



## **RURAL COMMUNITY ASSETS FUND NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY | GRANT YEAR 2025-2026**

### **NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY: Rural Community Assets Fund (RCAF) Grant Year 2025-2026**

Applications must be submitted to the Volunteer Florida Foundation via the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal no later than **Thursday, August 14th, 2025, by 5:00pm EDT.**

**Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered for funding.** The Volunteer Florida Foundation does not require organizations to submit a notice of intent to respond. Grant award distribution as described herein is contingent upon funding availability. For the 2025-2026 contract year, 100% match is required.

#### **I. BACKGROUND**

The Volunteer Florida Foundation raises funds to support Volunteer Florida, the state's lead agency for volunteerism and national service.

The Foundation assists in the administration of national service programs and promotion of volunteerism throughout the state and also manages the Florida Disaster Fund, Florida's private fund established to help communities with disaster recovery.

The Foundation is further responsible for the Governor's special initiatives, including Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month and Native American Heritage Month celebrations, as well as awards to honor Florida's most outstanding volunteers.

#### **II. CONTRACT/GRANT PERIOD**

Rural Community Assets Fund applications must be submitted to the Volunteer Florida Foundation via the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal by **Thursday, August 14th 2025, by 5:00pm EDT.** The grant period is 12 months from starting October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026. The Volunteer Florida Foundation reserves the right to allocate funds based on a competitive, internal programmatic and fiscal review. Grant award distribution is contingent upon funding availability.

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**III. GRANT OVERVIEW**

The Volunteer Florida Foundation's Rural Community Assets Fund (RCAF) strengthens the power and capacity of community organizations to further their missions by recruiting, equipping and mobilizing volunteers who serve Floridians in rural communities.

The Volunteer Florida Foundation will distribute up to a total of \$150,000 for organizational and training support for grantees participating in the FY 2025-2026 Rural Community Assets Fund grant program. Applicants may request between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per award amount. The applicant must provide a one hundred percent (100%) cash or in-kind match (or combination), to be verified during the contract period.

The first 50% of the contracted grant amount will be distributed at the beginning of the grant period, and the remaining 50% distributed mid-cycle. Successful grantees must provide supporting documentation for all grant funds expended, such as, but not limited to, invoices, proof of appropriate expenses for payments, sign-in sheets, agendas or other proof of use documents.

Proof of the first round of funding will be required to receive the second draw. Proof of appropriate expenses for the second round of funding will be required to close out the grant.

Grantees will receive-and are expected to participate in-Volunteer Florida Foundation provided Onboarding Training, along with ongoing monthly program-based assistance check in meetings, quarterly financial based assistance check in meetings, and coaching to ensure successful completion of grant requirements.

Applicants need not have an existing volunteer program. Volunteer activities may be in-person or virtual.

The Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and all other relevant information are available on the NOFA webpage: <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/rcaf-grant-opportunities/>.

**IV. ELIGIBILITY**

- 1) The applicant must be a public or private 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities (e.g., states, cities, counties, school systems, etc.); or Indian Tribes. If another entity serves as the project's fiscal agent, it must be an established 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that agrees to accept donations on behalf of a group that does not have IRS tax exempt status.
- 2) The applicant must be a Florida-based organization.

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- 3) The applicant must establish or have a service location in, or volunteers deployed to an eligible rural area.
- 4) RCAF funds may only be used to support individuals residing in eligible rural areas.
- 5) Proposed budget line items relevant to volunteer engagement work completed outside of the eligible rural area may be included if they directly contribute to the achievement of grant performance measures in the eligible rural area chosen by the grantee.
- 6) Geographic locations eligible for RCAF funding must be part of one of the designated “Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO)” as authorized by the Governor and outlined in F.S. 288.0656:

**RAO COMMUNITIES**

- Pahokee, Belle Glade, South Bay, Immokalee
- Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and intercoastal waterway
- The area in Okaloosa County that is contiguous with Walton County, within the area east of State Road 85 and north of I-10.
- The areas in Bay County that is contiguous with Calhoun, Jackson and Washington Counties, within the area north of Scotts Ferry Road and east of Highway 231 and the area north of Highway 388 lying west of Highway 231 and east of Highway 79

