

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Bidders' Conference Transcript

- [Sarah Chung]: Welcome, everyone. This is the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, or, as we like to call HVRP, Bidders' Conference. We are all so pleased that you could make it with us today. We've got some wonderful topics and slides to go over with you. But first, before we get started, we would like to introduce ourselves. My name is Sarah Chung. I am a coach for the NVTAC team or the National Veterans Technical Assistance Center, and I come from a direct service background. Much like a lot of you, I have worked in a shelter, also as a homeless outreach worker. I also worked at a Continuum of Care in my local county. And at my last position, I was a director at our local United Way, and so I understand on a real level how a lot of you who are service providers feel on a day to day. I'm going to toss it over to my colleagues next to give a brief bio about themselves. I'll hand it over to Steve Dudasik.

- [Steve Dudasik]: Hi, Everyone. Thanks for joining us today. My name is Steve Dudasik. I'm also a coach with the NVTAC team. I'm trained in rehabilitation counseling. I've been in the field a really long time—36 years. Like Sarah mentioned with her experience, I've done a little bit of everything in the field of clinical work: program design and development, grant writing, nonprofit leadership, consulting, and systems design and development. Great to have you all here today and joining us and learning about the HVRP bid. I'll turn it over to my colleague, Jenn Steigerwald.

- [Jenn Steigerwald]: Hey, everyone. I'm Jenn Steigerwald. I'm also a coach on our NVTAC team. Excited to be here with you all today. My background is in homelessness, primarily in the Continuum of Care. I worked locally at the Cincinnati, Hamilton County Continuum of Care, most recently before joining the NVTAC team as the coordinated entry manager. Thank you all for coming today.

- [Sarah]: Thank you, both Steve and Jenn. Appreciate it. We understand on a real level where a lot of you are coming from due to our own experience. A little housekeeping before we start the slides. We will try to get to most of your questions. We understand that there are a lot of people on this call, so before the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is released, please direct any questions that you have that we're not answering today to contact@nvtac.org. We will have that posted at the end of the slideshow. Just wanted to start you out with that.

So, to get started with what NVTAC is exactly, the role of NVTAC and the reason why we exist is to help HVRP grantees through their three-year period of performance to ensure that all grantees are as successful as they can be. As challenges arise, we help you all as grantees to stay ahead of things. We know on a real level as we introduced ourselves with our brief bios; we understand how when you're working at an agency, you're wearing many, many hats, and so that really is our job as NVTAC, free of charge to grantees, to help you get over any difficult challenges or humps, but also to hear the best practices that you are innovatively creating as you go.

We really are here to help you be as successful as you can while utilizing your grant, so we provide technical assistance that is designed to increase the abilities of you as grantees to be successful as you can be. As I said, under the HVRP grant, we will also support you throughout your whole period of performance as challenges might arise so that we can help you resolve them as quickly as possible. We provide not only one-on-one technical assistance; we facilitate peer-to-peer sessions and also help to collect, as I said, those innovative best practices that you were all coming up with all of the time that we would be honored to hear from you so that we can share them.

As we work with grantees, we want to hear your successes. We want to hear your pain points. We want to make sure that you are as successful as possible. We not only provide that technical assistance to you all, but we provide technical expertise to federal staff to assist with policy that is being developed and program oversight and strategic planning for future HVRPs. And so, we're really hearing from you all so that we can make this next process, this next chapter, even more streamlined. We quantify grantees' customer satisfaction, and we share, as I said, promising best practices and lessons learned.

So, HVRP: an overview and program description. HVRP is employment-focused. It's a competitive grant for the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Services or DOL-VETS. Veterans receive the job training and employment services required to reintegrate, to re-enter the workforce successfully. So, it's very employment-focused, but it's the only federal grant to focus exclusively on competitive employment for veterans who are experiencing homelessness.

