

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
Veteran Health Administration

**NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY:** Grants for Adaptive Sports Programs for Disabled Veterans and Disabled Members of the Armed Forces (Equine Therapy Grants)

**FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY NAME:** National Veterans Sports Program and Special Events

**ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE:** Initial

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:** VA-EQUINE-24

**ASSISTANCE LISTING:** 64.034

**KEY DATES:** Submission deadline 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on March 27, 2024

All technical questions related to the content of this Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) must be submitted no later than 10 business days prior to the submission deadline. Questions should be submitted to [Grants4Vets@va.gov](mailto:Grants4Vets@va.gov). Questions will be answered on the agency website.

Award decisions are expected to be made on or before September 30, 2024; however, please be aware that there are a variety of circumstances that may occur that could result in a later or earlier than expected award decision.

**TO APPLY:** Applications must be submitted via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Applications may not be sent by mail, email or facsimile.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Veterans Affairs National Veterans Sports Programs & Special Events (NVSPSE) Program announces the availability of \$1,500,000 (subject to the availability of federal funds) for the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program's Equine Therapy Grants. VA will award grants to qualifying organizations to plan, develop, manage and implement programs to provide adaptive sports, training, and other opportunities for Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities.

Applications for general adaptive sports proposals not focused on addressing mental health issues through equine therapy<sup>1</sup>, will not be considered under this NOFA and must be submitted to Funding Opportunity Number VA-SPORTS-24.

---

<sup>1</sup> Definition of Equine Therapy can be found in the section [VIII. Appendix – Definitions](#).

## Contents

<b>I. Program Description.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>A. Purpose: .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>B. Priorities and Goals: .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>C. Definitions: .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D. Authority:.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>E. Requirements for the Use of Grant Funds: .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>F. Evaluation and Performance:.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>II. Federal Award Information.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>A. Funding: .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>B. Allocation of Funds:.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>C. Equine Therapy Grant Award Period:.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>III. Eligibility Information .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>A. To demonstrate Significant Experience: .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>B. To qualify as a Large-Scale:.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>C. Entity Eligibility: .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>D. Cost Sharing or Matching:.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>E. Adaptive Sports Grant Program: .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV. Application and Submission Information.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>A. Submission.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>B. Application.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>C. Submission Requirements:.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>D. Funding Restrictions: .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>E. Additional Submission Requirements: .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>V. Application Review Information .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A. Administrative Review:.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>B. Merit Review:.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>C. Programmatic Review: .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>VI. Federal Award Administration Information.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>A. Federal Award Notices: .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>C. Reporting and Monitoring: .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>D. Payments of Adaptive Sports Program Grant Funds: .....</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>E. PII (Personal Identifiable Information)</b> .....	18
<b>F. Financial Risk:</b> .....	18
<b>VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contact</b> .....	18
<b>VIII. Appendix – Definitions:</b> .....	20
<b>IX. Appendix – Administrative Checklist:</b> .....	23

## **I. Program Description**

### **A. Purpose:**

The Adaptive Sports Grant Program, as identified under assistance listing 64.034 provides grants to eligible entities to plan, develop, manage, and implement programs to provide adaptive sports activities for Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities. For the purpose of this NOFA, VA will revise the definition of “adaptive sports activities,” found in 38 C.F.R. 77.2 “to incorporate equine therapy as detailed below” in this NOFA:

*(1) instruction, participation, and competition in adaptive sports*

For example: introductory equine therapy clinics, equine therapy camps, therapeutic riding, regularly scheduled equine therapy sessions, lessons and tournaments; which address mental health for veterans with disabilities and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities.

*(2) training and technical assistance to program administrators, coaches, recreation therapists, instructors, VA employees, and other appropriate individuals*

For example: equine therapy-specific certification courses, instructor trainings, continuing education courses geared towards equine therapy.

*(3) coordination, Paralympic classification of athletes, athlete assessment, sport-specific training techniques, program development (including programs at the local level), sports equipment, supplies, program evaluation, and other activities related to the implementation and operation of the program.*

For example: equipment distribution programs, instructional media (including handbooks, virtual program development).

### **B. Priorities and Goals:**

The primary goal of this NOFA is to seek eligible entities that have expertise to meet the needs and priorities of Veterans with disabilities and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities. This NOFA seeks eligible entities that will prioritize:

- providing adaptive sports for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities in underserved activities that are of increased interest.
- providing adaptive sports for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities in geographic regions where limited adaptive sports opportunities are available for this population.