**RAO COUNTIES**

Baker	Jackson
Bradford	Jefferson
Calhoun	Lafayette
Columbia	Levy
DeSoto	Liberty
Dixie	Madison
Franklin	Okeechobee
Gadsden	Putnam
Gilchrist	Suwannee
Glades	Taylor
Gulf	Union
Hamilton	Wakulla
Hardee	Washington
Hendry	
Highlands	
Holmes	



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**V. FATAL CRITERIA**

Applications will not be reviewed for funding unless ALL of the following criteria are met:

- 1) The application is submitted via the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal and received by the Volunteer Florida Foundation no later than **Thursday, August 14th 2025, by 5:00pm EDT**. The full application or any section of the application will not be accepted via email or hard copy.
- 2) The applicant is a Florida based organization and operates in an eligible rural community as defined.
- 3) The applicant is a public or private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, including faith-based and other community organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities (e.g., states, cities, counties, school systems, etc.); or Indian Tribes.
- 4) The applicant's IRS tax exemption status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit is currently in good standing. Ex. No adverse rulings, revocations, penalties, suspensions, pending applications, etc.
- 5) The applicant mobilizes or will mobilize volunteers to meet the mission of the organization.
- 6) The application includes the selection of relevant performance measures.
- 7) The application requests the allowable grant amount of between \$10,000 - \$15,000.
- 8) The application provides 100% match of the requested grant amount.

**VI. PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

*A total of three performance measures will be tracked during the grant year.*

1) **Program Capacity (a):**

Successful grantees will choose and show an increase in one (1) of the below indicators as a result of funded project activities, measured by a specific numerical target of their choosing:

- Number of individuals served,
- Types of services offered to individuals, or
- Number of services provided per individual

2) **Program Capacity (b):** Additionally, successful grantees will show an increase in the number of volunteers recruited and/or retained as a result of funded project activities, measured by a specific numerical target of their choosing.

3) **Proficiency in Volunteer Management Practices:**

Successful grantees will demonstrate during the contract period the capacity to effectively engage volunteers and strengthen organizational volunteer management practices by developing or growing two of the eight functions listed below. One function is required to be Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact. The applicant must select one (1) additional function from the remaining seven. Successful organizational implementation of effective

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volunteer management practices will be evaluated based on completion of a pre/post assessment and meetings with Volunteer Florida staff. These areas are considered necessary components of an effectively managed volunteer program, as defined in the report “Volunteering Reinvented: Human Capital Solutions for the Nonprofit Sector”, available on the NOFA webpage- <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/rcaf-grant-opportunities/>.

- 1) Market Research and Community Needs Assessments
- 2) Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
- 3) Recruiting and Marketing to Prospective Volunteers
- 4) Interviewing, Screening, and Selecting Volunteers
- 5) Orienting and Training Volunteers
- 6) Ongoing Supervision and Management
- 7) Recognition and Volunteer Development
- 8) Measuring Outcomes and Evaluating the Process

**VII. BUDGET**

Funds awarded to successful applicants are intended to be used for capacity building activities to develop or strengthen volunteer programs.

Applicants must provide a one hundred percent (100%) cash or in-kind match (or combination), to be verified at mid-cycle and the end of the contract period. Successful grantees will be required to provide supporting documentation such as, but not limited to, invoices, proof of payments, sign-in sheets, agendas, electronic reports, etc.

Applicants must use the approved Volunteer Florida Foundation Budget Template found on the NOFA webpage and submit as either a .xls or .xlsx file extension:

<https://www.volunteerflorida.org/rcaf-grant-opportunities/>.

The proposed budget should be sufficient to allow the grantee to perform the tasks described in the Application Narrative. The Budget Narrative should provide a full explanation of costs including their purpose, justification, and the basis for the calculation. Both narratives are outlined in section XIII. Application Scoring Criteria.

