



FY2026 Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program

Notice of Funding Availability Application Guidance Kit

Online Submission Deadline: October 3, 2025 by 3:00 PM

Funded through:

Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families

16 Francis Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
veterans.maryland.gov
(410) 260-3838

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Ed Rothstein, Acting Secretary

ELIGIBILITY

Funding through this solicitation is available to eligible service/support animal and equine therapy organizations to develop, implement, and support programs for eligible veterans and their eligible family members in Maryland.

IMPORTANT LINKS

[FY26 Service Animal Grant Application](#)

[FY26 Service Animal Grant Budget](#)

Purpose

Thank you for applying for a grant from the **FY26 Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program** offered by the **Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families (DVMF)**. The primary purpose of this program is to develop, implement, and support suicide prevention strategies in Maryland through the training and placement of service and support animals with veterans and equine therapy for veterans and their eligible family members. For purposes of this NOFA, eligible family members are defined as the veteran's spouse and the veteran's dependents.

If you need application assistance, please contact:

Toni Gianforti

Grant Specialist, Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program

Toni.gianforti@maryland.gov

The Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families (DVMF) - previously named the Department of Veterans Affairs - is a name change that reflects more comprehensively the Department's **mission of assisting veterans, active duty service members, their families and dependents, in securing benefits earned through military service.**

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I. Eligibility Criteria

Organizations may submit an application under the FY 2026 Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program if they:

- Are Maryland-based;
- Hold tax-exempt status by the IRS as a (501)(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization;
- Are a program certified through ADI (Assistance Dogs International) that trains service or support dogs for use by eligible veterans and their eligible family members; **OR**,
- Are a stable licensed in Maryland that (1) is also a Member Center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH, Intl.) **OR** (2) has Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) certified professionals who provide services to veterans and their eligible family members.

Each organization may submit only **one** application.

Applicants are required to use a data-driven, evidence-based approach and clearly describe how the funds will be used. Applicants must include strategies to address veteran mental health and well-being and explain how outcomes data and follow-up activities will be used to measure success.

II. Program Description

A. Requiring Agency

Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families (DVMF)

B. Opportunity Title

FY 2026 Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program

C. Submission Date

October 3, 2025 by 3:00 PM

D. Award Date

October 27, 2025

E. Anticipated Period of Performance

January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2026

F. Funding Opportunity Description

The Maryland Department of Veterans & Military Families anticipates the availability of \$111,000 for the FY 2026 Maryland Veterans Service Animal Grant Program. The minimum amount an applicant should request is \$5,000 and the maximum amount is \$12,000. The grant award period will be for one year.

Please note: Applications that do not meet the minimum range or those that exceed the maximum award allocation noted above are subject to removal from consideration during the initial technical review.

The Maryland Veteran Service Animal Program refers eligible veterans who inquire about service or support animals or equine therapy to nonprofit organizations who provide these services. The program provides additional funding mechanisms to assist organizations who train service or support animals for veterans and who provide equine therapy to veterans and their eligible family members. See [Senate Bill 182](#).

At the discretion of the Governor of the State of Maryland, funding is provided to the Maryland Veteran Service Animal Program and Fund to award discretionary grants to organizations who train service and support animals for veterans and who provide equine therapy to veterans and their eligible dependents. Successful applicants must detail within their application (1) how the grant will increase opportunities for veterans to receive professionally trained service or support animals, or (2) receive equine therapy for veterans, or (3) receive equine therapy for veterans and their eligible family members. The overriding purpose of this funding opportunity is to reduce the veteran suicide rate in Maryland. The DVMF recognizes, with the passage of SB182, the importance of including military families in equine therapeutic activities as essential in helping veterans achieve better mental health and overall well-being.

Interested 501(c)(3) organizations should address at least one of the four following NOFA priorities in their application for funding:

- Provide service and support animals or equine therapy to veterans with disabilities - and eligible family members - in geographic regions where limited opportunities are available for this population;

- Provide in-person training to staff, volunteers, and community partners on (1) military cultural competency, (2) suicide prevention, and (3) veteran mental health and well-being;
- Include veteran suicide prevention and mental health subject matter experts in program planning; and
- Establish staff certification opportunities to increase qualified personnel in their organization to train service and support animals or provide equine therapy opportunities for veterans and their eligible family members.