HVRP has two core objectives. The first objective is to provide services to assist with reintegrating that veteran into the workforce when they have been experiencing homelessness, and the second is to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing veterans who are experiencing homelessness. It's not just helping them to get a job, but it's also making sure that they can keep that job, and then they can be successful within that job through various social services or advocacy. Whatever it takes to help keep that veteran in a successful job that helps them to self-sustain because that really is part of the main goal. HVRP grantees accomplish those objectives through a variety of core services that I'm sure you're all quite familiar with. Of course, having knowledge of the population is very important. Having robust outreach strategies to veterans and acknowledging that some of those harder-to-find veterans should absolutely be a wonderful challenge for you and your team. The assessment and the intake process, and of course, case management resource, navigation, as well as job-driven training and placement, and then very importantly, collaboration with what's going on within your agency. But very importantly as well, what's going on in the community around you? And how can you leverage those services to help the veteran be as successful as possible?

The last part of the HVRP overview is to obtain high-quality career outcomes for veterans experiencing homelessness. I've been a case manager in my day as well, and so you know, as easy as we'd like to tell one of our clients or a veteran, "Hey, you know, Target is hiring over here." It's absolutely best and most important that we hear from the veteran what they would like to do and really help them along their goal setting and their employment path so that they

can be very happy within their position and do well. DOL-VETS encourages applicants to propose strategies to achieve economic opportunities, address historical inequities, and provide equitable access and outcomes to marginalized groups. And so, really, having a plan to target some of those harder-to-find populations. Are you not seeing as many women? Are you not seeing as many LGBTQ veteran folks? How can we create an outreach strategy that will bring them in? Those are the sorts of things that we are looking for and trying to find outcomes for those marginalized groups. DOL-VETS also requires grant recipients to provide an array of client-centered services, those wraparound services that I know that you're already doing aside from employment services. Utilizing case management approaches that directly assist the veterans who are experiencing homelessness and provide critical linkages to a variety of support services available in the local communities, such as housing supports, transportation, all these things that you're already doing to help ensure that your veteran and your clients have that wraparound approach to their care and their success. I'm going to hand it over to my colleague, Jenn, who will do the next section on applicant and veteran eligibility. Thank you, Jenn.

- [Jenn]: Thanks, Sarah. We are going to switch gears a little bit here and talk about applicant eligibility and veteran eligibility.

[Next Slide]: Before we jump into this information, just so you all know, all of this is based on the funding opportunity announcement or FOA from 2022. So last year's FOA. The first thing you'll see here is the type of applicant that is eligible to apply for HVRP. I won't read all of them to you, but just so you can get an idea of the variety of different applicants that can apply for an HVRP program, from organizations like state, county, city, or township governments, 501(c)(3)s, small businesses, faith-based organizations, private institutions of higher education, really a multitude of different types of applicants are eligible to apply for an HVRP. And again, this information is from the FOA from 2022, where all of this is listed, as well.

[Next Slide]: Along those lines, these are the four things that a successful application has to include for HVRP. First, we have SF-424, the "Application for Federal Assistance," which includes the Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI, which is generated from the System for Award Management (SAM) registration. Second, we have the project budget for the first year of funding only, which includes SF-424A and a budget narrative. Third, we have a project narrative, and then fourth, we have attachments to the project narrative.

[Next Slide]: So now we're going to turn it over to the eligibility for veterans to participate in an HVRP. This is like the broad overview of eligibility for HVRP. An individual must meet both the definitions for veteran and homeless, and we'll talk about what those definitions are, and we'll also touch on at risk for homelessness, which is another group of veterans that are eligible to be served in an HVRP.

[Next Slide]: So, these are the categories of HVRP eligibility, and we will go through each one of these. First, veterans who are homeless, as defined by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing—or HEARTH—Act at any time during the 60 days prior to program entry. We'll talk a bit more about that HEARTH Act definition in just a couple of minutes here. Second, veterans who, at program entry, are considered at risk of homelessness within the next 60 days. Also, we'll talk more about the full definition of who's considered to be

at risk in a couple of minutes. Veterans who are participating in the Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)/Tribal HUD-VASH, or Department of Veterans Affairs Supportive Services for Families—or SSVF—Programs; veterans who are receiving assistance under the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996; veterans recently released from incarceration; and last there, we have veterans transitioning from incarceration. So, these all are different categories of HVRP eligibility. And we can go to the next slide.

