Veterans disability assistance programs help disabled veterans secure benefits that they are owed from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (V.A.). The process a veteran must go through to get their benefits is complex, and nonprofits provide legal and administrative service to help veterans who may otherwise not have the time or knowledge to successfully navigate such a complex system.

The success of benefits assistance programs for disabled veterans is captured in the outcome “benefits secured for a veteran.” This guide includes protocols for calculating how many veterans were served, the dollar value of benefits claimed, and at what cost.

This guide is appropriate for nonprofits of any size operating a program whose primary charitable activity is to provide assistance to disabled veterans to help them claim their benefits. The impact calculation uses data typically already on hand and does not require intermediate or advanced training in data analysis. The output of this exercise is an impact statement, e.g., $900 dollars increases disability benefits claimed by a veteran by $50,000.

Resources

→ Use this free template to automatically calculate impact.
→ For more information, see the impact methodology for veterans disability assistance program.

Learn more at impactmatters.org/nonprofit-center
Impact Calculation Steps

1. Define the program (<10 minutes)
2. Gather program data (1-2 hours)
3. Calculate impact (<30 minutes using template)
   a. Estimate outcomes attributable to the nonprofit’s program
   b. Count costs needed to achieve those outcomes
   c. Divide costs by outcomes to calculate impact
4. Communicate findings (1 hour)

1. Define the program

   Identify the following:

   - Name of the program
   - Scope of the program. If there are multiple locations, it is acceptable to aggregate them into one equation or analyze them one at a time.
   - Time period of analysis. Select a period with complete data on claims assistance rendered, claims successfully secured, and completed financial statements.

2. Gather program data

   Impact analysis of veterans disability benefits assistance programs requires 6 data points, of which at least 3 are supplied by the nonprofit. Below is a list of the most important data points.

   When collecting data, keep in mind:

   - All data must match the chosen time period
   - If missing or incomplete, data can be estimated
   - Some data points are standard values derived from research literature, government statistics or other organizations. This is indicated.
   - Be prepared with the basics of the program: program activities, geography, beneficiary type and timeframe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Point</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of veterans receiving assistance with disability benefits</td>
<td>Number of veterans who received the nonprofit’s assistance with their disability benefits.</td>
<td>Nonprofit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Calculating Impact Series  Veterans Disability Benefits Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value of benefits claimed</th>
<th>Total value of cumulative and retroactive benefits secured for veterans. Can also provide approximate average benefit claimed per veteran, if total isn’t available.</th>
<th>Nonprofit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID: 03-010-02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterfactual percent of disability benefits claimed</td>
<td>Percentage of disability benefits veterans would have claimed without the nonprofit. The default value of this variable is assumed to be 25 percent. See full methodology[LINK] for explanation and details.</td>
<td>Nonprofit or Standard value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID: 03-009-03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cost Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total program costs related to securing veterans disability benefits</th>
<th>Use total costs of benefits assistance program. Do not include the costs of other programs you may run, such as community building or advocacy. Exclude any costs of donated labor, such as donated legal services.</th>
<th>Nonprofit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ID: 04-000-00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary costs</td>
<td>Report beneficiary costs if they are substantial. Otherwise, they can be estimated at $0. Partner costs are infrequently reported and are defaulted to $0 for veterans disability benefits programs.</td>
<td>Nonprofit or Standard value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID: 04-000-20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner costs</td>
<td>Report partner costs if they are substantial. They can be estimated at $0 if they are not substantial. Partner costs are infrequently reported and are defaulted to $0 for veterans disability benefits programs.</td>
<td>Nonprofit or Standard value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID: 04-000-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Calculate impact

To calculate the impact of a veterans disability program, divide the total dollar value of benefits secured from the V.A. by total program-related costs incurred by all cost-bearing parties (including beneficiaries and partner organizations). If using the calculations template, follow the instructions there and skip to the next section.

### Outcomes calculation

\[
\text{Outcomes} = \frac{\text{Total dollar value of benefits secured} \times (1 - \text{Counterfactual percent of disability benefits veterans would have received without nonprofit})}{1}
\]

Learn more at impactmatters.org/nonprofit-center
Calculating Impact Series  Veterans Disability Benefits Programs

*Total dollar value of benefits secured*: Total cumulative and retroactive disability benefits secured for all veterans served.

\[(1 - \text{Counterfactual percent of disability benefits veterans would have received without nonprofit})\]

: Counterfactual percent of disability benefits that veterans would have claimed without the nonprofit. This is assumed constant at 25 percent.

**Cost calculation**

\[Cost = \text{Program Costs} + \text{Partner Costs} + \text{Beneficiary Costs}\]

\textit{Program Costs}: Total costs of benefits program. Do not include the costs of other programs you may run, such as community building or advocacy. Exclude any costs of donated labor, such as donated legal services.

