FY27 RF Application (New Applicants)

Manatee County Government
Children's Services Dedicated Millage
Application Period December 10, 2025 – January 31, 2026

Organizational Strength

1. What is your **mission statement**?
Purpose of Question: While not scored, this is important to ensure that the program is fully within the mission. In some cases, nonprofits start work (especially if funds are offered) in areas outside of their core focus. i.e., last year Easter Seals stated they met the priority of adoption preservation when their mission is serving disabled children, some of which are adopted.
Scoring Area: Organizational Strength, Misson Statement. This is not a scored question.
Applicant Guidance: Please provide your organization's official mission statement as documented in your bylaws, website, or other governing materials.
Examples: • The mission of the Davis Health Alliance is to ensure that low income and at-risk individuals in our county get and use health care services. • The Carver After School Program is to change the odds now stacked against kids from low income families who are at high risk of school drop-out.

2. What does your **organization know how** to do especially well that contributes to this program achieving great gains for its participants?
Purpose of Question: The extent to which an agency understands what it does well is a major strength for many reasons, including hiring to fill shortfalls in knowledge or skills. It is far more predictive of success than a word smithed mission or vision statement.
Scoring Area: Organizational Strength, Core Know-How
Score Range: 0-2 **2 –** They have clearly stated one or more specific content on knowledge and /or skills that they have and that seem critical to the success in this program. It is specific, not general. **0 –** They did not state a specific core know-how or did so at a very vague level.
Applicant Guidance: Identify and describe 1-3 specific areas of core know-how (knowledge or skills) that your organization excels in and explain how each directly contributes to the proposed program's ability to achieve measurable outcomes for participants. Provide evidence or examples from program experience to support your response.
Examples: • Previously, we thought our core know-how was in educating—telling pregnant women about the importance of getting prenatal care and following medical advice. We now know we are more in the business of persuading than informing. Our core know-how is our skill in defining the key messages that cause young women to form a conviction that they should get prenatal medical care (especially in first trimester of pregnancy) and then act on that belief. • Our core know-how is twofold: a) having an intervention pathway into schools through principals; and b) ways to use data to track what we do next with a child in our program.

3. What predicts **leadership sustainability** for the organization?
Purpose of Question: Any issues of organizational survival are important to understand in that they consume time and attention that is diverted from effective programs. This question focuses on leadership where a loss of a board chair or CEO can cause real challenges. Even if successful, programs may slow down during a transition period. Of special concern: the loss of a well-liked founder.
Scoring Area: Organizational Strength, Leadership Sustainability
Score Range: 0-2 **2 –** There is nothing flagged or stated to question leadership sustainability. No key person is leaving for falling short. Or, if so, they have found an impressive new person. **0 –** There is a clear and unresolved issue with leadership sustainability.
Applicant Guidance: Describe any leadership turnover that has occurred within the past 24 months or is expected within the next 24 months—both for the organization as a whole and for this specific program. This includes roles such as CEO, board chair, executive director, or program manager. For each change, specify: the position, the reason for the change, the current status of the transition (such as whether a successor has been identified and the expected onboarding timeline), and the steps the organization is taking to prevent or minimize disruptions to operations, program delivery, and participant outcomes.
Examples: • Our leadership is solid. Kathryn, the CEO, anticipates remaining for at least the next five years as do all key staff. Board leadership rotates and we have identified the next two alternating chairs. We anticipate that they will be here to assume that role. • Jose, our program leader, is planning on retiring next year. While his leaving is a loss, he has identified and is mentoring the person who will take his place. We do not foresee any loss of momentum, services, or accomplishments with this transition.

4. What predicts **financial stability** for the organization?
Purpose of Question: Money is the second key area for sustainability. When an organization runs low on cash, much attention can be diverted from programs to staying afloat, even if the organization looks good by the end of the year. And trends toward higher expenses than incomes do not bode well for stability. To understand the dynamics of any organization, a look at 3-year trend lines is very important. Is the organization growing or shrinking? (i.e., not adding staff if they are not generating enough revenues.) It is important for an organization to ensure funding and avoid financial instability or crisis in the event of a loss of funds. This question exposes the organization's methods in predicting their financial stability, how they define financial success, and what measures they use to do such.
Scoring Area: **Organizational Strength, Financial Stability**
Score Range: **0-2** **2 –** There is no discrepancy between the narrative on stability and the numbers provided in the trend lines. The trend line over the past 3 years shows an excess of revenue over expenses and they are not overly dependent on investment from the county without reason (see program revenue sources in program budget). The trend is either stable at positive performance or getting stronger each year. There are no flags indicating financial instability, the organization describes their current financial situation as well as their future predictions. **1 –** There may be some discrepancy between the narrative on stability and the numbers provided in the trend lines. The trend line shows the organization is break even with revenue and expenses annually. They are not completely dependent on the county (see program revenue sources in proposed

budget) The organization has shown financial stability in the past but is currently running in a deficit with no concrete plan on getting into a surplus.

0 – They are losing money or are totally dependent on county funds to carry on without reason. There is no prediction for financial stability, or the organization offers no insight on their financial reporting.

Applicant Guidance: When assessing financial stability, describe any significant financial trends or events that impact the organization's current position—for example, the gain or loss of a major donor or funding source. Include an honest explanation of challenges related to cash flow, particularly your ability to cover salaries and operating expenses throughout the year. Remember that an annual surplus is not reassuring if the organization struggles to meet payroll mid-year. If the organization has been operating at a deficit, provide a clear explanation of the circumstances and outline the plan for returning to a stable financial position.

Revenue: Enter total **organizational** income from all sources.
Expense: Enter total **organizational** costs, including overhead (administrative costs).
Number of staff throughout the **organization**.

3 Year Trend Line	**1 Year Ago**	**2 Years Ago**	**3 Years Ago**
Organizational Revenue	$	$	$
Organizational Expense	$	$	$
# Staff Organization-wide			

Examples:

- The Guilford Health Group confidently predicts its sustainability over the next 5-10 years. While our financial net varies year to year, we are always "in the black" over any 3-year rolling average. Further, our government and foundation payments give us positive cash flow. Our key funders show no evidence of losing either money or interest in supporting us.
- Learning Turnaround has been in existence since 1963 and has never been in a stronger financial position. We have built a $1.5 million endowment and have diversified our revenue to the point that 60% comes from grants and 40% is earned income from services for which we charge. Our audited financials (including management letters) show that we have been in good standing for the last 3 years.

5. Provide the following information on the characteristics of your **Board of Directors**:

Purpose of Question: This information helps reviewers understand your board's expertise, lived experience, and safeguards for ethical governance.

Scoring Area: Organizational Strength, Board of Directors

Score Range: 0-4

4 – Five or more subject areas with significant experience, 90% of board members contribute dollars and strong and clear nepotism policy.

2 – Three to four subject areas with significant experience.

0 – Two or less subject areas with significant experience.

	# of board members
	# of board members who are residents of Manatee County
	# of board members who support with annual contributions

Provide the number of board members with significant experience in the following areas:

Applicant Guidance: Provide detailed information about your board of directors. When describing board members' backgrounds: • "Significant experience" refers to board members who have *worked or held roles* in the field your organization serves (for example, a board member who has professional experience in disability services, early childhood education, mental health, housing, etc.). • "Personal connection to the mission" refers to board members who have *direct lived experience* with the issue your agency addresses. For example, a parent of a child with a disability serving on the board of an organization supporting children with disabilities. Additionally, include your organization's nepotism policy. This should clearly state: • Whether board members may be related to one another. • Whether board members may be related to staff. • Whether staff may be related to other staff, especially in situations involving supervision or reporting relationships.			
	Finance		Personal connection to agency's mission
	Nonprofit management		Field(s) in which your agency works
	Law		Direct experience with kinds of people served
	Business		
Provide the agency's **policy on nepotism** at all levels. Include whether board members may be related, board members may be related to staff, or staff may be related to staff that they supervise.			

Program Information

6. Tell us about your program.
Purpose of Question: We are looking for a brief paragraph or two with an overview of the program to help the reviewers. Think of it as what you could state in 60 seconds if someone asked what your program is. Include in the designated spaces the program schedules and location. If you quote statistics, whether local, state or national, please provide source link or upload an appropriate attachment.
Scoring Area: Program Information, Program Schedule
Score Range: 0-4 **4 –** The schedule provided clearly shows when a program is open and providing services to the client. The program is open enough days of the year to meet the level of need in the community to move the needle. The program has identified specific days and times services directly related to the Results are provided and the time provided is adequate to assist clients to make the necessary gains to achieve the result by participating in the program. **2 –** Program provided days and times when they are open and providing services to clients, but it is unclear if the number of days and times services directly related to the Results are provided will be adequate for clients to make the necessary gains to achieve the result by participating in the program. **0 –** Surface level information is provided, and it is difficult to determine if the availability of services for client will positively impact gains related to the Results.
Applicant Guidance: • These details should provide what, when, where, and how the program provides their services to clients. • Indicate whether it is year-round, schoolyear only program, or summer only program. • Consider whether these details meet the client's needs and are available when needed in convenient locations. • How does the program directly align with and support the organization's mission • Include other good to know information, such as:

- Provided transportation
- Free, sliding scale, or fee-based
- Languages offered
- Registration process or waitlist information
- Unique program features (i.e. evidence-based model, family engagement components, specialized staff, etc.)

