



October 2025

ECHO VISION 2040 STRATEGIC PLAN

Volusia County



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Volusia County ECHO Program, a voter-supported initiative approved in 2000 and renewed in 2020, is a cornerstone of quality of life, funding projects that preserve the environment, enrich culture, honor history, and expand outdoor recreation. To guide the program through 2040, Volusia County partnered with TPMA to conduct the most comprehensive stakeholder engagement effort in ECHO's history, ensuring the strategic plan reflects community priorities and translates insights into actionable strategies.

Community Engagement Overview

This process combined broad public input with in-depth stakeholder insights:

- **Resident Survey:** 1,585 responses ($\pm 2.46\%$ margin of error), conducted in March 2025, providing a reliable snapshot of community sentiment.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** 52 discussions with County staff, Advisory Board members, grantees, nonprofit and municipal leaders, and civic partners.
- **Design Sprints:** Two interactive workshops with 25 stakeholders to co-develop strategic solutions.

Engagement was structured into tiers to maximize input while respecting participants' time, resulting in 85 participants representing residents, grantees, municipal leaders, business and community organizations, and ECHO staff.

Key Findings

QUALITY OF LIFE AND PROGRAM IMPACT

71% of residents rated their quality of life as "excellent" or "good" (*up from 66% in 2022*).

82.5% agree ECHO enhances their quality of life.

65% reported that quality-of-life amenities influence decisions to live or work in Volusia County.

\$31.5 million Estimated economic impact of ECHO-related activity annually.

PROGRAM AWARENESS AND SATISFACTION

- Awareness remains moderate: 40% familiar, 32% somewhat familiar.
- Satisfaction with funded projects is strong: 55% “satisfied” or “very satisfied.”
- Outdoor recreation amenities (trails, parks, water access) are most used and valued; environmental and learning facilities earned the highest satisfaction.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- Complex application process, especially for smaller nonprofits.
- Limited public awareness due to minimal marketing resources.
- Transparency and oversight concerns around Direct County Expenditures (DCEs).
- Inconsistent maintenance and long-term sustainability of funded projects.
- Equity and access barriers for smaller organizations.



RESIDENT- AND STAKEHOLDER-IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES

Connectivity & Access

Complete trail systems, expand water access, and improve geographic equity.

Environmental Stewardship

Prioritize land preservation, waterway restoration, and resilience-focused projects.

Application & Nonprofit Equity

Simplify applications, create tiered funding pathways, and offer phased funding for planning/design stages.

Transparency & Oversight

Formalize DCE review, strengthen Advisory Committee oversight, and depoliticize decision-making.

Marketing & Public Awareness

Launch multi-channel campaigns to showcase ECHO's value and opportunities.

Maintenance & Sustainability

Require detailed maintenance plans, budgets, and ongoing monitoring.

Strategic Alignment & Partnerships

Collaborate with Volusia Forever, municipalities, nonprofits, tourism, and business partners to integrate projects into countywide quality-of-life initiatives.



Strategic Roadmap: Goals & Strategies



Overall Impact

The Volusia County ECHO Strategic & Implementation Plan positions the program to:

- Increase public engagement and program awareness to transform ECHO from a “best-kept secret” into a widely recognized community asset that residents actively use and champion.
- Enhance grant accessibility, equity, and operational efficiency to remove barriers that exclude organizations from competing for ECHO funds while simultaneously streamlining processes to deliver ECHO projects faster and more cost-effectively.
- Ensure strategic, transparent, and data-driven use of county funds to protect ECHO’s future by proving every dollar invested through the direct county expenditure and grant programs delivers measurable results for the community.
- Modernize administrative and operational infrastructure to cut processing time from months to weeks while providing real-time oversight through automated program management and reporting.
- Strengthen governance and oversight through an effective Advisory Committee to ensure diverse community voices shape ECHO investments through transparent, participatory decision-making.

INTRODUCTION



The Volusia County ECHO Program, a voter-supported initiative and a recognized community “gem”, has long been a cornerstone of quality of life in the county. By funding projects that preserve the environment, enrich cultural and historical assets, and expand outdoor recreation, ECHO strengthens the social, economic, and environmental fabric of Volusia County, thereby enhancing the area’s livability for residents and attracting visitors and businesses alike.

To guide the program’s future through 2040, Volusia County partnered with TPMA to undertake the most comprehensive stakeholder engagement effort in ECHO’s history. This process combined a countywide resident survey, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, and collaborative design sprints, capturing both broad public input and deep insights from those directly involved in the program.

This report translates that extensive input into a strategic and implementation plan that provides a clear, actionable roadmap for ECHO’s continued success. It details community priorities, assesses program impact, identifies operational challenges, and establishes goals, strategies, and measurable outcomes designed to enhance public engagement, improve grant accessibility and equity, strengthen governance, and ensure the long-term sustainability of ECHO-funded projects.

By aligning future investments with resident priorities and embedding community-driven insights throughout, this plan positions ECHO to remain a voter-supported, community-valued cornerstone of Volusia County’s environmental, cultural, historical, and recreational quality of life through 2040 and beyond.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Volusia ECHO Resident Survey Analysis

The Volusia ECHO Program is Volusia County, Florida's quality of life initiative that provides funding through two pathways prescribed in Resolution 2020-79, a Grants-in-Aid program or Direct County Expenditure program to fund the acquisition, restoration, construction, or improvement projects related to environmental, cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational purposes. Originally a grassroots initiative, this is a citizen-approved referendum that passed in 2000 with a 57% approval. In 2020, the referendum passed again, this time with 72% of citizens voting to keep the program for another 20 years.

To ensure ECHO meets its goals, the program hired consulting firm TPMA to conduct the ECHO Vision 2040 Strategic Plan. As part of the planning process, Volusia ECHO shared a public survey to collect resident input to inform the strategic plan. While the survey is an important part of the strategic planning process, the purpose of this document is only to analyze the results of the survey, which will be used to inform the strategic plan but not to make recommendations about the strategic plan, which will be done at a later stage of the strategic planning process.

Methodology

Instead of creating a new survey, TPMA and ECHO opted to use a survey used previously in 2022 to track responses longitudinally, although a few modifications were made. The survey was designed to collect information regarding citizens' perspectives on quality-of-life in Volusia County, opinions on the ECHO program, views on types of ECHO projects, and quality-of-life spending habits. A copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

The survey, available in English and Spanish, was launched on March 3rd, 2025, via the County's social media channels and emails to stakeholders identified by the ECHO team, including municipalities, chambers, former grantees, nonprofits, advocates, critics, and other county programs. Partners, such as libraries and grantees, were given flyers to display with QR codes that asked for survey input.

Additionally, a press release about the survey was shared on March 3rd and was shared in the Daytona Beach News-Journal on March 13th. Paper versions of the survey were also provided to partners, although none were submitted. Regular social media updates and communication with stakeholders continued throughout March, and the survey closed on Monday, March 31st, approximately one month after its launch. In total, the survey received 1,585 responses.

With a sample size of 1,585 and a 95% confidence level, this survey achieves a margin of error of just $\pm 2.46\%$, which indicates a high level of precision and reliability. This level of accuracy is well within the standards for professional research and strategic decision-making. With this reach and level of rigor, it stands as the most comprehensive community engagement survey in the history of the ECHO Program.

SUMMARY

82.5% of respondents say ECHO projects are either beneficial or very beneficial

63.9% of respondents say ECHO does well or very well in meeting their household's needs (*up 14.3% from 2022*)

55.1% of respondents say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with ECHO projects (*down 3.2% from 2022*)

Themes from feedback about future ECHO projects include:

- Access to nature and recreation
- Environmental concerns
- Inclusivity and accessibility
- Regional distribution
- Infrastructure and maintenance
- Fiscal responsibility
- Program communication

Most visited:



Sports and Recreation Parks

Most important:



Water Access

Highest priority:



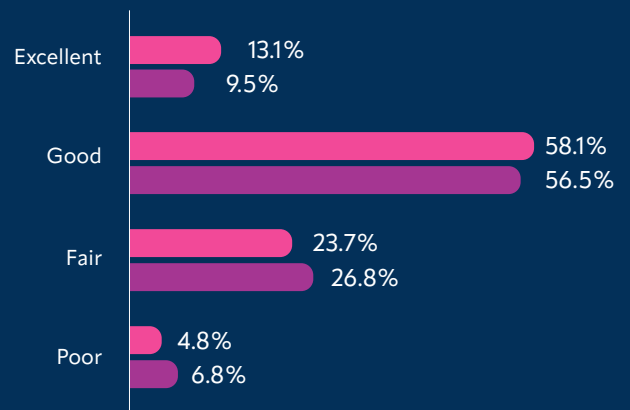
Trails

Best experience:



Environmental Learning Facilities

QUALITY OF LIFE IN VOLUSIA COUNTY



2025 Survey 2022 Survey

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey results are analyzed in the order in which they appeared to respondents.

The survey began by asking participants for some background information, with the first question asking if they were residents of Volusia County (responses displayed in Table 1). The vast majority of respondents were full-time residents of Volusia County, with fewer than 1% not having at least part-time residence. The two respondents who answered “Other” indicated they are part-time residents.

“I thank the leaders of Volusia County who work diligently to improve the quality of life and well-being of our society.”

-Stakeholder

Nearly 50% of respondents had lived in Volusia County for more than 20 years, although 17% of respondents had lived in Volusia for 5 years or fewer, indicating that Volusia continues to attract new residents.

TABLE 1: ARE YOU A VOLUSIA COUNTY RESIDENT?

Response	Percent
I am a full-time resident (e.g., I live here, or I go to school here)	96%
I am a part-time resident (e.g., I have a second residence here)	3%
I work here or I traveled here for a work-related reason, but I live somewhere else	0.5%
No	0.1%
Other (please specify):	0.2%

FIGURE 1: FOR APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN VOLUSIA COUNTY?

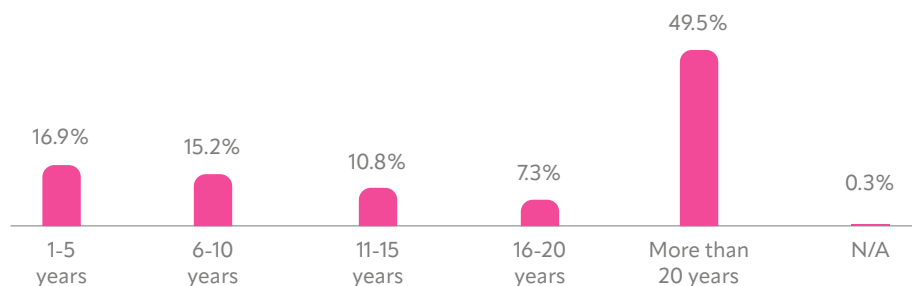
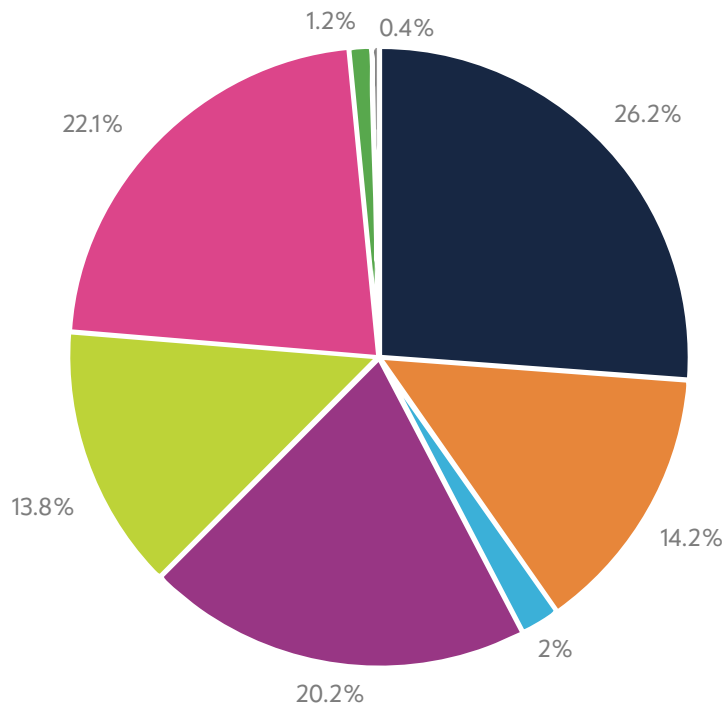


Figure 2 displays the location of the respondents' primary residence. For those who selected "Other," most indicated that they were located either in DeLeon Springs, Osteen, or an unincorporated area of Volusia County.

FIGURE 2: IN WHICH PART OF VOLUSIA COUNTY IS YOUR PRIMARY RESIDENCY LOCATED?



- East (Daytona Beach, Daytona Beach Shores, Holly Hill, Ponce Inlet, Port Orange, South Daytona area)
- Northeast (Ormond Beach area)
- Northwest (Pierson, Seville area)
- Southeast (New Smyrna Beach, Edgewater, Oak Hill area)
- Southwest (Deltona, DeBary area)
- West (DeLand, Lake Helen, Orange City area)
- Other
- Not applicable

CURRENT QUALITY OF LIFE

As the ECHO program is aimed at improving residents' quality of life, the survey asked about their opinion of their current quality of life (displayed in Figure 3) as well as the influence quality-of-life amenities have on their decision to live in Volusia County (displayed in Figure 4). Compared to the results of the 2022 survey, the number of residents who rated their quality of life as “excellent” or “good” increased significantly from 66% to 71.2%. Moreover, 64.7% of respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” that quality-of-life amenities influence their decision to live or work in Volusia County.

FIGURE 3: HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE THE CURRENT QUALITY OF LIFE IN VOLUSIA COUNTY?

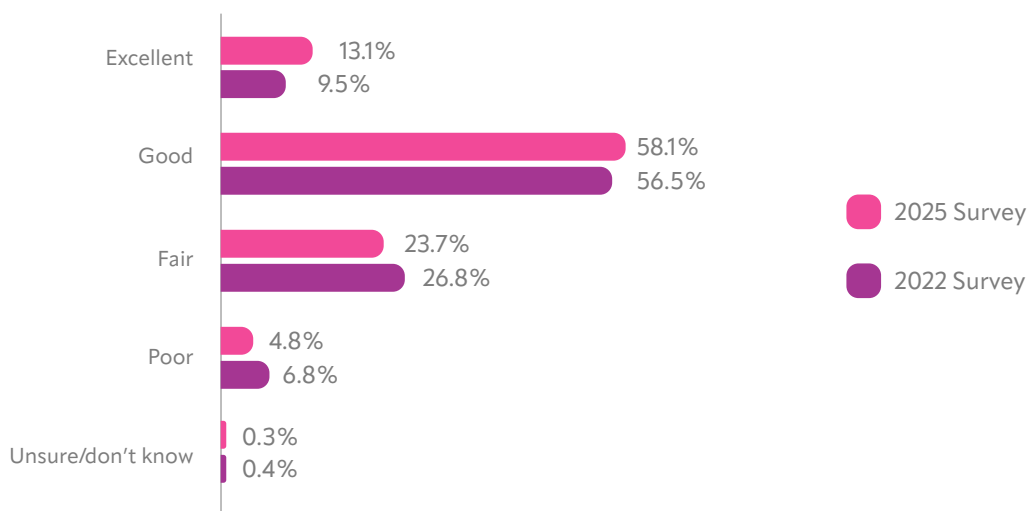
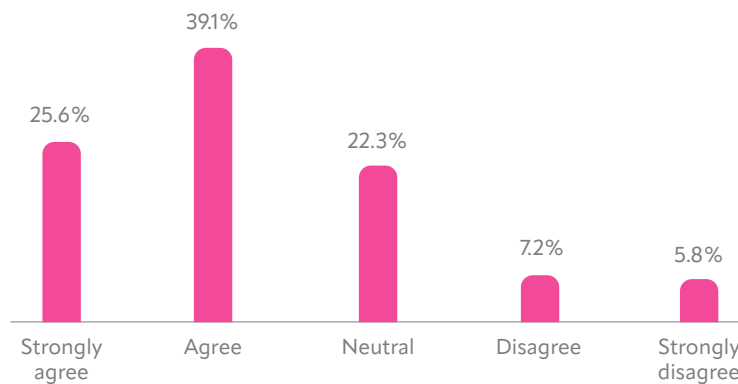


FIGURE 4: WOULD YOU SAY THE AVAILABILITY OF ARTS, CULTURE, OUTDOOR RECREATION, AND OTHER QUALITY-OF-LIFE AMENITIES IN THE COUNTY INFLUENCES YOUR DECISION TO LIVE OR WORK HERE?



ECHO SENTIMENT

The next part of the survey focused on residents’ perspectives on the ECHO program itself. Figure 5 displays respondents’ familiarity with the ECHO program. The full question asked was, “In the year 2000 and again in 2020, Volusia County residents voted to tax themselves to fund various environmental, cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational projects for public use. This program is known as the ECHO Program. How familiar, if at all, are you with the Volusia County ECHO Program?” More respondents (39.8%) indicated they were familiar with ECHO than those who were not (28.2%). Most indicated they were “somewhat familiar” (32%).

When asked about their satisfaction with ECHO-funded projects, 55.1% of respondents answered they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied,” compared to the 58.3% of respondents who had answered that way in 2022 (displayed in Figure 6). Respondents were given a link to the ECHO Transparency Dashboard, which included a complete list of ECHO projects.

FIGURE 5: HOW FAMILAR, IF AT ALL, ARE YOU WITH THE ECHO PROGRAM?

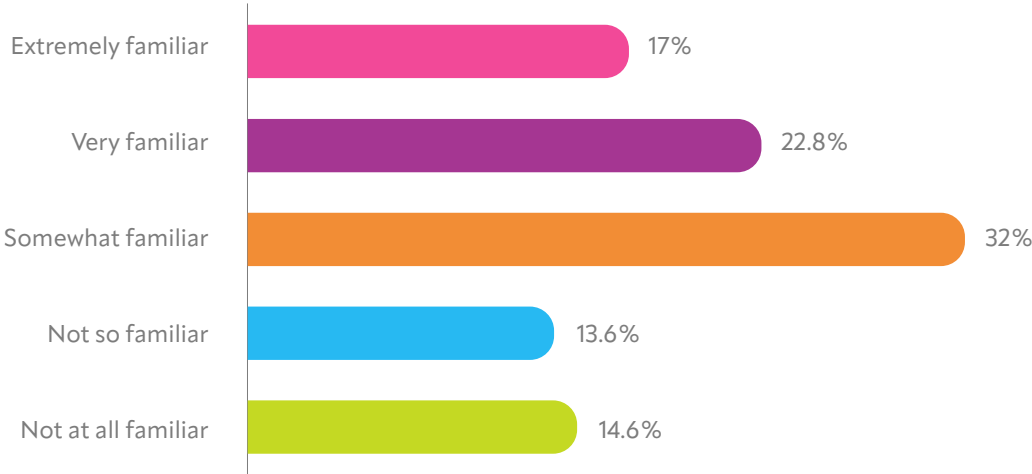
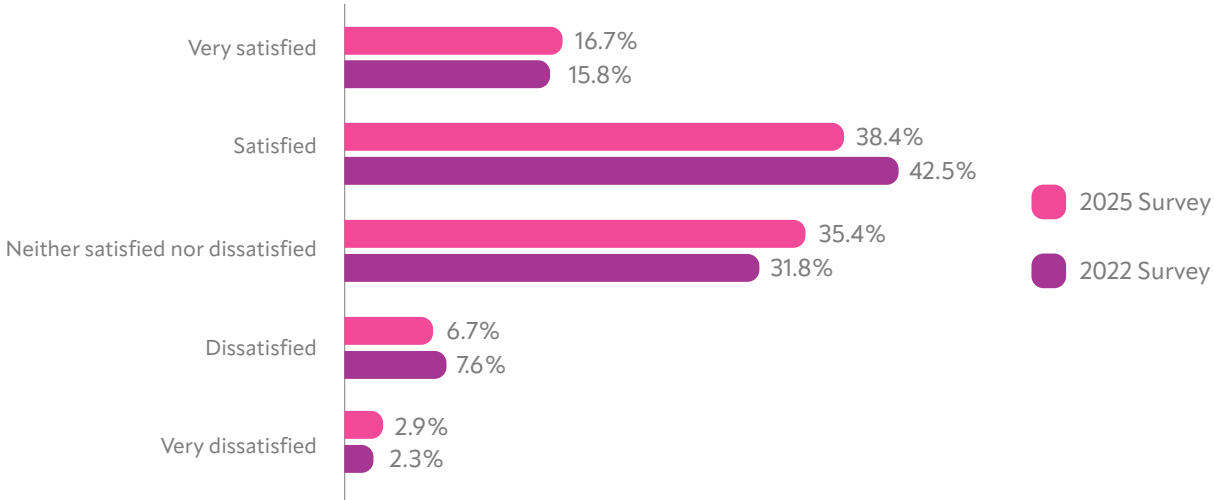


FIGURE 6: HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE ECHO FUNDED PROJECTS IN THE COUNTY?



Respondents' frequency of visits to various types of ECHO projects are displayed in Figure 7. Using "very often" and "often" as the standard, the most frequently visited type of project was sports & recreation parks (56%), followed by water access (53%). The least frequently visited type of project was performing art centers (40%), although many respondents still indicated that they visit them frequently.

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of their experience while visiting these types of ECHO projects (Figure 8). All categories had 1% or less than 1% of "poor" as the response. The category that received the most positive responses was environmental and learning science facilities (70%) and the lowest was performing arts centers (59%).

FIGURE 7: HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT THESE TYPES OF ECHO PROJECTS IN THE COUNTY?

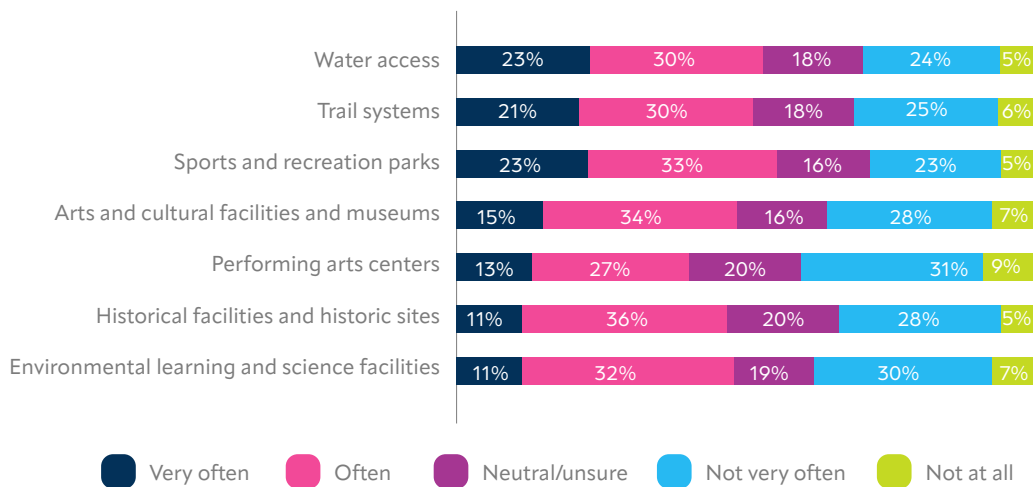
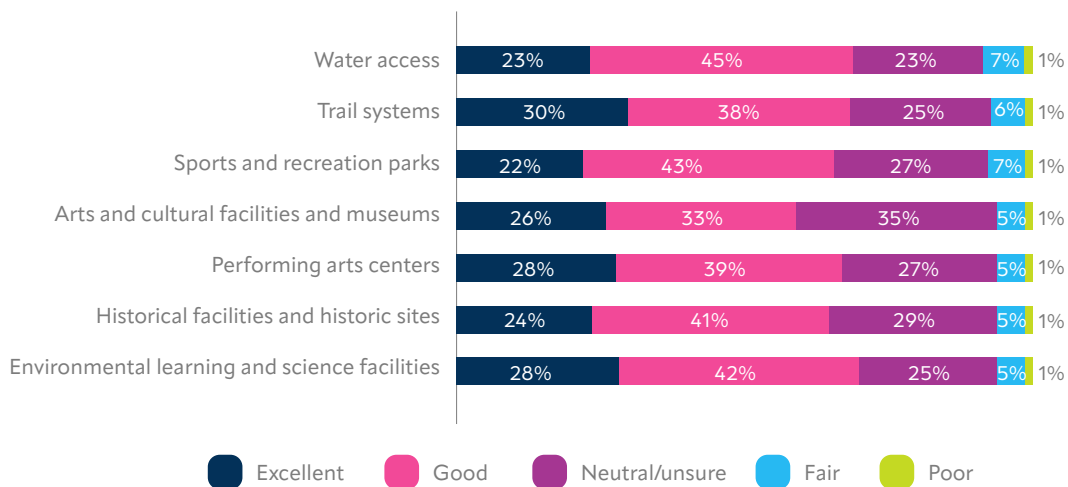


FIGURE 8: IF YOU VISITED ANY ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, HISTORIC OR OUT-DOOR RECREATION (ECHO) PROJECTS MENTIONED IN THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR EXPERIENCE?



Again, for each of these categories, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each for quality of life in Volusia County (Figure 9). All categories received at least 75% of respondents indicating they were either important or very important. The most important, according to residents, was water access (89%).

When asked about how well ECHO projects meet respondents' household needs, 63.9% answered either "well" or "very well" (Figure 10). The response options were slightly altered from the 2022 survey for clarity. However, in 2022, the comparable responses were "a great deal" and "a lot," which received 49.6%, indicating the program has increased in its ability to meet households' needs.

FIGURE 9: WHEN IT COMES TO IMPROVING THE OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE IN VOLUSIA COUNTY, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING PROJECTS?

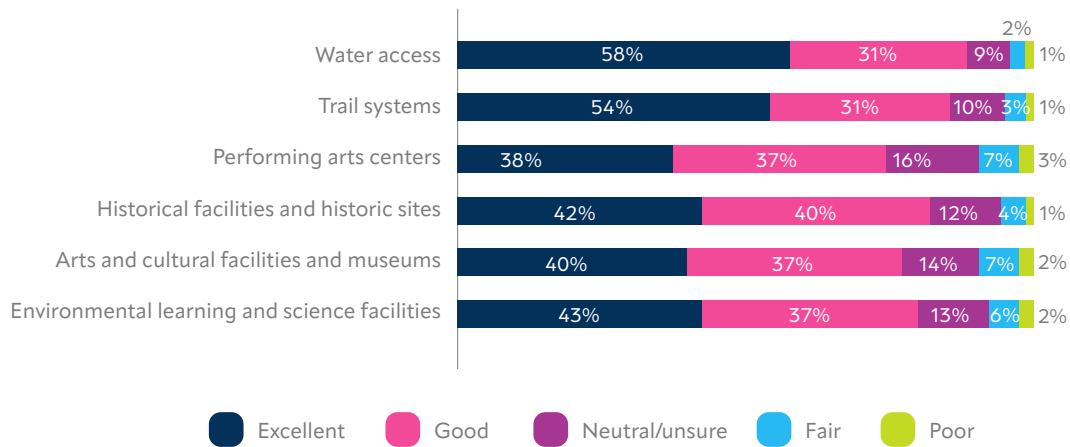
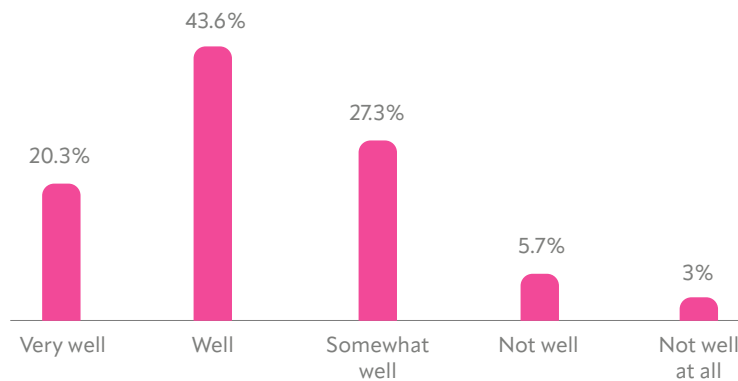


FIGURE 10: HOW WELL DO THE PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, HISTORIC, AND OUTDOOR RECREATION (ECHO) PROJECTS MEET YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S NEEDS?



QUALITATIVE ECHO FEEDBACK

Stakeholders were given a chance to identify specific ECHO projects that they do appreciate and do not appreciate. In the first question, “Is there a particular ECHO project or type of ECHO project that you really appreciate? If so, what is it and why?” stakeholders demonstrated a strong appreciation for all categories of ECHO projects. Themes from their responses are analyzed below, followed by a table counting the projects identified and the number of times they were mentioned.

“All of the ECHO projects that I have encountered or experienced are greatly appreciated by me and my family.”

Overall, there were 527 unique mentions of ECHO projects appreciated, although in some cases it was difficult to distinguish which projects were mentioned as completed projects and which residents would appreciate if they were completed. While respondents did have access to the ECHO transparency dashboard with all ECHO projects listed, many stakeholders still noted not being familiar enough with ECHO projects to give a valuable answer.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS

For many stakeholders, environmental projects have been one of ECHO’s most impactful contributions to their quality of life. Both marine and general environmental educational centers received high praise. Restoration projects were also highly valued by stakeholders, with requests for those projects to continue, specifically for waterways and shorelines. A few concerns about water quality were mentioned, with a cleanup of the Halifax River specifically identified as potential future project. There were also requests for protection of the Wildlife Corridor.

2. CULTURAL PROJECTS

Stakeholders showed general appreciation for ECHO’s contributions to the cultural scene, particularly praising the Daytona Playhouse and Athens Theatre and emphasizing the arts’ positive impact on youth. They also demonstrated support for expanding cultural offerings particularly in underserved areas and increasing affordable or free access to existing amenities. There was also support for increased diversity of cultural experiences.

3. HISTORIC PROJECTS

While historic projects were not referenced as often as the other ECHO categories, for certain stakeholders, historic projects were extremely important. They generally appreciated the educational aspects of the sites ECHO had supported, such as the Seville School, and believed these helped the public to appreciate local heritage and history.

4. OUTDOOR RECREATION PROJECTS

From the sheer quantity of times stakeholders praised ECHO’s outdoor recreation projects, this category seems to have made the greatest perceived impact on residents’ quality of life. Trails and bike trails were mentioned almost 90 times. While respondents appreciated the existing trail connectivity, they expressed a desire to see the connectivity completed and strengthened in various areas, with one stakeholder specifically mentioning the St. John’s River to Sea loop and the Florida Coast-to-Coast trail. They also requested more facilities (such as restrooms, water fountains, and benches) and environmental education along the trails. There were also many requests to improve and increase beach amenities and access and boat/kayak water access, and indoor recreation/pools for use during hot weather.

5. ACCESSIBILITY

Another theme from responses was appreciation of ADA ECHO projects, including beach access and board walks. There were requests for improved access to ECHO projects for all community members. There were several suggestions of ensuring ADA compliance in more outdoor recreation opportunities, specifically for seniors with mobility issues. There were also suggestion(s) of transportation between ECHO projects, such as a tram.

6. COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Community members made suggestions for how to increase awareness of the ECHO program, such as improved social media and internet presence, physical mailers, and an “ECHO Passport” program.

7. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

While there was general appreciation for projects that serve different parts of the county, some stakeholders noted a disparity in the geographic distribution of the projects, specifically noting fewer projects in the western or more rural parts of the county. There were requests for more amenities specifically in Deltona, Orange City, and Southeast Volusia, as well as more bike trails in the Ormond Beach area.

8. FAMILY AND YOUTH FACILITIES

Many comments expressed gratitude for family-friendly amenities, and others offered suggestions for similar projects. More shaded and safe playgrounds were one, more youth sporting facilities, splash pads, and swimming pools (specifically in DeLand and Orange City) were suggestions.

“My family found ECHO supported our quality of life in learning, enjoying nature, and living healthy active lives. It’s impossible to set one area above another. The kids performed, had outings, and attended camps at theaters, museums, pioneer settlement, and science centers. We hike and cycle trails across the county, play at playgrounds and sports fields, fish from piers, enjoy the restoration of historic sites for aesthetics and experiences, and take our dog to Barkley square. ECHO has made Volusia County a great place for families with limited income due to the proximity of so many diverse experiential opportunities. It touches our lives daily.”



9. GROWTH MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Stakeholders expressed strong concerns about overdevelopment and hoped that ECHO would not add to this issue. There were several requests that future projects focus on preserving green space rather than reducing it. Furthermore, stakeholders recommended ensuring ECHO projects focused on residential needs over tourist interests. Moreover, some respondents expressed a preference to fix infrastructure issues over funding ECHO projects. There were also those who mentioned not wanting the tax or program to exist in general.

10. SAFETY AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

There were a few comments about safety at certain facilities or on trails, including notes about homeless populations and drug use issues. Some suggested better lighting and security measures.

“You can either support ECHO or you can support unbridled growth, but not both - too many times I see politicians using ECHO for election year stunt purchases only followed by absurd growth decisions that are dichotomous to the principles of ECHO. I’m on board w whatever the community seems is in their best interest but the way that the ECHO \$ have been applied in some circumstances have been insulting to the taxpayers that are ‘in the know.’”

TABLE 2: FREQUENCY OF ECHO PROJECTS APPRECIATED BY STAKEHOLDERS

CATEGORY	PROJECT/FACILITY	COUNT
Environmental	Total Environmental Projects	145
	Marine Discovery/Science Centers	39
	Environmental Centers/Education	19
	Land Preservation/Environmental Protection	18
	Lyonia Preserve/ELC	17
	Gemini Springs	10
	Environmental Projects (general)	9
	Doris Leeper Park/Preserve/Trails	9
	Marine Science Center (Ponce Inlet)	8
	Blue Spring	7
	Dunlawton Sugar Mill Gardens	3
	Alexander Island	3
	Spruce Creek Park	1
	Rose Bay Educational Program	1
	Riverside Conservancy	1
Cultural	Total Cultural	131
	Daytona Playhouse	25
	Athens Theatre	25
	Museums (general)	14
	Art Centers/Museums (including The Hub on Canal)	13
	MOAS	10
	Performing Arts Centers	10
	Peabody Auditorium	5
	African American Museum	7
	NSB Little Theater/Digital Screen	5
	Ormond Beach Performing Arts Center	4
	The Casements	3
	News Journal Performing Arts Building	3
	Yvonne Scarlett Golden Center	2
	Cherry Center	2
	Lake Helen's Little Theater	1
	The Brannon Center	1
	Daytona Bandshell	1
Historic	Total Historic Projects	37
	Historical Sites (general)	14
	DeBary Hall	9
	Barberville Pioneer Settlement	7
	Ponce Inlet Lighthouse	4
	Seville Elementary School	2
	Lillian Place Heritage Center	1

CATEGORY	PROJECT/FACILITY	COUNT
Recreation	Total Recreation Projects	247
	Trails/Bike Trails (including Spring-to-Spring, River-to-Sea, etc.)	89
	Parks (general)	45
	Beach Access/Beachfront Parks	22
	Pickleball Courts/Facilities	21
	Water Access (general)	18
	Smyrna Dunes Park	10
	Boat Ramps	9
	Sports Fields/Athletic Facilities	8
	Splash Pads/Water Features	5
	Libraries	5
	Thornby Park	2
	Agricultural Center/Gardens	2
	Riverwalk Park	2
	City Island Rec Center	2
	Pictona	2
	The Skate Park	1
	Lake Beresford Park	1
	Whistle Stop Park	1
	Rinker Center	1
	Barkly Park (Dog Park)	1
	Total	527

The next question was “Is there a particular ECHO project or type of ECHO project that you do NOT appreciate? If so, what is it and why?” Themes from the responses are analyzed below, followed by a table counting the projects identified and the number of times they were mentioned. Overall, there were 73 unique mentions of ECHO projects that were not appreciated as much, along with many instances of “N/A,” “none,” and general appreciation of ECHO projects. Here again, some respondents also noted lacking knowledge on ECHO projects.

