impactPOLK

2027 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

give help. give hope.
giveWELL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION

Impact Polk is an annual competitive, donor-directed grant program of GiveWell Community Foundation (GWCF) with the goal of addressing community needs throughout Polk County. Public nonprofit organizations that serve in Polk County, FL, and are recognized by the IRS as described in the IRS Code Section 501(c)(3) as eligible for tax-exempt status may apply for grant funding. Please review these guidelines in their entirety as they contain all the information you need to submit your application. If you have any questions after reading the guidelines, please contact GWCF Grants Manager, Johnna Martinez, at jmartinez@givecf.org.

PROGRAM DETAILS

The United Community Needs Assessment (UCNA) for Polk County, Florida, conducted by GiveWell Community Foundation and United Way of Central Florida, identified six key areas that impact the lives of residents. Impact Polk 2027 will focus on the following six domains*:

Economic & Employment Opportunities

Helping citizens achieve financial independence such as:

- Creating skilled workforce training to attract businesses and promote economic growth.
- Creating training centers/programs with necessary resources and equipment.
- Implementing financial literacy programs for all ages.

Education: Early Childhood, K-12, and Post-Secondary

Enhancing early-childhood education opportunities; improving math and reading proficiency for greater high school graduation and college enrollments; and encouraging degree and/or certifications to prepare students for entry-level positions in different industries such as:

- Supporting low-income families with early childhood care and after-school programs that promote literacy, nutrition, and physical activity, so parents can work and become financially independent.
- Developing reading and math education programs, as well as summer programs to bridge gaps in learning.
- Providing literacy interventions, including tutoring and mentoring programs.

Food Security

Providing basic nutrition opportunities to support long-term health in adults and children such as:

- Providing accessible and affordable food production and distribution, including flexible pantry hours and mobile delivery.
- Providing affordable food sources and food hubs in collaboration with schools, community colleges, and local food businesses.
- Identifying food deserts for targeted assistance.

PROGRAM DETAILS (CONT.)

Housing/Shelter Opportunities

Providing quality, affordable housing and self-sufficiency opportunities such as:

- Providing rental assistance services, from emergency housing to long-term independent living.
- Providing security deposit assistance, hotel vouchers, and support for vulnerable populations such as families, veterans, youth aging out of foster care, and individuals facing eviction or fleeing domestic violence.

Quality of Life

Enhancing the lives of Polk County residents through health & wellness, arts & culture, animal welfare, and open green spaces such as:

- Developing community health and wellness initiatives.
- Strengthening local arts and culture programs.
- Improving animal welfare services with affordable care.
- Supporting stewardship and protection of outdoor spaces.

Transportation

Navigating transportation barriers for ease of access to jobs, education, healthcare, etc.:

- Developing reliable transportation services, such as public transit collaborations and/or voucher programs.
- Developing transportation safety awareness campaigns.

These targeted areas aim to address systemic issues and uplift the overall quality of life in Polk County by creating equitable access to essential services and opportunities.

** Please note that donor interest lies mainly in education and quality of life categories but may consider other areas.*

IMPORTANT DATES

- **October 19, 2026** – Impact Polk 2027 grant cycle opens.
- **November 16, 2026** – Applications must be fully submitted online by 11:59 p.m.
- **March - June 2027** – Final grant award notices sent.*

**Grant applications are reviewed by GWCF fundholders for funding consideration. Once grant decisions are made, all Impact Polk grant applicants will be notified as soon as possible.*

HOW TO APPLY

- When you are ready to begin the application process, go to impactpolk.org between October 19 and November 16, 2026. Click on the ***Nonprofit Portal*** link to be directed to the application login page. The Impact Polk web page includes useful information to help you complete your application, including video tutorials.
- If your organization has applied for grants previously, DO NOT create a new account. Sign in using the user email and password you used in previous grant application cycles. (If you have forgotten your login, or do not know your login, or to find out if your organization has applied previously, please contact Johnna Martinez at jmartinez@givecf.org.) If you are applying for the FIRST time, you will be asked to create an account. You will need to provide your organization's EIN (see the Nonprofit Portal tutorial on impactpolk.org).
- On the Applicant Dashboard in the Nonprofit Portal, click on ***Apply*** at the top menu bar. Then click the ***Apply*** button and enter the required information.
- You will be prompted when specific documents need to be included. There are sections where you can either upload the document, manually type information, or cut and paste the text into a text area.
- You may save your application until you are ready to submit. Please click *Save* before closing your Internet browser. Make sure your application is complete before submitting. Once you submit the application, you will not be able to make additional changes. We recommend someone else review your application prior to submission.
- Your application must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on November 16, 2026.

