

VETERANS EMERGENCY FUND TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of the Veterans Emergency Fund (VEF) is to enable Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to provide funds to assist Veterans and their families during times of crisis and when facing emergency financial situations that threaten their health and well-being. These Terms and Conditions set out the parameters under which the VEF is managed.

2. Program Authority

The *Department of Veterans Affairs Act* provides authority to the Minister of Veterans Affairs to administer Acts of Parliament and orders in council that are not by law assigned to any other federal department or any Minister for the care, treatment and re-establishment in civilian life of Veterans and the care of their dependents and survivors, and such other matters as the Governor in Council may assign.

An Order in Council provides authority for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to create the VEF and to enter into funding agreements and make transfer payments for the purposes of this program.

This proposal aligns with this mandate. As part of Budget 2017, the Government announced the VEF at \$1 million per year over 4 years.

3. Effective Date

The Veterans Emergency Fund is effective as of April 1, 2018.

4. Objectives

The objective of the program is to provide prompt monetary assistance to eligible Veterans and their family members who are facing financial crisis/emergency with the intent of resolving the immediate need. Where appropriate, applicants will also be referred to additional resources for longer-term support.

The VEF will allow VAC to meet its mandated commitments of assisting Veterans with the care, treatment and re-establishment in civilian life, as well as repaying the nation's debt of gratitude toward those who have sacrificed for our country.

5. Expected Outcomes

The Department's internal reporting and monitoring system, financial reporting and Department-sponsored research activities will be used to gather the information needed to measure and report the VEF's performance.

The following outline short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes of this program:

Short-Term and Medium-Term Outcomes

- Veterans and their families utilize the VEF
- Veterans Emergency Fund payments are made in a timely manner
- Veterans are referred to resources that assist them to manage their finances

Long-Term Outcomes

- Veterans and their families are financially secure

6. Definitions

Veteran

A Veteran is a person with Regular or Reserve force service (regardless of the amount of time served) in the Canadian Forces or merchant navy, or in the navy, army, air forces or merchant navies of Her Majesty's allied forces.

Spouse/Common Law Partner

A spouse or common-law partner is someone who is either residing with the Veteran in a conjugal relationship or with whom they are involuntarily or temporarily separated¹.

Survivor

A survivor, in relation to a deceased Veteran or CAF member, means the spouse or common-law partner who was, at the time of the Veteran's or CAF member's death was normally residing with the Veteran.

Orphan

An orphan, in relation to a deceased member or a deceased Veteran, means their child, or a child of their survivor or a child of a former spouse/former common-law partner who, at the time of the member's or Veteran's death, receives financial support of the Veteran and who is, at the time of application:

- under the age of 18 years;
- under the age of 25 years and following a course of instruction approved by the Minister;
or
- over the age of 18 years and prevented by physical or mental incapacity from earning a livelihood, if the incapacity occurred
 - before the child attained the age of 18 years, or

¹ An involuntary or temporary separation could happen when one spouse or common-law partner is away for work, school, or health reasons, etc. A common-law partner must be residing with the Veteran for a continuous period of at least twelve months before recognition of the common-law relationship can occur. While cohabitation is the primary basis of establishing a common-law relationship, there may be circumstances where the parties are involuntarily or temporarily separated. When that occurs the parties will still be considered to be common-law partners for the sake of this benefit. Cases of temporary separation of Veterans and their spouses/common-law partners will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

- after the age of 18 years and before the age of 25 years while the child was following a course of instruction approved by the Minister.

Dependent

A dependent is the Veteran’s natural or adopted child or a child of his/her spouse or common-law partner or a child of the former spouse/former common-law partner to whom the Veteran provides financial support. This includes a child who is:

- Under the age of 18;
- Under the age of 25 years and following a course of instruction approved by the Minister; or
- Over the age of 18 years and prevented by physical or mental incapacity from earning a livelihood, if the incapacity occurred:
 - before the child reached the age of 18 years; or
 - after the age of 18 years and before the age of 25 years while the child was following a course of instruction approved by the Minister.

7. Eligible Recipients

Eligibility for this fund is purposely broad to reduce restrictions being placed on those who require immediate financial help and to assist as many people as possible.

