



volunteerflorida

FY 2026-2027  
CERT/Citizen Corps Program  
Grant Funding Opportunity

Grant Applications  
Due 5:00 PM EDT,  
May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
via Blackbaud Portal

## OVERVIEW

Volunteer Florida is anticipating awarding \$100,000 which will be distributed through a competitive funding opportunity for Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and/or Citizens Corps (CC) for disaster preparedness, training and education needs of Floridians. Funding amounts are awarded by Volunteer Florida to grantees based on grant application scoring criteria as outlined herein. The maximum amount per grant award will be \$10,000, and the minimum to be awarded is \$5,000. The funding opportunity request is intended to support eligible CERT/CC functions, including planning, organization, equipment, training, exercise, and allowable management and for their participation in the FY 26-27 CERT/Citizen Corps Program. Interested parties may apply for funding for a CERT Program, a Citizen Corps Program, or both. If seeking funding for both CERT and Citizen Corps, a separate grant application must be electronically submitted for each via Blackbaud. Each grant application may request what they anticipate is needed with a minimum request of \$5,000 and a maximum request of \$10,000.

Included in this document are the forms and necessary information required to apply for the FY 26-27 CERT/Citizen Corps Program funding. The funding is administered by Volunteer Florida. Volunteer Florida has been designated to assist and support local CERT/Citizen Corps activities through training, technical assistance, and funding.

The mission of the Citizen Corps Program is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds. Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency. In this capacity, FEMA works closely with other federal entities, state and local governments, first responders and emergency managers, the volunteer community, and AmeriCorps. Citizen Corps was created to coordinate volunteer activities that will make local communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to any emergency situation.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program is a training program that prepares citizens to help themselves, their families, and their neighbors in the event of a disaster in their community. Through CERT, citizens can learn about disaster preparedness and receive training in basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and medical operations. With this training, volunteers can provide critical support by delivering immediate assistance to those impacted by an emergency prior to the arrival of professional responders.

**1. VOLUNTEER FLORIDA - CERT/CITIZEN CORPS POINT OF CONTACT**

For information regarding the CERT/Citizen Corps Program, please contact the Volunteer Florida Emergency Management Director, Christy Rojas, at [christy@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:christy@volunteerflorida.org) or 850-414-7400, Ext 106, or CERT Program Manager, Robin Bridges at [robin@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:robin@volunteerflorida.org) or 850-414-7400, Ext 119.

**For information or questions related specifically to this grant funding opportunity, please direct all correspondence to [robin@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:robin@volunteerflorida.org)**

## ELIGIBILITY

1. Eligible applicants are limited to local units of government as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, counties and cities within the State of Florida, Fire Tax Districts, other tax districts, regional planning councils, state-supported community colleges, colleges and universities, and federally recognized tribes, or nations within the State of Florida. Please note that 501(c)3 non-profit organizations are not directly eligible; however, local jurisdictions may subcontract with 501(c)3 organizations to perform these functions.
2. Previous CERT/CC grantees who did not expend 100% of funds and/or submit timely reports are eligible for application; however, final scoring may be adjusted to reflect previous fiscal year's actual spending and reporting adherence.
3. Current CERT/CC grantees for FY 25–26 are eligible to apply provided they have expended at least **50%** of their FY 25–26 award prior to submitting a subsequent application. All current and previous grantees must be in full compliance with required reporting, including PER, quarterly, and closeout reports. Current grantees will also be required to complete additional application questions outlining their plan for spending down/expensing the remaining balance of their existing award. Cash, in-kind or volunteer match cannot be duplicated across FY 25–26 and FY 26–27. Quarterly reporting during the overlapping grant will need to be documented separately for FY 25-26 and FY 26-27.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Volunteer Florida is responsible for managing the CERT/Citizen Corps program. All grant applications for funding will be carefully screened and reviewed for completeness. Any application determined to be incomplete will be disqualified. Applicants whose applications are deemed disqualified will be notified in writing.

