(c)(2) of this section, provided the wildlife was not otherwise hunted within those areas.

(d) *Superintendent's authority.*

(1) The Superintendent may establish closures, restrictions, and conditions on hunting that are the minimum necessary to prevent a significant impact to public health and safety, objects of historic and scientific interest that the Monument was established to protect, or endangered or threatened species.

(2) Except in emergencies, the Superintendent shall consult with appropriate State agencies before invoking the authority provided in paragraph (d)(1) of this section and notify the public of any such closures, restrictions or conditions through one or more methods listed in § 1.7 of this chapter, including publication in the Superintendent's Compendium (or written compilation) of discretionary actions referred to in § 1.7(b).

(3) Violating a closure, restriction, or condition established by the Superintendent under this paragraph (d) is prohibited.

■ 3. Add § 7.101 to read as follows:

§ 7.101 Craters of the Moon National Monument.

(a) *Hunting.* Notwithstanding any other provision contained in this chapter, hunting shall be allowed in Craters of the Moon National Monument.

(b) *State law.* Where hunting is authorized, such activities shall be conducted in accordance with Federal law and the laws of the State of Idaho.

(c) *Appropriate management.* Notwithstanding any provision in State law, hunting shall be subject to the following requirements.

(1) Hunting species subject to 16 U.S.C. 1533 is prohibited.

(2) The use of a weapon other than a short-range weapon is prohibited. For purposes of this § 7.101, a short-range weapon is:

(i) Any shotgun using any slug or double-aught (#00) or larger buckshot.

(ii) Any muzzleloader that is at least forty-five (0.45) caliber for deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, or gray wolf, or at least fifty (0.50) caliber for elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, or black bear.

(iii) Any bow having a peak draw weight of not less than forty (40) pounds up to or at a draw of twenty-eight (28) inches.

(iv) Any crossbow having a peak draw weight of not less than one hundred fifty (150) pounds.

(v) Any handgun using straight wall centerfire cartridges not originally developed for rifles.

(vi) Any airgun using pre-charged pneumatic power to propel a projectile (excluding shot and arrows) with unignited compressed air or gas and projectiles at least thirty-five (0.35) caliber for deer and pronghorn antelope or at least forty-five (0.45) caliber for elk and moose.

(3) Hunting in the north end section of the Monument is prohibited. For purposes of this § 7.101, the north end section is defined as the NPS-administered lands within the Monument located north and northwest of Highway 20/93. Maps showing the location of the north end section will be made available at the Monument visitor center.

(d) *Superintendent's authority.*

(1) The Superintendent may establish closures, restrictions, and conditions on hunting that are the minimum necessary to prevent a significant impact to public health and safety, objects of historic and scientific interest that the Monument was established to protect, or endangered or threatened species.

(2) Except in emergencies, the Superintendent shall consult with appropriate State agencies before invoking the authority provided in paragraph (d)(1) of this section and notify the public of any such closures, restrictions or conditions through one or more methods listed in § 1.7 of this chapter, including publication in the Superintendent's Compendium (or written compilation) of discretionary actions referred to § 1.7(b).

(3) Violating a closure, restriction, or condition established by the Superintendent under this paragraph (d) is prohibited.

Kevin J. Lilly,

Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

[FR Doc. 2026–23228 Filed 11–13–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4312–52–P

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

38 CFR Part 85

[Docket No. VA–2026–VBA–0397]

RIN 2900–AS68

Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is proposing regulations to implement the Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program (DSTOGP), as authorized under the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. This program aids veterans and their families by awarding funding to eligible organizations to carry out programs to improve covered outreach and assistance to ensure that veterans and their families are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs (including veterans programs of a State or Indian Tribe) for which they may be eligible.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before December 16, 2026.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments through *www.regulations.gov* under RIN 2900–AS68. That website includes a plain-language summary of this rulemaking. Comments will be posted for viewing by the public on *www.regulations.gov,* including any personally identifiable information (*e.g.,* a social security number or address) within a comment and its supporting materials. However, VA retains discretion to redact personal or sensitive information, including but not limited to personal or sensitive information pertaining to third parties. Additionally, VA will not post public comments that make threats to individuals or institutions or suggest that the commenter will take actions to harm an individual. Instructions for accessing agency documents, submitting comments, and viewing the rulemaking docket, are available on *www.regulations.gov* under ''FAQ.'' Any public comment received after the comment period's closing date is considered late and will not be considered in the final rulemaking.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Stacy Valenti, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), 504–460–9138 or *VBACOM2CRPostSepn@va.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act (the Act), Public Law (Pub. L.) 118–210, was enacted on January 2, 2025. Section 302 of the Act, codified at title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 6307, authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish the DSTOGP to provide assistance to States and Indian Tribes to carry out programs that improve covered outreach and assistance to veterans and their spouses, children, and parents; to ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs (including veterans programs of a State or Indian Tribe) for which they may be eligible; and to

facilitate opportunities for such individuals to receive competent, qualified services in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of veterans benefits claims. The Secretary delegated implementation authority to the Office of Military to Civilian Readiness (M2CR) within VBA. VA proposes to amend its regulations by adding a new part 85 to title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) to establish the requirements and procedures needed to administer this grant program in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 6307.