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**Budget Categories**

*Salary, Fringe Benefits, Food and Travel are **not** eligible budget expenses for this grant. Do not attempt to add additional tabs or information to the RCAF Budget Template. Enter information within the budget template only. All budget expenses must be itemized and included in equation format.*

Proposed budget line items relevant to volunteer engagement work completed outside of the eligible rural area may be included if they directly contribute to the achievement of grant performance measures-in eligible rural areas-chosen by the grantee. Allowable grant costs include the following:

- 1) Training- Funds may be used to purchase memberships, subscription services, materials or other training opportunities/resources specifically to strengthen the organization's capacity and ability to engage volunteers (staff training) or properly train volunteers to support the applicant's programming (training for volunteers).
- 2) Digital Media Resources- Funds may be used for the promotion of volunteer programming and communications with volunteers. Additional digital media resources aligned with the grant's purpose and performance measures may be included.
- 3) Volunteer and Promotional Resources- Funds may be used for materials to support branding for volunteer engagement efforts. Items must be clearly justified as beneficial for volunteers and volunteer engagement. Examples include, but are not limited to, tabling materials (banners, tablecloths, etc.) that will be used primarily to recruit volunteers, t-shirts that will be used repeatedly, nametags that will be used repeatedly, materials for volunteers so that they can engage in volunteer activities, relevant school supplies, materials to assist an individual or training manuals, etc.
- 4) Vetting Resources- This category includes criminal background/history checks, or other critical vetting needs required by the grantee or any partner organization(s), if relevant to the funded project.

**VIII. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/SUPPORT**

Rural Community Assets Fund grantees will receive and be required to attend Volunteer Florida Foundation trainings to establish or strengthen volunteer programs. Additionally, grantees will receive ongoing technical assistance and coaching.



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**IX. REPORTING**

Successful grantees must report data associated with listed performance measures, as well as the number of hours volunteers served and other volunteer/project demographics and information. This data must be submitted at the beginning of the contract period, at mid-cycle, and at the end of the contract period.

Successful grantees must provide detailed accounting of expenses with requisite evidence at mid-cycle and at the end of the contract period. The Volunteer Florida Foundation will provide instructions, reporting guidelines and documentation information.

**X. BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Successful grantees must complete background checks for all volunteers through the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website (no cost), and submit proof with mid-cycle and end of contract reports. Successful grantees must also verify the completion for volunteers of criminal background checks required by the grantee or any partner organization(s), if relevant to the funded project, by the end of the grant cycle.

**XI. VOLUNTEER FLORIDA FOUNDATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE CALL**

The Volunteer Florida Foundation will host a technical assistance conference call about the Rural Community Assets Fund application process on **Wednesday, July 30, 2025, at 10:00am EDT**. Interested individuals may join the meeting via Zoom. Click [here](#) to register. The call will be recorded and available for viewing after the live session on the NOFA webpage: <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/rcaf-grant-opportunities/>.

*To ensure that this funding process is carried out in a fair and equitable manner, all questions concerning the application must be submitted to [rcaf@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:rcaf@volunteerflorida.org).*

**XII. RURAL COMMUNITY ASSETS FUND ANTICIPATED TIMELINE**

- 1) Notice of Funding Availability application submission opens – Friday, July 18th, 2025
- 2) Application technical assistance call – Wednesday, July 30, 2025, 10:00am EDT
- 3) **Applications due to the Volunteer Florida Foundation – Thursday, August 14, 2025, at 5:00 EDT**
- 4) Application review and scoring – Friday, August 15, 2025 – Friday, August 29, 2025
- 5) Clarification provided to applicants – Tuesday, September 2, 2025
- 6) Final applications/budgets with clarification changes due to Volunteer Florida Foundation – Friday, September 12, 2025
- 7) Contracts provided to successful applicants – Monday, September 22, 2025

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- 8) Letters to applicants not receiving funding (as applicable) – Monday, September 22, 2025
- 9) Training for RCAF 2025/2026 Grantees-Monday September 29, 2025
- 10) First Round of Distribution (Contingent on VF receiving all required contract documents)-  
Wednesday October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025

**XIII. APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA**

*Word limits are enforced for each section of the application. Log in to the Blackbaud Grantmaking System to view.*

**1) Cover Sheet, Project Demographics (10 points)**

- a) The application includes full and accurate organization information as well as project demographics.
- b) The application includes the selection of one (1) RCAF indicator to be increased during the grant year from Program Capacity (a). (Section VI Performance Measures)
- c) The application indicates which one (1) of the eight (8) steps managing volunteers will be implemented or expanded during the grant year. Strategic Planning to Maximize Impact will be a required function for implementation or expansion, so should not be selected.