[Next Slide]: First, we'll start with the full veteran definition. So, this is the definition that DOL-VETS uses when determining if someone is a veteran. VETS considers full-time, active-duty service to include time spent in basic training, regardless of completion, consistent with the program guidance from the Department of Veterans Affairs. For more information on this veteran definition, you could always check the Department of Veterans Affairs' full definition. But these are the eligibility criteria that VETS uses when considering if someone's a veteran.

[Next Slide]: Like I mentioned before, the homeless definition that DOL uses for HVRP is from the HEARTH Act, and we have the next three slides that are the full definition. We won't read you the definition line by line. We just wanted to include it here for your reference. Again, we will be posting these slides and recording after today's session. In short, it's a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, lives in a shelter or a place not meant for human habitation, is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, is at imminent risk (and imminent risk is defined as within 14 days), so they're at imminent risk of losing their housing, or who is homeless in the 60-day period before HVRP enrollment, and who has since found housing. So that's a shorter summary of the full HEARTH Act definition. But again, if you want to read through the full definition, we will provide these slides after today's session.

[Next Slide]: Another population, aside from veterans experiencing homelessness, would be at-risk populations. We'll just go through some of the criteria for someone to be considered at risk. First, we have veterans who are low-income individuals, veterans who are at risk of losing their current housing due to significant changes in family dynamics, so that can be a variety of different things. We have some examples there, like separation, loss of spousal support, or loss of employment. Next, we have veterans referred from a shelter, the VA,¹ or local Continuum of Care—or CoC—provider, welfare, or public assistance recipients. And lastly, we have veterans with an eviction notice from a landlord or an eviction or foreclosure judgment. Any of those criteria would mean someone was considered at risk.

[Next Slide]: So, just some more on what at risk means. First, written documentation of the participant's status in the "at-risk" category is required, and it's preferred that that documentation is from a third-party source. Self-certification of being at risk can be used but should be used in limited or rare circumstances. Next, recently housed veterans and veterans at imminent risk again. That means 14 days or less of homelessness are actually considered homeless—not at risk. So, they would fall under the full HEARTH definition of homelessness, not at risk. That's something that can be confused pretty often. And then last—this one's really important—the number of enrollments for an HVRP for individuals who meet the "at-risk"

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

definition versus the homeless definition can only be 10 percent of planned enrollments unless you already have approval from your Grant Officer's Technical Representative—or GOTR—but the at-risk population can only be 10 percent of those planned enrollments. So that's something that, of course, an HVRP grantee would have to keep an eye on and keep track of.

[Next Slide]: Shifting gears a little away from eligibility, we'll talk about some core services and program implementation of HVRP. This is not all-encompassing of what happens in an HVRP program. But these are just some really important pieces, some core services that are involved in HVRP. First, outreach, recruitment, and engagement. Of course, a critical piece of many different programs, very critical for HVRP. Intake and assessment, employment and job training for veterans that are enrolled in the program, linkages and support services, collaboration with outside programs, and then employer engagement, as well, is critical to network and create an employer network to have more opportunities for the veterans that you're serving.

[Next Slide]: Under the HVRP umbrella, there are three different populations that a program serves. First, we have homeless women veterans and veterans with children; next, incarcerated veterans and veterans recently released from incarceration who are at risk of homelessness; and then also all other veterans who meet the eligibility criteria for homeless or at risk as described in the FOA. So, all veterans who meet those eligibility criteria would be eligible to be served and enrolled in an HVRP. But in addition to that broader population, there are programs that specifically target homeless women, veterans with children, and incarcerated veterans.

[Next Slide]: Last here, just two additional things to keep in mind when you're preparing your application. First, reaching historically marginalized veterans and reaching underserved communities. These are two areas that are very important to HVRP overall, nationwide. So, when preparing your application, HVRP applicants should consider how they will promote equity through their proposed project. That can include outreach strategies that address historical inequities. You should also address how you're going to serve states, communities, and areas that are not currently being served by an HVRP grant. We want to make sure that we're serving as many eligible veterans as possible across communities around the country. So just a couple of additional things to keep in mind when you're thinking about preparing your application.

[Next Slide]: I'm going to turn it over to Steve Dudasik.

