

National Cemetery Administration

**Guidelines and Requirements
for Review and Acceptance of Memorials
in National Cemeteries**

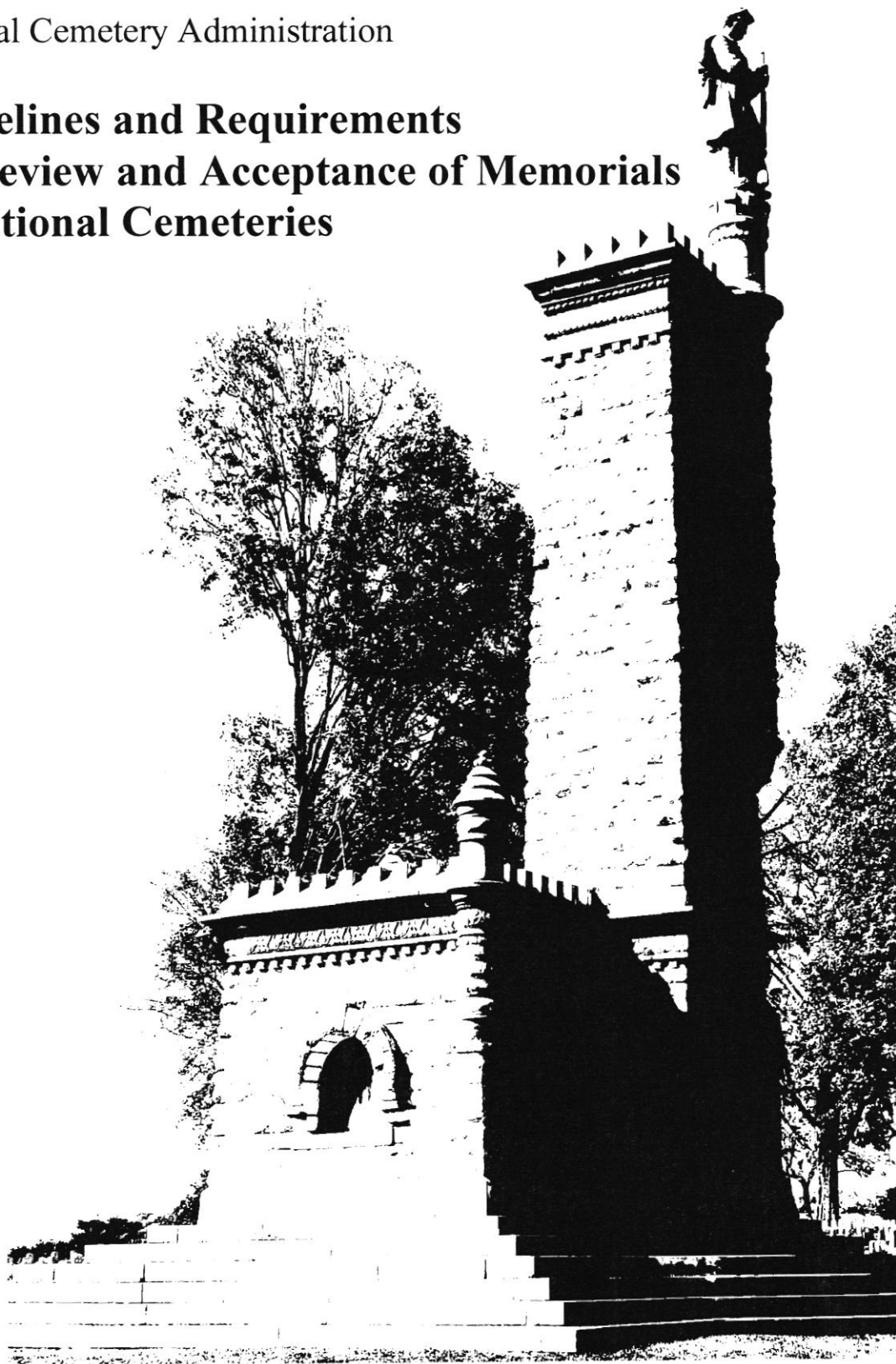


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1.0 Purpose and Scope

1.1 Purpose: The purpose of these guidelines and requirements is to provide guidance on the appropriate design, size, and procedures for the acceptance of donation of memorials to National Cemetery Administration (NCA). Each national cemetery is maintained as a national shrine, that is, a place of honor and memory where veterans and visitors can sense the serenity, historic sacrifice and nobility of purpose of those who have served the Nation in the military. This document contains criteria and information to instruct donor groups and national cemetery administration staff on the donation and acceptance of Commemorative Works and Standard Memorial Monuments. The responsibilities of the Cemetery Directors, Memorial Service Network (MSN) Directors and Central Office staff regarding proposal, installation, approval, and reporting of donations of memorials are contained herein.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Commemorative Work - for purposes of national cemeteries the term 'commemorative work' means any statue, sculpture, structure, landscape feature, or monument outside of the specified size range for standardized memorial monuments, designed to perpetuate in a permanent manner the memory of a group, event, a war, or similar major military conflict, a branch or major unit of the U.S. Armed Forces, or other significant element of American military history.