Examples:

1. A daily out-of-school time program at (location) during after school times and throughout the summer. The program incorporates a 30-minute reading intervention using the ABC curriculum for elementary children, homework help is available for those who request it from teacher partners. These activities directly advance the agency's mission to improve reading proficiency and overall academic success.
2. The Agency shall provide at a variety of community locations, a 6-week group workshop for parents at elevated risk of repeat child maltreatment using the evidence-based XYZ curriculum, thereby aligning with the agency's mission to promote child safety, prevent further maltreatment, and strengthen family protective factors.

7. New Program Status – alignment with Children's Services Priorities/Ordinance

Purpose of Question: It is important for programs to demonstrate clear alignment with the Children's Services priorities and purpose. This ensures that funds are used effectively for meaningful impact, prevents mission or purpose drift, strengthens long-term partnerships, and confirms that the program delivers measurable value in achieving service goals. In addition, alignment helps support the enhancement, expansion, and innovation of programs so they can better meet the evolving needs of children and families.

Scoring Area: Program Information, Program Alignment. This is not a scored question.

Applicant Guidance:

New Programs please consider and answer the following:

- What unmet need does this program address for the target audience, and how will it be tracked? Is it a service, good, location, demographic, risk factor, etc.
- Beyond the initial launch, what key resources are critical for the program's long-term success and sustainability?
- How would you ensure buy-in and alignment to the Children's Services ordinance and priorities as well as with Manatee County community providers and partners?

Established Programs please consider and answer the following:

- Regarding current or similar services to your program, what would your program do to improve efficiency, innovation, or user experience? How would you provide supporting evidence?
- How will you leverage technology or partnerships to expand the reach or impact of this existing program without increasing core costs disproportionately?
- What are potential risks or unforeseen consequences of expanding this program? What's the mitigation plan?

8. Evidence of Program need

Purpose of Question: Understanding the need for a particular program is necessary to ensure efficient allocation of funds, helps to avoid duplication of services, demonstrate accountability, and maximize impact and effectiveness.

Scoring Area: **Program Information, Evidence of Need. This is not a scored question.**

Applicant Guidance:

Provide a detailed explanation of why this program is needed in Manatee County. Your response should include: • Evidence supporting the need, such as local data, community assessments, waiting lists, surveys, referral patterns, or trends showing unmet demand. • Evidence that clients will use the services, such as past participation levels, inquiries, partnerships that generate referrals, or documented gaps in available services. • What would happen if the program did not exist, including the impact on children, families, and the community, as well as any negative outcomes, service gaps, or increased burdens on other systems. This information helps demonstrate the relevance, urgency, and community value of your program.

9. Program **historical information**
Purpose of Question: While not scored it is important to understand the program history to see the program data trends.
Scoring Area: Program Information, Historical Information. This is not a scored question.
Applicant Guidance: Provide the data called for as it relates to the program specifically in the past three years: • Program Participants • Program Staff • Program Contractors

10. Program **match funding** details
Purpose of Question: While not scored it is important to ensure that the program is looking for other funding as a first source and using the millage funds as a last resort. If the program's sole funding is from the CSAB then it is pertinent that the program is looking for a match of funds.
Scoring Area: Program Information, Match Funding. This is not a scored question.
Applicant Guidance: Provide the program's match funding data called for as it relates to the program specifically in the past three years. Please provide details of the requirements for the program to receive match funds. Include the investment amount required to receive the match, other funding sources that are also considered in the match, length of time the match funding is available for, from where the match is coming from, and other necessary or relevant information. The details regarding match funding are for informational purposes only. However, the details may be considered in the final funding decision.

Participant Information

11. Identified target client/audience served (eligibility)
Purpose of Question: To understand how many clients are anticipated to be served and who the program services focus on serving to achieve benefits or gains of the child.
Scoring Area: Participant Information, Target Audience. This is not a scored question.
Applicant Guidance: Provide whether the client is the child, the parent/caregiver, or both the child and their parent/caregiver. Stating who the client of a program is, dictates who learns the skills, how the results are measured, and what changes to expect. Share many clients are anticipated to be served by the program during the upcoming fiscal year.

12. Eligibility Categories

<u>Purpose of Question</u>: The use of these funds is restricted to benefit children who qualify for at least one of the following eligibility criteria: abused, neglected, at-risk, or economically disadvantaged as specified in the Children's Services Ordinance (91-42). Who is their identified client, the youth, the legal guardian, or both?

<u>Scoring Area</u>: Participant Information, Eligibility. This is not a scored question.

<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: While many of your participants may reflect more than one category, the County's requirement is that all participants served by this funding source must be represented in at least one category. Clients may be duplicated from more than one category. For each applicable section below, you must complete all parts in full. At-risk factors are required to be clearly defined. Any non-applicable sections should state "n/a", or "0". *Clients may fall under more than one of the eligibility criteria, but they must fall under at least one to use Children's Services Dedicated Millage for reimbursement of their services.*

- **Abused or neglected** – Children are in danger of suffering from or have a history of experiencing physical, emotional, educational, or medical maltreatment related to the failure to provide needed age-appropriate care.
    - Describe the method used to verify and determine abused or neglected eligibility criteria.
- **Economically disadvantaged** – Families with children prenatal or ages birth – 17 years lack the money they need for essentials such as housing, food, and transportation, and the opportunities to earn money to pay for them. Household income is 250% or below current federal poverty level guidelines.
    - Describe the method used to verify and determine economically disadvantaged eligibility criteria.
- **At-risk** – Children lack the basic necessities for normal childhood development. They face severe limitations, barriers, or challenges to reaching their potential academically, physically, socially, emotionally, or mentally. They have risk factors or lack protective factors in one or more domains (individual, peer, school, family, or community), or they exhibit, or have a strong potential to develop, behaviors that put them at risk for negative, life-altering consequences.
    - Provide the program definition of at-risk.
    - Describe the criteria and method used to verify and determine at-risk eligibility.

For each applicable section you must complete all parts in full. Any non-applicable sections should state "n/a", or "0".

13. Provide the **anticipated demographics** for the Manatee County participants to be served by the proposed program

<u>Purpose of Question</u>: While the program may serve other counties, here is where you will provide the total number of ***Manatee County participants*** anticipated to be served. Manatee County's Children's Services Ordinance states that children to be served by the Children's Services millage must be between the ages of birth through age 17. Parents may be served if the program benefits children prenatal through age 17.
Note: This information may also be used later to compare proposed numbers vs. actual numbers after the program year has ended.

<u>Scoring Area</u>: Participant Information, Anticipated Demographics. This is not a scored question.

<u>Applicant Guidance</u>:

- Report data exclusively for Manatee County residents anticipated to participate in your service or program in the upcoming fiscal year (October 1 – September 30).

- Overall total is the number of unduplicated participants to be served in the program.
- Age range category: If you serve adults for the benefit of their children, enter total # of adult participants in the parent/guardian category. If you solely serve adults for any other purpose, the program is not eligible for an investment from this funding source.
- Race/Ethnicity category: Report each participant only once, selecting the best fit from the categories provided.
- Each demographic area should have matching totals and equal 100%.

NOTE: Units of service are based on an eligible client/family receiving the program services. Units of service are no longer per day of operation when services are provided to eligible clients.

14. Explain how your participants differ in the **level of difficulties/client barriers** they face in achieving the program's intended Result(s), compared to those who would not qualify for services under the Children's Services Ordinance.

Purpose of Question: The response to this question is another way to see how well programs understand their participants. It additionally provides whether the program is reaching those that most need help (Results).

Scoring Area: Participant Information, Level of Difficulty/Client Barriers. This is not a scored question.

Applicant Guidance:
Understanding the level of difficulty a client faces is important to the investor because the degree of challenge directly affects both cost and service intensity. Supporting a client who is already close to achieving the desired result is generally less time- and cost-intensive than assisting someone who faces more substantial obstacles. The level of challenge also helps determine the appropriate approach, as clients with more barriers typically require services of greater intensity and duration. Programs should be able to identify barriers across all levels, even if certain types of barriers are not currently represented among clients served.
Enter the number of clients you anticipate in each category, then describe the types of barriers that would place a person at each level **compared to the general population**, not just compared to the clients you serve:

1. Low level (minor hurdles) or few barriers
2. Mid-level (significant challenges) or some barriers
3. High level (overwhelming obstacles) or many barriers

Note: Some programs may legitimately have zero clients in one or more levels. For example, a program may exclusively serve clients with Mid-Range or Many barriers, or it may include clients across multiple levels.