- in-person or web-based training for VA adaptive sports providers that minimizes required travel and maximizes effectiveness.
- including VA subject matter experts in the development of the curriculum for in-person or web-based training for adaptive sports providers.
- provide classifier certification opportunities to increase qualified personnel across the country.
- provide athlete classification opportunities for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities.

#### **C. Definitions:**

38 C.F.R. 77.2 and VIII. Appendix of this NOFA contain definitions of terms used in the Equine Therapy Grant and this NOFA.

#### **D. Authority:**

This grant program is authorized by 38 U.S.C. 521A. VA implements the Equine Therapy Grant by regulation in 38 C.F.R. Part 77. Funds made available under this NOFA are subject to the requirements of the aforementioned regulation and other applicable laws and regulations.

#### **E. Requirements for the Use of Grant Funds:**

The grantee's request for funding must be consistent with the limitations on and uses of grant funds set forth in 38 C.F.R. Part 77 and this NOFA. In accordance with the regulations and this NOFA, the following requirements apply to grants awarded under this NOFA:

- (1) Grantees may use up to a **maximum of five percent of grant funds for all administrative expenses**, which includes administrative expenses and any costs associated with an employee of the eligible entity other than reimbursement for time spent by such an employee directly providing coaching, training, or direct services for participants, as identified in 38 C.F.R. 77.14(c). Funding associated with proposed activities that are administrative in nature (e.g., recruitment activities, planning and grant management) will be considered as administrative costs, even if listed as otherwise in the proposal. The five percent rate is mandated by 38 U.S.C. 521A and applies unique definitions of administrative costs that supersede other federal non-legislative guidance.
- (2) Grant funds are solely to be used to support or provide services to Veterans or members of the Armed Forces with disabilities, as required in 38 C.F.R. 77.14(d).
- (3) Grantees may not use grant funds to support or provide services to individuals barred from receiving VA benefits, as identified in 38 C.F.R. 77.14(e).

#### **F. Evaluation and Performance:**

Grantees will be evaluated on the quality and timeliness of programmatic and financial reporting. NVSPSE will evaluate performance according to the grantee's originally approved proposal; including the percentage of participant numbers served, percentage of executed deliverables, adherence to the approved budget and estimated cost per veteran, and proper submission of modification requests as needed.

Evaluation and performance metrics may be used by NVSPSE as prior performance information for review of applications to future funding opportunities. Future funding opportunities may consider renewal applications for grant recipients that have a satisfactory level of compliance in reporting requirements on their initial grant, no major findings during a monitoring visit, and no restrictions or conditions imposed by VA on their initial grant. VA will not consider a renewal grant application under this NOFA.

## **II. Federal Award Information**

#### **A. Funding:**

This NOFA announces the availability of approximately \$1,500,000 to be awarded by VA for proposals to plan, develop, manage, and implement programs that provide equine therapy activities for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities.

VA will not consider a renewal grant application under this NOFA. Current grantees must submit an initial application if seeking grant funding.

All awards funded under this announcement will be grants.

#### **B. Allocation of Funds:**

Funding will be awarded under this NOFA to grantees for a 12-month period. The following requirements apply to Equine Therapy Grants awarded under this NOFA:

The maximum award amount for an application under this NOFA is \$750,000.00.

Multiple applications from the same applicant which duplicate programming/deliverables will not be considered for funding.

#### **C. Equine Therapy Grant Award Period:**

All Equine Therapy Grant awards will be for a 12-month period, September 30, 2024 – September 30, 2025.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

To be eligible, an applicant must qualify as a Non-Federal Government entity with significant experience in managing a large-scale adaptive sports program, as defined in 38 C.F.R. 77.2, for persons with disabilities if those disabilities are the same as those of Veterans with disabilities, and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities. “Significant experience” and “large-scale” are addressed in 38 C.F.R. 77.2 as:

#### **A. To demonstrate Significant Experience:**

All key personnel identified in the Equine Therapy Grant application must have experience implementing the adaptive sports activities to be provided and have experience working with persons with disabilities similar to those that Veterans and members of the Armed Forces may experience, including mental health diagnoses.

The experience must be for a minimum of two continuous years immediately prior to the date of the Equine Therapy Grant application submission to VA.

When more than one entity will be engaged in the provision of the adaptive sport activities, the entity applying for the adaptive sports grant (the primary applicant and fiscal entity) must provide documentation that verifies that the partnership will support the implementation of all the adaptive sports activities proposed in the adaptive sports grant application. Acceptable forms of documentation include a partnership letter or memorandum outlining the responsibilities, qualifications, and background of the secondary partner selected to provide services to Veterans.