1. POLITICAL CONCERNS

Some stakeholders expressed concern about ECHO funds being used for things outside of its original intent. There were specific concerns about the County Council spending ECHO funds (via Direct County Expenditures) on “pet projects” or as a “slush fund.” Another similar concern was not being able to see applications from county-owned assets on the transparency dashboard (i.e., Tide & Floral Beach Access Dune Walkover), or dashboard accessibility in general. There were also stakeholders who expressed less enthusiasm for the project in general, wanting to see less government spending or to see the funds go towards infrastructure issues.

“I don’t like gov’t giving \$ to gov’t. It was supposed to be a grass roots program for non profits. The grant process and requirements are far to tough for small nonprofits. It must be made easier to fulfill that promise of helping grass roots organizations more. Seems unfair to compete against gov’t staff grant writers and funding.”

2. EQUITY AND DISTRIBUTION CONCERNS

Again, there were requests for projects to be more evenly distributed across communities in the county. There were also concerns raised about some communities submitting multiple projects in one cycle, resulting in too many projects happening in a certain area at once. There were also concerns about certain institutions receiving too many ECHO funds, especially those who already might be well-funded. Some noted the difficulty nonprofits have in completing the ECHO applications and suggested that nonprofit projects should be evaluated separately from municipalities. There were also suggestions that non-profits, specifically historic organizations, should be evaluated in a separate process from municipalities.

3. ACCESS AND INCLUSIVITY ISSUES

Some stakeholders expressed dissatisfaction with ECHO funds being used for projects that aren't publicly accessible, particularly colleges and universities, private parks, and institutions with expensive membership or access fees. Some reported that certain projects have limited hours, making it difficult for those who work during the day to access. And again, there were concerns about safety, ADA compliance, and public/resident beach parking.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

- 4.** There was strong opposition to projects that reduce natural areas, trees, or green spaces. Some residents noted environmental and sustainability concerns as their top priority for ECHO in the future years, and noted the need to consider flooding. Several stakeholders noted that there seemed to be enough or too many sports facilities, particularly pickleball, at the expense of the environment.

“I hope ECHO focuses on irreplaceable and dwindling opportunities of historic preservation and natural land acquisition as a priority over opportunities that will be popular but are less time sensitive. We will have plenty of abandoned strip malls in the future to convert to pickle ball and basket ball courts. Save us old Florida first.”

5. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ISSUES

In opposition to some responses made to the previous question, some stakeholders expressed opposition for ECHO funds to be used for rebuilding or maintaining existing assets and wanted to see those costs assumed by county facilities management. Others expressed criticism of amenities in need of maintenance, such as the 27th beach ramp park or broken playgrounds.

6. CULTURAL AND IDENTITY CONCERNS

There were a few respondents who were critical of projects that could be seen to have a political agenda, such as “DEI” or “liberal-themed.”

TABLE 3: FREQUENCY OF ECHO PROJECTS NOT APPRECIATED BY STAKEHOLDERS

CATEGORY	PROJECT/FACILITY	COUNT
Environmental	Total Environmental Projects	4
	Paving in Natural Areas (Tomoka State Park)	1
	MOAS Trail (hurricane damage not fixed)	1
	Parks with Camping only for Special Groups	1
	Tusawilla Preserve (accessibility issues)	1
Cultural	Total Cultural	24
	Arts/Museums/Cultural Facilities	9
	MOAS (high admission fees/excessive funding)	3
	Performing Arts Centers/Peabody (poor management/parking)	3
	African American Museum of Arts	2
	Museum of Art DeLand (limited hours)	1
	Port Orange Art Haus (lack of adult classes)	1
	Public Art/Statues	1
	Athens Theater	1
	Small Random Galleries (Ocean Center)	1
	Creative Arts Café	1
	News Journal Theater	1
Historic	Total Historic Projects	0
Recreation	Total Outdoor Recreation Projects	45
	Pickleball Facilities/Pictona/Hawks Park	11
	Sports Complexes/Athletic Courts/Facilities/Stadiums/Auditoriums	10
	Motorsports/Motocross/Dirt Track	8
	Trails (safety concerns)	4
	Playgrounds (poor design/maintenance issues)	3
	27th Street Park/Beach Ramp Park (neglect/maintenance)	3
	YMCA	2
	ATV Trails/Motorized Vehicles in Preserves	2
	Tennis Court Lighting/Maintenance	1
	Bill Keller Enhancement Project	1
	Total	73

ECHO PRIORITIES

Next, respondents were asked to rank their priorities out of seven categories (Figure 11). Several respondents noted in the open-ended comments that they had difficulties getting the ranking system to work properly, although they were able to select their first priority. According to these answers, trail systems had the highest average ranking, followed by water access. However, as shown in Table 4, water access was most consistently ranked as the top priority.

FIGURE 11: PLEASE RANK THE LIST BELOW FROM BEING THE HIGHEST PRIORITY (1) TO THE LEAST PRIORITY (7) FOR YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD IN VOLUSIA COUNTY.

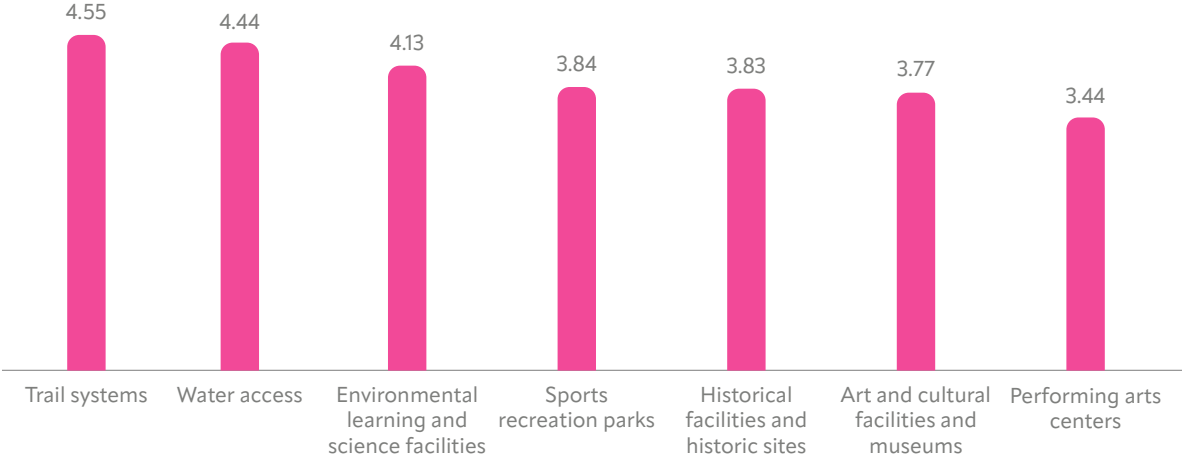
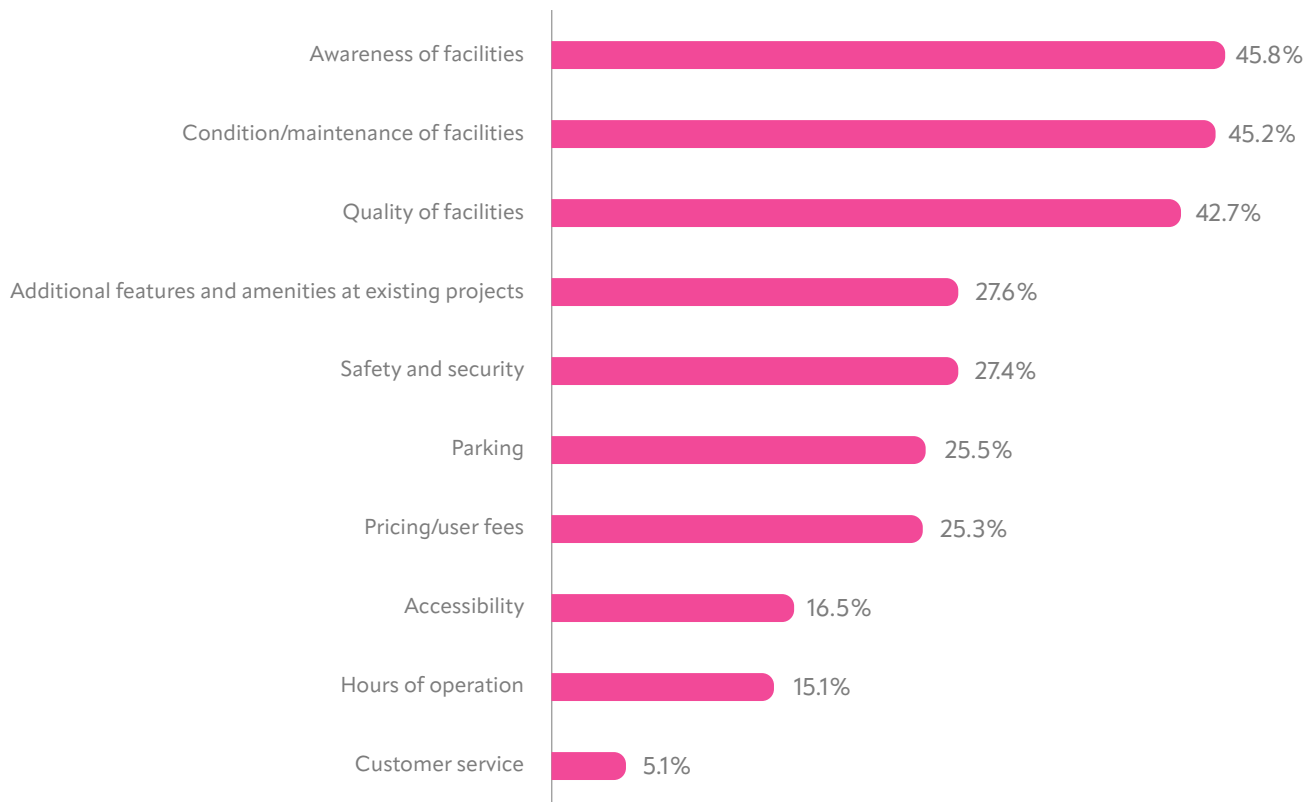


TABLE 4: PLEASE RANK THE LIST BELOW FROM BEING THE HIGHEST PRIORITY (1) TO THE LEAST PRIORITY (7) FOR YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD IN VOLUSIA COUNTY.

CATEGORY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	AVG. SCORE
Trail systems	21.7%	19.0%	15.8%	11.2%	10.6%	10.8%	10.8%	4.55
Water access	24.2%	16.3%	13.9%	10%	9.5%	12.9%	13.3%	4.44
Environmental learning and science facilities	14.1%	12.7%	16.6%	18.4%	15.8%	11.7%	10.7%	4.13
Sports recreation parks	14.7%	14.4%	12.3%	11.8%	13.1%	13.3%	20.4%	3.84
Historical facilities and historic sites	7.1%	13.1%	17.4%	19.5%	17.4%	12.1%	13.5%	3.83
Art and Cultural facilities and museums	8.9%	13.9%	14.3%	13.5%	18.3%	19.8%	11.3%	3.77
Performing arts centers	9.2%	10.6%	9.6%	15.8%	15.3%	19.5%	20%	3.44

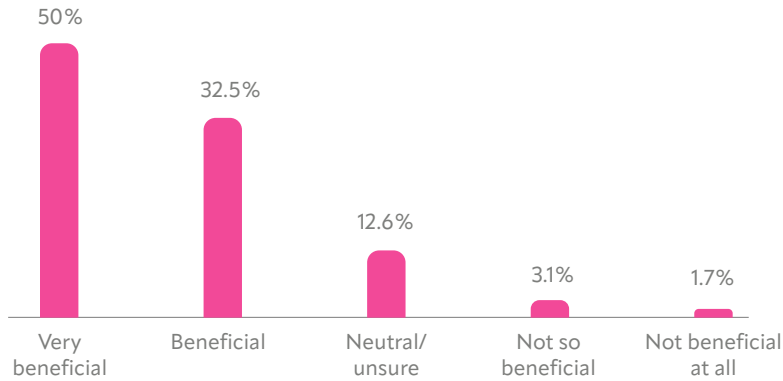
Respondents selected three qualities from a list that they believed would increase their utilization of ECHO projects (Figure 12). The three qualities that rose to the surface were awareness of facilities, condition/maintenance of facilities, and quality of facilities.

FIGURE 12: WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS THAT WOULD INCREASE YOUR UTILIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, HISTORIC AND OUTDOOR RECREATION (ECHO) PROJECTS? PLEASE SELECT 3.



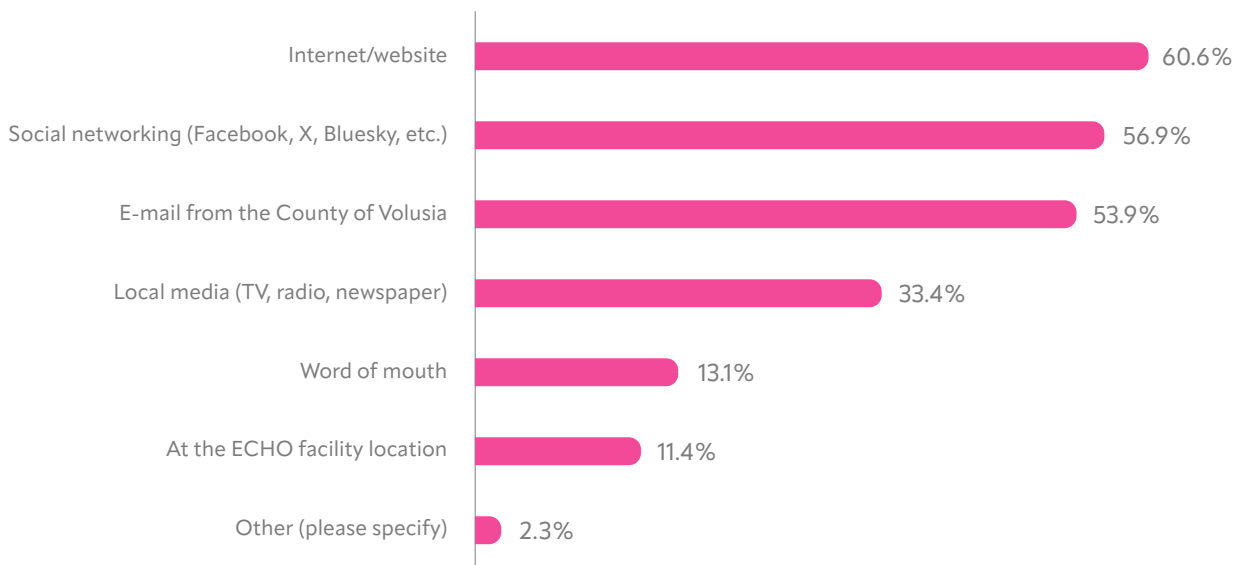
After answering questions that prompted reflection on ECHO projects, participants were asked a final general opinion question (Figure 13). The majority of stakeholders, 82.5%, found ECHO projects to be either beneficial or very beneficial. The answers to this question were slightly altered from the last survey, in which 73.4% of respondents indicated that ECHO projects did improve their quality of life, 9.67% said they did not, and 16.93% said they didn't know.

FIGURE 13: PLEASE SELECT WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST REPRESENTS YOUR OPINION OF ECHO PROJECTS.



When asked about the best way to communicate with stakeholders about ECHO projects, most said the best way would be through the internet/website and social networking. In the “other” category, a few stakeholders mentioned that not all Volusia residents have internet access or use the internet much, so physical mailings or advertising, as well as engagement at local events, would be best. A few also suggested using texts.

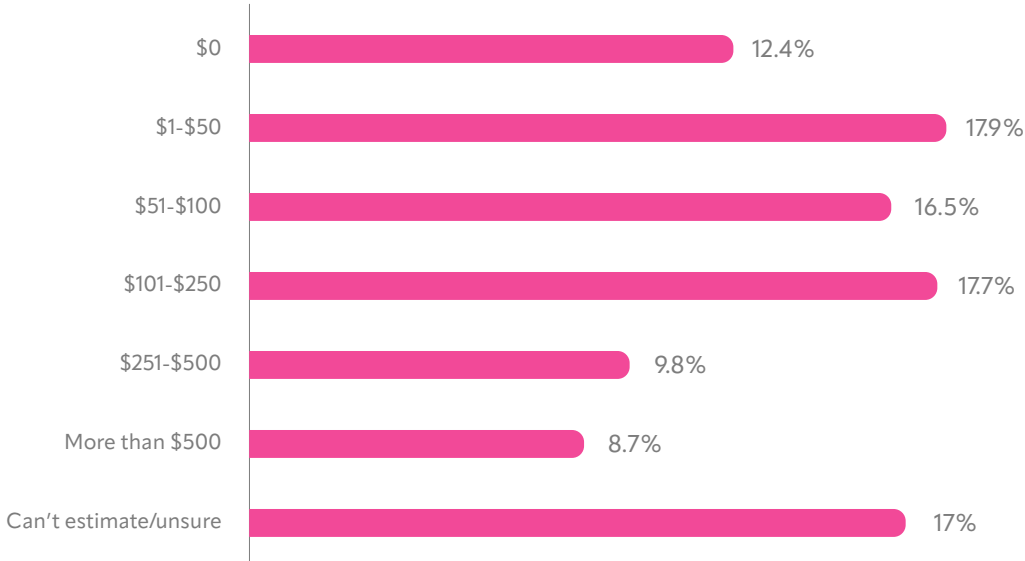
FIGURE 14: WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO NOTIFY YOU WITH INFORMATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, HISTORIC AND OUTDOOR RECREATION (ECHO) PROJECTS? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.



ECHO SPENDING HABITS

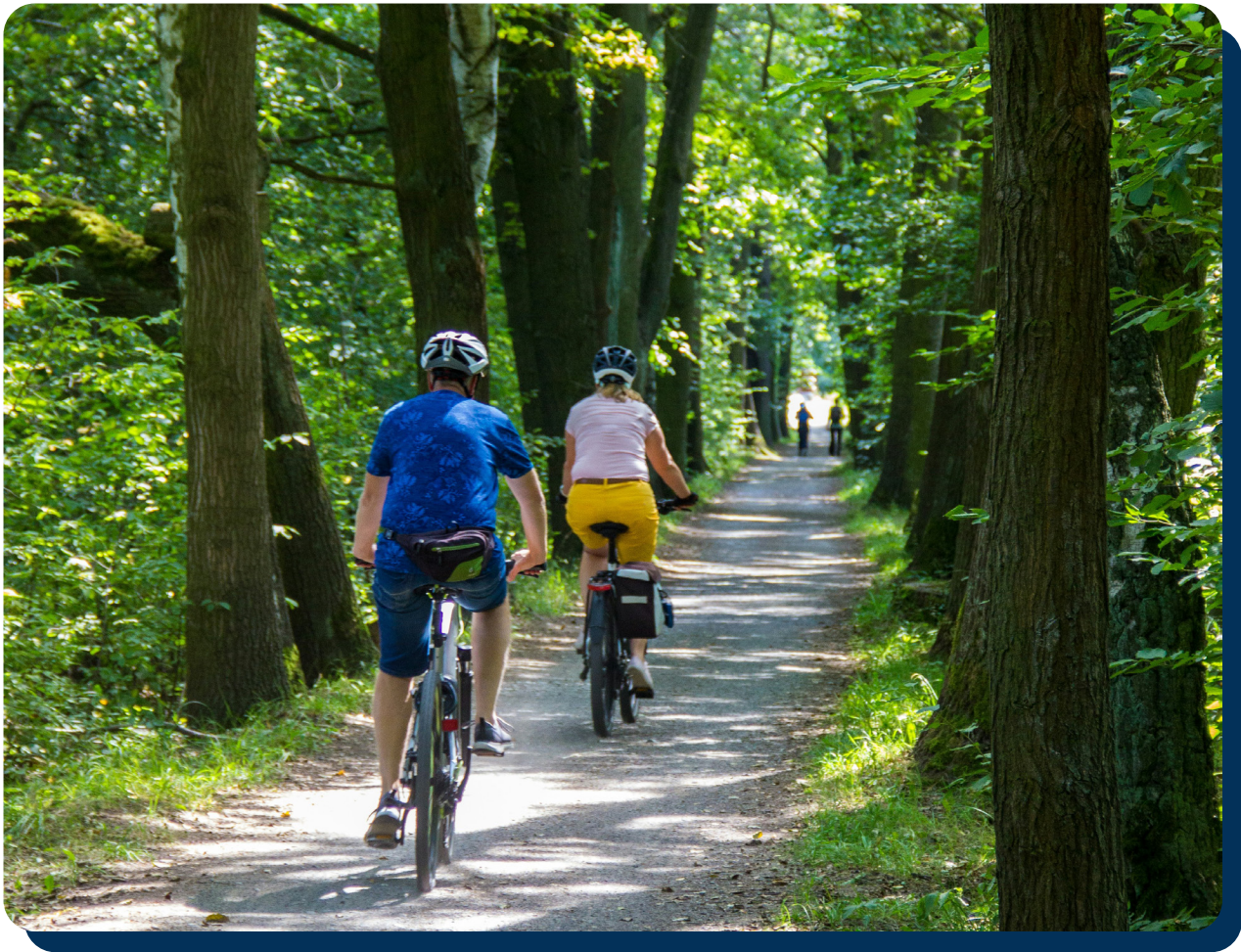
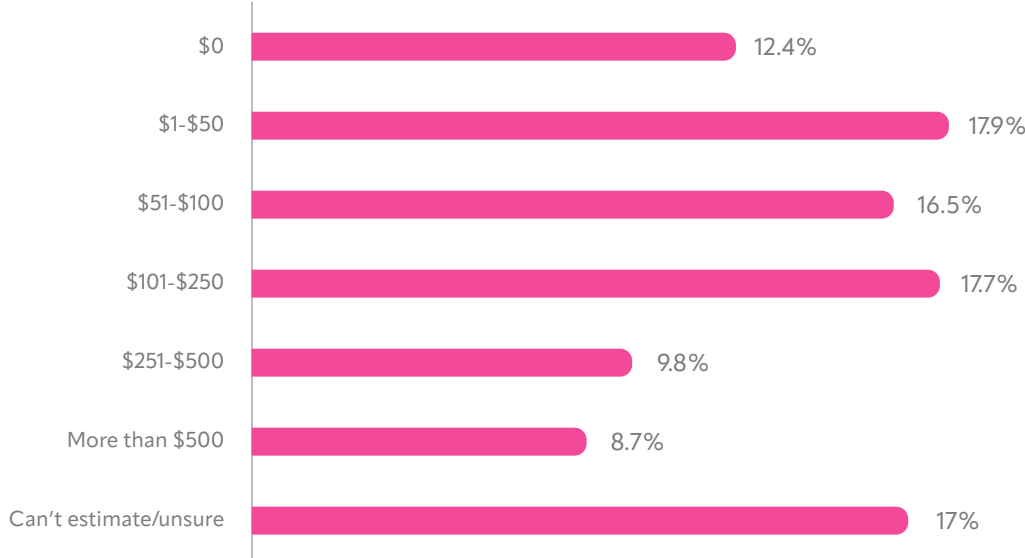
To get a high-level sense of the economic impact of ECHO, residents were asked about their spending habits while engaging with ECHO projects. The first question asked approximately how much stakeholders spend on direct costs while engaging with ECHO projects (examples given were event/concert tickets, equipment rentals, memberships, etc.). Their answers are recorded in Figure 15. If the 17% of respondents who answered “unsure” to this question are removed, 63.5% of residents spend \$51 or more annually at ECHO facilities.

FIGURE 15: IN THE PAST YEAR, APPROXIMATELY HOW MUCH HAVE YOU SPENT ON ACTIVITIES AT/WHILE ENGAGING WITH ECHO PROJECTS?



Similarly, stakeholders were asked to estimate how much they spent yearly on indirect costs while engaging with ECHO projects (examples given included dining, shopping, transportation, or other expenses). Again, if those who responded “unsure” are removed, then 70.7% of stakeholders reported spending at least \$51 annually on indirect costs. While these numbers are estimates, they can give insight into economic activity that is prompted by ECHO. While there is no guarantee that this is a perfect sample of all of Volusia County residents, these amounts can be used to make a rough estimate of total spending. In 2023, there were 460,382 adults living in Volusia County. Suppose 63.5% spend \$51 on direct costs annually, 70.7% spend \$51 on indirect costs annually (the most conservative estimate of the \$51 - \$500+ range), and the rest of the population did not spend any money at all on ECHO-related projects. In that case, Volusia County residents spend approximately \$31.5 million annually, prompted by ECHO projects.

FIGURE 16: IN THE PAST YEAR, APPROXIMATELY HOW MUCH HAVE YOU SPENT ON INDIRECT COSTS IN THE COMMUNITY WHILE VISITING AN ECHO-FUNDED DESTINATION?



FUTURE ECHO RECOMMENDATIONS

The final question regarding ECHO was, “Do you have any specific recommendations about the types of Environmental, Cultural, Historic and Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) projects to fund?” Stakeholders gave suggestions for future projects and other general feedback regarding their experience with the ECHO program. Themes from their responses are analyzed below, followed by a table counting the projects identified and the number of times they were mentioned.

- 1. ACCESS TO NATURE & RECREATION**
Outdoor recreation was the category that received the most suggestions for future projects. Specifically, stakeholders hoped to see completed trail connectivity (Spring to Spring, NSB to Edgewater), more water access, and recreation such as pickleball and indoor/outdoor pools.
- 2. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**
Along with recreation, one of the most frequent suggestions made about the ECHO program was to prioritize projects that conserve the county’s natural environment, wildlife habitats, and water restoration. Again, there were concerns about overdevelopment and flooding, and stakeholders suggested that ECHO could play a role in environmental stewardship education.
- 3. INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY**
Stakeholders hoped to see increased ADA compliance and accessibility in projects, especially parks and playgrounds. One even suggested a project that focuses specifically on special needs populations. Additionally, stakeholders hoped to see more projects that offer affordable activities for multiple age groups, especially families.
- 4. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION CONCERNS**
Again, stakeholders commented on wanting to see more equitable distribution of projects across the county. Specific areas named that needed more attention were West Volusia, DeBary, LPGA area, Deltona, and Port Orange.
- 5. INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAINTENANCE**
There were notices of specific amenities in the county that need an upgrade or maintenance. Some stakeholders noted a preference for maintaining existing facilities, especially those who received ECHO grants a while ago, over building new ones. Suggestions for supporting amenities included bathrooms, increased lighting, more signage, and water fountains on trails. Stakeholders also suggested better shade structures were needed in some outdoor facilities.
- 6. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**
Here again, some stakeholders raised concerns regarding the perceived magnitude of the ECHO tax, suggesting it may be excessive, while others perceived ECHO funds were being diverted away from their original intent. There were also several mentions of hoping to see reduced match requirements for smaller organizations, especially in the cultural and historic sectors.

7. PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

Both stakeholders who were familiar with ECHO and those who weren't thought that both the program and residents could benefit from increased communication and marketing about the program.

"I don't think ECHO gets the publicity [it] deserves for all the projects they have supported. It's an impressive list. Let Volusia County resident[s] know what you've done and what's planned for the future."

TABLE 5: DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT THE TYPES OF ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL, HISTORIC AND OUTDOOR RECREATION (ECHO) PROJECTS TO FUND?

CATEGORY	PROJECT/IDEA	COUNT
Recreation	Total Outdoor Recreation	143
	Bike/Walking/Multi-use Trails	41
	Boat Ramps/Docks	12
	Pickleball Courts	13
	Playgrounds/Children's Areas	13
	Sports Facilities	9
	Public Pool/Aquatic Facilities	7
	Dog Parks	5
	Mountain Bike Trails/Pump Track	5
	Skating Rink (Indoor/Outdoor)	5
	Disc Golf Courses	4
	Camping Facilities	3
	Running/Walking Track	3
	Off-Beach Parking	3
	Roller Skating Rink/Roller Derby	3
	Splash Pads	2
	Beach Access Improvements	2
	Dog Beach Areas	2
	Outdoor OHV/ATV/Dirt Bike Areas	2
	Lake Monroe Boardwalk	1
	Fishing Piers	1
	Shooting Range	1
	Public Plaza in Downtown DeLand	1
	Special Needs/Autism Facilities	1
	Indoor Playgrounds	1
	Ninja Warrior Obstacle Courses	1
	Seabird Island Nautical Park	1
	Former Golf Course Conversion to Park	1
Environmental	Total Environmental	61
	Land Preservation/Conservation	29
	Water Quality/Restoration (Springs, Lagoon)	6
	Beach Restoration/Access	6
	Living Shorelines/Artificial Reefs	4
	Nature Centers	4
	Wildlife/Botanical Areas	4
	Flood Mitigation/Environmental Restoration	3
	Food Forest/Educational Gardens	1

CATEGORY	PROJECT/IDEA	COUNT
Environmental	Fruit Tree Park	1
	Botanical Garden	1
	Wildlife Corridors	1
	Florida Scrub Habitat Acquisition	1
Cultural	Total Cultural	53
	Performing Arts Center/Theater	15
	Museum Support	14
	Community Music Events	8
	Science Park/Interactive Centers	4
	Dance Venues	3
	Art/Craft Classes	2
	Amphitheater	1
	Contemporary Art Facility	1
	Cultural Festivals	1
	Native American Museums	1
	Community Centers with Programming	1
	Cultural Gardens	1
	Sculpture Garden	1
Historical	Total Historical	21
	Historic Preservation (general)	7
	Athens Theater Support	3
	Ormond Beach Historical Museum	2
	Barberville Pioneer Settlement	2
	Historic Cemetery Preservation	1
	Sugar Mill Ruins Preservation	1
	World War One Monument Preservation	1
	Plantation Ruins	1
	Halifax Historical Society	1
	Gamble Place Restoration	1
	African American History Projects	1
	Total	278

DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondents also provided their demographic information, which can be found in Tables 6 - 10.

TABLE 6: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RANGES INCLUDES YOUR AGE?

Range	Percent
Younger than 18	0.4%
18-25	1.2%
26-41	13.2%
42-57	23.4%
58-76	52.9%
77 or older	8.9%

TABLE 7: DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN?

Response	Percent
Yes, currently living at home	24.9%
Yes, not living at home	46.7%
No	28.4%

TABLE 8: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING RANGES INCLUDES YOUR ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME?

Range	Percent
Less than \$30,000	7.1%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	17.7%
\$60,000 to \$99,999	28.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	23.4%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13.6%
\$200,000 or more	9.7%

TABLE 9: DO YOU IDENTIFY AS A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY?

Response	Percent
No	85.1%
Yes	14.9%

TABLE 10: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBE YOU? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Response	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous or First Nations	1.83%
Arab or Middle Eastern or Northern African	0.25%
Asian or Asian American	1.01%
Black or African American	1.96%
Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx or Spanish origin	4.79%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.57%
White or Caucasian or European American	85.11%
I prefer to self-identify:	5.11%



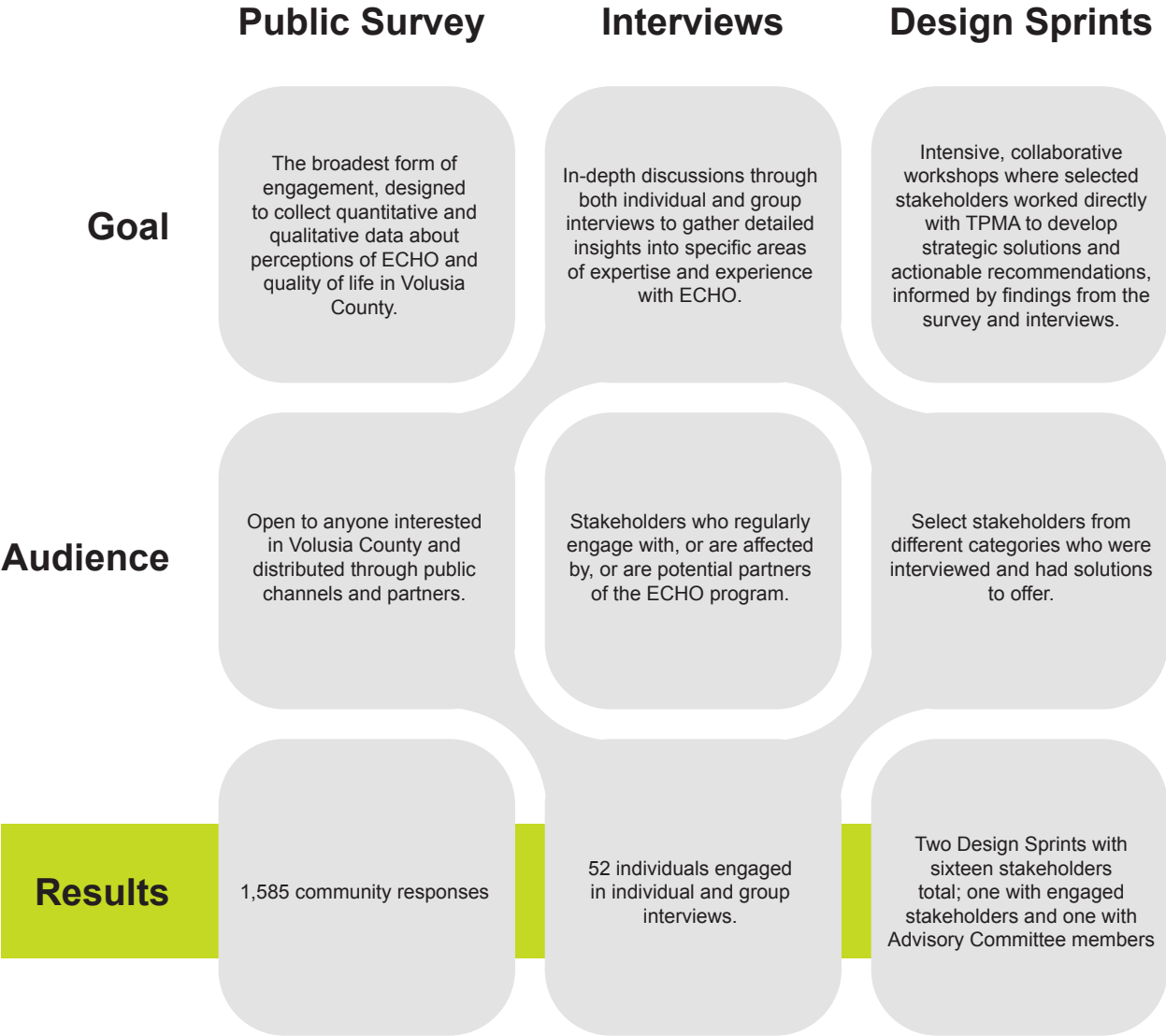
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



Introduction

Engaging stakeholders is a critical component of strategic planning for a public program. The Volusia County ECHO program serves residents by providing quality-of-life amenities through grants-in-aid and Direct County Expenditures (DCE). To inform this strategic plan, Volusia County and TPMA conducted the most robust stakeholder engagement ever undertaken for the ECHO program, ensuring perspectives from residents, grantees, and other community partners were captured. A comprehensive, multi-tiered engagement approach was designed to gather both broad input and in-depth insights, producing actionable recommendations grounded in community priorities.