Example:
From a prenatal health clinic for pregnant women:
- **Few barriers to result:** 15 women, have no health insurance, no primary physician.
- **Mid-range:** 40 women, no health insurance, no primary physician, first pregnancy.
- **Many barriers to result:** 65 women, no health insurance, no primary physician, first pregnancy, under 20 years of age, single parent, smokes cigarettes, uses alcohol.

Suggested approach: First, define the projected number of participants who will have many challenges or a very big challenge getting to the result(s). Then provide a list of the barriers they face. Do the same for the opposite end—those with few barriers in getting to the result. Then consider those with mid-range barriers to achieving the result(s).

15. Define two typical **program clients**
<u>Purpose of Question</u>: High performing agencies really know their participants. They know what the issues are, and they know what they need, not just at general levels but in the highly specific terms of actual individuals. If a young participant comes from a family with a culture that devalues education for girls, investors will look for a program that addresses that critical factor either by changing parent viewpoints or giving the child ways to move forward with other validation.
<u>Scoring Area</u>: Participant Information, Knowledge of Participants
<u>Score Range</u>: 0-4 **4 –** They have identified specific individual (not group) challenges or conditions in participants and can describe how they address them with their program. **2 –** Some factors identified for individual, but insufficiently specific or clear; or factors identified but with no information on how their program is designed to address them. **0 –** Very little individual identification factors are provided.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: Please provide examples based on actual participants from your current client base, using no real names. If necessary, you may use composite examples drawn from real cases. Describe each participant's situation, strengths, and any characteristics relevant to defining their eligibility. Highlight key differences between the examples and explain how your program addresses the specific challenges each participant faces. Be sure to include how the program is intentionally designed to respond to those identified challenges.
<u>Examples</u>: • Angela is 10 and in the 4th grade. She is more than two grade levels behind in reading. She is sociable and seldom has a behavior problem. She is, however, distracted and does not readily focus on homework or anything else that looks to her like schoolwork. She has a single mom who is concerned about her and says she tries to limit her time on social media but is not consistently successful. Our program has elements that specifically address her attention span challenge and will make learning more engaging for her. • Jose is 13 and in 9th grade. He has one parent who is incarcerated and is being raised by one parent with support from his grandparents. Through school counselors, it was recommended to his grandparents that he should consider participation in this program to help resolve some anger issues that have been identified during the school day. Upon intake into the program an ACE assessment was completed by his parent on his behalf, his ACE score was determined to be a 4. Our program supports all youth with any determined risk factors and helps to establish protective factors for participants.

Difference Made

16. **Program priorities**
<u>Purpose of Question</u>: Although this section is not scored, it is still important. It helps determine whether the agency is working towards one of the County's priorities and contributing to measurable progress. While no additional points are awarded for selecting a particular priority, reviewers can consider whether the program is achieving results or generating broader impacts that relate to their priorities.
<u>Scoring Area</u>: Difference Made, Program Priorities. This is not a scored question.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: Selecting a priority is optional and does not affect your eligibility for funding from the Children's Services Dedicated Millage. No additional points are awarded for choosing a priority. However, if your program advances one or more of the county's priorities, please indicate which one(s) below. This information helps reviewers understand the specific results your agency is working on to achieve, how your program contributes to measurable progress for children and families in Manatee County, and whether your

outcomes align with county priorities or address other important community needs. Programs that do not align with any listed priority are still fully considered for investment. **Selecting "Not Applicable" is an option,** scroll to the bottom of the list to find the two options.
Please review the priority descriptions carefully **before selecting them**.

- Do not try to make the program's goals and services fit into a priority if they don't naturally fit.
- If your program does not address any of the priorities or related targets, select "No Priority Applicable".
- Applicants are not advised to, nor are they asked to obligate the program to solve an issue that is outside of the mission and expertise of the agency.

If selecting **one or more priorities**:

- At least one results should be the total unduplicated number of participants the program plans to serve for the year.
- If the result doesn't measure at least 50% of the anticipated participants, a second result should be considered. The second result does not have to measure a priority; however, it needs to provide how the funds are being invested.
- If your result statement doesn't include all program participants, there will be an opportunity to explain why they aren't all included in the result statement at the end of the section.

17. What **result(s)** are this program committed to achieve for the eligible clients served? Provide your result(s) statement(s), include the number of clients anticipated to be served and how many will achieve.

<u>Purpose of Question</u>: With Results-First investing, Manatee County invests in measurable outcomes for children and families, not just in programs or activities.
In this section, please clearly describe:

1. The specific, positive change (the "result") you want participants to achieve. Examples:
    - "Good" things going up (e.g., school attendance increases, reading scores improve, children remain safely in their homes)
    - "Bad things going down (e.g., child abuse reports decrease, chronic absenteeism drops, juvenile arrests decline)
2. The target level of improvement that would truly make a meaningful difference (compared to children who do not participate in your program or to the general population). A tiny change might technically be an "improvement," but we are looking for changes that are significant enough to matter in a child's life.
3. How many children or families you expect to reach that target level of results during the funding year.

Only include participants who meet the client definition you provided earlier in the application (see the "Participant Information" section).

Client follow-up is not a Result. When a client has achieved and left the program or is no longer tracked by the program due to achieving the Result, that provides program efficacy and should be tracked to ensure the gains achieved by the client were maintained. Please select the whether you track program efficacy through follow-up with clients at the end of the Results – Milestone – Verification section.

<u>Scoring Area</u>: Difference Made, Results

<u>Score Range</u>: 0-10

10 – The results are both clear and strong. The response is clear about the number of persons who get to a specific level of improvement that can reasonably be verified by behavior. The level of gain specified is high enough to really make a difference. If the program meets a priority, its result clearly speaks to it.

5 – The gains are somewhat clear and somewhat strong enough, but without enough to fully verify clarity and strength. If the program meets a priority, its result lacks clarity in linking to it.

0 – The gains are not clear and not strong. They do not specify a number getting to a specific behavior. And as best you can tell, the improvement they note is not strong enough to make much of a difference. If the program meets a priority, its results have no clarity in linking to it.

Applicant Guidance: Use the format in the examples below in your response.

Manatee County invests in measurable, life-changing results for children and families — not just in programs or activities.

In this section, tell us exactly what meaningful difference your program will make. For each result your program is committed to achieving, please provide a clear Result Statement that answers these four questions:

1. Who will change? (children, youth, parents/caregivers, etc., use the same client definition you gave earlier in the application)
2. What observable change will happen?
   Focus on behavior or status, not attitudes or feelings (e.g., "children attend school regularly" rather than "children feel more motivated").
   Good things going up or bad things going down.
3. How much change is needed to truly make a difference in a child's life?
   Set a specific, meaningful target (not just "will improve").
   Example: "move from chronically absent (≤90% attendance) to satisfactory attendance (≥95%)" instead of "attendance will improve."
4. By when will this change happen? (typically, by the end of the program or funding year)

Required Format (add as many results as needed)

Of the (# of eligible clients to be served), we anticipate serving, (# who are anticipated to achieve) will achieve (define the intended result/improvement, add priority statement if one was selected).

Examples:

Of the 150 unduplicated children who were chronically absent, the agency anticipates serving, 120 will increase their school attendance from 90% or less to 95% or higher, by the end of the current school year.

Of the 100 parents who are the subject of a child-welfare investigation, the agency anticipates serving, 80 will have their case closed with no instances of verified maltreatment within 12 months.

Key Guidelines for Strong Results

- Focus on end-of-program outcomes, not interim steps or milestones.
- Use numbers, not just percentages (percentages are okay in parentheses for context).
- Make the target ambitious but realistic — high enough to stand out among other applicants, yet achievable.
- If your program produces different results for children vs. parents/caregivers, list them separately.
- Only count participants who meet your earlier client definition (see Participant Information section).
- Clear, specific, and meaningful results make your program much more competitive for Children's Services funding.
  - State the amount of change to be achieved.
- Focus on behaviors rather than attitudes or knowledge.
  - Consider the condition or disposition that needs to change, determine what an empowered person can achieve that a non-empowered one cannot. This is likely something that can be verified.
- Set high enough to make a real difference, but not too high that it can't be achieved.

- If a priority was selected, at least one result needs to reflect the priority with at least 50% of the eligible clients (demographics) measured.
  - If 50% aren't tracked, another result is necessary.
  - If there is only one result, enter NA for Result 2 and Result 3.

All programs are required to have at least one Result statement with associated Milestones/Verifications. Please enter the information as well as you can. If a recommendation is approved and investment is awarded, staff will work with program representatives to align it to County standards.

