ACTION: Notice of Funding Availability

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SUMMARY:

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Initial

FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY NAME: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY TITLE: Adaptive Sports Programs for Disabled Veterans and Disabled Members of the Armed Forces

Department of Veterans Affairs 38 CFR Part 77

Funding Availability under the Grants for Adaptive Sports Programs for Disabled Veterans and Disabled Members of the Armed Forces

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: VA-SPORTS-19

CFDA NUMBER: 64.034

KEY DATES: Applications for adaptive sports program grants under the Adaptive Sports Grant Program must be submitted via www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 14, 2019. The mission of the Office of National Veterans Sports Programs & Special Events (NVSP&SE) is to provide opportunities for Veterans to improve their independence, well-being, and quality of life through adaptive sports and therapeutic arts programs.

VA is announcing the availability of funds for adaptive sports grants under the Adaptive Sports Grant Program, administered by the Veterans Health Administration

(VHA). Awards made for adaptive sports activities will fund operations for a 13-month period beginning September 1, 2019 and ending September 30, 2020.

The goals and objectives of the Adaptive Sports Grant Program include providing adaptive sport activities designed to enhance the rehabilitative and therapeutic health of Veterans and Servicemembers across the complete spectrum of adaptive sport activities – from recreational through elite levels of competition. This is achieved through support for training of adaptive sports providers, athlete assessment / classification, adaptive sport program development and equipping, and provision and instruction in adaptive sports. Programs awarded grants can range from local and community-based to those with national outreach.

This notice of funding availability (NOFA) contains information concerning the Adaptive Sports Grant Program, the grant application processes, and the amount of funding available. VA strongly recommends referring to 38 CFR part 77, Grants for Adaptive Sports Programs for Disabled Veterans and Disabled Members of the Armed Forces in conjunction with this notice (https://www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/38_CFR_Part_77_Federal_Register_Posting.pdf ).

ADDRESSES:

*Submission of Application Package:* The Adaptive Sports Grant application (listed as VA-Adaptive Sports Grant Program) for funding opportunity VA-SPORTS-19 is available through Grants.gov (http://www.grants.gov/ ). Two additional mandatory forms (VA Form 10096 and VA Form 10091) to be included with the application are located at the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program webpage at https://www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-

program/. All application documents are to be submitted through Grants.gov to VHA Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events (10P4RN), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420. Applications may not be sent by mail, email or facsimile (FAX). Applications must be received in Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the application deadline date. All application materials must be in a format compatible with the Grants.gov application submission tool. Applications must arrive 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. Applicants may submit an amendment to a grant application as described under 38 CFR 77.6.

To submit an application in Grants.gov, the applicant must have:

- A current registration in Duns & Bradstreet for a D-U-N-S Number (http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/),
- A current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) for a Commercial and Government Entity Code (CAGE) (https://www.sam.gov/SAM/),
- A current E-Business Point of Contact that will be submitting the application in the grants.gov system

*Technical Assistance:* Information on how to obtain technical assistance with the preparation of an initial Adaptive Sports Grant application is available on the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program webpage at: https://www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-program/

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**:**

VHA Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events (10P4RN), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420; (202) 632-7136 (this is NOT a toll-free number); sports4vets@va.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

## I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. *Purpose:* The purpose of the Adaptive Sports Grant Program is to provide grants to eligible adaptive sports entities to plan, develop, manage, and implement programs to provide adaptive sports activities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. For the purpose of this Program, adaptive sports activities are defined as:

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

The grantee may offer disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces opportunities to participate directly in adaptive sports, to participate in adaptive sports competitions, or to participate in activities where a new sport can be learned.

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

The grantee may offer adaptive sports training opportunities to community providers and/or VA staff members to improve their skills or learn new approaches for the delivery of adaptive sports to Veterans or Servicemembers.

(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*.

The grantee may offer sport-specific classification of Veteran athletes, training of providers to be classifiers, or may purchase certain types of equipment. 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. However, construction will not be authorized through this grant mechanism.