1. Priority will be given to applicants who:
  - a. Demonstrate high cost efficiency;
  - b. Show a high level of partnership activities;
  - c. Demonstrate significant involvement in all-hazard emergency preparedness;
  - d. Demonstrate strong sustainability plans to sustain the program after the grant funding has expired.

2. Priority will be given to applicants of existing programs who:
  - a. Demonstrate a high degree of excellence in past grants;
  - b. Demonstrate timely and sound compliance with reporting, expenditures, and effectiveness of current program; and
  - c. Demonstrate willingness to “mentor” new programs in nearby or distant areas, or to expand their own programs to encompass significantly more adjacent geographic area than currently covered.
  
3. Application scores are based on the following point system:
  - a. The maximum amount of points that can be awarded is 100.
  - b. There are five application categories:
    - i. General - 5 points max.
    - ii. Program Narrative – 40 points max.
    - iii. Cost Effectiveness – 10 points max.
    - iv. Proposed Budget – 25 points max.
    - v. Community Integration – 20 points max.
  - c. Only applicants receiving a minimum score of 60 points will be considered for funding.
  
4. Following the scoring and ranking of applications, a listing of the intended awards will be posted on the Volunteer Florida website, [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org) for 72 hours prior to final award.
  
5. Applications will be reviewed through an internal programmatic and competitive review process where applicants will be scored against the above criteria and ranked. Successful applicants will be notified in writing of the intent by Volunteer Florida to issue the grant award. After the notice of award, Volunteer Florida will review the proposed budget provided with the application and provide feedback during the week of May 26, 2026, through June 12, 2026. At the discretion of Volunteer Florida, based upon funding availability, priorities, and other factors, a grantee may be funded at less than their requested amount.
  
6. Electronic applications for the FY 26-27 CERT/Citizen Corps Program grant applications must be submitted electronically via Blackbaud and received no later than 5:00 PM EDT, Wednesday, **May 6, 2026**. If seeking funding for both CERT and Citizen Corps, separate application must be submitted for each via Blackbaud.

7. If an accommodation is needed for a disability in order to participate in this solicitation process, please contact Christy Rojas at [Christy@volunteerflorida.org](mailto:Christy@volunteerflorida.org) at **least five days** prior to the date that the accommodation is needed.

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Any application determined to be incomplete will be disqualified. Applicants whose applications are deemed as disqualified will be notified in writing.

1. Electronic applications must be submitted via Blackbaud and received no later than 5:00 PM EDT, **May 6, 2026**.
2. Grant applications for CERT and for Citizen Corps must be submitted separately via Blackbaud.
3. Only applications that include the following completed items will be evaluated:
  - a. Application
  - b. Letter of Support or acknowledgment from corresponding County Emergency Management Office (except in the case where the applicant is the County Emergency Management Office).
  - c. Proposed Budget Worksheet (using template provided)
4. Grantees are required to provide cash or in-kind match **dollar for dollar for FY 26-27 funds**. If cash match is from a particular funding source, the applicant should provide documentation of the funding source. Volunteer hours (valued at \$33.00/hour) directly related to Training, Outreach, Deployment or Exercises may be used as the match requirement.

Source: <https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/vovt-report-2025.pdf>

## APPLICATION TIMELINE

### GRANT AMOUNTS

1. Each grant application may request what they anticipate is needed with a minimum request of \$5,000 to a maximum request of \$10,000. The grant period will be from July 1, 2026 through May 31, 2027. The funding cycle is anticipated to begin upon submission of all required documentation and subsequent approval. Applicants must have the ability to execute spending of funds on the date indicated in the contract agreement.