Eligible recipients for funding will include:

1. Veterans²
2. Current Spouses/Common-law partners of Veterans
3. Survivors of Veterans or of deceased CAF members
4. Orphans of Veterans or CAF members (or the legal guardian if the orphan is under the age of 18 years)

Eligible recipients must reside in Canada³.

8. Eligible Expenditures

VEF funds are considered as social assistance payments and as such, are not considered as income for the purposes of personal income tax.

The following categories address the types of financial emergencies that may be provided through the VEF to eligible recipients (or to eligible recipients on behalf of their dependents). The list is not exhaustive and each application should be considered on the merits of the individual’s circumstances and demonstrated need:

1. Food

² In cases where two or more Veterans live together in one household, each shall be eligible for this program in their own right

³ Residing in Canada means they are absent from Canada for intervals of no more than 183 consecutive days, or 183 cumulative days between July 1 of one year and June 30 of the next year.

2. Clothing
3. Shelter
4. Medical care/expenses
5. Expenses required to maintain safety and shelter

9. Ineligible Expenditures

Payments will not be made on the basis of the following:

1. Funding requests of an ongoing nature (e.g. a series of payments such as rent, mortgage, vehicle payments etc.)
2. Funding requests of a commercial nature
3. Funding requests to purchases non-essential goods, services or travel

10. Application Requirements

An application for VEF funds will be made in the format provided by the Department and will include, at a minimum:

1. Name and contact information of the applicant
2. Service number of the Veteran
3. The specific reason for the request and the nature of the emergency
4. Declaration as to financial need and lack of access to liquid assets to address the need
5. Attestation to the validity of all information provided in the application

VAC may seek additional details to confirm identity and/or relationship to a Veteran by requesting additional documents such as quotes, invoices, or bills, etc., that show the amount required to cover the emergency need or expenses

11. Maximum Amount Payable

The maximum amount payable per Veteran per household per fiscal year will be \$2,500. In cases where both spouses are Veterans or where Veterans are otherwise sharing accommodations, each shall be eligible in their own right to the maximum amount payable per fiscal year, providing the funds are requested for separate purposes. Household refers to a person or a group of persons who occupy a collective dwelling and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada, and for the purposes of this section includes an Orphan and a Dependent.

Eligible recipients may make application to the VEF more than once a year, and therefore may receive VEF funds more than once a year up to the maximum amount of \$2,500. Payments will be authorized by officials in accordance with VAC's existing financial delegated authorities table.

12. Exceeding Rates

The amount payable may be exceeded up to a total maximum of \$10,000 in exceptional circumstances as determined by the Minister.⁴

13. Basis of Payment

VEF payments will be paid as a grant in accordance with government legislation and policies, including the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Treasury Board Policy on Transfer Payments*.

Payments may be made via Standard Payment System (SPS) cheques, direct deposits, and via a dedicated Veterans Emergency Fund Grant (acquisition) card.

VAC will direct VEF payments to a third party (e.g. utility company) where authorized by the Applicant provided the third party is not a charity or non-profit organization.

14. Stacking Limit

Where possible and appropriate, the costs will be shared with the recipient and/or with government and/or the private sector and/or non-profits in the community. However, where the sharing of costs is not feasible, total government funding must not exceed 100 percent of eligible expenditures.

15. Delegation of Authorities

The Minister of Veterans Affairs has full authority to approve agreements and expenditures related to the VEF. This authority may be delegated in accordance with the VAC delegation of spending and financial authority instruments.

16. Due Diligence

Departmental systems, procedures and resources are in place to ensure due diligence in approving payments and verifying eligibility and entitlement for the management and administration of the program.

17. Duration of Terms and Conditions

These terms and conditions do not have an expiry date. Should changes be required, the terms and conditions will be amended.

18. Reviews

Applicants do not have the right to request a review of decisions rendered by VAC if the applicant disagrees with the decision.

19. Official Languages

⁴ An example of circumstances where the amount exceeds \$2,500 might be the unexpected costs associated with crucial inter-provincial travel to a children's hospital.

VAC will provide access to the program in both official languages in accordance with the spirit and intent of the *Official Languages Act* and the Treasury Board policies and directives on official languages.