*B. Funding Priorities:* The primary goal for this NOFA is to ensure that appropriate levels of resources are provided to eligible adaptive sports entities with capabilities that are well suited to meet the needs and priorities for Veterans with disabilities and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities as described in the Adaptive Sports Grant Program goals and objectives. Priorities to be supported by this NOFA are **providing adaptive sports activities that are of increased interest for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities, and providing adaptive sports activities in geographic regions where limited sports opportunities are available for this population.**

C. *Definitions:* 38 CFR 77.2 contains definitions of terms used in the Adaptive Sports Grant Program and this NOFA.

D. *Approach:* Grantees will be expected to leverage Adaptive Sports Grant funds to provide adaptive sports activities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. In doing so, grantees are required to establish outreach programs

as detailed in 38 CFR 77.11. Grantees may work through coordinated partnerships built through formal agreements or the informal working relationships commonly existing among adaptive sports entities, Veteran Service Organizations, and other entities providing adaptive sport activities and/or services. This grant program is administered annually and does not guarantee subsequent awards.

E. *Authority:* This grant program is authorized by 38 U.S.C. 521A, as extended by Public Law 115-251. VA implements the Adaptive Sports Grant Program by regulation in 38 CFR 77. Funds made available under this NOFA are subject to the requirements of the aforementioned regulations and other applicable laws and regulations.

F. *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 CFR 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 administrative expenses, which includes administrative personnel** identified in 38 CFR 77.14(c). Administrative personnel expenses include 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.

(2) Grantees may support or provide services (including adaptive sports activities) to individuals with disabilities who are not Veterans or members of the Armed Forces, or both, but grantees may not use grant funds to support or provide services

(including adaptive sports activities) to those individuals, as identified in 38 CFR 77.14(d).

(3) Grantees may not use grant funds to support or provide services from individuals barred from receiving VA benefits, as identified in 38 CFR 77.14(e).

## II. Award Information

A. *Overview:* This NOFA announces the availability of up to fifteen million dollars ($15,000,000) for initial grants (see Section IV.F.1.a below for definition) to provide adaptive sports activities to Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities under the Adaptive Sports Grants Program.

B. *Funding:* The funding priorities for this NOFA are as follows:

(1) VA will provide up to $15,000,000 over a 13-month period for initial grants to eligible entities proposing adaptive sports activities listed under I.A. (*Purpose*) above.

(2) Of the funding available, up to $1,500,000 has been designated for equine therapy dedicated to Equine-Assisted Therapy for Veterans with mental health issues.

(3) **VA will not consider the renewable grant application format under this NOFA**. Current grantees must submit an initial application if seeking grant funding.

C. *Allocation of Funds:* Funding will be awarded under this NOFA to grantees for a 13-month period. The following requirements apply to adaptive sports grants awarded under this NOFA:

(1) The maximum award amount for an Adaptive Sports Grant Program application under this NOFA is $750,000. Of note, there are additional audit requirements for entities that expend $750,000 or more from federal grants, as outlined in 2 CFR part 200.501.

(2) There is not an established maximum number of Adaptive Sports Grant Program applications per eligible adaptive sports entity per year.

(3) Proposals with multiple components should be submitted as one application packet. Multiple applications from the same applicant for the same program will not be considered.

D. *Adaptive Sports Activities Grant Award Period:* All Adaptive Sports Grant Program awards will be for a 13-month period.

## III. Eligibility Information

A. *Eligible Applicants:* To be eligible, an applicant must:

(1) Qualify as a Non-Federal Government entity with significant experience in managing a large-scale adaptive sports program, as defined in identified in 38 CFR 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.

(2) Demonstrate a minimum of two continuous years of implementing adaptive sports activities and working with individuals with disabilities (these years must occur immediately prior to the date of the Adaptive Sports Grant application submission to VA).

(3) When more than one entity will be engaged in the provision of the adaptive sports activities, the entity applying for the Adaptive Sports Grant must provide documentation that verifies sufficient experience is available through the partnership to implement all of the adaptive sports activities proposed in the adaptive sports grant application.

B. *Cost Sharing or Matching*: This section is not applicable to the Adaptive Sports Grant Program.

C. *Equine Therapy*: To be eligible for consideration for funding specifically designated for equine therapy for mental health issues provided by Public Law 115-244 as explained in the Conference Report (House Report 115-929) and the Senate Report 115-269 for the Public Law, the applicant must clearly document objectives and strategies to address mental health issues through equine therapy in the grant proposal. Applications with equine therapy that do not provide justification of mental health aspects will be considered as a general Adaptive Sports Grant Program applicant. For Sections IV, V, and VI under this NOFA, the instructions for equine therapy for mental health issues and all other grant applications are the same.