1.2.2 Construction Monitor – the person responsible in NCA to monitor construction progress and conduct the final inspection during construction of a commemorative work. The Office of Construction Management (OCM) will recommend to Office of Field Programs who -- the Cemetery Director, the MSN Engineer or OCM Project Manager -- should be responsible for construction monitoring. The Director, Field Programs, will decide who will be responsible for construction monitoring.

1.2.3 Donor Group - the organization offering donation of a Commemorative Work or Standardized Memorial Monument.

1.2.4 Foundation - as used for Standardized Memorial Monuments, is a concrete pad a total of 4 inches wider and 4 inches longer than the memorial monument dimensions at its base, to provide support under the monument. The pad shall be set flush with the ground and shall extend no more than 2 inches beyond the monument on any side.

1.2.5 Memorial Plaque - a cast bronze or cast stainless steel plate with a commemorative inscription that is mounted to a cut stone or natural boulder base.

1.2.6 Memorial Walkway, Path, or Trail - an area or areas, separate and distinct from interment areas for the collective display of memorials donated by various recognized veterans groups.

1.2.7 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - a legal document describing a bilateral agreement between VA and the donor group for a commemorative work. It creates a

platform for a clear understanding of each party's commitments/purpose and sets out expectations for responses in the event of intentional or unintentional breach of the MOU's original commitments.

- 1.2.8 Review Board - a group of no more than seven (7) design experts who are federal employees, assembled by NCA for the purpose of providing input and recommendations on the design, aesthetics and appropriateness of individual Commemorative Work proposals. The anticipated membership of the review board is two (2) NCA representatives (landscape architect and architect) and five (5) other representatives with expertise in disciplines such as art, art history, sculpture, architecture, and landscape architecture from federal agency programs such as General Services Administration (GSA) Art in Architecture, National Park Service (NPS) Cultural Resources, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Department of Treasury U.S. Mint, Smithsonian Institution, and U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.
- 1.2.9 Standardized Memorial Monument - A cut stone or natural boulder base of a specified size with an incised inscription or a plaque honoring military service in the U.S. Armed Forces by groups or organizations or those physically interred in that national cemetery.

2.0 Record Keeping and Reporting

2.1 Required Documentation - New Commemorative Works shall be formally conveyed from the donor to NCA through a Custody Receipt signed by both parties. Three (3) original Custody Receipts and one (1) copy will be generated: An original Custody Receipt as well as a set of reduced-sized final drawings, a copy of MOU, and related correspondence will be permanently maintained by the History Program, VACO; the Cemetery will retain an original Custody Receipt and an original MOU; the donor will be provided with an original Custody Receipt and original MOU. The MSN will retain a copy of the Custody Receipt and copy of MOU.

2.2 Disposition of Records - All documentation maintained in NCA offices should be considered permanent records and should not be archived or destroyed.

2.3 Reporting Requirements - Policy and procedures for the reporting of new memorials installed at VA national cemeteries and soldiers lots are contained in *NCA Notice 2006-03 Reporting Memorials in VA National Cemeteries*. The Notice requires a Cemetery Director to report new memorials within 30 days of installation in accordance with specified procedures, and annually certify and report the number and names through the appropriate Memorial Service Network by September 30 of each year.

3.0 Commemorative Works

3.1 General guidelines and requirements

3.1.1 Commemorative Works will be accepted only from organizations whose purposes, objectives and teachings, as exemplified by their constitution, by-laws and activities

are primarily patriotic in nature. The organization must be based on a primary objective to honor and recognize military service and have thus acquired a distinctive patriotic character and purpose. Commemorative works may also be accepted from governments (federal, state and local.)

