

**PROCESSING DONATIONS OF STANDARDIZED MEMORIAL MONUMENTS,  
PLAQUES, BENCHES AND TREES; FALLEN SOLDIER DISPLAYS**

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This is a new handbook that replaces parts of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Handbook 3160/1, Gifts and Donations Procedures at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries. This handbook establishes the procedures and responsibilities related to processing donations of standardized memorial monuments (SMM), plaques, benches and trees; and Fallen Soldier displays.

**2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:**

a. This handbook replaces previously issued guidance, updates procedures, and defines the duties of Cemetery Directors, District Executive Directors, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) central office staff regarding the proposal, installation, approval, and reporting of donations of SMM, plaques, benches and trees; and Fallen Soldier displays for placement in VA national cemeteries.

b. This handbook clarifies procedures for developing and deciding proposals for donations at, above, and below the newly designated \$10,000 threshold, which may require higher level approval or donor vetting for non-governmental organizations (NGO).

c. This handbook specifies that acceptance of SMM, plaques, benches and trees; and Fallen Soldier displays will be aligned with VA burial eligibility criteria to ensure commemoration of those eligible for burial in VA national cemeteries.

**3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** NCA Office of Cemetery Operations, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this handbook. Please refer questions about this handbook to the Executive Director of the Office of Cemetery Operations.

**4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS:**

a. NCA Directive 3160, Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries (December 14, 2018);

b. NCA Handbook 3160.01, Donations of Monetary or In-kind Gifts or Items of Personal Property (December 14, 2018);

c. NCA Handbook 3160.03 – Processing Donations of Non-Standardized Commemorative Works and Carillons (January 15, 2019); and

d. VA Directive 0008, Developing Public-Private Partnerships with, and Accepting Gifts from, Non-Governmental Organizations (May 29, 2015).

**5. RESCISSIONS:**

a. NCA Guidelines and Requirements for Review and Acceptance of Memorials in National Cemeteries (October 30, 2007).

b. NCA Notice 2006-03, Reporting Memorials in VA National Cemeteries (May 1, 2006);

c. NCA Memorial Plaque Policy (July 3, 1990);

d. NCA Field Operations Director Letter, Donated Tree Policy (February 7, 1989);

e. Section 3.13, Gifts and Donations, M40-2, National Cemeteries - Administration, Operations and Maintenance (May 1, 1984);

f. Section 3.15, Memorial Monuments, Commemorative Tablets and Plaques, M40-2, National Cemeteries – Administration, Operations and Maintenance (May 1, 1984);

g. NCA Notice 2017-04, Acceptance of Donations Featuring the Fallen Soldier Display (December 15, 2017).

**6. RECERTIFICATION:** This publication is scheduled for recertification on January 31, 2024.

/s/ Ronald E. Walters  
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

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## SECTION I – GENERAL GIFT AND DONATION INFORMATION

### 1. PURPOSE

a. This handbook updates procedures for NCA review and approval of proposed donations of standardized memorial monuments (SMM) to eliminate dollar value considerations in determining approval level. This handbook also incorporates guidance on reviewing and accepting proposed donations of memorial plaques, benches and trees, and Fallen Soldier Displays. It provides updated definitions, responsibilities, and procedural guidance in the appendices for use by NCA employees.

b. This handbook includes instructions for implementing the new Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy on donor vetting as it relates to public-private partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGO) for donations valued at or above \$10,000.

c. This handbook instructs employees on how to assist interested donors (groups or organizations) with developing or revising proposals to donate SMMs, memorial plaques, trees, benches and Fallen Soldier displays that comply with NCA design and other criteria.

d. The statutory authorities for policies contained in this document are found in sections 2403 and 2407 of title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.). Implementing regulations are published in section 38.603 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

### 2. BACKGROUND

a. Generally, NCA is authorized to accept gifts and donations that are beneficial to a national cemetery or made for the purpose of beautifying national cemeteries. Such gifts may include SMM, plaques, benches and trees, and Fallen Soldier displays. Additionally, the Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs (USMA), or the USMA's designee, may solicit gifts and donations and authorize the use of his or her name, the name of the USMA's designee, the name of the Secretary, or the name of the Department of Veterans Affairs by an individual or organization in any campaign or drive for donation of money or articles to VA for beautifying, or for the benefit of, one or more national cemeteries.

b. SMM, new benches and trees, and Fallen Soldier displays have a uniform appearance, enabling a streamlined approval process. District Executive Directors have final approval authority on this category of donations, which allows donors to quickly achieve the commemorative intent contemplated in their donation.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

a. Blue Star Memorial Marker – A standard cast-aluminum monument by National Garden Clubs, Inc. designed to pay tribute to the United States (U.S.) Armed Forces, in general.

b. Donor – A group or organization that presents NCA with the gift of a standardized memorial monument, or memorial plaques, benches, and trees, or a Fallen Soldier display for placement in a VA national cemetery. Acceptable donors may include but are not limited to:

(i) An organization whose purposes, objectives and teachings, as exemplified by their constitution, bylaws and activities that primarily honor, support, or celebrate the U.S. Armed Forces, Veterans, and Servicemembers. The primary objective of such an organization should be to honor and recognize military service and have thus acquired a distinctive patriotic character and purpose.

(ii) A government (federal, state and local) or non-governmental organization (NGO), if the potential donor is a credible organization both programmatically and organizationally.

c. Fallen Soldier Display (also referred to as the battlefield cross) – Any physical, three-dimensional replica or depiction incorporated into the design of a standardized memorial monument that features a helmet, boots, dog tags, and rifle.

d. Foundation – A concrete pad or base to provide support under a standardized memorial monument.

e. Memorial bench – A long seat designed to accommodate two or more people, which may vary in style, materials, and location on cemetery grounds.

f. Memorial plaque – A cast-bronze or cast-stainless steel plate of a specific size that contains a commemorative inscription and is mounted either to a cut-stone or natural-boulder base of a specified size, or to masonry wall or structure designated for that purpose.

g. Memorial tree – A live tree that may vary in variety, size, and location on cemetery grounds.

h. Memorial walkway, path, or trail – An area within a national cemetery that is separate and distinct from interment areas and is designed to accommodate the collective display of SMM and memorial plaques.

i. NCA historic properties - objects that commemorate large military conflicts or military events, as well as groups of individuals. These properties do not include any Government-furnished memorialization benefits (headstones or markers), private grave markers, or ornamental landscape features.

j. Standardized memorial monument – a cut-stone or natural-boulder of a specified size that contains an incised inscription or a memorial plaque. The inscription or plaque honors military service by groups or organizations or members of groups or organizations who meet VA burial eligibility authorities.

#### 4. SCOPE

a. This handbook outlines the procedures and criteria NCA staff and leadership must follow in reviewing and deciding gifts and donations of standardized memorial monuments, plaques, benches and trees, and Fallen Soldier displays. This handbook also covers gifts and donations solicited by the USMA and those gifts and donations solicited in the name of the USMA (or designee), VA Secretary, or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

b. This handbook references actions to vet donors under VA Directive 0008, Developing Public-Private Partnerships with, and Accepting Gifts from, Non-Governmental Organizations (May 29, 2015).

c. This handbook includes new provisions for acceptance of memorial trees and benches, and clarifies policies for donations of the Fallen Soldier display.

d. The information in this handbook applies to donation requests received on or after the certification date. Also, the information in this handbook is consistent with other NCA policies and, where applicable, VA policies.

