



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

LFIR # 2551

1. Project Title

2. Senate Sponsor

3. Date of Request

4. Project/Program Description

The Veterans Law Institute (VLI) was created to serve the needs of the 1.5 million veterans throughout Florida. The Veterans Advocacy Clinic (VAC), a program of the VLI, focuses its work on helping veterans receive the disability compensation benefits they have earned from both the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD). The VAC accomplishes this through direct services and policy work. Since 2014, the VAC's work has resulted in veterans receiving approximately \$23.1 million dollars in additional future benefits they have earned, as well as \$12.7 million dollars in back benefits for veterans. The total projected lifetime benefits for these veterans and family members is estimated to be over \$42.4 million dollars. Over the course of one year, law students and VLI attorneys pour approximately 200-300 hours of free legal work into each veteran's case. The VAC current carries as many as 80 active client cases at a time.

5. State Agency to receive requested funds

State Agency contacted? Yes

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Type of Funding	Amount
Operations	438,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	438,000

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	438,000	52%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	398,000	48%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2024-2025	836,000	100%

8. Has this project previously received state funding? Yes

Fiscal Year (YYYY-YY)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		
2020-21	0	250,000	65B	Yes

9. Is future funding likely to be requested? Yes

a. If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.

b. Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.

HEERF 1 = \$115,249
HEERF 2 = \$212,146



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10. Has the entity requesting this project received any federal assistance related to the COVID-19 pandemic?

If yes, indicate the amount of funds received and what the funds were used for.

Stetson Law received approx 615K in HEERF funds. They were used for Media Services expenditures, classroom equipment to allow for distancing and air purification, COVID testing, plexiglass installation, etc.

Complete questions 11 and 12 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

11. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

- Planning
 Design
 Construction
 N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)?

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

12. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

13. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits		0
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Medical evaluation fees to establish eligibility for benefits and severity of conditions.	30,000
Operational Costs: Other		
Salary and Benefits	Director/Attorney/Professor Associate Director/Attorney Veterans Law Institute Coordinator	150,000
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Technology, software, advocacy, and travel	80,000
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Case Management, Paralegals, Staff Attorneys	178,000
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		438,000

14. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?



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The goal of VAC is to transform a veteran's life by opening the door to the benefits he or she has earned. Not only can obtaining these benefits completely change the lives of veterans living on the edge of homelessness, but it can also allow veterans to get needed medical treatment at VA facilities more quickly as VA recognizes that their injuries are service-connected. The VAC helps veterans and their family members by developing evidence and arguing their cases within the complex and confusing framework of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs' disability benefits application and appeals process. Legal assistance is provided as veterans file claims, appeal decisions at the local level, the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in Washington, D.C.

b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

To be successful at both the DoD and the VA, the veteran normally will require medical evidence to be submitted on his or her behalf. Each medical examination or review can cost anywhere from \$2500-5000 depending on the nature of the examination and the type of professional administering the testing (psychologist, forensic psychologist, neuropsychologist, or neurologist). We are requesting funding to help provide medical examinations for each of these cases as well. We also use funds to provide transportation to and from evaluation appointments and hearings for homeless and very low income veterans. The funds will also provide resources for outreach to veterans and veteran groups, intake interviews, conducting case analysis, performing fact investigations, preparing claims, and drafting briefs.

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

Legal services to access earned benefits from the US Dept. of Veterans Affairs. This will include outreach to veterans and veteran groups, intake interviews, conducting case analysis, performing fact investigations, gathering witness statements, collecting new medical evidence and opinions from specialists, preparing claims, drafting briefs, appealing decisions, navigating the complex VA decision/appeals system, referrals to other vetted agencies for additional support.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

Disabled veterans, family members of veterans, widows/widowers of veterans, elderly persons, persons with poor mental health, persons with poor physical health, jobless persons, economically disadvantaged persons, homeless persons, physically disabled persons, currently or formerly incarcerated persons, university/college students, and victims of crime. Between 200-300 persons are expected to be served through direct representation, referrals, and information. The VAC currently must refer 90% of the veterans and family members applying for our services out to other organizations due to our limited resources.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?

Improvement in mental health. At least 45 veterans will enroll in and/or seek services and treatment for service-connected mental health conditions from VA.
 Improvement in physical health. At least 45 veterans will be assisted in successfully pursuing benefits for disability from VA which will allow better access to appointment at the VA Medical Centers with less co-payments.
 Improvement in the quality of education. At least 30 law students will work with veterans and learn veterans law.
 Improvement in economic activity and enhancing specific individual's economic self-sufficiency. Case management will track and report monetary increases for veterans assisted.
 Reduction in substance abuse. Veterans who receive VA benefits will get priority health care in order to seek individualized and frequent treatment to reduce substance abuse. This will be measured with case management software and statistics.

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for the contract?

Ineligibility for future funding or grants or repayment of funds.

15. Requester Contact Information

a. First Name **Last Name**

b. Organization

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number **Ext.**



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16. Recipient Contact Information

a. Organization

b. Municipality and County

c. Organization Type

- For Profit Entity
- Non Profit 501(c)(3)
- Non Profit 501(c)(4)
- Local Entity
- University or College
- Other (please specify)

d. First Name Last Name

e. E-mail Address

f. Phone Number

17. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. Name

b. Firm Name

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number