

# FOUNDATION



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

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## WHO WE ARE

The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Foundation is the official 501(c)(3) charity of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. The VFW Foundation was established in 1996 to assist in securing financial resources for VFW programs and services. Through strategic relationships with corporations, private foundations, and individual supporters, the VFW Foundation helps fill in governmental assistance gaps for U.S. service personnel, veterans, and military families.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the VFW Foundation is to serve military veterans, service members and their families by securing resources for programs that facilitate enhanced life outcomes—Now and for Generations to Come!

## OUR VISION

The vision of the VFW Foundation is to create a positive impact on America's military veterans, service members and their families by addressing their unique needs.

## WHO WE HELP

U.S. service personnel, veterans and military families have often personally sacrificed so much for us all. Thus, it is only right that we, in turn, provide for their urgent financial, physical, and emotional needs.

## WHAT WE DO

The VFW Foundation secures donations in support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars through the generosity of corporations, foundations and individuals who care passionately about giving back to those who have given so much for so many. Resources are secured through a variety of fundraising activities and assist with VFW national programs and services such as Unmet Needs, National Veterans Service, the Sport Clips "Help A Hero" scholarship program, and Voice of Democracy scholarships. The VFW Foundation also assists VFW Posts and Departments in their local fundraising endeavors and provides grants to advance their community service efforts. The VFW Foundation's fundraising activities include:

- Corporate relationships, partnerships, matching gifts, and cause-marketing agreements
- Corporate sponsorships for the annual VFW National Convention
- Grants from corporations and foundations
- Employee giving campaigns such as United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, etc.
- Individual gifts including major gifts, planned gifts, memorial gifts, vehicle donations, donor advised gifts, etc.
- In-kind gifts of products
- Fundraisers & Special Events

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Visit [www.vfwfoundation.org](http://www.vfwfoundation.org), email [foundation@vfw.org](mailto:foundation@vfw.org) or call (816) 968-1128.

## VFW FOUNDATION

## VFW Foundation Grant Opportunities

For over 120 years, VFW Posts have been pillars of support in their communities. From building local playgrounds and organizing clothing drives, to military support events and disaster relief efforts, we take great pride in our long history of service.

VFW community service projects continue to make a significant impact on local communities. In an effort to support VFW Posts and Auxiliaries in these endeavors, the VFW Foundation frequently offers grant opportunities each fall. Typically, these grants award anywhere from \$1,000-\$1,500 in support of community-based projects. Information about current or upcoming VFW Foundation grant programs can always be found at [www.vfw.org/grants](http://www.vfw.org/grants).

Upon applying for any grant, a VFW or Auxiliary can expect to wait no longer than six (30) days for a decision notification from the VFW Foundation. If the request is approved, it may take up to six (6) weeks for the award funding to hit the Post's bank account. The timeline for review and payment is dependent on the workload of the Foundation staff, and applicants often times receive funding in less than two weeks of submitting an application.

While each of these grants has its own unique guidelines, there are some minimum requirements a Post or Auxiliary must meet to be eligible to apply.

To be eligible to receive a grant your Post must:

- Have a completed election report on file at VFW National Headquarters
- Not owe any outstanding grant reports to the VFW Foundation
- Not be on suspension or in financial arrears
- Have a qualifying project

Sometimes, grants require that you work with one of our eligible partners listed at: <https://www.vfw.org/grants-supporters>

For further information on these opportunities, please visit [www.vfw.org/grants](http://www.vfw.org/grants)

## FUNDRAISING IDEAS FOR VFW POSTS

Below are some ideas that might be beneficial to help your Post increase fundraising activities.

- **Your first task is to decide what you need funding for and how much is needed.** Is funding required for building improvement, handicapped accessible ramps, programs, etc.? Do you need \$5,000 or \$50,000? If it's a building project, you might want to get "free" construction estimates from contractors so as to have a "ballpark" idea of costs. Also, especially if you are expanding or changing the footprint of your building, you will want to check with your city/county to make sure that this is allowable.
- **Unfortunately, there are few if any federal grants that are applicable to VFW Posts.** Even if there were federal grants, the application process would most usually be overwhelming and entirely too complicated. Federal grant money is also closely monitored which might require the hiring of a full-time staff member just for compliance. Thus, we strongly advise that you do not consider federal grants as a fundraising option.
- **Some states provide assistance to veterans groups so check with your local elected state representatives.** There might be funds for building improvement, "green" technology or energy saving innovations applicable to your building, etc.
- **Keep track of how other Posts in your state have successfully raised money.** Imitation can often be a good thing.

Now:

**(1) Where is your Post located? Is it in a rural or urban area?** If urban or near a larger city, go to your local Chamber of Commerce, local community foundation or even your library (Reference Librarian) to get a free list of the largest nongovernmental employers/companies in your county. With this you can create a potential donor list.

**(2) Think of the companies that the Post already has a relationship with such as private utility companies (gas, electric, water, cable TV, etc). Does the Post have a canteen? If so what about the beverage distributor? What about your bank that holds the Post's funds?** Ask for a donation from all of these companies. You might only get \$50 but some Posts have actually received donations of \$5,000 or more.