#### **B. To qualify as a Large-Scale:**

Organizations providing equine therapy for mental health must be large scale. 38 C.F.R. 77.2 defines large-scale adaptive sports programs as meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- (1) An adaptive sports program of a National Paralympic Committee (NPC) or of a National Governing Body (NGB) that is authorized to provide Paralympic sports programs in one or more States;
- (2) An adaptive sports program of a NGB that has been recognized by an external validating authority if the programs validated by that authority would meet the requirements of paragraph (3) of this definition if considered one program; and
- (3) An adaptive sports program in which at least 50 persons with disabilities participate or in which the persons with disabilities who participate reside in at least five different congressional districts.

### **C. Entity Eligibility:**

To be eligible, an entity must comply with 2 C.F.R. Parts 25, and 200, criteria for a Non-Federal entity eligible for federal grant programs; including but not limited to: being registered in SAM.gov, no active exclusions or delinquent federal debt, and not being debarred or suspended.

The Equine Therapy Grant provides adaptive sports activities for Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities; therefore, applicants that do not provide adaptive sports activities including equine therapy for persons with disabilities that are the same as those that may be experienced by Veterans or members of the Armed Forces; or Veterans or members of the Armed Forces with disabilities will not be considered for funding.

### **D. Cost Sharing or Matching:**

This program does not require cost sharing or matching funds.

### **E. Adaptive Sports Grant Program:**

Applicants interested in submitting a proposal for adaptive sports other than equine therapy, including equine activities that do not address mental health must submit to Funding Opportunity Number VA-SPORTS-24, as these proposals will not be considered under this NOFA.

## **IV. Application and Submission Information**

### **A. Submission**

To submit an application for funding consideration in response to this NOFA, submit the application and all affiliated materials via the [www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/) portal. Files should use naming convention listed below. Applications that are incomplete or incorrect may result in the application not being considered for funding.

### **B. Application**

There are 6 elements that are required to make a complete grant application, and 1 additional optional element. Documents for elements requiring specific forms, and additional resources including a Frequently Asked Questions document, can be found on [www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/) and the NVSPSE webpage, [www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-program/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-program/).

REQUIRED: Adaptive Sport Grant Application (VA Form 10096) – Requested file name: “VA-10096”. This document should be saved and uploaded as a PDF.

VA Form 10096 can be found on the NVSPSE Program website. All fields in the form must be completed for the form to be considered complete.



Applications including an incomplete VA Form 10096 may be screened out during the administrative review.

For the deliverables section (Exhibit A) all applicants should clearly indicate the:

- activity offered/training provided,
- city and state where the programming will be conducted,
- frequency of the programming,
- deliverable start dates and completion dates,
- the estimated number of Veterans served/ providers trained, and
- budget estimate for each deliverable.

Additional guidance/suggestions related to completion of this form can be found on the NVSPSE website. It is a requirement that all grant recipients participate in a joint outreach campaign with VA, consistent with 38 C.F.R. Part 77.11, to inform all eligible Veterans and separating members of the Armed Forces with disabilities about the existence of the adaptive sports activities funded by the grant. This plan can be detailed in the outreach section of VA Form 10096.

Within the Program Budget (Exhibit B), personnel expenses should be delineated between Personnel (Operational) and Personnel (Administrative) expenses. Personnel (Operational) are any reimbursement cost associated with time spent by such an employee directly providing coaching or training for participants, and Personnel (Administrative) are any cost associated with an employee of the eligible entity other than reimbursement for time spent by such an employee directly providing coaching or training for participants. Any contracted work must adhere to 38 United States Code 521A(d)(4)-(5).

**REQUIRED: Narrative (10 single-spaced pages maximum) – Requested title “Narrative”. This document should be saved and uploaded as a PDF.**

Narrative must be formatted in 12-point font. This document provides an opportunity to expand upon the information in the exhibits of VA Form 10096. Any additional information related to the VA Form 10096 can be included in the same format as the VA Form 10096. For example, additional deliverables may be proposed using the same table as Exhibit A<sup>2</sup>.