Engagement Strategies



The stakeholder list, comprised of 85 individuals with diverse backgrounds, was strategically organized into three participation tiers based on their expertise and community roles.

The stakeholder list was developed through a collaborative process involving:

- 1. Initial Identification:** County staff held several meetings to compile an initial list of potential stakeholders based on institutional knowledge and previous engagement.
- 2. Strategic Categorization:** Working with TPMA during strategy meetings, County staff refined the list and assigned stakeholders to appropriate engagement tiers based on:
 - Specific expertise and knowledge areas
 - Representation across different community sectors
 - Historical involvement with relevant programs
 - Capacity to participate in more intensive engagement activities
- 3. Balance and Diversity:** We deliberately sought to include voices from various geographic areas of the county, different professional backgrounds, and diverse perspectives to ensure comprehensive insights.

The strategic assignment of stakeholders, as outlined below, to different engagement tiers allowed maximized input while respecting participants' time constraints and leveraging their specific areas of expertise most effectively. This multi-layered approach ensured both breadth (through surveys) and depth (through interviews and design sprints) of community perspectives, resulting in more robust and representative findings to inform the planning process. In many cases, individual follow-up interviews were offered to participants who were unable to make one of the originally scheduled times and to community members who requested an interview.

PARTICIPATION TIERS



ECHO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS (CURRENT & FORMER)

Role: Provide historical context and institutional knowledge about ECHO program operations, successes, and challenges.

Value: Deep understanding of existing frameworks, past decision-making processes, and program evolution.

Primarily in: Tiers 1 and 2

OTHER COUNTY COMMITTEES

(Volusia Forever, Cultural Council, Historic Preservation Board, County Council)

Role: Offer complementary perspectives from related county initiatives.

Value: Help identify alignment opportunities and potential collaborative approaches across county programs.

Primarily in: Tiers 2 and 3

DIVISION DIRECTORS & MUNICIPALITY DIRECTORS

Role: Provide insights on implementation challenges and opportunities from an operational perspective.

Value: Practical knowledge of municipal needs, regulatory requirements, and administrative processes.

Primarily in: Tiers 1 and 2

GRANT WRITERS & PREVIOUS GRANT APPLICANTS

Role: Share first-hand experiences with the application process, funding requirements, and project implementation. Both grant writers who had completed successful applications and those who were not recommended for funding were included in this group.

Value: Identify pain points and improvement opportunities in the grant lifecycle. One of the goals of the strategic plan is to increase grants distributed, so understanding grantee experience was integral to that.

Primarily in: All tiers, with experienced grant writers in Tier 1

GENERAL CITIZENS

Role: Represent broader community interests and perspectives from end-users of funded initiatives.

Value: Ensure strategies align with public needs and values. This category included stakeholders who had concerns about the ECHO program to ensure that broad perspectives were captured.

Primarily in: Tier 3, with select community leaders in Tier 2

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPRESENTATIVES

Role: Represent business community perspectives and economic development considerations.

Value: Connect program objectives with economic impact opportunities and business community needs.

Primarily in: Tiers 2 and 3

ECHO STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS

During the interview phase of the strategic planning process, TPMA engaged a diverse range of stakeholders, including former ECHO Advisory Committee members, county and city officials, county council members, nonprofit leaders, grant writers, chamber representatives, and residents, to evaluate community input regarding the Volusia County ECHO program. Participants brought a wide variety of professional expertise in municipal governance, nonprofit management, economic and community development, environmental conservation, arts administration, historical preservation, and civic advocacy. This engagement aimed to capture the nuanced experiences of applicants and grant recipients, identify areas of program strength and opportunities for improvement, and ultimately inform strategic recommendations for the Volusia County ECHO Strategic Plan.

When taken collectively, participants expressed broad support for ECHO's mission of delivering valuable projects that increase Volusia County's quality of life. Many stakeholders commended ECHO staff for their support and proactive engagement throughout the application process. Throughout TPMA's interviews and focus groups, stakeholders identified several key focus areas for program refinement. These included the need to expand marketing of ECHO's successes and program details, increased transparency in the review and approval of Direct County Expenditures, discussed substantial barriers for nonprofit applicants, and a need to review ECHO Advisory Committee processes. Additionally, stakeholders emphasized that community input should play a heightened role in the future direction of the Volusia County ECHO program.

In total, TPMA engaged with 52 individuals in this phase of the process. The full list of stakeholders engaged, along with the discussion guides, is in the appendices.

Stakeholders

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

TPMA interviewed six sitting members of the ECHO Advisory Committee, whose primary responsibilities include reviewing and recommending grant applications. These interviews were done individually to comply with the Florida Sunshine Law. These stakeholders represented a mix of backgrounds and geographic areas of the county and have been involved anywhere from a few weeks to more than fifteen years. These stakeholders have been significant supporters of the program and are very familiar with it. Their goals for the strategic plan include simplifying the application process, especially for non-profit applicants, and bringing process and accountability to the Direct County Expenditure (DCE) portion of the program.

CITY PERSONNEL & GRANT WRITERS

Municipalities make up much of the eligible recipient pool. TPMA spoke with nine city personnel from various parts of the county, most of whom had previously received an ECHO grant or had active ECHO projects. These stakeholders were from departments like leisure services, parks & recreation, economic development, community engagement, and local government administrators. Additionally, a few independent grant writers, who had worked on many ECHO projects for various cities, were also included to talk about their experience with the program. These stakeholders were grateful for the ways ECHO had benefitted their communities, saying that the program had allowed them to provide high-quality amenities they would not have otherwise been able to do. Their priorities for the strategic plan included smoother application and more transparency from the County Council on their use of DCE.

NONPROFIT APPLICANTS

The other pool of ECHO grant recipients are non-profit organizations. TPMA spoke with 12 non-profit representatives who were recipients and applicants of ECHO grants. These non-profits were located throughout the county and represented mostly the “cultural” and “environmental” groups. Like the municipalities, many of these organizations said that their ECHO funding had allowed them to do what they otherwise could not, and in some cases, said their organization would not exist without ECHO. However, these stakeholders reported having significant struggles with the application process and meeting grant requirements, and hoped the strategic plan would result in an application(s) that were designed with them in mind.

COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

County personnel are critical to the planning, administration, and delivery of the ECHO program or ECHO-funded projects. Engaging county personnel offers operational insights that are essential for informing the ECHO strategic planning process. TPMA spoke with county officials representing parks and recreation, environmental management, public libraries, county-operated cultural and science centers, and extension personnel. Many of the engaged had direct experience managing ECHO and DCE-funded projects and expressed strong support for ECHO’s role in Volusia County. ECHO was described as critical funding tool that enables the delivery of public amenities that may not be otherwise accessible. Several noted concerns regarding the length and complexity of the ECHO reporting period, the need for more effective public outreach and education, clearer definitions of project accessibility, and stronger community engagement.

CHAMBERS

Chambers of Commerce represent the nexus of economic development, quality of life, and community investment, while serving as a consolidated voice for local employers and in some instance nonprofits. TPMA engaged with three personnel representing various chambers across Volusia County. All expressed strong support for ECHO highlighting its potential as a tool for business attraction and talent retention. Additionally, ECHO funded projects were described as catalysts for economic growth. Despite their support, chamber representatives noted limited direct engagement with the ECHO program and a need to highlight ECHO projects’ impact on tourism. The representatives expressed a desire to communicate ECHO’s success and increase collaboration to continue and improve quality of life in Volusia County.

RESIDENTS & FORMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Residents and former ECHO Advisory Committee Members shared insight regarding community expectations and ECHO program governance. TPMA engaged a diverse group of long-term residents, civic volunteers, community advocates, and former ECHO advisory members. These stakeholders brought diverse perspectives including land conservation, marketing, higher education, law enforcement, nonprofit leadership, and strategic planning. Although generally supportive, both residents and former ECHO Advisory Committee members voiced concerns regarding the perceived politicization of project approvals, inequities in geographic and project type prioritization, and program transparency. Several stakeholders placed emphasis on increasing citizen engagement and proactive public education. Former Advisory Committee Members noted potential inconsistencies in project scoring and review procedures, a need for stronger onboarding procedures for new Advisory Committee members, and a desire for increased diversity in the Committee.

THEMES

Each of the major themes of the interviews are included below. While some topics, such as stakeholders’ vision of the future for the ECHO program, were specifically asked about, others were brought up by stakeholders.

ECHO Sentiment

TPMA began the discussions by asking about how stakeholders’ experiences with ECHO have been so far to understand the context of their recommendations for the strategic plan. Overall, their feedback on the program was substantially positive, and all stakeholders recognized that ECHO has accomplished some impressive things, such as the “world-class trail system.” One stakeholder called it “a gem of a program”—a rare example of a voter-approved initiative that has successfully maintained its integrity, evolved with the times, and delivered lasting public value. Others noted that its success is due in part to the fact that it is multifaceted—by combining the four different categories, the program offers something for everyone. Most thought the program had done “a terrific job” and praised county staff for their efforts to run the program and aid potential grant recipients in the process.

“I think ECHO has had a huge impact on Volusia County. I mean, just the amount of people that visit ECHO projects every single day, in every part of the County. I think it’s really valuable. We have amenities that improve the quality of life here because of ECHO that we would not have otherwise.”

– Nonprofit Awardee

Areas in which stakeholders thought the program could improve were mostly in improving the application process and laxing unnecessarily strict grant requirements. Another issue that emerged consistently throughout stakeholder engagement was the perception that Direct County Expenditures may not always align with ECHO’s original voter-approved mission. Some stakeholders expressed strong concerns about recent DCE allocations, with several using pointed language to describe their perception that County Council members were treating ECHO funds as a discretionary resource rather than a restricted program for environmental, cultural, heritage, and outdoor recreation projects. These stakeholders indicated that continued perceived misalignment between DCE projects and ECHO’s core mission would significantly impact their support for the program’s future. A few stakeholders also believed there was still some “untapped potential” and that ECHO could take more of a lead in envisioning quality of life for Volusia County residents.

A minority of stakeholders were more critical of the program and said that while they were pleased with the original ballot language for the program, they were unsatisfied with how it had played out. The biggest issues were lack of strategic vision, lack of citizen input, and leniency in adhering to application standards.

Envisioning the Future of ECHO

As stakeholders looked to the future of ECHO, they spoke passionately about the program’s potential to shape the character and livability of Volusia County for years to come. Many emphasized the importance of continuing to fund impactful, visible projects—that the program should “get cool stuff built” and reflect well-spent taxpayer dollars. Several stakeholders described ECHO as a vital tool for addressing funding gaps, particularly in the creation of shared spaces that promote civic pride, recreation, and community connection across demographics. They envisioned the program as a partnership between residents, government, and local organizations—a collaborative investment in quality of life.

Stakeholders encouraged the County to more proactively define and lead a strategic vision for ECHO, one that elevates its role in shaping the county's identity and values. They expressed interest in seeing ECHO more actively communicate its impact and legacy, particularly in terms of environmental stewardship, public health, and cultural investment. Many saw the next fifteen years of ECHO as an opportunity to build resilience and sustainability through public-private partnerships and long-term planning. As one stakeholder put it, "Our legacy will be in the green space and the outdoor amenities we've provided," imagining a future where Volusia is known for its trails, natural assets, and infrastructure designed with the next generation in mind.

**"People recognize ECHO is a good investment. I'd love to see it passed again in 2040."
– City Personnel**

Marketing & Education

Nearly every stakeholder group raised the importance of improving marketing and public awareness of ECHO as a critical area for future investment. As Volusia County grows and the program's budget expands, many felt it was essential to ensure that residents, particularly new ones, understand what ECHO is, how it works, and what it has accomplished. A recurring theme was that the public often misunderstands the program's structure, especially the role of the DCE and the special project classification. Some stakeholders believed this confusion has led to misconceptions about oversight and impact, and recommended that ECHO do more to clearly tell its story.

Stakeholders stressed the need for a multifaceted approach to marketing, including celebrating program milestones like better-marketed ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings, creating short promotional videos, maintaining a visible presence at community events and festivals, and increasing outreach through local civic groups like chambers of commerce and Rotary clubs. Some suggested that in addition to the ribbon cuttings, ECHO could highlight the impact that it has by celebrating projects after they have been open to the public for five years or so. Some stakeholders specifically mentioned hoping to see physical marketing materials, such as billboards (which could be shared with a major project) and rack cards, and another suggested using ECHO's Ocean Gallery as a public education tool.

Many recommended that the County provide grantees with marketing templates and materials to help them promote ECHO projects, and suggested creating new tools, such as an "ECHO passport" or field trip series for schools, to encourage public engagement. Grantees also expressed willingness to support ECHO's efforts in educating the public beyond physical signage and offered to distribute informational materials if ECHO put some together. Some stakeholders also noted that improved public education and awareness of ECHO could help address another frequent concern, the issue of Direct County Expenditures.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of ongoing community involvement in shaping ECHO's direction and priorities. Several noted that listening sessions held in the past were helpful and should be hosted again periodically. Residents particularly hoped to see in-person gatherings, such as at libraries, schools, or other gathering places, to discuss quality of life needs. Some recommended outreach focused specifically on underrepresented areas or demographics, especially as the county grows.

Others noted that with significant population change since 2020, increased input is necessary. New residents may be unfamiliar with the program, and evolving needs around quality of life and access to recreational, cultural, and environmental amenities require updated insight. Residents and Advisory Committee members alike expressed support for formalizing regular opportunities for public input.

A few stakeholders also stressed the need to engage other sectors beyond government and nonprofits. In particular, several mentioned that developers and foundations should be strategically engaged. As more homes are built and green space diminishes, stakeholders cautioned that ECHO funds should not be used to backfill the absence of required amenities in new developments. Instead, they argued, developers should be expected to contribute or be part of broader quality-of-life investments. ECHO, they stressed, should be used to enhance, not replace, what should already be provided. Foundations should be engaged to make sure grantmaking efforts are not redundant, and so that ECHO and foundations can work in tandem.

Direct County Expenditures (DCE)

Stakeholders expressed a wide range of opinions about DCE, with most acknowledging the value of DCE as a tool for advancing quality-of-life projects, but also voicing concerns about transparency, oversight, and trust. For many, better accountability for DCE was their top priority for the strategic plan and was necessary for their support of the ECHO program moving forward. While some stakeholders, particularly county staff, pointed to the efficiency and flexibility of DCE in carrying out the program’s goals, many Advisory Committee members and residents were uneasy about how DCE has been applied in recent years. Longstanding Advisory Committee members, in particular, worried that DCE projects circumvent the standard ECHO review and ranking process, leading to a perceived lack of accountability and erosion of public trust that could draw significant criticism of the program from the public.

Several stakeholders described the use of DCE as having shifted from a strategic funding mechanism to a tool for filling budget gaps without sufficient input from the Advisory Committee or residents. They emphasized the need for clearer standards, greater transparency, and more opportunities for the Advisory Committee to weigh in, especially in early project stages. Some suggested a formalized “exceptional grant” process for DCEs that would require detailed proposals, robust matching funds, and structured oversight, akin to the expectations for nonprofit or municipal applicants. Others did not think a whole application was necessary, but that key details of the project were shared with Advisory Committee, who should be allowed to recommend (or not recommend) projects.

That said, not all feedback was critical. Some county employees highlighted the practical advantages of DCE, especially for projects already embedded in departmental five-year plans. One described it as “the most efficient way to spend money” when ECHO funds were otherwise sitting unused. Others supported DCE in principle but called for improvements to transparency and communication. Common suggestions included enhancing the ECHO dashboard to identify DCE-funded projects, publishing an annual report on program achievements that includes future DCE projects in the pipeline, and creating greater public awareness of meetings where DCE projects will be discussed.

“I don’t want to be a complication to direct county expenditures, but I think the public does misunderstand it. And it hurts ECHO.”

– Resident

Application Process

Applicants across the board—cities, nonprofits, grant writers, and residents—described the ECHO grant application and reporting process as overly complex, burdensome, and difficult to navigate. While the program’s accountability standards are valued, many stakeholders felt that the current structure discourages participation, particularly from smaller organizations, thereby limiting the program’s ability to serve citizens.

Confusion was a recurring theme. Several applicants reported that the handbook and application do not clearly state what expenses are eligible for reimbursement. For example, signage requirements were highlighted as particularly problematic—not only because they are costly, but because some found it unclear whether ECHO covers them or not (others recognized ECHO did not cover signage and were unhappy about it). Similarly, applicants expressed frustration with the budget chart, noting the need for more instructions on how to categorize expenses or match sources and more relevant examples of completed budget charts.

The application process itself was often described as lengthy and cumbersome. Many suggested breaking the application into distinct tracks based on project size or type (such as cultural, historic, or trail projects) or developing a tiered grant structure with scaled requirements. This approach was widely supported as a way to level the playing field, reduce administrative burden, and open participation to a more diverse set of applicants. A sliding match scale was also positively received, with interest in expanding its use.

Planning grants and phased project approvals were among the most frequently proposed changes. Stakeholders pointed to examples where promising projects were denied due to a lack of finalized construction documents, even when other elements (such as land acquisition or concept planning) were complete. Many felt that offering smaller grants for planning, design, and engineering would strengthen the pipeline of future applications. Some expressed caution about funding projects that may not ultimately move forward, but most agreed that the benefits of expanding access outweigh those risks.

The **“shovel-ready” requirement** was another common sticking point. While a few supported the emphasis on readiness, most stakeholders felt the standard is too strict. Unlike other public funding sources, ECHO requires full architectural and engineering documents upfront, along with proof of complete financing—requirements that are particularly challenging in the current economic environment and for organizations that rely on fundraising. This was described as one of the biggest barriers for nonprofits, which often cannot raise funds until a grant is secured.

Feedback on **application workshops** was mixed. Some found them helpful, especially for navigating the forms, while others said they were too focused on procedural details and lacked space for strategic or organizational planning. Several stakeholders suggested offering additional training opportunities, including educational sessions on nonprofit governance, sample application reviews, and peer mentorship from previous grantees.

The **current application system** was also criticized. Applicants want to be able to download and retain a copy of their full application, and some noted difficulties navigating this function. Reimbursement timelines and processes for budget updates were also described as inconsistent or slow, creating challenges for grant and project management.

Finally, stakeholders raised concerns about equity and participation across the county. Some noted that west-side communities may not have benefited as much from ECHO investments and encouraged the program to consider future demographic shifts and geographic balance in its application review process. Others pointed to skepticism about usage data, particularly in smaller or passive-use projects like parks, and suggested that usage tracking requirements should be scaled to project type and size.



Grantee Types: Non-Profit vs. Municipalities

Although both cities and nonprofits face challenges in navigating the ECHO program, the impact of those challenges is experienced very differently. The program's uniform standards seem to disproportionately disadvantage nonprofit applicants, particularly smaller organizations with limited staff and funding.

Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of including nonprofits in ECHO funding decisions, noting that these organizations contribute significantly to quality of life in Volusia County, especially through cultural, youth, and community programming that cities cannot easily replicate. However, application data suggests nonprofit participation has declined over the last 10 years, largely due to persistent barriers related to match funding, capital access, and administrative capacity.

Nonprofits frequently struggle to meet the upfront financial requirements of the program, such as securing matching funds or complying with restrictive covenants early in the process. These conditions make it difficult to access lines of credit, and unlike municipalities, nonprofits typically lack reserves or predictable tax revenue to bridge funding gaps. Some suggested that the program consider allowing match funds to be raised after approval or increasing flexibility in how capital requirements are structured. Others proposed better guidance on budget forms, as well as more transparency on items like the 10% retainage held until project closeout.

Long-term reporting obligations, especially the 20-year commitment period, were also seen as ill-suited to smaller nonprofits whose staffing or missions may evolve significantly over time. Some residents questioned whether nonprofit projects are delivering on public access requirements in practice, pointing to challenges like limited hours or parking access. Still, others noted that public-private partnerships, where infrastructure is owned by a public entity but operated by a nonprofit, could help bridge these capacity gaps and deliver innovative, sustainable programming.

Cities, by contrast, often have in-house planning staff, grant writers, and access to capital budgets, which makes them better equipped to meet ECHO's standards. While city staff acknowledged that the application process is time-consuming and complex, they generally have greater ability to navigate it. Some cities advocated for additional flexibility—such as allowing “as-built” projects instead of full shovel-ready plans—and asked to be eligible for more than two or three open projects at a time.

Several cities expressed interest in better aligning their long-term capital improvement plans with ECHO timelines and suggested that earlier coordination with program staff could help avoid pitfalls. They also recognized that nonprofits are held to the same standards as cities but lack equivalent resources, leading to a consensus among some city and county staff that the program's expectations should be more tailored to applicant type.

Ultimately, participants across sectors agreed: if ECHO aims to fund a wide range of impactful projects, its structure and supports should reflect the varied capacities of its applicants. Ideas to support this included tiered requirements, technical assistance, and improved coordination with philanthropic partners to help nonprofits meet their match.

Grantee Types: E vs. C vs. H vs. O

Stakeholders widely acknowledged that Outdoor Recreation (O) projects tend to dominate ECHO funding, while Cultural (C), Historical (H), and Environmental (E) projects are less common. Opinions varied on whether this imbalance is a problem, but many felt that the current system unintentionally favors recreation.

Outdoor Recreation is seen as broadly appealing, relatively low-risk, and easier to implement. Some noted that its infrastructure needs are more straightforward and that the application process is better aligned with this category. However, a few stakeholders noted that playgrounds may need special consideration due to their shorter life expectancy and inability to meet 20-year requirements.

Stakeholders did not always have a clear understanding of what “Environmental” projects should include. Stakeholders asked for clearer definitions of what qualifies as “E,” noting that beyond environmental education centers, the category is underused. Some supported recent expansions, like seawall restoration or green infrastructure, but felt ECHO could do more to proactively support environmental resilience. Others attributed the low number of projects to the lack of infrastructure-focused environmental groups.

Historical projects face capacity barriers. Many heritage organizations are small and lack the staffing or matching funds to apply. Suggestions included supporting land acquisition for historic access, better clarifying eligible project types, helping potential applicants identify matching fund sources, and creating a community-driven list of priority sites.

Several recommended category-specific application forms or tracks to reduce confusion and level the playing field—especially for more complex or capacity-limited applicants. Others encouraged more targeted outreach to underrepresented categories to boost applications.

Expanding the Use of ECHO’s Funds

While ECHO was originally designed to fund new capital projects, some stakeholders, particularly from cities and nonprofits, raised the need to reconsider how funds could be used to support ongoing maintenance, resilience, and facility upgrades.

Some Advisory Committee members expressed strong opposition to using ECHO funds for operations or heavy maintenance, emphasizing that applicants must demonstrate their capacity for long-term upkeep. One member underscored this view by stating that “ECHO should not be your [...] insurance policy.” Others felt routine repairs and upkeep should fall to Public Works, especially for city or county-owned assets.

However, cities and some grantees made the case that limited flexibility in this area can create challenges. For example, upgrading aging infrastructure like halogen lighting or responding to increasingly frequent flood events often competes with ECHO eligibility criteria. One city official cited the financial pressure of climate-related repairs as a reason to consider broadening eligible uses, arguing that these were indeed important to quality of life.

Grantees proposed several ideas to address these needs:

- Establishing a resilience or emergency repair fund for ECHO-funded facilities, citing examples like lightning damage to historic structures.
- Allowing limited support for non-staff operational costs, such as utilities or preventive maintenance, especially when it preserves public use and extends the life of funded projects.
- Updating eligibility to reflect changing climate conditions, population growth, and indoor recreation demands.
- Exploring models used by other funding programs, such as HUD block grants, to support storm-proofing or infrastructure resilience.

Some stakeholders noted that while the County's cultural grant program exists to support operations, it has not kept pace with growing needs and remains capped at funding levels set two decades ago.

Overall, there is tension between maintaining the program's original purpose and adapting to evolving realities, especially for facilities that now face more frequent wear, weather impacts, and sustainability pressures.

Advisory Committee

Many stakeholders viewed the Advisory Committee as engaged and committed, with members valuing site visits and their role in the process. Still, concerns were raised about the committee's composition and practices. While some diversity exists, several stakeholders advocated for broader representation (especially in regard to professional backgrounds and geography) and a more transparent or inclusive selection process. Multiple comments pointed to inconsistent interpretation of review criteria and perceptions of favoritism, with some applicants feeling reviews reflected personal bias more than objective scoring. Others defended the process, noting all entities have equal access if they apply. Some recipients said feedback during review felt overly critical or adversarial, especially in public forums, and worried that speaking out about their experience might jeopardize future funding. Anonymous feedback opportunities were suggested to address this.

Suggestions to address these experiences included:

- Term limits could bring in new voices and reduce political influence, though others expressed concern about finding enough qualified members.
- Increased selection criteria and selection process.
- Professional Development or strong onboarding for board members to ensure all are on the same page, understand program goals, and learn to score projects objectively while treating applicants respectfully.
- More informal contact with Advisory Committee members prior to formal review. Some applicants benefited from pre-existing relationships with Advisory Committee members and suggested formalizing this could make the process more equitable.

Partnerships

Many stakeholders saw potential for ECHO to expand its impact by fostering more collaboration, both across private sectors and with other county programs like Volusia Forever. Grant writers and grantees emphasized that stronger partnerships between nonprofits, cities, and cultural institutions could enhance project sustainability and reduce taxpayer risk. Several cited examples, like the county owning property while nonprofits operate it, as a model worth expanding.

Environmental stakeholders and Advisory Committee members suggested that ECHO could better leverage Volusia Forever by funding complementary access or infrastructure projects on protected lands. Some proposed deeper alignment or even co-funding mechanisms between the two programs to advance shared goals. With a perceived lack of non-profits in the environmental category pursuing this funding, some liked the idea of utilizing public-private partnerships for "E" specifically.

Looking ahead to 2040, one former committee member noted that preservation may become a stronger public priority. Positioning ECHO now to support long-term environmental and access goals, particularly through public-private partnerships, could help meet future needs more effectively.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

With a few exceptions, stakeholders think the program has been and will continue to be successful in providing quality of life amenities to Volusia County residents. Most also see opportunities that could improve the program through 2040. A few of the themes are included in the table below, showing the average of stakeholder sentiment regarding the topic (analyzed by interview, not weighted for group interviews) on a scale from -5 to +5, as well as the frequency with which they were discussed.

Theme	Average	Frequency Discussed
More marketing/education	3.50	16
Current ECHO sentiment	2.74	21
More accountability/transparency for DCE	2.56	18
Citizen input on ECHO	2.38	8
Easing restrictions for non-profits	2.09	16
Easing restrictions in general/for cities	1.29	7
Using ECHO funds for maintenance (past/present or future)	-0.33	9

Based on these extensive conversations, TPMA synthesized stakeholder feedback into the following recommendations. Note that these are not all compatible with each other, and these are not necessarily TPMA's recommendations (which will be forthcoming).

MARKETING & EDUCATION

- Increase ECHO's marketing capacity to highlight successful projects via the internet, billboards, and physical print materials
- Regularly represent ECHO at community events, including festivals and Chamber-sponsored events.
- Create fun ways to engage residents, such as an "ECHO Passport" and field trip series.
- Work with visitor bureaus to promote ECHO projects

Community Engagement (sub of Marketing & Education)

- Reintroduce listening sessions to gather input on evolving community needs.
- Have more physical presence/interactive kiosks – Ocean Center, Airport, and others...
- Conduct regular county-wide surveys to inform funding priorities.
- Engage with developers and foundations on how to align with ECHO.

STRUCTURE FOR DCE

- Increase transparency and accountability for DCE.
- Share more details of DCE in advance of public meetings. Consider whether DCE should be integrated into the grant application process, including filling out a 2-pager with critical information about the project for review.
- Improve communication about how DCE funds are used, to build public trust and understanding using website and annual reports.

APPLICATION IMPROVEMENTS

- Simplify the application, starting by removing redundancies
- Consider customizing application by category, budget size, or applicant type.
- Improve the budget chart, clarify cost categories, and provide multiple examples of how to fill out the chart.
- Reduce requirements like full architectural documents, marketing plans, and operational plans, opting

for more direct questions such as a marketing checklist and operation cost increases.

- Address delays in reimbursements and budgeting updates.
- Look at stakeholders willing to open a set-aside for operations.

GRANT TERM UPDATES

- Allow for phased projects (e.g., design, then construction) and/or planning grants to help with financial and planning constraints.
- Allow for more pre-award cost recovery (e.g., increase cap on grant writing expenses).
- Explore emergency/resilience funding for repairs to ECHO-funded sites.
- Consider modest operational support (e.g., utilities, maintenance, not staffing).
- Incentivize adaptation for climate change, e.g., sea level rise planning, green infrastructure.
- Allow staff to review budget changes that don't involve a changing scope.

VISION-SETTING / PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP ROLE

- Take a more active role in strategic leadership and long-term planning with cities and nonprofits.
- Pursue public-private partnerships to reduce taxpayer risk and expand program reach. Consider non-profits and private entities to operate ECHO facilities.
- Coordinate more intentionally with Volusia Forever to align land preservation with access or programming.
- Use ECHO funding to support broader resiliency and access goals across sectors.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT

- Broaden diversity: professional background, skill set, and geography
- Explore term limits to reduce politicization while retaining expertise.
- Provide more consistent training and guidance on scoring criteria and application review.
- Offer anonymous applicant feedback mechanisms for grantees.
- Ensure equitable access to committee members for technical questions or early guidance.

The next phase of strategic planning will be taking these findings, along with program discovery and community survey findings, to a focused group of stakeholders to fuel a design sprint, with the aim of prioritizing strategies and identifying goals and objectives to support them.

ECHO DESIGN SPRINT SUMMARY

Volusia ECHO partnered with TPMA to conduct a strategic plan through 2040. After engaging the public through a survey and conducting extensive interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders (Advisory Committee members, nonprofit and municipal grantees, and residents), TPMA visited Volusia County to host two in-person design sprints in June 2025.

The first design sprint included the Advisory Board chair, grant writers, and representatives from nonprofits and municipalities. The second design sprint included the entire Advisory Board along with ECHO staff. Participants brought a wide variety of professional expertise in municipal governance, nonprofit management, economic and community development, environmental conservation, arts administration, historical preservation, and civic advocacy. In these engagements, TPMA highlighted key stakeholder findings for these groups and guided them through a fast-paced “design sprint” process aimed at identifying, prioritizing, and building out solutions. The results of each session are presented together below.

In total, TPMA engaged with twenty-five individuals in this phase of the process. The full list of stakeholders engaged is in the appendix.



SAILBOAT ACTIVITY (SWOT)

This activity presented participants with an example SWOT analysis and asked them to add to, edit, and prioritize the list.

* indicates a priority for Session 1

† indicates a priority for Session 2

Bold indicates a priority for both sessions



STRENGTHS

- **Quality-of-Life Enhancement**
- Multi-faceted mission and diverse appeal*
- Funding resiliency (voter-approved for the next 15 years)†
- Proven impact
- Supportive staff
- Geographic distribution of projects



WEAKNESSES

- **Complex and burdensome application process and strict guidelines**
- **Low public awareness/marketing deficiency**
- Too many “O” projects compared to E, C, and H*
- Lack of political leaders’ understanding†
- Maintenance funding gaps
- Shrinking external resources for Not-for-profits (i.e. state & federal funding)



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Community visioning** - ECHO could take more of a leadership role in Quality-of-Life planning
- Stronger alignment with Volusia Forever†
- Strategic integration with master and other plans*
- **Marketing strategy†**
- Public-private partnerships
- Regional economic growth
- Funding public art



THREATS

- **Politicizing the process***
- Overdevelopment†
- Long-term maintenance needed†
- Environmental risks
- Changing fiscal landscape
- Demographic shifts

HOW MIGHT WE

This activity asked participants to turn their priorities from the SWOT into “How Might We... (address this topic)” questions. When rephrased, these questions become overarching goals.

Session 1

Focus Area 1: Application Process and Requirements

Focus Area 2: Nonprofit Access and Funding Barriers

Focus Area 3: Transparency, Depoliticization, and Advisory Review

Focus Area 4: Strategic Alignment and Partnerships

Focus Area 5: Marketing and Public Awareness

FOCUS AREA 1

Application Process and Requirements

- Streamline and simplify the application process by reducing complexity and onerous guidelines, ensuring ECHO funds are directed toward mission-driven projects while making the process more accessible for nonprofits with limited support.
- Have ECHO staff and/or the ECHO board show how each section of the application is being utilized.
- Create three different applications for nonprofits, municipalities, and DCE.
- Create and implement a different type of application and implement different funding requirements.
- Review application requirements to ensure each requirement adds value to the project.
- Ensure that all entities, including the county, go through the application process on all projects.

FOCUS AREA 2

Nonprofit Access and Funding Barriers

- Reduce or eliminate barriers to funding for nonprofits.
- Reduce long reporting periods.
- Make strategic investments – integration with small nonprofits.

FOCUS AREA 3

Transparency, Depoliticization, and Advisory Review

- Have the advisory committee review and rank the DCE to make recommendations to the county council.
- Make decisions based on facts and figures, not opinions.
- Utilize successful projects as justification and proof of program success.
- Stay focused on preserving and advancing quality-of-life enhancements.

FOCUS AREA 4

Strategic Alignment and Partnerships

- Strengthen ECHO’s alignment with Volusia Forever by increasing collaboration and leveraging opportunities, including the Community Reinvestment Act, to expand access to green space.
- Work with cities to address expressed needs in master plans and capital improvement plans.
- Involve the community and businesses in the planning process.

FOCUS AREA 5

Marketing and Public Awareness

- Enhance the marketing and education of ECHO’s proven impact.
- Market ECHO’s success more effectively to let citizens know of the different organizations that have benefited from ECHO.
- Provide more marketing to reach residents about ECHO projects.

Session 2

Focus Area 1: Improving Political Conditions

Focus Area 2: Marketing & Education

Focus Area 3: More Accessible Application

Focus Area 4: Maintenance

Focus Area 5: Miscellaneous

FOCUS AREA 1

Improving Political Conditions

- Gain synergy between ECHO and County Council.
- Educate our politicians of the benefits and economic impact of ECHO.
- Navigate the politics for ECHO funding.
- “Political focus review of development.”
- Define the role of the program (political).
- Mitigate politicizing the process.

FOCUS AREA 2

Marketing and Education

- Market the programs to our citizens.
- Explain how quality of life enhances.
- Market updates to the community.
- Make citizens aware of ECHO’s Quality of Life mission.
- Enhance and expand marketing across Volusia County to increase public awareness, understanding, and engagement with the ECHO program.

FOCUS AREA 3

More Accessible Application

- Make the application process simplified and perhaps geared towards municipalities or nonprofits.
- Make the application process more accessible and easier for smaller organizations.
- Make a new application to make the process easier for nonprofits and municipalities.

FOCUS AREA 4

Maintenance

- Quantify maintenance requirements of grant holders.
- Address long-term maintenance requirements.

FOCUS AREA 5

Miscellaneous

- Sustain funding resiliency.
- Sustain funding moving forward.
- Increase synergy with strategic planning of all stakeholders.



SOLUTION JAM

Participants were asked to select three responses from the “How might we” exercise to use as goals and brainstorm potential solutions or approaches to accomplishing those goals.

Session 1

FOCUS AREA 1

Application Process and Requirements

Create a streamlined process for getting projects funded that align with the ECHO mission, ensuring all funding is utilized effectively.

