



**COLORADO**  
**Department of Local Affairs**  
Division of Local Government

# Mobile Veterans Support Unit Colorado Revised Statute 24-32-118.5

## SMART ACT REPORT

January 2024



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## **SMART ACT REPORT** **Mobile Veterans Support Unit Grant Program** **January 2024**

Section 24-32-118.5, of the Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S) requires the Department of Local Affairs, Division of Local Government, to provide an update and submit a request to continue the grant program. This document serves as a response to this reporting requirement.

### **Program Overview**

The Mobile Veterans Support Unit grant provides funding to an eligible Veteran-owned and focused organization, experienced in serving military Veterans, for the provision of services to all military Veterans in rural Colorado areas who have experienced homelessness and/or are without the ability to access essential services.

The Mobile Veterans Support Unit grant is a two-year grant to provide services to military Veterans of any discharge status.

Colorado Senate Bill 21-032, signed into law on June 23, 2021, to establish the Mobile Veterans Support Unit grant, administered through the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). This legislation came from a gap in support for military Veterans, of any discharge status, to access transportation, resources and housing in rural Colorado areas.

Grant Purpose as provided in statute 24-32-118.5(2)(b):

The grant program must include funding for:

- (I) A two-year grant program;
- (II) Two staff members; and
- (III) The purchase of a vehicle to distribute supplies or transport veterans in rural areas who do not have access to public or private transportation. Every effort must be made to ensure the vehicle is compliant with the federal “Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990”, 42 U.S.C. sec. 12101 et seq., as amended, in order to serve veterans who live with a disability.

Total appropriation:	\$229,070
Total funding Award:	\$182,580
Grantee:	Veterans Community Project (VCP)

The grant has been used to establish a program using the Veterans Homeless Outreach Team (V-HOT) model that has been successfully implemented nationally. This model implements a community partner approach to address homelessness issues, which involves a variety of community partners, including first responders, mental health providers, healthcare providers and other local stakeholders that share the goal of building trust and communication with homeless communities or encampments as an effective way of engaging and assisting those who are homeless.

## Program Status

VCP used the initial funds to purchase and retrofit an ADA compliant mobile outreach unit to serve Veterans in rural areas and where access to appropriate social service support is not available. These services are primarily provided in the northern Colorado counties of Boulder, Weld and Larimer but also include more rural regions down to the Front Range, up to the Wyoming border, no further south than I-70, and no further east than Fort Morgan.

The VCP mobile unit has provided outreach supplies such as hygiene packs, clothing, snack packs (food that does not require a kitchen to prepare) and food boxes (pantry items for those who have some type of housing and access to a kitchen). VCP also provides trained and specialized case managers to assess, engage and refer Veterans to a variety of resources to stabilize housing, access mental health services, behavioral health programs, addiction care services, healthcare, legal services, and other Veteran specific programs. They also provide mobile case management and assistance with workforce development efforts, which includes career coordination, connection to employers, career counseling and employer referrals.

VCP has utilized resources to assist with housing placement and housing stability for Veterans by using local social service agencies and coordinated entry efforts through access points with community partners and other invested stakeholders in each area. This established true wrap-around assistance and case management in each area of service.

VCP's mobile outreach unit officially launched for services in August of 2022, and has since been making trips to local catchment areas, as well as further areas of rural Colorado between four and twelve trips per month. Outreach is currently covering over 8,000 sq miles of Northern Colorado and the Front Range, and the VCP outreach van has traveled a total of 8,179 miles since its launch in August 2022. The first few months were focused on relationship and trust-building in the rural communities. The program has since expanded to include a greater number of outreach partners, and services have been focused more on the areas with the greatest success in connecting directly with Veterans. Service providers in these areas have helped to create the greatest vetting and insurance that Veterans will be present for our outreach events.

Veterans who had an intake for services or supplies have information gathered regarding Veteran status. Verification method and eligibility was conducted with either a DD-214 in hand or through Squares VA eligible confirmation. Those that do not complete an intake for services are considered engagement only connections, which means they visited the mobile unit VCP staff, but did not opt for services.

## Program Successes

The following successes were identified by the grantee.

- 21 Veterans were served through case management, which is 7% of all Veterans served through the VCP outreach and housing program. Of these 21 served, they assisted 3 with attaining housing and prevented 3 from being evicted.
- 31 Veterans received a referral resource or other navigation resource but did not have direct case management through our program.
- 99 Veterans had some level of interaction but did not receive VCP services.



- In addition to Veterans, VCP connected with 40 Veteran family members who were directly connected to the Veterans above.
- VCP V-HOT completed 105 community/outreach visits.
- Continued to make consistent contact with various service partners, gaining greater community trust and a better understanding of the regions where VCP's presence can have the greatest impact.

## **Program Challenges**

The following challenges were identified by the grantee:

- One of the most effective ways to help spread the word about the mobile outreach unit and their outreach services is through community partner connections. Without the support of local services, VCP is very challenged to meet community needs or even understand the community needs.
- Success depends a great deal on the willingness of local organizations to partner. They have had success with this in more local regions, but not in all areas.
- There is still a lot of outsider resistance in rural communities. There is a need to continue to develop trust further if they want to have success in those areas.
- Veteran transportation to events is a challenge, as is Veteran transportation as a whole. Many of the Veterans served need transportation support to services, to healthcare appointments, and other needs. There are minimal available supportive services for transportation and the need continues to climb.
- The model of a mobile support unit does not allow for a deep impact with those served. Investing in partner organizations that already provide services would make them more effective and more impactful to Veterans overall.

## **Report Requirement and recommendation to continue:**

While this one time program has fostered learning about Veteran needs and challenges across the state of Colorado, and having successfully funded the capital needs of the program, the vendor does not believe additional funding for this program is necessary. This program has created a better understanding of needed services for Veterans that can be used to better allocate resources and tap into existing programs to fill the gaps across Colorado.

This report serves as the complete report as required by March 21, 2024, per C.R.S. 24-32-118.5(3)(d).