III. Program Requirements

The following core elements must be addressed within the Program application narrative:

1. **Collaborative Partnerships** – Collaborative partnerships are **not** those that provide referrals to your program. Collaborative partnerships are those that are integral, in some capacity, to the implementation and outcomes of your program. A successful application should also include evidence of one or more current or proposed working partnerships with one or more of the following:

- Local community organizations. An example of a local community partnership could be programmatic planning/events/activities with a local library, church or community center, veteran service centers, etc.
- Government/Nonprofit/Local Community Leaders. Local, state, federal and/or neighborhood leaders, health care providers, etc. that provide, in their unique capacity, programmatic planning/events/activities.
- Research entities. Either from within the US Department of Veterans Affairs, the healthcare industry or through an academic institution, will help applicants identify trends, develop targeted strategies, and measure the effectiveness of their program.

Note: Applicants will be asked to provide with their application evidence of established partnerships or, if not yet established, evidence of intent to do so under the priorities/objectives of this NOFA. Current, signed letters on partners' letterhead, clearly stating the nature of their relationship to the applicant, will satisfy this requirement.

2. **Statement of Need/Purpose of Request**

Describe the extent of the problem in your community or service area with regard to veteran and military families' mental health issues and well-being (e.g., incidence/prevalence of post-traumatic stress, military sexual trauma, combat-related trauma, traumatic brain injury, and physical disability). Address current gaps in service

that exist and how your program will help narrow or close that gap with NOFA funds. Provide back-up data - perhaps in consultation with one or more of your partners - to support your Statement of Need.

3. **Objectives**

Applicants should identify how they will accomplish at least one of the bulleted priorities noted in Section II. Program Description, F. Funding Opportunity Description. Using the bullets below as examples, applicants' objectives should state how they would:

- Enable veterans to receive professionally trained service canines, or provide equine therapy sessions to veterans and eligible family members, to effectively and sustainably improve mental health and overall well-being and reduce risk of veteran suicide.
- Establish a research/evaluation component to be integrated into program operations, if one does not already exist;
- Foster effective and consistent collaborations with the DVMF, external organizations, and the communities they serve, in order to increase awareness of the applicant's program, as well as improve mental health, overall well-being and reduce risk of suicide among veterans.

When identifying objectives, **briefly describe the activities to be performed to achieve the objectives**. For example, "We will provide 200 equine therapy sessions for veterans and their eligible family members. Sessions will be led by two PATH-certified instructors during three one-hour sessions per week. Each participant will complete an initial assessment questionnaire before participating in our program, and will be evaluated again at the conclusion of their participation using (insert your specific) evaluation measurement tool."

4. **Anticipated Metrics**

In order to ensure accountability for an award issued under this NOFA, the DVMF requires that grantees report on metrics (numbers). The metrics are noted below. In the application, applicants should state the number they hope to achieve in each category, where applicable. Please note that numbers of veterans and eligible family members served should be an unduplicated count:

- Number of veterans to be served;
- Number of eligible family members to be served;
- Number of canines to be trained for placement with Maryland veterans;
- Number of canines to be placed with Maryland veterans;

- Number of individual equine-assisted therapy sessions to be provided with veterans/eligible family members;
- Number of group equine-assisted therapy sessions to be provided with veterans/eligible family members;
- Number of outreach and education activities targeted at local government, other nonprofit organizations, civic groups, etc. to increase community knowledge regarding suicide prevention and military cultural competency;
- Number of staff who will obtain PATH certifications;
- Number of staff who will obtain EAGALA certifications;
- Number of anticipated new staff/volunteers providing direct service to veterans and eligible family members who will complete the training modules itemized below on the PsychArmor website - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/collections>

The Basics of Military Culture
 Fifteen Things Veterans Want You To Know
 Women Veterans Series
 VA S.A.V.E.

4. Outcomes

The DVMF wants to know if an applicant's objectives and activities demonstrably improve the quality of life for veterans served through a grant award by improving veteran health/mental health, overall well-being, and reducing their risk of suicide. In this section, identify tools you will use to evaluate your program participants' pre- and post-status in terms of your program's impact (e.g., records, surveys, interviews, pre- and post-tests, follow-up contacts, community feedback, etc.). Outcome results must also include eligible veteran family members, if applicable.