#### 5. REFERENCES

a. 38 U.S.C. § 2403, Memorial areas.

b. 38 U.S.C. § 2407, Authority to accept and maintain suitable memorials.

c. 38 C.F.R. § 38.603, Gifts and donations.

d. VA Directive, Developing Public-Private Partnerships with, and Accepting Gifts to VA from, Non-Governmental Organizations (May 29, 2015).

e. NCA Directive 3160, Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries (December 14, 2018).

f. NCA Handbook 3160.01, Donations of Monetary or In-Kind Gifts or Items of Personal Property (December 14, 2018).

g. NCA Handbook 3160.03, Processing Donations of Non-Standardized Commemorative Works and Carillons (January 15, 2019).

**SECTION II – INITIAL REVIEW OF DONORS AND DONATION OFFERS**

**1. Receiving gift and donation offers.** Any NCA employee may receive offers of monetary donations, personal property, in-kind goods and services, and land. For donations and gifts valued at or above ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), including those solicited by the USMA or on behalf of VA, NCA must first determine whether a donor meets the requirements under VA Directive 0008, Developing Public-Private Partnerships with, and Accepting Gifts from, Non-Governmental Organizations (May 29, 2015). VA's directive applies to offers of gifts or donations, which means any property, item, service, or funds, from non-governmental organizations (NGO), not individuals.

NCA will not require donor vetting for offered donations valued under \$10,000. Upon receipt of any written gift or donation offer at or above the \$10,000 threshold, the NCA point of contact (POC) or the appropriate Cemetery Director will:

a. Provide to potential donors the "Options for Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries" (Appendix A) to inform donors of items NCA may accept as a gift and general development requirements.

(1) For example, if the donor is offering a standardized memorial monument or memorial plaque, the POC or Cemetery Director may provide the donor with the checklist from that handbook and inform the donor of the vetting process in paragraph (b) of this handbook.

b. Inform potential donors in writing that NCA must first determine whether the donor meets VA requirements for gift acceptance, and obtain information about the donor and the intended donation or gift for vetting purposes. See Appendix B to develop donation offers from non-governmental organizations (NGO) valued at or above \$10,000 for vetting purposes.

c. Request a determination from the Executive Director, Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovations (OEMI), who is responsible for vetting potential donors in accordance with requirements in VA Directive 0008 - Developing Public-Private Partnerships with, and Accepting Gifts from, Non-Governmental Organizations (May 29, 2015).

**2. Donor vetting.** The Executive Director, OEMI, is responsible for vetting all potential NGO donor entities of money, goods, services, or personal property valued at or above \$10,000. NCA may vet individual donors who meet this monetary threshold as appropriate.

a. If the donor does not meet VA or NCA policy requirements to establish a partnership with NCA for gift or donation purposes, the Executive Director, OEMI, will communicate that determination in writing back to the donor and inform the Cemetery Director.

b. If the donor meets VA and NCA policy requirements, Executive Director, OEMI, will communicate that determination in writing back to the Cemetery Director to continue development of the donation package. See Appendix E – Sample Letter to Approve/Disapprove Donor.

### **3. Referring vetted packages for development.**

a. For a standardized memorial monument (SMM) or memorial plaques, trees, and benches, or a Fallen Soldier display, NCA employees must immediately refer the potential donor to the Cemetery Director at the location where the donor proposes to place the donated item. NCA employees are prohibited from referring potential donors and donation offers to other entities, such as support committees or Veterans Service Organizations. Upon receipt of any donation offer, the Cemetery Director will:

(i) Provide all potential donors with Appendix A - Options for Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries, that informs them of the different types of donations NCA may accept as gifts and outlines general development requirements for donation proposals.

(ii) Advise potential donors that NCA may only accept a SMM; or memorial plaques, trees, and benches, or a Fallen Soldier display from donors and organizations whose purpose, objectives, and teachings, as exemplified by their constitution, bylaws and activities are primarily patriotic in nature. The organization must have a primary objective of honoring and recognizing military service, and have acquired a distinctive patriotic character and purpose.

(iii) Advise the donor that in no instance will a monument outside the stated dimensions of this handbook be accepted as a SMM and that donations that exceed these requirements may be re-submitted as a non-standardized commemorative work subject to maintenance endowments and a more in-depth and lengthy approval process.

b. In cemeteries where SMMs were accepted based on previously defined specifications that are consistent with, but more stringent than those defined in this handbook, and are reflective of the desires of the local Veterans community, the Cemetery Director will communicate those unique specifications to prospective donors. The Cemetery Director may recommend disapproval of a proposed donation that does not adhere to unique specifications to ensure uniformity of appearance.

c. If the Cemetery Director receives the information required for a complete submission of a proposed donation that requires donor vetting, the Cemetery Director will forward it to the Executive Director, OEMI, for a decision.

### **4. Referring approved donors for proposal development**

a. NCA employees will follow Appendix C - Checklist for NCA Employees – Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; and Fallen Soldier Displays.

b. Cemetery Directors will provide vetted donors Appendix D - Checklist for Donor – Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays as guidelines for completing the phases of the donation process. Cemetery Directors will assist vetted donors with developing donation proposals in accordance with procedures in this handbook.

c. For other gifts or donation types, see NCA Handbook 3160.01 to locate the donor checklist for Donations of Monetary or In-Kind Gifts or Items of Personal Property, and NCA Handbook 3160.03 for the donor checklist for Non-Standardized Commemorative Works and Carillons.

## SECTION III – PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1. DEVELOPING A DONATION PROPOSAL

a. Cemetery Directors must communicate the following information, in addition to the design criteria found in Section III, 2. to donors to assist them in developing donation proposals.

b. Only one standardized memorial monument (SMM) or memorial plaque honoring a specific subject matter will be permitted at a national cemetery. District Executive Directors can request an exception from the Executive Director of Cemetery Operations if there is a compelling reason to approve.

c. If the SMM or plaque honors a military event, it must be at least ten (10) years after the officially designated end of the event.

d. Primary components and design elements of any proposed SMM or plaque must not feature actual or realistic replicas of ordnance or instruments of war (e.g., artillery, submarines, fighter jets, etc.) and would not be approved, except when used as an engraved or incised depiction of the Fallen Soldier display, as defined in this handbook, or as they appear in a unit emblem, so long as it is not the predominant feature.

e. Proposed SMM, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays must be primarily secular in nature and not feature explicit religious emblems or themes.

f. Proposed SMM, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays must not include words or design elements that are incompatible with the VA or NCA mission to honor Veterans, or that a reasonable person could perceive as offensive or derogatory.

g. Proposed SMM, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays must not acknowledge any individual or corporate contributors, nor any advertising. District Executive Directors may allow inclusion of an inscription or a dedication plaque that identifies the donor.

h. For any potential replication of an existing monument, memorial, or artwork from another location, the donor must certify in writing that the owner of the original design or object has provided NCA with the necessary permission(s) or approval(s) for replication.

i. The standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display must honor military service by groups or organizations who meet VA burial eligibility authorities.

j. The standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display may not be used to honor individuals or civilian service, no matter how notable or patriotic. NCA does not permit inscription of individual names on these donated items.

### 2. DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

#### a. Standardized Memorial Monuments (SMM) and Plaques

(i) Character and Theme: SMM and memorial plaques must be consistent with the purpose of the cemetery as a national shrine.

(ii) Color: Color applied to stone and metal is limited to donor group's organizational emblems and the service seals.

(iii) Concrete foundation: The concrete foundation specifications must be part of technical drawings submitted in the proposal package. The donor group must arrange for a concrete pad a total of four (4) inches wider and four (4) inches longer than the memorial monument dimensions at its base, and of appropriate thickness to provide support under the monument. The pad must be set flush with the ground and must extend no more than four (4) inches beyond the monument on any side. The design of the foundation must accommodate soil/climate conditions and must be coordinated with the Cemetery Director.