Examples:

- Of the 50 high-risk parents, we anticipate serving, 42 will achieve the behavior goals in the areas which moves them out of the "at-risk range" for child abuse/neglect, and they have no new reported instances of child/abuse neglect.
- Of the 50 economically disadvantaged 4-year-olds we anticipate serving, 45 will begin Kindergarten equipped with the knowledge and social-emotional skills necessary to be successful.

18. Is there a difference in the numbers served for the Result and the numbers claimed in the Demographics? If yes, explain why.

Purpose of Question: For clarification purposes and to ensure CSAB and program staff understand the difference between the number of clients served and the clients tracked for the Results.

Scoring Area: Difference Made, Demographics to Results Clients. This is not a scored question.

Applicant Guidance: Demographics are to reflect the total number of Manatee County clients served by the program, while those counted in the Results reflect clients working towards achieving the Results through the milestones.

Examples:

- The total number served in the demographic includes parents/guardians (demographics total 49). The number measured for the Result reflects the children who are participating in the program services (Results total 21).
- There were clients served and recorded in the demographics who didn't meet the client definition in the Results yet they are eligible for program participation based on the program's definition of the client listed in agreement.
- Clients received defined services (demographics) but didn't attend facets of the program related to the Results.

19. Milestones and Verifications.

Purpose of Question: Traditionally agencies follow work plans, which tell them very little about the relationship between spending money and getting participants to a result. This question asks agencies to focus on their participants and their progress rather than on what staff do to serve the participants. Consider milestone as the path a participant must achieve to reach the goal/Result. Once the agency has its milestones, they can manage their programs to achieve them.

Scoring Area: Difference Made, Milestones and Verifications (Participants on Track)

Score Range: 0-6

6 – The milestones focus on participant progress; not what staff does to help participants. The milestones also show that a participant not only participated but made tangible progress.

3 – Some but not all milestones reflect actual participant actions and progress from participation.

0 – The milestones do not focus on participants or does not reflect what participants achieve to make progress toward the results.

Applicant Guidance:

Milestones provide details of client progress.

During the program year milestones provide documentation that participants are on track to achieve the intended Results. Each milestone has a verification that is trackable. If the program has more than one result, complete all associated milestones and verification entries for those Results. If the program only has one result, enter NA for the milestones and verifications for Results 2 and 3.

Tips to remember when writing your milestones.

- Milestones are crucial checkpoints marking progress, showcasing what the client gains (value, skills, results) and proving the service's impact towards the intended result.
    - Strong predictor of a client achieving the result.
- Incremental progress or gains, in steps, from the time they enter the program to when they achieve the result.
    - An estimated time for achieving each milestone in terms of how many days, weeks, or months from the starting date you think it should be reached is especially important if you have rolling start times.
- Make sure the milestones can be readily verified as part of the program.

Tips to remember when considering verifications

- How does program staff verify a client has achieved the milestone.
- Provide how and where it is tracked for your program.
- Data generated and tracked by the program is fine.
- At least one objective method is preferred.
    - Assessments or check points in a standardized program.
- May include subjective methods.
    - What staff, parents, or teachers see and hear
    - From clients, indicating progress.

Example:

Result:

Of the 50 high-risk parents, we anticipate serving, 42 will achieve the behavior goals in the areas which moves them out of the "at-risk range" for child abuse/neglect, and they have no new reported instances of child/abuse neglect.

Milestone 1:

Parents reviewed insights from their initial assessment and committed themselves to achieve the set goals in their Parenting Improvement Plan.

Typical time to achieve: 2-3 weeks

Verification: Staff has documented the insights of parents following the initial assessment as well as parent's visible commitment to achieving their goals in the Parenting Improvement Plan.

Milestone 2:

Parents demonstrated (not just knowing) new skills learned within the first four weeks of program participation.

Typical time to achieve: 4 weeks

Verification: Staff has documented evidence of parent engagement in the program through the skills they have seen the parents put into practice during this time in the program.

Milestone 3:

After 8 weeks, parents advanced towards completion of their behavioral goals within the timelines set in the Parenting Improvement Plan.

Typical time to achieve: 8 weeks

Verification: Parents have made documented progress in the behavior goals and have been demonstrating their skills during supervised home visit observations.

Milestone 4:

Parents have met all goals in their parenting plan, placing them out of the risk range for child abuse/neglect.

Typical time to achieve: 18 months

Verification: There have been no new reports of child abuse/neglect involving the parents.

20. Participant achievement follow-up (Results)
Purpose of Question: Tracking Results-achieving clients is crucial for proving program value, securing funding, improving future services by identifying what works, boosting client motivation through visible success, and fostering long-term relationships for referrals and continued support. It provides concrete data for accountability, demonstrates ROI, informs better decision-making, and offers powerful social proof of success for potential new clients and partnerships.
Scoring Area: Difference Made, Program Efficacy. This is not a scored question.
Client achievement follow-up is not a Result. When a client has achieved and left the program or is no longer tracked by the program due to achieving the Result, the follow-up provides program efficacy and should be tracked to ensure the gains achieved by the client were maintained. Please select the whether you track program efficacy through follow-up with clients.

21. When participants do not reach **a milestone**
Purpose of Question: Having milestones is of little use unless they are used. This question asks how agencies will track and respond to failure to meet milestones, including the two key ones of (1) clients being behind in their efforts to achieve the intended result, and (2) failing to generate enough participant engagement to forecast they will actively use a service to make and sustain an improvement. This demonstrates the program's need for having a data system that goes to the front lines, where those interacting with participants often know most quickly when a program is not working.
Scoring Area: Difference Made, Performance Improvement Process
Score Range: 0-4 **4 –** Response includes a system that monitors and responds to participants and prompts an intervention plan where they fall short; OR the monitoring system proves that participants are reaching the milestones and there is no need to get them on track. **2 –** Response has a procedure that guides program staff on making changes once they spot them, but without a systematic prompt in quality control. **0 –** Response has little or no forethought on quality control or what to do when persons do not hit milestones.
Applicant Guidance: What process or system do you use to track participant progress, identify when additional interventions are needed, and determine how to apply those interventions? We are looking for a clear description of the approach your program uses to ensure that milestones are actively monitored and used to guide decisions. Please describe how your system or process accomplishes the following: • Monitoring: How does the program track participant progress in real time and identify as early as possible when individuals are not reaching expected interim milestones? • Problem Identification: How does the program determine why a participant is falling behind, including how staff gather information, engage with participants, and assess contributing factors?

- Rapid Adjustment: How does the program decide what changes are needed in the program structure, service delivery, or supports—and how quickly those adjustments are made once concerns are identified?

Example:

We use case management software to compile and store data on women in our program—including clinic visits, recorded interactions with their mentor, and case notes staff may choose to add. The software is web based with clear privacy limits, available internally to everyone who needs to track progress. We include milestone entries—e.g., the first time the women get health advice and each time they show evidence of using it.

Our quality assurance lead reads all case notes and other data monthly on all participants. She has published standards she applies to signal when something seems off-course. Her first action is working with the direct staff. At least one new intervention is tried within two weeks.

22. Please state **broader (additional) impacts**

Purpose of Question: Nonprofits often find the result question too confining. They want to say more about broader values. This gives them a chance to do so, while retaining the discipline of a focus on actual changes in behavior and conditions. Investors are not open to vague statements of collaboration or empowerment, (i.e., the agency must say what is achieved by those results or other good things happening).

Scoring Area: Difference Made, Broader Impacts

Score Range: 0-2

2 – Response clearly states important and specific impacts that go beyond achieving a result. The added gains are not trivial.

1 – Response states some impacts, but it is unclear whether they are due to the program service or other factors.

0 – Response too vague or impacts are not of significant value.

Applicant Guidance: In addition to the primary results you track for this program, what other benefits are expected for participants and for Manatee County as a whole? Please describe any additional positive outcomes that may occur when participants achieve your program's results. **Include both cost-related impacts and other meaningful gains.** Be specific about the benefits to participants, the community, and the organizations that support them.

Examples:

- The average added cost nationally of a low birth weight baby in the first three years of life is \$30,000. For the 75 neonatal conditions, we anticipate preventing, the cost savings (to insurers and payers) is \$2.25 million.
- The confidence and skills the women in our program build are clearly applicable to gains in many areas, from health and education to housing and food security.
- The economic benefits of quality early childhood interventions are significant, producing a \$14-17 return for every dollar invested. A child growing up in poverty who has experienced high quality early education such as we provide is 40% less likely to require special education or to be held back a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school and twice as likely to go to college.