DVMF suggests applicants use either the PHQ-9 (Patient Depression Questionnaire) [Patient Health Questionnaire-9 \(PHQ-9\) - Mental Health Screening - National HIV Curriculum](#), or the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL 12) [Interpersonal Support Evaluation List \(ISEL-12\) | Coordinated Assistance Network](#) as evaluation tools.

In the event you are partnering with another organization to gather and assess outcomes for the grant, please provide the entity conducting the evaluation and their scope of work. If you use other evaluative tools, please attach an example of the survey to your grant application.

5. Deliverables

- Online grant submission: October 3, 2025 By 3:00 PM.
- Interim Grant Report: July 17, 2026 By 3:00 PM.
- Final Report: January 31, 2027 By 3:00 PM

IV. Reporting Requirements

Grantees must develop a plan for training service and support animals or providing equine therapy in a manner consistent with evidence-based best practices. This plan must articulate how the applicant plans to meet the requirements above. The DVMF requires programs and projects to focus on delivering services that show their effectiveness via program outputs (metrics) and program outcomes (how participation in your program has resulted in client betterment),

All grants awarded under this funding opportunity will be required to report on the mandatory performance measures noted in **III. Program Requirements, 3. Anticipated Metrics.**

Post-award recipients must submit the above metrics and a brief narrative report:

- In the Interim Grant Report (due July 17, 2026), include metrics from January 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026 (six months); and
- At the time of the final grant report (January 31, 2027)*

*The final report must include program metrics achieved throughout the **full** grant period and must be submitted to DVMF by January 31, 2027.

V. Application Process

Applicants are required to apply for grant funding through the Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families Service Animal Grant Program Fund Google Form Application.

If you need assistance with completing the program-specific information required in the online application, please contact:

Toni Gianforti
Grant Specialist
Toni.gianforti@maryland.gov

V. Training/Technical Assistance (TA)

To help applicants prepare and submit applications that reflect the DVMF's established guidelines and procedures, application instructions are provided. Applicants are encouraged to review these instructions prior to completing the online application.

The DVMF will conduct a Technical Assistance (TA) Conference call to provide further application and budget preparation assistance and to answer questions. **Attendance on the TA Call is a requirement in order to be considered for funding.** The FY 2026 Maryland Veteran Service Animal Grant Program NOFA Technical Assistance Call will be held **Thursday, September 11, 2025, 10:00-11:30am.**

Call in Number: (US) +1 929-282-1452

PIN: 496 172 851#

Meeting Link: meet.google.com/gpa-cnzd-nfz

Important Dates

- Application and Budget Technical Assistance Conference Call: Thursday, September 11, 2025, 10:00-11:30am
- Application Deadline: October 3, 2025 By 3:00 PM
- Award Notices/Denial Notices e-mailed: October 23, 2025
- Award Documents Due: November 7, 2025
- Program Start Date: January 1, 2026
- Interim Grant Report Due: July 17, 2026
- Program End Date: December 31, 2026
- Final Report Due: January 31, 2027

VI. Application Evaluation

The DVMF will assess the merits of each application based on applicants' responses in each of the following areas, with an emphasis on Metrics, Outcome Evaluation and Budget Narrative.

- Statement of Need/Purpose of Request
- Objectives and Activities
- Anticipated Metrics (participants to be served)
- Outcome Evaluation Measurement Tool/Questionnaire
- Estimated Expenses and Budget Narrative (justification per line item)
- Timeline (**only if planning a new program**)

The FY26 Maryland Veteran Service Animal Grant Program is a competitive application process. The DVMF will conduct an internal staff and external review of each application submitted in accordance with this NOFA.

VII. Funding Specifications

A. Distribution of Awards

- The initial grant award payments will be half of each individual total grant award. The Initial grant payments will be made not later than December 17, 2025. The second disbursement for all grant awards will be the balance remaining on each grant award. The second and final payment will be disbursed after submission of the Interim Grant Report, due by July 17, 2026.

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families reserves the right to make additional budget reductions and adjustments at its discretion.

B. Allowable Costs

- Salary and Fringe Costs:

(1) Staff positions providing direct service to veterans,

and/or

(2) Staff positions engage in community outreach/education/referral activities that increase awareness of veteran issues in the community, refer eligible veterans and eligible family members to the program, and raise the bar on a community's military cultural competency.