**2) Executive Summary (5 points)**

*Use the exact language below, entering requisite information.*

*The mission of [Name of the organization] is to [Mission statement]. We achieve our mission by [List primary examples of the activities the organization does to achieve its mission]. This may be a few short sentences.*

*During the contract period, [Name of the organization] proposes to increase [List one (1) RCAF indicator from Program Capacity (a) (Section VI: Performance Measures)] in [the county or counties where volunteers will serve]. Additionally, [list one additional volunteer management practice], will be established or improved during the contract period. Note: The function must not be Strategic Planning to Maximize Impact, which will be required.*

*Anticipated budget items include [list line items]. Be sure to include the same expenditures in this section as you will in the Budget Template.*

**3) Application Narrative (35 points)**

- a) The application clearly describes how the organization's mission will be advanced and supported specifically as a result of being awarded RCAF funds.
- b) The application clearly describes existing programming that the organization performs and will further as a result of RCAF funds, including:



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- Number of individuals served
  - Type(s) of service(s) offered to individuals
  - Number of services provided per individual
  - Site(s) where programming occurs
  - Where staff is housed and deployed and/or where volunteers are deployed, if a volunteer program has been established
- c) The application clearly describes how volunteers will be engaged in, and produce contributions to, existing programming in eligible rural areas, specifically as a result of being awarded RCAF funds. The applicant lists the eligible site(s) where programming will occur.
- d) The application clearly describes the proposed roles of leveraged volunteers.

**4) Organizational Capacity (10 points)**

- a) The application clearly describes the organization's experience, staffing, and management capacity to plan and implement the proposed program.
- b) If relevant, the applicant clearly explains the relationship to any entity that serves as the project's fiscal agent, which must be an established 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization in good standing that agrees to accept donations on behalf of a group that does not have tax exempt status.
- c) The application fully explains the organization's infrastructure and experience managing grants.
- d) The application clearly describes how performance measure data will be tracked.
- e) The application clearly describes how the applicant, in implementation and management of its volunteer program, will prevent and detect compliance issues.
- f) The application clearly describes how the organization will comply with contract requirements related to prohibited and unallowable activities.

**5) Performance Measures (10 points)**

- a) The application clearly describes how performance measure targets will be met and tracked.
- b) The application clearly describes the equipment or software already acquired or needed that is directly related to the recruitment, support, management and retention of volunteers and tracking volunteer demographics/activities.
- c) Program Capacity (a): The application identifies one (1) RCAF indicator that will be increased over the course of the contract period as a result of funded project activities, and provides a numerical estimate for each increase (target):
  - Number of individuals served
  - Types of services offered to individuals

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- Number of services provided per individual

Program Capacity (b): The application provides a numerical target for the number of volunteers recruited and/or retained as a result of funded project activities.

- d) Proficiency in Volunteer Management Practices: The application describes both the required one (1) of the eight (8) steps or functions (Strategic Planning to Maximize Impact) and one (1) additional function from the remaining seven (7) for effectively managing volunteers that will be incorporated or enhanced during the contract period, and why.

**6) Budget and Budget Narrative (30 points)**

- a) The proposed budget contains only allowable expenses in the categories of Training, Digital Media Resources, Volunteer Promotional Resources, and Vetting Resources Only.
- b) The application and budget include a one hundred percent (100%) match that must be verifiable in the same allowable budget categories as previously noted. The Budget Narrative clearly explains the source of funds, the type of contribution (cash, in-kind or combination), the amount, as well as the intended purpose of the match.
- c) The application is detailed and provides a full explanation of associated costs including their purpose, justification, basis for the calculations. All costs must be itemized and all calculations must be presented in equation format, identifying cost per unit, and other key details, etc. This is in addition to the required, completed budget template to be uploaded to the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal application. All costs should be listed separately or individually. The budget should be completed using the exact, approved Volunteer Florida Foundation Budget Template found on the NOFA webpage: <https://www.volunteerflorida.org/rcaf-grant-opportunities/>.
- d) The application thoroughly explains how the proposed program budget reflects the program's goals and design as described in the Application Narrative.
- e) The application states the organization's current budget, the percentage of the organization's budget this grant would represent, and how the organization will comply with fiscal compliance oversight.