- Utilize tourism tax to fund capital projects and advertising
- Application/guidelines focused on ECHO mission with no other requirements
- Phase Grants. 1. Planning and Design. 2. Construction. If awarded design and not follow through. Should get paid back by ECHO.
- 3 distinct applications for funding projects, including DCE, municipalities, and nonprofits.
- Eliminate cap on grant amount per project, especially for exceptional projects.
- Submit an exceptional project at any time out of cycle
- Eliminate NTP requirement. Allow project to proceed once grant agreement issued.
- Eliminate requirement for CST. Plan prior to application.
- Eliminate ongoing monitoring and annual reporting because the public monitors and it increases application cost.
- Questions - Use a fillable form/standards for application format

Contribute to assisting the application process.

- Create a 2-tier ECHO application:
- Planning grants under \$50k to support A+E does with a commitment to apply the following cycle for small nonprofits.
- Regular ECHO application.
- Reduce requirements on certain areas
- Online grant portal to manage applications
- Increase maximum grant award amounts
- Can we provide resources to small non-profits to help them navigate the application

Add a “design” phase to ECHO funding.

- Create phased plan for ECHO design. Build phase I and phase II.
- The funding for design could be reimbursed when construction complete. Just like Florida Inland Navigation District does.
- Fund design in Phase I. Fund construction in Phase II.

Better balance the ECHO projects.

- Balance actively seek out non – “O”
- Category specific applications
- Converts to community vision – long-term vision.
- TA – identify potential projects – help with application and match ideas and partnerships.
- Combine environmental projects with Forever and water access and land preservation (vs strict building)
- Work with environmental groups to and get ideas as they do not build things but could have ideas.
- Balance ECHO workshops with nonprofits by category. Can tied their an 501-c-3 reg.
- Easier terms for ECH

Develop different applications for each type of project (i.e., environmental, cultural, historic, and outdoor recreation).

- Create an application for each E, C, H, and O.
- ECHO staff to create specific questions for each letter (application)
- Require less years reporting for playgrounds.
- For outdoor recreation. Do not require business plan, feasibility study, and marketing plan.
- Ranking could occur per letter (category)

FOCUS AREA 2

Nonprofit Access and Funding Barriers

Reduce match requirement to encourage more applications.

- Non-profits allow a smaller match.
- Make it easier for all to apply.
- Increase the amount of the grant.
- Require a 25% match for cities and a 10% match for nonprofits.
- Location match requirement for nonprofits. Lower match requirements for cities.

FOCUS AREA 3

Transparency, Oversight, and Advisory Review/Depoliticization

Uncover and shed light on possible environmental, political, and demographic influences in the process.

- DCE applications are reviewed and ranked by ECHO, and recommendations are made to the County Council.
- County involves cities/ECHO advisory/non-profits in DCE plan (planning session)
- Prioritize countywide strategic planning of ECHO projects, including public input.

Minimize the DCE.

- More access to funds by simplifying the process and having more flexible rules.
- Require DCEs to go through the application process, committee review, etc.

FOCUS AREA 4

Strategic Alignment and Partnerships

Involve the community in shaping a long-term vision for quality of life.

- Conduct public regional actions and workshops from general to focused, i.e., historic structures in X place, municipalities in order to create a community plan to address long-term vision on specific areas.
- Direct outreach to non-profits
- Community plans include specific letters/guidelines. Example alignment of Forever and ECHO. Example historic structure. Staff plan – engage get on potential partners and resources.
- Community involvement. Regularly conduct surveys.
- Community vision. Conduct geographic interactive listening sessions. Back and forth.
- Outline DCE plan to cities and all non-profits twice a year.
- Workshop meeting with county council about DCE. 5 year plan facilitations and guardrails to better fit overall ECHO parameters.

FOCUS AREA 5

Marketing and Public Awareness

Increase awareness of ECHO assets to residents and future residents.

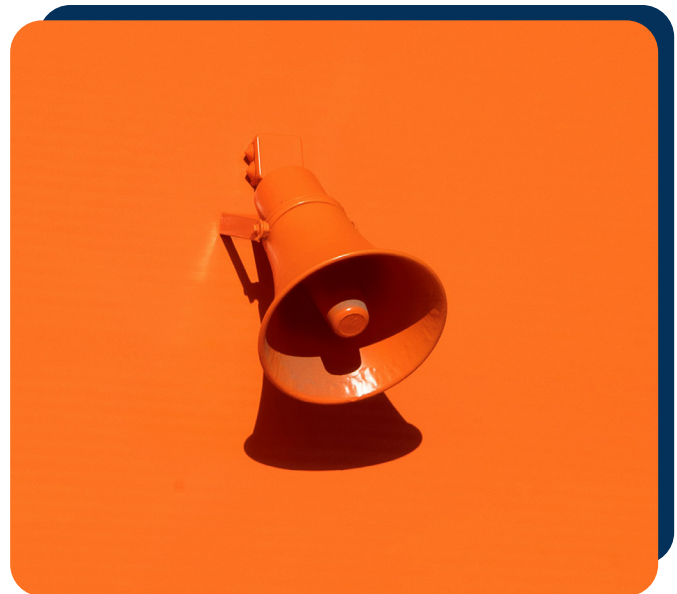
- Set up a meeting with the staff.
- Flexible guidebook or rules to meet needs. Focus on project scopes, not policy.

Reinforce and improve public awareness of the multi-faceted mission of ECHO's purpose or accomplishments.

- Yearly, ongoing, multi-touchpoint marketing campaign.
- Social media
- "Highlight" projects – Facebook/Instagram/YouTube
- Chambers – local business
- Adv. Authorities.
- Continue signage – were concerns, but very important for public awareness.
- Awareness. Give details for signage, not just reno of ECHO
- Elected Officials roundtable.
- Billboard campaign directed to yearly projects.
- Interactive Apps/websites on ECHO projects
- Awareness. Visit civic groups. Be a presenter at their meetings regularly.
- Website
- Work with the tourism boards to be part of their campaign.
- Awareness. Outreach through schools. Work with teacher orgs.
- Awareness. County does plenty of press releases but they are buried among themselves. Do direct media outreach.
- Facilitate regional tourism through advertising.

Increase awareness of ECHO assets to residents and future residents.

- Listening Sessions should be held periodically in different cities.
- ECHO advertising and marketing inside Volusia County for projects/accessibility.
- Create new opportunities for public participation.
- Partnership with Tourism tax.
- PBS advertising – Channel 13.
- Rack Cards and Billboards.



Session 2

FOCUS AREA 1

Improving Political Conditions

Educate our politicians of the benefits and economic impact of ECHO.

- Meet with Council members who appointed you – give them a report on recommendations prior to them voting
- Organize site tours for politicians during application process
- Proposed economic solutions – directly with end users

Comply with results of what residents want.

- Prioritize residents desires
- Decide to lead [illegible] on priorities as we see them
- Keep public's expressed priorities in mind with annual grant process
- Review DCE need and transparency – does it meet residents' expectations?
- Most grants [illegible] DCE should be [illegible] with citizens requests
- Discuss with applicants at beginning of process – what will be needed long-term to keep in good shape – years and money?

FOCUS AREA 2

Marketing and Education

Improve marketing to increase public awareness and understanding of ECHO.

- Target new homebuyers and residents with [illegible] information
- Marketing kiosks somewhere in Volusia County
- Funding discussions locally
- Marketing workshops – present templates
- Synergy with CVBs/Advertising Authorities
- Rack cards/billboards
- Review process locally
- Marketing improvements
- Investment in community accessible info like on busses or public spaces
- Partner with like organizations for marketing

Market the program so Volusia knows about these amenities

- ECHO Rangers
- Schools; homeschoolers
- Yearly marketing program
- Social media
- Post printed flyers to be handed out
- Annual roadshow with the cities and nonprofits

Make the application process more user-friendly.

- Minimize paperwork
- Color code
- Online application
- DCE competes and must be ranked
- Phase projects for funding
- Review the application process to make it more user-friendly (and by element – ECHO)

Improve awareness of ECHO.

- Community-based programs for youth
- More advertising of ECHO
- Collaborate with VCBs and advertising boards to include ECHO in programs and marketing efforts.
- Market to schools
- ECHO – say it again and again and again. In print, online, signage

FOCUS AREA 3

More Accessible Application

Create a new application to make the process easier to nonprofits and municipalities

- Stakeholders meetings to [illegible] design and identify pain points
- Category apps – Nonprofits vs municipalities
- Community education sessions to help guide new interest and applicants
- Improvements allowable rather than maintenance
- Perhaps a phased grant. 1) design, plan 2) construction. If plan does not move forward, grant \$ returned
- Sliding match for nonprofits and municipalities
- Redesign application process
- Direct review of application process with applicants

FOCUS AREA 4

Maintenance

Qualify maintenance requirements

- Make a maintenance part of the application process [and budget]
- Can we request applicants to include maintenance in the application/budget
- Determine responsibility for ongoing maintenance
- Maintenance funded by DCE
- Include maintenance plan in application – a detailed plan – source of funding for maintenance
- Direct review of application process with applicants

FOCUS AREA 5

Miscellaneous

Make ECHO a minimum standard for overdevelopment.

- Develop Land Development Regulations to enhance ECHO opportunities
- Make program a part of the development standards

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



This section presents the recommended strategies for advancing Volusia County ECHO's mission and achieving its long-term goals. Each recommendation identifies specific objectives, actionable steps, responsible parties, timelines, and measurable performance metrics to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective program implementation. These strategies are designed to enhance public engagement, strengthen governance, optimize operational efficiency, and align county investments with community priorities.

1. Marketing & Engagement

Objective: Expand public awareness and participation in ECHO programs while fostering community engagement and partnerships to deliver more projects that enhance Volusia County's quality of life.

From both interviews and design sprint results of both sessions, marketing and engagement emerged as one of the most critical themes for stakeholders who recognize the value that ECHO projects bring to Volusia County. Still, grantees and Advisory Committee members noted that many citizens responding to the community survey did not know much about ECHO or ECHO projects.

To maximize community impact, it is recommended to allocate more time and resources to advertising both the program and its projects. High-level goals from this section of the design sprint included “enhance the marketing and education of ECHO’s proven impact,” “make citizens aware of ECHO’s Quality of Life mission,” and “improve marketing to increase public awareness and understanding of ECHO.” ECHO is currently developing a marketing strategy in addition to this strategic plan, which will support and inform the bulk of this strategy. However, there are steps ECHO can take beyond traditional marketing to inform, educate, and engage the public.

Marketing

1.1

Increase ECHO’s marketing efforts to highlight its impact through digital, print, and physical media, ultimately increasing public access, appreciation, and voter support for program renewal.

RATIONALE

ECHO has invested millions in community assets over the past 25 years. It's time to ensure residents and visitors are aware of and able to benefit from these investments. With a long track record of success, the program is well-positioned to shift some focus from development to visibility.

Survey results show that approximately 28% of respondents are not very familiar with ECHO. Considering response bias, actual public awareness is likely even lower across Volusia County. Improved visibility can foster public goodwill, increase the usage of funded facilities, and support future program renewals.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. Digital Presence

Goal: Reach younger audiences and residents via online platforms.

- Launch a dedicated microsite that showcases project impacts, maps of funded locations, grantee stories, and program history.
- Develop and distribute short videos (single or multiple grantee spotlights, community testimonials, “Where are they now?” updates).
- Expand use of social media platforms to share success stories, updates, and events. Beyond posting on official ECHO channels, share collateral with grantees, many of whom expressed a willingness to share ECHO marketing materials in their own channels.

2. Free Public Advertising

Goal: Reach broad public audiences, including tourists and older residents who may not engage digitally.

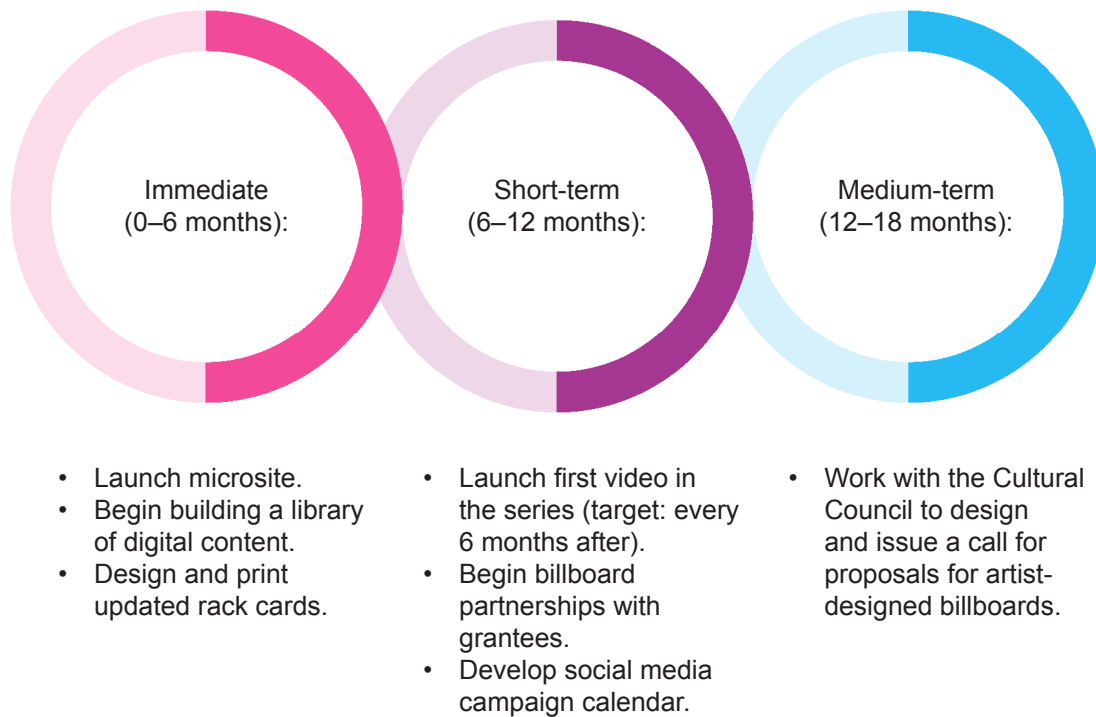
- Identify high-visibility County-owned locations (e.g., Airport, Ocean Center) for free billboard-style advertising.
- Partner with ECHO grant recipients and the Cultural Council to co-brand campaigns and integrate public art into billboards or display spaces. Consider funding the County's art in public places program using ECHO funds to increase the recognition of ECHO in County public access facilities.
- Complement billboard efforts with digital kiosks in libraries, visitor centers, and municipal buildings to ensure broad accessibility.

3. Physical Print Materials

Goal: Reach older residents and ensure visibility in physical spaces.

- Produce and distribute rack cards for libraries, visitor centers, municipal offices, and community centers. Additionally, these materials can be shared with grantees to display and distribute as well.
- Consider an enhanced new homeowner ECHO engagement initiative using property appraiser data on new home purchases and a direct mailing campaign that includes a personalized map showing their home's specific proximity to ECHO-funded amenities they now help support through their property taxes..

TIMELINE: ONGOING



METRICS

- Increase in public awareness based on follow-up surveys
- Website visits and video views
- Growth in social media followers and engagement
- Number of collaborative billboard or print campaigns launched
- Increase in attendance or visitation at ECHO-funded sites

1.2

Create fun ways to engage residents, such as an “ECHO Passport” and a field trip series, and further develop the ECHO Rangers program.

RATIONALE

- These engagement efforts encourage exploration of ECHO-funded projects and support equitable access across the county.
- Young families are a key target audience for long-term awareness and support of ECHO.
- During stakeholder interviews, ideas such as the ECHO Passport, field trips, and expanding ECHO Rangers were widely supported.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. Expand the ECHO Rangers Program

- ECHO Rangers already exists for students in grades 1–5, offering educational programming at ECHO sites.
- Consider opportunities to enhance and expand the program, such as:
 - a. New content or activities at additional ECHO locations
 - b. Age group expansion (e.g., adding a junior/senior ranger level)
 - c. Partnerships with local Scouting organizations for aligned programming or badge tie-ins
- Owner: Volusia County Education Coordinator

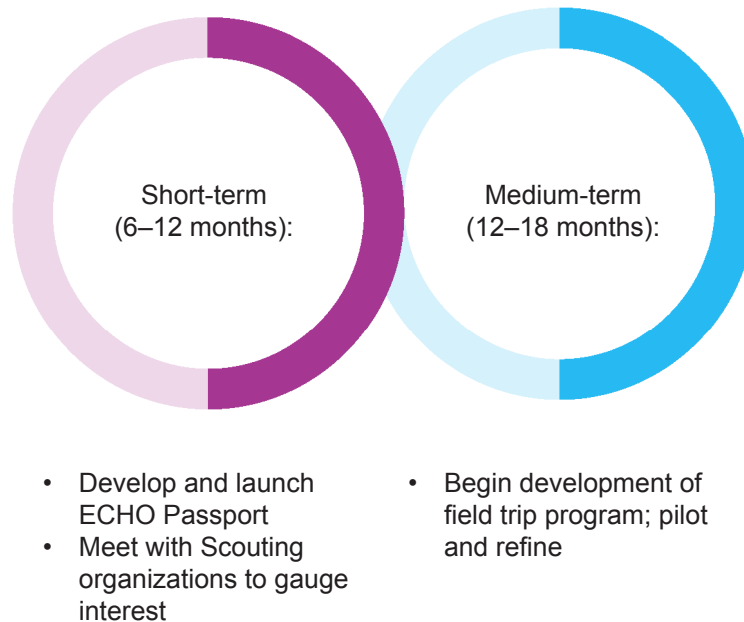
2. Create a Field Trip Program with Local Schools

- Partner with schools to facilitate educational field trips to ECHO sites or offer virtual reality field trips.
- Develop curriculum-aligned materials and take-home info for students and families about the ECHO program and visited sites.
- Consider offering entry fee subsidies or transportation support for schools serving high-need communities. Investment income from the ECHO reserve fund may be an option to support such a program with non-Ad valorem funds. Start with a small pilot, then expand as partnerships develop.

3. Launch an ECHO Passport Program

- A self-guided, family-friendly passport encouraging residents and visitors to explore ECHO-funded sites.
- Open to all ages; unlike ECHO Rangers, no pre-registration or specific scheduling is required.
- Participants receive a stamp or digital check-in at each site.
- Include tiered incentives, such as:
 - a. Visit 5 sites in each ECHO category → ECHO T-shirt
 - b. Visit 10+ sites in each ECHO category → Entry in drawing for local memberships or experiences
- Materials can be distributed via visitor centers, libraries, and local government buildings.

TIMELINE: ONGOING



METRICS

- Number of Passport participants and site check-ins
- Number of new or returning participants in the ECHO Rangers program
- Number of schools and students participating in field trips
- Feedback from participating families and teachers
- Social media or earned media coverage of program activities

Marketing

1.3 Collaborate with visitor bureaus to promote ECHO-funded sites to tourists.

RATIONALE

- ECHO investments are designed primarily for the benefit of Volusia County residents, but they also enhance amenities that are attractive to visitors.
- While education about the ECHO program itself is not as important for tourists, promoting ECHO sites to tourists can increase usage, drive new audiences to under-visited areas, and generate revenue for local businesses.
- Strategic visitor engagement can complement resident-focused efforts and create broader awareness of the County's commitment to quality-of-life investments.
- Building ECHO program awareness among residents creates a multiplier effect that directly supports our local economy. When residents understand and appreciate ECHO amenities, they are more likely to showcase these assets to visiting friends and family members and encourage visitors to explore

more local attractions rather than traveling to neighboring counties. The result is increased visitor spending at local restaurants, shops, and service businesses, which strengthens the commercial tax base and supports local employment.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. Build Partnerships with Local Tourism Organizations

- Initiate or deepen collaboration with:
 - a. Daytona Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - b. New Smyrna Beach Area Visitors Bureau
 - c. West Volusia Advertising Authority
- Identify shared marketing goals and cross-promotional opportunities.

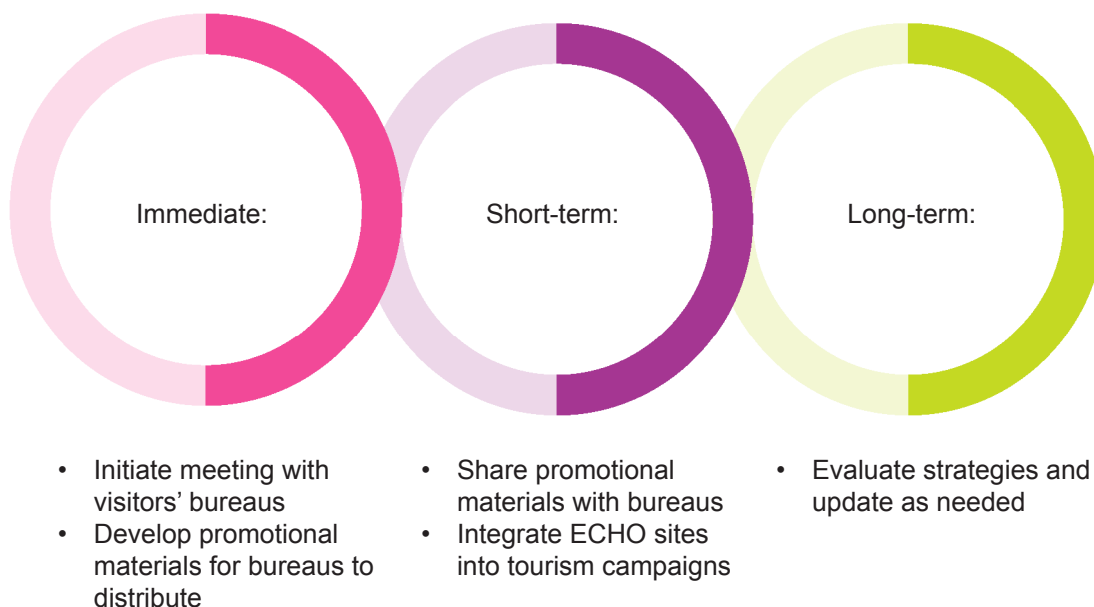
2. Develop and Share Physical & Digital Promotional Materials

- Provide rack cards, brochures, and ECHO Passport booklets at tourism information centers, hotels, welcome centers, and popular attractions.
- Create printable or digital maps highlighting ECHO sites by category
- Share photo and video content with visitor bureaus to include in their marketing materials and social media.
- Feature ECHO-funded locations in visitor itineraries during significant regional events (e.g., races, bike weeks, art festivals).

3. Integrate ECHO Projects into Regional Tourism Campaigns

- Encourage inclusion of ECHO-funded destinations (e.g., museums, trails, historic sites, environmental education centers) in thematic tourism campaigns such as:
 - a. Heritage tourism
 - b. Outdoor adventure
 - c. Arts and culture itineraries
- Deploy an AI-powered trip planner on the ECHO microsite that instantly generates personalized itineraries connecting visitors with relevant parks, cultural venues, and recreational facilities based on their interests, group size, location and available time – transforming ECHO-funded sites into active tourism assets that demonstrate measurable ROI.

TIMELINE



1.4 Reimagine listening sessions to gather input on evolving community needs.

RATIONALE

- Listening sessions were frequently mentioned during interviews and design sprints—some stakeholders recalled past sessions, while others saw them as a strong future engagement tool.
- Although ECHO staff have held sessions before, they noted low attendance. A more creative, embedded approach could improve participation.
- As Direct County Expenditure (DCE) projects increase, intentional community engagement becomes increasingly important. Listening sessions offer a valuable avenue to share residents' desires with County officials.
- Participating in and sponsoring widely attended events offers a dual opportunity: share the story of ECHO and gather valuable input from a broad cross-section of residents.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. Meet People Where They Are – Embed Listening in Community Events

- Rather than standalone sessions, attend existing high-traffic events hosted by or in partnership with ECHO grantees (e.g., museums, environmental centers, cultural festivals, park events).
- Additionally, represent ECHO at community events, such as festivals, environmental days, and chamber-sponsored events to share information and gather feedback.
- Set up interactive ECHO tables or feedback stations that blend education with data-gathering.

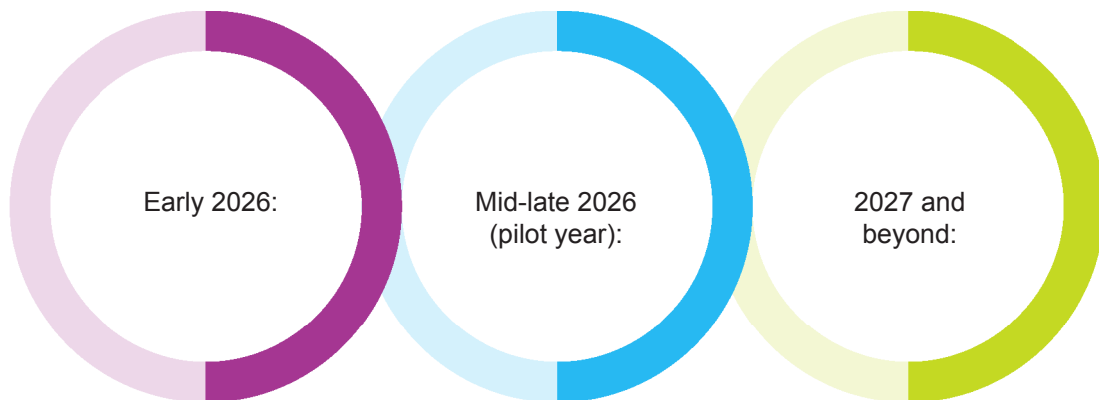
2. Use Creative, Family-Friendly Engagement Methods

- To make feedback fun and approachable, consider the following:
 - a. “What’s missing?” wall with sticky notes or drawing prompts
 - b. Kids’ station where children draw what they’d like to see in their community
 - c. Quick polls or sticker-voting on community priorities—could include potential projects County Council is considering

3. Strengthen Community Input Reporting to Advisory Committee and Elected Officials

- Compile findings from each event into a simple summary or visual report.
- Present these findings to the County Council and ECHO Advisory Committee regularly—perhaps annually or biannually—as part of community accountability and planning.

TIMELINE



- Identify key community events to attend
- Begin attending events and collecting input, aiming for 3-5
- Evaluate reach and impact
- Expand reach as staffing & capacity allow

SUCCESS

- Number of events attended and/or sponsored annually
- Number of citizens engaged
- Ideas shared with County Council
- Public awareness gains (measured via surveys, microsite traffic, or anecdotal feedback)

Engagement

1.5

Create opportunities for passive, in-person learning and feedback by increasing physical presence using interactive kiosks at key locations (e.g., Ocean Center, Airport, etc.).

RATIONALE

Not all residents or visitors can or will engage online or at staffed events. Passive, in-person exhibits and kiosks allow for continuous engagement, even with limited staffing.

These installations can help residents and tourists discover new, lesser-known ECHO sites, potentially alleviating crowding at more popular destinations. They also help gather insight into community priorities and awareness of amenities.

KEY COMPONENTS

1. Enhance the ECHO Presence at the Ocean Center

- The Ocean Center currently hosts a small ECHO gallery; this can be expanded to include a simple interactive exhibit with features such as:
 - a. A touchscreen map of ECHO-funded sites
 - b. A “Where have you been?” visitor pin board or digital check-in
 - c. A question wall (e.g., “What do you wish existed in Volusia?”)
 - d. QR codes linking to the ECHO microsite or feedback forms
- Rotating displays could highlight featured projects or upcoming events.

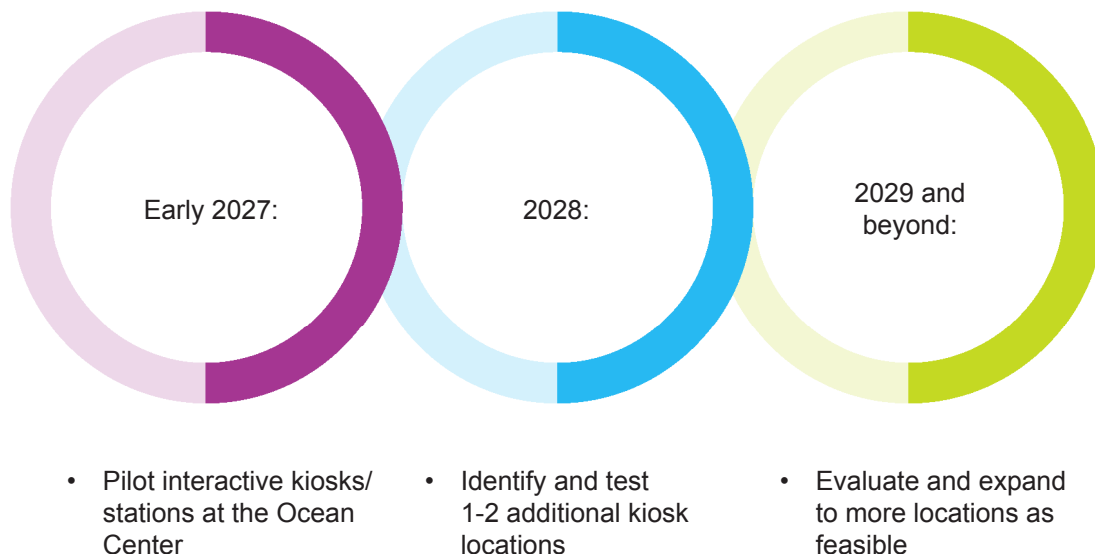
2. Install Interactive Kiosks in Key Public Locations

- Place touchscreen kiosks or low-tech display boards in strategic, high-traffic areas, such as:
 - Visitor or recreation centers
 - Libraries or museums
 - Beaches or trailheads
- Kiosks could include:
 - a. Interactive maps of ECHO sites by category
 - b. Suggested itineraries (“Visit 3 sites near you today!”)
 - c. Short surveys or prompts (e.g., “What’s your favorite place in Volusia?”)
 - d. Integration with ECHO Passport check-ins or prize tiers
- Could explore partnerships with private venues (e.g., malls, transportation hubs) for broader reach.

3. Collect and Analyze Feedback Data

- Design kiosks to log interactions (e.g., most viewed pages, most common feedback)
- Regularly compile and analyze data to inform ECHO’s planning and marketing strategies.
- Ensure ADA accessibility and offer multilingual content where appropriate.

TIMELINE



METRICS

- Number of kiosks or exhibit locations installed
- Number of interactions logged (touches, feedback entries, check-ins)
- Number of unique users or visitors engaged
- Quality and volume of feedback collected
- Engagement levels by location (to inform future site placements)

Engagement

1.6 Conduct regular county-wide surveys to inform funding priorities.

RATIONALE

Recent surveys were done in 2022 and again in 2025, as part of this planning process, providing valuable information on residents' understanding of, perception of, and priorities for the ECHO program. One of the priorities for stakeholders was implementing citizen feedback into ECHO's decisions, to "comply with the results of what residents want." Having a regular survey cadence will help inform ECHO staff, the Advisory Committee, and the Council on resident quality-of-life perceptions and ECHO priorities.

KEY COMPONENTS

- While rotating or expanding other questions in longer survey years, in shorter years, streamline the community survey to focus on core measures:
 - a. Knowledge of ECHO
 - b. Current Quality of Life Rating
 - c. Highest priorities for quality-of-life amenities
 - d. Opinion of ECHO
- Partner with grantees, libraries, community organizations, etc., to distribute
- Integrate results into other engagement.
- Provide results for the County Council and help them interpret results, including:
 - a. What has changed since the previous survey?
 - b. How do citizens' priorities align with the Council's projects and with grants distributed?
- Publish results overview on ECHO microsite.

TIMELINE

Beginning in 2026, administer the shorter survey every year. The more comprehensive survey can be administered every 5 years, with the next full survey scheduled for 2030.

METRICS

- Number of surveys distributed
- Number of responses per survey
- Feedback from County Councilors

1.7 Engage with community organizations on how to align quality-of-life resources and initiatives with ECHO.

RATIONALE

- The work of community organizations frequently intersects with the goals of ECHO, but stakeholders have reported a lack of communication and alignment of effort. It is assumed that increased engagement between these entities and ECHO could result in more impactful projects and direct community resources and initiatives where they might be most effective.
- Chambers of commerce are often regarded as conveners of businesses and nonprofits that have direct experience and knowledge of what community resources are available. Coordinating with these entities might allow ECHO not only to disseminate information about the program but also to gather insights. Opening these lines of communication might also serve to inspire the development of new projects or catalyze private investment to support local quality of life efforts.
- Foundations and other funders might be prioritizing the same types of projects as ECHO, leaving gaps in resources to meet the evolving needs of local nonprofits. Since private funding sources often have more flexibility to adapt to change than the public sector, coordination could result in increased capacity and better strategic alignment, ensuring well-rounded philanthropic support in Volusia County.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Work with community organizations (e.g., Chambers of Commerce) to convene interested businesses and nonprofits for discussions about ECHO, local quality of life efforts related to ECHO's priorities, and private sector insights.
- Host coordination meetings with applicable organizations providing adjacent funding (e.g., foundations) centered around key questions, such as:
 - a. What are ECHO's funding priorities? Is there a way for these funders to help advance those priorities?
 - b. If ECHO is funding capital projects, what resources are available to help applicants with programming and other needs?
 - c. Is ECHO funding the creation of projects that funders are not interested in supporting?
 - d. What resources, collaborations, or initiatives exist that could support the success of ECHO projects?

TIMELINE:

Start in 2027, revisit as needed

METRICS

- Number of community organizations met with
- Meeting outcomes
- Feedback from ECHO staff about the quality of information gathered

2. Application/Grant Terms

Objective: Enhance the ECHO grant process by streamlining applications, modernizing grant terms, and strengthening accountability to ensure that projects remain accessible, sustainable, and aligned with community priorities.

As program staff and Advisory Committee members hope to see more applications from nonprofits, the application is a core focus of the strategic plan. Stakeholders, particularly those who had previously applied for an ECHO grant, described the process as overly burdensome, complex, and redundant. Improving the process was the main priority for most grantees. Through conversations with applicants, it became clear that while there were indeed ways the application could be improved, the grant terms were sometimes more burdensome than the application itself, especially for smaller nonprofits. Advisory Committee members also believed that the application could be improved.

Application

2.1 Streamline the application, starting by removing redundancies and overly burdensome application questions, sections, or requirements.

RATIONALE

Grantees reported that sections of the grant application feel redundant and unnecessary to them, going as far as to say it is the “most difficult” grant for which they have applied. The following adjustments are recommended to begin streamlining the application.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Consider moving **Questions 21-23** under Question 20.
 - a. “Describe how the green infrastructure...including how the project will conserve water, conserve energy/promote water efficiency.
 - b. If this is a new facility, how will it meet the green building standards or certifications?”
- Simplify **Question 29**:
 - a. “List the name of staff dedicated to this project (include their responsibilities and the amount of time each will be spending on the project per week.”
 - b. Remove “amount of time each will be spending on the project per week” as it is not necessary.
- Section: **Operating Forecast Detail**
 - a. Replace **Question 37** with more specific questions. These would also serve to replace the business plan.
 - i. Current Question 37: “Outline how the facility or project will operate once complete. The narration should include such items (as applicable) as staffing, maintenance requirements, increased programming, fees, and memberships. Include a detailed maintenance and replacement plan for the 20-year compliance period:”
 - b. Replace with:
 - i. How will the facility or site be operated once completed? What are the expected operating costs (e.g., utilities, insurance, staffing, programming) and how will they be funded?
 - ii. What is your long-term plan for capital replacement and upkeep (20-year compliance period)? Include maintenance or replacement schedule for major equipment, structures, or systems (e.g., roofing, HVAC, trails, signage), if applicable. How do you plan to fund replacements or repairs over time?

