U.S. Veterans Organizations by the Numbers
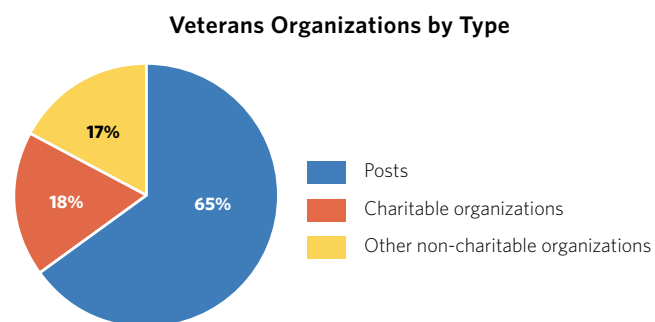
by GuideStar

November 2015

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Prepared by GuideStar

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How Many Veterans Organizations Are There?

More than 45,000 nonprofits devoted to veterans and their families are registered with the IRS.

Veterans Organizations by Type

- 65% Posts
- 18% Charitable organizations
- 17% Other non-charitable organizations

Who Are They?

The IRS recognizes different types of nonprofit organizations. Here's how veterans nonprofits break down in IRS terms:

- The majority of veterans nonprofits—65 percent—are posts or organizations such as the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

- The next largest group—18 percent—of veterans nonprofits are charitable organizations, such as Operation Homefront, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans Workshop, and the Wounded Warrior Project.

  [*Charitable organizations are 501(c)(3) nonprofits, which are organized specifically for charitable purposes and can accept tax-deductible contributions. You can learn more about the underlined different types of nonprofits on GuideStar.*]

- The remaining 17 percent fall among several other categories of non-charitable nonprofits.
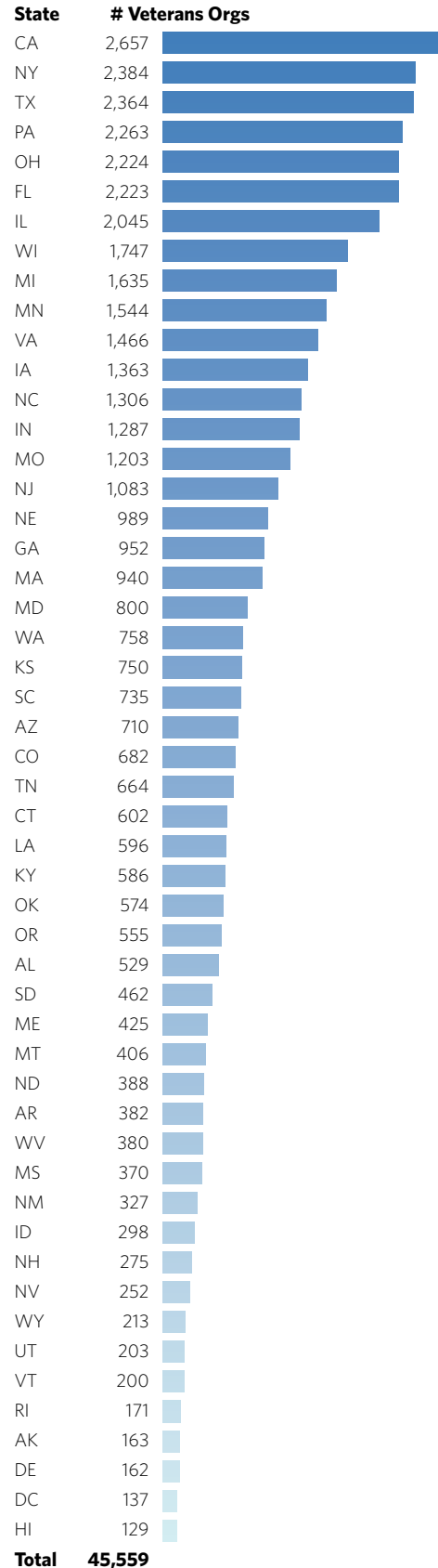
Where Are They?

You'll find veterans organizations in every state of the union. California, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida, and Illinois have the most (more than 2,000 per state). Rhode Island, Alaska, Delaware, and Hawaii each have fewer than 200 veterans nonprofits located in them.