(iv) Dimensions: The size range for standardized memorial monuments is twenty-four (24) to thirty-six (36) inches high, thirty-three (33) to forty-five (45) inches wide and twelve (12) to twenty (20) inches deep.

(v) Inscriptions: Inscriptions on a standardized memorial monument or memorial plaque may use grey-scale lithochrome to improve legibility. All proposed inscriptions must be approved by the NCA History Program to verify the accuracy and authenticity of any attribution or content about service by groups or organizations who meet VA burial eligibility requirements.

(vi) Location: In most national cemeteries, SMMs and plaques are placed along a memorial walkway or in other areas purposefully designated for their common display. Cemetery Directors must consult with the District Executive Director to determine a location for a SMM or plaque if no area has been so designated. Limited space and historical considerations are potential bases for disapproving a standardized memorial monument. NCA designs its newest cemeteries with memorial walkways and areas as part of the Cemetery Master Plan in accordance with successful design principles. By restricting their size and designating the location for SMMs, NCA can balance its priority interment mission while still allowing donors to recognize military service of groups and organizations.

(vii) Materials and durability: A standardized memorial monument must be granite, marble, limestone, or a natural-boulder, in the natural color of the material. If a memorial plaque is part of the monument, it must be of cast-bronze or cast-stainless steel, in its natural color. The materials and workmanship of the SMM, including the plaque and the stone base, must be of durable materials of the highest quality, free of flaws and imperfections.

(viii) Quality of Design: The design intent of SMMs and memorial plaques displays is to invite reflection on the commemorative purpose and not on the artistic properties of the monument, plaque or display. The design and features should not detract from, or infringe upon, other monuments in the cemetery. By definition, SMMs have a uniform

appearance that enables a streamlined approval process, which allows donors to quickly achieve the commemorative intent contemplated in their donation.

**b. Design or Selection and Location Criteria for Memorial Trees and Benches**

(i) Trees and benches may vary in variety, style, materials, or location but must be consistent with the planned cemetery development and planting plan. If there is no Cemetery Master Plan, the Cemetery Director may coordinate with the District Engineer for guidance.

(ii) Donations of trees or benches that replace previously accepted trees or benches must be of the same variety, style, materials, and location.

(iii) Trees will not be accepted as donations in areas where they will negatively affect operations or interfere with gravesites, markers, utilities, or drainage, even if they are replacements.

**c. Design and Location Criteria for a Fallen Soldier Display**

(i) Location and placement: Physical replicas of the Fallen Soldier display may not be permanently placed in burial sections, or in areas surrounding committal shelters. If requested by families for ceremonial use at committal or memorial services, Cemetery Directors may allow the use of a mobile Fallen Soldier display. Cemetery Directors may recommend the following non-burial areas where permanent replicas may be displayed: the public information center (PIC); administrative offices; or, memorial walkways.

(ii) Replica design: Cemetery Directors will communicate to donors the following design requirements for three-dimensional, physical replicas, which must:

(A) Be no larger than the life-size version of the helmet, boots, dog tags, and rifle;

(B) Be made of cut-stone or a durable metal (e.g., brass, cast-bronze, or cast-stainless steel) in its natural color for durability and ease of maintenance; and

(C) Include a base for the display that is proportionate to the overall size of the display. The base should not exceed the display's width by more than six (6) inches on any side, and should be no higher than twelve (12) inches.

(ii) Military era: Once a Fallen Soldier display is accepted by a cemetery, any subsequent display in the same cemetery must commemorate a different military era by using design elements (helmet, firearm, boots) that were or are commonly used in that era.

**d. Design and Location Criteria for Blue Star Memorial Markers**

(i) Typically donated by local garden clubs, the "Blue Star Memorial Marker" (mounted on a post) or a "Blue Star Memorial By-Way Marker" (mounted on a cut-stone or natural-stone boulder) may be accepted for donation to a VA national cemetery.

(ii) The Blue Star Memorial Marker size is approximately forty-one (41) inches high by forty-five (45) inches wide and mounted on a seven (7) foot high aluminum octagonal post.

(iii) The Blue Star By-Way Marker plaque is twelve (12) inches high by twenty (20) inches wide with predrilled holes for mounting on masonry.

(iv) The Blue Star markers should be located in a prominent location (e.g., along a main roadway, near the Public Information Center (PIC)/Administrative Building, etc.), where they can be viewed by families and visitors.

### 3. PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

a. The Cemetery Director will submit to the District Executive Director a digital copy of the donor's written and graphic proposal to donate a SMM, memorial plaques, new benches and trees, or a Fallen Soldier display containing the items listed below. Cemeteries will retain any hard copies of the documents provided by donors throughout the process and will archive them for future reference upon completion.

(i) Cover Letter: A cover letter signed by the donor or an authorized representative. This includes the donor's name, mailing address, and contact information for principal point of contact (POC). For non-governmental entities and those not recognized by VA under 38 CFR § 14.628, Requirements for accreditation of service organization representatives; agents; and attorneys, donors must provide documents of articles of incorporation, membership criteria, history of Donor Organization, proof of tax exempt status, and copy of the constitution and bylaws.

(ii) Donor Acceptance: Proof that the donor was vetted through the Executive Director, OEMI and met VA requirements for NCA to accept the donation, if necessary.

(iii) Narrative of Commemorative Intent: A statement that includes:

(A) The background and historical information on the group or event to be commemorated or memorialized;

(B) The relevance or relationship of commemoration to the donor; and

(C) Reasons for seeking placement in a VA national cemetery.

(iv) Conceptual Design: For all SMMs, memorial plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays, provide technical drawings of the proposed design showing:

(A) All four elevations, plan, and foundation specifications with exact dimensions;

(B) Exact inscription and details of all text and graphics, if any; and

(C) Materials specified in the fabrication.

- (v) Conceptual Landscape Plan: Indicate the desired location for the donated item.
- (vi) Cost Estimate: Provide an estimation of the cost for the design, fabrication, and installation of a standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display; or, to purchase memorial trees or benches. NCA requests this information for reporting purposes only.
- (vii) Contractor Information (if applicable): Provide the contractor's name, telephone number, and Appendix G – Sample Contractor Certification of Liability Insurance.
- (viii) Proposed Schedule: Provide an estimated timeline for key activities including fabrication, delivery, and installation.
- (ix) Sample Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by NCA of a Donated Item (Appendix F).

## SECTION IV – DONATION REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

### 1. REVIEWING THE DONATION PROPOSAL

a. The process for accepting a Blue Star marker is the same as a standardized memorial monument, as outlined in this handbook. For both donation types, the Cemetery Director will:

(i) Review the donation proposal package against Appendix C - Checklist for NCA Employees – Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays to ensure that the package is complete and ready for decision;

(ii) Submit all proposed inscriptions containing historical information to the NCA History Program (44D) to verify accuracy and authenticity;

(iii) Work with the donor to modify the proposal, if necessary, to meet required specifications provided in this handbook, or cemetery-specific criteria;

(iv) Submit a digital copy of the donation proposal to the District Executive Director and provide a recommendation for the decision to approve the standardized memorial monument, plaque, new benches and trees; or Fallen Soldier display; and

(v) Send a letter to the donor acknowledging NCA's receipt of their proposal to donate a standardized memorial monument, plaques, benches and trees; Fallen Soldier display (Appendix H).