DONOR CONSIDERATIONS DURING APPLICATION REVIEW

When reviewing applications, the donors look for signs of efficient and effective organizations. The following criteria are meant as a general guide, not a definitive checklist:

- The program/project must be conducted within Polk County, Florida.
- If the organization has received previous funding from Impact Polk, the applicant must be current in reporting requirements.
- An organization that exhibits strong management skills and sound leadership.
- A project that leverages donor dollars.
- A creative project that has a measurable outcome and positive impact on the community.
- A project that addresses a specific identified and prioritized need in the community
- Support for community outreach, education, and vital services provided by faith-based organizations.

ELIGIBILITY

All interested organizations must meet the following general requirements:

- Submit complete grant application no later than 11:59 p.m. on November 16, 2026. Incomplete or late applications WILL NOT be accepted, no exceptions. Applications submitted will be reviewed for completeness. Incomplete applications will be denied.
- Your Impact Polk project must provide services within Polk County, FL. One hundred percent of program participants must reside in, or receive services in, Polk County zip codes.
- Applicant MUST be a 501(c)(3) public charity in good standing as recognized by the IRS. Eligibility will be verified.
- Must provide a list of current Board Members and demonstrate strong board support and sound governance.
- Must provide total revenue and total expenses for your current fiscal year.
- Must provide previous year's IRS Form 990 or most recent audited financial statements.
- Project must meet organization's mission. We will not fund expanded services that do not meet the mission.
- Project must NOT begin prior to March 2027 and must be completed within one year of funds being awarded.
- Maximum grant request is $20,000. Funding is NOT guaranteed. Previous funding does not guarantee continued funding. One application per organization.

WHAT WE WILL NOT FUND

GiveWell Community Foundation will *NOT* consider an Impact Polk application for:

- Organizations that are not considered exempt or exemption has been revoked under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- Organizations that are not based in or serving communities in Polk County;
- Grants to individuals (rent, utilities, etc.) or private foundations;
- Capital campaigns or capital projects (land, buildings, etc.);
- General operating, administration*;
- Fundraising costs;
- Political campaigns or direct lobbying efforts;
- Medical or scientific research;
- Events of any kind;
- Debt reduction or bridge funding;
- Advertising space of any kind;
- Marketing unless directly related to project (registration, brochures, announcements, or playbills);
- Membership dues, fees, conference registration, or affiliation campaigns;
- Conferences, symposia, or related travel;
- Religious or sectarian projects that are not offered to the general public;
- Services commonly regarded as the responsibility of the government (street repair, fire or police protection);
- Public or private school services required by state law, such as regular classroom instruction or athletic activities;
- Banquets, galas, walks, runs, etc.

**Incremental consultant/professional fees, such as therapeutic positions, summer camp counselors, etc., may be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I know if my organization has a profile already set up in your system?

- If you begin to create a New Account, the system will notify you if the same EIN already exists. If the EIN already exists in our system, DO NOT create a new account. If you don't know if your organization has applied in the past, please contact Johnna Martinez by email at jmartinez@givecf.org and we will let you know if a profile already exists and if a new contact person can be added to that profile.

2. What do I do if I forget my login information?

- The username is your email address (or the address of whoever originally created the profile). You can reset your password on the Login page or contact Johnna Martinez at jmartinez@givecf.org to have it reset for you.
- The Login page can be found by visiting impactpolk.org and clicking *Nonprofit Portal*.

3. Can we see what's been funded in the past?

- Yes, previous Impact Polk grantee lists are available at impactpolk.org. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the *Previous Impact Polk grants* dropdown box.

4. Why can't I submit my application?

- There could be several reasons why your application cannot be submitted. Please scroll back up and look for red highlighted areas indicating an error. Be sure to adhere to character limitations - if you go over on characters (spaces, periods, commas, etc., count as characters) you will receive an error. Some areas require an answer - be sure there are no blanks in the application, and if so, please fill in or upload required information.

5. How will I know if you received my application?

- You will receive an email confirmation when you submit your application.

6. How will I know if my organization is awarded funding?

- All applicants will be contacted by email or phone indicating whether or not they have been selected to receive funding. These announcements will be made as soon as possible. We appreciate your patience.

7. If my organization is awarded funding, how would we receive our award?

- If you are awarded a grant, we prefer to send funds electronically. If you answered "Yes" to the question in the application about receiving funds electronically, we will email a form to you to complete and return with your account information. If you answered "No" we will mail a check.

8. Is there anything else worth knowing before I begin my application?

- Several recent software improvements have made applying easier:
  - » Rich Text Formatting, such as bold, italized, and underlined text, are now allowed in three sections within the application: Project Description, Evaluation Method, and Budget Narrative. Text that is copied from a Microsoft Word document and pasted into these sections should retain most of the original formatting.
  - » Tutorials for the ***Collaboration*** and ***Copy Request*** features are available at impactpolk.org.