23. Provide the **objective verification** used which confirms that participants have achieved the Result(s).
<u>Purpose of Question</u>: For objective verification, we are looking for data points that are independent of personal views. We are also looking to see if the levels of change (i.e., gold stars or the like) are strong predictors of the result sought.
<u>Scoring Area</u>: Difference Made, Objective Verification
<u>Score Range</u>: 0-4 **4 –** Evidence involves success on an instrument/tool used by the program; there is evidence that this achievement is strongly connected with the results sought. It goes beyond opinion in signifying that a result has been achieved. **2 –** The application offers some evidence independent of opinions but without clarity that is sufficient to reflect actual achievement of result. **0 –** There is no objective evidence offered or it is so weak as to be as verification of the result.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: What measured standard(s) or assessment tool(s) will you use to objectively verify that participants achieved the stated results? Additionally, what evidence shows that your chosen assessment or tool is an accurate and reliable measure of that achievement? How will you know—based on objective information—that it's time to celebrate success? By objective, we mean information that does not come from staff or participant opinion. Subjective perspectives will be addressed in a later question. A few tips: • If you use pre- and post-assessments, they should measure changes in behavior or condition, not just knowledge retention or opinions. Knowledge alone rarely produces meaningful change. • Not all commonly used assessments are strong predictors of success. Some popular school-readiness tools, for example, are not well correlated with later learning outcomes. • It is acceptable—and encouraged—to include structured observations from direct program staff as part of your verification process. These observations should focus on clear indicators of progress or behavioral change and should be distinguishable from general, opinion-based observations. **Objective Verification**: Information that can be proven with facts and is independent of personal feelings, beliefs, or interpretations.
<u>Examples</u>: • The imbedded assessments in the Opal River Pre-K curriculum are our yardsticks for school readiness. When a child achieves a ten on this metric, this is a very good predictor of school readiness and actual reading capability. • We will use available records to determine the number of foster care placements and adoptions that remain intact. We will, however, report to the County on a cohort basis of those we serve to preserve privacy.

24. Describe the **subjective verification** used which confirms that participants have achieved the Result(s).
<u>Purpose of Question</u>: The reason for a subjective view is that the participant is often the best reporter on what is happening to them—and even better if they have chosen to change a condition or behavior by taking some initiative. The question only has value, however, if it goes beyond satisfaction to look at the changes the person has made; the ways in which the program prompted or at least influenced those

decisions, and the level of engagement that forecasts that the gain will be sustained after the program ends.
<u>Scoring Area</u>: Difference Made, Subjective Verification
<u>Score Range</u>: 0-4 **4 –** Response clearly specifies how participant achievement will be captured based on progress through the program. These are not just opinions but include examples of the client's gains and when/how they have been successfully applied. **2 –** Response includes participant views based on progress through the program(such as satisfaction), but without clarity on specific gains. **0 –** Response offers little or no element that reflects achievement perspectives on results achieved.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: How will you gather and document participants' subjective perspectives about the gains they achieved and the role your program played in helping them? Please describe the methods and tools you use to capture accomplishments as participants experience and describe them. Your response should explain how you collect, document, and interpret these personal viewpoints. A few tips: • Go beyond basic participant satisfaction. Explain how you learn which specific elements of the program participants believe were most important in helping them succeed. • If participants are not the ones providing subjective feedback, input should come from those closest to them—such as parents/guardians, teachers, or other natural supports. • When assessing changes in behavior, ask participants for concrete examples (e.g., "Name two things you are doing differently now.") • Include whether participants believe their improvements will continue after the program ends, as this information is especially valuable to funders and investors. **Subjective View:** Information based on a person's individual perspective, feelings, beliefs, or experiences.
<u>Examples</u>: • We will use a survey that asks our participants to specify what they are doing differently because of our program and the difference that change is making. For those with great changes, and those with little or no change, we will follow up with interviews done by staff not involved in the program to learn just what happened that led to high or low achievement. • We will produce at least twenty 2-3 paragraph result stories in which participants use their own words to say what happened and whether they think they achieved the targeted result. We will make this meaningful by dividing result stories into high achievement, low achievement, and everything in between, and saying about how many persons are in each category.

Program Success Factors

25. Share your program's **past success**.
<u>Purpose of Question</u>: The primary reason is that this is the best evidence an agency will achieve at a high level. What they achieved last year is far more predictive than what they say they will achieve next year. A second reason is that it tells you how good the agency is about recognizing and defining past results. To respond well to this question some structure must be in place to know the answers to past performance.
<u>Scoring Area</u>: Program Success Factors, Past Success
<u>Score Range</u>: 0-8

8 – Response reflects clarity on how many clients achieved the result(s) in the past year. If a new program, they either show clarity on success achieved by staff leading the program or client success data is less than a year with the time period clearly indicated.

4 – The response provides some result information, but it was incomplete either because results are not clear, or they did not include everyone presumed to get to the result.

0 – No useful data was provided on past achievement.

Applicant Guidance:

For the past year ending September 30, tell us how many people participated in the program and how many achieved the result proposed? Provide an explanation for why participants are not achieving the Result(s). Do this even if they are achieving at the level that was anticipated.

1. Applicants with Results First experience: Provide precise program result data for the past year, or at least a partial year. If data is for less than a one-year period, please indicate the period covered.
2. Applicants with no Results First experience: We realize that some applicants may not have used Results First in the past and may have no good data for the past year. In this case, provide your best estimate and note it as such. In a year, you will have a much easier time providing precise past result data should anyone ask—and they will!
3. Applicants for new programs with no past data: If your program is new and has no past participants, focus your response on the past success of another program offered through the organization or of the person(s) who will run the program. If they also have no experience in the program, for which you seek investment, you should make a compelling case for your performance given no data on past achievement.
4. Include why participants are not achieving the Result.

Examples:

- Full year example: In the year ending September 30, of the 50 economically disadvantaged 4-year-olds we served, 42 began Kindergarten with all the necessary knowledge and skills in terms of cognitive, social and emotional to be successful, only 3 under our target set for the year. The three who did not meet the results moved out of the area prior to completing the program.
- Best estimate example: In the year ending September 30, of the 50 high-risk parents we served, we estimate that at least 40 of them achieved the behavior goals in the areas which moved them out of the “at-risk range” for child abuse/neglect and have had no new reported instances of child abuse/neglect. This is our best estimate based on the data we gathered for the last six months of the past fiscal year and the first six months of the new fiscal year where we experienced an 80% success rate.
- New program example: This is a new program for our agency, and we have not operated a similar program in the past. The director we plan to hire for this program, however, has had great success with very similar programs in Broward County. In selecting her, we verified that she was instrumental in helping the participants get to the result and had an average success rate of 75%, which we plan to use as our target for this program.

26. Program changes and the difference they made in clients’ achievements.

Purpose of Question: Investors are more interested in providing investments to agencies that grow, develop, and change based on experience. As noted in guidance to applicants, we would pick a program slightly lower in current achievement levels that demonstrated great increases in performance in the last three years over a program with slightly higher achievement levels but have flatlined on progress/success. This question looks at the most vital skill needed to learn, acknowledging that something is not working. As Mark Twain put it, “It is tough to learn from mistakes you never made”.

Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Program Changes (Adapting)

Score Range: 0-4

- **4 –** Changes were made (within the limits allowable if using a core curriculum) that made a difference (learning was achieved).
- **2 –** Changes were made, but difference made is not clear.
- **0 –** No changes were made (no learning was achieved).

Applicant Guidance: If your program was in operation last year, reflect on your program’s progress over demonstrating how it has evolved and improved to better meet participants’ needs by truly starting where they are. A steep, positive learning curve is the strongest predictor of long-term success.
When comparing two programs currently at the same level of achievement:

- One that has remained steady is likely to stay at that level.
- One that has rapidly improved from a lower level in the past 1-2 years is far more likely to continue rising and reach even higher, achieving greater Results.

Real learning isn't just about what you know today, it's about how effectively you apply knowledge and experience to intentionally adapt and create greater success for clients.

Even when using a fixed core curriculum or approach, there is still control over key variables such as the people who deliver it and how they interact with clients. Focus response on improvement efforts there.

If this is a new program, consider focusing on why your organization is suited to meet the needs of the community through these program services.

Examples:

- We are now putting far more emphasis on our instructors and how they track progress of children in our program, by what they see and hear that signifies engagement, and then intentional use of program for personal achievement in a specific domain. We have increased the number of clients achieving results by over 10% and seen an equal percent decrease in the time it takes our students to get to the result.
- We have learned that we cannot reasonably help the students (roughly half) who drop into our programs with very low frequency. We now identify those who come at least twice a week and stay for at least two hours as the cohort group to which our success metrics apply. The others, we are clear, we are simply keeping safe and, hopefully, happy. While we cannot quantify it yet, the gains in success are very clear from concentrating our time on those students with us for enough time to make a difference. This is reflected in the result set in this application which is much higher than the one set for last year—before we made this change.

27. Define your program by its **major/key elements** and then tell us why you chose this approach as the best way to achieve results. Include all evidence of its effectiveness.