### 2. DONATION APPROVAL

a. The Cemetery Director may approve donations of trees and benches intended to replace previously accepted trees and benches that are of the same variety, type, style, and in the same location, excluding in a burial area. Cemetery Directors may accept these in-kind, replacement donations without District Executive Director review or approval. Trees will not be accepted as donations for areas where they will negatively affect operations or interfere with gravesites, markers, utilities, or drainage, even if they are replacements.

b. The District Executive Directors must:

(i) Approve donation proposals that meet the design guidelines and other requirements in this handbook by completing Appendix F – Sample Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by NCA of a Donated Item.

(ii) If a proposal meets the guidelines but, for any reason, the District Executive Director feels approval is not appropriate, he or she may consult the Executive Director, Office of Cemetery Operations (41A) prior to making a final decision.

(iii) Disapprove donation proposals that do not comply with the design guidelines and other conditions or requirements outlined in this handbook.

c. The Cemetery Director will notify the donor, in writing, of the decision on donation proposals using Appendices I and J as templates for the decision letters. The Cemetery Director may also contact donors by telephone, if necessary. In those instances, the Cemetery Director must document the purpose and outcome of the call on VA Form 119, Report of Contact, available electronically at:

<https://vaww.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA119.pdf>.

## SECTION V – DONATION DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION

### 1. SCHEDULING DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION

a. **Transporting and Delivering the Donation.** Prior to delivery and installation of an approved donation, the Cemetery Director must ensure that the donor is aware of their responsibility for the contractors that will deliver and install the approved donation to the VA national cemetery. Cemetery Directors may provide safety information for transporting and installing monuments or plaques to the memorial pathway location, if available. The process for installing a Blue Star marker is the same as a standardized memorial monument, as outlined in this handbook.

(i) The Cemetery Director must obtain the contractor's certification of insurance that contains, at a minimum, a statement that the contractor complies with applicable Federal and State worker compensation, Right-to-Know laws, environmental standards, and occupational disease studies. Contractors must also provide the name of the insurance carrier and provide proof of bodily injury liability insurance coverage of at least \$500,000 per occurrence and property damage liability insurance coverage of at least \$500,000 if it was not included with the proposal. (Refer to Appendix F – Sample Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by NCA of a Donated Item, and Appendix G – Sample Contractor's Certification of Liability.)

(ii) The Cemetery Director will work with the donor to schedule installation actions that will be performed during normal cemetery operating hours, unless otherwise directed.

b. **Inspecting the Donation Upon Delivery:** The Cemetery Director will inspect the standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display upon delivery to the cemetery, before installation. If the Cemetery Director finds that the donation does not conform to the approved specifications, the Cemetery Director will reject the delivery.

c. **Safety and Condition of Cemetery Grounds:** The Cemetery Director will inspect the areas affected by the completed donation installation to ensure the contractor removed all debris and left the grounds in the same, or better condition. Cemetery Directors must convey the following to donors:

(i) The Donors and their contractor(s) are responsible for ensuring all work is performed in a manner that safeguards VA employees and the public and must take necessary precautions to protect persons and property from injury or damage.

(ii) The donor assumes sole responsibility for the actions of their employees and contractors for replacing contractor-damaged cemetery structures, features, or equipment, including but not limited to: turf, trees, plant beds, landscaping, walks, curbs and gutters, road pavement, headstones or markers, grid monument control markers, utility and service lines, valve boxes, irrigation lines and equipment, etc.

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(iii) The Cemetery Director must approve any repair work prior to the repair, replacement, or reinstallation of damaged property that must meet the Cemetery Director's satisfaction.

## SECTION VI – CEMETERY RECORDKEEPING OF DONATIONS

### 1. GIFTS AND DONATIONS FILE

a. Each cemetery must maintain a detailed record of all proposals and donations of standardized memorial monuments (SMM), plaques, benches and trees; Fallen Soldier displays. The records must be sufficient to support an audit trail of the actions taken to process donations. NCA Finance Service will request documentation for audit reviews. The following documentation must be retained in the cemetery's file:

(i) Original written offers;

(ii) If an accepted donation is a historical item, the Cemetery Director should refer the original offer and acceptance documentation to the NCA History Program.

(iii) Copies of all communications with the donor, to include OEMI and the District Executive Director and Cemetery Director decision letters for accepted or declined offers, memoranda of agreements, etc.;

(iv) Copies of all recommendations made for donation offers that are forwarded to the USMA or a Cemetery Director for a decision; and

(v) Copies of the Sample Deed of Gift (Appendix K) for each historical donation that includes signatures by the donor and NCA Recipient and a description of the materials conveyed to the ownership of the U.S. Government;

### 1. GIFTS AND DONATIONS RECORDS BOOK

a. Cemetery Directors must establish and maintain a Gifts and Donations Record Book that includes:

(i) a description of the gift,

(ii) actual or estimated value,

(iii) date of donation; and

(iv) donor identity, unless donor anonymity is requested.

b. The Gifts and Donations Record Book must be maintained in a public area of the administration office or other suitable public space.

c. NCA's Agent Cashier will maintain a corresponding gifts and donations log and file for all accepted donations

**SECTION VII – REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

**1. REPORTING THE DONATION.** NCA is required to report and track its historic properties, which includes monuments and memorials installed in VA national cemeteries, soldiers' and government lots. These properties generally encompass objects that commemorate large military conflicts or military events, as well as groups of individuals. These properties do not include any Government-furnished memorialization benefits (headstones or markers), private grave markers, or ornamental landscape features.

a. Within thirty (30) days of installation of a standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque, or Fallen Soldier display, the Cemetery Director must report that a new donation was installed at the VA national cemetery to the NCA History Program, see Appendix L – New Monument or Memorial Report.

b. The NCA Historian must:

(i) Submit, annually every December, a list of NCA historic properties to the VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management (CFM) for inclusion in the Inventory of Historic VA Facilities;

(ii) Maintain NCA's permanent inventory of historical artifacts that are donated to the cemeteries;

(iii) Maintain VA's capital asset inventory and notify NCA Budget Service, Capital Asset Management of updates;

(iv) Refer any potential new donations of historic materials to NCA staff designated by the Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations responsible for reviewing such offers and notifying appropriate District Executive Director of the referral;

(v) Assist District Executive Directors, Cemetery Directors, and NCA History Program staff to execute Deed of Gift documentation for any accepted historical asset donations; and

(vi) Communicate acceptance of donated heritage assets with the NCA History Program staff through the appropriate District Office and NCA Finance and Budget Services.

**SECTION VIII – MAINTENANCE AND REMOVAL OR RELOCATION OF DONATED ITEMS**

**1. DONATION MAINTENANCE:** NCA will provide reasonable care, maintenance, and conservation of the donation in perpetuity. NCA is not responsible for replacing any standardized memorial monuments, plaques, benches and trees; or Fallen Soldier displays that are stolen or destroyed, entirely or in part, by acts of nature.

**2. REMOVAL OR RELOCATION OF A DONATED ITEM:** Removal or relocation of any accepted donation specified this handbook must be approved by the District Executive Director. Cemetery Directors will develop a written justification for removal or relocation. Prior to making a decision, particularly for removal or relocation of accepted donations that are considered historic (50 years or older in age), District Executive Directors must provide the NCA History Program and the Historical Architect responsible for Section 106 requirements with notice of the proposed action, which may be subject to review and approval by State Historic Preservation Offices.

**APPENDIX A – Options for Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries****Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration****Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries**

VA is authorized under sections 2406 and 2407 of title 38, United States Code to request (solicit) and accept gifts and donations, as well to solicit gifts and donations for the benefit or beautification of our national cemeteries. Potential donors may review the information below and decide the type of gift or donation they want to make and understand NCA review and acceptance procedures for proposed donations.