Purpose of the DSTOGP

As part of the implementation of section 302 of the Act, the DSTOGP would provide funding to States and Indian Tribes to improve proactive outreach, benefits education, and claims assistance for veterans and their families. Pursuant to the Act, this could include but not limited to using funds to:

- Reach out to recently separated or long-discharged veterans—and their spouses, children, and parents—to identify those who may be unaware of VA, State, or Tribal benefits.
- Explain veterans benefits by delivering clear briefings on compensation, education, housing, and other entitlements, and by tailoring information to each family's circumstances.
- Develop and advance VA, State, and Tribal claims by pairing veterans and family members with accredited or other representatives, as appropriate, who can compile evidence, complete applications, and represent claimants through every stage of the decision-making process.
- Increase the number of county or Tribal veterans service officers (VSO) serving in the State by hiring new, additional such officers.

To apply applicants must submit a proposal to VA. Part of that proposal must demonstrate a documented need in their target communities and explain how their proposed project would track and achieve certain outcome measures established by VA. (for example, these could include metrics such as outreach contacts, benefit enrollments, and claim outcomes). Proposals that devote the bulk of the requested resources to informing, guiding, and advocating for veterans and their families fall within the Act's primary intent. Complementary services (such as, coordinated transportation to VA medical centers and onsite legal aid clinics for discharge upgrades) could also be considered. VA would further prioritize proposals that serve areas with a critical shortage of county or Tribal VSOs, or areas with high rates of suicide among veterans or referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line. See 38 U.S.C. 6307(f).

Applications for DSTOGP funding must present a clear, evidence-based narrative that shows how the applicant will locate hard-to-reach veterans and family members, inform them of every benefit for which they may be eligible, and guide them through the full lifecycle of a VA or similar claim. A strong proposal describes step-by-step outreach channels (such as, Tribal radio spots, faith community briefings, and social media geo-targeting), intake and needs assessment tools, accredited claims prep support, and follow-up contacts that confirm benefits enrollment or payment. Applicants must also detail any wraparound supports (such as, translation, transportation, and legal aid for discharge upgrades) that remove barriers to successful claims completion.

Proposals must include a detailed, cost-justified budget tied to these proposed activities. The budgets must show costs associated with staff time, travel, technology, and evaluation costs, while demonstrating how resources are tied to outreach, benefits education, and claims development for the targeted veteran population and their families. Applicants may include participant flow chart, Gantt chart, or similar graphic may illustrate the sequence from initial outreach to claim decision and post-award check-ins. Examples of proven outreach activities include mobile ''benefits buses,'' community benefits fairs cohosted with State and Tribal agencies, virtual claims workshops, and embedded VSOs in rural county offices.

Grantees would be required to carry out proactive outreach, intake, and needs assessments to identify veterans and family members who may not be receiving the benefits they have earned. They must deliver individualized benefits counseling and claims assistance, guiding participants through each stage of the claims process, including the initial application, evidence gathering, and appeals processes. Grantees are expected to track and confirm benefit awards, then address any economic, benefits, or healthcare gaps that remain. To ensure participants can fully leverage their benefits, programs should also provide, or coordinate, wraparound supports such as employability skills workshops, financial literacy coaching, or referrals to medical services.

Part 85 of Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations

VA proposes to establish and implement, in new 38 CFR part 85, the DSTOGP authorized by section 302 of the Act. Establishment of this new part ensures organization and clarity for implementation of this new grant program. Consistent with the Act, VA proposes to title part 85 the ''Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program.''

85.1 Purpose and Scope

Proposed § 85.1 would set forth the purpose and scope of DSTOGP. Paragraph (a) would state that this part implements the DSTOGP with the purpose of improving covered outreach and assistance to veterans and their families to ensure such individuals are fully informed of, and assisted in applying for, any veteran and veterans-related benefits and programs (including veterans' programs of a State or Indian Tribe). This is consistent with the purpose noted in 38 U.S.C. 6307(a). Paragraph (b) would outline the scope of VA's authority, consistent with § 6307(b). Specifically, it would make clear that VA may provide grants to eligible organizations to provide outreach services and intensive client-centered case management services tailored to the unique needs of veterans and their families and that these services may include, but are not limited to, benefits assistance, claims navigation, local resource referrals, and engagement activities that improve access to services and support.

85.2 Definitions

As this is a new VA authority, VA proposes to define terms in § 85.2 that would be referenced in the new part. First, VA proposes to define the terms ''applicant,'' ''grantee,'' ''Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO),'' and ''grant agreement'' in a manner consistent with other VBA regulations for outreach assistance grant programs. See, *e.g.,* 38 CFR 80.2.

Section 6307(b) authorizes VA to award grants to States and Indian Tribes. Thus, VA proposes to define the term ''eligible recipient (organization)'' to mean: a ''State government,'' which would be defined as any of the fifty States of the United States, the District of Columbia, Commonwealths, territories, or possessions of the United States, or any agency or instrumentality of a State government; or a ''Tribal organization'' or an organization with the meaning given in section 4(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

VA's proposed definition of State government is consistent with how VA has previously defined State entities eligible for outreach assistance grant programs. See, *e.g.,* 38 CFR 80.2. As for VA's proposed definition of ''Tribal organization,'' VA believes specifying a ''Tribal organization'' (as defined at 25 U.S.C. 5304) as an eligible organization is consistent with 38 U.S.C. 6307(n)(3), which defines ''Indian tribe'' to have the meaning given such term in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304(e)).

