterans’ Entitlements Act 1986</i>
VITA	<p>Veterans’ Indemnity and Training Association Inc.</p> <p>VITA provides access to professional indemnity insurance at an affordable cost for members of ex-service organisations (ESOs) and incorporated groups who provide advice and advocacy services to members of the ex-service community about government pensions, benefits and community support services.</p>
VRB	<p>Veterans Review Board.</p> <p>The VRB is a tribunal created by Parliament to review decisions about disability pensions, war widow(er)’s pensions, and attendant allowance under the VEA rehabilitation, compensation and other benefits under the MRCA.</p>

## Appendix A: Summary of eligible and ineligible BEST expenses

### Salary expenses

Eligible salary expenses include the base salary, superannuation, leave entitlements, and redundancy payments for:

- Administrative Assistants – Primarily responsible for the provision of support for compensation advocates
- Compensation Advocates – may also be known as Pension Officer, Case Officer or Advocate.

### Equipment and administration expenses

Two categories of administrative expenses are eligible for grants. These categories, and examples of items which fall within these categories, are listed below.

All requested items must clearly address the program objectives in order to be considered eligible for funding. Where an expense could be attributed to both advocacy and other activities, the expense should be calculated on a pro-rata basis, for example, if 20% of your phone bill used for advocacy, you should only claim only 20% of the expense.

#### Equipment expenses

Computer equipment related to compensation and wellbeing advocacy work:

- desktop, laptop (each with 3 year warranty), DVD burner, printers and printer supplies, tablets, Multi-Function Device (MFD), fax machine, scanner, surge protector, computer network equipment, televisions/monitors.

Computer software:

- anti-virus and security software annual licence, Microsoft Version Upgrades, application tools (for example, MS Office), Client management system subscription fees.

**Please Note:** ESOs are entitled to purchase versions of software with support included.

Office equipment and office furniture:

- filing cabinet, desk and chair, meeting table, visitor chairs, bookcase.

Reference material:

- related reference books and medical information that is available via print and online (for example, MIMS).

#### Administration expenses

Internet infrastructure:

- based on network setup, number of stand-alone PCs, laptops, wireless for laptops being used remotely and modems.

Internet access:

- establishment fees and ongoing access costs including cloud storage subscriptions.

Office supplies:

- general stationery, postage, paper, toner, ink, folders, cleaning products, hard drives, memory sticks and brochure holder.

Telephone costs:

- landline and mobile phone calls related to the provision of compensation and wellbeing services.

Travel:

- reimbursement for domestic travel, for any of the following reasons:
  - for compensation advocacy work, to assist veterans with their DVA claims away from the office.  
**Please Note:** Travel to and from home to the ESO office is personal travel and is an ineligible administrative expense
  - travel to nearby VRB and AAT hearings
  - for wellbeing advocacy and support, an example of eligible travel is when a wellbeing advocate travels from their workplace to visit a veteran in hospital, an aged care facility or in their home.
  - travel associated with a trainee attending their mentor's workplace for the purpose of compensation claims work
  - travel to compulsory ATDP training courses, where it is not possible for advocates to attend training online, by video, or in the local region
  - travel should be calculated at the rate of 41.8 cents per kilometre when advocates use their own motor vehicles.  
**Please Note:** any personal travel (including personal travel that may encompass purposes for which the grant is sought) is not eligible. A travel log detailing the kilometres travelled, purpose of journey, date(s) of travel and attributed costs for each journey will be required.

Training:

- nationally accredited training that directly supports the provision of compensation or wellbeing advocacy for veterans and/or their families such as record keeping training, first aid and mental health courses.

### **Ineligible items**

You cannot use the grant for the following:

- utility costs covering electricity, gas, water, and so on
- the cost of leasing premises (including rent) or purchase of real property
- council rates
- office expenses and fees including insurance, advertising expenses, accounting fees, audit fees and bank fees
- legal consultation costs, including litigation
- functions such as commemorative and social activities
- meals, gifts, flowers or prizes
- air conditioning units, or refrigerators
- accommodation associated with travel
- attendance at conferences
- training courses that are not primarily supporting the provision of advocacy or wellbeing support

any administrative, equipment or training expense not primarily attributable to the provision of compensation advocacy, or wellbeing support.

Ineligible salary expenses include:

- salaries for wellbeing advocates and support officers
- salary related payments/expenses, including:
  - Honoraria/Volunteer Expenses
  - Work Cover.

## Appendix B: Explanation of the BEST grant calculation formula

### Summary of the funding formula used to calculate grants

A formula is used to calculate BEST grants. The formula is based on the compensation and wellbeing work that an organisation has undertaken in the most recent calendar year. The formula has been developed to provide a more transparent, equitable, and repeatable way to calculate grants.

In consultation with the ex-service community, this formula is reviewed following each funding round to ensure that it most effectively meet the aims and objectives of the ESO community and the BEST program.

### Principles underpinning the formula

Each applicant's recommended grant is based on the volume and complexity of the work it has done as a percentage of the total amount of work undertaken nationally by all applicants.