**TYPES OF DONATIONS**

- Monetary (cash, checks, bequests)
- Non-monetary (goods/personal property: trees, equipment; or, services: e.g. landscaping)
- Land (real property)
- Carillon (bell tower)
- Standardized memorial monuments (cut-stone or natural boulder of a specified size that contains an incised inscription or a memorial plaque to honor military service in the U.S. Armed Forces by groups or organizations or members of groups or organizations physically interred in that national cemetery. It is not to be used to honor individuals or civilian service however notable or patriotic.) SMM have a uniform appearance that enables a streamlined approval process; it allows donors to quickly achieve the commemorative intent contemplated in their donation.
- Non-standardized memorial monument commemorative works (unique and substantial statue, sculpture, monument, plaque, structure, or landscape feature with dimensions and design complexity that exceed the specifications for a standardized memorial monument.) A non-standardized memorial monument is considered an improvement to real property and is designed to perpetuate the memory of a branch or major unit of the U.S. Armed Forces or similar group, war, major military conflict, or significant event related to war or military conflict, or other significant element in American history.

**GENERAL REVIEW AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

- **RECEIPT OF OFFER:** NCA will request information from the donor, such as organization contact information, partners contributing to the donation, and technical information with narrative describing the purpose of the donation, and any relationships with the cemetery's support or friends group.
- **DEVELOPMENT:** NCA will provide vetted donors with specific information relative to the type of donation they wish to make. NCA officials will work with donors to develop proposals that may require items including narrative statements about the donation, inscription information, technical drawings, cost estimates, proof of insurance, maintenance endowment agreements, and schematics.

- **DECISION:** NCA will work with donors to finalize proposals and, if applicable, inscription content and design specifications to support NCA's decision for acceptance. Decisions will be communicated in writing to donors.
- **DELIVERY/INSTALLATION/EXPENDITURE:** The donor will be required to provide all funds necessary for installation and agree that the donation becomes the property of the U.S. government upon acceptance.

**NOTE:** Donor organizations may engage in fundraising activities to cover the costs of the donation. Due to Federal law, under no circumstances will any statement made by the donor, oral or written, convey support or endorsement by VA. VA specifically prohibits the Donor, or its agents, from using VA's name, or that of any official or employee, that would indicate VA sponsorship or participation in the fundraising effort. Donor accepts all risk for any commitment the make prior to receiving final approval in writing of the donation.

**APPENDIX B – Checklist for Vetting Non-Governmental Organizations  
Offering Donations At or Over \$10,000**

**[INSERT NAME OF NCA EMPLOYEE CONDUCTING INTAKE AND DATE]**

Donor Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Point of Contact (POC) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

POC Phone Number / Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Donor Organization and Operating Status (check all that apply):**

Veterans Service Organization _____	Faith-Based Service Organization _____
Not-for-profit organization _____	Community-based Organization _____
Charitable Organization _____	National Organization _____
For-profit / Commercial Entity _____	International Organization _____
Active / Inactive (circle one)	

**Description of Organization’s Mission, Purpose, or Goals (provide details)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the donor organization’s mission align with NCA’s mission and purpose?

**YES / NO** (circle one)

Does the donor organization serve Veterans, Servicemembers, and their family members?

**YES / NO** (circle one)

Does the donor organization have an existing partner or donor relationship with NCA?

**YES / NO** (circle one)

Would partnership with the donor result in a conflict of interest or present litigation risks to VA? **YES / NO** (circle one) If **YES**, provide rationale:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Donation Type / Purpose of Donation (check all that apply; provide details):**

Monetary Gift _____	Goods _____
Services _____	Carillon _____
Fallen Soldier Display _____	Memorial Tree _____
Memorial Plaque _____	Memorial Bench _____

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Non-Standardized Memorial Monument Commemorative Works \_\_\_\_\_  
Standardized Memorial Monument \_\_\_\_\_

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## **APPENDIX C – Checklist for NCA Staff – Donations of Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays**

### **INITIAL DONATION OFFER AND DONOR VETTING PHASE**

- 1. NCA employee receives an inquiry from a group or organization interested in donating SMM and memorial plaques, trees, benches, and Fallen Soldier displays for placement in a VA National Cemetery. The employee must refer the potential donor to the Cemetery Director at the proposed recipient site.
- 2. Cemetery Director determines whether the potential donor is a non-governmental organization that wishes to donate an item valued at ten-thousand dollars (\$10,000) or greater. The Cemetery Director will:
  - a. Provide all potential donors, regardless of donation value, Appendix A – Options for Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries.
  - b. If the donation is valued at \$10,000 or greater and the potential donor is an NGO, the Cemetery Director will inform the potential donor that NCA must first determine whether the donor meets VA requirements for gift acceptance. The Cemetery Director will assist the potential donor with gathering the requisite information about the donor and intended donation for vetting purposes as shown in Appendix B – Checklist for Vetting Non-Governmental Organizations Offering Donations Over \$10,000.
- 3. If the donation is valued at \$10,000 or greater and the potential donor is an NGO, Cemetery Director will submit the donor information to the Executive Director, OEMI to vet the donor under VA Directive 0008, *Developing Public-Private Partnerships with, and Accepting Gifts from VA from Non-Governmental Organizations*.
  - a. If the Executive Director, OEMI finds the donor does not meet VA requirements, the Executive Director, OEMI will communicate a written decision to the potential donor and cc the Cemetery Director to inform him/her of the decision.
  - b. If the Executive Director, OEMI finds the donor meets VA requirements, the Executive Director, OEMI will communicate a written decision to the Cemetery Director that prompts development of the donation proposal.

### **PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT PHASE**

- 4. Cemetery Director assists the approved donor with developing the donation proposal for SMMs and memorial plaques, trees, benches, and Fallen Soldier displays. This includes providing the donor with the appropriate appendices to this handbook and coordinating with the District Executive Director and NCA central office, as needed.
- 5. Cemetery Director obtains one complete copy of the proposed donation of a standardized memorial monument, plaques, benches and trees, or Fallen Soldier display from the donor. A complete proposal includes the following:

- a. A cover letter signed by the donor or an authorized representative of the group or organization.
  - b. Proof that the donor was vetted through the Executive Director, OEMI and met VA requirements for NCA to accept the donation, if necessary.
  - c. A narrative of commemorative intent that includes the background and historical information on the group or event that is being commemorated or memorialized, a statement of relevance or relationship of the commemoration or subject to the donor, and an explanation of reasons for placing it in the proposed VA national cemetery.
  - d. For all SMMs, memorial plaques, or Fallen soldier displays provide technical drawings of the proposed design showing:
    - (i) All four elevations, plan, and foundation specifications with exact dimensions;
    - (ii) Exact inscription and details of all text and graphics, if any; and
    - (iii) Materials specified in the fabrication.
  - e. Conceptual landscape plan for proposed location.
  - f. Cost estimate that includes the cost for the design, fabrication, and installation of a standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque, or Fallen Soldier display; or, to purchase memorial trees and benches. NCA requests this information for reporting purposes only.
  - g. Information about the contractor, to include the contractor's name, telephone number, and Appendix G – Sample Contractor Certification of Liability Insurance.
  - h. Estimated timeline for key activities including fabrication, delivery, and installation.
  - i. A completed Appendix F – Sample Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by NCA of a Donated Item.
6. Cemetery Director takes the following actions:
- a. Reviews the donation proposal package against Appendix C - Checklist for NCA Employees – Standardized Memorial Monuments and Memorial Plaques, Trees, Benches, and Fallen Soldier Displays to ensure that the package is complete and ready for decision.
  - b. Submits all proposed inscriptions containing historical information to the NCA History Program (44D) to verify accuracy and authenticity.