VA also proposes to define the term ''veterans-related benefits and programs'' to clarify the scope of services supported under this authority. For purposes of this part, ''veterans-related benefits and programs'' would mean benefits, services, and assistance administered by VA under the authority of the Under Secretary for Benefits, as well as comparable benefits, services, and assistance provided by State and Tribal governments that support veterans, their dependents, and beneficiaries. This definition aligns with VA's statutory authority while allowing flexibility for State and Tribal partners to deliver similar outreach, benefits, and services within their respective jurisdictions.

Finally, VA proposes to define the term ''participant'' as a veteran, or a spouse, child, or parent of a veteran, who receives services for which a DSTOGP grant is awarded. The purpose of the DSTOGP is to improve outreach to veterans and their spouses, children, and parents; therefore, VA proposes to use a definition that captures additional family members within the expanded scope of the DSTOGP, compared to the term ''participant'' as used in another veteran grant program (see 38 CFR 80.2(n)).

85.3 Grants—General

In § 85.3, VA proposes to provide general information about DSTOGP grants. Paragraph (a) would state that VA would award DSTOGP grants to applicants selected in accordance with this part. Paragraph (b) would state that the maximum amount to be awarded to each grantee and the total maximum amount for all grants would be specified in the NOFO. Paragraph (c) would specify that the number of grants VA would award would depend on the total amount of grant funding available at VA's discretion and the funding amount awarded to each grantee, which is based on each grantee's proposal.

Paragraph (d) would clarify that VA would award only one DSTOGP grant in any one location, as specified in the NOFO. This limitation ensures VA compliance with section 6307(d), requiring the Secretary to equitably distribute grants among States and Indian Tribes with varying levels of urbanization. Paragraph (e) would provide that DSTOGP grant awards last for a maximum period of 2 years, beginning on the date of the award. Awards will not be extended; however, this limitation would not preclude an entity from subsequent award grants under a separate NOFO. Paragraph (f) would specify that a grant under this part should not exceed the amount required by the organization to provide the services described in § 85.1. Finally, paragraph (g) would prohibit a grantee from charging fees to a participant or requiring participation in other activities sponsored by the grantee as a condition of receiving services under the DSTOGP grant.

85.4 Notice of Funding Opportunity

VA will notify the public, through a NOFO, when funds for this grant program are available. Proposed § 85.4 would explain that when funds are available for DSTOGP grants, VA would publish a NOFO on *Grants.gov* website. It would include the location for obtaining grant applications; submission deadlines; any preferences for priority population(s); the estimated amount of funding available, in total and per grantee; the minimum number of total points and points per category that an applicant must receive to be considered for a DSTOGP grant; any timeframes and manner for grant payments; a description of eligible organizations; and any other information necessary for the application process, as determined by VA. This could include, but is not limited to, a description of the program, including the program goals and objectives, a reference to the relevant Assistance Listings (''detailed public descriptions of Federal programs that provide grants, loans, scholarships, insurance, and other types of assistance awards,'' per *SAM.gov*), and a description of how the award will contribute to the achievement of the program's goals and objectives. These components are consistent with the requirements and recommendations within 2 CFR part 200 regarding notices of funding opportunity (see 2 CFR 200.204).

Additionally, proposed § 85.4 would state that the NOFO would include a description of outcome measures developed by the Secretary that would be used to assess grantee performance. In addition to requirements under 2 CFR part 200 to establish and include performance goals in any Federal award (see 2 CFR 200.211), section 6307(j) directs the Secretary to develop and provide to grantees outcome measures for the DSTOGP that consider specific goals outlined in the statute. Applicants must describe how their proposal would meet such outcome measures, as required under section 6307(c)(2)(B). Thus, VA would need to identify these measures in the NOFO.

85.5 Applications

VA proposes to describe in § 85.5 that, to apply for a DSTOGP grant, an applicant must submit a complete application package to VA, as described in the NOFO posted at *Grants.gov.* VA intends to define a complete application in the NOFO as including those application items expressly required under section 6307(c)(2) and any other information the Secretary may need to make in selecting grantees. See 38 U.S.C. 6307(c)(1). This information would likely include a well-articulated project narrative that describes program design (including outreach), recruitment and engagement plans, assessment process, identification of local area network providers, and the applicant's ability and capacity to administer the grant.

85.6 Additional Factors for Selecting Applications

In addition to the scoring criteria published in the NOFO, VA proposes to outline, in § 85.6, additional factors VA may consider when selecting grantees. These factors would include evaluation of certain financial factors, such as performance on previous Federal grants, ability to demonstrate standards of fiscal integrity, per 2 CFR 200.206, and financial capability and internal controls. VA would also specify in proposed § 85.6 that priority would be given to projects that would serve areas with a critical shortage of county or Tribal VSOs or areas with high rates of suicide among veterans or referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line. Finally, VA would include in proposed paragraph (e) a requirement that at least five percent of any total amount of grants awarded under a NOFO must be made to Tribal organizations, as required under 38 U.S.C. 6307(e).