**(3) A bank is also a good place to speak to an individual called a Trust Officer.** He/She might handle foundation money. For instance, if someone died in your community back in the 1950s or 1960s in the provisions of their will they could have set up a local foundation. Perhaps, they appointed family members (spouse, children, sibling, etc.) to the foundation Board. Now, those individuals might have passed as well. The money then is typically managed by a bank (through a Trust Officer). Sometimes the money is managed by a law or accounting firm but

again it's usually a bank. And that Trust Officer is almost always the decision maker each year on what nonprofit organizations get that money. Trust Officers are more common at banks in urban areas especially at the main bank headquarters (not a branch).

**(4) Use your Post members as a resource.** Perhaps, they know individuals with financial resources or persons who hold high positions in local companies who might consider donations. These might be neighbors, friends, other family members, people they go to church with, etc. Your Post members might be able to provide an introduction to the potential donor so that you can speak to them directly. Also, promote your Post to your members as an organization that can be designated in their wills.

**(5) Are there any casinos within 50 miles of the Post?** Contact regular and Native American casinos and ask to speak to a person who most usually has a title of "Public or Community Affairs Manager." Ask for a donation. Even though (non-Native American) casinos are usually directed by the state to give a certain portion of their earnings to specific community causes (especially education) they often donate to other groups as well.

**(6) Assemble a one-page sheet (some Posts do a brochure) that lists all the activities that your Post does for its community.** This insert can be included with any fundraising letter that you send out or something to bring with you when talking to a potential donor directly. The reality is that most people have no idea what a VFW Post does for its community. Thus, list all the activities such as:

- Does your Post send care packages to local troops in Afghanistan?
- Does your Post help out homeless vets?
- How about a food pantry or food distribution to the needy?
- Do Post members regularly visit the VA to see patients?
- Do you allow the use of your Post building to other community groups such as the Boy or Girl Scouts?
- Does your Post participate in Patriot's Pen or Voice of Democracy? If so, how much money have you given to local students over the past 10 years (the amount might surprise you!).

**(7) OK, here is an issue that might come up. Most VFW Posts are classified by the Internal Revenue Service at 501(c)(19) not the more common 501(c)(3).** A 501(c)(19) is still a nonprofit designation but it is specific to a “...*group of past or present members of the American Armed Services*” whereas a 501(c)(3) is simply “...*a general nonprofit.*” Regardless, a donor such as a company or individual, would almost always get the same tax benefit contributing to a 501(c)(19) as they would to a 501(c)(3). With that said, in most instances a corporation, foundation or individual only wants to donate to a 501(c)(3) as they are not familiar with the 501(c)(19) designation. If this is the case, we can usually still make a donation possible. The donor can make the grant/check out to the VFW Foundation. We highly advise that you call and consult us (phone number below) before running a gift through the Foundation so our staff can keep an eye out for it. Once the grant check is received, the Foundation will cash it and send your Post a check for 100% of the original gift!

Here are two points to emphasize to the donor (and once they understand this they usually will go ahead and make the donation).

1. 100% of their money with no administrative or other costs will return to the Post as the VFW Foundation does this as a service to VFW Posts/Departments;
2. The donor will receive a tax receipt not from your Post/Department but from the VFW Foundation which is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. The VFW Foundation has a variety of pre-made letters for this purpose that we can send your Post.

So we can effectively track potential donations, please call us for further guidance before proceeding.

NOTE: The VFW Foundation cannot pass through government funds (federal, state, county or city). Moreover, each donation also must be in excess of \$500.

**(8) Here are two other important things that the VFW Foundation can also do for VFW Posts and Departments:**

I. Provide a variety of fundraising template letters that you can edit and make specific to the needs of your Post/Department. These are in Microsoft Word format and can be emailed to you.

II. The Foundation has access to a national database that facilitates detailed research for all foundation gifts made in every single U.S. county (including yours). Depending on the size of the county (whether it's urban or rural) usually determines the amount of foundation activity. Thus, with that said a county for a large urban city such as Pittsburgh, PA, might have substantial foundation activity whereas a county in the middle of Kansas might have none. One never knows until it is researched in the database. When identifying potential foundation donors, information is sent to the Post/Department that will include the name, address, contact person, telephone #, etc. If a foundation is interested in possibly funding your Post/Department, they

might send you an application to fill out. If so, contact the Foundation for assistance. By the way, getting grant money is entirely possible. For example, several Posts have received grants in excess of \$25,000 with information provided. To receive this information, please send an email (address below) requesting research along with the name of the county and state your Post is located in.

We know it's often difficult to raise money these days. To succeed you will have to dedicate yourself to this cause and naturally expend a fair amount of effort. A wise man once said that nothing good ever happens by chance without commitment and determination. We are here to help so do not hesitate to contact us with your fundraising questions or concerns.

**CONTACT US:** [vfwfoundation.org](http://vfwfoundation.org), [foundation@vfw.org](mailto:foundation@vfw.org) or call 816.968.1174.