- Staff Development/Training Costs: Cost of classes for staff to attend PATH or EAGALA certification training (including travel/hotel costs); costs related to retaining subject matter experts to train staff in military and cultural competency; costs to obtain software licenses and monthly software fees directly related to program service delivery.
- Equipment Related to Development/Training: Projectors, pop-up displays, etc.
- Supplies Related to Development/Training: Binders, file folders, printer paper, toner, etc.
- Travel Related to Program Delivery: Round-trip estimates should be based on departure from the grantee's primary service delivery location to the secondary point of service delivery location and back. The current Maryland reimbursement rate is \$.70/mile, but will change January 2026. In creating your budget, grantees should use \$.70/mile.
- Equine Training: Cost to train equines for carriage driving, or to train new equines to provide mounted/unmounted therapeutic service to veterans and eligible family members.
- Equipment Related to Equine/Canine Services: leashes, bridles, saddles, driving carts, canine crates. In addition, large fans used to facilitate delivery of equine-assisted services in indoor arenas are an allowable cost. Other equipment not included in this definition may be allowable if approved by the Grant Administrator.
- Supplies Related to Equine/Canine Care: Hay, feed, farrier services, grooming supplies, kennel costs, veterinary services, etc.

C. Unallowable Costs

The following services, activities, and costs are not be eligible for funding and should not be included in the application budget:

- Rent
- Printing costs
- Utilities
- Food/beverage

- Marketing give-aways, trinkets
- Fundraising
- Lobbying
- Research
- Audit or consulting costs

VIII. Other Reporting Requirements

Prospective grantees will be required to provide, and update as necessary, their financial/fiscal status with the General Accounting Division(GAD)/Comptroller of Maryland. See: <https://www.marylandtaxes.gov/divisions/gad.php>

A. Match

There is no match required for this funding source. **DO NOT ENTER A MATCH INTO YOUR BUDGET.** If you wish to show other financial or in-kind contributions to your program, it may be written into your narrative.

B. Transparency and Accountability

A strong emphasis is being placed on accountability and transparency. Grantees must be prepared to track, report on, and document specific outcomes, benefits, and expenditures attributable to the use of grant funds. Misuse of grant funds may result in a range of penalties to include suspension of current and future funds and civil/criminal penalties.

C. Payments

Grantees will receive payments from the Maryland Comptroller's Office (with confirmation by paper check). Grantees are required to contact the DVME Grant Specialist regarding receipt of their grant checks. Deadlines for reporting check delivery status are January 15, 2026 (first check) and July 30, 2026 (second check).

IX. Application Instructions

Section 1: FY26 Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program Grant

At the discretion of the Governor of the State of Maryland, funding is provided to the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program and Fund to organizations who train service and/or support animals for veterans and who provide equine therapy to veterans and their eligible family members. Applicants must detail within their application how the grant will increase opportunities for veterans to receive professionally trained service or support animals, or for veterans and their eligible family members to receive equine therapy, as well as improve mental health, overall well-being and reduce suicide risk among the veteran population.

Section 2: Eligibility Criteria

1. In order to apply, your organization must be 501(c)(3) tax-exempt and meet the minimum standards as described in Title 35, Subtitle 6 of the Maryland Veterans Service Animal Program
2. The minimum grant request is \$5,000; the maximum request is \$12,000.
3. Indicate in which of the following geographic region(s) your organization will serve veterans and their eligible family members through this grant:
 - Central: Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard and Harford counties
 - Western: Alleghany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, and Washington counties
 - Southern: Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary' counties
 - Eastern: Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties.
4. Your organization must provide training for service or support dogs, or provide equine-assisted therapy for veterans and their eligible family members.
5. If your organization provides equine-assisted therapy, your organization must be a Member Center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH, Intl.) or be EAGALA Certified.
6. If your organization trains and places canines with Maryland veterans, your organization must be professionally accredited through Assistance Dogs International (ADI).