85.7 Scoring and Selection

Under proposed § 85.7, VA would evaluate each DSTOGP application, submitted on time and in full compliance with the NOFO, against clear, benefit-centric scoring criteria specified in the NOFO. The NOFO announcement would specify the relative weight (point value) for each scoring criterion. Point totals would

emphasize an applicant's capacity to perform targeted outreach, deliver accurate benefits education, and provide claims preparation and follow-through. VA would rank applications by score, in order of highest to lowest total score, then weigh additional factors outlined in proposed § 85.6 to ensure each grantee can responsibly expand veterans' access to earned benefits.

85.8 Disposition of Applications

Proposed § 85.8 states that VA would assign one of three dispositions to an application reviewed under § 85.7 and notify applicants via a written notice of the decision. The first potential disposition would be to approve the application, in whole or in part. The second would be to disapprove an application because, while minimally acceptable, it does not rank high enough in relation to other applications based on the level of funding available, or for another reason as provided in the decision document. Finally, VA could disapprove an application because it was not complete. As noted under proposed § 85.18, VA application decisions would be discretionary and not subject to appeal.

85.9 Withdrawal of Grant Application

VA proposes to include a withdrawal provision in § 85.9. Applicants would be able to request to withdraw their application from consideration by writing to the VA point of contact specified in the published NOFO. While not required, VA recommends that applicants provide a rationale for the withdrawal request.

85.10 Grant Agreement

For grant awards, VA proposes in § 85.10 that VA would memorialize awards in an agreement to be drafted by VA and executed by VA and the grantee. Grantees and subrecipients would be required to agree to operate the project in accordance with proposed 38 CFR part 85, 2 CFR part 200, and any terms outlined in the grant agreement. Part 200 offers uniform guidance and conditions for the management and administration of Federal grants. VA also proposes to require grantees and subrecipients to comply with such other terms and conditions as VA may establish for purposes of carrying out DSTOGP, including those concerning recordkeeping and reports for program monitoring and evaluation purposes, in an effective and efficient manner; and provide any necessary additional information requested by VA in the manner and timeframe specified by VA. These proposed requirements are consistent with other VA grant programs. Finally, VA proposes to include a paragraph stating that VA will include in the grant agreement any outcome measures, consistent with the NOFO, that must be met in order to qualify for subsequent DSTOGP grants.

85.11 Payments Under the Grant

Proposed § 85.11 would specify that payments would follow the schedule described in the NOFO and that grantees would not be reimbursed for costs resulting from obligations incurred before the effective date of the award.

85.12 Grantee Reporting Requirements

Under proposed § 85.12(a), grantees would be required to submit to VA quarterly reports no later than 30 days after the quarter ends. Such reports would be required to include information outlined in the grant agreement, including but not limited to outreach activity, participant numbers, expenditures, and outcomes. Proposed paragraph (b) would require grantees, within 120 days after the last day of the grant period, to submit a final report to VA complying with the NOFO requirements. Finally, proposed paragraph (c) would specify that additional reports may be required for accountability, program evaluation, and compliance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act), Public Law 115–435. The Evidence Act requires agencies to ''advance program evaluation as an essential component of Federal evidence building.'' Program evaluation is defined as ''an assessment using systematic data collection and analysis of one or more programs, policies, and organizations intended to assess their effectiveness and efficiency.'' While specific program evaluations are required in various applicable laws and Congressional reports, VA may also evaluate major acquisition programs, other programs, and policies that in the judgment of VA leaders are significant and are likely to benefit from such evaluation.

85.13 Remediation Plan; Subsequent Grants

Section 6307(m) prohibits VA from awarding a subsequent grant under the DSTOGP to any grantee who fails to meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary, unless the Secretary approves a remediation plan submitted by the grantee. As discussed above, VA would announce such outcome measures in the NOFO, providing applicants an opportunity to describe how their proposal would accomplish such measures. VA would then incorporate such measures into the DSTOGP agreement, consistent with the Act and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidance under 2 CFR part 200. Proposed § 85.13 would inform grantees that, in the event the grantee does not meet the outcome measures developed by the Secretary, the grantee would not be eligible for a subsequent DSTOGP grant unless the grantee submits and VA approves a remediation plan describing how and when the grantee plans to meet such outcome measures.

85.14 Withholding, Suspension, Deobligation, Termination, and Recovery of Funds by VA

Upon execution of the grant agreement, VA would obligate grant funds to the extent authorized by VA in the NOFO or the grant agreement or subsequently authorized by VA in writing. Proposed § 85.14(a) explains that VA would enforce part 85 through such actions as may be appropriate. Appropriate actions would include withholding, suspension, deobligation, termination, recovery of funds by VA, and actions in accordance with 2 CFR part 200. VA also proposes to define withholding to mean that payment of DSTOGP grant funds would not be paid until such time as VA determines that the grantee provides sufficiently adequate documentation or takes actions to correct a deficiency.

The specific sections of 2 CFR part 200 on withholding, suspension, deobligation, termination, and recovery of funds are 2 CFR 200.208, 200.305, and 200.339 through 200.343, and 200.346. VA would refer to 2 CFR part 200 rather than include those requirements in this section as those requirements in 2 CFR part 200 may change. Referring to 2 CFR part 200 provides VA the ability to implement those changes without having to conduct further rulemaking.