- iii. Will you commit to maintaining and replacing all necessary components for the full 20 years of the restrictive covenant? Do you anticipate any difficulties in doing so?
- iv. Will the project generate revenue for sustainability, and if so, how (e.g., rentals, fees, ticket sales, memberships, gift shop, etc.)? If yes, please list typical costs and explain how fees will be structured.
- Remove “next project year” column in Question 39, at least for nonprofits.
- As the application is updated, it is essential to communicate/advertise application changes to past and potential grantees.

TIMELINE

Immediate: next grant cycle

METRICS

- Feedback from grantees
- Increased number of applications over time

Application

2.2 Replace requirements like business plans, marketing plans, and operational plans with more specific questions.

RATIONALE

These sections of the application are intended to gather information from grantees about marketing and sustainability for projects. While the information is important, and ECHO provides examples and tips for creating these, they continue to be difficult for grantees and don't always yield the relevant information for review.

KEY COMPONENTS

- The Business plan can be eliminated. This is already covered in earlier metrics and goals questions, and additional information is covered in the update to Question 37.
- Replace the Marketing plan with the following questions (or similar):
 - a. Do you agree to comply with the requirement to market your ECHO project in the following ways? (Check all that apply: ECHO temporary sign, ECHO permanent sign, ECHO logo on website, ECHO logo on all print materials/PR regarding this project)
 - b. Will you have a press release and/or ribbon cutting for the project (preferred but not required)?
- Most of what is asked for in the Feasibility study has already been covered. Can be replaced with just this question (or similar):
 - a. Have you conducted any public engagement to support or inform this project (e.g., surveys, public meetings, stakeholder discussions)? If yes, please briefly describe what was done and summarize any key findings.

TIMELINE:

Late 2026/early 2027

METRICS

- Feedback from grantees
- Increased number of applications

2.3

Launch a phased grant structure that supports project development in stages, beginning with planning and design and followed by construction, to strengthen project readiness, feasibility, and long-term impact.

RATIONALE

ECHO wants to bring high-quality amenities to Volusia County. One of the most significant issues is the risk that grantees must incur when applying for ECHO grants, particularly since they are required to pay for fully engineered drawings before submitting their applications. Due to the heavy upfront costs, some grantees are hesitant to apply for projects that they would not be able to complete if they were unable to secure ECHO funds. Smaller nonprofits may forgo applying altogether to avoid the risk; larger organizations may decide to opt for a more modest project. Offering phased approaches or planning grants will increase the number and quality of projects. This solution was identified by stakeholders during the design sprint and recommended by TMPA as one of the most impactful ways to increase applications.

Two grant programs provide strong models:

- **Rebuild Illinois Cultural Capital Planning Grant** – A technical-assistance tier inside Illinois’ Rebuild Illinois Capital program designed to assist arts and cultural organizations in securing objective information before capital projects. Applicants are limited to Illinois-registered 501(c)(3)s, government municipalities and entities, and public higher-education institutions that deliver arts programming to state residents. This grant provides capital without a matching requirement to support architectural studies, feasibility analyses, site screenings, ADA assessments, and other related expenses. Note, the grant explicitly excludes fully engineered (“complete architectural”) drawings. Awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, without match requirements, are designed to prepare applicants for future construction funding within 1-2 years.
- **Mass Cultural Council’s Cultural Facilities Fund** – Feasibility and Technical Assistance Tier – A planning grant program administered by MassDevelopment and the Mass Cultural Council that provides up to \$35,000 for architectural and engineering plans or studies, business and market analysis, capital campaign feasibility, accessibility audits, energy-efficiency studies, and broader feasibility analysis. Applicants are required to secure a 1:1 full match before accessing the funds and have 12 months to complete the planning. Additional capital funding is provided once the planning grant is closed.

KEY COMPONENTS

- ECHO may consider creating a “Planning and Design” grant to increase access to capital and reduce the initial financial risk of pursuing large-scale capital projects. This tier could be used to fund architectural and engineering drawings, feasibility studies, site selection, environmental and ADA assessments, as well as market or business analyses.
- Award amounts could range from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Those receiving planning grants must enter into a restrictive covenant ensuring that the completed project will be dedicated to public use.
- These grants could still require a 1:1 match. Neither of these funds (planning grant dollars or match dollars) may be used towards the match for the construction phase.
- Applicants who have completed the planning phase for approximately 12 months could then be eligible for an ECHO capital grant.
- ECHO may adopt a 12 to 36-month window between planning close-out and construction application.
- Some stakeholders and staff have pointed out concerns that some grantees who receive planning grants may not return for construction or phase II ECHO grants. Some suggested implementing a payback clause if grantees do not move forward with their project. While this approach is

uncommon, as planning grants provide public value by informing stewardship of taxpayer money¹ and will likely deter applicants, it could help reassure taxpayers and policymakers of Volusia County that public funds are carefully safeguarded. ECHO could consider a phased payback approach, for example:

Red Flag Indicator	Recapture Risk Level	Recovery Percentage
No construction grant application filed	High	75%
Completed planning but no funding effort	Medium	50%
Site control lost due to negligence	High	75%
Organization dissolution/inactivity	Full	100%
Planning deliverables not completed	Full	100% + penalties

- The planning phase could also allow nonprofits to secure and leverage matching funds for their capital grant.
- Additional considerations may include:
 - a. Encouraging engagement of veteran, minority, and women-owned planning and design firms
 - b. Providing more precise definitions of eligible and ineligible planning types to ensure resources are best allocated toward capital project readiness
 - c. Should nonprofit grantees still express hesitation about applying for planning grants or ECHO grants in general, ECHO could consider removing the payback clause to reduce risk and encourage more applications. Note that just because an organization applies for these planning grants does not mean it will receive funding; it still faces review by the Advisory Committee, which can turn down an application should it feel that it does not meet ECHO requirements or is unlikely to come to fruition.
 - d. ECHO may consider a “systems replacement” category to allow nonprofits to identify needed upgrades and seek additional replacement grant funding. These are usually considered capital expenses, but have not historically been included in ECHO, despite the program’s capital nature.

TIMELINE:

- Launch early 2027. Revise and update as needed.
- Assess impact in 2028-2029.

METRICS

- Feedback from grantees on reduced upfront risk and improved readiness.
- Increased number of applications.
- Percentage of planning-phase projects advancing to construction within 2 years.

¹Planning grants are widely considered best practice because they allow applicants to explore feasibility, refine designs, and surface challenges before committing significant public funds to construction. Even if a project is not ultimately built, the planning work provides lasting value by informing future decisions and avoiding costly missteps. TPMA is unaware of planning grants, private or public, that include payback clauses if a project does not move to Phase II. Agencies usually see design as a standalone deliverable.

2.4 Increase allowable pre-award cost recovery for grant writing.

RATIONALE

The extensive grant application requires significant up-front investment from grantees. Inflation has increased the cost of preparing competitive applications, especially for the smaller nonprofits ECHO hopes to engage more significantly. Currently, grantees can only use funds expended on a grant writer as part of their required match. Consider increasing the cost recovery cap and provide match funding equal to the grantee for this professional service. This would reduce this barrier for entry into the grant program and increase equity in access to ECHO program funding.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Increase allowable grant writing cost recovery from \$7,500 to \$10,000 or \$15,000.
- Remove the current restriction that limits this benefit to organizations with annual budgets under \$200,000.
- Require documentation, including an agreed-upon scope of work, hourly rate, hours worked, and proof of payment.

TIMELINE:

Immediate: next grant cycle.

METRICS

- Feedback from grantees
- Increased number of applications

2.5 Support the sustainability of ECHO projects through Restrictive Covenants lifecycle via investment income.

RATIONALE

- As ECHO's capital investments mature, nonprofit needs are evolving toward long-term sustainability, including repairs, equipment replacement, and other upkeep that ensures continued public benefit. Surveyed residents emphasized the importance of the quality and maintenance of ECHO facilities. However, ECHO currently provides no mechanism for addressing these ongoing needs, despite such uses being allowed under the referendum. Meanwhile, other public grant programs, such as the National Endowment for the Arts and Allegheny County's RAD program, regularly fund things like equipment, building upgrades, and operations as part of protecting and enhancing quality-of-life investments.
- TPMA has compiled a few options to address this, and recommends ECHO begin with Option 1 and progress to Option 2 after a few years, should it wish to continue this work.
 - a. Option 1 (Recommended Start): Small competitive grant pool for urgent capital investment (e.g., HVAC, roof repairs, generators), modeled after RAD.
 - b. Option 2: A dedicated non-structural grant pathway for costs that build sustainability, such as equipment, repairs, and operations. These grants would not require architectural drawings.
 - c. Option 3: Allow limited anticipated maintenance costs within broader ECHO capital grant budgets. This idea was generated during stakeholder sessions.
 - d. Option 4: Maintain status quo (not recommended).
- Introducing a controlled, strategic grant mechanism focused on sustainability allows ECHO to meet community expectations and grantee needs better, utilize its capital investments, and pilot an approach that balances long-term impact with accountability.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Use investment income (not direct ECHO revenue) to fund this grant type initially. Begin with modest funding (up to \$300k-\$500k/year) based on investment performance.
- Limit eligibility to prior ECHO nonprofit grantees with a demonstrated need. ECHO may limit this to specific categories it feels need extra support or align with citizens' interests, such as Environmental, Cultural, and Historic projects.
- Require grantees to show how the funding will build future sustainability and reduce reliance on ongoing support from ECHO. One way to achieve this would be to administer multi-year grants that decrease in value each year.
- Position this as a pilot, not an entitlement. This will be a one-time opportunity, as ECHO's income allows, not a regular funding cycle like the main capital grant.
- Furthermore, there has been some discussion on the difference between replacement or renovation (which are allowable capital expenses under ECHO) and maintenance (not considered capital expenses). During a future audit, ECHO could collaborate with its auditors to more clearly define and adopt a more widely accepted, comprehensive definition of capital expenses.

TIMELINE

- Launch initial income-funded investment sustainability grants in 2027
- Evaluate after the first funding cycle. If continued, consider making the program more permanent in 2030, based on outcomes, demand, and citizen feedback

METRICS

- Number of grantees supported, and types of projects funded
- Improvement in facility condition and service delivery (qualitative and quantitative)
- Increase in citizen satisfaction and engagement with ECHO facilities
- Grantee-reported outcomes: reduced deferred maintenance, improved sustainability

Grant Term Updates

2.6

Incentivize ambitious, environmentally-friendly green infrastructure and nature-based solutions projects for all categories of ECHO projects.

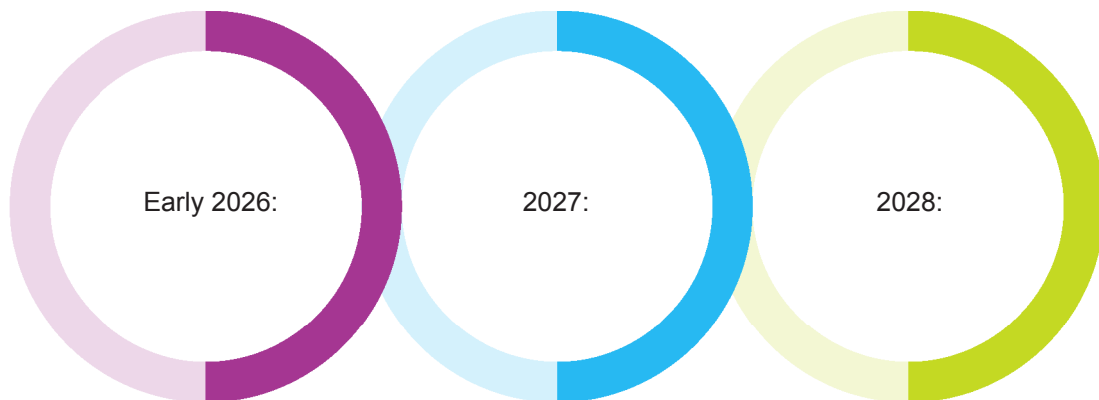
RATIONALE

Environmental preservation was one of the most commonly requested uses of ECHO funds in the public survey, alongside recreation. Citizens expressed concern about overdevelopment, flooding, and the need for environmental education. Stakeholders also noted examples that ECHO could incentivize, such as intentionally designed parks that support flood mitigation and sustainability goals. Adding an environmental incentive aligns with both community values and practical needs. These incentives should align with the County's goal of incentivizing low-impact development and can be applicable to all categories of ECHO projects, not only Environmental projects.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Develop a list of eligible green features (e.g., native landscaping, solar energy, rain gardens, flood retention design).
- One way to incentivize these projects would be to offer up to \$100,000 or an additional not exceed percentage (i.e., 20%) of total project cost in additional funding—without required match—for projects that incorporate significant environmental elements (such as flood retention parks, living shorelines, or major restorations native landscaping, bioswales, LED lights, etc.). Using the percentage model, a grantee completing a \$1 million dollar project would be eligible for up to an additional \$200,000 without match to fund low-impact development elements, green infrastructure, and/or nature based solutions as part of the project.
- If included as a bonus of ECHO's main grants-in-aid program, then add a question to the application asking grantees whether they are applying for additional funds, and if so, how much. Include an additional line item in the budget form asking how the environmental dollars will be used.
- Alternatively, develop a standalone mini-grant program to fund environmental add-ons (ensure that the ECHO program has adequate staffing to run another mini-grant program).
- ECHO could use this bonus structure as a model to support other emerging priorities over time.
- Share these projects and impact with citizens in annual reports and other communications.

TIMELINE



- 2026: Determine eligibility, review county priorities, design incentive
- Pilot or test in select projects
- Full rollout

METRICS

- Number of projects with green features
- Dollars spent on supporting ambitious environmental goals
- Resident support for ECHO's environmental impact

Grant Term Updates

2.7 Adjust the reporting requirements.

RATIONALE

ECHO's reporting requirements are more extensive than most grants of similar size and purpose. Grantees have expressed that the lengthy reporting process can be discouraging and has even deterred potential applicants. The current one-size-fits-all approach and requirements do not account for differences in project types. For example, parks and trails are unlikely to undergo significant changes over time, whereas cultural or nonprofit facilities often need to adapt to meet evolving community needs.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Staff and Advisory Committee review current annual report forms and remove questions whose answers are not regularly reviewed.
- Implement phased reporting for all projects: have grantees fill out the amended annual report for the first five years, then a simplified version of the annual report after that. Simplified annual reports should ask for:
 - a. Basic project information
 - b. Hours of Operation/Public Access

- c. Population Served
- d. Have there been any major changes to the project since your last annual report?
- ECHO staff could have grantees fill out the full annual report at the 10 and 20-year marks, should they wish to do so.
- Move annual report cycles to follow the calendar year, due by January 15th of the following year.

TIMELINE

Immediate: (January 15, 2027 would be first due date for 2026 Annual Report based on Jan, 1 – Dec. 31, 2026)

METRICS

- Increase in grant applications
- Increased adaptability and effective use of ECHO-funded spaces

Grant Term Updates

2.8 Increase overall grant award amounts and phase out “exceptional” category.

RATIONALE

ECHO’s current \$600,000 grant cap, unchanged since 2020, no longer reflects the true cost of delivering impactful projects. Adjusted for inflation since the program’s creation, the purchasing power is nearly half of its original value. At the same time, the “exceptional grant” category has proven confusing and potentially intimidating to applicants, limiting the number and diversity of large-scale proposals. Combining these changes will make the program more accessible, responsive to real costs, and aligned with community needs.

KEY COMPONENTS (OPTIONS)

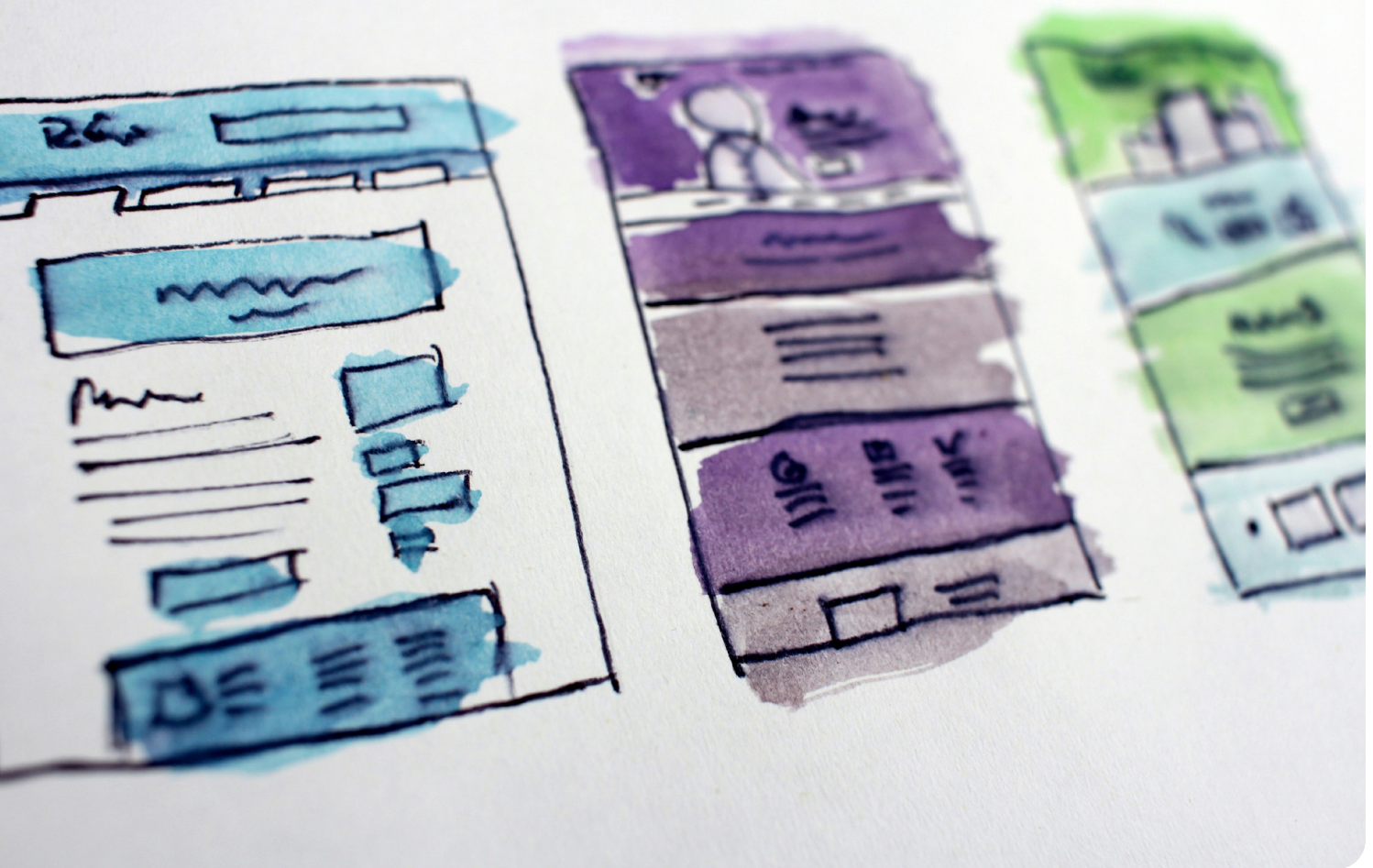
- Adopt \$1,250,000 for standard grants and phase in a gradual increase up to \$2.5 millions and then eliminate the exceptional grant category at the end of the phased approach.
- Re-evaluate funding caps during the annual audit based on inflation, construction costs, and program goals.
- If warranted, gradually increase the amount organizations can apply for over the next 3-5 years. This phased approach could be as follows:
 - a. 2026: \$1.25 million standard grant cap and \$2.5 exceptional grant cap
 - b. 2027: \$1.5 million standard grant cap and \$2.5 exceptional grant cap
 - c. Following this phased approach, which increases the standard grant cap by \$250,000 annually, the exceptional grant would be completely phased out by the 2032 grant cycle.
- Remove the “exceptional grant” category entirely.

TIMELINE

Immediate: next grant cycle

METRICS

- Increase in quality of project proposals
- Improved ability for applicants to deliver complete, impactful projects within budget



3. Direct County Expenditures

Objective: Advance transparency, accountability, and strategic impact of DCE by clarifying processes, improving communication, and ensuring projects reflect citizen priorities and long-term quality-of-life goals.

While the grants-in-aid program has been ECHO's primary delivery method for many years, the referendum and ballot language do not require the County to distribute funds through grants. Instead, the County may choose to spend the funds directly. The Direct County Expenditures (DCE) program allows the County Council to allocate ECHO funds for quality-of-life amenities without waiting for a nonprofit or municipality to submit an application. This approach can expedite projects and ensure timely and equitable investment in community priorities.

While many agree that DCE projects benefit residents, the current process has frustrated some citizens and Advisory Committee members who feel it lacks fairness, transparency, and assurance that funds are used as intended. Strengthening transparency and accountability in the DCE process could help maintain public trust, ensure alignment with ECHO's mission, and position DCE to fill gaps where competitive grant applications are lacking.

3.1 Continue to increase transparency and accountability for DCE.

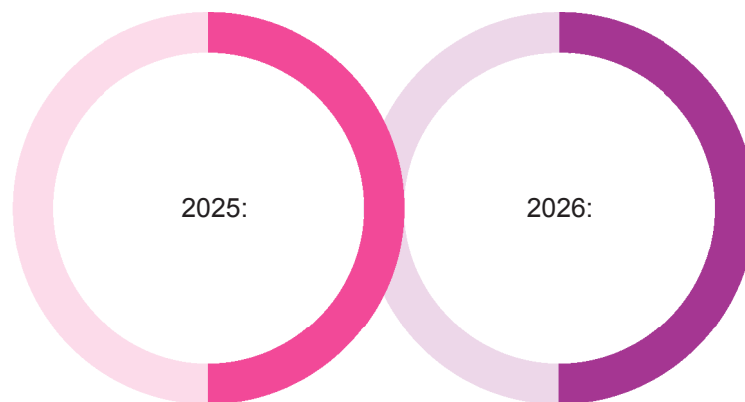
RATIONALE

While most stakeholders acknowledged the value of DCE as a tool for advancing quality-of-life projects efficiently, they also voiced concerns about transparency, oversight, and trust. For many, better accountability for DCE was their top priority for the strategic plan and was necessary for their support of the ECHO program moving forward. Some citizens also said that increased transparency and accountability of the program would increase their support for it.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Increase visibility of DCE projects on the ECHO Dashboard by adding a dedicated DCE category that shows how ECHO funds are allocated to these projects.
- Expand ECHO's webpage to include detailed information on the DCE program, including how it works, projects funded to date, and upcoming projects in the 5-year projection.
- Prominently display and share more details on DCE projects and give ample notice for applicable public meetings to improve transparency and build public trust, using both the website and annual reports.
- Enhance ECHO annual reports to include comprehensive DCE project details, using the RAD program's annual report as a potential model ([example here](#)).

TIMELINE



- Add information about DCE to ECHO microsite
- Add DCE category and projects to ECHO Dashboard. Annual report with past and future DCE projects shared publicly

METRICS

- Increased citizen support for ECHO
- DCE category visible on ECHO Dashboard
- Number of DCE projects and funding amounts listed online
- Public meeting materials include advance DCE details
- Annual report includes more detailed DCE projects, with feedback from the Advisory Committee and stakeholders

DCE Updates

3.2 Require a streamlined application for DCE projects.

RATIONALE

In line with the auditor's recommendation for a DCE Handbook, requiring a short application for DCE projects would provide the Advisory Committee with the details needed to assess alignment with ECHO goals. The purpose of the Committee is to ensure citizen representation in funding decisions, whether projects are led by nonprofits, municipalities, or the County itself. While the County Council retains full administrative control over ECHO grant and DCE allocations, implementing a streamlined two-page application template would create consistent documentation for committee review and ensure a more transparent review process. Providing the committee with a list of DCE projects—that align with the ballot language and reflect county priorities—and allow the committee to make a DCE project ranking recommendation that is forward to County Council could increase program efficiency and demonstrate fiscal accountability to taxpayers while maintaining the County Council's broad discretion within ballot language parameters.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Require a brief application, about two pages, with information including but not limited to:
 - a. Project purpose
 - b. Budget
 - c. County priority alignment
 - d. Location
 - e. Timeline

TIMELINE

2026: begin requiring two-pager application for DCE projects

METRICS

- Improved feedback from the Advisory Committee
- More citizen support of DCE projects

3.3 Increase communication between the County Council and the Advisory Committee.

RATIONALE

Regular, structured communication between the County Council and the ECHO Advisory Committee would help ensure that project recommendations are understood in context and that Council decisions reflect ECHO's mission and goals. Advisory Committee members have suggested options such as joint workshops or an annual meeting to review ECHO's purpose, priorities, progress, and upcoming work. Others have proposed individual check-ins with the Council members who appointed them, to provide updates on recommendations before project votes occur. Historically, the Advisory Committee Chair would attend County Council meetings that included ECHO topics for this reason.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Re-instate the practice of having the Advisory Committee Chair attend Council meetings when ECHO projects are reviewed and approved, filling in context and speaking to the Committee's recommendations when appropriate.
- Once a year, the Advisory Committee shares a concise report on program progress, metrics, and upcoming priorities with the Council. This time can help each group to refocus on ECHO's priorities and goals.

TIMELINE

Begin in 2026

METRICS

- Attendance and participation of the Advisory Committee Chair at Council project review meetings
- Improved synergy between County Council and Advisory Committee



3.4 Take a more active role in strategic leadership and long-term planning for the County's DCE projects.

RATIONALE

“Community visioning” was the top opportunity identified by both design sprint groups in the SWOT analysis, referring to ECHO’s position to lead quality of life visioning for Volusia County. Still primarily a grantmaking organization, ECHO has the opportunity to refine its application criteria or scoring to influence projects in a way that aligns with stakeholder priorities. However, this is even more important when it comes to the DCE program, which allows the county to take a more active role in leading Quality of Life projects. These DCE projects should be informed by citizens’ desires, as informed by input from surveys and other forms of engagement.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Leverage engagement findings to develop a Volusia County Quality of Life Vision and identify priority projects/amenities (e.g., multiple stakeholders suggested upgrading the VC Fairgrounds as a priority project).
- Provide County Council with a recommended list of DCE projects aligned with the vision statement. This could help the public understand how their input informed project priorities and outcomes.

TIMELINE

2027 - Once substantial community engagement is completed

METRICS

- Adoption of a Quality-of-Life Vision Statement
- Number and percentage of DCE projects aligned with identified citizen priorities
- Public approval of ECHO projects—both grant and DCE

3.5 Take a more active role in strategic leadership and long-term planning for the County's DCE projects.

RATIONALE

While ECHO has certain funding limitations, some grantees have used creative approaches, such as public-private partnerships, to deliver impactful projects. These arrangements often involve a public entity applying for funds while collaborating with a nonprofit or private developer to complete specific aspects of the project. Stakeholders appreciated these approaches, especially where they enable local governments to offer a service or amenity that they would not be able to provide on their own.

- For example, the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse & Museum, owned by the City of Ponce Inlet and operated by a nonprofit, demonstrates how ownership and operations can be split effectively. Another example involves a city applying on behalf of a developer, where the developer contributes land to the city in exchange for public amenities, creating a mutually beneficial partnership.
- Encouraging creative approaches, including partnerships, could lead to more transformational projects that meet ECHO goals.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Develop short (under five pages) case studies detailing the structure, success factors, and replicable strategies of selected ECHO projects.
- Include practical resources for applicants, such as legal considerations, sample agreements, and project checklists.
- Consider exempting qualifying public-private partnership projects from the “three open project” cap to encourage innovation.

TIMELINE

2028 – write case studies. Publish before the next grant cycle

METRICS

- Number of new grant applications that include public-private partnerships
- Stakeholder feedback on the usefulness of case studies

Vision-Setting/Public-Private Partnership Role

3.6 Coordinate more intentionally with Volusia Forever to supplement land preservation with access and programming.

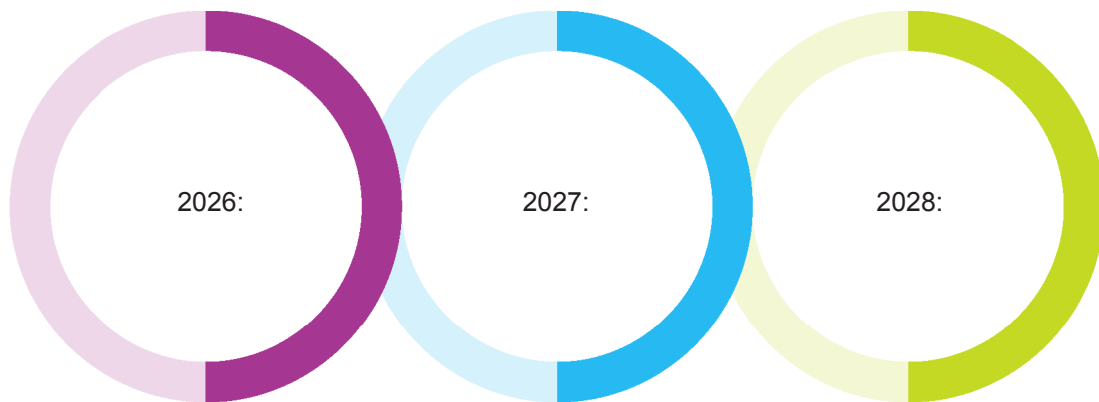
RATIONALE

Stakeholders value environmental projects, but ECHO receives relatively few Environmental applications. This may be partially because Volusia Forever also operates in this space, purchasing land for preservation purposes (and likely because environmental non-profits tend to have fewer capital expenses). The County could leverage ECHO funds to develop more public access to these Forever properties.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Work through DCE to enhance public access to Forever-acquired lands via trails, interpretive centers/kiosks, and other amenities.
- Explore opportunities to contract with nonprofits for services rendered in developing and managing these access points.

TIMELINE



- Identify key properties for access
- Begin discussions with environmental nonprofits if the partnership model is followed
- Start planning projects to add to the DCE pipeline

METRICS

- Number of County-owned preservation properties with public access
- Amount of ECHO dollars awarded to Environmental projects
- Citizen feedback via surveys

4. Program Infrastructure and Enhancements

Objective: Modernize ECHO's operational and administrative infrastructure to support efficient grantmaking, expand equitable access, and ensure long-term program sustainability.

Infrastructure

4.1 Increase the administrative capacity of the ECHO Program.

RATIONALE

This is a fiscally responsible and strategic investment that will strengthen internal infrastructure, build capacity, and ensure effective implementation of the ECHO Vision 2040 Strategic Plan.

The current administrative funding, which is approximately 3%, is significantly below national best practices for public capital grant programs. This underinvestment places long-term sustainability, oversight, and legal compliance at risk as the program grows in scope and complexity.

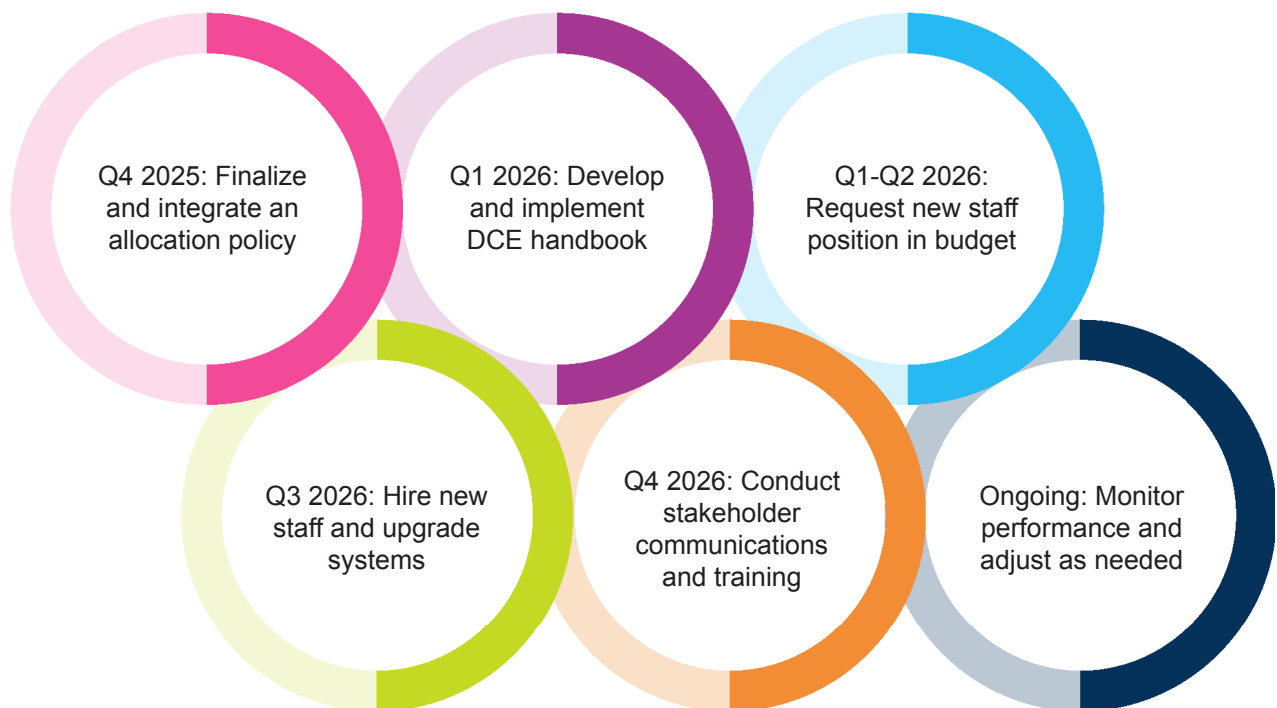
The proposed adjustment would support personnel services and operating expenses and is driven by several key factors:

- The Vision 2040 Strategic Plan introduces new strategies, including increased marketing, broader community engagement, and a potentially greater volume of applications to review, which will intensify operational demands on staff time and systems.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Increased capacity for administrative functions is supported by best-in-class peer programs and will result in enhanced return on investment for the ECHO program.
- Federal, state, local, and nonprofit grant programs routinely allocate 8-15% for administration.
- Develop and implement a DCE handbook. Codify procedures to strengthen compliance, reduce risk, and standardize internal workflows.
- Expand administrative capacity by investing in new tools, systems, and personnel to manage increased demands from grant management, application review, compliance monitoring, and expanded marketing and community engagement initiatives.
- Communicate the rationale for increased capacity to key stakeholders. Educate grant partners and public about the rationale, linking the capacity expansion to improved outcomes, transparency, accountability, and long-term service delivery.

