Florida Blue ✚♥
Foundation

Food Security

Watch an informational webinar on the Food Security grant program.

Click here to access the online application for the Food Security grant program.

Important Dates/Deadlines
- Application open date: **On or about Tuesday, April 1, 2025**
- Application due date: **Tuesday, May 20, 2025, by 3:00 p.m.** (Eastern Time)
- All applicants will be notified of their status: **September 2025**
- Required orientation: **October 2025**

Florida Blue Foundation's programs are focused on improving health by impacting food security, advancing mental well-being, growing healthy communities, and addressing health disparities. This funding opportunity is focused on Food Security.

Description of the 2025 Food Security Grant Program

Goal: Improve access to affordable, healthy, and nutritional foods for vulnerable populations who live in food insecure communities.

Background

The Foundation is committed to funding programs that empower vulnerable populations to overcome food insecurity and access nutritious food, promoting healthier choices and improved well-being. By supporting these initiatives, we aim to bridge the gap in food security and foster a healthier future for these communities. Research has consistently shown that reliable access to fresh, local foods is a powerful catalyst for healthier choices, leading to better health outcomes and a reduced risk of chronic diseases.

In 2023, a staggering 13.5% of US households - 18 million families - struggled to access food, a 0.7% increase from 2022, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA ERS).[1] In Florida, 1 in 8 people (equivalent to 2,935,330 individuals) face hunger, including 1 in 5 children (equivalent to 819,940 children).[2] Rural Florida is disproportionately affected, with 14.3% of households experiencing food insecurity, compared to 10.4% in urban areas.[3]

Ensuring access to nutritious food is essential for a healthy and fulfilling life. The USDA ERS defines food security as having consistent access to enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, food insecurity is a pervasive issue in all communities, with rural areas being particularly vulnerable due to poverty, lack of transportation, unemployment, and high cost of living. The consequences of food insecurity can be severe, with far-reaching impacts on people's health and well-being.[4]

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[1] Rabbitt, M. P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L. J., & Burke, M. P. (2024). Household food security in the United States in 2023 (Report No. ERR-337). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://doi.org/10.32747/2024.8583175.ers

[2] What Hunger Looks Like in Florida, Feeding America. https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/florida. Accessed March 5, 2025.

[3] Feeding America. (2022). Map the Meal Gap 2022: Food Insecurity and Food Costs in the United States. https://map.feedingamerica.org/. Accessed March 13, 2025.

[4] Food Security in the U.S., U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA ERS). https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us. Accessed March 5, 2025.

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Food security is a critical social determinant of health that affects individual and population-level health outcomes. In Florida, where chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity are prevalent, food insecurity can exacerbate these conditions and worsen health outcomes. According to Feeding America, addressing food insecurity through evidence-based interventions like Food is Medicine, which leverages the therapeutic potential of food by providing essential nutrients and promoting healthy eating habits to prevent and manage chronic diseases, can make a significant impact on reducing the burden of chronic disease.[5] Food insecurity is estimated to contribute to over $77 billion in additional healthcare costs annually in the U.S., making it a critical issue to address.[6]

Florida Blue Foundation will provide three- and four-year grants to nonprofit organizations with a proven track record of addressing food insecurity. Programs should focus on increasing access to healthy food and program services, with the ultimate goal of moving underserved communities from food insecure to food secure.

2025 Food Security Funding Priorities
Florida Blue Foundation is committed to improving access to affordable, healthy, and nutritional foods for vulnerable populations, with a focus on harnessing the power of Food is Medicine to improve chronic health conditions and increasing access to healthy food in rural communities where it is scarce.

> **Priority 1: Improving Chronic Health Conditions**
> Addressing food insecurity and lack of access to affordable, nutritious food is crucial in reducing the risk of chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity, which are prevalent in Florida. Ensuring access to fresh, healthy food significantly supports healthier lifestyle choices and improves overall community health outcomes. Programs are encouraged to incorporate health screenings and a robust nutrition education component to mitigate the health risks associated with food insecurity.
>
> **Priority 2: Bridging the Rural Food Gap**
> Improving access to healthy food in rural communities is essential to addressing unique challenges faced by these areas where geographic isolation and limited resources often hinder access to fresh, nutritious options. This aims to enhance food security by supporting innovative and sustainable solutions that support local self-sufficiency. Programs are encouraged to incorporate a strong nutrition education component to help individuals make healthier choices, ultimately improving the overall well-being of rural communities across Florida as defined by the [Florida Department of Health](#).

Special Notes
Applicants may apply to one or both Funding Priorities. Organizations applying for both must complete a separate application for each Funding Priority.

When completing the online application, please keep in mind that Florida Blue Foundation is looking for nonprofit charitable organizations to propose proven services that serve primarily underserved, underinsured, and low-income individuals in Florida.