**XIV. BLACKBAUD- APPLICATION NAVIGATION AND SUBMISSION**

***Read all application and completion information before beginning the process. Complete the steps outlined in this section to submit the Rural Community Assets Fund application via the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal.***

**Application Link:** <https://bbgm-apply.yourcausegrants.com/apply/programs/06bae864-f43a-4231-ba0f-37cb93eca10c>. Do not use links from previous grant cycles.

- A.** Log into the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal by either using an existing



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username and password (from previous Volunteer Florida or Volunteer Florida Foundation grant cycles) or by creating a new username and password.

**Use the navigation bar above the fields to shift between pages of the application, rather than clicking the back button.**

**To return to an 'In Progress Application' or view a previously 'Submitted Application', use the following link:** <https://bbgmapply.yourcausegrants.com/apply/auth/signin>. Using the initial application link results in the creation of a new application. You may select any portion of the application to view/edit, unless it has been submitted.

- B.** Log in to Blackbaud. The user will be prompted to complete the eligibility quiz:
- 1) Are you a Florida based organization?
  - 2) Is your organization one of the following: A public or private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, including faith-based and other community organizations; institution of higher education; government entity (e.g., states, cities, counties); or Indian Tribe?
  - 3) Is your organization's IRS tax exemption status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit currently in good standing (Ex. No adverse rulings, revocations, no penalties, suspensions, pending applications, etc.)?
  - 4) Does your organization mobilize or will it mobilize volunteers to meet the mission of the organization?
  - 5) Does your organization serve a RAO (Rural Areas of Opportunity) County?
- C.** The user must enter all required application information. All required information is not necessary to complete to move to the next section of the application, if using the top navigation. You will not be notified about whether a required field is incomplete until the final section of the application (but before submission).

- 1) **Cover Sheet (Organization, Applicant and Fiscal Information)**
  - a) Organization Name
  - b) Tax ID
  - c) Address
  - d) Phone
  - e) Website
  - f) CEO name, title, e-mail, and phone number
  - g) Name, title, e-mail, and phone number of the person submitting the application



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- h) Name, title, e-mail, and phone number of fiscal contact/financial representative (if relevant)
- 2) **Project Demographics**
  - a) Project Title
  - b) Cities and Counties Served
  - c) Selected RCAF Indicators from Program Capacity (a)
  - d) Selected Volunteer Management Practice
- 3) **Application Narrative and Organizational Capacity**
  - a) Executive Summary
  - b) Application Narrative
  - c) Organizational Capacity
- 4) **Performance Measures and Narrative**
  - a) Identify at least one (1) RCAF indicator and enter a numeric target from Program Capacity (a)
  - b) Enter a numeric target number of volunteers to be recruited and/or retrained from Program Capacity (b).
  - c) Identify one (1) additional volunteer management practice from the remaining seven (7) from the Proficiency in Volunteer Management Practices other than Strategic Planning to Maximize Volunteer Impact
- 5) **Budget and Budget Narrative**
  - a) Properly name the completed budget document using the following format: Agency Name\_RCAF\_Budget\_2025-2026 and upload it to the Blackbaud Grantmaking online portal. Accepted file extensions: .xls or .xlsx.
  - b) Budget Narrative
- 6) **Submission**
  - a) Check the box agreeing with the background check statement.
  - b) Check the box agreeing with the certification of content statement.
  - c) Insert electronic signature and date.
  - d) Select "Review and Submit".
- 7) **Review My Applications**
  - a) Review the Rural Community Assets Fund application.
  - b) Correct any problem(s) indicated in red then select either "Save for Later"

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or “Update”.

- c) Once completed and ready, select “Submit” to permanently send the application to the Volunteer Florida Foundation for funding consideration.
- 8) Once the application is submitted, the user will receive an automated e-mail from the Volunteer Florida Foundation with a copy of the submission/full application and a tracking number. If no tracking number is received, the application was not submitted and the user should follow the above steps listed to submit. Applicants should check their Spam folders as well.
- 9) **You cannot edit your application after you select Submit, but you may begin a new application using the original Blackbaud application link. The original submitted application and one additional newly created application submission will be permitted. A third application submission will not be accepted. You must notify the Volunteer Florida Foundation of the intent to complete a second application by emailing: [rcaf@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:rcaf@volunteerflorida.org)**

*To ensure that this funding process is carried out in a fair and equitable manner, all questions concerning the Application must be submitted to [rcaf@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:rcaf@volunteerflorida.org).*