- c. Works with the donor to modify the proposal, if necessary, to meet required specifications provided in this handbook, or cemetery-specific criteria
- d. Scans and submits a digital copy of the donation proposal to the District Executive Director and provides a recommendation for the decision to approve the standardized memorial monument, plaque, Fallen Soldier display or new memorial trees and benches. Cemetery Director retains all original documents in the cemetery Gifts and Donations file.
- e. Sends a letter to the donor acknowledging NCA's receipt of their proposal to donate a standardized memorial; or memorial plaques, trees, and benches; or a Fallen Soldier display. (Appendix H).

### **REVIEW/APPROVAL PHASE**

- 7. Cemetery Director approves donations of trees and benches intended to replace previously accepted trees and benches that are of the same variety, type, style, and in the same location, except where there is an impact on operations.
- 8. District Executive Director takes the following actions:
  - a. Reviews the proposal, cemetery findings, and recommendations and approves or disapproves.
  - b. Prepares and signs a letter to the donor using Appendices I and J as templates.
  - c. Directs the Cemetery Director to coordinate follow-on actions as required for approved donations.
- 9. The Cemetery Director notifies the donor, in writing, of the decision on the donation proposal by providing the letter signed by the District Executive Director.

### **INSTALLATION PHASE**

- 10. Cemetery Director coordinates with the donor and contractor to install the approved donation. Donors must be aware of the following:
  - a. Donors and contractors are responsible for ensuring all work is performed in a manner that safeguards VA employees and the public and must take necessary precautions to protect persons and property from injury or damage.
  - b. Donors assume sole responsibility for the actions of employees and contractors for replacing contractor-damaged cemetery structures, features, or equipment, including but not limited to: turf, trees, plant beds, landscaping, walks, curbs and gutters, road pavement, headstones or markers, grid monument control markers, utility and service lines, valve boxes, irrigation lines and equipment, etc.

- c. Cemetery Directors must approve repair work prior to repair, replacement, or reinstallation of damaged property that must meet the cemetery director's satisfaction.
  
- 11. Upon delivery, the Cemetery Director inspects the condition of the approved donation and its conformance to the design documents. After inspection, the Cemetery Director may officially accept the donation and begin coordinating the installation.
  
- 12. Cemetery Director or his/her designee oversees the donor's contractor during installation.
  
- 13. Cemetery Director conducts final inspection of installation.
  
- 14. Cemetery Director follows up with donor on actions needed to correct any deficiencies, damage, or other adjustments.

**REPORTING PHASE**

- 15. Within thirty (30) days of the installation of an approved new donation, the Cemetery Director will complete Appendix L – New Monument or Carillon Report and send it with all associated documents to the NCA History Program (44D).

**APPENDIX D – Checklist for Donor – Donations of Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays**

**INITIAL DONATION OFFER AND DONOR VETTING PHASE**

- 1. Express to the Cemetery Director the group's interest in donating a standardized memorial monument; or memorial plaques, trees, or benches; or a Fallen Soldier Display to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration. Indicate the VA national cemetery where you intend for it to be placed. The Cemetery Director will provide Appendix A– Options for Gifts and Donations to VA National Cemeteries.
- 2. When a potential donor is a non-governmental organization proposing to donate an item valued at \$10,000 or greater, NCA must determine whether the potential donor meets VA requirements for gift acceptance. In those instances, the Cemetery Director will provide Appendix B – Checklist for Vetting Non-Governmental Organizations Offering Donations Over \$10,000.
- 3. If required, submit the required information outlined in Appendix B to the Cemetery Director to initiate the donor vetting process.
- 4. Receive notice of the outcome of the donor vetting process.
  - a. If a potential donor does not meet VA requirements, a written decision is provided by the office of the Executive Director, OEMI.
  - b. If a potential donor meets VA requirements, the Cemetery Director contacts the donor to initiate development of the donation proposal.
- 5. Review and discuss the following donation criteria with the Cemetery Director:
  - a. Only one standardized memorial monument or memorial plaque honoring a specific subject matter will be permitted at a national cemetery.
  - b. If the standardized memorial monument or plaque honors a military event, it must be at least ten (10) years after the officially designated end of the event.
  - c. Primary components and design elements of any proposed standardized memorial monument or plaque must not feature actual or realistic replicas of ordnance or instruments of war (e.g., artillery, submarines, fighter jets, etc.) and would not be approved, except when used as an engraved or incised depiction of the Fallen Soldier display, as defined in this handbook, or as they appear in a unit emblem.
  - d. Proposed SMM, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays must be primarily secular in nature and not feature explicit religious emblems or themes.

- e. Proposed SMM, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays must not include words or design elements that are incompatible with the VA or NCA mission to honor Veterans, or that a reasonable person could perceive as offensive or derogatory.
  - f. Proposed SMM, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays must not acknowledge any individual or corporate contributors, nor any advertising. Cemetery Directors may allow inclusion of an inscription or a dedication plaque that identifies the donor.
  - g. For any potential replication of an existing monument, memorial, or artwork from another location, the donor has certified in writing that the owner of the original design or object has provided to NCA, in writing, the necessary permission(s) or approval(s) for replication.
  - h. The standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display must honor military service by groups or organizations who meet VA burial eligibility authorities.
  - i. The standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display may not be used to honor individuals or civilian service, no matter how notable or patriotic. NCA does not permit inscription of individual names on these donated items.
6. Review and discuss the following design considerations with the Cemetery Director:
- a. **Standardized Memorial Monuments**
    - (i) Character and Theme: SMM, memorial plaques and Fallen Soldier displays must be consistent with the purpose of the cemetery as a national shrine.
    - (ii) Color: Color applied to stone and metal is limited to donor group's organizational emblems of the donor group and the service seals.
    - (iii) Concrete foundation: The concrete foundation specifications must be part of technical drawings submitted in the proposal package. The donor group must arrange for a concrete pad a total of four (4) inches wider and four (4) inches longer than the memorial monument dimensions at its base, and of appropriate thickness to provide support under the monument. The pad must be set flush with the ground and must extend no more than four (4) inches beyond the monument on any side. The design of the foundation must accommodate soil/climate conditions and must be coordinated with the Cemetery Director.
    - (iv) Dimensions: The size range for a SMM is twenty-four (24) to thirty-six (36) inches high, thirty-three (33) to forty-five (45) inches wide and twelve (12) to twenty (20) inches deep.
    - (v) Inscriptions: Inscriptions on a standardized memorial monument or memorial plaque may use grey-scale lithochrome to improve legibility. All proposed inscriptions must be approved by the NCA History Program to verify the accuracy and authenticity

of any attribution or content about service by groups or organizations who meet VA burial eligibility requirements.

(vi) Location: In most national cemeteries, SMMs and plaques are placed along a memorial walkway or in other areas purposefully designated for their common display. Cemetery Directors must consult with the District Executive Director to determine a location for a SMM or plaque if no area has been so designated. Limited space and historical considerations are potential bases for disapproving a standardized memorial monument. NCA designs its newest cemeteries with memorial walkways and areas as part of the Cemetery Master Plan in accordance with successful design principles. By restricting their size and designating the location for SMMs, NCA can balance its priority interment mission while still allowing donors to recognize military service of groups and organizations.