The Narrative must include detailed information that allows the VA Adaptive Sports Grant review team to fully understand the applicant's

---

<sup>2</sup> A copy of Exhibit A of the VA Form 10096 can be found in section X. Appendix – VA Form 10096, Exhibit A

proposed project plan and ability to execute this plan, in relation to the scoring criteria listed in Section V. A. (2) of this NOFA and the priorities of the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program listed in Section I. B. of this NOFA. The Narrative must also include evidence of eligibility in accordance with 38 C.F.R. 77.2, including 2 or more years of organizational experience providing adaptive sports opportunities to at least 50 people with disabilities, or providing adaptive sports opportunities to veterans residing in at least 5 congressional districts. A listing of proposed sports should be provided, to include location for each sport, cost per participant, and number of veterans proposed to be served.

REQUIRED: Budget Details (2-page maximum) – Requested title “Budget Details”. This document should be saved and uploaded as a PDF.

This document must be formatted in 12-point font. Table format is allowable and encouraged.

- This document should convey the amounts in each cost category (supplies, operations, etc.) for the proposed deliverables and justifications for each amount.
- This document should summarize items that are in a given deliverable category (Deliverable #1 supplies shoes, skis, harnesses).
- This document should state the cost per veteran per activity session.
- This document should expand on the Exhibit B and Exhibit C of the VA Form 10096. Budget Details should include an explanation of the budget and a categorical description of proposed costs<sup>3</sup>.

REQUIRED: Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) – Complete through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

This form is completed through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and will be included as part of the application.

REQUIRED: VA-FSC Vendor File Request Form (VA Form 10091) – Complete through [www.cep.fsc.va.gov/](http://www.cep.fsc.va.gov/).

A web version of this document must be submitted through the VA Customer Engagement Portal at <https://www.cep.fsc.va.gov/> by the application deadline stated in this NOFA. Ensure that the information

---

<sup>3</sup> An example of an itemized budget can be found in [XI. Appendix – Budget Details - example](#)

provided on this form aligns with the information listed in SAM.gov. This form is required for all applicants.

REQUIRED (only if applicable): Letters of Partnership (Combine all letters into a single document) – Requested title “Partnership”. This document should be saved and uploaded as a PDF.

If the adaptive sports activities will be implemented through partnerships as described in 38 C.F.R. 77.5(a)(5) and 77.8(b), signed documentation of the partners confirming a partnership must be submitted. Letters of partnership should include details of the scope of activities and if applicable, scope of funding involved in the partnership. If these letters are not provided as directed, the proposal will be evaluated as if the partnership has not been officially established. Additional supporting attachments may be provided at the applicant’s discretion. Letters of recommendation from individuals and entities that are not involved in delivery of adaptive sports services do not qualify as partnership letters.

OPTIONAL: Letters of Support (Combine all letters into a single document) – Requested title “Support”. This document should be saved and uploaded as a PDF.

Letters of support may be provided to demonstrate the applicant has relationships that will allow them to successfully recruit the population targeted in the proposal. These letters may come from, but are not limited to, VA medical centers, DoD medical treatment facilities, and Veteran Service Organizations. It is recommended these letters highlight the willingness of correspondent to collaborate and assist the applicant in identifying eligible participants for the proposed activities.

### **C. Submission Requirements:**

As per 2 C.F.R. Part 25, each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual, or meets the conditions under which a Federal awarding agency may exempt the applicant under 2 C.F.R. 25.110(b) or (c), or is exempt by OMB under 2 C.F.R. 25.110(d)) is required to:

- Be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) for a Commercial and Government Entity Code (CAGE) before submitting its application ([www.sam.gov/SAM/](http://www.sam.gov/SAM/)). Please note, there is no cost to register, update, or renew an entity registration in SAM.
- Maintain an active SAM registration for the duration of the application period.

Be currently registered and provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application (<https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/>).

- Register in [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Authorization of roles, including the ability to submit an application on behalf of an organization, is managed by the E-Business Point of Contact for that organization. If you do not know the E-Business Point of Contact for your organization, please reach out to Grants.gov Applicant Support at 1-800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).
- Submit by required date: Once all submission requirements are completed [Section IV. B.], applications must be submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time on March 27, 2024. In the interest of fairness to all competing applicants, the deadline is firm as to date, hour and minute. Applicants should consider this stipulation and submit materials early to avoid risk of loss of eligibility brought about by unanticipated delays. Confirmation of an application submission will be auto generated and sent by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- Applications must be submitted as a complete package. Materials arriving separately will not be included in the application package for consideration and may result in the application being rejected. Applications not meeting the above criteria will be ineligible for further review and cannot be considered for funding.