### 2. APPLICATION SCHEDULE

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Notice of Funding Availability & Application Release:	March 16, 2026, COB
Technical Assistance Webinar:	April 8, 2026, 2:00pm – 3:00pm EDT
Technical Assistance Responses Posted:	April 10, 2026, COB
Technical Assistance: Finance Webinar:	April 20, 2026, 2:00pm – 3:00pm EDT
Technical Assistance: Finance Responses Posted:	April 22, 2026, COB
<b>Deadline for Receipt of Applications via Blackbaud:</b>	<b>May 6, 2026, 5:00PM EDT</b>
Grant Review Period	May 7, 2026 – May 20, 2026
Intent to Award Posted:	May 22, 2026, COB
Budget Clarification/Approval:	May 26, 2026 – June 12, 2026
<b>Anticipated Contract Award:</b>	<b>July 1, 2026</b>
Contract Period of Performance:	July 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027

3. Interested parties may attend the Technical Assistance Webinar to be held on **April 8, 2026**, 2:00pm EDT.
  - a. Link to the Teams Meeting Here: [Join the meeting now](#)
  - b. Meeting ID: 223 085 010 585
  - c. Passcode: Ji7H4dG9
  
4. Interested parties may attend the Financial Technical Assistance Webinar to be held on **April 20, 2026**, 2:00pm EDT.
  - a. Link to the Teams Meeting Here: [Join the meeting now](#)
  - b. Meeting ID: 236 103 294 165
  - c. Passcode: Qu7rS9pb
  
5. Volunteer Florida reserves the right to revise the application schedule provided above. Revisions to this schedule will be posted on the Volunteer Florida website, [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org). Applicants are responsible for checking the Volunteer Florida website for updates to the schedule.

## **FUNDING OBJECTIVES**

Use of grant funds provided must be used to supplement and not supplant or replace state or local funds that would otherwise be available to conduct activities funded by this grant funding opportunity.

### **1. PLANNING**

Planning spans all five National Preparedness Goal mission areas and provides a baseline for determining potential threats and hazards, required capabilities, required resources, and establishes a framework for roles and responsibilities. Planning provides a methodical way to engage the whole community in the development of a strategic, operational, and/or community-based approach to preparedness. Allowable planning costs include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. All-of-Nation/Whole Community Engagement/Planning
  - i. Developing/enhancing emergency operations plans to integrate citizen/volunteer organizations and other non-governmental organization resources and participation.
  - ii. Engaging the whole community in public education and awareness activities.
  - iii. Planning to foster public-private sector partnerships, including innovation for disaster initiatives that support the Citizen Corps mission.
  - iv. Executing an America's PrepareAthon! activity to engage the whole community in a hazard-specific activity on the National Day of Action.
  - v. Establishing a Citizen Corps Council that brings together representatives of the whole community to provide input on emergency operations plans, risk assessments, mitigation plans, alert and warning systems, and other plans; assisting in outreach and education of community members in preparedness activities; and building volunteer capacity to support disaster response, recovery, and mitigation.
  - vi. Delivering the CERT Basic Training Course and supplemental training for CERT members who have completed the basic training, the CERT Train-the-Trainer Course, and the CERT Program Manager course.

- b. Resource Management Planning
  - i. Developing/enhancing logistics and resource management plans.
  - ii. Developing/enhancing volunteer and/or donations management plans.
  - iii. Establishing, expanding or maintaining volunteer programs that support disaster preparedness and/or response, including but not limited to: Neighborhood Watch/National Neighborhood Watch, CERT, Volunteers in Police Service, Medical Reserve Corps, and Fire Corps.

## 2. ORGANIZATION

- a. Funds may be used for all-hazards emergency management operations, staffing, and other day-to-day activities in support of emergency management, including staffing CERT and Citizen Corps positions at the local levels in order to promote whole community engagement in all phases of emergency management.
- b. Personnel costs, including salary, overtime, compensatory time off, and associated fringe benefits, are allowable costs. These costs must comply with 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E – Cost Principles.

## 3. TRAINING AND OUTREACH

- a. Training activities should be posted locally. CERT TTT and CERT PM classes need to be posted at <http://trac.floridadisaster.org/trac/loginform.aspx>. Training should foster the development of a community-oriented approach to emergency management that emphasizes engagement at the community level, strengthens best practices, and provides a path toward building sustainable resilience.