A maximum of 70% of available BEST funds are allocated to meet applications for salary funds, with the remaining 30% allocated to claims for administrative funds.

An organisation's entire contribution to assisting the veteran community is recognised by taking into account the work done by both paid and volunteer officers.

Grants to support salary are only available for advocates providing, and admin officers supporting, compensation advocacy. Only workload directly related to claims and appeals will be used in the calculation of these salary grants.

Grants for administrative costs (computer equipment, travel costs, and so on.) will be available for items supporting both compensation AND wellbeing work. Grants for these items will therefore be calculated based on an organisation's compensation AND wellbeing workload.

The supplementary administrative funding pool has been removed with the \$200,000 allocation being returned to the standard Salary and Admin funding pools.

Regardless of workload, an organisation cannot receive a grant in excess of the amount requested for either salary or administrative costs.

### Workload ratings

The differences in the complexity of certain types of work, and the variations in the time that needs to be spent on these, is represented by a rating for each relevant type of work. These ratings are as follows:

Type of Work	Workload Rating	Measure type
Wellbeing Hour	0.50	Wellbeing Work
DRCA primary claim	1.0	Compensation Work
VEA primary claim (includes single or multiple conditions)	2.0	
MRCA primary claim (includes single or multiple conditions)	4.0	



Type of Work	Workload Rating	Measure type
Multi-Act claims (must include MRCA and cannot also be counted as a MRCA, DRCA or VEA claim)	5.0	
VEA S31 claim (includes single or multiple conditions)	2.0	
DRCA S62 claims	3.0	
MRCA Internal Reviews	3.0	
VRB/AAT Preparation	3.0	
VRB Appeals	15.0	
AAT Appeals	20.0	
Applications For Increase (AFI)	1.0	

An organisation must undertake at least a minimum amount of work (a workload rating of 30) to be eligible to be offered a grant.

#### Grant calculation

The recommended amount of an organisation's salary and administrative grant is determined by calculating, in the following order:

- separate workload totals for compensation and wellbeing activity for each applicant, by multiplying the amount of each type of work done with the workload rating for that type of work
- a total national workload figure for salaries by combining all the individual compensation workloads and a total national workload for administrative support by adding the total wellbeing workloads to the total compensation workload
- each applicant's percentage of the national total workload for both salaries and administrative support
- the organisation's maximum grant amount by applying this percentage to the available national funds for that grant component (salary or administrative)
- where an organisation has requested less than its maximum grant, excess funds are reallocated across the remaining organisations, this process may need to be repeated a number of times until all funds have been allocated.

## Appendix C: Service Standards for Claims Advocacy

### Key principles underpinning claims advocacy service standards

#### 1. *Responsiveness of claims advocacy services*

The veteran and their family is able to access claims advocacy services quickly and the advocacy process and timeframes are transparent.

#### 2. *Reliability and accuracy of claims advocacy services*

The veteran and their family receives high quality claims advocacy advice and assistance to access services and support from DVA.

#### 3. *Ease of access to claims advocacy services and safety of access*

Claims advocacy is accessible to veterans and their families and safe for them and the ESO advocate.

#### 4. *Management of claims advocacy services*

ESO claims advocacy services are managed effectively and efficiently and veterans and their families are supported by well managed ESOs who are continuing to learn and improve.

### Expectation statement for veterans and families

You are able to access claims advocacy services quickly and easily through a network of Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) who offer high quality services. You are aware of claims advocacy service timeframes and the role of the ESO advocate assisting you. You are able to access claims advocacy services in a safe way (both physically and mentally). The ESO providing assistance to you is well-run and you feel confident in their ability to represent, or assist you, to access services and support from the Department of Veterans' Affairs. You are aware that you are able to provide feedback or make a complaint if you are dissatisfied with the service you receive.

#### 1. Responsiveness of claims advocacy services

Standard	Examples the standard is met (this list is not exhaustive, other examples may demonstrate the standard is met)
<p><b>1.1</b> – The ESO is able to assist a veteran and their family with claims advocacy assistance within a reasonable timeframe of initial request.</p>	<p>The ESO has an internal process that outlines how a veteran claims advocacy request is actioned.</p> <p>The ESO has a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on timeliness of initial contact with the veteran/their family after a request for claims advocacy assistance is received and advocates are aware of KPI.</p> <p>The ESO keeps suitable records and is able to monitor the claims advocacy request and action date.</p>
<p><b>1.2</b> – The ESO will also assess the wellbeing needs of the veteran/their family at the initial request for claims advocacy assistance.</p>	<p>The ESO has an internal process that includes a wellbeing check at initial point of contact.</p>
<p><b>1.3</b> – The ESO keeps the veteran and their family informed throughout the claims advocacy process.</p>	<p>The ESO has an established communication process in place that includes providing copies of documents to claimants and communication at set points.</p>