Amendment Submissions: After an applicant has submitted a complete application, an applicant may submit an amendment to the grant application package, as described under 38 C.F.R. 77.6. An amendment submitted after the application submission deadline and prior to the grant award cannot change the scope of the original application or increase the amount of the grant requested by more than a total of 10-percent. An applicant seeking to amend its grant application must submit a narrative description of, and clear justification for, the requested changes, and a revised Standard Form 424 (Application for Federal Assistance). Amendments submitted after the application submission deadline will not be considered during the Administrative or Merit Review stages. Consideration of amendments will only occur for applications that progress to the Programmatic Review stage.

#### **D. Funding Restrictions:**

- A grant for the 12-month period may not exceed \$750,000.
- A maximum of five percent of grant funds may be allocated for all administrative expenses (including "Personnel (Administrative)" and

- “Administrative (Non-Personnel)”), which includes any costs associated with an employee when not directly providing coaching or training for participants<sup>4</sup>.
- Funding cannot be utilized to support research activities.
  - Funding cannot be utilized to reimburse for any medical services<sup>5</sup> (those traditionally funded by insurance).
  - Funding cannot be utilized to reimburse expenses incurred prior to the period of performance.
  - Construction is not authorized through this grant mechanism; however, funding may be used to purchase equipment that would allow for safe transfers in and out of sports equipment/sports environments and improve accessibility to disabled Veterans and members of the Armed Forces.

#### **E. Additional Submission Requirements:**

Submission of an incorrect or incomplete application package will result in the application being rejected during an initial administrative review [Section V. A]. The application packages must contain all required elements listed in Section IV. B. Selections will be made based on criteria described in 38 C.F.R. 77.5 and this NOFA. The application package must be submitted through [www.grants.gov/](http://www.grants.gov/). Applications may not be sent by mail, email or facsimile.

### **V. Application Review Information**

Submitted applications will undergo a three-phase review process: administrative, merit, and programmatic. Applications will be evaluated by selection criteria described in 38 C.F.R. 77.5, and further detailed in this section of the NOFA. The administrative review criteria are indicated in Section V. A. Those determined to be ineligible based on these stated criteria will not be scored for funding consideration. Those applications determined to be eligible for funding consideration after the administrative review will undergo a merit review, and scoring will be based on criteria indicated in Section V. B. Those applications receiving a total merit score of less than 65 will be determined to be ineligible for funding consideration. Remaining applications will be considered for funding recommendation based on the programmatic review process.

#### **A. Administrative Review:**

VA will only score applications that meet the following minimum requirements:

- The application is filed within the time period and submission process established in the NOFA.
- The application includes all required elements listed in Section IV B.

---

<sup>4</sup> Budget category definitions can be found on page 4 of the VA Form 10096

<sup>5</sup> Definition of medical services can be found in the section VIII. Appendix – Definitions

- The Program is unique from other applications submitted by the same applicant, when submitting multiple applications.
- The applicant has an active SAM.gov registration in good standing (not debarred or delinquent) for the duration of the review period.
- The applicant is an eligible entity as defined in 38 C.F.R. 77.2.
- The applicant does not have an outstanding obligation to the Federal Government that is in arrears and does not have an overdue or unsatisfactory response to an audit.
- The applicant is not in default by failing to meet the requirements for any previous Federal assistance.
- Proposed funding request is within \$750,000 cost ceiling.
- Administrative fees are within 5% of requested award.
- Inclusion of all required information in the grant application as specified by [38 U.S.C. 521A\(c\)](#).

Administrative review applicant checklist can be found in [IX Appendix] for applicant use. The checklist can be used as a guide when preparing the application package to ensure that the application has met administrative screening criteria. Note that this checklist is only an aid for applicants and should not be included in the application package. If the application does not meet all of the screening criteria, the application will not move forward to the merit review process.

## **B. Merit Review:**

**Programmatic Plan (70 points)** - Information is best displayed, but not limited to, the following documents: VA Form 10096, Narrative.

- **NOFA Compliance (5 points)** – Applications that comply with the NOFA will receive 5 points. Transversely, applications that do not comply with the NOFA will not receive any points under this criteria.
  - Documents are within page limit guidelines.
  - Only documents stated in Section IV.B. are submitted. No additional documents.
  - Deliverables are written appropriately, and indirect costs are distributed amongst deliverables.
- **Adaptive Sports Activities (10 points)**
  - Adaptive sports activities to be provided are clearly stated on VA Form 10096.
  - Target population/disability group for each proposed activity are clearly stated.
  - Any adaptations required for target population are clearly stated.