D. *Other*: To be eligible, an entity must comply with 2 CFR part 200 criteria for a Non-Federal entity eligible for federal grant programs. For example, if an entity has been found to be in violation of a particular Federal statute and as a result is precluded from receipt of federal grant funds, that entity is ineligible and will not be considered for a grant. Because the Adaptive Sports Grant Program provides adaptive sports activities for Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities, applicants that do not provide adaptive sports activities for disabled Veterans, disabled members of the Armed

Forces, or persons with disabilities that are the same as Veterans or members of the Armed Forces, will not be considered for funding.

## IV. Application and Submission Information

A*. Obtaining an Application Package*: Download application materials directly from the Grants.gov website and VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program webpage, http://www.grants.gov/ and https://www.blogs.va.gov/nvspse/grant-program/, respectively. Any questions regarding this process should be referred to the NVSP&SE Program Office via phone at (202) 632-7136 (not a toll-free number) or via e-mail at sports4vets@va.gov.

B. *Content and Form of Application Submission:* ***Note: Upload all forms for the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program Opportunity Number VA-SPORTS-19 application via the Grants.gov portal***

(1) **Proposed Adaptive Sports Program Narrative**: Upload as "Narrative.pdf". Describe the proposed project in detail using the outline below:

a. Background: Provide background information regarding the current program. Clearly articulate how the program has been implementing adaptive sports activities and working with individuals with disabilities, the goals and objectives of the plan proposed for funding, and support to demonstrate the proposed plan will address the priorities listed above. Inclusion of outcomes from historical programming is encouraged.

b. Implementation Plan and Environment: Provide an overall strategic implementation plan for completing the proposed plan, to include the program design, funding utilization, and how the facilities and/or resources supported by the award will help meet the goals and objectives of the plan. Outline resources that will be created and/or leveraged through the award. Describe any end products/deliverables that will be developed by the conclusion of the award period. Explain how the plan can be initiated without delay once the award is made.

c. Impact: Describe the potential impact the proposed plan will have on increasing the availability of adaptive sport activities for Veterans and Servicemembers with disabilities.

**(2) Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)**: Upload as "SF-424.pdf". This form can be found on the Grants.gov website.

**(3) Budget Information (SF-424A)**: Upload as "SF-424A.pdf". This form can be found on the Grants.gov website.

**(4) Assurances (SF-424B)**: Upload as "SF-424B.pdf". This form can be found on the Grants.gov website.

**(5) Adaptive Sport Grant Application (VA-10096)**: Upload as "VA-10096.pdf". This form can be found on the NVSP&SE Program website.

**(6) VA-FSC Vender File Request Form (VA-10091)**: Upload as "VA-10091.pdf". This form can be found on the NVSP&SE Program website.

**(7) Letters of Support**: Combine all documents and upload as "Letters.pdf".

**a.** Letters of Outreach Support: Provide a letter (or letters, if applicable) for relationships established to provide outreach support, consistent with 38 CFR 77.11, signed by the Service or Department Chair, supervisor/manager, or appropriate organization official, confirming the interest and ability of the organization to support the relationship with the grant applicant. Such letters are not required to come from the individual with which the relationship has been established if this individual is not in a position to speak for the organization.

**b.** Letters of Partnerships (if applicable): If the adaptive sports activities will be implemented through partnerships as described in §§ 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. Relatedly, letters of recommendation from individuals and entities that are not involved in delivery of adaptive sports services do not qualify as partnership letters.

C. *Submission Dates and Times*: Once all submission requirements are completed (please see *Submission of Application Package* section), applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 14, 2019. Grants

will fund operations for the 13-month period beginning September 1, 2019 and ending September 30, 2020. 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. Additionally, in the interest of fairness to all competing applicants, this deadline is firm as to date and hour, and VA will treat as ineligible for consideration any application that is received after the deadline. Applicants should consider this practice and make early submission of their materials to avoid risk of loss of eligibility brought about by unanticipated delays, computer service outages, or other submission-related problems. If an application package has been submitted, applicants may submit an amendment to the grant application package as described under 38 CFR 77.6.