(vii) Materials and durability: A standardized memorial monument must be granite, marble, limestone, or a natural-boulder, in the natural color of the material. If a memorial plaque is part of the monument, it must be of cast-bronze or cast-stainless steel, in its natural color. The materials and workmanship of the standardized memorial monument, including the plaque and the stone base, must be of durable materials of the highest quality, free of flaws and imperfections.

(viii) Quality of Design: The design intent of SMMs, plaques, and Fallen Soldier displays is to invite reflection on the commemorative purpose and not on the artistic properties of the monument, plaque or display. The design and features should not detract from, or infringe upon, other monuments in the cemetery. By definition, SMMs have a uniform appearance that enables a streamlined approval process, which allows donors to quickly achieve the commemorative intent contemplated in their donation

#### b. **Trees and Benches**

(i) Trees and benches may vary in variety, style, materials, or location but must be consistent with the planned cemetery development and planting plan. If there is no Cemetery Master Plan, the Cemetery Director may coordinate with the District Engineer for guidance.

(ii) Donations of trees or benches that replace previously accepted trees or benches must be of the same variety, style, materials, and location.

(iii) Trees will not be accepted as donations in areas where they will negatively affect operations or interfere with gravesites, markers, utilities, or drainage, even if they are replacements.

#### c. **Fallen Soldier display**

(i) Location and placement. Physical replicas of the Fallen Soldier display may not be permanently placed in burial sections, or in areas surrounding committal shelters.

(ii) Replica design. Cemetery Directors will communicate to donors the following design requirements for three-dimensional, physical replicas, which must:

(A) Be no larger than the life-size version of the helmet, boots, dog tags, and rifle;

(B) Be made of cut-stone or a durable metal (e.g., brass, cast-bronze, or cast-stainless steel) in its natural color for durability and ease of maintenance; and,

(C) Include a base for the display that is proportionate to the overall size of the display. The base should not exceed the display's width by more than six (6) inches on any side, and should be no higher than twelve (12) inches.

(iii) Military era: Once a Fallen Soldier display is accepted by a cemetery, any subsequent display in the same cemetery must commemorate a different military era by using design elements (helmet, firearm, boots) that were or are commonly used in that era.

d. **Blue Star Memorial Marker.** Typically donated by local garden clubs, the "Blue Star Memorial Marker" (mounted on a post) or a "Blue Star Memorial By-Way Marker" (mounted on a cut-stone or natural-stone boulder) may be accepted for donation to a VA national cemetery.

(i) The Blue Star Memorial Marker size is approximately forty-one (41) inches high by forty-five (45) inches wide and mounted on a seven (7) foot high aluminum octagonal post.

(ii) The Blue Star By-Way Marker plaque is twelve (12) inches high by twenty (20) inches wide with predrilled holes for mounting on masonry.

(iii) They should be located in a prominent location (e.g., along a main roadway, near the Public Information Center (PIC)/Administrative Building, etc.), where they can be viewed by families and visitors.

### **PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT PHASE**

7. Submit to the Cemetery Director a complete copy of the written and graphic proposal to donate a standardized memorial monument; or memorial plaques, trees, and benches; or a Fallen Soldier display containing the following:

a. A cover letter signed by the donor or an authorized representative of the group or organization.

b. A narrative of commemorative intent that includes the background and historical information on the group or event that is being commemorated or memorialized, a statement of relevance or relationship of the commemoration or subject to the donor, and an explanation of the reasons for placing it in the proposed VA national cemetery.

d. For all SMMs, memorial plaques, or Fallen soldier displays provide technical drawings of the proposed design showing:

(i) All four elevations, plan, and foundation specifications with exact dimensions;

(ii) Exact inscription and details of all text and graphics, if any; and

(iii) Materials specified in the fabrication.

e. Conceptual landscape plan for proposed location.

f. Cost estimate that includes the cost for the design, fabrication, and installation of a standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque, or Fallen Soldier display; or, to purchase memorial trees and benches. NCA requests this information for reporting purposes only.

- g. Information about the contractor, to include the contractor's name, telephone number, and Appendix G – Contractor Certification of Liability Insurance.
  - h. Estimated timeline for key activities including fabrication, delivery, and installation.
  - i. A completed Appendix F – Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by NCA of a Donated Item.
8. Receive a letter of acknowledgment for the conceptual donation proposal.

**REVIEW/APPROVAL PHASE**

9. Receive a letter from the Cemetery Director that the proposed donation of a standardized memorial monument, plaque, benches and trees; or a Fallen Soldier display is either approved or disapproved. If approved, the Cemetery Director will work with the donor to coordinate delivery and installation of the donated item.

**INSTALLATION PHASE**

10. Donors must be aware of the following:
- a. Donors and contractors are responsible for ensuring all work is performed in a manner that safeguards VA employees and the public and must take necessary precautions to protect persons and property from injury or damage.
  - b. Donors assume sole responsibility for the actions of employees and contractors for replacing contractor-damaged cemetery structures, features, or equipment, including but not limited to: turf, trees, plant beds, landscaping, walks, curbs and gutters, road pavement, headstones or markers, grid monument control markers, utility and service lines, valve boxes, irrigation lines and equipment, etc.
  - c. Cemetery Directors must approve repair work prior to repair, replacement, or reinstallation of damaged property that must meet the cemetery director's satisfaction.
11. Upon delivery, the Cemetery Director inspects the condition of the approved donation and its conformance to the design documents. After inspection, the Cemetery Director may officially accept the donation and begin coordinating the installation.
12. Cemetery Director or his/her designee will oversee the donor's contractor during installation.
13. Cemetery Director will conduct the final inspection of the installed donation.
14. Cemetery Director will follow up on actions needed to correct any deficiencies, damage, or other adjustment.

**APPENDIX E – Sample Letter for Executive Director, OEMI Approval or Disapproval of Donor Vetting**

[Insert VA seal and letter head for Executive Director, OEMI; cc Cemetery Director]

[Date]

[Donor or POC Name]

[Title, if any]

[Street Address]

[City, State, Zip code]

Dear [Name of Donor or Donor Representative]:

Thank you for [“your offer to donate” OR “the offer to donate, on behalf of (Donor name)], the [SPECIFY donation type], valued at [SPECIFY monetary estimate] to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [name of VA National Cemetery or National Cemetery Administration].

I am responding because I am responsible for the initial review of offers from potential donors under VA policies for developing responsible public-private partnerships with non-governmental organizations. As part of NCA’s due diligence, I must review all donation offers valued at or above \$10,000, taking into consideration factors such as donor suitability and whether acceptance of the proposed donation would be consistent with applicable legal authorities, VA core values, and available resources.

**APPROVAL**

Based on the information you provided about the proposed donation, I find that partnering with you [“your organization” OR “the donor”] would advance our shared mission to honor our Nation’s fallen heroes. I request that you please work with the leadership at [name of VA National Cemetery OR NCA POC] to complete the donation review and decision process.

**DISAPPROVAL**

Based on the information you provided about the proposed donation, I find that partnering with you [“your organization” OR “the donor”] [“presents a conflict of interests” OR “would not advance our shared mission to honor our Nation’s fallen heroes” OR “would drain NCA resources away from our mission to meet the burial needs of our Veterans” OR SPECIFY RATIONALE]. I understand this may not be the result you seek but hope you understand our obligation to adhere to VA’s policies that ensure we meet our primary purpose of serving Veterans.

Thank you for your interest in support of VA and the National Cemetery Administration.

Sincerely,

NAME

Executive Director, Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovations

**APPENDIX F – Sample Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by NCA of a Donated Item**

[Please use official VA or NCA letterhead and follow VA formatting.]