- Equine therapy activities are clearly targeted to address mental health.
- Program does not include a clinical fee-for-service reimbursement.
- The inclusion of equine mounted work includes a strong justification.
- **Program Objectives and Design (15 points)**
  - Program's concept, goals and objectives are clearly defined.
  - Programming is evidence-based and related to sport and population.
  - Each deliverable describes the activity and/or event to be implemented.
  - Each deliverable includes an expected number of veterans or trainers served.
  - Actions that do not serve attendees (such as outreach and purchasing of equipment) are distributed amongst deliverables.
  - Locations, dates, and/or frequency are provided for each deliverable.
- **Program Management and Past Performance (15 points)**
  - Information regarding program history, staff qualifications, and overall past performance (with particular focus on equine programming and mental health) is clearly provided.
  - Primary staff holds a certification by an accredited program.
  - Functions of key personnel are clearly explained.
  - Proposal demonstrates an understanding that award shall not reimburse any medical services.
  - Evidence of safety measures and policies are clearly stated, including an emergency action plan, inclement weather plan, and First Aid/CPR requirements.
- **Capability for Successful Execution of Program (15 points)**
  - Evidence of disabled service member population in geographical region is provided.
  - Ability to recruit target population (Veterans with disabilities and Servicemembers with disabilities) is clearly defined.
  - Timeframe is reasonable for successful execution of the proposed plan.
  - Significant experience in managing a large-scale equine therapy program, as defined in 38 C.F.R. 77.2 and Section III. A of this NOFA, is clearly stated.
- **Partnerships (10 points)**
  - Communication plan is clearly stated.
  - Partnerships and collaborating organizations are clearly defined and provide a clear benefit to implementation of the program.

- Relationships with VA Medical Centers, Department of Defense facilities, Veteran Service Organizations, and/or other Veterans is evidenced through Memorandum of Agreements, Letters of Partnership and/or Letters of Support.

### **Financial Capability and Plan (30 points)**

Information is displayed, but not limited to, the following documents: VA Form 10096, SF-424, Budget Details, Narrative.

- **Capability (5 points)**

- Experience managing funds is clearly stated.

- **Plan (15 points)**

- Budget is justified and clearly explained within the proposal. Cost per veteran is clearly stated in application and matches non-veteran costs.
- Expenses are distributed amongst deliverables. (i.e. outreach, program equipment, administrative costs should be distributed amongst deliverables and should not be listed as their own deliverables).
- Budget Details document is clear, itemized, includes specific cost estimates and directly correlates to deliverables.
- Budget Details include an estimated cost per veteran per visit.
- A clear and specific budget breakdown is provided.

- **Reasonableness of Costs (10 Points)**

- Budgeted costs are reasonable, allocable and allowable under 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Subpart E and produce good value for the amount of funds paid for proposed activities.
- Budgeted costs are comparable to regional market value for similar goods and services. Costs adhere to GSA rates when applicable.
- Proposal demonstrates an understanding that award funding shall be allocated solely to Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities.
- Costs including storage and/or leased space, vehicles, horses, farm equipment, equine boarding, equine supplies and equine mounted work must include a strong justification and state allocability to the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program.
- Travel funds of 20% or less of the total grant award are usual and customary. Travel funds greater than 20% of the total grant award may be allowable but requires a detailed written justification in the required Narrative document (Section IV.B(4) of this NOFA).



- Budget does not include travel for VA employees in official duty status for VA employees in official duty status.
- Budget does not include costs to support athlete or staff travel to attend VA national rehabilitation events (National Veterans Wheelchair Games, National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, National Veterans Golden Age Games, National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic, National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic).

### **C. Programmatic Review:**

- Merit review score.
- Active agreements with VA (e.g., Memorandum of Agreement) to provide adaptive sports services or activities will be considered to optimize use of funding for grant awards, and to ensure that services are not duplicated.
- Relevance of application to the total grant funds allocated for equine therapy.
- Relevance of application to the total grant funds allocated for a specific type of activity.
- Relevance of application to the total grant funds allocated for a specific type of disability.
- The proposed program provides adaptive sports opportunities in geographic regions where VA has identified limited sports opportunities for disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces.
- The proposed program provides an adaptive sports activity or adaptive sports activities that meet the current needs and priorities for veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities.

## **VI. Federal Award Administration Information**

### **A. Federal Award Notices:**

For grant applications that are selected for funding, NVSPSE will contact the applicants to enter into a grant agreement with VA. Payments will be made to the grant recipient in accordance with 38 C.F.R. Part 77, 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and other applicable provisions of this NOFA. Contact by NVSPSE prior to receipt and signature of the grant agreement does not confirm or suggest recommendation of funding is forthcoming. The grant agreement is the verification of award and will be sent for signature via email to the point of contact indicated in the application.

