



2026 Sapphire Award Eligibility Guidelines

All intending to submit a nomination are advised to thoroughly review this document before proceeding with development of a nomination.

Deadline to submit is October 7, 2025

[Link to application portal](#)

2026 Theme

The theme for the 2026 Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards is “The Power of Connection.”

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Nurturing meaningful human connections and developing collaborative relationships are key to creating and maintaining stronger and more engaged communities. The annual Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards provides attendees the opportunity to convene, discuss critical health issues, and learn innovative strategies and solutions that improve the health of all Floridians.

The Sapphire Awards were designed in 2005 by Florida Blue Foundation to recognize excellence and innovation in community health leadership and programs in Florida. Since then, 157 Sapphire Awards, totaling \$8 million, have been awarded across Florida. The Sapphire Awards program and dinner will be held on April 16, 2026.

The 2026 Sapphire Awards will honor, through a competitive external review process, outstanding programs, organizations, and individuals whose services are distinguished by exemplary leadership, innovation, and documented impacts in improving health in local communities. They will excel at:

- **Transformational Partnerships:** Developing and sustaining robust connections, collaborations, or partnerships that leverage diverse resources, strategies, and relationships to address health disparities, drive meaningful improvements in community health outcomes, and contribute to a culture of health and well-being.
- **Innovation and Creativity:** Demonstrating novel approaches, innovative solutions, or creative strategies that highlight the power of connections and improve community health outcomes.

- **Leadership:** Exhibiting strong leadership with a focus on amplifying marginalized voices and promoting community-driven solutions.
- **Measurable Impact:** Demonstrating clear, quantifiable, and sustained improvements in health outcomes and quality of life as a direct result of innovative partnerships, collaborations, or connections.
- **Sustainability and Scalability:** Showcasing a clear plan for sustaining and scaling successful partnerships, collaborations, or initiatives to maximize impact and reach.
- **Foundation Priorities:** Aligning with one or more of the three priority areas of the Foundation (Improving Health, Food Security, Mental Well-being) and demonstrating a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of these areas in achieving holistic community health.

The focus of a nominated program, organization, or individual could include: senior isolation and loneliness programs; nutrition-related health issues; access to health care in rural areas; disaster response and recovery efforts; health literacy initiatives; mental health crisis response initiatives; and more.

AWARD DETAILS

The Sapphire Award was designed to recognize a nominee's accomplishments. Awardees will be announced at the Sapphire Awards dinner and program on April 16, 2026. These are one-time awards. Those seeking financial support or grants should visit the Foundation's website for information on current funding opportunities.

Awards will be presented to first, second, and third place winners in each category (Program, Organization, Individual). Award funds will be presented to eligible Florida-based organizations that possess exemption by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3), or are a unit of Florida government (e.g., county health department, K-12 school, college, university, etc.). Type III Supporting Organizations and private foundations are not eligible to submit nominations nor receive award funds.

SAPPHIRE AWARD NOMINATION APPLICATION INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR

The Sapphire Award Nomination Application [Informational Webinar](#) will be available beginning September 2. The webinar can be viewed at your convenience.

https://kvgo.com/bcbsflorida/2026_Sapphire_Awards_Informational_Webinar

IMPORTANT DATES

September 2, 2025	Nomination Applications Open
September 2, 2025	Nomination Application Informational Webinar available
October 7, 2025	Deadline to submit Nomination Applications
January 13, 2026	All applicants receive notice of status
April 16, 2026	Sapphire Award Winners announced at the Awards Dinner and Program Finalists must be present to receive the Award
April 16-17, 2026	2026 Community Health Symposium and Sapphire Awards

NOMINATION APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

Nomination Application Categories

- Program
- Organization
- Individual

For the 2026 competition, an organization may submit a PROGRAM nomination application, OR an ORGANIZATION nomination application, but not both. An organization may also nominate one person for the INDIVIDUAL award category. See details below for other guidance on submitting a nomination application.

Nominated Programs

- An organization seeking recognition for a single health-related program should submit a PROGRAM nomination application.
- Organizations submitting a Program nomination application must be incorporated in the state of Florida and the programs for which they are seeking recognition, either individually or collectively, must be currently conducted in the state of Florida.
- The nominated program must be in operation for a minimum of three years.
- Programs that received an award at any level in previous years are not eligible for another nomination. However, a different program at the organization that has not received an award may be nominated in the Program category.
- Organizations submitting a Program nomination application must possess exemption by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3), or be a unit of Florida government (e.g., county health department, K-12 school, college, university, etc.).
- Program nomination applications must include two References from non-staff people such as current/former patients/clients, community leaders, elected officials, funders, or representatives from partner agencies/organizations.
- Type III Supporting Organizations and private foundations are not eligible to submit a nomination application in any category, nor are they eligible to receive award funds.

