



Photo by Frank Cowan

“Stand Down” is a military term referring to a chance to achieve a brief respite from combat. Troops assemble in a base camp to receive new clothing, hot food, and a relative degree of safety before returning to the front. Many agencies and organizations that serve veterans experiencing homelessness, including the U.S. Department of Labor’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Services (DOL-VETS), have adapted this approach to serve civilian veterans who are homeless through Stand Down events.

More than 160 organizations across the country partner with local businesses, government agencies, tribal governments, and community- and faith-based service providers to hold Stand Down events in local communities for homeless veterans and their families, allowing them access to needed services and help re-entering the labor force. Each year, DOL-VETS awards Stand Down grants to assist with reintegration of homeless veterans into the labor force through programs that enhance employment and training

Planning a Stand Down

Successful Stand Down events consider the needs of the local community. Stand Down organizers should think about the following during the initial planning stages of the event:

- **Duration:** Stand Down events can be single- or multi-day events, depending on community needs.
- **Audience:** Organizers should consider the size of their homeless veteran population, both sheltered and unsheltered, and the needs of that population, including sub-populations (e.g., women veterans, veteran families, veterans with disabilities).
- **Services:** The services provided at Stand Downs should reflect the needs of participants. Though certain minimum services must be available for homeless veteran participants during a Stand Down (e.g., benefits counseling and access, medical and mental health services, housing assistance referrals, linkages to employment and training programs), many include other services, such as Veteran Court, food, and personal hygiene supplies.
- **Partnerships:** Successful events occur when several local agencies work together to plan, market, host, and operate the Stand Down event. These groups include HVRP grantees, local Department of Veteran Affairs, American Job Centers, Veteran Service Organizations, service providers, and others. It is the comradery and shared mission displayed at Stand Down events that help strengthen the resolve to end veteran homelessness.

Forming a Partnership

There are multiple partners that can provide logistical and staff support, in-kind donations, and other funding streams beyond DOL-VETS funding to help create a well-rounded and robustly funded Stand Down event. Partners can include:

- **Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC):** Your VAMC should be a primary partner for your Stand Down event. VAMCs are typically involved at the local level and can provide screening, staffing, and other hands-on assistance at events. VAMCs also have access to General Services Administration surplus items, and even funding. The [VA website](#) has a list of VA Stand Down points of contact (POCs).
- **American Job Center (AJC):** The AJC, including its veteran services program, should be engaged in Stand Down events. AJCs may offer employment counseling, registration to the AJC, job leads with local employers, and information about job training.
- **Community Colleges:** Colleges may also get involved by offering information about their services and supports for veterans, including academic and job training programs.

Financing Strategy

Federal and private funds are typically used for food items, prepared meals, bottled water, clothing for homeless veterans, sleeping bags, personal hygiene care kits, facility and tent rentals, transportation to and from the Stand Down, event publicity, and other logistical and promotional costs. Additional funding is then used to enhance employment and training opportunities or promote “self-sustainment” for homeless veterans. Soliciting new organizations and engaging prior donors, should be a part of an overall financing strategy.

Funding Through DOL-VETS

DOL-VETS supports local Stand Down events that help homeless veterans attain meaningful civilian employment. Stand Down funding is provided in the form of non-competitive grants that are awarded on a first come, first served basis, until available funding is exhausted. For a Stand Down grant award, applicants must describe a plan that clearly demonstrates how grant funding will be used for homeless veterans only. Although both veterans and non-veterans may participate in Stand Down events, grant funding can only be used to purchase items, including food and meals, for veteran participants who are homeless.

A variety of organizations may apply for these grants, including State and local Workforce Investment Boards, Veterans Service Organizations, local public agencies, tribal governments, and nonprofit organizations, including community and faith-based organizations. These grants do not require matching funds but do encourage applicants to leverage other available resources to maximize the services to veterans and their families participating in Stand Down events. Applicants for DOL-VETS Stand Down grants may request up to \$10,000. From time to time, DOL-VETS may change the process for Stand Down grant applications. Organizers should go directly to the [DOL-VETS Stand Down page](#) for the latest information about applying for a Stand Down grant.

Raising Funds

The money provided by DOL-VETS is typically a large portion of a Stand Down budget, but engaging local partners for direct financing, support, and donations is critical to funding a successful event. Stand Down organizers may secure funding in many ways, including commercial sponsorships, foundation grants, and fundraising events. For example:

- **Fundraising Events:** Some Stand Down sponsors partner with the American Legion or other VSOs to host a fundraising event.
- **In-Kind Donations:** Many Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), faith-based organizations, nonprofits, private entities, philanthropic organizations, and individuals will donate money, time, services, and giveaway products to Stand Down operations.