TIMELINE



METRICS

- Track the audit compliance rate pre-post-implementation and the successful closure of audit findings
- Evaluate grant processing efficiency and project closeout timeliness
- Gauge stakeholder satisfaction via surveys and qualitative feedback
- Measure the successful execution of marketing and community engagement campaigns
- Monitor staff retention, training benchmarks, and workload balance, especially in key areas like application review
- Determine the frequency of procedural gaps or compliance issues reported

Infrastructure

4.2 Launch a library-based admission pass program.

RATIONALE

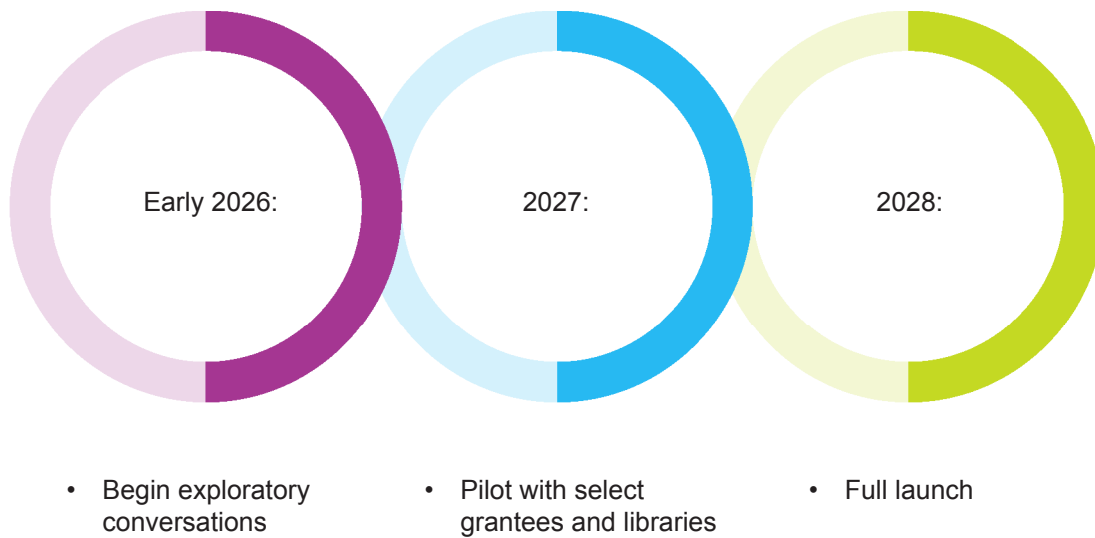
Many ECHO-funded projects provide tremendous value to the community but may not be free to access. In order to improve equitable access and citizen engagement with these projects, ECHO should consider a program that allows residents to check out free or discounted admission passes through the public library system. This would help fulfill ECHO's mission of expanding access to environmental, cultural, historic, and outdoor recreation amenities while supporting increased attendance for grantee organizations.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Following the “[RAD Pass](#)” program model, partner with the Public Libraries to offer free or reduced-cost admission passes that can be checked out like a book and provide access to underserved audiences.
- Participating organizations choose the number of passes and blackout dates/times.
- Library card holders can reserve passes online or in person.
- ECHO may need to fund or subsidize the cost of these passes; determine if ECHO funds can be used and, if not, consider investment income earned on ECHO fund reserves as a potential funding source.
- Publicize participating organizations and details on ECHO and library websites.
- Incentivize grantee participation by offering additional application points in the grant scoring process.



TIMELINE



METRICS

- Number of participating ECHO-funded organizations
- Number of library cardholders accessing passes
- User satisfaction (via library survey or digital feedback form)
- Attendance increases at ECHO venues via pass use

Infrastructure

4.3 Allow staff to approve budget changes that do not involve a change in scope.

RATIONALE

Grantees reported delays in project implementation due to the current requirement that budget modifications must be reviewed and approved by the County Council. This creates scheduling issues, particularly for construction projects where costs fluctuate frequently. Allowing ECHO program staff to approve budget amendments that do not affect project scope will streamline processes and improve grantee success without compromising oversight.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Define “non-scope” budget changes, regardless of the percent of overall project budget, such as:
 - a. Reallocating funds between existing approved line items (e.g., moving funds from equipment to labor within the same project).
 - b. Changes due to inflation or contractor bids that do not alter the size, features, or purpose of the project.

- c. Amend criteria for when a budget amendment request constitutes a change in scope it needs to be escalated to the Advisory Committee for review and recommendation and County Council for final disposition.
- d. Require grantees to submit a standardized budget modification form for staff review.
- Establish a formal internal review process and documentation for transparency and audit readiness.
- Communicate the new process clearly to grantees in application materials and award letters.
- Allow more flexibility for nonprofit and cultural projects to evolve their use of space over time, as long as the project remains publicly accessible and within the boundaries of an ECHO project.

TIMELINE

Next grant cycle

METRICS

- Fewer delayed projects due to budget change approvals
- Feedback from grantees
- Number of budget amendments handled administratively vs. escalated

Infrastructure

4.4 Establish an anonymous grantee feedback process.

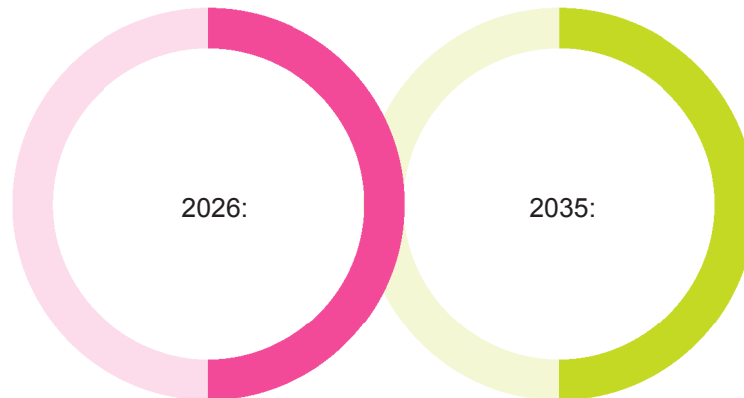
RATIONALE

Some grantees have expressed concerns about aspects of the application and review process. As the program evolves and seeks new grantees, maintaining a clear channel for candid, ongoing feedback without fear of retaliation will help identify areas for improvement early. An accessible, anonymous feedback mechanism fosters trust, encourages honest input, and supports continuous improvement.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Create a short, anonymous online form focused on clarity, fairness, and usability of the application and review process.
- Distribute the survey periodically to recent grantees and applicants. This may not make sense to share after every funding round if the award pool is too small to provide anonymity, so it may need to be shared every 3 years or so.
- Review responses internally with staff and the Advisory Committee to identify trends and actionable changes.
- Consider completing a more in-depth grantee perception study at the ten-year mark to capture broader stakeholder insights and benchmark progress over time. This could provide valuable data when evaluating the effectiveness of the strategic plan.

TIMELINE



- Develop and pilot the feedback from within the next grant cycle
- Consider a more in-depth grantee perception study

METRICS

- Number of responses received
- Percentage of feedback items addressed and incorporated into process changes
- Improvement in applicant satisfaction ratings over time

Infrastructure

4.5 Invest in grantmaking professional development for program staff.

RATIONALE

ECHO's unique nature means there are not many similar programs from which lessons can be learned. At its core, it is a public program and is appropriately run that way. However, it is also functionally a grantmaking program, which requires a skill set that may be different from those traditionally needed in public service. Professional development in grantmaking and grant management can help equip staff with the tools to adjust the grants programs over the course of the program, ultimately stewarding citizens' resources.

KEY COMPONENTS

Once a year or as needed, offer professional development opportunities in grantmaking and grant management to key program staff and review best practices as a team.

TIMELINE

2026 – Begin and continue throughout program

METRICS

- Feedback from program staff about professional development benefit
- Number of learnings implemented in grant program

4.6 Consider supporting quality of life through public art and creative placemaking long-term.

RATIONALE

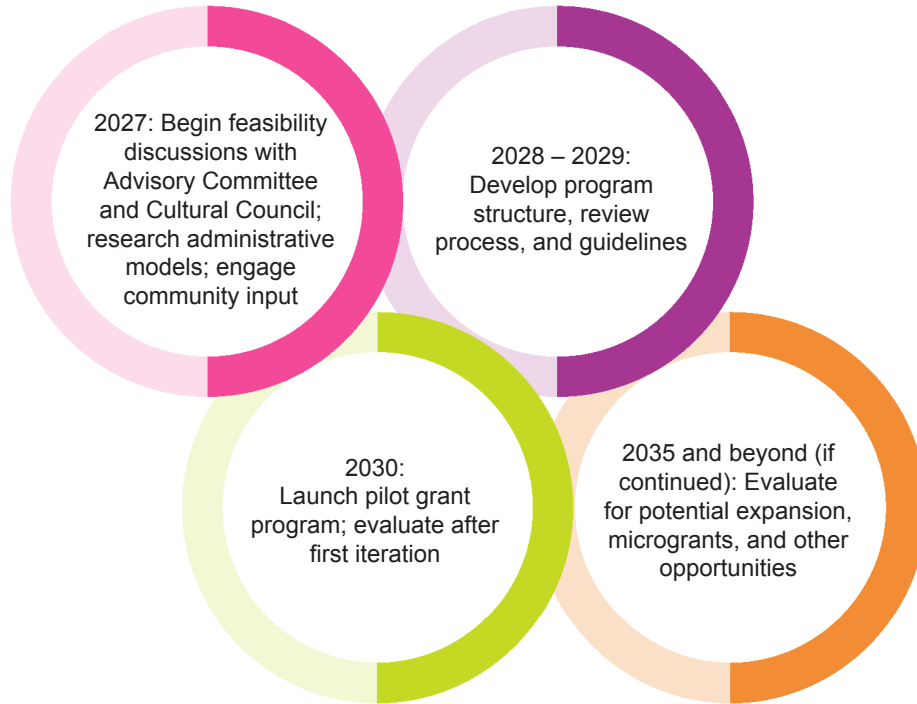
- Public art and creative placemaking are increasingly recognized as key contributors to quality of life, economic vitality, tourism, and community identity. These projects benefit both residents and visitors, often enhancing underutilized or overlooked spaces and serving as catalysts for broader revitalization efforts.
- While many public art and placemaking efforts involve capital expenses (e.g., sculpture installation, mural fabrication, infrastructure improvements), the current ECHO grant structure does not fully accommodate or encourage these types of projects. This presents an opportunity to grow ECHO's impact and align with both national best practices and local desires as ECHO's revenue increases.
- In interviews and the citizen survey, many stakeholders expressed a desire for ECHO to help “tell Volusia’s story” — showcasing its natural beauty, history, and cultural diversity. Public art is one of the most effective, visible, and place-specific tools to accomplish this.

KEY COMPONENTS

- ECHO could consider the following in order to support quality-of-life and the cultural sector. Both of these could work similarly to ECHO's current set-aside for trails.
 - a. Partner with Cultural Council or other partners with expertise to offer public art grants.
 - b. Future possibilities: Offer microgrants for creative placemaking programming, including projects like temporary or transitional public installations, place-based artist residencies, and cultural programming.
- There are many national programs, case studies, and best practices that ECHO could look into to consider whether it might fit their community and goals. Examples include:
 - a. Indianapolis, Indiana – [Public Art for Neighborhoods Initiative](#)
 - b. Maricopa, Arizona - Vibrant City & Community Art Grant Programs
 - c. [ArtPlace America](#) (now sunsetted, but key resource archive) – creative placemaking resources and programs



TIMELINE



METRICS

- Number of public art projects completed
- Geographic and demographic distribution of projects
- Survey results on community pride, engagement, and perception of Volusia identity
- Number of artists supported
- Economic and/or tourism data tied to project locations

5. ECHO Advisory Committee

Objective: Strengthen the capacity, consistency, and public trust of the ECHO Advisory Committee by improving member training, ensuring balanced representation, and fostering transparent, constructive review practices.

One of the only themes that was discussed in interviews and focus groups but not in the design sprint was the current operation of the ECHO Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee plays an important role in distributing ECHO's funding to qualified projects. The ECHO Advisory Committee has had different members throughout the years and had slightly different approaches, but grantees reported that previous experiences with the Advisory Committee made them hesitant to reapply for funds, raising concerns about function and objectivity. The following tactics are recommended to support the Advisory Committee as they support quality of life in Volusia County.

Committee

5.1

Develop an Advisory Committee on-boarding training and information packet for more consistent and equitable application review.

RATIONALE

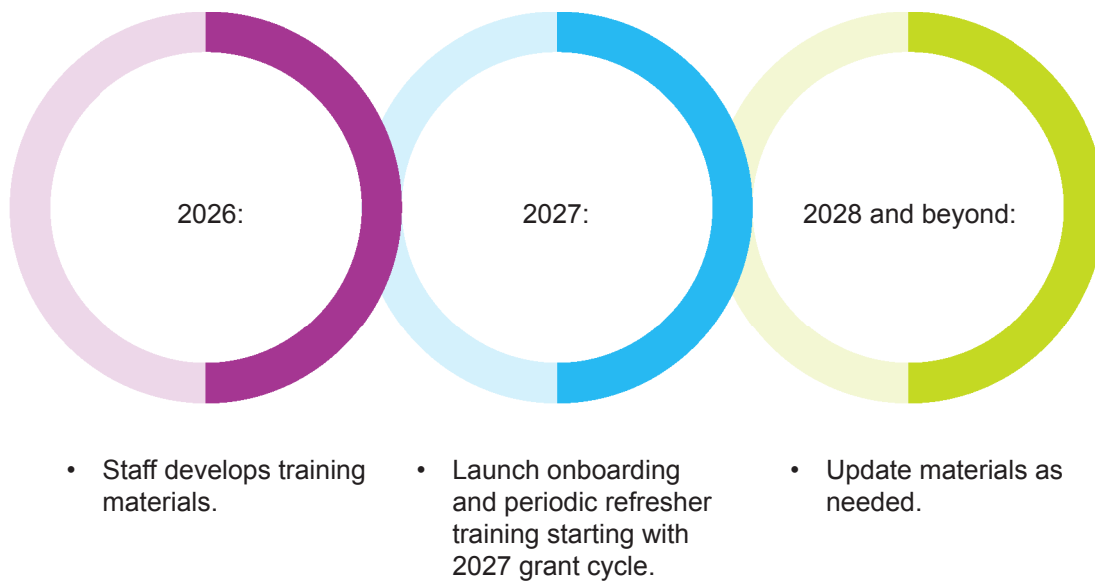
The ECHO Advisory Committee plays a critical role in ensuring that public funds support impactful, well-managed projects. However, the current review process relies heavily on institutional knowledge, which creates inconsistencies in application scoring and committee expectations. Some grantees have reported feeling discouraged by the tone of reviews, which can seem more punitive than constructive. While the Advisory Committee must ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars, it also plays a critical role in encouraging and enabling successful projects. A formal training program can help align members' understanding of their role, encourage consistency and fairness, and promote a solution-oriented, supportive review process.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Create a comprehensive onboarding package that includes:
 - a. A written guide outlining ECHO goals, Advisory Committee member expectations, and application review criteria
 - b. A companion video training series (will likely need to be at least two hours) that walks through scoring practices, common challenges in applications, the grant cycle, and best practices in providing feedback for grantees
- Emphasize a “coach” mindset in training – encouraging committee members to act as partners in project development, not just gatekeepers. Training should include:
 - a. How to frame critiques constructively
 - b. How to suggest resources or improvements when improvement is needed
 - c. The importance of equitable and inclusive evaluation
- Implement a consistent scoring requirement:
 - a. All members must individually score each category of each application (not just rank all projects).
 - b. If members do not complete full scoring, their input may not be factored into final deliberations.
- Update training materials periodically to reflect program changes, applicant feedback, and best practices in grantmaking.

- Additionally, while the Advisory Committee practices disclosing conflicts of interest via a form during each review round, there are still some perceptions at least of unfairness when it comes to Advisory Committee review. What constitutes a conflict of interest should be included in the training and Committee members should be regularly reminded that this definition surpasses projects that they would benefit from or are involved with in some way, but also includes projects that a friend is involved with or they have some special interest in. Real and perceived conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Serving on a board or as a volunteer with an applicant organization
 - b. Having a personal or family relationship with applicant staff or leadership
 - c. Having met with or advised an applicant organization during project development
 - d. Any financial interest, current or potential, related to the project

TIMELINE



METRICS

- Feedback from Advisory Committee members regarding efficacy of training
- Feedback from grantees regarding Advisory Committee review

5.2

Develop an Advisory Committee member selection guide to support County Council appointments and ensure balanced and skilled committee composition.

RATIONALE

The ECHO Advisory Committee plays a vital role in reviewing and recommending investments that impact the entire county. To ensure effective and equitable decision-making, it is important that the committee reflects a broad mix of skills, backgrounds, and geographic representation. Currently, there is limited guidance to assist County Council members in selecting appointees. A structured selection guide will help ensure that appointments are intentional and fill key gaps in expertise, contributing to a balanced Advisory Committee.

KEY COMPONENTS

- ECHO staff should develop a guide that outlines the desired qualifications and perspectives needed on the Advisory Committee. The framework could include categories such as:
 - a. Subject matter expertise in ECHO priority areas: Environmental, Cultural, Historic, and Outdoor Recreation
 - b. Technical knowledge: architecture/design, engineering, construction management, ADA compliance, capital planning
 - c. Operational expertise: nonprofit leadership, financial management, grants administration
 - d. Geographic representation: include members from across Volusia County to reflect individual community voices
 - e. Additional recommendations included from stakeholders in the Appendix.
- Prior to each appointment cycle, staff will provide County Council with a simple matrix showing:
 - a. Backgrounds and locations of current members
 - b. Which priority areas or skill sets are already represented
 - c. Where there are gaps that could be filled through new appointments
- Ensure the ECHO Advisory Committee interest form categories match the categories in the matrix.

TIMELINE

- 2026 – Develop and implement guide
- Review and update guide prior to new appointment cycles

METRICS

- Advisory Committee membership includes at least one individual with experience in each ECHO priority area and each geographic area of Volusia
- Collectively, the Advisory Committee has the technical skills to make informed decisions

5.3 Implement Advisory Committee term limits to broaden citizen input and engagement.

RATIONALE

While the expertise and historical knowledge of long-serving Advisory Committee members are invaluable, best practices recommend regular turnover for boards and committees that aim to represent a broad cross-section of citizens. Rotating membership encourages fresh perspectives, strengthens community representation, and helps prevent stagnation. It is recommended to establish similar limits to maintain institutional knowledge while ensuring diverse voices contribute to ECHO's decision-making.

KEY COMPONENTS

- Limit service for Advisory Committee members to 4 years per term, with no more than two consecutive terms.
- Allow former members to return after a break in service.
- Offer opportunities for outgoing members to remain engaged through community outreach, mentoring newer members, or participating in special initiatives.

TIMELINE

Next appointment cycle – may need to be phased in

METRICS

- Increase in citizens serving as Advisory Committee members
- Feedback from citizens and stakeholders regarding committee representation and engagement

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



This section outlines the key components of a comprehensive action plan for achieving Volusia County ECHO's vision and goals. Each strategy includes an action plan outlining specific tasks, responsible parties, timelines, and performance metrics for effective implementation and evaluation.

MARKETING & ENGAGEMENT

Expand public awareness, understanding, and participation in ECHO programs while fostering community engagement and partnerships to enhance Volusia County’s quality of life.

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
1.1 Increase ECHO marketing investment	Marketing	1.1.1 Launch microsite highlighting projects, maps, & grantee stories 1.1.2 Produce/distribute short videos 1.1.3 Expand social media campaigns & partner sharing 1.1.4 Implement co-branded billboards & creative public art 1.1.5 Produce/distribute rack cards & direct mail	Immediate	0-18 months	ECHO staff, Grantees, Cultural Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website visits Video views Social media engagement Billboard/print campaigns Survey-based awareness ECHO site attendance
1.2 Create fun engagement programs	Marketing	1.2.1 Expand ECHO Rangers program 1.2.2 Launch school field trips with curriculum support Implement ECHO 1.2.3 Passport with tiered incentives	Short term	6-18 months	Education Coordinator, Schools, Scouting orgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passport participation/ check-ins Ranger program participation School/student engagement Family/teacher feedback
1.3 Collaborate with visitor bureaus	Marketing/ Tourism	1.3.1 Build partnerships with visitor bureaus 1.3.2 Provide promotional materials for tourists 1.3.3 Integrate ECHO sites into regional campaigns	Immediate	Short - long term	ECHO staff, Visitor Bureaus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites featured in campaigns Visitor traffic Referral traffic to website/social media Visitor feedback
1.4 Reimagine listening sessions	Community Engagement	1.4.1 Embed sessions in high-traffic events Use interactive 1.4.2 methods (sticky-note walls, kids’ stations, 1.4.3 polls) Present findings to County Council and Advisory Committee	2026	Annual; full survey 2030	ECHO staff, Grantees, Community orgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey distributed Responses per survey Council feedback Public awareness/ priorities tracked
1.5 Install passive learning kiosks	Engagement/ Education	1.5.1 Expand Ocean Center gallery with interactive exhibits 1.5.2 Install kiosks at libraries, visitor centers, beaches 1.5.3 Collect/analyze visitor interaction data	Early 2027	2027-2029+	ECHO staff, Venue partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kiosk/exhibit locations Interactions logged Unique visitors engaged Feedback quality/volume Engagement by location

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
1.6 Conduct regular countywide surveys	Data/ Community Feedback	1.6.1 Administer annual short survey 1.6.2 Conduct comprehensive survey every 5 years 1.6.3 Integrate results into planning/reporting	2026	Annual; full survey 2030	ECHO staff, Grantees, Community orgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey distributed • Responses per survey • Council feedback • Public awareness/priorities tracked
1.7 Engage with community organizations	Partnership/ Alignment	1.7.1 Convene chambers, nonprofits, funders 1.7.2 Host coordination meetings to align resources/projects 1.7.3 Identify collaborative opportunities	2027	Ongoing	ECHO staff, Chambers, Foundations, Nonprofits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations engaged • Meeting outcomes • Staff feedback on information quality

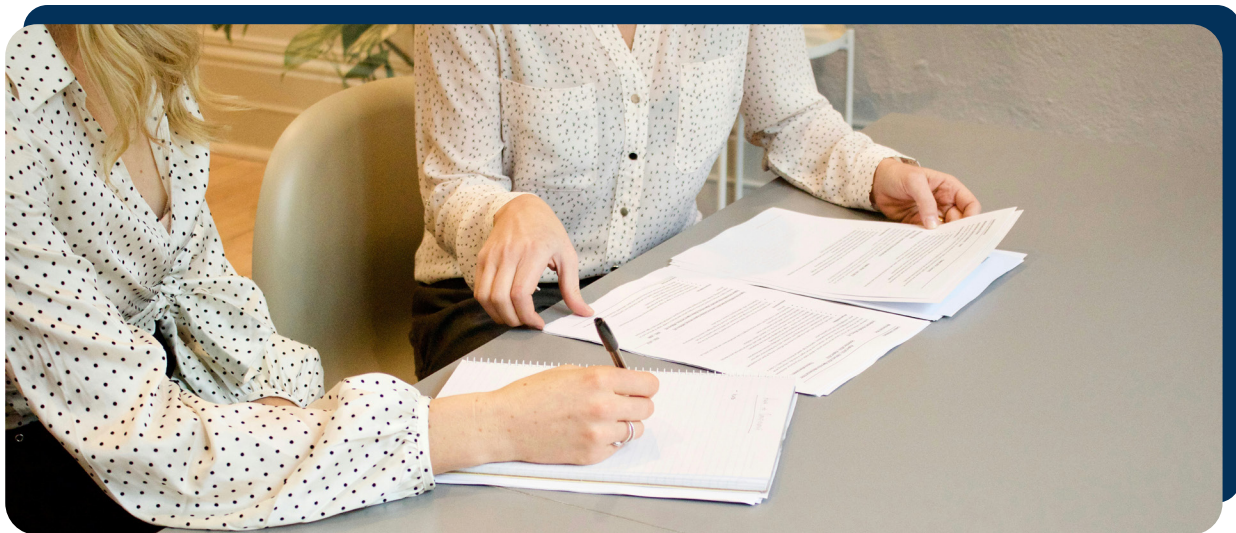
APPLICATION/GRANT TERMS

Enhance the ECHO grant process by streamlining applications, modernizing grant terms, and strengthening accountability to ensure that projects remain accessible, sustainable, and aligned with community priorities.

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
2.1 Streamline application process	Application	2.1.1 Remove redundancies and overly burdensome questions 2.1.2 Consolidate Q21-23 under Q20 2.1.3 Simplify Q29 (remove staff hours details) 2.1.4 Replace Q37 with targeted operations/maintenance questions 2.1.5 Remove "next project year" column (Q39, nonprofits) 2.1.6 Communicate updates to past/potential grantees	Immediate	Next grant cycle	ECHO staff, Venue partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantee feedback • Increased number of applications
2.2 Replace plan requirements with specific questions	Application	2.2.1 Eliminate full business plan requirement Replace marketing plan with checklist + PR/ribbon cutting Qs 2.2.2 Replace feasibility study with single public engagement Q	Late 2026	2026-2027	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantee feedback

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
2.3 Launch phased grants for nonprofits	Grant Structure	2.3.1 Create “Planning & Design” tier (\$10k–\$100k) for drawings, feasibility, ADA, market studies 2.3.2 Require 1:1 match, not applicable to construction match 2.3.3 Require 12–36 mo transition to capital phase 2.3.4 Consider payback clause if no construction phase 2.3.5 Explore “systems replacement” category (HVAC, roofing, etc.)	Early 2027	Ongoing; assess 2028–2029	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced upfront risk (grantee feedback) • Increased applications • % of planning projects advancing to construction
2.4 Expand pre-award cost recovery	Access	2.4.1 Increase allowable grant writing reimbursement to \$10k–\$15k 2.4.2 Remove restriction limiting benefit to orgs <\$200k budget 2.4.3 Require documentation (scope, rate, proof of payment)	Immediate	Next grant cycle	ECHO staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantee feedback • Increased number of applications
2.5 Support sustainability through investment income	Long-Term Impact	2.5.1 Pilot competitive grant pool (\$300k–\$500k/year) for urgent capital (HVAC, roof, equipment) 2.5.2 Explore dedicated sustainability grants (equipment, repairs, ops) 2.5.3 Position as pilot, not entitlement 2.5.4 Limit eligibility to prior nonprofit grantees 2.5.5 Clarify definitions of capital vs. maintenance in audit	2026	Pilot, then reevaluate 2030	ECHO staff, Auditors, Nonprofits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantees/projects supported • Facility condition improvement • Increased citizen satisfaction • Grantee-reported outcomes

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
2.6 Incentivize environmentally beneficial projects	Environmental	2.6.1 Develop list of eligible green features (solar, native plants, rain gardens) 2.6.2 Offer bonus funds: \$100k (major green features), \$50k (basic features) 2.6.3 Add application/budget line for environmental funds 2.6.4 Alternatively: mini-grant program for environmental add-ons 2.6.5 Highlight projects in annual reports and communications	2026	Pilot 2027; rollout 2028	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of green projects • Dollars spent on environmental goals • Resident support for ECHO's environmental impact
2.7 Adjust reporting requirements	Reporting	2.7.1 Review/remove unnecessary annual report Qs 2.7.2 Implement phased reporting: full reports (years 1–5), simplified after 2.7.3 Require full report at 10 and 20 years 2.7.4 Move to calendar year cycle (due Jan)	Immediate	Next grant cycle	ECHO staff, Venue partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased applications • Improved adaptability and effective use of spaces
2.8 Increase grant caps; eliminate “exceptional” category	Grant Awards	2.8.1 Raise cap to \$2.5M by 2026 2.8.2 Reevaluate caps annually based on inflation and costs 2.8.3 Eliminate exceptional grant category	Immediate	2026-2027+	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee, Auditors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of proposals • Ability to deliver complete, impactful projects



DIRECT COUNTY EXPENDITURES (DCE)

Advance transparency, accountability, and strategic impact of DCE by clarifying processes, improving communication, and ensuring projects reflect citizen priorities and long-term quality-of-life goals.

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
3.1 Increase transparency and accountability	Oversight & Reporting	3.1.1 Add dedicated DCE category on ECHO Dashboard	2025	2025-2026	ECHO staff, IT, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCE category live on Dashboard • # of projects/ funding amounts listed • Annual report includes DCE section • Increased citizen support & trust
		3.1.2 Expand ECHO webpage with program details, funded projects, and 5-year projections				
		3.1.3 Publicly share DCE project details with advance notice of public meetings				
		3.1.4 Enhance annual reports with comprehensive DCE section (RAD as model)				
3.2 Require streamlined application for DCE projects	Application	3.2.1 Require 2-page submission with project purpose, budget, match, location, timeline	2026	Ongoing	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee, Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Advisory Committee feedback • Increased public support for DCE projects
		3.2.2 Advisory Committee reviews and provides feedback				
3.3 Improve communication between Council and Advisory Committee	Governance & Communication	3.3.1 Reinstate Advisory Committee Chair attendance at Council meetings on ECHO projects	2026	Ongoing	Advisory Committee, Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair participation at meetings • Improved synergy between Council & Advisory Committee
		3.3.2 Advisory Committee delivers annual concise progress/priorities report to Council				
3.4 Strengthen strategic leadership for DCE	Vision & Planning	3.4.1 Leverage citizen engagement to create Volusia County Quality of Life Vision	2027	Ongoing	County Council, ECHO staff, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Statement adopted • % of DCE projects aligned with citizen priorities • Increased public approval of ECHO
		3.4.2 Identify priority projects (e.g., VC Fairgrounds upgrades)				
		3.4.3 Provide Council with DCE project list aligned with vision				
		3.4.4 Report annually to public on how input informed outcomes				

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
3.5 Support public-private partnerships	Partnerships & Innovation	3.5.1 Develop short (<5 pages) case studies on successful partnerships 3.5.2 Provide resources for applicants (legal considerations, sample agreements, checklists) 3.5.3 Consider exempting partnership projects from “3 open project” cap	2028	Before next grant cycle	ECHO staff, Legal, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of new grant applications with partnerships • Stakeholder feedback on case studies
3.6 Coordinate with Volusia Forever to expand public access	Environmental Access	3.6.1 Identify key Forever-acquired properties for access projects 3.6.2 Use DCE for trails, kiosks, interpretive centers, amenities 3.6.3 Explore nonprofit partnerships for development/management	2026	2026-2028 rollout	ECHO staff, Environmental nonprofits, County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of preservation properties with public access • \$ ECHO awarded to Environmental projects • Citizen survey feedback

PROGRAM INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENHANCEMENTS

Modernize ECHO’s operational and administrative infrastructure to support efficient grantmaking, expand equitable access, and ensure long-term program sustainability. accountability to ensure that projects remain accessible, sustainable, and aligned with community priorities.

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
4.1 Increase administrative capacity	Administration & Capacity	4.1.1 Finalize and integrate an allocation policy 4.1.2 Develop/implement DCE handbook to standardize procedures and reduce risk 4.1.3 Invest in staffing, systems, and tools to support application review, grant management, marketing, and engagement 4.1.4 Communicate changes to stakeholders	2026	2026-2027	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee, County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit compliance rate pre/post • Grant processing efficiency • Stakeholder satisfaction • Staff retention/training benchmarks • Frequency of procedural gaps

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
4.2 Launch Library-Based Admission Pass Program	Access	4.2.1 Partner with Volusia County Public Libraries to offer free/reduced-cost admission passes 4.2.2 Libraries manage reservations; grantees set number of passes and blackout dates 4.2.3 Publicize participating organizations and details online 4.2.4 Incentivize grantee participation through application scoring	Early 2026	Pilot 2027; full launch 2028	ECHO staff, Libraries, Grantees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of participating organizations • # of library cardholders using passes • User satisfaction • Attendance increases at ECHO venues
4.3 Allow staff to approve non-scope budget changes	Operations & Oversight	4.3.1 Define non-scope changes (reallocations, inflation adjustments) 4.3.2 Amend criteria for scope-related escalations 4.3.3 Implement standardized budget modification form 4.3.4 Establish internal review process and documentation 4.3.5 Communicate process clearly to grantees	Next grant cycle	Ongoing	ECHO staff, Grantees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer project delays • Grantee feedback • # of budget amendments handled administratively vs. escalated
4.4 Establish anonymous grantee feedback process	Continuous Improvement	4.4.1 Create short, anonymous online survey on application/review process 4.4.2 Distribute periodically (every 3 years or as needed) 4.4.3 Review internally with staff and Advisory Committee 4.4.4 Conduct in-depth grantee perception study at 10-year mark	2026	Pilot 2026; review ongoing	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of responses • % of feedback items addressed • Improvement in applicant satisfaction ratings
4.5 Invest in staff professional development	Capacity & Skills	4.5.1 Offer annual or as-needed professional development in grantmaking and grant management 4.5.2 Review best practices as a team and implement learnings	2026	Ongoing	ECHO staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff feedback on professional development benefit • Number of improvements implemented
4.6 Support public art and creative placemaking	Cultural & Community Impact	4.6.1 Research feasibility and administrative models with Advisory Committee and Cultural Council 4.6.2 Cultural Council Develop structure and guidelines (2028-2029) 4.6.3 Launch pilot grant program in 2030 evaluate 4.6.4 Consider expansion, microgrants, or other opportunities post-pilot	2027	Pilot 2030; evaluate ongoing	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee, Cultural Council, Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of public art projects • Geographic/demographic distribution • Community survey results • # of artists supported • Economic/tourism impact

ECHO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Strengthen the capacity, consistency, and public trust of the ECHO Advisory Committee by improving member training, ensuring balanced representation, and fostering transparent, constructive review practices.

STRATEGY	CATEGORY	ACTION STEPS	START	TIMEFRAME	SUPPORT	PERFORMANCE METRICS
5.1 Develop Advisory Committee onboarding & training	Training & Oversight	5.1.1 Create onboarding guide with goals, expectations, scoring criteria 5.1.2 Produce companion video training (2+ hrs) 5.1.3 Emphasize “coach” mindset and constructive feedback 5.1.4 Require full scoring by all members 5.1.5 Update materials regularly 5.1.6 Clarify conflict-of-interest policy with examples	2026	Develop 2026; launch 2027; update ongoing	ECHO staff, Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of members completing training • Member feedback • Grantee satisfaction on fairness • Documented COI disclosures
5.2 Create Advisory Committee member selection guide	Governance & Recruitment	5.2.1 Develop guide outlining desired qualifications (priority areas, technical skills, nonprofit/financial expertise) 5.2.2 Ensure geographic and demographic representation 5.2.3 Provide Council with member matrix to identify gaps 5.2.4 Align interest form with selection matrix	2026	Implement 2026; review ongoing	ECHO staff, County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced representation across priority areas • Geographic diversity • Use of matrix in appointments
5.3 Implement Advisory Committee term limits	Governance & Engagement	5.3.1 Limit service to 4-year terms; max two consecutive terms 5.3.2 Allow return after break in service 5.3.3 Offer outgoing members outreach/mentorship roles 5.3.4 Phase in during next appointment cycle	Next appointment cycle	Phased in starting 2027	County Council, ECHO staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of new citizens serving • Turnover rate per cycle • Stakeholder feedback on representation/engagement

CONCLUSION

The Volusia County ECHO Program remains a highly valued community asset, recognized for its measurable contributions to quality of life, local economic activity, and the preservation of environmental, cultural, and historical resources. Insights from residents, grantees, municipal leaders, and other stakeholders confirm that ECHO continues to enhance livability, support equitable access to county amenities, and foster sustainable growth.

This Strategic & Implementation Plan translates those insights into a clear, actionable roadmap for 2025–2040. It addresses key challenges, including application complexity, limited public awareness, and long-term maintenance, while strengthening transparency, equity, and operational efficiency. By focusing on strategic priorities such as connectivity and access, environmental stewardship, accessibility and equity, marketing and public engagement, sustainability, and partnerships, the plan ensures that future investments reflect community values and maximize impact across the county.

Through the implementation of this plan, ECHO is positioned not only to meet but to exceed community expectations, maintaining its status as a voter-supported, community-valued cornerstone of Volusia County’s environmental, cultural, historical, and recreational quality of life for decades to come.