- 3.1.2 Commemorative Works will not be accepted from individuals.
- 3.1.3 Only one Commemorative Work honoring a specific subject matter will be accepted at a cemetery.
- 3.1.4 The primary component or design element of the proposed Commemorative Work does not feature actual ordnance or a realistic replica of actual ordnance. For example, Commemorative Works built around something such as a torpedo or a howitzer would not be approved.
- 3.1.5 The proposed Commemorative Work is primarily secular in nature and does not feature explicit religious emblems or themes.
- 3.1.6 The proposed Commemorative Work does not include words or design elements that are incompatible with the VA or NCA mission to honor veterans, or that could be perceived as offensive or derogatory by a reasonable person.
- 3.1.7 The proposed Commemorative Work does not bear acknowledgment of individual or corporate contributors, nor any advertising.
- 3.1.8 If the Commemorative Work honors a military event, it is at least 10 years after the officially designated end of the event.
- 3.1.9 For any potential replication of an existing monument, memorial, or artwork from another location, the donor has certified in writing that the group has received any necessary permission(s) or approval(s) for replication.
- 3.1.10 The proposed Commemorative Work design team must have a licensed/registered landscape architect or architect as a member of the team, with experience in the design of similar projects. Specialty disciplines should be involved as needed for the specific project.
- 3.1.11 The design, location, size, and features of the commemorative work shall be compatible with the existing infrastructure features of the cemetery such as roadways, curbing and gutter, pedestrian walkways, storm drainage system, underground and/or overhead utilities, topography, etc.
 - 3.1.11.1 When existing infrastructure features of the cemetery need to be modified or new infrastructure features need to be added to accommodate the commemorative work, the design of these features shall be accomplished by the donor groups registered professional architect, landscape architect, or engineer as appropriate, and included on the commemorative works contract documents to be submitted NCA for approval.

3.1.11.2 Design and construction of new or modified infrastructure features that are needed to accommodate the commemorative work shall be in accordance with Paragraph 3.4 “Compliance with Codes” and meet all VA standard construction guidelines and specification requirements. New or modified infrastructure design and construction shall match or exceed the physical and material characteristics, quality, and design of the existing infrastructure features of the cemetery.

3.1.12 The proposed commemorative work design shall be evaluated by the Review Board for artistic and commemorative merit, and the Board will make recommendations for NCA consideration.

3.2 Proposal Process

3.2.1 A proposal to donate a commemorative work shall be submitted in writing to the Cemetery Director.

3.2.2 A proposal to donate a commemorative work shall contain the following:

3.2.2.1 Identification of Donor Organization (includes mailing address of Donor Organization, designation of organization’s principal point of contact, and - for other than government entities - documents or articles of incorporation, membership criteria, history of Donor Organization, proof of tax exempt status, and copy of the constitution and by laws, if not a recognized National organization according to 38CFR14.628.)

3.2.2.2 Conceptual design drawings of proposed commemorative work showing:

3.2.2.2.1 Elevations, plan, and dimensions

3.2.2.2.2 Potential areas for inscriptions and proposed text, if available

3.2.2.2.3 Materials proposed

3.2.2.2.4 Location proposed by donor group

3.2.2.2.5 Conceptual landscape plan for proposed location

3.2.2.3 Narrative of commemorative intent (includes background and historical information on what group or event is being commemorated or memorialized, a statement of relevance or relationship of subject to Donor Organization and explanation of reasons for seeking placement in a VA national cemetery.)

3.2.3 Cemetery Director:

3.2.3.1 Acknowledges the conceptual proposal in writing (Appendix C) and explains the Commemorative Work process and time frames to expect either approval or disapproval