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[5] Smith, Morgan, Ronli Levi, and Hilary Seligman. Food is Medicine: Final Report and Key Learnings 2021. Feeding America, 2021. Web. Accessed March 17, 2025.

[6] Rabbitt, M. P., Reed-Jones, M., Hales, L. J., & Burke, M. P. (2024). Household food security in the United States in 2023 (Report No. ERR-337). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://doi.org/10.32747/2024.8583175.ers

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Programs that address opioids and other substance abuses, research, and entrepreneurial programs will <u>not</u> be funded under this grant program.

Special consideration will be given to organizations that provide services in the following ZIP codes: 32206, 32805, 33612/33613, 33142, and 33311. **Providing services to these specific ZIP codes is not a requirement to apply for this grant program.**

Florida Blue Foundation recognizes the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform the delivery of food security services and improve outcomes. While not required, applicants are encouraged to explore the use of AI-driven resources, access, and tools in their proposed program. If your organization plans to incorporate AI in your program, please describe how you intend to leverage AI to:
- Enhance access to healthy and nutritious food
- Optimize food distribution
- Analyze data and evaluate outcomes

Please highlight any innovative AI-powered solutions, such as chatbots, virtual assistants, or predictive analytics, that you plan to use to enhance the potential grant program. This may include partnerships with AI technology providers or the development of in-house AI capabilities.

Completing the Application

The Program Milestone Document is available to be downloaded. The completed Program Milestone Document is to be uploaded to the application as an attachment. Basic information – name of organization, program title, amount requested, etc. – will be requested within the application. Program objectives, tasks, expected outcomes/results, and other details will be captured within the Program Milestone Document. The information within the Program Milestone Document will then be the basis for all reporting for the programs selected for funding.

Funding
- Florida Blue Foundation has approximately $3 million for the funding of this program.
- The Foundation will fund three- and four-year grants. The total amount requested for the life of the grant should range between $270,000 to $400,000 (the approximate amount per year is between $90,000 to $100,000).

Grantee Requirements
- **USDA Survey:** Grantees are required to *achieve at least a 36% increase in Food Security* over a three-year average, with the preferred method of tracking progress being the Six-item Short Form Retrospective USDA Survey. If using the USDA survey, grantees must administer it twice a year and include results in progress reports. However, if an organization is unable to administer the USDA survey, they may still apply and describe an alternative method for tracking progress from food insecure to food secure. This alternative method must be aligned with industry best practices and included in the Overall Evaluation Plan section of the application.

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- **ACH Payments:** Please be aware that should your program be selected for funding, Florida Blue Foundation will disburse payments via ACH transactions, and you will be required to provide requested banking information.
- **Grantee Orientation:** Successful applicants should be prepared to attend a mandatory virtual grantee orientation that is tentatively scheduled to take place October 2025. Specific date and time will be provided once confirmed.
- **Annual Foundation Event:** Successful applicants must attend the Florida Blue Foundation's annual Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards each year for the life of the grant. Dates and locations will be provided once they are confirmed.
- **Budget:** When developing your budget, please include funds for each year of the grant to cover potential annual program meetings and attendance at Florida Blue Foundation's annual Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards.

Eligible Applicants

Nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organizations, public agencies, universities, colleges, training centers, community centers, schools, health care-related facilities, faith-based institutions, and others that:

1. Are incorporated in Florida
2. Have the capacity, expertise, resources, knowledge in the field, and time needed to carry out the intent of the program
3. Have expertise in delivering educational and awareness programs on targeted topics to targeted populations described in this application
4. Have expertise in developing and managing programs
5. Have the capability to reach target populations described under this application.

What We Do Support

1. Salaries, including benefits
2. Employee training
3. Rental fees for program/meeting costs
4. Webinar or other types of media/technology
5. Program materials/equipment
6. Required travel related to this grant (e.g., attend Florida Blue Foundation's Annual Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards, and other potential annual program meetings, etc.)
7. Training/educational materials
8. Printing and dissemination
9. Indirect costs – an amount up to but not to exceed 10% of the total grant amount.
   (Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant project function or activity but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs.)

What We Do Not Support

1. Organizations that do not have a 501(c)(3)
2. Research and development
3. Individuals
4. Capital campaigns
5. New start-ups
6. Profit making enterprises as applicants

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Need Help?
Check out the **Frequently Asked Questions beginning on the next page.**

If you still have questions, you may contact us via email: floridabluefoundation@floridablue.com; or via phone: 1-800-477-3736, ext. 63215. Please include your name, organization name, your contact information, and interested grant program name.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If an organization does not provide services in the following ZIP codes: 32206, 32805, 33612/33613, 33142, and 33311, would the organization still be eligible to apply?
A: Yes, as long as the organization primarily serves underserved, underinsured, and low-income individuals in Florida. Special consideration will be given to organizations that provide services in these specific ZIP codes. However, it is not a requirement to apply for this grant program.