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

1. Are you a Volusia County resident?
 - I am a full-time resident (e.g., I live here, or I go to school here)
 - I am a part-time resident (e.g., I have a second residence here)
 - I work here or I traveled here for a work-related reason, but I live somewhere else
 - No
 - Other (please specify): _____
2. For approximately how many years have you lived in Volusia County?
 - N/A
 - 1 – 5 years
 - 6 – 10 years
 - 11 – 15 years
 - 16 – 20 years
 - More than 20 years
3. In which part of Volusia County is your primary residence located?
 - Northeast (Ormond Beach area)
 - East (Daytona Beach, Daytona Beach Shores, Holly Hill, Ponce Inlet, Port Orange, South Daytona area)
 - Southeast (New Smyrna Beach, Edgewater, Oak Hill area)
 - Northwest (Pierson, Seville area)
 - West (DeLand, Lake Helen, Orange City area)
 - Southwest (Deltona, DeBary area)
 - Other (please specify): _____
4. How would you evaluate the current quality of life in Volusia County?
 - Excellent
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Unsure/don't know
5. Would you say the availability of arts, culture, outdoor recreation, and other quality-of-life amenities in the county influences your decision to live or work here?
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree

6. In the year 2000 and again in 2020, Volusia County residents voted to tax themselves to fund various environmental, cultural, historical, and outdoor recreational projects for public use. This program is known as the ECHO Program. How familiar, if at all, are you with the Volusia County ECHO Program?

- Extremely familiar
- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not so familiar
- Not at all familiar

7. How satisfied are you with the ECHO funded projects in the county? For a list of projects, please visit the ECHO Transparency Dashboard at <https://rb.gy/fi1ceq>.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

8. How often do you visit these types of ECHO projects in the County?

	Very often	Often	Neutral/ unsure	Not very often	Not at all
Environmental learning and science facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art and Cultural facilities and museums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical facilities and historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performing arts centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports and recreation parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trail systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. If you visited any Environmental, Cultural, Historic or Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) projects mentioned in the previous question, how would you rate your experience?

	Excellent	Good	Neutral/ unsure	Fair	Poor
Environmental learning and science facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art and Cultural facilities and museums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical facilities and historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performing arts centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports and recreation parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trail systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. When it comes to improving the overall quality of life in Volusia County, how important are the following projects?

	Extremely important	Important	Neutral/ unsure	Not so important	Not at all important
Environmental learning and science facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art and Cultural facilities and museums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical facilities and historic sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Performing arts centers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports and recreation parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trail systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. How well do the previously mentioned Environmental, Cultural, Historic and Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) projects meet you and your household's needs?
 - Very well
 - Well
 - Somewhat
 - Not well
 - None well at all

12. Is there a particular ECHO project or type of ECHO project that you really appreciate? If so, what is it and why?
 - [Comment box]

13. Is there a particular ECHO project or type of ECHO project that you do NOT appreciate? If so, what is it and why?
 - [Comment box]

14. Please rank the list below from being the highest priority (1) to the least priority (7) for you and your household in Volusia County.
 - Environmental learning and science facilities
 - Art and Cultural facilities and museums
 - Historical facilities and historic sites
 - Performing arts centers
 - Sports and recreation parks
 - Trail systems
 - Water access

15. What are the three most important areas that would increase your utilization of Environmental, Cultural, Historic and Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) projects? (Select 3)
 - Accessibility
 - Additional features and amenities at existing projects
 - Awareness of facilities
 - Condition/maintenance of facilities
 - Customer service
 - Hours of operation
 - Parking
 - Pricing/user fees
 - Quality of facilities
 - Safety and security

16. Please select which of the following best represents your opinion of ECHO projects.
 - Very beneficial
 - Beneficial
 - Neutral/unsure
 - Not so beneficial
 - Not beneficial at all

17. What is the best way to notify you with information on Environmental, Cultural, Historic and Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) projects? Select all that apply.
 - Internet/website
 - Local media (TV, radio, newspaper)
 - At the ECHO facility location
 - Word of mouth
 - Social networking (Facebook, X, Bluesky, etc.)
 - E-mail from the County of Volusia
 - Other (please specify): _____

18. In the past year, approximately how much have you spent on activities at/while engaging with ECHO projects? Please include only direct costs (e.g., event/concert tickets, equipment rentals, memberships, etc.)
- \$0
 - \$1-\$50
 - \$51-\$100
 - \$101-\$250
 - \$251-\$500
 - More than \$500
 - Can't estimate/unsure
19. In the past year, approximately how much have you spent on indirect costs (e.g., dining, shopping, transportation, or other expenses) in the community while visiting an ECHO-funded destination?
- \$0
 - \$1-\$50
 - \$51-\$100
 - \$101-\$251
 - \$251-\$500
 - More than \$500
 - Can't estimate/unsure
20. Do you have any specific recommendations about the types of Environmental, Cultural, Historic and Outdoor Recreation (ECHO) projects to fund?
- [Comment box]

The following questions are for research purposes only. This survey is completely anonymous.

21. Which of the following ranges includes your age?
- Younger than 18
 - 18-25
 - 26-41
 - 42-57
 - 58-76
 - 77 or older
22. Do you have children?
- No
 - Yes, currently living at home
 - Yes, not living at home
22. Which of the following ranges includes your annual household income?
- Less than \$30,000
 - \$30,000 to \$59,999
 - \$60,000 to \$99,999
 - \$100,000 to \$149,999
 - \$150,000 to \$199,999
 - \$200,000 or More
23. Do you identify as a person with a disability?
- Yes
 - No

24. Which of the following best describe you? (Check all that apply)
- American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous or First Nations
 - Arab or Middle Eastern or Northern African
 - Asian or Asian American
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx or Spanish origin
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - White or Caucasian or European American
 - I prefer to self-identify: _____

APPENDIX B

Interview Guides

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Please introduce your name, role, and organization.
2. What is your experience with Volusia ECHO?
3. From your perspective, what is Volusia ECHO's role in the County? How has that role evolved over time?
4. The Volusia ECHO Program seeks to enhance the quality of life of Volusia County's residents by working to provide environmental/ecological, cultural, historical/heritage, and outdoor recreational projects. How well do you think it achieves that goal?
5. What is Volusia ECHO doing well [or what has it done well]?
 - a. Potential follow-up: Has this changed over time?
6. How should this program evolve over the next 15 years?
7. What do you think are the biggest challenges Volusia County/ECHO are facing now or will face in the next 15 years that the strategic plan should address?
8. What are the biggest opportunities for Volusia County/ECHO that should be included in the strategic plan?
9. How could ECHO be more transparent and accountable to citizens?
10. How could ECHO improve citizens' awareness of the program?
11. ECHO is ultimately about quality of life in Volusia County. Thinking about your life in Volusia, what are your hopes and dreams for the future?
12. How would you describe the ECHO program to someone unfamiliar with it?
13. What do you believe is the most significant contribution ECHO has made to Volusia County?
14. If you could ensure ECHO accomplishes three specific things by 2040, what would they be?
15. Innovation Scenario: Imagine it's 2040 and ECHO is celebrated as the most innovative conservation and recreation program in Florida. What bold new approaches would it have pioneered?
16. Legacy Scenario: When future generations look back at ECHO's impact from 2025-2040, what accomplishments would you want them to recognize as transformative for Volusia County?
17. Is there anything else we should know about your experience with the ECHO program?

QUESTIONS FOR SPECIFIC STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

ECHO Advisory Committee Members

1. How did you come to be a part of the ECHO Advisory Committee? Why were you interested?
2. What was your experience like?
 - a. What went well? What was challenging?
3. Do you feel the program's goals align with community needs? Why or why not?
4. What do you think are the key topics the strategic plan should address?
5. How could the program be improved to better serve Volusia County?
6. Should ECHO consider a tiered grant structure to better accommodate projects of different scales and types?
7. In 2000, ECHO's referendum passed with a 57% vote. The renewal passed in 2020 with a 72% vote. What do you think caused the increase?

Program Critics:

1. What concerns do you have about how ECHO has operated?
2. What changes would you make to improve accountability, transparency, or impact?

3. What would need to change for you to fully support renewal in 2040?
4. Should ECHO consider a tiered grant structure to better accommodate projects of different scales and types?

Non-Profit Grantees

1. Have you received ECHO funding? When?
2. What was the project?
 - a. Follow-up: What was the most valuable outcome of your project?
3. What was your experience with the grant application?
 - a. Follow-up: How could this process be improved?
 - b. Potential follow-up: how has this impacted your decision to reapply?
4. What was your experience with construction/implementation?
5. What support would have made your project more successful?
6. In what ways could ECHO better meet your needs?
7. Who else are the major funders of ECHO projects in the County? I.e., foundations, philanthropists, etc....
8. Should ECHO consider a tiered grant structure to better accommodate projects of different scales and types?

Municipality Grantees

1. How have ECHO funds benefited your community so far?
2. Has your municipality applied for funds, and if so, what was your experience with the grant application like?
 - a. Follow-up: how could this process be improved?
 - b. Potential follow-up: How has this impacted your decision to reapply?
3. What was your experience with the grant implementation like?
 - a. Potential follow-up: Are there regulatory or administrative barriers that limit project implementation?
4. Have you encountered challenges with this program unrelated to the grant application and/or implementation process? If so, what are they?
5. Are there gaps in funding, project types, or processes that ECHO can be address?
6. How could the county improve collaboration with municipalities to maximize ECHO's impact?
7. Should ECHO consider a tiered grant structure to better accommodate projects of different scales and types?
8. What coordination challenges exist between ECHO and other government programs or departments?
9. What administrative or procedural aspects of ECHO could be streamlined or improved?

Other County Programs and Employees

1. How has your program intersected with ECHO projects?
 - a. Potential follow-up: Are there duplicative efforts or other inefficiencies between ECHO and your program?
2. What are opportunities to better leverage ECHO resources that should be included in the strategic plan?
3. Should ECHO consider a tiered grant structure to better accommodate projects of different scales and types?
4. What coordination challenges exist between ECHO and other government programs or departments?
5. What administrative or procedural aspects of ECHO could be streamlined or improved?

Economic Development/Chambers

1. Have ECHO-funded projects contributed to local economic growth? If so, how?
 - a. Follow-up/probe: How do environmental, cultural, historic, and outdoor recreation projects affect business attraction and retention?
2. How aware are businesses of ECHO and its impact?
3. Are there community/economic development needs that aren't being met that ECHO could or should have a role in addressing?
4. How could Volusia ECHO collaborate more effectively with you/your organization?
5. Should ECHO consider a tiered grant structure to better accommodate projects of different scales and types?

Full List of Participants

Alexa Baldwin, Executive Director, Athens Theatre

Amy Zengotita, Economic Development Manager, City of Holly Hill

Barbara Ann Heegan, Executive Director, Port Orange & South Daytona Chamber of Commerce

Beth Gibson, Grant Writer

Carmen Hall, Community Assistance Director, Volusia County

Carmen Rosamonda, City of DeBary, City Manager

Chad Macfie, Marine Science Center Manager, Volusia County

Chad Truxall, Marine Discovery Center Executive Director, Volusia County

Clay Henderson, Resident

Cyndi Fernandez, Assistant Director, Conservation Florida

Gerald Fieser, ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Gerard J Pendergrast, ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Ginger Adair, Environmental Management Director, Volusia County

Jack Surette, Resident & Former ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Jake Johansson, County Council Member-At-Large

Jeffrey Ault, Resident & Former ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Jennifer Coolidge, Executive Director, Atlantic Center for the Arts

Jessica Fentress, Coastal Director, Volusia County

Jessica Modriskey, Director of Operations, Conservation Florida

John Macaluso, ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Kalan Taylor, UF/IFAS Extension of Volusia County Director and Agriculture and Natural Resources agent

Kathy Thompson, Executive Director, Daytona Playhouse

Keith Chester, Resident

Keith Willis, Leisure Services Director, City of Daytona Beach

Kelli McGee, Executive Director, Riverside Conservancy

Larry French, Historic Preservation Board Member

Loretta Moio, Grant Writer

Lucinda Colee, Library Services Director, Volusia County

Marc Swartz, Resident

Mark Manning, Parks Director, City of Deltona

Mark Rizzo, Land Manager, Conservation Florida

Mary Anne Connors, Resident & Former Volusia Forever Committee Member

Melissa Lammers, Resident

Nancy Keefer, President & CEO, Daytona Chamber of Commerce

Nancy Maddox, Economic & Community Development Director, City of Daytona Beach Shores

Pat Northey, ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Patricia Drago, ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Peter Ferriera, Deputy Parks Director, City of Port Orange

Reggie Santilli, ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Reginald Williams, Board Chair, African American Museum of Art Inc

Rob Salazar, Leisure Services Director, City of New Smyrna Beach

Samantha Bergeron, Economic Development Director, City of New Smyrna Beach

Sidney Johnston, Resident & Former Stetson University Office of Grants

Stacey Simmons, Resident & Former ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Stephanie Ford, President & CEO, New Smyrna Chamber of Commerce

Stephanie Mason-Teague, Resident & Former ECHO Advisory Committee Member

Sue Lovallo, Parks Director, City of Port Orange

Tabitha Schmidt, Museum of Arts and Sciences, CEO

Theresa Brooks, Grant Writer

Tim Baylie, Parks Director, Volusia County

Two anonymous survey participants, representing County boards

Wendy Anderson, Resident & Volusia Soil & Conservation District

APPENDIX C

Design Sprint Session Attendees

SESSION 1

1. Melissa Lammers
2. Sidney Johnston
3. Loretta Moisio
4. Jason Schaitz
5. Theresa Brooks
6. Beth Gibson
7. Stephanie Mason-Teague
8. Reggie Santilli
9. Jack Surrette
10. Samantha Bergeron
11. Peter Ferreira
12. Nancy Maddox
13. Tim Baylie
14. Carmen Hall

SESSION 2

1. Leah Washington
2. Reggie Santilli
3. John Macaluso
4. Daniel Marsh
5. Nick Dunnam
6. Tom Laputka
7. Gerald Fieser
8. Gerard J. Pendergast
9. Patricia Drago
10. Kendra Hively
11. Doug Pettit
12. Pat Northey

APPENDIX D

Plan Attachments

Florida Arts & Culture: Cultural Facilities Grant Guidelines

Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA): Creating Places IHCDA Crowdgranting Program Guidelines 2023-2024

IndyArts Council: Public Art for Neighborhoods Fund: 2024 Community Connection Grants

ECHO Advisory Board Positions

City of Maricopa: Celebration of the Arts: Support the Community Art Grant 2024-2025

City of Maricopa: Celebration of the Arts: Vibrant City Art Grant 2024-2025

City of Maricopa: Celebration of the Arts Grant Program, Support the Community Art Grant Application

City of Maricopa: Celebration of the Arts Grant Program, Vibrant City Art Grant Application

City of Maricopa and the Cultural Affairs and Arts Advisory Committee: Maricopa Wild Horses, a Public Art Project

Orange County Arts and Cultural Affairs: FY24 Cultural Facilities Funding Review Panel Conflict of Interest Form for Panelists

Planning Grant Examples

Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD): 2024 Annual Report

Recommendation to Increase Administrative Funding for the ECHO Program



Cultural Facilities Grant Guidelines

Application Open: April 1

Application Deadline: June 1, 5 p.m. ET

Grant Period: 23 months (beginning July 1, year of appropriation)

If a deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the deadline date will be the next business day.

Florida Department of State

Division of Arts and Culture
329 North Meridian Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Application Submission

Applications must be submitted on or before June 1, 5 p.m. ET.

Applications must be submitted on the DOS Grants System at dosgrants.com.

For Assistance and Information

Contact the program manager responsible for your proposal type and discipline at dos.myflorida.com/cultural/about-us/staff-listing.

These Guidelines are also available electronically at:

dos.myflorida.com/cultural/grants/grant-programs/cultural-facilities and can be made available in an alternative format.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Division of Arts and Culture Cultural Facilities Program (CF) Guidelines. We're glad you are applying for a Cultural Facilities grant from the Division! These guidelines are supported under section 265.701, *Florida Statutes* and incorporated by reference into Rule 1T-1.039, Florida Administrative Code, and they detail the policies and requirements for the application and administration of the Cultural Facilities Program grants.

Timeline

April	Announcement of application availability in <i>Florida Administrative Register</i> , via email and on our website.
April – June	Division staff assistance and consultation available to applicants.
June 1, 5 p.m. ET	Applications due. Applications must be submitted on the DOS Grants System at dosgrants.com on or before this date. If a deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the deadline date will be the next business day.
July 1 (first year)	Notification of Grant Award and grant details forms available in the award year. Grant period begins.
October 15 (first year); January 15 (first year); April 15 (first year); July 15 (second year); October 15 (second year); January 15 (second year); April 15 (second year)	Quarterly reports due for Cultural Facilities projects. Interim reports must be submitted on the DOS Grants System at dosgrants.com . If agreements are extended additional quarterly reports will be required until the expiration of the grant period.

June 1 (second year)	End date for projects. All grant and local matching funds must be expended by this date. All grant and local matching funds must be expended by this date. The grant period is 23 months unless an extension is granted.
July 15 (second year), 5 p.m. ET	Final Reports due for Cultural Facilities projects. Final Reports must be submitted on the DOS Grants System at dosgrants.com . If agreements are extended additional quarterly reports will be required until the expiration of the grant period.

Program Description

The Cultural Facilities Program coordinates and guides the State of Florida's support and funding of renovation, new construction, or acquisition of cultural facilities. It is intended for organizations whose mission is arts and cultural programming in one of the disciplines as defined in section 265.283(1), *Florida Statutes*.

By program definition, a cultural facility is a building where the programming, production, presentation, exhibition of any of the arts and cultural disciplines are carried out (section 265.283(1), *Florida Statutes*). These disciplines are music, dance, theatre, creative writing, literature, architecture, painting, sculpture, folk arts, photography, crafts, media arts, visual arts and programs of museums. The Program is intended for: bricks and mortar construction; renovation; or for acquisition. **Projects must fall squarely into one category, not any combination of the three.** State funding shall not be used for parking facilities, sidewalks, walkways, and trails that are the entire scope of work; landscaping; fabrication or design of exhibits (not permanently affixed to the building); nor commercial projects.

Public or private pre-K-12 schools; libraries; civic organizations; parks, recreation and leisure organizations; human service organizations; or other community service agencies do not meet the definition of arts or cultural organizations.

The Division offers two levels of funding within the Cultural Facilities Program. These levels are determined by the specific use of the facility:

- 1) A purpose-built or single use facility that will solely be used for the programming, production, presentation, exhibition of any of the arts and cultural disciplines (Section 265.283(1), Florida Statutes) **at least 85% of the time**. This type of facility includes theatres, performance centers, museums (including, aquariums, botanical gardens, history centers, zoos, etc.) and art centers. **The maximum request amount for this type of facility is \$500,000.**
- 2) A multi-purpose facility that will be used for the programming, production, presentation, exhibition of any of the arts and cultural disciplines (Section 265.283(1), Florida Statutes) **less than 85% of the time**. This type of building includes community centers, recreation centers, civic centers and municipal buildings. **The maximum request amount for this type of facility is \$200,000.** Project costs must be directly related to the arts and cultural portion of the facility.

Eligibility

The following conditions are required for eligibility. **All** documentation must be provided by the application deadline.

1. **Must not** have multiple active Cultural Facilities projects under contract at one time. Cultural Facilities projects have a grant period of 23 months. Unless a grantee has a smaller project that will be completed in a single year, grantees should submit new applications every other year. Cultural Facilities is subject to Legislative appropriation and recommendations approved by the Secretary of State will be funded top-down until the appropriation is depleted.

Any applicant on the ranked list that has not completed a previously-funded Cultural Facilities project by July 1 of the award year will be passed over and the funds will be allocated to the next grantee on the list without an active Cultural Facilities project under contract. A previously-funded project is considered complete when it has reached 100% completion as supported by contractor documentation or if the contract has reached its end date and all funds have been expended. The previously-funded project final report and payment request must be completed and submitted to the Division by July 1 of the award year.

2. **Must** use the facility to directly conduct arts and cultural programming. Documentation **must** be provided to support the percentage of facility use is for arts and cultural purposes as it pertains to the organization's mission per section 265.283(1), *Florida Statutes*.

If the proposal is for a new space without previous programming, programming examples (either proposed or programming being performed at another location) **must** be provided and support the percentage of facility use for arts and cultural purposes.

3. **Must** have the required legal status.
4. Agree to comply with all application requirements:
 - a. Complete all proposal activities within the grant period;
 - b. Make programming and activities open and accessible to all members of the public (see accessibility and nondiscrimination);
 - c. Match the grant amount requested, at least dollar for dollar (see request amount and match requirements); and

- d. Include only allowable expenses in the proposal budget (see allowable and non-allowable expenses).
5. Agree to comply with all grant administration requirements:
 - a. Provide all information needed for the grant award agreement;
 - b. Request approval for any changes to the awarded grant;
 - c. Submit timely and accurate reports;
 - d. Maintain complete and accurate grant records;
 - e. Comply with the requirements of the Florida Single Audit Act; and
 - f. Use the appropriate credit line or approved logo to acknowledge grant funding.
See grant contract for credit requirements.
6. **Must** have **unrestricted use** of the land and buildings associated with the project which means you **must** be able to record a Restrictive Covenant on the property with the Clerk of Court for ten (10) years or provide a 10-year surety bond. See “Unrestricted Use of Land and/or Buildings” for additional information.
7. **Must retain ownership** of all improvements made under the grant (unless the land or buildings are owned by the State of Florida and leased to an eligible applicant).
8. If the property is leased, only facilities with leases in which the lessor is a public entity governed by either a municipality or county, or a not-for-profit entity are eligible for a Cultural Facilities grant (facilities or property owned by an individual or for-profit entity are not eligible for a Cultural Facilities grant).
9. If the property is leased, **the lease agreement must be dated, signed by all parties, and submitted** at the time of the application submission.
10. **Must** provide documentation of **Total Support and Revenue** for the last completed fiscal year.
11. **Must** have appropriate **matching** funds and documentation at time of application submission.
12. **Must** provide **current architectural plans** signed by a licensed architect or engineer clearly indicating scope of work. **If architectural plans are not required for the completion of the project, contractor project proposals or working drawings must be provided. Must** include budget estimate provided by the architect, engineer, or contractor that the Proposal Expense Details are based on.

13. **Must have current project support** of local officials (city and county government), community groups, and community members —for this project— documented in writing at time of application.
14. Applicants **with structures 50 years or older must submit a determination letter (stating that the proposed project will have NO adverse effects to the building’s historical significance) from the Division of Historical Resources (DHR) at time of application** (For additional information, please contact the Bureau of Historic Preservation (BHP) at 850.245-6333). This includes structures where the intent is demolition.
15. Must complete an online application form at dosgrants.com by the application deadline.

In addition to these eligibility requirements, all applicants in noncompliance at the time of the application deadline will be deemed ineligible to apply.

Application Restrictions

1. Organizations may only submit one (1) Cultural Facilities application per application deadline.
2. Cultural Facilities grants do not fund Historic Preservation projects.
3. Organizations with projects funded by the Legislature outside of the review of the Florida Council on Arts and Culture or Secretary of State are not eligible to receive Cultural Facilities grant support for the same Scope of Work from the Division of Arts and Culture within the same fiscal year in which legislative funding is appropriated.
4. No organization may receive more than \$1.5 million during a consecutive previous five (5) state fiscal year period (July 1 – June 30).

Legal Status

To meet the legal status requirement, an applicant organization must be either a public entity or a Florida nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation as of the application deadline in accordance with section 265.701(2), *Florida Statutes*.

Public Entity

A Florida local government, entity of state government, school district, community college, college, or university. Private schools, private community colleges, private colleges, and private universities are not public entities and must be nonprofit and tax-exempt to meet the legal status requirement.

Nonprofit, Tax-Exempt

To apply to the Cultural Facilities grant program, an applicant must be both:

1. **Nonprofit:** incorporated as an active nonprofit Florida corporation, in accordance with Chapter 617, *Florida Statutes*; and
2. **Tax-exempt:** designated as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended. Staff will verify status in Guidestar at [guidestar.org](https://www.guidestar.org).

The Division of Arts and Culture will verify that the applicant is registered with the Division of Corporations as of the application deadline. If the applicant is not registered with Corporations by the application deadline, the application will be deemed ineligible.

If the applicant is registered in Corporations but their status is not "active," the applicant must correct the status within 10 calendar days of notification or the application will be deemed ineligible.

For more information on corporate status, visit [sunbiz.org](https://www.sunbiz.org) or call the Division of Corporations, profit and nonprofit information line at (850) 245-6052. To verify corporate status, you can review your corporate record online through the sunbiz.org document search tool.

For more information about tax-exempt status, see Exemption Requirements - Section 501(c)(3) Organizations on the Internal Revenue Service website ([irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov)).

Required Documentation

1. All applicants must provide a UEI number. You can request a UEI number at sam.gov.
2. All applicants must provide a copy of the Substitute W-9 with the grant application. This can be found at <https://flvendor.myfloridacfo.com>.

Application Requirements

Grant Period

All proposed activity must take place within the grant period.

- The grant period **start date** is July 1 of the award year.

- The grant period **end date** is June 1 (23 months after award begins) unless an end date extension is approved by the Division.

Accessibility and Nondiscrimination

The Division of Arts and Culture is committed to making the arts and culture accessible to everyone. Organizations seeking support for activities are required to be open and accessible to all members of the public, regardless of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, age, or marital status.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunication. The ADA extends the requirements under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, to all activities of state and local governments and places of public accommodations operated by private entities, including places of public display. The 504 Self Evaluation Workbook which can be used as a reference, and downloadable Disability Symbols can be found at dos.myflorida.com/cultural/info-and-opportunities/resources-by-topic/accessibility.

Request Amount

For purpose-built facilities, that will solely be used for the programming, production, presentation, exhibition of any of the arts and cultural disciplines at least 85% of the time, you may request up to \$500,000 for renovation, acquisition, or construction of the entire facility. For a multi-purpose facility that will be used for the programming, production, presentation, exhibition of any of the arts and cultural disciplines less than 85% of the time, you may request up to \$200,000 for renovation, acquisition, or construction of the portion of the facility that is directly related to arts and culture. There is no minimum request amount.

Match Requirements

Applicants must provide at least one dollar in cash or in-kind (donated goods or services) for every dollar requested from the division. This is called match.

Total Proposal Expenses are defined as match (cash and in-kind) + request amount. No more than 25% of the total match may be in-kind. See the in-kind section of the guidelines for more details.

25% of the match must be cash on hand at the time of application. Remaining matching funds may be anticipated at the time of application but **must** be documented at the time of application and be received by the end of the grant period. All expenses (both state grant and match) must be paid out (not merely encumbered) by the grant end date of June 1.

Applicants must match the request amount with non-state funds specific to the construction, renovation, or acquisition project. The amount provided as match depends on Total Support and Revenue statement (comprehensive income, revenue and expense) and REDI eligibility. Operating expenses cannot be used as match.

Summary of Match Requirements	Required Match
Last completed FY total support and revenue \$1,000,000 or less	1:1
Last completed FY total support and revenue of more than \$1,000,000 with a REDI waiver	1:1
Last completed FY total support and revenue of more than \$1,000,000 without a REDI waiver	2:1

Exception: The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) recognizes those rural or economically distressed counties or communities designated pursuant to sections 288.0656 and 288.06561, *Florida Statutes*, as REDI qualified. The REDI program is administered by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. You can find more information and a list of economically distressed counties and communities at floridajobs.org/business-growth-and-partnerships/rural-and-economic-development-initiative/rural-definition.

Applicants in a REDI designated area must only provide \$1 of required match for every \$1 requested from the state regardless of their Total Support and Revenue. Applicants requesting the REDI waiver must submit a letter at the time of the application from the eligible county/community indicating their support for the proposal and indicating the request for a match reduction. The Division cannot waive all matching funds.

Types of Match

Three types of match (**must** be on hand at the time of the application submission):

- Cash on Hand (Liquid Assets)

At Least 25% of total request amount match must be cash on hand at the time of the application, documented by bank statements showing restricted funds or city or county resolution.* Fixed Capital Outlay accounts **must** be separate from general operating accounts. Business checking accounts are **not** acceptable unless they are specifically named for that purpose. Cash on hand may exceed 25% of the total match but may never be less than 25% of the total match.

- Irrevocable Pledges

Irrevocable pledges are legally binding promises to donate by individuals or groups. Irrevocable pledges can make up no more than 75% of the match and must be auditable. Irrevocable pledges must indicate that the funds will be received by the Grantee by the end of the grant period. **Letters from boards or other groups that pledge to raise money for the project are not acceptable irrevocable pledges.** Money already received from an irrevocable pledge is considered Cash on Hand and would already be part of any bank balance.

- Documented In-Kind Contributions

In-kind contributions can make up no more than 25% of the match, must be itemized at the time of application, and the goods and services received and utilized by the end of the grant period. In-Kind Contributions by the applicant are **not eligible** for match.

In-kind (Donated Goods and Services)

The value of all professionally skilled services used as in-kind must be documented in writing by the volunteer. The value of donated goods must also be documented. Records of such documentation must be available upon request.

The value of volunteer services may be calculated using the federal minimum wage or wage rates normally paid for professionals skilled in the service provided (such as a supplier donating construction materials services or an electrician providing pro bono work). For information on the current federal minimum wage, see the Wage and Hour Division of the US Department of Labor at dol.gov/whd/minimumwage.htm.

Organizations must have all match complete and confirmed at the time of application.

***Municipalities and counties (public entities)** must submit an executed copy of an approved resolution by a city or county commission with the application materials. The resolution **must** include the dollar amount dedicated and available to the project if the grant is awarded and the date the funds will be available. The submitted resolution **must be dated and signed by an authorizing official**. An unsigned resolution will not be accepted and the application will be deemed ineligible. Funding, as indicated by the resolution, must be made available within 90 days of the start of the grant award period. An internal document or budget will not be accepted as documentation. **Resolutions will not be accepted after the application deadline.**

Non-allowable Matching Funds

- Funds that are for General Operating Expenses (i.e. the unrestricted column on the Statement of Activity page of the organization's audit);
- Revenue from bond issues that have not been passed at the time of application;
- Revenue from grants that have not yet been awarded;
- Fundraising costs;
- Legal fees or taxes;
- Matching funds will be designated only to the Scope of Work presented in this application and may not have been used in previous Division or Department of State grants;
- Expenditures made before the grant period;
- Interest paid on mortgage. The interest paid on the mortgage is considered to be the "cost of doing business;"
- Building or Land value;
- Loans and equity; and
- Any State of Florida agency funds.

Matching Funds Documentation

Documentation of matching funds **MUST** include bank statement(s) confirming cash on hand or resolution showing funds dedicated to the Scope of Work.

And as applicable:

- Award letters from third parties;
- Copies of irrevocable pledges (include a list or spreadsheet with totals); and
- Letters of intent or invoices for future in-kind goods and services.

If matching funds are from a single source (i.e. County/Municipality Resolution, single donor, etc.), applicants are **strongly encouraged** to include letters or surveys showing community support for the project with their support documentation.

Allowable Expenses

Allowable expenses must be:

- not excluded by these Guidelines and approved by the Division;
- necessary and reasonable for the performance of the Scope of Work;
- specifically and clearly detailed in the Project Budget; and
- incurred and paid within the grant period of July 1 of the award year through June 1 (23 months after award begins).

Only allowable expenses may be included in the proposal budget.

Non-Allowable Expenses

Grant (state and matching) funds may not be spent on the following:

- Expenditures made before the grant period;
- Costs incurred or obligated outside of the grant period;
- Expenditures for work not included in the Scope of Work of the executed Grant Award Agreement as described in the original application and approved by the panel;
- Costs for planning, which include those for preliminary and schematic drawings, and design development documents necessary to carry out the project;
- Design, fabrication or construction of exhibits not permanently affixed to building
- Commercial property (coffee shops, cafés, and gifts shops as part of the facility are allowable);
- General Operating Expenses (GOE). Administrative costs for running the organization (including but not limited to salaries, travel, personnel, office supplies, mortgage or rent, operating overhead or indirect costs, etc.);
- Costs associated with representation, proposal, or grant application preparation
- Costs for lobbying or attempting to influence federal, state or local legislation, the judicial branch, or any state agency;
- Costs associated with bad debts, contingencies (money set aside for possible expenses), fines and penalties, interest, taxes (of any kind), and other financial costs including bank fees and charges and credit card debts;
- Costs for travel, private entertainment, food, beverages, plaques, awards, or scholarships;

- Regranting, contributions, and donations; and
- **Grant award funds** may not be used for parking facilities, sidewalks, walkways, and trails that are the entire scope of work; landscaping; fabrication or design of exhibits (not permanently affixed to the building); nor commercial projects. However, matching funds may be used for elements that are part of the project.

Spending state grant funds on expenses that have not been approved by the Division, even if directly related to the program or project, will be disallowed and could result in a legal demand for the return of grant funds.

Expenditures shall be in compliance with the state guidelines for allowable project costs as outlined in the Department of Financial Services' Reference Guide for State Expenditures, which are incorporated by reference and are available online at https://www.myfloridacfo.com/docs-sf/accounting-and-auditing-libraries/state-agencies/reference-guide-for-state-expenditures.pdf?sfvrsn=b4cc3337_2.

Review Criteria and Scoring

Each eligible application will be evaluated on three (3) competitive criteria

Criteria	Application Section(s)	Worth
Need for Project and Project Impact	Percentage of Arts and Cultural Programming, Production, and Administration; Need for Project; Project Impact; and Operating Forecast Detail	up to 45 points
Scope of Work	Scope of Work; Project Description	up to 30 points
Project Budget and Matching Funds	Proposal Budget Detail; Expenses; Proposal Budget Detail: Income; Matching Funds Statement; and Project Team	up to 25 points

The total possible number of points the panel can award to an application is 100. The panel's evaluation will be based on the information contained in the application, required attachments

and support materials submitted with the application. The panel's individual scores will be averaged to determine a final score for each application.

Applications must receive a minimum average score of 80 or higher to be *recommended* for funding. Applications receiving an average score of 80 or higher will be recommended to the Secretary of State and forwarded to the Florida Legislature for funding consideration.

Applications with a tied average score will be ranked by application number order (lowest to highest).

Review Process

1. Division staff will conduct a technical review to determine eligibility. Eligible applications will then be submitted to the members of the Florida Council on Arts and Culture who serve as the grant review panel.
2. The members of the Florida Council on Arts and Culture will evaluate each application on the review criteria and assign a score.
3. The Florida Council on Arts and Culture approves a list for submission to the Secretary of State.
4. The Division forwards a ranked list to the Secretary of State.
5. The Secretary of State approves the ranked list for submission to the Legislature for funding consideration.

Staff Review

The technical review of applications verifies:

1. Applicant has the correct **legal status** (public entity governed by either a municipality or county or not-for-profit, tax-exempt, Florida Corporation).
2. Applicant has **unrestricted use** of the land and buildings associated with the project. The applicant **MUST** be able to file a Restrictive Covenant on the property with the Clerk of Court for ten (10) years or provide a 10-year surety bond. See **Unrestricted Use of Land and/or Buildings** for additional information.
3. **The facility is owned by a public entity governed by either a municipality or county, or a not-for-profit entity.**

4. **The lease agreement is dated and signed** by all parties (if applicable).
5. Documentation of **Total Support and Revenue** for the last completed fiscal year has been provided and matches the information provided in the application.
6. The appropriate level of funding has been requested.
7. Appropriate **matching** funds ratio has been identified and documentation has been provided.
8. **Current architectural plans** signed by a licensed architect or engineer clearly indicating the scope of work have been provided. **If architectural plans are not required for the completion of the project, contractor project proposals or working drawings must be provided.**
9. **Budget estimates** provided by the architect, engineer, or contractor that the Proposal Expense Details are based on have been submitted.
10. **Current project support** of local officials (city and county government), community groups, and community members —for this project— has been provided.
11. Applicants **with structures 50 years or older have submitted a determination letter (stating that the proposed project will have NO adverse effects to the building’s historical significance) from the Division of Historical Resources (DHR)** (For additional information, please contact the Bureau of Historic Preservation (BHP) at 850.245-6333). This includes structures where the intent is demolition.
12. Documentation supporting percentage of facility use for arts and cultural purposes as it pertains to the organization’s mission per section 265.283(1), *Florida Statutes* has been provided. If project is for a NEW space without previous programming, programming examples **must** be provided. Responses to application questions regarding the percentage of facility use **must** be verifiable and support the organization’s mission and the purpose of the proposed project.
13. For applicants with acquisition projects only: **Appraisal and purchase documents** have been provided.