More than 1,000 veterans organizations are in the Washington, DC, metropolitan statistical area (MSA). The Chicago MSA comes in second with more than 745, and the Philadelphia MSA comes in third with 583.

What Do Veterans Organizations Do?

The answer to this question is as varied as the organizations. Veterans nonprofits:
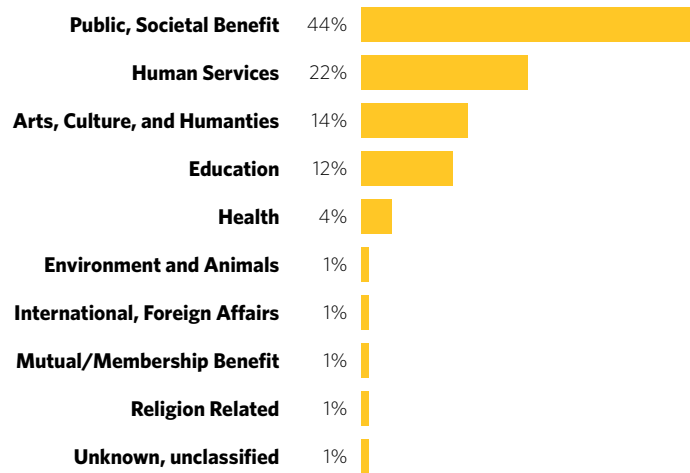
- Help veterans transition to civilian life

- Help veterans file claims and negotiate the Veterans Administration system

- Help wounded veterans heal physically and mentally and cope with challenges presented by long-term injuries

- Assist wounded veterans' families and caregivers

- Sponsor research on medical issues affecting veterans

- Provide financial assistance to veterans' families and wounded veterans

- Provide places where veterans can network and spend time with other veterans

- Provide educational programs on Americanism and patriotism

- Advocate for veterans' rights and legislation

- Act as resources on veterans' issues

State	# Veterans Orgs
CA	2,657
NY	2,384
TX	2,364
PA	2,263
OH	2,224
FL	2,223
IL	2,045
WI	1,747
MI	1,635
MN	1,544
VA	1,466
IA	1,363
NC	1,306
IN	1,287
MO	1,203
NJ	1,083
NE	989
GA	952
MA	940
MD	800
WA	758
KS	750
SC	735
AZ	710
CO	682
TN	664
CT	602
LA	596
KY	586
OK	574
OR	555
AL	529
SD	462
ME	425
MT	406
ND	388
AR	382
WV	380
MS	370
NM	327
ID	298
NH	275
NV	252
WY	213
UT	203
VT	200
RI	171
AK	163
DE	162
DC	137
HI	129
Total	**45,559**

Collectively, charitable veterans organizations work in all mission areas. Nine out of 10, however, work in one of four categories:

- Public, societal benefit—44 percent

- Human services—22 percent

- Arts, culture, and humanities—14 percent

- Education—12 percent

Number of Veterans Organizations by Cause Area

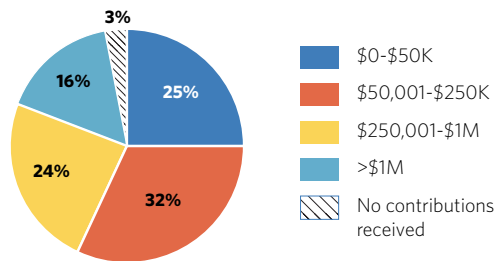| Cause Area	Percent
Public, Societal Benefit	44%
Human Services	22%
Arts, Culture, and Humanities	14%
Education	12%
Health	4%
Environment and Animals	1%
International, Foreign Affairs	1%
Mutual/Membership Benefit	1%
Religion Related	1%
Unknown, unclassified	1%

How Much Do Veterans Organizations Receive?

Most veterans organizations (66 percent) receive $50,000 or less a year in contributions or grants. Only 14 percent receive more than $250,000.

More than a quarter (28 percent) of charitable veterans organizations receive $50,000 or less in contributions annually. Some 40 percent receive more than $250,000.