Q: If an organization is applying to Priority 2: Bridging the Rural Gap, where can the map of Florida's Rural Counties be found?
A: The Florida Department of Health has a map listing these rural counties: Rural Counties

Q: What is the required percentage increase in Food Security that the grantee must achieve measured by the Six-item Short Form Retrospective USDA Survey?
A: Grantees are required to *achieve at least a 36% increase in Food Security* over a three-year average. This benchmark is based on the Six-item Short Form Retrospective USDA Survey, a widely used and reliable tool for assessing household food security. By tracking this percentage increase, the Foundation can evaluate the effectiveness of an organization's program in moving households from food insecure to food secure.

Q: If an organization is unable to administer the Six-item Short Form Retrospective USDA Survey, would the organization still be eligible to apply?
A: Yes, organizations that are unable to administer the USDA survey can still apply. We encourage them to describe their alternative methods for tracking progress from food insecure to food secure under the Overall Evaluation Plan section of the application.

Q: Are current grantees eligible to apply to the same program? Or for a different program?
A: Yes, as long as the proposal aligns with the intent of the grant. And, if applying to the same grant program, the proposal needs to be different from what is currently being funded.

Q: What is the deadline to submit the 2025 Program application?
A: Food Security: Before 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Q: When will applicants be notified of their status as approved or declined?
A: Food Security: September 2025

Q: Do you fund 12-month applications?
A: No. The Food Security grant program will award three- and four-year (36 or 48 months) grants to nonprofit organizations.

Q: How many proposals do you expect to receive? How many will you fund?
A: We do not have an estimate of how many proposals we will receive. Florida Blue Foundation has approximately $3 million for the funding of the 2025 Food Security grant program.

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Q: What is the decision-making process of selecting applications for funding?
A: A review committee composed of internal and external individuals who are knowledgeable and/or experts in this funding area make recommendations to the Foundation. The Foundation's Board of Directors has the final approval for all recommended applications.

Q: For budgeting purposes, can you please provide an estimate of the numbers of days and nights spent at each of the events: Florida Blue Foundation's Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards and at a potential annual program meeting?
A: Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards - This is a two-day event typically held in Orlando. We recommend estimating the hotel cost at $250 per night and registration at $150. Remember to also add in transportation cost. There is no limit to the number of attendees from your organization. It is recommended that, at a minimum, the person who is managing the day-to-day operation of the program attend.

Other meetings - Meetings in subsequent years are not set in stone and sometimes they are scheduled in conjunction with the Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards or at another time during the year that may be scheduled at a central location. The schedule generally allows for closer organizations to be able to travel back and forth in one day.

Estimated cost per meeting: $800 per person/per year.

Q: Can these grant funds be used to purchase a building?
A: No, our programs are not designed to fund brick and mortar grants. Our grants are designed to provide direct delivery services to the underserved and low-income individuals and communities across Florida.

Q: Are indirect costs allowable?
A: Yes, up to 10% of indirect costs are allowable under these programs.
Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant project function or activity but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs.

Q: What if our organization does not have an audited financial statement?
A: In lieu of an audited financial statement, the Foundation requests the organization's internal financial statements (Statement of Financial Position or Statement of Activities) for the most recent two years.

Q: Is there a maximum number of objectives in the program milestone document?
A: There is no maximum number of objectives.

Q: If an organization is not based in Florida but provides direct services in markets across the country including Florida, would the organization still be eligible to apply?
A: Yes, as long as the organization can provide the required documents in the Attachments section of the application including the State of Florida Solicitation of Contributions Certificate from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

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Q: What is the Florida Solicitation of Contributions Certificate? Do state agencies need to provide one?
A: The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services requires this certification for nonprofits seeking to solicit funds in the state of Florida. It must be renewed yearly. We request that you upload the current certificate that is less than one year old. It is a required attachment so if your organization is exempt, please attach the exemption letter from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Q: When will the grants become effective?
A: As soon as the grant agreements are fully executed September 2025, operations are expected to begin in October 2025.

Q: I cannot register online or my organization Tax ID number is not recognized.
A: If you are having trouble registering or cannot find your organization, please click on "Contact Us" located in the blue box at the top of the page and provide the organization name, address, and tax ID number. Someone will get back to you.

Q: Is there someplace where we may find a list of previously funded/successful proposals for examples of projects that suit the Foundation's other Funding Priorities?
A: The Foundation's **website** is a great resource for additional information and there you will find a link to the most current Impact Report which highlights many grantees.

Q: Our organization has more than one affiliate or chapter across the state utilizing the same Tax ID number. Are we able to apply from multiple affiliates/chapters?
A: Each chapter may submit an application. If the chapters plan to submit similar programs, our recommendation is to submit a statewide proposal. Large organizations that have many divisions, such as universities, colleges, hospital systems, or government agencies, may submit only one application per Funding Priority. If you have specific questions, please reach out to the Foundation.

Need Help?
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