- [Steve]: Hi, everyone. This whole talk we're doing today is for folks who are looking to apply and respond to the FOA for HVRP. So, I wanted to talk a little bit about allowable costs with the HVRP program. Applicants must provide a one-year budget of up to \$500,000 that supports the targeted population and the service delivery areas. Additionally, proposed allocations must be proportional to the resources needed to implement the proposed project, and line items in your proposed budget must crosswalk with the proposed project design. During your narrative section of the FOA, as well as the budget analysis, that's what you would have to present. The HVRP FOA; it's a 3-year program, but you provide financial information for your one-year budget of up to \$500,000.

[Next Slide]: When we're looking at allowable costs, certainly you might be familiar with this if you've had federal grants in the past; it's pretty consistent with other federal grants that your

allowable costs certainly would be the personnel salary and fringe benefits. You can have staff travel, but it cannot exceed 10 percent of the one-year budget. You could charge for equipment supplies as well as HVRP participant wages, which would involve on-the-job training and/or transitional jobs, and any other participant support and cost not included elsewhere that you want to include in your budget narrative. With the indirect cost rate, you could utilize either your negotiated indirect cost rate agreement or the de minimis. The de minimis is the standard 10 percent of indirect costs that you're able to charge to this project. If you have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, you're allowed to use that as well, which may or may not be above the de minimis rate.

[Next Slide]: I wanted to talk a little bit about training and employment within HVRP, which you're going to have to discuss in your narrative.

[Next Slide]: Some of the criteria that the grantee or prospective grantee will have to meet is that a minimum of 80 percent of participants must receive one or more job training services through referral or the grantee's direct services. Now, when we're talking about job training services, you can utilize such community-based organizations that you might be partnered with, as well as American Job Centers (AJC) and any other organization or business that might be offering job training, so you would have to describe that you're going to meet that 80 percent criteria of your participants getting a job training service. It's also very important to mention when you're doing the HVRP grant that life skills and financial management do not count towards the 80 percent of the job-training requirement.

[Next Slide]: Here are some job training examples that I alluded to before. That would be on-the-job training, apprenticeships, customized job training, upgrading, retraining, or other work-based learning; occupational skills training provided by the applicant; or a third-party training provider. Another thing to remember when we're talking about job training; it has to be really related to the job market in your locality. So, it has to be related to a viable career within the locality where your HVRP program will take place, and you have to keep that in mind. So, when you're looking at job training, it has to be very much related to the job market in your particular locality.

[Next Slide]: As I just mentioned before, some things to keep in mind: targeting in-demand occupations (and that could be indicated in the Labor Market Information provided in the Statement of Need); placement into an unsubsidized apprenticeship is considered placement into employment, which you always have to keep in mind; job training received by participants can be provided—a few examples there that I listed that I mentioned before: through the AJCs; GI Bill; the VR&E, which is the Veteran Readiness and Employment services offered through VA; state rehab programs; and other training providers. Certainly, it's a really flexible approach to who you could partner with to provide the job training required.

[Next Slide]: In your narrative for the FOA, you must describe how you will develop a formal employment and job training plan based on the individual job training needs assessment for each veteran. So, each veteran that you're going to serve will have an individualized plan developed for them or with them, and you would need to describe in your plan how you would go about that and approaches to help the participant achieve self-sufficiency, including referral to other services or programs. As was mentioned when Sarah was doing the overview of HVRP, it's very

much person-centered, and it involves a lot of wraparound services to help the individual achieve employment success. So, you have to keep that in mind during your narrative portion of your follow-up. Applicants must also indicate how they will manage and document participant progress. So, this evidence must reference research studies, government reports, and the applicant's experience, demonstrating that the strategy yielded positive results in the past. You have to mention how you are skilled in serving this population and how you would be an effective HVRP provider.

[Next Slide]: Now, I want to move over to applying for funding. What would that look like? What are some tips you could consider? And there are some questions we have in the Q&A that we'll get to hopefully at the end to answer any questions you might have during this presentation. I just wanted to make that clear. So, applying for funding. What are some things that need to be considered?