Contributions to All Veterans Organizations

- 66% $0-$50K
- 17% $50,001-$250K
- 9% $250,001-$1M
- 5% >$1M
- 3% No contributions received
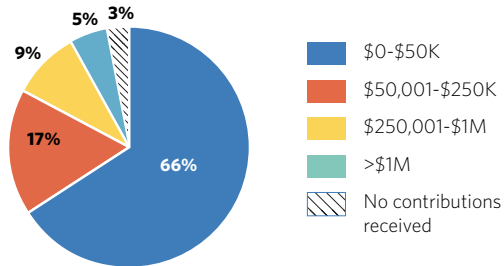
Contributions to Charitable Veterans Organizations

- 25% $0-$50K
- 32% $50,001-$250K
- 24% $250,001-$1M
- 16% >$1M
- 3% No contributions received
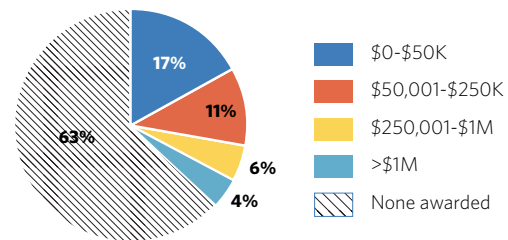
How Much Money Do They Give Away?

The majority—64 percent—of all veterans organizations do not make grants or payments. Another 33 percent award $250,000 or less in grants annually. Only a fraction (3 percent) grant more than $250,000 a year.

Some 63 percent of charitable veterans organizations do not make grants or payments. Another 28 percent award $250,000 or less annually. Some 10 percent grant more than $250,000 a year.

Grants and Payments Made by All Veterans Organizations

- 28% $0-$50K
- 5% $50,001-$250K
- 2% $250,001-$1M
- 1% >$1M
- 64% None awarded
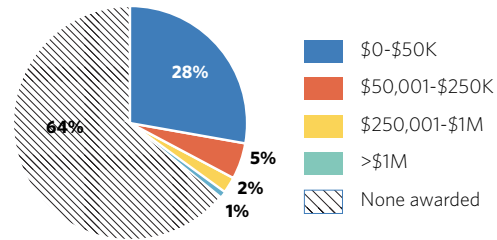
Grants and Payments Made by Charitable Veterans Organizations

- 17% $0-$50K
- 11% $50,001-$250K
- 6% $250,001-$1M
- 4% >$1M
- 63% None awarded

How Can You Chose the Right Veterans Organization to Give To?

When giving to a charity, you want to make a difference in the causes that touch your heart. But how can you ensure that your charitable donation has the maximum impact possible? Follow our five simple steps to **give with your head as well as your heart:**

1. Clarify your values.

Charities are as diverse as their donors. Be proactive and don't just give to the first one that solicits you! Consider the type of charity you want to support—small or large; start-up or established; local, national, or international.

2. Focus on mission.

Make sure the nonprofit has an easy-to-understand mission that aligns with your principles and beliefs. And confirm that the nonprofit has clear steps laid out explaining how it will achieve its mission. You can research specific nonprofits in GuideStar's database of more than 2 million organizations, or use our advanced search to find charities by cause, size, and location.

3. Get the facts.

Dig deeper once you find a nonprofit that meets your basic requirements. Pay attention to factors that are most relevant to nonprofit performance—results, transparency, and leadership—but don't buy into the Overhead Myth. Remember: there are no stories without

numbers, and no numbers without stories. Visit a nonprofit's website. Read its annual report. And turn to its GuideStar Nonprofit Profile for an easy indication of its transparency. Look for a <u>Bronze, Silver, or Gold logo</u> on its profile in order to research mission statements, financial statistics, and impact and effectiveness information.

4. Verify Legitimacy

Let's face it: there are sham nonprofits out there. If you see a big green check mark next to "Registered with the IRS" on a nonprofit's GuideStar Nonprofit Profile, you know it's legitimate. *No* check mark means that <u>further investigation is required</u>:

- If the charity is not on GuideStar, ask to see its IRS letter of determination

- If the organization is faith based, ask to see its official listing in a directory for its denomination

5. Trust your Instincts.

If you have concerns about a charity, don't contribute. Instead, find another nonprofit that does similar work but makes you feel more comfortable. Remember, reputable charities:

- *Are* willing to send you literature about their work, or direct you to their website

- *Don't* use pressure tactics

- *Take* "no" for an answer