D. *Intergovernmental Review*: This section is not applicable to the Adaptive Sports Grant Program.

E. *Funding Restrictions:* Up to $15,000,000 will be awarded for adaptive sports grants to be funded under this NOFA. This funding includes up to $1,500,000 for equine therapy for mental health issues, and the remaining funding for all other adaptive sports grants. Eligible entities are not restricted to the number of grants they may receive. The following requirements apply to adaptive sports activities grants awarded under this NOFA:

(1) A grant may not exceed $750,000.

(2) There is not an established maximum number of Adaptive Sports Grant Program applications per eligible adaptive sports entity per year. Multiple applications for the same program from the same applicant will not be considered.

(3) An eligible entity that receives a grant may use a portion of the grant for administration and personnel expenses of the eligible entity within the authorized levels as described in 38 CFR 77.14(c).

F. *Other Submission Requirements*:

(1) Applicants may apply for an initial grant at this time, but not a renewal grant.

(a) *Initial Grant*. An eligible entity may apply for funding as an initial grant regardless of whether they have received prior funding from the VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program.

(b) *Renewal Grant*. In subsequent years after receiving an initial grant, 38 CFR 77.4(b) provides the option for grantees to apply for a renewal grant if the grantee's program will remain substantially the same. As a reminder, VA NVSP&SE is not accepting renewal applications for the Adaptive Sports Grant Program during FY2019, and current grantees must submit initial applications pursuant to 38 CFR part 77.4(a) if seeking a grant.

(2) Submission of *an incorrect or incomplete application package will result in the application being rejected* during an initial administrative review. The application packages must contain all required forms and certifications. Selections will be made based on criteria described in 38 CFR 77.5 and this NOFA. Applicants and grantees will be notified of any additional information needed to confirm or clarify information provided in the application and the deadline by which to submit such information. The application package must be submitted through Grants.gov to be transmitted to the following: VHA Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events

(10P4RN), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20420. Applications may ***not*** be sent by mail, email or facsimile (FAX).

## V. Application Review Information

A. *Criteria*

(1) ***Administrative Review****:* VA will only score applicants that meet the following minimum requirements:

(a) The application is filed within the time period established in the NOFA;

(b) The application is completed in all parts;

(c) The applicant is an eligible entity as defined in 38 CFR Part 77.2;

(d) The activities for which the adaptive sports program grant is requested are eligible for funding under 38 CFR part 77 and this NOFA;

(e) The applicant's proposed participants are eligible to receive adaptive sports activities under 38 CFR part 77;

(f) The applicant agrees to comply with the requirements under 38 CFR part 77;

(g) 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; and

(h) The applicant is not in default by failing to meet the requirements for any previous Federal assistance.

(2) ***Merit Review***: VA will use the following criteria to score applicants who are applying for Adaptive Sports Grant Program grants, consistent with 38 CFR Part 77.12(f):

(a) VA will award up to 10 points based on the applicant's adaptive sports activities plan;

(b) VA will award up to 10 points based on the applicant’s program concept and objectives;

(c) VA will award up to 10 points depending on the program design based on facts, good reasoning, sound judgment, and logic, and program elements directly linked to the achievement of program objectives;

(d) VA will award up to 10 points based on adequacy of program management structure to include background, qualifications, experience, and past performance (with particular focus on adaptive sports activities) of the applicant, and any partner or partners identified by the applicant in the adaptive sports grant application;

(e) VA will award up to 20 points based on the applicant's capability (including support provided by any partnership or partnerships) to successfully execute the program;

(f) VA will award up to 15 points based on the applicant's financial capability and plan and based on whether budgeted costs are reasonable, allowable and produce good value for the amount of funds paid for the activities proposed to be undertaken;

i. The following will generally not be considered reasonable budgeted costs: Grant funding requests to purchase vehicles or horses and for athlete or staff to attend VA national rehabilitation events. But

grant funding to rent a wheelchair accessible van, bus, or truck would generally be considered reasonable.

ii. Travel funds greater than 20% of the total grant award require a request for an exemption in the narrative portion of the grant application. It is not authorized to use funding for travel for VA employees to attend adaptive sports trainings.

iii. If an applicant has an existing agreement with VA (e.g., MOA), the application and agreement will be considered individually to ensure that services are not duplicated.