Purpose of Question: This question helps you to gauge the power of the approach an agency is using. While more general, it tells you how clear the applicant is on the key elements in their program and why they have included them as the best way to proceed. Part of that clarity is being concise. Agencies that need long narrative to tell you about their program are less likely to be successful than those who get right to the meat of what they do and why. It may be more important that an agency has clear intention than that you agree with it.

Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Approach (Key Program Elements)

Score Range: 0-2

2 – Response provides clarity on specific elements which are clearly important in contributing to success.
1 – Response is non-specific in identifying elements that contribute to success.
0 – Response does not identify any elements that contribute to success.

Applicant Guidance: Please describe your program's core delivery sequence by answering these four questions in order:

- **Program Sequence**
  List the 3–4 most important elements (or phases/steps) of your program in the exact order you deliver them to participants in order to achieve your stated result(s).
- **Rationale for This Approach**
  Explain why you believe this specific sequence and combination of elements is the most effective way to achieve your intended results. Be specific about the theory of change or principles that guide your design.
- **Evidence of Effectiveness**
  Provide a concise summary of the evidence that your approach works. This may include:
  - Your own outcome data (pre/post scores, completion rates, follow-up results, etc.)
  - Independent evaluations or third-party studies
  - Research that validates the core components you use (even if not your specific program). Include links or citations when available. If your approach aligns with practices recognized as evidence-based or research-based, note that as well.
- **Comparison with Alternative Approaches**
  Briefly describe 1–2 other common or similar approaches that aim for the same or similar results. Explain why you chose your current approach over those alternatives (e.g., stronger evidence, better fit with your population, lower cost, greater adaptability, cultural relevance, etc.).

Examples:

- Our approach has two key elements, to develop a mentoring relationship with expectant mothers at high risk of not getting and following prenatal medical guidance. We see building this relationship (most often through a mentor or adult friend) with the young woman as critical and we provide support services to the expectant mothers to break down barriers in their path to delivering a healthy baby. These can involve housing, money, or other factors beyond health.

  Before deciding on this approach, we explored other models such as media campaigns. Our conclusion was that no amount of information or pleading, without this mentoring relationship as the key to informing and persuading, would be effective with these young women. Here is a link to a research article supporting our choice.
- Our program to strengthen adopting families treats each family differently. We do not go in as a program or guidebook or any other standard stuff that may or may not apply to them. We first establish a relationship based on the assumption that we are resourceful and may be able to help them with any challenges they face. Since the numbers involved are not large, we can approach this based on individual and resourceful relationships. The best evidence we have is that we have been using this approach for three years and none of the 34 families which we work with has experienced an adoption disruption.

28. Note the **level of intensity and duration** of your approach and explain why it is necessary to achieve the result(s) for the persons you are helping.
Purpose of Question: Many agencies implement programs that are not long or intense enough to make a difference for participants. One reason is that they are conditioned to focus on a high count of those who receive services. This question encourages nonprofits to think about what it really takes to ensure that most recipients get the intended results, not just to offer a service.
Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Approach (Program Intensity and Duration)
Score Range: 0-4 **4 –** Response is very clear on why the length of the program is the right intensity and duration to make a difference. **2 –** Response includes the length, intensity and duration but does not clearly link it to how that gets them to the result. **0 –** Response includes no explanation for why a program length or intensity contributes to the result.
Applicant Guidance: Many programs fail to produce strong results not because their approach is weak, but because the dosage (intensity × duration) is too low to create meaningful change for the participants who need it most. Please clearly state the level of intensity you believe is required for participants to reliably achieve the intended Result(s): • **Intensity** o Hours per day or per week of direct program contact o Staff-to-participant ratio o Frequency and nature of individualized support (e.g., weekly one-on-one coaching, daily check-ins, etc.) • **Duration** o Total number of weeks or months the participant must be actively engaged o Any follow-up or booster sessions required after the core program • **Total Participant Load per Cohort or per Staff Member** o Maximum number of participants you can serve at the stated intensity and duration while still maintaining quality and achieving results • **Rationale and Evidence** o Briefly explain why less intensity or shorter duration has been shown (in research or your own data) to produce weak or no results o Provide any evidence (your own outcome data by dosage level, published studies on minimum effective dosage, etc.) that supports your recommended intensity/duration We are willing to fund fewer participants at higher intensity if that is what it takes to produce strong, lasting outcomes. Please be specific and evidence-informed in your answer.

Examples:

- Of the 120 students who come during the school year to our before and after school program, we cannot effectively help the students (roughly half) who drop into our program with very low frequency. To achieve the intended results, our program approach requires participation at least two times per week for a minimum of two hours each day throughout the school year. We have identified a cohort group of 60 students who attend at this frequency for whom our program can make a significant difference, and we will apply our success metrics to this group. The other half, we are simply keeping safe and, hopefully, happy when they drop into our program.
- Our counseling program needs at least 10 consistent weekly sessions to have enough time to build a trusting relationship and make a significant difference in improving the client's mental health.

29. Evidence that your **program director** can and will guide the program to achieve its results.

Purpose of Question: The right person is more important than the plan. The question is important in going beyond resume factors or degrees, certifications, and experience to look at the attributes that a program leader need. The leader's ability to hire, keep, and motivate a great staff is easily as important as what they know.

Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Program Director

Score Range: 0-6

6 – Response clearly shows that the program director is strong in both areas
A) Credentials/degrees/experience & B) Skills and attributes.

3 – Response clearly shows that the program director is strong in at least one of the areas.

0 – Response does not show that the program director is strong in either area.

Applicant Guidance: Selecting the right people is often more critical to a project's success than program design or funding levels. Begin by clearly stating the required **credentials or degrees**, then describe any preferred qualifications that exceed those minimum standards. When addressing experience, ensure it directly relates to the responsibilities the individual will hold within the project.

The second area, **skills and attributes,** acknowledges that effectiveness comes as much from a person's character and competencies as from formal education. Describe who the people in these roles in ways that matter to the success of the program and identify the specific skills they bring. Avoid vague statements such as "a good people person," which do not provide meaningful insight into a candidate's actual capabilities.

Example:

- Credentials/Degrees/Experience: Suzie Johnson, our program director, has the required domestic violence certification and has an MSW, a degree beyond the required bachelor's degree for this role. She has worked in this field for 15 years and fully understands and applies both the legal and procedural framework in her daily work and melds well with the kinds of persons in our program.
- Skills and Attributes: Suzie is the opposite of burned out. She is fresh every day when it comes to engaging with participants and giving them the hope and confidence, they need to be successful. She has a remarkable track record in helping our participants—well above state of local "averages" for achievement. We think this is largely due to who she is as a person.

30. Evidence that program **staff or contractors** will guide the program to achieve its results
Purpose of Question: The persons who directly interact with participants are often seen as the program by participants, who care little about plans, missions, logic models or anything else. What they know and what helps them is a person. Factors such as engagement, resourcefulness, and optimism are known to matter. Sadly, traditional funders ignore this factor almost entirely.
Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Staff or Contractors
Score Range: 0-6 **6 –** Response clearly shows that all staff interacting with participants are strong in both areas A) Credentials/degrees/experience & B) Skills and attributes. **3 –** Response clearly shows that all staff are strong in one area. **0 –** Response does not show strength for all staff in either area.
Applicant Guidance: The people directly interacting with your participants are the most critical factor in success in many programs. Typically, participants often define the program as the individuals that help them, even more than with program leaders. The ability to engage with participants is critical, and energy, confidence, and other attributes are likely to be more essential than knowledge or knowledge-based credentials. Speak to all staff interacting with participants, not just those viewed as outstanding. Share how credentials or attributes are applied by staff in their interactions with clients, thereby adding value.
Examples: • Credentials/Degrees/Experience: Melanie Davis is our lead childcare worker and has all required certifications. This is her second year in the field (which she entered after getting her associate degree) so she has limited experience. On the other hand, she has no "old school" thinking and has many ideas that have already proven of great value. • Skills and Attributes: Melanie is very inquisitive. She asks questions and gets our participants to ask questions. Her curiosity is infectious in a very good way. We have found that when our kids shift from making statements to asking questions, engagement goes up significantly. • Credentials/Degrees/Experience: We will hire two new staff to help in our afterschool reading program. No credentials are required, and we do not find degrees important as is knowledge of our kids. The people we hire have the experience of having "been there". These staff are under direct supervision of certified teachers. • Skills and Attributes: Our new staff selected will be very interested in actual student achievement, whether they pass next week's vocabulary test for completing a paper that gets compliments from teachers at school. They will do whatever it takes to make the 6-8 students in their group get on grade level in reading.