As an officer or recognized representative of \_\_\_\_\_, I hereby certify and acknowledge on behalf of the organization the following conditions relating to the donation of \_\_\_\_\_, to \_\_\_\_\_ National Cemetery.

1. The acceptance of the gift or donated item by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is subject to the provisions of 38 U.S.C. § 2407.
2. Title to the donated item passes to, and is vested in, the United States, and the donor relinquishes all control over the future use or disposition of the gift or donation.
3. The donor is responsible for all costs related to design and acquisition, transporting, installing, and finishing the installation of the donation.
4. The donor is responsible for all costs for repairs related to damage to cemetery features and infrastructure caused by the installation of the donated item including, but not limited to: turf and landscaping; walks; curbs and gutters; street paving; and utility and service lines.
5. The design plans and exact location for placement of the donation must be approved by the Cemetery Director.
6. All actions associated with installation and dedication of donated items will be approved in advance by the Cemetery Director.
7. NCA will provide reasonable care and maintenance of the donated item and accountability of the gift. NCA will not be responsible for replacing any standardized memorial monuments, plaques, or Fallen Soldier displays that are stolen or destroyed (entirely or in part) by acts of nature.

We agree to the above conditions:

_____ Signature of Representative or Officer	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Cemetery Director	_____ Date
_____ Signature of District Executive Director	_____ Date

**APPENDIX G – Sample Contractor Certification of Liability Insurance**

I certify that \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_:  
(Name of Company) (Date)

- a. Our company complies with applicable Federal and State Worker Compensation and occupational disease studies; and
- b. Our company has current Bodily Injury Liability Insurance coverage written on the comprehensive form of policy of at least \$500,000 per occurrence with \_\_\_\_\_; and  
(Name of Insurance Company)
- c. Our company has current Property Damage Liability insurance coverage of at least \$500,000 with \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Name of Insurance Company)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Company Official Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Company Official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number

January 15, 2019

NCA HANDBOOK 3160.02

**APPENDIX H – Sample Letter Acknowledging Receipt of a Proposal to Donate Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays**

[Please use official VA or NCA letterhead and follow VA letter formatting; CC Cemetery Director]

[Date]

[Donor or POC Name]

[Title]

[Street Address]

[City, State, Zip code]

Dear [Donor or POC name]:

Thank you for your recent offer to donate [a standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque, or Fallen Soldier display] OR [memorial tree(s) or bench(es)] to [cemetery name].

Please be advised that your offer to donate is under review. I will contact you with a decision if additional information is needed or when the review process is complete.

Sincerely

[Name]

District Executive Director

cc: Cemetery Director

January 15, 2019

NCA HANDBOOK 3160.02

**APPENDIX I – Sample Approval Letter – Donations of Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays**

[Please use official VA or NCA letterhead and follow VA letter formatting; CC Cemetery Director]

[Date]

[Donor or POC Name]

[Title]

[Street Address]

[City, State, Zip code]

Dear [Donor or POC name]:

Your request [or The request], on behalf of the [Donor name], to place [a standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque, or Fallen Soldier display] on this cemetery's Memorial [walkway/path/area] OR [Memorial Tree(s) or Bench(es) in the [cemetery name] is approved. The documents and drawings you submitted meet National Cemetery Administration requirements for the donation type.

We are privileged that your organization has selected [cemetery name] as the site for a memorial honoring those who served in the [Name of group being honored].

At [cemetery Name], the approved donation of [a standardized memorial monument, plaque, or Fallen Soldier display] [ memorial trees or benches] will be placed in the [area/location] that is designated [for collective display] [to beautify the cemetery grounds].

We look forward to hearing from the [contractor name] when the [standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque or Fallen Soldier display has been completed], or the [tree(s) or bench(es) have been purchased] to arrange for placement.

If I may be of further assistance I can be reached at [phone number], or by e-mail at [cemetery director]@va.gov.

Sincerely,

[Name]

District Executive Director

cc: Cemetery Director

January 15, 2019

NCA HANDBOOK 3160.02

**APPENDIX J – Sample Disapproval Letter – Donation of Standardized Memorial Monuments, Plaques, Benches and Trees; Fallen Soldier Displays [Date]**

[Please use official VA or NCA letterhead and follow VA letter formatting; CC Cemetery Director]

[Donor or POC Name]

[Title]

[Street Address]

[City, State, Zip code]

Dear [Donor or POC name]:

Thank you for your offer [OR the request, on behalf of the [Donor name], to donate a [standardized memorial monument OR plaque, tree(s), bench(es) or Fallen Soldier display] that was proposed to be placed in [the Memorial walkway/path/area] at [cemetery name]. I am writing to inform you that your request was not approved.

[Insert reasons and bases for the disapproval: donation failed to meet design specifications, OR proposed donation does not honor military service in the US Armed Forces by groups or organizations, etc.]

I regret that we cannot accommodate your request. If you have any questions, please contact me at [phone number], or by e-mail at [cemetery director]@va.gov.

Sincerely,

[Name]

District Executive Director

cc: Cemetery Director

**APPENDIX K – Sample Deed of Gift Form for Donation of Heritage Asset**

[Use Donor Letterhead or Donor Name]

**DEED OF GIFT FORM**

I wish to convey my ownership of certain historical materials, described below, to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), for the purposes of preservation, research, and education. By signing below, I hereby grant and convey to the NCA unrestricted title and all physical, custodial, literary, and copyrights that I may have to the historical materials herein described. NCA, its successors or assignees, may scan, duplicate, reformat, preserve, publish, and distribute images of these materials in any format they deem appropriate.

Description of materials being donated:

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Subject(s)</u>	<u>Date/Range</u>
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[Please insert requested information under headings shown above]

Donor Signature	NCA Recipient Signature
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Donor Name (please print)	NCA Recipient (please print)
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Date	Date
------	------

\_\_\_\_\_  
Donor's Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip Code

### APPENDIX L – New Monument or Carillon Report

Within thirty (30) days of the installation of an approved standardized memorial monument, memorial plaque, or Fallen Soldier display the Cemetery Director at the location where the donation was placed must complete this form and send it with all associated documents to the NCA History Program (44D). The required information for the report is shown below; the fillable form is located on the NCA intranet at:

[http://vaww.nca.va.gov/docs/history\\_prog/NewMemorialReport.pdf](http://vaww.nca.va.gov/docs/history_prog/NewMemorialReport.pdf)

Submit by Email    Print Form

#### National Cemetery Administration NEW MONUMENT or CARILLON REPORT

Complete form and forward, along with other requested materials, within 30 days of installation.

Cemetery Name  Station No.

Monument Name or Carillon

Date Installed  Date Dedicated

Donor Name

Cost  Dimensions (H x W x D)

Material(s)

Artist/Designer/Manufacturer

Location in cemetery  
(e.g. grave section, road, memorial walkway)

Inscription(s)

Submit a minimum of three (3) digital photographs of the monument/carillon to show all sides and inscriptions (carillons and monuments other than standard ones will require a greater number of photographs to adequately address entire object); copies of dedication ceremony announcements; media coverage; plans or related documentation. Digital images should be 1600x1200 pixels at 180 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger.

Signature of Cemetery Director

Date

Copies:    Send via email to [NCAHistoryProgramMailbox@va.gov](mailto:NCAHistoryProgramMailbox@va.gov)  
              Retain a copy at the cemetery for your permanent files  
              Send District office a copy

For questions, please contact Jennifer Perunko, Historian, at 202/632-5441 or [jennifer.perunko@va.gov](mailto:jennifer.perunko@va.gov)

Created 6/1/2016