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:**

As a condition of receiving a grant, the applicant must agree to conduct a joint outreach campaign with VA as described in 38 C.F.R. 77.11.

### **C. Reporting and Monitoring:**

Upon execution of a grant agreement with VA, grantees will comply with requests from NVSPSE for provision of oversight and monitoring of adaptive sports activities as described in 38 C.F.R. 77.16 and 38 C.F.R. 77.18.

Reporting will be required quarterly and an annual report at award close-out. Submission of timely reports is a continuing condition of eligibility. All reporting will be completed electronically. In these reports, grantees will be required to report data including, but not limited to: information on participants served, time spent providing adaptive sports activities, financial and acquisition data related to the grant, types of supportive services provided and other information as requested by NVSP&SE. Grantees must report on all activities funded by the Adaptive Sports Grant Program. Through all reporting, the grantee will be expected to demonstrate adherence to the grantee's proposed program concept, as described in the grantee's application.

Monitoring will consist of all grant recipients being subject to visits to monitor operations and compliance. Grant monitoring is based on a grantee's level of risk, which will be determined by a pre-award risk assessment. A grantee's level of risk and monitoring cadence is subject to change during the award period, pending grantee performance.

### **D. Payments of Adaptive Sports Program Grant Funds:**

Grantees will receive payments electronically through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Payment Management System. All payments will be made on a reimbursement basis as per guidance from the Office of Management and Budget.

### **E. PII (Personal Identifiable Information)**

Applicants submitting applications in response to this NOFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to the Department and must be observed except where disclosure is allowed by the prior written approval of the Grant Office or by court order. By submitting an application, applicants are assuring that all data exchanges conducted through or during the course of performance of this award will be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable federal law.

### **F. Financial Risk:**

Applicant confirms by acceptance of the award that the entity has Financial Management systems in place.

## **VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contact**

VHA Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20420; grants4vets@va.gov. More resources that may assist with the application process can be found at [www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-program/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-program/).

All correspondence with VA concerning this NOFA should reference the above title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation. Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFA submission deadline has passed, VA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until all award notifications have been completed.

## **VIII. Appendix – Definitions:**

For the purposes of this Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA):

**Adaptive sport:** a sport that has either been adapted specifically for persons with a disability or created specifically for persons with a disability. This can include equine activities that do not address mental health and are solely for the purpose of participation in sport.

### **Adaptive sports activity:**

- (1) Instruction, participation, and competition in adaptive sports;
- (2) Training and technical assistance to program administrators, coaches, recreational therapists, instructors, Department employees, and other appropriate individuals; and
- (3) Coordination, Paralympic classification of athletes, athlete assessment, sport-specific training techniques, program development (including programs at the local level), sports equipment, supplies, program evaluation, and other activities related to the implementation and operation of the program.

**Adaptive sports grant program:** A program facilitated and managed by the NVSPSE that awards grants to qualifying organizations to plan, develop, manage, and implement programs to provide adaptive sports opportunities and equine therapy for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces as authorized under 38 United States Code 521A.

Note, this grant, funding opportunity number: VA-EQUINE-24, focuses solely on funding for Equine Therapy for mental health of Veterans.

**Applicant:** an eligible entity that submits an application for an adaptive sports grant announced in a NOFA.

**Construction:** construction, rehabilitation, alteration, conversion, extension, or improvement of buildings, highways, or other real property.

**DoD:** the Department of Defense.

**Eligible entity:** a Non-Federal Government entity with significant experience in managing a large-scale adaptive sports program for persons with disabilities if those disabilities are those that many disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces have. To demonstrate significant experience, all the key personnel identified in the adaptive sports grant application of the entity must have experience implementing the adaptive sports activities to be provided and have experience working with persons with disabilities that many disabled veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces to be served through the adaptive sports grant have. The experience must be for two continuous years immediately prior to the date of submission to VA of the grant

application. When more than one entity would be engaged in the provision of the adaptive sport activities, the entity applying for the adaptive sports grant must provide documentation that verifies that through the partnership, it has the experience necessary to implement all of the adaptive sports activities proposed in the adaptive sports grant application.

**Equine therapy:** equine-assisted activities that address mental health.

- (1) Not to include equine activities that do not address mental health and are solely for the purpose of participation in sport.