31. Provide the name of any outside entity or individual **who commits to do something for the success of your program**. Then tell us just what they must do and achieve. Upload their one-page written commitment to do so. Do not upload an MOU.
Purpose of Question: Nonprofits are often rewarded for having partners and collaborations that benefit the clients being served by this program. This question goes deeper and provides whether the agency is dependent on other organizations and people, or a system to be successful. The first great data point is whether they know who is essential and who is not. The second is if they have commitments from their essential partners on the action of support they intend to provide to the program, not just nice words about cooperating.
Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Essential Partner Commitment
Score Range: 0-4

4 – Response names an outside entity or individual with clear commitments to play the specified role and the corresponding document (not an MOU) is uploaded; or the applicant is credible in stating they do not have or need anyone to play a role. **2 –** Response identifies an outside entity or individual but without clear commitments to play the specified role and the corresponding document (not an MOU) is uploaded; or the applicant is not persuasive that they need no external partner. **0 –** Response is unclear on role and/or commitment is not specific, no commitment is stated; or the applicant is not credible in stating it needs no external partner. There is no uploaded document; or the uploaded document is an MOU despite the instructions.
Applicant Guidance: Many programs rely on outside partners to complete essential tasks or provide key resources. For example, an out-of-school-time program may require a school to share academic data, or another organization may need to supply theater tickets, books, mentors, or other critical items. If your program depends on an external entity to succeed, you must identify that partner and provide evidence of their commitment. Your submission must include a one-page written commitment letter from each partner you rely on. The letter must: • State exactly what the partner will do or provide, and • Describe the specific outcomes or responsibilities they are committing to fulfill for your program's success. These letters must contain **specific commitments**, not general endorsements or statements of support. Only include letters from partners who provide support that is essential to the success of your program. Each letter must include at least one clear sentence beginning with "We commit to…" or equivalent wording that states the partner's concrete contribution.
Example: • Jane Doe, President, Young Presidents Association of Manatee County, commits to providing 10 reading mentors who will consistently participate with the youth. There is a link to an example/template for a letter of commitment on the County Children's Services Funding webpage.

32. **Referring clients** to partners for other services
Purpose of Question: Many nonprofits refer their participants for other services but know little about whether they follow-up or are effectively helped. This question gets to those essential realities that so often determine participant success. The question also signals that the county is not satisfied with the response that "we did the referring—not our job to see if they got better—or even if they went". There are a few instances where follow-up referrals can endanger the client, such as domestic violence, in which the agency is excused from the follow-up process in the best interest of the client.
Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Referral Sources
Score Range: 0-4 **4 –** Response either is creditable for not needing any referrals or shows careful selection of referral groups and a way to follow-up to verify use and value of service. **2 –** Response shows some kind of follow-up but without showing clear evidence of careful selection or ability to verify use and value of referral. **0 –** Response shows little or no clarity on selection or follow-up verification.
Applicant Guidance: Tell us whether the providers you refer clients to are the only available options and whether their services are affordable. If multiple providers exist, explain the factors that led you to

choose one over the others. Be specific about each provider's effectiveness—evidence of strong outcomes is far more persuasive than simply noting that staff meet credentialing requirements.

On describing referral follow-up, be specific about how you track whether the referral led to a visit and whether that visit was helpful to your participants. In the event tracking referrals will endanger the clients you serve, please provide us this information in your response.

Example:

- Providers to which we refer: For housing needs, we refer our participants to Trinity Housing Group. Last year this provider served about 80 participant families, placing 34 in transitional housing and 20 in more permanent rental or owned housing. For those needing more in-depth counseling for mental health, we refer our participants to Healthy Lives. This provider serves about 50 persons a year and about half of these thrive independently within 24 weeks or less of counseling.
- Follow up:
  - We have an agreement with all agencies, to whom we refer to our participants, to provide notification within 5 working days once the individual has come in to them for service. We count showing up, not appointments made.
  - For participants, our standard procedure is to call them directly within 10 days of giving them the referral to: 1) verify that they have set an appointment or 2) to prompt them in any way possible to do so. For those not yet connected, we tell them we will call in another ten days. And we keep this until it is clear for whatever reasons that the referral will not be used. That is very rare given this follow up. We have over a 90% success rate of referrals leading to additional support for our participants.

33. Does this Program utilize Unite Us to provide and receive referrals for families and children in need of various services? If yes, provide the details on use. If not, provide what is preventing its use.

Purpose of Question: We are committed to strengthening Manatee County's coordinated care network and through this commitment Manatee County has become a part of Unite Us Florida. This resource provides a secure, closed-loop digital referral platform that connects health and social service providers. The platform enables:

- Bi-directional referrals among providers
- Real-time tracking of referral status and outcomes
- Identification of service gaps and at-risk populations
- Shared outcome measurement across the network
- Empowerment of families to request and manage their own services

Scoring Area: Program Success Factors, Unite Us

Score Range: 0-2

2 – Response is the program fully utilizes the Unite Us platform to regularly provide or receive referrals for Manatee County children and families.
1 – Response is the program uses the Unite Us platform occasionally but has not fully embraced its use as a regular practice within the program.
0 – Response is the program hasn't registered or doesn't use the Unite Us platform.

Applicant Guidance:
Please include the following in your response:

- Does this program currently use Unite Us Florida to send/receive referrals
  - Provide a summary on the program's current use, or
  - What the barriers are preventing the use of the platform

F. Investments

34. Investment amount requested

35. Are you seeking investment from sources outside of the Children's Services Millage? Provide details.

Purpose of Question: It is important that applicants seek other sources of investment as this demonstrates diversification of funding, which signals a more robust and viable business model to potential investors. This approach reduces the overall risk associated with relying on a single source of capital, indicating resourcefulness and a stronger chance of survival and growth

Scoring Area: F – Investments, Other Sources of Funding. This is not a scored question but is used in scoring the budget.

36. Loss or reduction of other sources of funding investments. Provide details.

Purpose of Question: This information helps funders make informed decisions and ensures their investment will have meaningful, lasting impact.

Knowing whether a not-for-profit has lost or experienced a reduction in funding sources—such as foundation grants, corporate support, or major donors—is important when considering funding because:

- **It reveals financial stability or vulnerability.** A drop in key funding can signal financial strain and help funders understand whether the organization can sustain operations.
- **It helps assess risk.** Funders want to know whether their investment would help stabilize a temporary shortfall or whether the organization is facing deeper structural challenges.
- **It identifies gaps the new funding may need to fill.** Understanding what was lost helps clarify whether the organization is seeking funds to maintain essential services, prevent service cuts, or respond to increased need.
- **It shows how the organization adapts.** Funders can evaluate whether the organization has taken responsible steps to diversify revenue, adjust operations, or develop a sustainability plan.
- **It ensures funds are used effectively.** Funders want to know their investment will support a program that can continue delivering measurable results, not simply delay an impending financial crisis.
- **It helps determine long-term viability.** A history of lost or reduced funding can indicate future challenges, while transparent reporting demonstrates good governance and sound management.

Scoring Area: Investments, Loss of Funding Resources. This is not a scored question.

Applicant Guidance:

If your program has experienced a significant loss or reduction in funding, please provide the following details:

- Which funding source was lost or reduced (e.g., foundation grant, corporate funding, government contract, major donor).
- The amount of funding that was lost or reduced and the timeframe.
- Why the funding is no longer available (e.g., grant cycle ended, funder changed priorities, decreased revenues, non-renewal).
- How the loss affects the program, such as impacts on staffing, service levels, or capacity.
- What steps the organization has taken to address or mitigate the loss (e.g., seeking new partnerships, fundraising efforts, operational adjustments).

37. Do you have a waiting list? If yes, provide the information for each of the three year periods.

Purpose of Question: This unscored question provides insight into program demand. A waiting list indicates unmet need, while the absence of one suggests the agency has capacity to serve additional clients. The size of the waiting list can also prompt valuable follow-up questions, such as: 'What resources would be required to eliminate the list or reduce it by half?' Often, the cost per additional client is lower than the cost for those currently served. If an agency is requesting increased funding, they should explain in the previous question how the additional investment will affect their waiting list, if one exists.

Scoring Area: Investments, Waitlist. This is not a scored question.

Applicant Guidance: Please note the number of persons on a waiting list for the proposed program in each of the years listed. If there is no wait list, enter NA.

38. Name two other providers that provide similar programming. Objectively, what do you see as key points of similarity and differences.

Purpose of Question: In almost all fields, there are multiple groups addressing a particular need. This information helps you to look at program options and at least some comparative information as the applicant sees this. The response tells you if the group is aware of and learning from others with similar focus. High performing groups are always benchmarking and exploring possible collaborations based on programs that have a similar focus, but different strengths.

Scoring Area: Investments, Similar Programs

Score Range: 0-2

- **2** – Response is very clear on both similarities and difference of groups most like them. No judgment on what this means, simply look for clarity.
- **1** – Response is not clear on both similarities and differences—or not fully clear on one.
- **0** – Response is not clear on similarities and differences.