## 2. Reliability and accuracy of claims advocacy services

Standard	Examples the standard is met (this list is not exhaustive, other examples may demonstrate the standard is met)
<p><b>2.1</b> – The ESO providing claims advocacy services ensures advocates are suitably trained and qualified.</p>	<p>The veteran/their family are aware they can request a copy of the advocates Statement of Attainment confirming their qualification from the Course in Military Advocacy and a current Letter of Authorisation issued by the ESO.</p> <p>The ESO advertises and abides by ATDP Code of Ethics OR an organisation code of ethics that includes practicing at competency level only.</p> <p>The ESO has internal training procedures as well as ATDP.</p>
<p><b>2.2</b> – The ESO submits claims on behalf of the veteran and their family (or assists) that are of a high standard (valid and complete).</p>	<p>The ESO understands the requirements for a claim to be considered valid and complete.</p> <p>The ESO submits claims on behalf of the veteran and their family that are valid and complete.</p> <p>The ESO is using a claim checklist prior to submission.</p>
<p><b>2.3</b> – The ESO submits claims electronically.</p>	<p>The ESO is consistently using MyService or the ESO Portal to submit claims.</p>

What is a '**high standard**' of claim?

A claim that is of a 'high standard' is a claim that contains all the information required by DVA to commence investigating the claim. Claims that are of a high standard are valid and complete.

A **valid claim** is a claim that;

- is for a new condition or benefit (i.e. the veteran does not have the condition accepted already);
- is for a condition or benefit that is not within the review period of an existing decision;
- includes proof of identity information (if required);
- is signed and dated (by the veteran and advocate (if required)); and
- is related to a period of eligible service.

A **complete liability claim** includes;

- a specific diagnosis for the condition claimed;
- medical evidence supporting that diagnosis;
- a contention or attributing statement on how the condition claimed is related to service; and
- all sections of the claim are completed.

### 3. Ease of access to claims advocacy services and safety of access

Standard	Examples the standard is met (this list is not exhaustive, other examples may demonstrate the standard is met)
<p><b>3.1</b> – The ESO is able to offer claims advocacy services to veterans and their families across a range of channels and regardless of location.</p>	<p>The ESO is listed correctly on the Accredited Advocate Register.</p> <p>The ESO has a website listing their services and contact details.</p> <p>The ESO has appropriate equipment and knowledge to offer services face-to-face, over the phone or online.</p> <p>The ESO is assisting veterans via phone and online.</p> <p>The ESO is assisting veterans across a wide geographical reach (i.e. beyond their LGA).</p>
<p><b>3.2</b> – While accessing claims advocacy assistance the veteran and their family are physically and mentally safe.</p>	<p>The ESO offers services in an environment that complies with work health safety requirements and any applicable health standards.</p> <p>The advocate has undertaken appropriate mental health training to assist veterans.</p>
<p><b>3.3</b> – While providing claims advocacy assistance the advocate is physically and mentally safe. This includes the ESO setting and communicating expectations of the advocate role.</p>	<p>The ESO provides advocates with a physical work environment that complies with work health safety requirements and any applicable Government health directives.</p> <p>The ESO supports advocates taking care of their own health first – i.e. caps on numbers of active cases managed and processes to transfer clients to another ESO/advocate if required.</p> <p>The role of the ESO advocate is articulated and communicated to the veteran and their family.</p>

#### 4. Management of claims advocacy services

Standard	Examples the standard is met (this list is not exhaustive, other examples may demonstrate the standard is met)
<p><b>4.1</b> – ESOs have good record keeping-practices that includes recording claims advocacy case notes and numbers of claims/clients assisted.</p>	<p>The ESO has, and is maintaining, an appropriate record management system and can demonstrate the system works i.e. is supported by record keeping policy which includes information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what records are kept</li> <li>• who is responsible for managing records</li> <li>• training on record-keeping practices</li> <li>• handling sensitive and secure records, and</li> <li>• electronic records and back-up procedures</li> </ul> <p>and is able to produce records at DVA's request.</p>
<p><b>4.2</b> – The ESO has professional indemnity insurance.</p>	<p>The ESO has indemnity insurance and ensures the veteran/their family is aware of this and proof can be made available to veteran and their family if requested.</p>
<p><b>4.3</b> – Advocates have the following checks and registrations (if applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with Children</li> <li>• Working with Vulnerable People</li> </ul>	<p>The advocate has completed the relevant checks and the ESO has a record of this.</p>
<p><b>4.4</b> – The ESO participants in, and supports advocates with, continuing professional development.</p>	<p>ESO is part of a community of practice.</p> <p>Advocates have gained points through ATDP CPD program or another approved program.</p>
<p><b>4.5</b> – Veterans and their families are able to provide feedback or make a complaint with the ESO about the service they received. The ESO will take reasonable action to resolve a complaint.</p>	<p>The details of the feedback process are publicly available and a copy provided directly to the veteran/family.</p> <p>The ESO actively seeks feedback at conclusion of action.</p> <p>The ESO has a complaint resolution policy and provides feedback to the complainant on action taken to resolve a complaint.</p>