(g) VA will award up to 15 points based on the applicant's proposal to provide adaptive sports opportunities in geographic regions where VA has identified limited sports opportunities for disabled Veterans and disabled members of the Armed Forces. This weighting also will include demographic distribution of population in determining geographic need; and

(h) VA will award up to 10 points based on the applicant's proposal to provide an adaptive sports activity or adaptive sports activities that meet VA's current priorities and needs for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities. Grant applications will be evaluated based on how clearly they explain how the proposed adaptive sports activities meet the priorities described in Section I.B. above.

Detailed information regarding the application process is located in 38 CFR 77.4-77.13.

B. *Review and Selection Process:* VA will review all initial adaptive sports program grant applications in response to this NOFA according to the following steps. Applications will be scored as described above. These scores will serve as a basis for selection, while also considering relevance of the applications to the total amount of grant funds allocated for a specific sport, region, or type of activity. A minimum score of 65 points is required to be considered for a grant.

## VI. Federal Award Administration Information

A. *Award Notices*: Although subject to change, the Office of NVSP&SE expects to announce grant recipients on or about August 31, 2019. Prior to executing a funding agreement, VA will contact the applicants, make known the amount of proposed funding, and verify the applicant is still seeking the funding. Once VA verifies this information with the applicant, VA will enter into an agreement with the grantee and make payments to the grant recipient in accordance with 38 CFR part 77, VA Office of Finance policy (http://www.va.gov/finance/policy/pubs/volumeX.asp), and other applicable provisions of this NOFA.

B. *Administrative and National Policy Requirements:* In order to qualify for funding under the Adaptive Sports Grant Program, grantees are required to offer outreach programs as described in 38 CFR 77.11. Consistent with VA's adaptive sports outreach programs' goals, grantees will interact with VA's outreach programs to facilitate effectiveness and efficiency of the adaptive sports grant and the comprehensive approach of providing adaptive sports opportunities at the national, regional and community-based levels for Veterans, and members of the Armed Forces, with disabilities.

C. *Reporting*: VA places great emphasis on the responsibility and accountability of grantees. As described in 38 CFR 77.16 and 77.18, VA has procedures in place to monitor adaptive sports activities provided to participants and outcomes associated with the adaptive sports activities provided. Applicants should be aware of the following:

1. Upon execution of a grant agreement with VA, grantees will comply with requests from the Office of NVSP&SE for provision of oversight and monitoring of adaptive sports activities subject to 38 CFR 77.18.

2. Grantees will be required to report data such as information on participants served, time spent providing adaptive sports activities, financial and acquisition data related to the grant, and types of supportive services provided. Grantees must treat the data for activities funded by the Adaptive Sports Grant Program separate from that of activities funded by other programs. Grantees will be required to work with NVSP&SE to report grantee-level data for activities funded by the Adaptive Sports Grant Program to VA on at least a quarterly basis, consistent with 38 CFR 77.16.

3. VA shall complete annual monitoring evaluations of each grantee. Monitoring will also include the submission of quarterly and annual financial and performance reports by the grantee. The grantee will be expected to demonstrate adherence to the grantee's proposed program concept, as described in the grantee's application.

4. Grantees will be assessed based on their ability to provide the deliverables outlined in their grant application. In addition to meeting program requirements defined by the regulations and NOFA, grantees will be assessed on their ability to facilitate participants' opportunities for ongoing participation in adaptive sports activities to enhance therapeutic effects.

## VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

A. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael F. Welch, VHA Office of National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events (10P4RN), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20420; (202) 632-7136 (this is NOT a toll-free number); sports4vets@va.gov.

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 the proposal review process has been completed.

## VIII. Other Information

A. *VA's Goals and Objectives for Funds Awarded Under this NOFA:* In accordance with 38 CFR 77.5(a)(7) and (8), VA will evaluate an applicant's ability to meet VA's goals and objectives for the Adaptive Sports Grant Program. VA's goals and objectives include the provision of adaptive sports activities designed to enhance the rehabilitative, therapeutic, and health of Veterans and members of the Armed Forces with disabilities across geographic regions. For purposes of this NOFA, VA's goals and objectives also include the provision of adaptive sports activities across the spectrum of adaptive sports from recreational through elite levels of participation.

B. *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 either a just-in-time or

reimbursement basis as per guidance from the Office of Management and Budget. This process minimizes the time elapsing between the transfer of funds from the United States Treasury and the disbursement by the Adaptive Sports Grant Program grant recipient.