Applicant Guidance: While most programs share at least some common elements with others in their field (e.g., similar goals, target populations, or service types), we ask all applicants to objectively compare their program with two others—even if the similarities seem minor. This helps us understand the local service landscape and your program's positioning within it. Focus on factual similarities and differences without any value judgments (e.g., avoid implying one is "better" or "more effective"). If no similar programs exist in Manatee County, please compare them with programs in nearby counties (e.g., Sarasota, Hillsborough, or Pinellas) or elsewhere in Florida. Please structure your response to address the following:

Provider 1 & 2

- Name of the provider/program and its location (city/county)
- Key similarities (e.g., shared target population, service types, delivery methods, or Results pursued)
- Key differences (e.g., variations in scale, eligibility criteria, focus areas, or partnerships, curriculum, practice method)

Comparisons

- How you identified these providers (e.g., directories, partnerships, or public website) and provide links
- List similarities and differences

Example:
Children for Success and Parker Youth Center are two providers we see as similar in that they serve K-12 students with before and after school programs. We are similar in an intent to not only keep children safe and happy but experiencing more academic success and character development. We are different in two ways:

1. We serve a much more defined neighborhood. Our youth come from just two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school.
2. We have defined character development in specific terms--including intentional behavior and giving and getting from others. We track these in terms of observed and self-reported behavior changes. We do not believe other providers in this area do that, although they may do something of that nature.

39. Name any steps you take to reduce program costs.

Purpose of Question: The best way to get money is to need less of it. This question lets you see how the applicant is using all possible approaches to reduce its costs. This question is most relevant for high performing programs. There is little value in reducing costs for a group that achieves a low level. Consider the uploaded Program Budget when scoring.

Scoring Area: Investments, Cost Reductions/Resource Leveraging

Score Range: 0-6

6 – Response reflects they are taking active steps that significantly lower costs in at least one or two areas.
4 – Response reflects some cost reductions, but with limited dollar gains.
0 – Response reflects no evidence of cost reduction.

Applicant Guidance: We want to understand how much your program benefits from free or deeply discounted resources, and exactly how much these resources reduce your real cash budget (not theoretical "value of volunteer time").
Please provide the information below as a simple bulleted or numbered list (no table required). For each resource you receive at no cost or significantly reduced cost, tell us the real dollar impact on your cash budget.

- Resource Type: Volunteers, in-kind goods or services, donated or discounted equipment or vehicles, reduced-fee contracts, other
- Brief description of the resource and what it replaces
- Full market or retail cost. The amount you would have to pay in cash if this resource were not donated or discounted
- Amount you pay for the amount for goods or services (usually $0 or a small fee)
- Dollar savings and the percentage this savings represents the total program budget (How to calculate: Dollar Savings / Total Program Budget x 100)

Use realistic replacement costs (what you would truly have to pay a staff member or vendor). Only count work or items that genuinely substitute for a cash expense.

Example:

- We have 30 volunteers playing key roles in enrollment, transportation, and verifying results. Their accomplishments would cost us about $15,000 if we had to pay people to perform those functions. This lowered our budget by 5% for the year.

• We work out of 1,000 sq. ft. of donated space in the Universal Church. In that immediate area, the annual lease price for that space would be, conservatively, $7,200. This lowered the annual budget by 15%. Our last two vans we bought through lease for a discount of 40% on average from their reasonable actual purchase price. Counting anticipated maintenance, the savings for buying used is $8,000. We also had 25 computers donated by the Acme Company, which considered them outdated, but were fine for our use. The cost to buy those computers at a used market rate would have been $7,500. This combination has reduced our annual budget by 5%.

Uploaded Program Budget
Purpose of Question: Reviewers will use all the financial and budget information when reviewing the uploaded anticipated program budget to ensure the program plan is fiscally sound and demonstrates appropriate use of funds to achieve the program goals and Results as they were provided.
Scoring Area: Investments, Uploaded Program Budget
Score Range: 0-4 **4** – Response reflects they have diversified revenue through grants and other funding sources. The program is less than 25% fiscally dependent upon the Children's Services millage. **2** – Response reflects they have diversified revenue through grants and other funding sources. The program is less than 50% fiscally dependent upon the Children's Services millage. **0** – Response reflects the program is 100% dependent upon Children's Services millage.
Applicant Guidance: With the understanding that this is an anticipated budget, please provide your best estimate on program revenues and expenditures for the proposed year.
Example: • While there is no example for the budget all programs are required to use the FY27 Anticipated Program Budget Form as well as the itemization forms (Administrative, Professional, and Miscellaneous).

Required Documents

Applicant Guidance: It is recommended to have a folder saved on your computer desktop that includes all the documents and uploads needed for the application process. Please name each document as requested and include the program name at the end. To upload, click "choose file" then click the "upload" button to ensure your file is loaded properly. If the name of the document is listed on the application screen, then it has been uploaded and will be submitted with your application. ***NOTE:*** You must "save" this page to complete the upload process.
Tax Exempt Status Verification 501c3
Purpose of Request: A tax-exempt status verification is requested because the Children's Services Ordinance only allows the funds to be used to pay tax exempt agencies (non-profits, state agencies, and political subdivisions of the State of Florida).
Applicant Guidance: The letter from Internal Revenue Service stating the tax-exempt status of the non-profit agency. Governmental agencies may meet this requirement by uploading the current Consumer's Certificate of Exemption from payment of Florida Sales and use tax issued by the Florida Department of Revenue.
IRS 990 Tax Return
Purpose of Request: The IRS 990 provides a snapshot of the agency's purpose, staffing and sources of financial support, and use of funds. It may be used to answer questions such as: Does the revenue

indicate too much reliance on a source that could be jeopardized by a weak economy, declining stock market, or other external factor; does the compensation listed for paid staff appear justifiable in view of the organization's activities and their responsibilities?
Applicant Guidance: The federal tax return public charities file with the Internal Revenue Service. IRS 990, or 990EZ, must be most recent year filed. **This is not required for a federal, state, or local governmental agency.**
Certificate of Liability Insurance Coverage
Purpose of Request: A certificate of liability insurance is requested because certain amounts of coverage are a requirement to receive an investment from the county. The certificate lists the coverages held by the insurer as well as lists Manatee County Government as additional insured on the policy.
Applicant Guidance: A Certificate of Insurance as evidence of the agency's current coverage. Required coverage: • Commercial General Liability in an amount not less than $1,000,000 per occurrence and in the aggregate; and • Professional Liability in an amount not less than $1,000,000 per occurrence (if required).
Certificate of Status
Purpose of Request: The Certificate of Status tells us that the corporation has not dissolved or failed to maintain active and provides the legal name of the corporation.
Applicant Guidance: Certificate of Status from Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, **must be for the current calendar year and state "active status".** **This is not required for a federal, state, or local governmental agency.**
Agency Financial Audit
Purpose of Request: An audit is required by the county to receive any funds through a contract. The audit is a review of the organization's financial condition (lists all revenues and expenditures) and level of financial accountability including use of accepted accounting practices, internal controls, and separation of duties.
Applicant Guidance: • The agency's most recent audited financial statement or compilation from an independent certified public accountant registered in the State of Florida. • The audit/compilation **must be less than 2 years old** to receive funding from Manatee County.
Audit Management Letter
Purpose of Request: If an audit management letter was received by the agency, it will list concerns and recommendations. The organization should have adopted the recommendations it contained regarding improvements in the accounting system and controls.
Applicant Guidance: The management letter related to the agency's last audited financial statement or compilation by a certified public accountant registered in the State of Florida.
Board of Directors List
Purpose of Request: The board list provides information on the members, such as the county of residence, their profession, and the term dates for officers. It may be a concern if there are no Manatee residents on a board. County Commissioners and employees of the Neighborhood Services Department may not serve on the boards of an agency receiving county funds.
Applicant Guidance: • The list must include the following information for each member of the Agency's Board of Directors: member's name, county of residence, profession, and term dates. • Identify all officers of the board, by position.
Agency Approved Bylaws

<u>Purpose of Request</u>: Bylaws are both a legal document and a roadmap for a nonprofit organization's actions. It is an organization's operating manual and tells how an agency should be run.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: The bylaws of the agency, approved by the board of directors, and all updates. Must be signed and dated by Chair.
Licenses (if required)
<u>Purpose of Request</u>: If an agency, or professional, is required to be licensed, copies must be provided.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: Licenses would include any applicable license necessary to operate or house the proposed program, e.g., program, facility, or professional. If this program is an out of school time program providing tutoring, enrichment, mental health services, etc. and is not required by Florida Department of Children and Families (FLDCF) to obtain and maintain a license, an exemption letter is necessary in lieu of the licensure.
Provide Agency Nepotism Policy (if in place)
<u>Purpose of Request</u>: The agency's nepotism policy outlines how an agency deals with working relationships between those on the board of directors and their staff.
<u>Applicant Guidance</u>: Provide the details or section of the Bylaws that details the nepotism policy that is currently in place.