Additional types of training or training related activities include but are not limited to the following:

- i. Developing/enhancing systems to monitor training programs
- ii. Conducting all hazards emergency management training
- iii. Attending Emergency Management Institute (EMI) training or delivering EMI train-the-trainer courses
- iv. Attending other FEMA-approved emergency management training.
- v. State-approved, locally-sponsored CERT training

- vi. Mass evacuation training at local, state, and tribal levels
  - vii. Communications plans
  - viii. Administrative plans
  - ix. Recovery planning
  - x. Continuity plans
- b. Allowable training-related costs include the following:
- i. Funds used to develop, deliver, and evaluate training
  - ii. Overtime and backfill
  - iii. Travel
  - iv. Hiring of a full or part-time staff or contractors/consultants
  - v. Certification or recertification of instructors

#### **4. EXERCISE AND DEPLOYMENT**

- a. Allowable exercise-related costs include:
- i. Funds used to design, develop, conduct and evaluate an exercise
  - ii. Hiring of a full or part-time staff or contractors/consultants
  - iii. Overtime and backfill
  - iv. Travel
  - v. Supplies
  - vi. Other Items - These costs are limited to items consumed in direct support of exercise activities, such as the rental of space/locations for planning and conducting an exercise, rental of equipment, and the procurement of other essential nondurable goods. Recipients are encouraged to use free public space/locations, whenever available. Costs associated with inclusive practices and the provision of reasonable accommodations and modifications that facilitate full access for children and adults with disabilities are allowable.
- i. When conducting an exercise that shall include meals for the attendees, the Grantee shall submit a request for approval to Volunteer Florida no later than twenty-five (25) days prior to the event to allow for review. The request for meals must be submitted on letterhead and must include the date of exercise, agenda, number of attendees, and costs of meals.

## 5. EQUIPMENT

- a. Allowable equipment categories are listed on the web-based version of the Authorized Equipment List (AEL) at <https://www.fema.gov/authorized-equipment-list>. Unless otherwise stated, equipment must meet all mandatory regulatory and/or FEMA-adopted standards to be eligible for purchase using these funds. In addition, agencies will be responsible for obtaining and maintaining all necessary certifications and licenses for the requested equipment.
- b. Allowable equipment includes equipment from the following AEL categories:
  - i. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Category 1)
  - ii. Information Technology (Category 4)
  - iii. Cybersecurity Enhancement Equipment (Category 5)
  - iv. Interoperable Communications Equipment (Category 6)
  - v. Detection Equipment (Category 7)
  - vi. Power Equipment (Category 10)
  - vii. Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) Reference Materials (Category 11)
  - viii. CBRNE Incident Response Vehicles (Category 12)
  - ix. Physical Security Enhancement Equipment (Category 14)
  - x. CBRNE Logistical Support Equipment (Category 19)
  - xi. Other Authorized Equipment (Category 21)
- c. Applicants should analyze the cost benefits of purchasing versus leasing equipment, especially high cost items and those subject to rapid technical advances. Large equipment purchases must be identified and explained. For more information regarding property management standards for equipment, please reference 2 C.F.R. Part 200, including 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.310, 200.313, and 200.316.

## 6. MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION (M&A)

- a. M&A activities are those defined as directly relating to the management and administration of the program funds, such as financial management and monitoring. It should be noted that salaries of state and local emergency managers are not typically categorized as M&A, unless the state or local emergency management agency chooses to assign personnel to specific M&A activities.

- b. M&A costs shall not exceed 5% percent of the total grant award.

## **7. TRAINING EVENTS**

- a. The following are required items for the CERT Basic Training Course to be taught under this grant:
  - i. Use of the Full FEMA/EMI/CERT Basic Training Course – G-317, including the terrorism module and showing the Sheltering-In-Place Video;
  - ii. Lead Instructors for the following courses must be approved by Florida Division of Emergency Management and Volunteer Florida, and must provide a letter of recommendation from their sponsoring agency to Volunteer Florida CERT Program Manager:
    - i. Use of a CERT Train-the-Trainer (TTT) – G-428 Qualified Individual; vetted and approved by FDEM and Volunteer Florida
    - ii. Use of the CERT Program Manager Course – G-427 Qualified Individual; vetted and approved by FDEM and Volunteer Florida

It is the responsibility of the grantee to arrange and compensate course managers for CERT trainings and course manuals. Grantees must maintain and monitor a database to track the number of trained volunteers.