3.2.3.2 Reviews proposal for compliance with general guidelines and requirements

3.2.3.3 Reviews the Cemetery Master Plan

3.2.3.4 Confers with the donor group on the site recommendation

3.2.3.5 Forwards proposal to MSN office with cemetery findings and recommendations

- 3.2.4 Memorial Service Network:
 - 3.2.4.1 Reviews proposal and cemetery director's findings
 - 3.2.4.2 Makes recommendation for acceptance or non-acceptance of proposal
 - 3.2.4.3 Submits to Office of Field Programs
- 3.2.5 Office of Field Programs reviews proposal and forwards to Office of Construction Management
 - 3.2.4.1 Reviews proposal with MSN's and cemetery director's findings
 - 3.2.4.2 Makes recommendation for acceptance or non-acceptance of proposal
 - 3.2.4.3 Submits to Office of Construction Management
- 3.2.6 Office of Construction Management:
 - 3.2.6.1 Reviews proposal and prepares comments to be considered by Review Board
 - 3.2.6.2 Convenes Review Board up to four times a year.
- 3.2.7 Review Board reviews proposal, makes recommendation and forwards to Office of Construction Management. This review will occur for the initial proposal and also during the design review phase.
- 3.2.8 Office of Construction Management prepares recommendation package and forwards to Field Programs.
- 3.2.9 Office of Field Programs reviews package and makes recommendation on approval or disapproval of donation
 - 3.2.9.1 Prepares decision letter for signature of Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs
 - 3.2.9.2 Develops MOU to be signed by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs for acceptance of the memorial donation.
- 3.3 Design guidelines and requirements
 - 3.3.1 Character and Theme: The Commemorative Work shall be artistically designed and consistent with the purpose of the cemetery as a national shrine. The Commemorative Work will be placed in perpetuity.
 - 3.3.2 Size and Scale: The size and scale of the Commemorative Work shall be appropriate to the site and context within the cemetery.
 - 3.3.3 Materials and Workmanship
 - 3.3.3.1 The Commemorative Work shall be of durable and permanent materials, designed with maintenance and upkeep in mind. Factors such as minimal maintenance and upkeep of the commemorative work shall also be considered. Materials should be appropriate to environment and topography in which they are installed, for example, desert, mountainous terrain, humid climate, etc.
 - 3.3.3.2 The materials and workmanship of the commemorative work shall be of the highest quality, free of flaws and imperfections.

3.3.4 Compliance with Codes

3.3.4.1 The design and construction of the commemorative work shall comply with the latest edition of national recognized building codes as a minimum, such as the International Building Code (IBC), National Electrical Code (NEC), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Codes, and National Standard Plumbing Code (NSPC).

3.3.4.2 The commemorative work shall be readily accessible to people with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended, and local accessibility requirements. To achieve compliance, the National Cemetery Administration uses as its standard for building and facility design the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standards (ABAAS). It is NCA policy to make all cemetery structures accessible without the use of special facilities for the disabled. The donor group's A/E is responsible for checking to see whether there are local accessibility requirements. If they exist, the most stringent requirements shall prevail between local and ABAAS. The criteria of these standards would be considered a minimum in providing access for the physically disabled.

3.3.4.3 The commemorative work must comply with applicable federal statutes, Executive Orders, and state and local regulations establishing environmental standards.

3.3.5 Effect on historic and cultural resources, and mandatory Section 106 consultation:

New Commemorative Works should be consistent with the historic significance of the cemetery. Appropriate siting can be assessed using the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Preservation Brief 36, Protecting Cultural Landscapes*. The goal is to ensure that a new Commemorative Work does not adversely affect the historic character or existing features of the cemetery. Any proposed Commemorative Work that could potentially affect the character of an NCA national cemetery or soldiers' lot shall be subject to the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This is applicable to all NCA cemeteries regardless of age, but especially those more than 50 years old. NCA shall be responsible for the Section 106 Process.

3.3.6 Inscriptions: Inscriptions shall be meaningful to the broadest possible audience. Text and any design element on the commemorative work and related plaques shall be limited to interpretive information about the work itself or the subject it commemorates. Wording shall be both descriptive and concise. It may include a brief memorial inscription, or verse, quotation, or other brief wording appropriate to the work. Inscriptions shall not include words or design elements that are incompatible with the VA or NCA mission to honor veterans, or that could be perceived as offensive or derogatory by a reasonable person. Plaques should be in scale with the work. The plaque should be in scale to the work and complimentary, rather than competing with it for attention. Dedication plaques shall be limited to name of the artist or designer, name of the donor group, and the date dedicated.

3.3.7 Safety: To ensure public safety, the commemorative work shall be free of hazards and consistent with VA's responsibility to maintain a safe environment, protect and preserve VA staff, volunteers, visitors and property.

3.4 Location guidelines and requirements

3.4.1 The specific locations for Commemorative Works shall be consistent with the cemetery master plan. If no master plan exists, the cemetery director shall consult with MSN and VACO.

3.4.2 Commemorative Works shall be located only within developed grounds and must not conflict with existing or planned burial space.

3.5 Design Documents Submission and Approval Process

3.5.1 Commemorative Work proposals that are accepted by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and covered by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will proceed to the design phase.

3.5.2 The donor and the donor's A/E firm shall adhere to the approved proposal concept for the commemorative work and to the signed MOU.

3.5.3 Most commemorative works will follow the following typical submission policy: one Schematic submission, one Design Development submission and one Construction Document submission. Depending on the complexity of the project NCA may alter the submission requirements by adding or deleting certain reviews.