[Next Slide]: As mentioned before, you could apply for a ceiling amount of up to \$500,000 each year, with a total of \$1,500,000 for the three-year period of performance. When a registered applicant submits an application with grants.gov, an electronic time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by grants.gov, so you know that your application was received and that grants.gov has recorded that. That's really good to know that you're not wondering if your grant was received and it was successfully submitted. Separately from HVRP, DOL-VETS also funds Stand Down activities through a separate VETS Stand Down application. So those of you who want to get support for local Stand Down events for veterans, that's through a separate DOL Stand Down application.

[Next Slide]: So, how do you apply? Well, you'll be applying to your FOA through grants.gov. Some tips are to read through the registration process carefully before registering. These steps can take as long as four weeks to complete. So, it's an intensive process. So just keep in mind that you figure out the timeframes in order to get registered. The time should be factored into plans for timely electronic submission in order to avoid unexpected delays that could result in your application being rejected. [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) applicants can apply online using Workspace or through paper applications. Late submissions will not be accepted.

And prior to the FOA being out there and the FOA announcement being made, for all questions regarding this presentation today and any other questions regarding the HVRP bidding process, you could reach out to us directly at contact@nvtac.org. And again, all of these slides and recording will be posted on the nvtac.org website.

[Next Slide]: Let's jump into the questions, and my colleagues and I could go through them and answer the questions that you've posted today. Any other questions that we do not get to, we will answer and also post on the nvtac.org website.

- [Jenn]: Like Steve mentioned, we won't be able to get to all of the questions in the Q&A today. But a couple. We've seen some repeat questions. We'll make sure to hit those.

So a couple of people asked what the FOA or F-O-A is, and that is the Funding Opportunity Announcement, so that is what you will have the opportunity to respond to if you are wanting to apply for HVRP.

Another really great question someone asked is, how do we find out if an HVRP project already exists in our area or community? So on the NVTAC website, nvtac.org, you'll see an option for the [Find A Grantee](#) map, and on that map, you will see every current grantee by state, by the community they serve, around the country so that you'll be able to get a good idea of where HVRP currently is if you check out that map.

Someone asked if the FOA is out yet, and it is not. Again, you will be able to see the FOA when it is released on grants.gov.

Someone asked if we can go back to the slide that has the email for questions. Sarah, can we go back one slide? There we go, and it's the very last bullet: contact@nvtac.org for any questions about today's session or any questions that come up after we end today.

- [Steve]: I'm seeing a question here. I think it's regarding the de minimus rate of 10 percent quarterly or annually, and that would be annually.

- [Jenn]: Another question. A couple of people ask, what is the deadline for the application? That information will all be listed in the FOA once it's released, so that is not available yet.

- [Sarah]: I also see a question in the chat about what Stand Down activities are. Great question. Basically, they're events that are one to three days long that bring all sorts of services for veterans, whether it's housing services, haircuts, case management services, services for mental health resources, services for substance use resources, employment, or health care. A lot of referrals are also there. So, it's a really wonderful event to participate in, as well as to apply for.

- [Steve]: I'm seeing a question here that might clarify the levels or what projects can be funded under HVRP. The question is, can an HVRP project target only one of the eligible populations? For example, have a program only for homeless veterans and women, but not for incarcerated veterans. Within HVRP, there are three specific HVRP programs you could apply for. One is specifically targeting homeless female veterans and veterans with children. One targeted specifically veterans who have been involved in the justice system or incarcerated veterans. The other level of funding is what we might call general HVRP, where you could serve the entire population of veterans in your locality. So, there are three levels or three targets that you could apply for within this grant.

- [Jenn]: And as a reminder, a couple more questions about the recording and slides from today's session rolled in. They will be posted on nvtac.org. You'll be able to access them there, and they'll be under the webinars tab.

So, it looks like we hit all the questions that we are able to respond to. Again, as a reminder, if you have additional questions after today's session, please reach out to us. We are more than happy to get you the answers to whatever questions you have.

We'd like to thank you all for attending today. Again, these slides and recordings will be available on the nvtac.org website. Please reach out to us with any questions, and we hope you have a great rest of your day.

- [Steve]: Thank you, everyone. Thanks for being with us today.