VA acknowledges that when certain actions (such as suspension and termination) are taken against grantees pursuant to this section and 2 CFR part 200, a disruption in services to participants may occur. While VA would not be regulating responsibilities for grantees to continue to provide services or to coordinate the transfer of participants to other sources of support, VA would include such requirements and responsibilities in the grant agreement entered into by VA and the grantee pursuant to this part. This arrangement would ensure that the disruption and impact upon participants is minimized as much as possible.

85.15 Compliance Review Requirements

VA would further ensure fiscal responsibility by proposing in § 85.15 to conduct site visits and inspections to review grantee accomplishments, management systems, and records. All visits would be performed with minimal disruption to the grantee to the extent practicable.

85.16 Financial Management

Proposed § 85.16 would ensure compliance with Federal grant regulations (that is, 2 CFR part 200) by requiring all grantees and subgrantees to comply with the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and to use financial management systems based on OMB cost principles outlined at 2 CFR 200.400 through 200.475.

85.17 Recordkeeping

Proposed § 85.17 would state that grantees must maintain records per 2 CFR 200.334–200.338 and produce them upon VA's request.

85.18 Non-Appealability of Grant Award Decisions

Grant decisions under this part do not award benefits and are at the discretion of the Secretary. As such, proposed § 85.18 would specify that any decisions under this part are final and not subject to appeal.

Executive Orders 12866, 13175, 13563, and 14192

VA examined the impact of this rulemaking as required by Executive Orders 12866 (Sept. 30, 1993) and 13563 (Jan. 18, 2011), which direct agencies to assess all costs and benefits of available regulatory alternatives and, if regulation is necessary, to select regulatory approaches that maximize net benefits. The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs has determined that this rulemaking is a significant regulatory action under Executive Order 12866, as supplemented by Executive Order 13563. This proposed rule is expected to be neither a regulatory nor deregulatory action under Executive Order 14192 due to costs being no more than *de minimis.* The regulatory impact analysis associated with this rulemaking can be found as a supporting document at *www.regulations.gov.*

Executive Order 12866 directs agencies to ''in most cases . . . include a comment period of not less than 60 days.'' This rulemaking proposes to establish regulations that govern the newly authorized DSTOGP with funds appropriated in fiscal years 2026 and 2027. However, OMB has issued government-wide guidance regarding Federal grant assistance outlined at 2 CFR part 200, with agencies required to issue implementing regulations for specific grant programs that are consistent with that part. As such, VA generally receives few, if any, substantive comments regarding its program-specific grant assistance regulations. Thus, we believe there is nothing in this proposed rule that would be unfamiliar to the public and that providing 30 days would still be sufficient for the public to meaningfully comment on this rule. For these reasons, the Secretary issues this rule with a 30-day public comment period. VA will consider and address comments that are received within 30 days of the date this proposed rule is published in the **Federal Register**.

Executive Order 13175 provides that Federal agencies may not issue a regulation that has Tribal implications, that imposes substantial direct compliance costs on Tribal governments, and that is not required by statute, unless the Federal government provides the funds necessary to pay the direct compliance costs incurred by the Tribal Organizations or the Federal agency consults with Tribal officials early in the process of developing the proposed regulation and develops a Tribal summary impact statement. VA's DSTOGP is required by statute, but participation is voluntary and 100 percent of the costs for an approved project may be provided by VA. Thus, Executive Order 13175 requirements are not applicable.

However, in the spirit of the Executive Order, VA has communicated with the Tribal Organizations regarding the implementation of this grant program. Senior VA officials and representatives continue to meet with and communicate with Tribal Organizations that are interested in the grant program. VA has not received any written comments regarding the subject of this proposed regulation from Tribal Organizations, but welcomes their input during the 30-day comment period following publication of the proposed rule.

Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Secretary hereby certifies that this proposed rule would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities as defined by the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601–612). The Secretary acknowledges that this proposed rule may affect some Tribal governments that may be considered small entities; however, VA does not believe it would impact a substantial number of small entities. Further, even if a substantial number of small entities were affected, the economic impact of this rule is not significant. This proposed rule would not impose any mandatory requirements or costs on small entities as a whole and will only affect those that choose to participate in the DSTOGP. To the extent this proposed rule would have any impact on small entities, the impact of this amendment is both minimal and entirely beneficial. Therefore, under 5 U.S.C. 605(b), the initial and final regulatory flexibility analysis requirements of 5 U.S.C. 603 and 604 do not apply.

Unfunded Mandates

This proposed rule would not result in the expenditure by State, local, and Tribal governments, in the aggregate, or by the private sector, of $100 million or more (adjusted annually for inflation) in any one year.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This proposed rule includes provisions constituting a new collection of information under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) (44 U.S.C. 3501–3521). Under the PRA, Federal agencies must obtain approval from OMB for each collection of information they conduct or sponsor.

Comments on this new collection of information should be submitted through *www.regulations.gov* during the public comment period for this rulemaking. VA invites comments on: (1) whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of VA's functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of VA's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or the use of other forms of information technology.