\textit{Partner Costs}: Expenses incurred by partner organizations. Unless otherwise reported, assumed at $0.

\textit{Beneficiary Costs}: Unless otherwise reported, the cost to veterans is assumed at $0.

**Impact Calculation**

\[Impact = \frac{\text{Outcomes}}{\text{Costs}}\]

Apply a 5% discount rate to convert impact into current year values.

**4. Communicate findings**

Impact calculations are presented as an impact statement:

\$900 dollars increases disability benefits claimed by a veteran by $50,000

At a minimum, accompany the impact statement with the name of the nonprofit. Space permitting, the following can be added:

- Program details (name, activities, beneficiaries served, geography)
- Outcome and cost data source and time period
- Method for attributing outcomes
- Outcomes, cost and impact calculations

Learn more at impactmatters.org/nonprofit-center
Website

Impact statements can accompany other program information, such as number of people served, or be presented standalone on the home, program, impact or other relevant pages.

The calculations template provides a snippet of code that you can add to your website and display your impact statement.

ImpactMatters Rating

If you have completed the impact calculation template, you may be eligible for an impact rating from ImpactMatters. Submit the spreadsheet here and ImpactMatters will be in touch: https://forms.gle/3N8feJsyTX3TR47E9

GuideStar Platinum

GuideStar is a database of millions of organizations used by donors and nonprofit professionals. GuideStar awards seals based on transparency. This impact calculation can be used to attain GuideStar’s highest seal, Platinum. To do so, follow the steps below:

- Click “Update nonprofit profile” in the top menu. If you haven’t already gained access to your organization, click “Find and get approved” and follow the instructions. Then, click on your organization’s name to get started.
- To receive a Platinum seal, you must first complete the steps for Bronze, Silver and Gold. Follow GuideStar’s instructions for doing so.
  - When filling out the programs section of Bronze, make sure to create a program that matches the program or programs you used calculate impact. Enter the details for the program, including the budget. We recommend including this note in the program description: “The impact of this program was calculated using ImpactMatters’ Methodology for Estimating Impact and reported through GuideStar’s Platinum Seal program.”
- On the Platinum screen, click “Add a new metric”. GuideStar does not have a dedicated metric for benefits claimed on behalf of veterans. Select “Can’t find a metric? Add your own” at the bottom and enter the metric “Total dollar amount of disability benefits secured on behalf of veterans.” After selecting the metric, enter your result and the associated year. Repeat the process for the metric “Number of veterans served.” Select “Outcome” as the metric type.
- Complete your GuideStar Platinum level.

Learn more at impactmatters.org/nonprofit-center
Example: Paralyzed Veterans of America

**Program activities:** Providing assistance to help disabled veterans claim the government benefits they are owed.

**Geography:** United States

**Beneficiaries:** Veterans

Data was collected by reviewing nonprofit’s tax form 990.

We estimate the amount of benefits claimed as a result of the nonprofit's work by comparing its reported figures to the amount of benefits that would have been claimed without the nonprofit's help (the “counterfactual”). Without the nonprofit, some veterans might have successfully filed claims on their own or with the help of other organizations. These counterfactual successes must be netted out of the successes we observe. Otherwise, we would be attributing a change (benefits received) to the nonprofit when it would have happened anyway. Few nonprofits estimate the counterfactual themselves, so we construct our own counterfactual estimate based on research and educated assumptions. Specifically, we assume that attorneys and claims assistants at other nonprofits generally have full caseloads. We also assume that veterans applying or appealing on their own experience half the success rate as if they had been assisted by the nonprofit.

### Outcomes calculation

\[
\text{Outcomes} = \frac{289,052,466 \text{ cumulative and retroactive benefits secured}}{(1 - 25\% \text{ of disability benefits veterans would have received without nonprofit})}
\]

### Cost calculation

\[
\text{Total costs} = \text{program costs} + \text{partner costs} + \text{beneficiary costs}
\]

### Impact Calculation

\[
\text{9.97 in benefits secured for every dollar donated} = \frac{\text{175,664,414 in benefits secured}}{\text{17,616,705 total costs}}
\]

5% discount rate has been applied to convert impact into current year values. Impact statement is rounded.

Learn more at impactmatters.org/nonprofit-center
Impact: $3,000 increases disability benefits claimed by a veteran by $30,000.

Click [here](#) to see their full rating.

This guide was prepared by ImpactMatters, a nonprofit rating agency that helps donors find high impact nonprofits. ImpactMatters develops and disseminates resources, tools and guidelines to help nonprofits communicate impact. Learn more at impactmatters.org/nonprofit-portal.

Direct feedback on this guideline to info@impactmatters.org.