Section 3: Organization Information

1. Full organization name
2. Organizational Mission
3. Organization's IRS EIN (Employer Identification Number)
4. Full organization address
5. Organization Contact Name and Contact Title

6. Organization Contact Phone Number
7. Organization Contact Email Address.

Section 4: Grant Program Information

1. Indicate if the grant award will address one or more of the indicated priorities as detailed (see **II. Program Description, F. Funding Opportunity Description**).
2. Provide a title for your grant (if a grant is awarded to your organization, this will assist DVMF in publicizing your award).
3. Specify the amount of your grant request (must be a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$12,000).
4. Affirmation of Start and End dates for grant period.
5. Compliance with Maryland's Commercial Non-Discrimination Policy.
6. Additional Recipients of Service under the Grant

Section 5: Program Narrative

1. Statement of Need/Purpose of Request
2. Program Objectives and Program Activities
3. Program Timeline (**only if this is a new program for your organization**)
4. Anticipated Metrics (Outputs) as noted below:
 - Number of veterans to be served;
 - Number of eligible family members to be served;
 - Number of canines to be trained for placement with Maryland veterans;
 - Number of canines to be placed with Maryland veterans;
 - Number of individual equine-assisted therapy sessions to be provided with veterans/eligible family members;
 - Number of group equine-assisted therapy sessions to be provided with veterans/eligible family members;
 - Number of outreach and education activities targeted at local government, other nonprofit organizations, civic groups, etc. to increase community knowledge regarding suicide prevention and military cultural competency;
 - Number of staff who will obtain PATH certifications;
 - Number of staff who will obtain EAGALA certifications
 - Number of anticipated new staff/volunteers providing direct service to veterans who will complete the training modules itemized below on the PsychArmor website - <https://learn.psycharmor.org/collections>

The Basics of Military Culture
 15 Things Veterans want you to Know
 Women Veterans Series
 VA S.A.V.E.

5. How often program participants will take part in grant activities (daily, weekly, monthly, or other).

Section 6: Partnerships (Refer to III. Program Requirements, 1. to address this section).

Section 7: Anticipated Outcomes (Grant Results)

- Outcome measurement tool(s)
- Describe what outcomes (changed conditions for veterans) you hope to achieve
- State any additional information not already requested in the application

Section 8: Organization Budget and Budget Justification (Refer to VII. Funding Specifications, B, Allowable Costs). Do not include unallowable costs (Refer to VII. Funding Specification, C. Unallowable Costs). Please fill out and upload the Google Budget Sheet.

The following activities/expenses are allowable costs that can be included in the grant budget:

- Salary and Fringe Costs: Staff salary and fringe can be included in an applicant's budget if:

(1) Staff positions provide direct service to veterans,

and/or

(2) Staff positions engage in community outreach/education/referral activities that increase awareness of veteran issues in the community, refer eligible veterans to the program, and raise the bar on a community's military cultural competency.

- Staff Development/Training Costs: Cost of classes for staff to attend PATH or EAGALA certification training (including travel/hotel costs); costs related to retaining subject matter experts to train staff in military and cultural competency; costs to obtain software licenses and monthly software fees directly related to program service delivery.
- Equipment Related to Development/Training: Projectors, pop-up displays, etc.
- Supplies Related to Development/Training: Binders, file folders, printer paper, toner, etc.
- Travel Related to Program Delivery: Round-trip estimates should be based on departure from the grantee's primary service delivery location to the secondary point of service delivery location and back. The current Maryland reimbursement rate is \$.70/mile, but will change this January. In creating your budget, grantees should use \$.70/mile.
- Equine Training: Cost to train equines for carriage driving, or to train new equines to provide mounted/unmounted therapeutic service to veterans.

- Equipment Related to Equine/Canine Services: Examples include leashes, bridles, saddles, driving carts, canine crates. In addition, large fans used to facilitate delivery of equine-assisted services in indoor arenas are an allowable cost. Other equipment not included in this definition may be allowable if approved by the Grant Administrator.
- Supplies Related to Equine/Canine Care: Hay, feed, farrier services, grooming supplies, kennel costs, veterinary services,

Section 9: Supporting Documentation - Upload all documentation.

- Two professional letters from organizations who are current collaborative partners specific to the grant application. **Collaborative partners are not those entities that provide your program with referrals only.** Letters must be on the reference organization letterhead with contact information for the reference, including their name, title, phone number and email address.
- A copy of the organization's most recent IRS form 990 or 990-EZ.
- The applicant's current organizational operating budget.
- The applicant's current Board of Directors
- Proof of the applicant's professional accreditation as a PATH Member Center, EAGALA certification, or ADI certification.

Applications that are incomplete or incorrect will result in the application not being considered for funding.