3.5.4 The donor's A/E is responsible for producing a correct, complete, and fully coordinated set of drawings, design narrative, calculations, sample boards and specifications for the successful completion of the project in accordance with professional practice standards and VA criteria.

3.5.5 At each submission, the donor's A/E shall date all material and present designs on standard size drawings that are appropriately labeled "SCHEMATIC SUBMISSION", "DESIGN DEVELOPMENT SUBMISSION", or "CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENT SUBMISSION", in large block letters above or beside the drawing title block. In each submission, the donor's A/E shall incorporate the corrections, adjustments and changes made by NCA at the previous review.

3.5.6 A/E Seal: Each Construction Drawing shall bear the seal and signature of the registered professional architect, landscape architect or engineer responsible for its design. Before the final contract documents are issued for construction, a principal of the design firm shall be required to provide a signed certification that all drawings and calculations have been properly signed and sealed by the appropriate individual for each discipline, in accordance with the rules and regulations of the local state

licensing authority. This certification shall be forwarded to the NCA Office of Construction Management upon the completion of the Construction Documents.

3.5.7 The donor or the donor's A/E firm shall submit complete packages at each stage of design to the Office of Construction Management with copies to the Cemetery, MSN and Office of Field Programs.

3.5.8 Office of Construction Management:

3.5.8.1 Reviews design documents, receives and consolidates comments from MSN and Cemetery and prepares comments to be considered by Review Board

3.5.8.2 Convenes Review Board up to four times a year.

3.5.9 Review Board reviews design, makes recommendation and forwards to Office of Construction Management.

3.5.10 Office of Construction Management responds to donor group with consolidated NCA comments at each stage of design document review.

3.5.11 Upon completion of Construction Documents, Office of Construction Management makes recommendation on approval of design documents for the commemorative work

3.2.9.1 Prepares decision letter for signature of Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs.

3.6 Construction Requirements

3.6.1 Construction and Inspection

3.6.1.1 The donor organization and/or its general contractor shall coordinate the construction with the designated Construction Monitor.

3.6.1.2 The contractor shall obtain all necessary licenses and/or permits required to perform this work.

3.6.1.3 On-site work must be performed during the cemetery's normal operating hours.

3.6.1.4 All on-site contractor work must be coordinated with the cemetery's ongoing grounds maintenance and burial operations, including funeral traffic and "quiet times" during the funerals. Work shall interfere as little as possible with normal functioning of the cemetery, including operations of utility services, fire protection systems, and any existing equipment, and with work being done by others. The construction contractor shall keep roads clear of construction materials, debris, standing construction equipment, and vehicles. The contractor shall perform a clean-up of the construction site at the close of construction work each day.

3.6.1.5 The designated Construction Monitor shall monitor the progress of the commemorative work for compliance with the approved drawings and specifications.

3.6.1.6 The designated Construction Monitor shall inspect the commemorative work for compliance with the approved drawings and specifications.

3.6.1.7 The designated Construction Monitor shall make certain that the contractor leaves the surrounding grounds or cemetery grounds in the same or better condition after the construction of the monument is completed. All debris resulting from the construction shall be removed by the contractor.

3.6.2 Liability requirements

3.6.2.1 Liability insurance requirements for each donated commemorative work shall be stipulated in the MOU between NCA and the donor group. The donor group shall provide the contractor's certification of liability insurance in amounts and as stipulated in the MOU.

3.6.2.2 The donor organization is responsible for obtaining the Contractor's Certification of Liability Insurance, Performance and Payment Bonds and providing them to the designated Construction Monitor prior to start of construction.

3.6.2.3 The donor organization and its contractor are responsible for ensuring that all work is done in a manner that safeguards all VA employees and the public. The contractor shall be solely responsible for any and all actions of his/her employees and shall take all responsible precautions necessary to protect persons and property from injury or damage. Furthermore, the contractor and his/her employees shall fully comply with all applicable Federal, State, County, and City Laws, ordinances, Right-to-Know laws, EPA guidelines and regulations.

3.6.2.4 The donor organization and its contractor are responsible for the prompt replacement of any contractor-damaged cemetery structure, feature or equipment, including but not limited to: turf, trees, plant beds, landscaping; walks; curbs and gutters; road pavement; headstones or markers; utility and service lines; valve boxes, grid monument control markers, irrigation lines and equipment, etc. Damage shall be brought to the immediate attention of the designated Construction Monitor before any corrective action is taken. The contractor shall bear all costs associated with repair, replacement and reinstallation of damaged property to the cemetery director's satisfaction.

