

CHAPTER 197

VETERANS; REWARDS, PRIVILEGES

197.608 Veterans service office grant program.

197.609 Education program.

197.608 VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE GRANT PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. **Grant program.** A veterans service office grant program is established to be administered by the commissioner of veterans affairs consisting of grants to counties to enable them to enhance the effectiveness of their veterans service offices.

Subd. 2. **Rule development.** The commissioner of veterans affairs shall consult with the Minnesota association of county veterans service officers in formulating rules to implement the grant program.

Subd. 3. **Eligibility.** To be eligible for a grant under this program, a county must:

(1) employ a county veterans service officer as authorized by sections 197.60 and 197.606, who is certified to serve in this position by the commissioner of veterans affairs;

(2) submit a written plan for the proposed expenditures to enhance the functioning of the county veterans service office in accordance with the program rules; and

(3) apply for the grant according to procedures to be established for this program by the commissioner and receive written approval from the commissioner for the grant in advance of making the proposed expenditures.

Subd. 4. **Grant application.** (a) A grant application must be submitted to the department of veterans affairs according to procedures to be established by the commissioner. The grant application must include a specific description of the plan for enhancing the operation of the county veterans service office.

(b) The commissioner shall approve a grant application only if it meets the criteria for eligibility as established and announced by the commissioner and there are sufficient funds remaining in the grant program to cover the amount of the grant. The commissioner may request modification of a plan. If the commissioner rejects a grant application, written reasons for the rejection must be provided to the applicant county and the county may modify the application and resubmit it.

Subd. 5. **Qualifying uses.** The commissioner of veterans affairs shall determine whether the plan specified in the grant application will enable the applicant county to enhance the effectiveness of its county veterans office.

Notwithstanding subdivision 3, clause (1), a county may apply for and use a grant for the training and education required by the commissioner for a newly employed county veterans service officer's certificate, or for the continuing education of other staff.

Subd. 6. **Grant amount.** The amount of each grant must be determined by the commissioner of veterans affairs, and may not exceed the lesser of:

(1) the amount specified in the grant application to be expended on the plan for enhancing the effectiveness of the county veterans service office; or

(2) the county's share of the total funds available under the program, determined in the following manner:

(i) if the county's veteran population is less than 1,000, the county's grant share shall be \$2,000;

(ii) if the county's veteran population is 1,000 or more but less than 3,000, the county's grant share shall be \$4,000;

(iii) if the county's veteran population is 3,000 or more but less than 10,000, the county's grant share shall be \$6,000; or

(iv) if the county's veteran population is 10,000 or more, the county's grant share shall be \$8,000.

In any year, only one-half of the counties in each of the four veteran population categories (i) to (iv) may be awarded grants. Grants shall be awarded on a first-come first-served basis to counties submitting applications which meet the commissioner's criteria as established in the rules. Any county not receiving a grant in any given year shall receive priority consideration for a grant the following year.

In any year, after a period of time to be determined by the commissioner, any amounts remaining from undistributed county grant shares may be reallocated to the other counties which have submitted qualifying application.

The veteran population of each county shall be determined by the figure supplied by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, as adopted by the commissioner.

History: 1993 c 192 s 79; 1993 c 366 s 5

197.609 EDUCATION PROGRAM.

Subdivision 1. Establishment and administration. An education program for county veterans service officers is established to be administered by the commissioner of veterans affairs.

Subd. 2. Eligibility. To be eligible for the program in this section, a person must currently be employed as a county veterans service officer as authorized by sections 197.60 to 197.606, and be certified to serve in that position by the commissioner of veterans affairs or be serving a probationary period as authorized by section 197.60, subdivision 2.

Subd. 3. Program content. The program in this section must include but is not limited to informing county veteran service officers of the federal, state, and private benefits and services available to veterans, training them in procedures for applying for these benefits, updating them on the changes in these benefits and the eligibility criteria and application procedures, informing them of judicial and regulatory decisions involving veterans programs, training them in the legal procedures for appealing decisions disallowing benefits to veterans, and providing education, information, and training for any other aspects of the veteran service officer position.

History: 1993 c 192 s 80