Title: Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program (DSTOGP) Application.

OMB Control No: 2900–NEW.

CFR Provisions: 38 CFR 85.5.

Type of Review: New collection.

Abstract: The collection of information in proposed 38 CFR 85.5 would require DSTOGP grant applicants to submit the SF–424, *Application for Federal Assistance,* SF–424A, *Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs,* SF–LLL, *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities,* and the *Project/Performance Site Location(s)* forms available from *Grants.gov.* The purpose of this collection is to determine

applicant eligibility for a DSTOGP grant. VA would use this information to score and evaluate grant applications.

Affected Public: Eligible recipients interested in applying for a DSTOGP grant.

Estimated Annual Burden: 867 hours.

Estimated Average Burden per Respondent: 260 minutes.

Frequency of Response: Annually.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 200.

Title: Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program (DSTOGP) Grantee Reporting and Recordkeeping.

OMB Control No: 2900–NEW.

CFR Provisions: 38 CFR 85.12 and 85.17.

Type of Review: New collection.

Abstract: The collection of information in proposed 38 CFR 85.12 would require DSTOGP grantees to submit quarterly performance reports; SF–425, *Federal Financial Report;* and additional reports, as determined by VA. The collection of information in proposed 38 CFR 85.17 would require DSTOGP grantees to comply with applicable recordkeeping requirements outlined in 2 CFR part 200. The purpose of this collection is to support program implementation and ensure adequate oversight, transparency, and accountability under the Act.

Affected Public: Eligible recipients interested in applying for a DSTOGP grant.

Estimated Annual Burden: 560 hours.

Estimated Average Burden per Respondent: 1 hour.

Frequency of Response: Quarterly.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 35.

Assistance Listing

The Assistance Listing number and title for the program affected by this document is 64.061, Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program (DSTOGP).

List of Subjects in 38 CFR Part 81

Administrative practice and procedure, Armed Forces, Employment, Grant programs—veterans, Indians, Indians—tribal government, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Outreach, Veterans.

Signing Authority

Douglas A. Collins, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, approved this document on November 9, 2026, and authorized the undersigned to sign and submit the document to the Office of the Federal Register for publication electronically as an official document of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Gabriela DeCuir,

Alternate Federal Register Liaison Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs.

For the reasons stated in the preamble, VA proposes to amend title 38 by adding part 85 as set forth below:

PART 85—DOLE STATE AND TRIBAL OUTREACH GRANT PROGRAM

85.1 Purpose and scope.
85.2 Definitions.
85.3 Grants—general.
85.4 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
85.5 Applications.
85.6 Additional factors for selecting applications.
85.7 Scoring and selection.
85.8 Disposition of applications.
85.9 Withdrawal of grant application.
85.10 Grant agreement.
85.11 Payments under the grant.
85.12 Grantee reporting requirements.
85.13 Remediation plan; subsequent grants.
85.14 Withholding, suspension, deobligation, termination, and recovery of funds by VA.
85.15 Compliance review requirements.
85.16 Financial management.
85.17 Recordkeeping.
85.18 Non-appealability of grant award decisions.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 501, 512, 6307.

§ 85.1 Purpose and scope.

(a) *Purpose.* This part implements the Dole State and Tribal Outreach Grant Program (DSTOGP) with the purpose of improving covered outreach and assistance to veterans and their families to ensure such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs (including veterans programs of a State or Indian Tribe).

(b) *Scope.* Under this program, VA may provide grants to eligible organizations to provide outreach services and intensive client-centered case management services tailored to the unique needs of veterans and their families. These services may include, but are not limited to, benefits assistance, claims navigation, local resource referrals, and engagement activities that improve access to services and support.

§ 85.2 Definitions.

For purposes of this part and any Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued pursuant to this part:

(a) *Applicant* means an organization that submits an application for a DSTOGP grant as announced in a NOFO.

(b) *Eligible recipient (organization)* means one of the following:

(1) State government; or

(2) Tribal organization.

(c) *State government* means any of the fifty States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, any territory or possession of the United States, or any agency or instrumentality of a State government.

(d) *Tribal organization* has the same meaning given in section 4(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304)).

(e) *Grantee* means an applicant that is awarded a grant under this part.

(f) *Participant* means a veteran or a spouse, child, or parent of a veteran who receives services for which a DSTOGP grant is awarded.

(g) *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)* means a Notice of Funding Opportunity published at *Grants.gov* in accordance with § 85.4.

(h) *Grant agreement* means a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity that is consistent with 31 U.S.C. 6302 and 6304.

(i) *Veterans-related benefits and programs benefits* means services and assistance administered by VA under the authority of the Under Secretary for Benefits, as well as comparable benefits, services, and assistance provided by State and Tribal governments that support veterans, their dependents, and beneficiaries.

§ 85.3 Grants—general.

(a) *Grants.* VA will award DSTOGP grants to applicants selected in accordance with this part.

(b) *Maximum amounts.* The maximum amount to be awarded to each grantee and the total maximum amount for all grants will be specified in the NOFO.

(c) *Number of grants awarded.* The number of grants VA will award will depend on the total amount of grant funding available at VA's discretion and the funding amount awarded to each grantee, which is based on each grantee's proposal.