## **8. REPORTING FORMS**

- a. Each grantee is required to submit Quarterly Status Reports as indicated in the signed grant contract agreement. Reporting forms will be submitted through Blackbaud.
- b. The Quarterly Status Report should include extensive training data, explanation of expenditures for each quarter, and any CERT/Citizen Corps activities that took place during the quarter.
- c. Failure to submit Quarterly Status Reports by the deadline may result in payment being held for reimbursement.

## 9. REIMBURSEMENTS

- a. This is a cost reimbursement contract.
- b. A Periodic Expenditure Report (PER), along with supporting documentation, will be required before a reimbursement will be made to the grantee.
- c. Grantees will be required to attend a PER 101 training during the contract period.
- d. PERs will be submitted quarterly to Volunteer Florida's online PER submission grantee Portal system:  
<https://volunteerfl.mccicloud.io/forms/sgp>.

## 10. COMPLIANCE

- a. CERT/Citizen Corps programs must comply with National Incident Management System (NIMS). Applicants should reference [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).
- b. A letter from the County Emergency Management Agency or the sponsoring agency indicating compliance with NIMS requirements must be completed by the deadline outlined in the contract.

## 11. SPONSORSHIP

- a. All public education and outreach materials created using this grant must include Volunteer Florida logo, tagline, and website; and comply with logo standards. For more information, please contact the CERT Program Manager. All public education and outreach materials created using this grant must be approved by Volunteer Florida, including language, content, and method of communication.

## SCORING CRITERIA

### 1. GENERAL

- a. **THE COMPLETENESS OF AN APPLICATION SHALL BE DETERMINED BASED UPON THE DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED WITH THE APPLICATION. AN INCOMPLETE APPLICATION WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.** Incomplete applications include, but are not limited to the following:
  - i. Applications that are not in compliance with the requirements and instructions in this application guide;
  - ii. Applications that do not contain the required forms, or contain incomplete forms;
  - iii. Applications that are not received on, or before the closing deadline;
  - iv. Applications that propose a project that cannot be completed within the grant period; and/or
  - v. Applications proposed by a local government whose adopted comprehensive plan has not been found to be in compliance with Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes.
  - vi. Applications requesting less than \$5,000.
- b. Volunteer Florida may waive minor irregularities in the applications received when they are merely a matter of form and not substance and the corrections of such are determined not to be prejudicial to other applicants. Variations which are material to the scoring shall not be waived.

### 2. SCORING

Scoring will be based on point values as stated in the Application Process in Section 3.b i - v herein.

- a. Each application will be reviewed by a review committee of at least three members, including at least one Volunteer Florida employee with knowledge of the solicited services.
- b. Each of the applications will be evaluated in accordance with the terms of this application.
- c. Total point scores for each application shall be calculated based on the scores of the review committee.
- d. Awards will be made based on the application scores.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Upon submission of a FY 26-27 CERT/Citizen Corps grant application, the applicant agrees:

1. To adhere to all Volunteer Florida award requirements.
2. To be responsible for understanding the requirements of the following as they apply to this grant program:
  - a. Chapter 252, Florida Statutes (F.S.); [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us)
  - b. Chapters 27P-6, 27P-11, and 27P-19, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.); [www.flrules.org](http://www.flrules.org)
  - c. The Department of Homeland Security adopted 2 C.F.R. Part 200
  - d. FEMA guidelines and guidance on CERT, for information click [here](#)
3. To receive funds through the process of cost reimbursement for approved expenditures.
4. To acknowledge that the application review process is competitive and applications are scored on a point system.
5. To acknowledge that the period of performance for the FY 26-27 CERT/Citizen Corps grants will be from July 1, 2026 – May 31, 2027.