Nominated Organizations

- An organization may submit a Sapphire Award ORGANIZATION nomination application to seek recognition for the collective impact of all its health-related services and interventions.
- An organization seeking recognition for a single health-related program should submit a PROGRAM nomination application instead.
- Organizations that received an Organization award at any level in previous years for the collective impact of all their health-related programs are not eligible for another nomination in the Organization category.
- Organizations submitting applications for a Sapphire Award must be incorporated in the state of Florida and the programs for which they are seeking recognition, either individually or collectively, must be currently conducted in the state of Florida.
- The nominated organization must be in operation for a minimum of five years.
- Organizations applying for a Sapphire Award (all categories) must possess exemption by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3), or be a unit of Florida government (e.g., county health department, K-12 school, college, university, etc.).

- Organization nomination applications must include two References from non-staff people such as current/former patients/clients, community leaders, elected officials, funders, or representatives from partner agencies/organizations.
- Type III Supporting Organizations and private foundations are not eligible to submit a nomination application in any category, nor are they eligible to receive award funds.

Nominated Individuals

- Nominated Individuals may be community volunteers, educators, staff members, managers, executives, administrators, community leaders, or health care professionals who have worked and/or volunteered in the state of Florida with qualified health-serving organizations that are physically located in Florida. Qualified health-serving organizations must be a 501(c)(3) organization, or a unit of Florida government (e.g., county health department, K-12 school, college, university, etc.).
- Nominees must have a proven record of more than five years of work, expertise, and accomplishments in the field.
- Nominees may be active or retired.
- Nominees must be alive and a resident of Florida at the time the nomination application is submitted. Posthumous nomination applications will not be considered.
- Individuals may be nominated
 - For their work as a professional, service as a volunteer, or a combination of both, and the nomination should focus heavily on the individual's professional work and/or volunteer service performed in Florida.
 - For a career that spans one or more organization or community, with a focus on their work performed in Florida.
 - By a peer, colleague, co-worker, staff member, board member, volunteer, patient, client from the organization where the individual works and/or volunteers, or from separate organizations.
- Individuals who received an award at any level in previous years are not eligible for another nomination in the Individual category.
- Self-nomination applications for the Individual category will not be accepted.
- Organizations submitting an Individual nomination application must possess exemption by the Internal Revenue Service under section 501(c)(3), or be a unit of Florida government (e.g., county health department, K-12 school, college, university, etc.).
- Nomination applications for individuals must include two References from people who know the work of the individual. The references may come from two non-staff people, including, one board member, volunteer, patient, client from the organization where the individual works and/or volunteers, community leaders, funders, or representatives from partner agencies/organizations.
- Type III Supporting Organizations and private foundations are not eligible to submit a nomination application in any category, nor are they eligible to receive funds.

SPECIAL NOTES

- Organizations may submit one nomination application for the ORGANIZATION category OR one nomination application for the PROGRAM category, but not both.
- Large organizations that have many divisions or affiliates – like a university, college, hospital, national nonprofit – should reach out to your development office, foundation, or headquarters to determine which nomination application to submit. Multiple submissions of affiliates from a single

institution may result that none of the applications will be reviewed and considered for recognition.

- Current and former employees, retirees, and board members of Florida Blue Foundation, Florida Blue (Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida), the subsidiaries and affiliates of Florida Blue and GuideWell Mutual Holding Corporation, and their spouses and family members, are not eligible for nomination, nor may they serve as a reference or nominator. Additionally, current and former members of the Sapphire Awards Committee, as well as their spouses and family members, are not eligible for nomination, nor may they serve as a reference or nominator.
- Individuals who wish to submit a nomination and prefer to not nominate under their organization, or who are retired or between jobs, should send an email to floridabluefoundation@floridablue.com with subject line: *Sapphire Award Nomination by Individual*. Include in the email the following information for the Nominator: full name, email, mailing address, and phone. You will receive an email from the grants manager with information you will need to access the application portal.
- All chosen finalists must be available for interviews and recording by the Foundation and must be present at the Sapphire Awards program and dinner on April 16, 2026.

SUBMITTING A NOMINATION APPLICATION

Florida Blue Foundation uses an online application process. After you have read/printed/saved the 2026 Sapphire Award Nomination Application Guidelines, please access the [online application portal](#) to start a new Program, Organization, or Individual nomination application; access an existing nomination application that you opened, created, or saved; or submit a completed nomination application.

QUESTIONS

Please direct questions to:

Email: floridabluefoundation@floridablue.com

Phone: 800-477-3736, ext. 63215.