(d) *Grant award limitation.* Only one DSTOGP grant will be awarded in any one location, as specified in the NOFO.

(e) *Period of performance.* DSTOGP grants will be awarded for a maximum period of 2 years, beginning on the date on which the DSTOGP grants are awarded. They will not be extended. This does not preclude an entity from subsequent award grants under a separate NOFO.

(f) *Amount of grant.* A grant under this part shall not exceed the amount required by the organization to provide the services described in § 85.1.

(g) *No participant charges.* A grantee may not charge any participants a fee for services provided by the grantee or require participation in other activities sponsored by the grantee as a condition of receiving services under the DSTOGP grant.

§ 85.4 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

When funds are available for DSTOGP grants, VA will publish a NOFO at *Grants.gov* (*https://www.grants.gov*). The NOFO will include:

(a) The location for obtaining DSTOGP grant applications, including the specific forms required;

(b) The date, time, and place for submitting completed DSTOGP grant applications;

(c) Priority population categories;

(d) The estimated total amount of funds available and the maximum funds available to a single grantee;

(e) The minimum number of total points and points per category that an applicant must receive to be considered for a grant and information regarding the scoring process;

(f) Any timeframes and manner for payments under the DSTOGP grant;

(g) A description of eligible organizations or other eligibility requirements;

(h) A description of outcome measures developed by the Secretary that will be used to assess grantee performance; and

(i) Other information necessary for the DSTOGP grant application process, as determined by VA.

§ 85.5 Applications.

To apply for a grant, an applicant must submit a complete application package to VA, as described in the NOFO. Applications will be accepted only through *www.grants.gov.*

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900–NEW)

§ 85.6 Additional factors for selecting applications.

(a) *Applicant's performance on prior award.* VA may consider the applicant's noncompliance with requirements applicable to prior VA or other agency awards.

(b) *Applicant's fiscal integrity.* Applicants must meet and maintain standards of fiscal integrity, per 2 CFR 200.206.

(c) *Priority preference.* Priority will be given to applicants whose proposals will serve:

(1) Areas with a critical shortage of county or Tribal veterans service officers; or

(2) Areas with high rates of—

(A) suicide among veterans; or

(B) referrals to the Veterans Crisis Line.

(d) *Risk assessment evaluation.* VA will evaluate the applicant's financial capability and internal controls.

(e) *Set-aside.* VA must ensure that at least five percent of any total amount of grants awarded under a NOFO is made to Tribal organizations.

§ 85.7 Scoring and selection.

(a) *Scoring.* VA will only score complete applications received from eligible applicants by the deadline established in the NOFO. The applications must meet the minimum criteria set forth in the NOFO and will be scored as specified in the NOFO.

(b) *Selection.* Applications will be ranked by score and selected accordingly, also considering factors in § 85.6.

§ 85.8 Disposition of applications.

(a) Based on application review and funding availability, VA will:

(1) Approve the application for funding, in whole or in part;

(2) Determine the application is acceptable but not fund the proposed program because it does not rank sufficiently high in relation to other applications to qualify for an award based on the level of funding available, or for another reason as provided in the decision document; or

(3) Determine the application was not complete and therefore VA did not evaluate the application pursuant to § 85.7.

(b) Applicants will receive written notice of the decision.

§ 85.9 Withdrawal of grant application.

Applicants may withdraw a DSTOGP application submitted via *Grants.gov* by writing to the VA contact specified in the NOFO.

§ 85.10 Grant agreement.

(a) VA will draft a DSTOGP grant agreement to be executed by VA and the grantee.

(b) The DSTOGP grant agreement will provide that the grantee agrees to, and will ensure that each subgrantee (if applicable) agrees to:

(1) Operate the project in accordance with this part, 2 CFR part 200, and the terms of the grant agreement.

(2) Comply with such other terms and conditions as VA may establish for purposes of carrying out DSTOGP, including those concerning recordkeeping and reports for program monitoring and evaluation purposes, in an effective and efficient manner; and

(3) Provide any necessary additional information requested by VA in the manner and timeframe specified by VA.

(c) VA will include in the grant agreement any outcome measures, consistent with the NOFO, that must be met in order to qualify for subsequent DSTOGP grants.

§ 85.11 Payments under the grant.

(a) Payments will follow the schedule described in the NOFO.

(b) Grantees will not be reimbursed for costs resulting from obligations incurred before the effective date of the award.

§ 85.12 Grantee reporting requirements.

(a) Quarterly reports are due 30 days after the quarter ends and must include information outlined in the grant agreement, including but not limited to outreach activity, participant numbers, expenditures, and outcomes.

(b) Final reports are due 120 days after the end of the grant period.

(c) Additional reports may be required for accountability, program evaluation, and compliance with the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900–NEW)

§ 85.13 Remediation plan; subsequent grants.

In the event a grantee does not meet the outcome measures outlined in the DSTOGP grant agreement, VA will not approve a subsequent DSTOGP grant unless the grantee submits and VA approves a remediation plan describing how and when the grantee plans to meet such outcome measures.

§ 85.14 Withholding, suspension, deobligation, termination, and recovery of funds by VA.