3.7 Endowment for Maintenance

3.7.1 An agency trust fund or endowment shall be established for each commemorative work to accept, hold, and invest monies for future needs of monuments in a revenue generating account similar to authorities granted to the National Park Service and General Services Administration for maintenance of memorials and monuments under their jurisdiction.

3.7.2 The amount provided by the donor group as an endowment for perpetual maintenance of the commemorative work shall be a fixed percentage of about ten percent of the cost of construction or other appropriate amount as specified in the MOU.

4.0 Standardized Memorial Monument Donations

4.1 General guidelines and requirements

4.1.1 Standardized Memorial Monuments will be accepted only from organizations whose purposes, objectives, teachings as exemplified by their constitution, by-laws and activities are primarily patriotic in nature. The organization must be based on a primary objective to honor and recognize military service and have thus acquired a distinctive patriotic character and purpose. Standardized Memorial Monuments may also be accepted from governments (federal, state and local.)

4.1.2 Standardized Memorial Monuments will not be accepted from individuals.

4.1.3 Only one memorial monument honoring a specific subject matter will be accepted at a cemetery.

4.1.4 The primary components of the proposed memorial monument do not feature actual or realistic replicas of ordnance.

4.1.5 The proposed memorial monument is primarily secular in nature and does not feature explicit religious emblems or themes.

4.1.6 The proposed memorial monument does not include words or design elements that are incompatible with VA or NCA mission to honor veterans, or that could be perceived as offensive or derogatory by a reasonable person.

4.1.7 The proposed memorial monument does not bear acknowledgment of individual or corporate contributors, nor any advertising.

4.1.8 If the memorial monument honors a military event (war or major conflict), it is at least 10 years after the officially designated end of the event.

4.1.9 For any potential replication of an existing monument, memorial, or artwork from another location, the donor has certified in writing that the group has received any necessary permission(s) or approval(s) for replication.

4.1.10 The memorial monument honors:

4.1.10.1 Military service in the U.S. Armed Forces by groups or organizations (as distinctive from individuals and civilian service, however notable and patriotic); or

4.1.10.2 Those physically interred in that national cemetery (e.g., allied forces, prisoners of war, Confederate personnel).

4.1.11 Standardized memorial monuments which meet all criteria and with a total value of \$3,000 or less may be accepted by the cemetery director. Standardized memorial monuments which meet all criteria and with a total value of \$5,000 or less may be accepted by the MSN director. Monuments with a total value over \$5,000 will be forwarded to the Director, Office of Field Programs.

4.2 Application Process

4.2.1 A request for placement of a memorial monument shall be submitted in writing to the Cemetery Director.

4.2.1.1 Each proposal to donate a standardized memorial monument should contain the following:

4.2.1.1.1 Identification of Donor Organization (includes mailing address of Donor Organization, designation of organization's principal point of contact, and - for other than government entities - documents or articles of incorporation, membership criteria, history of Donor Organization, proof of tax exempt status, and copy of the constitution and by laws, if not a recognized National organization according to 38CFR14.628.)

4.2.1.1.2 Technical drawings of proposed monument design showing:

4.2.1.1.2.1 All four elevations, plan, and foundation specifications with exact dimensions

4.2.1.1.2.2 Exact inscription and details of all text and graphics

4.2.1.1.2.3 Materials specified in the fabrication

4.2.1.1.2.4 Location proposed by donor group

4.2.1.1.2.5 Conceptual landscape plan for proposed location

4.2.2.3 Narrative explanation of commemorative intent (includes background and historical information on the group or event to be commemorated or memorialized, a statement of relevance or relationship of commemoration to Donor Organization, and an explanation of reasons for seeking placement in a VA national cemetery.

4.2.2.4 Contractor's name and phone number

4.2.2.5 Contractor's Certification of Liability Insurance

4.2.2.6 Copy of Terms and Conditions of Acceptance by VA for Gift Donation signed by the donor.

4.2.2.7 Estimate of Approximate Cost (including design, fabrication, and installation.)

4.2.2.8 Proposed schedule for fabrication, delivery, and installation.

4.2.2.9 Schedule for Dedication Ceremony (if requested). See Appendix K for procedures and time line.

4.2.2.10 The Cemetery Director shall review and approve/disapprove the request and respond to the donor organization in writing if memorial is valued at \$3,000 or less, or forward to the MSN director for approval if the total value is over \$3,000.