**Grantee:** an entity that is awarded an adaptive sports grant under this part.

**Large-scale adaptive sports program:**

- (1) An adaptive sports program of a National Paralympic Committee (NPC) or of a National Governing Body (NGB) that is authorized to provide Paralympic sports programs in one or more States;
- (2) An adaptive sports program of a NGB that has been recognized by an external validating authority if the programs validated by that authority would meet the requirements of paragraph (3) of this definition if considered one program; and
- (3) An adaptive sports program in which at least 50 persons with disabilities participate or in which the persons with disabilities who participate in the program reside in at least five different congressional districts.

**Medical Service:** any service provided by a health care professional that would be generally billable to any party, for example: physical therapy or mental health treatment. For the purpose of this NOFA, VA will not reimburse for these services nor provide oversight or assume liability of medical services provided by a grant recipient.

**National Governing Body (NGB):** an organization that looks after all aspects of a sport and is responsible for training, competition and development for their sports.

**National Paralympic Committee (NPC):** the national organization recognized by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) as the sole representative of athletes with disabilities from their respective jurisdiction.

**Notice of funding availability (NOFA):** a Notice of Funding Availability published in the OMB-designated government-wide Web site in accordance with 38 C.F.R. 77.13 and 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

**Paralympics:** a series of international contests for athletes with a range of physical and intellectual disabilities, including mobility disabilities, amputations, blindness, and

traumatic brain injury, that are associated with and held following the summer and winter Olympic Games.

**Participant:** a disabled veteran or disabled member of the Armed Forces who is receiving adaptive sport activities from a grantee.

**Partnership:** any type of arrangement in which the parties agree to cooperate and is not limited to a legal partnership.

**Personal Identifiable Information (PII):** Any representation of information that permits the identity of an individual to whom the information applies to be reasonably inferred by either direct or indirect means.

**Persons with a disability:** includes persons with physical disabilities or mental health diagnoses.

**Sport:** a usually competitive individual or group physical activity governed by a set of rules or customs, which, through casual or organized participation, aim to use, maintain or improve physical ability and skills while normally providing entertainment to participants.

**VA:** the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Veteran:** a person described in Title 38, CFR 3.1, United States Code of Federal Regulations.

**Veterans Service Organization (VSO):** an organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of Title 38, United States Code, a subgroup of such an organization, or a nonprofit entity registered with the U.S. Government that has a primary mission to provide services to veterans and members of the Armed Services.

(Authority: [Pub. L. 111-163](#), [38 U.S.C. 501](#), [38 U.S.C. 521a](#), [38 C.F.R. Part 77](#))

## IX. Appendix – Administrative Checklist:<sup>6</sup>

Application Requirement	Complete?
The deadline submission requirements are met	
All required components of the application are appropriately titled and saved in the specified formats and submitted through Grants.gov, (the VA will attempt to open documents, but will not troubleshoot any problems related to opening files)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SF-424 (Completed and signed in Grants.gov), Application for Federal Assistance</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA Form 10091 (Completed and signed in VA Customer Engagement Portal: <a href="http://www.cep.fsc.va.gov/">www.cep.fsc.va.gov/</a>)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA Form 10096</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrative</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget Details</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letters of Partnership (if applicable)</li> </ul>	
Applicant has an active SAM.gov registration in good standing (not debarred or delinquent) for the duration of the review period	
Technical Proposal (meeting requirements)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrative (not exceeding 10 pages)</li> <li>Budget Details (not exceeding 2 pages)</li> </ul>	
Application does not exceed the ceiling amount of \$750,000 total costs	
Admin costs do not exceed 5% of the budget	

<sup>6</sup> The checklist is not an exhaustive guide, but only an assistance tool. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all requirements are met and that all materials are complete in accordance with the entirety of the NOFA.

## X. Appendix – VA Form 10096, Exhibit A

<b>EXHIBIT A</b> <b>Program Goal and Deliverables</b> <i>(Include locations, activities, frequency of occurrence and number of veterans.</i> <i>Note: for training of providers include an estimated number of Veterans that will benefit)</i>					
Program Deliverable					
	DELIVERABLES	NUMBER OF VETERANS	DELIVERABLE START	DELIVERABLE COMPLETION	BUDGET ESTIMATE
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					



## XI. Appendix – Budget Details; example

Deliverable	Item	Total Cost	Budget Category
<i>Example: Deliverable 1</i>	<i>10 Helmets</i>	<i>\$430</i>	<i>Supplies</i>