VA will enforce this part through such actions as may be appropriate. Appropriate actions include withholding, suspension, deobligation, termination, recovery of funds by VA, and actions in accordance with 2 CFR part 200. For purposes of this section, withholding means that payment of DSTOGP grant funds will not be paid until such time as VA determines that the grantee provides sufficiently adequate documentation or takes actions to correct a deficiency for the grant.

§ 85.15 Compliance review requirements.

(a) VA may conduct site visits, as needed, to review grantee

accomplishments and management control systems.

(b) VA may inspect grantee records to determine compliance with the provisions of this part.

§ 85.16 Financial management.

(a) All grantees (and subgrantees) must comply with the applicable requirements of the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996, as implemented by 2 CFR part 200.

(b) Grantees must use financial management systems that comply with 2 CFR 200.400–200.475.

§ 85.17 Recordkeeping.

Grantees must maintain records per 2 CFR 200.334–200.338 and produce them upon VA request.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 2900–NEW)

§ 85.18 Non-appealability of grant award decisions.

VA grant award decisions under this part are final and not subject to appeal.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Parts 52 and 81

[EPA–R10–OAR–2026–8551; FRL–13545–01–R10]

Air Plan Approval; AK; Fairbanks $PM_{2.5}$ Boundary Redesignation and Clean Data Determination

AGENCY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to approve a request from Alaska to revise the boundary designation of the existing Fairbanks North Star Borough nonattainment area for the 2006 primary 24-hour fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). The EPA is proposing to split the existing nonattainment area into two distinct nonattainment areas, an area covering Fairbanks and the Goldstream Valley, and an area covering North Pole. The proposed new areas cover the same geographic area as the existing area. The EPA is also proposing to issue a clean data determination (CDD), for the proposed Fairbanks and Goldstream Valley area (''proposed Fairbanks nonattainment area'') based on a determination that the area is attaining the 2006 $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS. If the EPA finalizes this CDD, certain Clean Air Act (CAA) requirements that apply to the proposed Fairbanks nonattainment area will be suspended for so long as the area continues to meet the 2006 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS. The EPA is taking this action pursuant to Clean Air Act sections 107, 110, 172, and 189.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before December 16, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA–R10–OAR–2026–8551, at *https://www.regulations.gov.* Follow the online instructions for submitting comments. Once submitted, comments cannot be edited or removed from *Regulations.gov.* The EPA may publish any comment received to its public docket. Do not electronically submit any information you consider to be Confidential Business Information (CBI) or other information the disclosure of which is restricted by statute. Multimedia submissions (audio, video, etc.) must be accompanied by a written comment. The written comment is considered the official comment and should include discussion of all points you wish to make. The EPA will generally not consider comments or comment contents located outside of the primary submission (*i.e.,* on the web, cloud, or other file sharing system). For additional submission methods, the full EPA public comment policy, information about CBI or multimedia submissions, and general guidance on making effective comments, please visit *https://www.epa.gov/dockets/commenting-epa-dockets.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Matthew Jentgen, EPA Region 10, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 155, Seattle, WA 98101; by telephone at (206) 553–0340, or by email at *jentgen.matthew@epa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Throughout this document, the use of ''we,'' ''us,'' or ''our'' is intended to refer to the EPA. We use multiple abbreviations and terms in this proposed rule. While this list may not be exhaustive, for ease of reading and for reference purposes, the EPA defines the following terms and acronyms here:

Alaska DEC Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
AQS Air Quality System
CAA Clean Air Act
CDD Clean Data Determination
EPA U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
NAAQS National Ambient Air Quality Standards
$PM_{2.5}$ Fine Particulate Matter
SIP State Implementation Plan
SLAMS State and Local Air Monitoring Station
TSD Technical Support Document

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I. Executive Summary

A. What action is the EPA taking?

The EPA is proposing to approve a request from Alaska to revise the boundary designation of the Fairbanks North Star Borough nonattainment area for the 2006 primary 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS.[1] The Agency is proposing to split the existing nonattainment area into two distinct nonattainment areas, a Fairbanks and Goldstream Valley area (''Fairbanks nonattainment area'') and a North Pole area (''North Pole nonattainment area'), that cover the same geographic area as the existing nonattainment area. The EPA is also proposing to issue a CDD for the proposed Fairbanks nonattainment area for the 2006 24-hour $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS.

B. What is the legal authority and what are the requirements?

The EPA is proposing to revise the existing nonattainment area boundary pursuant to CAA section 107. CAA section 107(d)(3)(D) authorizes the Governor of any State to submit to the Administrator a revised designation of any area or portion thereof within the State. The Agency must approve or deny such proposed redesignation within 18 months. Under CAA section 107(d)(1)(A), any area that does not meet (or that contributes to ambient air quality in a nearby area that does not meet) the NAAQS must be designated as a nonattainment area.

The EPA is proposing the CDD pursuant to CAA sections 172 and 189 and 40 Code of **Federal Register** (CFR) 51.1015 for the proposed Fairbanks nonattainment area. These statutory and regulatory provisions authorize the Agency to suspend certain nonattainment planning obligations if a $PM_{2.5}$ nonattainment area has attained the $PM_{2.5}$ NAAQS. If finalized, the CDD would relieve the State from the

[1] *See* 40 CFR 81.302.