Only documents that provide clarification to staff will be considered after the application deadline. If necessary, a request for clarification will be sent with a response deadline. Such requests will be made in writing to the Applicant Organization using the contact information provided in the application. These requests are not for additional information, but to clarify the information already submitted in the application. Responses received after the established

deadline will not be accepted. Clarifications will become an official part of the application.
Required documents that were not submitted with the application will not be accepted.

Information Provided to the Florida Council on Arts and Culture Review Panel

The Division will make available a staff report on each eligible application that provides an assessment of the information provided in the grant application. The staff report will include:

1. A synopsis of the proposed Scope of Work;
2. A summary of all previously awarded Cultural Facilities grants and Fixed Capital Outlay line item grants and their completion status and history of management by the applicant;
3. Any clarification requested from an Applicant Organization and received by the specified deadline;
4. An assessment of the proposed Scope of Work and timeline regarding the grant period and comparison to previously-funded Cultural Facilities projects;
5. An assessment of the proposed estimated budget including eligibility of claimed match contributions, with recommendations for any grant request amount adjustments that may be justified by the findings of the staff technical review. Examples of the need for such adjustment would be:
 1. A recommendation to delete work related to non-allowable costs;
 2. Work not consistent with the Cultural Facilities guidelines;
 3. To reduce the grant award in an amount commensurate with inadequately documented or non-allowable match contributions; or
 4. To reduce the request amount based on the eligible funding level as determined by the specific use of the facility.
6. Other information regarding the Applicant Organization and its compliance with previous Division grants, if relevant.

Florida Council on Arts and Culture Review Panel

Panel meetings are a public process and anyone can participate by attending in person or via the virtual meeting option. Participation instructions will be emailed to applicants and posted on the Division's web site and in the online grant system. The Division strongly encourages applicants to participate in the grant panel meeting—however, it is not required. Participating in the panel process can be very helpful for those that intend to apply for future grants.

Members of the Florida Council on Arts and Culture serve as the grant review panel for the Cultural Facilities program. A Division staff member will serve as the panel Chair. Chairs do not vote on applications being reviewed.

A typical panel meeting will include the following:

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction of Panelists and Staff
3. Panel Instructions from the Chair
4. Scoring of applications. For each application:
 - the Chair will announce the application number and applicant name
 - applicants may provide a *brief* update on the application. Updates may only include new proposal information
 - applicants will be permitted to respond to panelist questions
 - each panelist will voice his or her score
 - panelists may choose to recommend and vote to reduce an eligible request amount
 - division staff will calculate and voice the total points and the average panel score
5. Public comment - anyone (including applicants) may speak about the applications under consideration.
6. Panel Recommendations
7. General discussion from the panel (i.e., regarding policies, procedures)
8. General comments from the public - limited to 3 minutes or at the Chair's discretion
9. Closing remarks from the Chair
10. Adjournment

Any information provided during the panel review that negatively affects an application may result in an application being deemed ineligible or a reduction in request amount.

The panel chair will request discussion and a vote on the recommended funding list, ranked in order of total average score (highest to lowest). The Council may amend the recommendations based on new or existing pertinent information about the application or panel proceedings such as:

- Score calculation errors by the Division;
- Applicant noncompliance with administrative requirements of previous grants from the Department of State;
- Bankruptcy or other fiscal concerns;
- Changes in the applicant's staff that would impair implementation of the proposed grant activity;
- Typographical errors in the Committee's recommendations.

Funding Process

The Secretary of State will provide the Legislature with an approved list, ranked in order of total average score, with funding recommendations for all projects that received a total average score of 80 and above. The Legislature may use this list to make funding decisions.

Any applicant on the ranked list that has not completed a previously-funded Cultural Facilities project by July 1 of the award year will be passed over and the funds will be allocated to the next grantee on the list without an active Cultural Facilities project under contract.

What if an application is not funded?

If the Legislature does not fund **any** applications on the list presented in a given year, the applications on that list are eligible for “rollover” for the following year (only). Applications may only be on the rollover list once. If your application is not funded on the rollover, you must submit a new application. If the ranked list is partially funded in a given year, there is no “rollover” option.

Why Rollover?

As a rollover, your application:

- Is guaranteed a place on the next recommended funding list if you submit a Rollover Update;
- Will not be re-scored, but will be ranked by the original score on a list that includes new applications; and
- Will be recommended for the amount of funding that was originally requested.

A single list (of both rollover and new applications) ranked in order by average score, highest to lowest, will be submitted to the next session of the Legislature. Rollover application recommendations will be identified as such on the ranked list.

Rollover Update

Applicants wishing to rollover must submit a Rollover Update. This should provide updated information pertinent to the application since its original submission in the following application sections:

- Scope of Work (Project Description) as recommended by the Council and approved by the Secretary of State;
- Project Budgets;
- Matching Funds Statement; and
- Contact information.

A specific deadline will be established and eligible applicants will be notified by email. When you submit the Rollover Application, Division staff will:

- Verify Basic Eligibility;
- Verify that the Project Description in the Rollover application has **NOT** changed from the Project Description in the original application that was recommended by the Council and approved by the Secretary of State; and
- Verify match percentages and documentation.

Removal from the Rollover List

An organization will be removed from the rollover list for the following:

- Failing to submit the updated information by the rollover deadline announced on the Division's website; and
- Failing to maintain basic eligibility, required match, or undisturbed use of the building or land or both.
- Changes in Scope of Work (Project Description)

Note: The project that was recommended for funding by the Florida Council on Arts and Culture and approved by the Secretary of State must not change. If changes to the Scope of Work are required, the applicant must submit a **NEW** application on the DOS Grants System at dosgrants.com during the regular application window.

How to Apply

Applications must be submitted on the DOS Grants System at dosgrants.com.

All application information submitted to the Division is open for public inspection and subject to the Public Records Law (Chapter 119, *Florida Statutes*).

Application Form

The application form must be completed using the Division's online grant application and submitted online by 5:00 p.m. ET on the application deadline. Deadlines are posted on the Division's web site at dos.myflorida.com/cultural/grants/grant-programs/cultural-facilities.

Applicants may request that a submitted application be electronically un-submitted at any point before the application deadline. The application must be resubmitted by the application deadline to be considered.

Attachments and Support Materials

Attachments and support materials must be uploaded into the online grant application system. Attachments and support materials will not be accepted by any other method including email and fax.

Required Attachments

Attachments are required documentation of eligibility. The required attachments for Cultural Facilities are:

1. **Matching Funds** Documentation.
 - Bank statements, awards, contracts, for **cash on hand**.
 - Copies of **irrevocable pledges (include a list or spreadsheet with totals)**.
 - Letters and/or invoices from **in-kind contributors**.
2. Documentation of **Unrestricted Use** (construction and renovation projects only; see Unrestricted Use of Land and/or Buildings).
 - Deed, title, or property tax statement to document **unrestricted use; or**
 - Executed copy of lease and written explanation of any easements, covenants, or other conditions to document **unrestricted use**.
3. **Total Support and Revenue** Documentation (See Total Support and Revenue)
 - Audit or financial statement; OR
 - Audit or financial statement of the organization that will be responsible for management of the facility (*public entity applicants only*).
4. Current **Architectural Plans** (for new construction and renovation projects only) certified by a licensed architect or engineer. If architectural plans are not required for the completion of the project, contractor project proposals or working drawings must be provided. (See Architectural Plans).
5. **Budget estimates** provided by the architect, engineer, or contractor that the Proposal Expense Details are based on.
6. **Project Support** Documentation
 - Up to 6 current letters of support from local officials (City and County Government), community groups, and community members (See Support Letters).
7. **Bureau of Historic Preservation (BHP) Determination Letter** stating that the proposed project will have **NO adverse effects to the building's historical significance** for buildings 50 years or older (See Historical Review Requirements).
8. **Nonprofit IRS Letter**. Not-for-profit tax-exempt applicants must also provide one (1) copy of your IRS 501(c) (3) or 501(c) (4) determination letter.
9. **Substitute W-9**. A copy can be obtained at flvendor.myfloridacfo.com.
10. **Form 990** for the organization's last completed fiscal year.

11. **Mission and Programming Materials** such as season program, box office statement, educational programs that document percentage of arts and cultural programming of facility. If project is for a new space without previous programming, provide programming examples.
12. **Additional Support Materials:** Support materials will be considered by panelists in the review and scoring so including them is highly recommended (See Support Materials).
13. **Appraisal and Purchase Documents (for Acquisition projects only):** In this attachment the Applicant Organization must include an appraisal(s), purchase agreement, title/owner search, and certified land survey. All closing costs are the responsibility of the Grantee. In addition to the supporting documents required for all applications, this application must include the following:
 - A copy of an executed option or purchase agreement;
 - A copy of the complete appraisal prepared by a Florida State Certified General Real Estate Appraiser;
 - A copy of a title search; and
 - A copy of the certified land survey.

Unrestricted Use of Land and/or Buildings

You must provide documentation that the Applicant has Unrestricted Use (either ownership or lease) of the building and the land associated with the proposal/project.

- **Ownership:** Legal proof of unrestricted ownership of property and building by the applicant. Unrestricted means unqualified ownership and power of disposition. Documentation may include a deed, title, or a copy of a recent property tax statement. Provisional sales contracts, binders, or letters of intent are not acceptable documentation of ownership.

If you do not have ownership of property and building, you must provide:

- **Lease for a specific period of time:** The lease must be executed/effective at the time of the application deadline and remain in effect for a length of time of not less than ten (10) years following the Grant Award. Only facilities with leases in which the lessor is a public entity governed by either a municipality or county, or a not-for-profit entity are eligible for a Cultural Facilities grant. Facilities or property owned by an individual or for-profit entity are not eligible for a Cultural Facilities grant
- **Documentation must include an executed copy of a lease** (see definition of Lease) and a written explanation of any easements, covenants, or other conditions affecting the use of the site or facility, or both.
- **Ownership of Improvements:** Applicants must retain ownership of all improvements made under the grant unless land or buildings or both are owned by the State of Florida and leased to an eligible applicant.

Total Support and Revenue (Statement of Comprehensive Income, Revenue and Expense)

You must provide documentation of your Total Support and Revenue for your last completed fiscal year.

- **Not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations** provide an audit to substantiate Total Support and Revenue. If you do not have an audit, provide a financial statement **signed and certified by the authorizing official**, as documentation of Total Support and Revenue (Upload the last completed fiscal year).
- **Municipal or county governments (public entities)** - Either an audit or an internally prepared financial statement must be submitted as documentation of Total Support and Revenue (Upload the most recent available).
- If a City or County government owns the building or land or both and is applying on behalf of a not-for-profit organization, then the financial statements (or audit) of both entities are required.

Architectural Plans

All new construction and renovation applicants must upload current architectural plans for the facility certified by a licensed architect or engineer (not required for building acquisition). If architectural plans are not required for the completion of the project, contractor project proposals or working drawings must be provided. Applicants are required to include budget estimates provided by the architect, engineer, or contractor that the Proposal Expense Details are based on.

Support Letters

All applicants must submit current letters of project support from local officials (City and County Government), community groups, and community members who are lending support to this project. Letters should be from individuals who have actually visited the facility (if a renovation project) or participated in programs (if a new facility). **Applicants should avoid form letters; original letters that are signed and current are preferred.** A maximum of six support letters are recommended.

If matching funds are from a single source (i.e. Municipality/County Resolution, single donor, etc.), applicants are **strongly encouraged** to include letters or surveys showing community support for the project.

Historical Review Requirements

Facilities that are 50 years old or older may have historical significance that must be preserved. This includes structures where the intent is demolition. If your facility meets the criteria, the Bureau of Historic Preservation (BHP) must approve your project plans before submission of your application. Upload a copy of the BHP determination letter stating that the proposed project will have **no adverse effects** to the building's historical significance at time of the application.

Please note that the review time for projects is approximately 30 days once all required information is received by the Bureau of Historic Preservation office. If you have questions, please contact the Review and Compliance Section at 850.245.6333 or visit BHP web site at dos.myflorida.com/historical/preservation/compliance-and-review/documents-forms.

Support Materials

Support materials may include, but are not limited to:

- Photographs;
- Supplemental or expanded budgets;
- Flyers, brochures;
- Newspaper articles; and
- Plans for sustainable design.

Please submit only high quality materials that support your application and only as many as you need. Required attachments do not count towards the 10 upload limit.

It is your responsibility to verify and receive permission for the use of any copyrighted materials. You are also responsible for considering accessibility of your materials.

File Formats

Council members are not required to own specific software and the Division makes no guarantee that reviewers will be able to view your digital materials. To increase the chances of file compatibility, make sure files are in one of the following formats.

- Documents: doc., docx, .pdf, or .txt
- Images: .jpg, .gif, .png, or .tiff
- Audio: .mp3
- Video: .mp4, .mov, or .wmv

MacOS productivity files such as Pages, Keynote, and Numbers are not acceptable formats. Please save files into .pdf format before submission.

In lieu of large media files, the Division recommends providing a document with links to view media online.

Uploading Instructions

- Attachments and support materials must be uploaded in the online system by the application deadline.
- You may include up to 10 uploads for your support materials in addition to your Required Attachments. You can include more than one item in an upload. Do not upload multiple copies of the same file. You must describe your materials as you upload them.

Grant Forms

The following forms must be used in the administration of all grants in these guidelines and are hereby incorporated by reference and available from the Division through dosgrants.com:

#	Title	Form #	Effective Date
1.	Cultural Facilities Grant Application	CA2E147	XX/XXXX
2.	Grant Award Agreement	CA2E038	XX/XXXX
3.	Cultural Facilities Program Report	CA2E048	XX/XXXX

Single Audit Act

All grant award recipients are required to complete a Single Audit Act certification form through the Department of State grants management system at dosgrants.com. Each grantee, other than a grantee that is a State agency, shall submit to an audit pursuant to 2 CFR 200, Subpart F - Audit Requirements, and Section 215.97, *Florida Statutes*. Certifications and any required audit are due nine months following the organization's fiscal year end date. See Florida Single Audit Act for more information.

Definitions

Accessibility - Opening existing programs, services, facilities and activities to individuals with disabilities. Inclusiveness of persons with disabilities is addressed through staffing, mission, policy, budget, education, meetings and programs to ensure that audiences/participants have an equal range of opportunities.

Applicant - A non-profit, tax-exempt, Florida corporation or a local or state governmental entity, school district, community college, college, university or artist engaged in or concerned with arts and cultural activities that is requesting grant funds from the Division.

Applicant Cash (\$) - Funds from the applicant's present and/or anticipated resources. For the Operating Budget purposes, this line-item represents withdrawal from savings. This line item is often used to "balance the budget" when expenses exceed other revenues. It shows the applicant's ability to "pay the bills" for all expense items. If there are excess revenues, reduce this line to zero or only the amount needed to balance the budget. Negative numbers cannot be used to balance the budget.

Authorized Official - Name of person with authority to legally obligate the Applicant.

Cash Reserves (\$) - For most organizations, this will be your savings account, other cash reserves or investments that are available to spend on general operations or programs. The "reserve" will usually increase when there are excess revenues for the year and decrease if there was a deficit. This is more a year end accounting function than actual day to day activity.

Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA) - A statewide compendium of state projects that provide financial assistance to nonstate entities. As the basic reference source for state projects, the primary purpose of the Catalog is to assist users with obtaining general information on state projects and identifying state projects that meet specific objectives. State projects are cataloged by agency and are assigned a Catalog of State Financial Assistance (CSFA) number for easy referencing. The Cultural Facilities CSFA number is 45.014.

Community - The geographic area and/or constituents served by the applicant (for general program support requests) or by the proposal (for project requests).

Community Organizations - Civic, social service and business groups that may be involved in the project for which funding is being requested. These may include science organizations, historical organizations and organizations which serve diverse populations.

Congressional District of Applicant - District of the United States House of Representatives in which the applicant's business address is located.

Contact Person - The person to contact for additional information about the application. The person with immediate responsibility for the project.

Costs: Allowable (\$) - Costs shall be allowed for the purposes of a grant provided that:

- they occur or are obligated within the grant period specified on the grant application; and
- they are solely for the purposes of the grant and can be easily identified as such.

Council - The Florida Council on Arts and Culture; a 15-member advisory council appointed to advise the Secretary of State regarding cultural grant funding and on matters pertaining to culture in Florida.

Cultural Diversity - Having the characteristic of being deeply rooted in and reflective of ethnically diverse, inner-city or rural populations and which represents the works of a particular culture, including an ethnic minority.

Cultural Events - Includes different artistic, cultural or educational activities which were produced or sponsored by the grantee, were open and accessible to the public and took place in the grant period, i.e. performances, exhibits, rehearsals, workshops, classes, seminars, demonstrations, conferences, publications or media broadcasts. Do not include strictly fund-raising/gala events. Note: to count number of events, only include the number of different events which were offered, i.e. a play performed ten times or a museum exhibit running for three months, should each be counted as one event.

Deliverable - The quantifiable goods or services that must be provided in order to receive payment. Each deliverable must be connected with one or more activities identified and described in the Scope of Work. Deliverables, along with the Scope of Work, are included in the grant agreement. Deliverables must be agreed upon by both the Division and the grant recipient. The deliverables will be developed by the grant applicant in the grant application for inclusion in the grant agreement but may be renegotiated by the Division.

Department - The Florida Department of State.

Director - The Director of the Division of Arts and Culture.

Disability - A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Division - The Division of Arts and Culture of the Department of State.

End Date - The last date of fiscal activity in the project for which assistance is requested.

Equipment (\$) - All items which cost in excess of \$5,000 (per unit) and have a life expectancy of over one year.

Financial Consequences - The financial consequences that will be applied if the grant recipient fails to perform all tasks outlined in the Scope of Work and/or fails to meet the deliverables outlined in the grant agreement. Financial consequences are tied to deliverables and each payment. Per Section 287.058, *Florida Statutes*, the Division is required to specify a reduction in grant funding that will be applied if the recipient fails to perform all activities outlined in the Scope of Work and/or fails to meet the deliverables outlined in the grant agreement.

Florida Accountability Contract Tracking System (FACTS) - The State of Florida's centralized online contract reporting system. All information pertaining to the grant agreement will be available on the FACTS system and viewable by the public. This includes the grant agreement, payment information, deliverables, performance metrics, grant award and audit information. FACTS is online at facts.fldfs.com.

Florida Single Audit Act – Requires an audit of a nonstate entity's financial statements and state financial assistance if \$750,000 or more in state financial assistance is expended during the non-state entity's fiscal year. Such audits shall be conducted in accordance with the auditing standards as stated in the rules of the Auditor General.

Folklife - Means the traditional expressive culture shared within the various groups in Florida: familial, ethnic, occupational, religious and regional. Expressive culture includes a wide range of creative and symbolic forms such as custom, belief, technical skill, language, literature, art, architecture, music, play, dance, drama, ritual, pageantry and handicraft, which forms are generally learned orally, by imitation or in performance and are maintained or perpetuated without formal instruction or institutional direction (267.021, *Florida Statutes*).

Government Support: Federal (\$) - Cash support derived from grants or appropriations given for this project (other than this grant request) by agencies of the federal government or a proportionate share of such grants or appropriations allocated to this project.

Government Support: Local/County (\$) - Cash support derived from grants or appropriations given for this project by agencies of the local or county government or a proportionate share of such grants or appropriations allocated to this project.

Government Support: State/Regional (\$) - Cash support derived from grants or appropriations given for this project (other than this grant request) by agencies of the state government and/or multi-state consortiums of state agencies or a proportionate share of such grants or appropriations allocated to this project.

Grant Award - The dollar amount of a grant award approved by the Secretary of State for a project, program or general program support as outlined in the application.

Grant Award Agreement - The document by which the Grantee enters into a contract with the State of Florida for the management of grant funds.

Grant Award Letter - The letter signed by the Secretary of State or an authorized representative of the Department of State and countersigned by the grantee. The grant award letter contains the grant award amount.

Grant Period - The time for the use of the grant award as set forth in the grant award agreement.

Grantee - An organization receiving a grant award from the Department of State.

In-Kind Contribution (\$) - The documented fair market value of non-cash contributions provided by the grantee or third parties which consist of real property or the value of goods and services directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to the project.

Individuals Participating - The total number of individuals who are directly involved in the funded activity as artists, non-artist project participants or audience members between the grant or project start and end dates.

Figures should encompass only those individuals directly affected by or involved in the funded activity and should include Artists Participating and Youth Benefiting. For General Program Support count artists, staff, audiences and project participants directly involved with organization's events and services within the given funding period; do not substitute the entire population of the geographic area served. For projects related to publication, report the number of persons using the materials or the number of copies actually distributed; do not substitute the total number of copies produced. For Internet-based projects, report the number of unique users; do not substitute the number of "hits" or times the information was accessed.

Marketing (\$) - Include all costs for marketing/publicity/promotion specifically identified with the project or programming. Do not include payments to individuals or firms which belong under "Personnel," or "Outside Fees and Services: Other." Include costs of newspaper, radio and television advertising, printing and mailing of brochures, fliers and posters and space rental when directly connected to promotion publicity or advertising

Matching Funds - The portion of the project costs not borne by the Department of State. Matching funds shall amount to at least 50 percent of project costs which may include up to 25 percent of project costs as in-kind, unless otherwise specified in the Grant Award Agreement.

Funds received from the sale of the Arts License Plates are considered local government support and are allowed as match.

Minority - A lawful, permanent resident of Florida who is one of the following:

- an African-American (a person having origins in any of the racial groups of the African Diaspora);
- a Hispanic-American (a person of Spanish or Portuguese culture with origins in Spain, Portugal, Mexico, South America, Central America or the Caribbean, regardless of race);
- an Asian-American (a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian Subcontinent or the Pacific Islands, including the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778);
- a Native-American (a person who has origins in any of the Indian Tribes of North America prior to 1835); or
- an American Woman. [288.703(4), *Florida Statutes*]

Noncompliance - The grant recipient is not following Florida statutes or rules, the terms of the grant agreement, Florida Department of State policies and guidance, local policies or other applicable laws.

Non-profit - Incorporated as an active non-profit Florida corporation, in accordance with Chapter 617 or Chapter 623, Florida Statutes. We do not fund Foreign Non-profits. A foreign non-profit is an existing corporation that is registered to do business in a state or jurisdiction other than where it was originally incorporated.

Older adults - Individuals over the age of 65 that directly attended/participated in the project or program.

Outside Fees and Services: Other (\$) - Payments to firms or persons for non-artistic services or individuals who are not normally considered employees of the applicant, but consultants or the employees of other organizations, whose services are specifically identified with the project or programming.

Outside Fees and Services: Programmatic (\$) - Payments to firms or persons for the programmatic services of individuals who are not normally considered employees of the applicant, but consultants or the employees of other organizations, whose services are specifically identified with the project or programming. Include artistic directors, directors, conductors, conservators, curators, dance masters, composers, choreographers, designers,

video artists, filmmakers, painters, poets, authors, sculptors, graphic artists, actors, dancers, singers, musicians, teachers, instructors, etc. serving in non-employee/non-staff capacities.

Personnel: Administrative (\$) - Payments for salaries, wages, fees and benefits specifically identified with the project or programming, for executive and supervisory administrative staff, program directors, educational administrators, managing directors, business managers, press and agents, fund raisers, clerical staff such as secretaries, typists, bookkeepers; and supportive personnel such as maintenance and security staff, ushers and other front-of-the-house and box office personnel.

Personnel: Programmatic / Artistic (\$) - Payments for salaries, wages, fees and benefits specifically identified with the project or programming for programmatic personnel including artistic directors, directors, conductors, conservators, curators, dance masters, composers, choreographers, designers, video artists, filmmakers, painters, poets, authors, sculptors, graphic artists, actors, dancers, singers, musicians, teachers, instructors, puppeteers, etc.

Personnel: Technical/Production (\$) - Payments for employee salaries, wages and benefits specifically identified with the project, for technical management and staff, such as technical directors; wardrobe, lighting and sound crew; stage managers, stagehands; video and film technicians, exhibit preparators and installers, etc.

Presenter (Sponsor) - An organization that is in the business of presenting professional performing artists or arts groups to the public.

Private Support: Corporate (\$) - Cash support derived from contributions given for this project (other than this grant request) by business, corporations and corporate foundations or a proportionate share of such contributions allocated to this project.

Private Support: Foundation (\$) - Cash support derived from grants given for this project or programming by private foundations or a proportionate share of such grants allocated to this project or programming.

Private Support: Other (\$) - Cash support derived from cash donations given for this project or a proportionate share of general donations allocated to this project. Do not include corporate, foundation or government contributions and grants. Include gross proceeds from fund-raising events.

Project Costs - All allowable expenditures incurred by the grantee and the value of in-kind contributions made by the grantee or third parties in accomplishing the grant.

Project Title - A short descriptive title of the project for which applicant is requesting assistance. If no formal title exists or if the title is not descriptive, a short phrase describing the activities of the project should be substituted.

Public Entity - A Public Entity is a Florida local government, entity of state government, school district, community college, college or university. Private schools, private community colleges, private colleges and private universities are not public entities and must be non-profit and tax-exempt to meet the legal status requirement. Public entities are not eligible to apply to the Arts in Education category. Public entities may apply to another discipline or the Arts in Education Specific Cultural Project Program grant category.

Recurring Cultural Program - Recurring cultural programs exist within multipurpose public or private non-profit institutions such as municipalities, universities, foundations, cultural centers and organizations, museums and other arts and cultural organizations. To be eligible:

- a cultural program located within a multipurpose institution must function as a discrete unit within its parent institution and present or produce a full season of programming on a yearly basis;
- have a full segregated and itemized budget within that of its parent institution;
- have an advisory board that governs the activities of the program; and
- be able to separately fulfill the Basic Eligibility and discipline-specific requirements.

Entire departments or schools within a university, college or other multipurpose institution do not qualify as recurring programs.

Regional - Within the state, at least 150-mile land radius of venue.

Regranting - Using state grants monies to underwrite grants programs or individual grants within one's own organization or another organization. Regranting of Division funds is prohibited.

Remaining Operating Expenses (\$) - All expenses not entered in other categories and specifically identified with the project. Include non-structured renovations, improvements, scripts and scores, lumber and nails, electricity, telephone and telegraph, storage, postage, photographic supplies, publication purchases, sets and props, equipment rental, insurance fees, trucking, shipping and hauling expenses not entered under "Travel."

Remaining Proposal Expenses (\$) - All expenses not entered in other categories that are specifically identified with the project or programming.

Revenue: Admissions (\$) - Revenue derived from the sale of admissions, tickets, subscriptions, memberships, etc. In the Proposal Budget the admissions must be for events attributable or prorated to the proposal.

Revenue: Contracted Services (\$) - Revenue derived from fees earned through sale of services (other than this grant request). Include sale of workshops, etc., to other community organizations, government contracts for specific services, performance or residency fees, tuition, etc. Include foreign government support.

Revenue: Other (\$) - Revenue derived from sources other than those listed above. Include catalog sales, advertising space in programs, gift shop income, concessions, parking, investment income, etc.

Rural Economic Development Initiative - (REDI) recognizes rural or economically distressed counties and communities. You can find more information and a list of economically distressed counties and communities at floridajobs.org/business-growth-and-partnerships/rural-and-economic-development-initiative/rural-definition.

School-based Cultural Events - Cultural events that directly involve the participation of a public or private PreK-12 school, i.e. school field trips to arts organizations, performances or workshops which took place on school grounds or other collaborations between arts organizations and schools. In school-based cultural events, the school is involved in organizing the children's participation in the cultural event. Touring companies should not report attendance at schools when the program was funded by the Division's state touring grant program.

Scope of Work - A description of the specific work to be performed under the grant agreement in order to complete the project. The Scope of Work will be provided by the grantee for inclusion in the grant agreement if the grant is awarded funding.

Secretary - The Florida Secretary of State.

Service Area - Regular client/program participants, not including broadcasts.

Space Rental, Rent or Mortgage (\$) - Payments for rental of office, rehearsal, theatre, hall, gallery and other such spaces. Do not include principal of mortgage; include interest only. Do not include rental of housing for guest artists or other persons.

Start Date - The first date of fiscal activity in the project for which assistance is requested.

State Supported Institution - Any organization whose general operations budget is supported by funds from state appropriations which exceeds \$10,000, exclusive of competitive, nonrecurring grants.

Tax-exempt: designated as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, as amended. Staff will verify status in Guidestar at guidestar.org.

Total Fund Revenue - Means all revenue received by an organization during a fiscal year and recognized in the organization's independent certified audit or attested financial statement.

Total Operating Income (\$) - Gross operating income for the organization's last completed fiscal year. Governmental agencies may include all funds directly appropriated and administered by the applicant agency, as well as support services provided by the agency, that are directly attributed to the program. A detailed listing of these support services must be attached to the grant application operating budget and must be approved by and signed by agency budget officials. Do not include capital contributions or expenses in the operating budget.

Traditional Arts - Traditional arts are traditional cultural expressions through which a community maintains and passes on a shared way of life. Traditional arts are rooted in and reflective of the cultural life of a community. Community members may share a common ethnic heritage, cultural mores, language, religion, occupation or geographic region. These vital and constantly reinvigorated artistic traditions are shaped by values and standards of excellence that are passed from generation to generation, most often within family and community, through demonstration, conversation and practice. Traditional art expressions are usually learned informally through a relative or the community and are maintained without formal teaching or academic training. Traditional arts are learned orally or by observation and imitation, often through a master artist instructing an apprentice. Some traditional arts have a deep-rooted history with little change, while others are constantly evolving and adapting to their changing environment.

Florida Statutes Definition “. . . (6) Folklife means the traditional expressive culture shared within the various groups in Florida: familial, ethnic, occupational, religious and regional. Expressive culture includes a wide range of creative and symbolic forms such as custom, belief, technical skill, language, literature, art, architecture, music, play, dance, drama, ritual, pageantry and handicraft, which forms are generally learned orally, by imitation or in performance and are maintained or perpetuated without formal instruction or institutional direction,”
267.021 FS.

The Traditional Arts discipline includes many forms and processes of expression including, but not limited to: performing traditions in music, dance and drama; traditional storytelling and other verbal arts; traditional crafts; visual arts; and architecture.

Examples of Traditional Arts projects may include an African Caribbean Dance Festival, Music and Dance of India, Cherokee Storytelling and African American gospel music *in which each art form is presented by a traditional artist.*

Note: The Traditional Arts discipline is **not** intended for programming that focuses primarily on the following activities: research for scholarly purpose only; historical presentations; re-creations or re-enactments; cultural appropriation and revivalism, tourism and contemporary studio crafts or reproductions.

Travel (\$) - Include fares, hotel and other lodging expenses, taxis, per diem payments, toll charges, mileage, allowances on personal vehicles, car rental costs, etc. For transportation not connected with travel of personnel and for trucking, shipping or hauling expenses see "Remaining Operating or Proposal Expenses."

Underserved Designation – Either a rural or minority cultural organization.

A **rural** cultural organization is:

- Designated by the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) as an economically distressed county or community. You can find more information and a list of economically distressed counties and communities at floridajobs.org/business-growth-and-partnerships/rural-and-economic-development-initiative/rural-definition.

A minority cultural organization is:

- Community-based,
- Deeply rooted in and reflective of a specific religious, racial, national or cultural group of non-western or Judeo-Christian tradition or
- Composed of at least 51% persons who represent such groups as African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, individuals with disabilities and other minorities. This includes staff, board, artists and volunteers. Gender is not considered a minority for the purposes of this program.

Youth Participating - Individuals under the age of 18 that directly attended/participated in the project or program.

Help

For general information about the Division of Arts and Culture and to access grant information, panel details and resources, visit our web site at: dos.myflorida.com/cultural.

For information about the Cultural Facilities program, contact the program manager responsible for your proposal type and discipline at dos.myflorida.com/cultural/about-us/staff-listing.

CREATING PLACES



IHCDA Crowdgranting Program Guidelines 2023-2024



CreatINg Places

2023-2024 IHCD A Program Guidelines

Program Description

In 2016, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCD A) in conjunction with Patronicity, developed “CreatINg Places,” a place-based crowdgranting program. The goal of CreatINg Places is to assist Indiana communities in funding place-based projects that highlight and improve upon a community’s identity and strengths.

“Crowdgranting” combines crowdfunding - the practice of funding a project or venture through small donations from a large number of people, typically via the internet - with a reward-based sponsor matching grant. Crowdgranting is an innovative, yet simple way for non-profit groups to generate public interest in and raise donations for making local improvements. Because it utilizes a web-based donation platform, projects are accessible to anyone with internet access. This tool engages local residents, businesses, and community organizations to play a part in developing community improvements, while also fostering a greater sense of pride as they invest in their surroundings.

CreatINg Places will support projects that activate underutilized public spaces or create new public spaces. The program aims to generate public interest and involvement in the development and implementation of place-based improvements by incentivizing small, public donations with a matching grant from IHCD A if and when their fundraising goal is reached by a set period of time.

Indiana’s ability to retain and attract talent is improved when its communities are able to develop their unique sense of place, as well as their outdoor amenities and activities. It is IHCD A’s and Patronicity’s hope that the CreatINg Places program will have positive effects on the lives and well-being of the Indiana communities it serves.

Eligible Applicants

Grants will only be made available to applicants and projects that are determined to be eligible by IHCD A. The CreatINg Places program is available to projects that meet the following criteria:

- The project activates a currently underutilized public space or creates a new public space.
- The project allows free public access at all times or regularly scheduled times in which it offers free and public access.
- The applicant is a nonprofit with 501c3 or 501c4 status or is a local unit of government.
- The project development budget is between \$10,000 and \$100,000. Projects with budgets over \$100,000 in total development costs may utilize this program, however all additional funding must be committed prior to applying to the CreatINg Places program.
- The project can be completed and open to the public within one year of receiving IHCD A’s funds.
- Projects within historic districts or which involve individual buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places may require additional review.
- At least a portion of the project or event must physically activate a new or underutilized public space.

- Applicants and/or closely related project partners with previous CreatING Places projects must complete and close out existing projects prior to applying for a new project.
- IHCDCA gives preference to projects in walkable, easily accessible locations which build vibrancy to small towns and large urban centers.

Evaluation Criteria

In addition to meeting the above eligibility criteria, applicants should make sure that their proposed projects have the following project characteristics to be deemed as eligible for funding by IHCDCA:

- The project must be well-defined and focused with an explanation of how the project will improve the community and attract visitors to the space
- It must be welcoming and approachable for all members of and visitors to the community
- Exhibit site control in the form of a legally binding agreement to utilize the site
- Applicant must identify a target project start date and target project completion date
- A plan for long-term maintenance of the project
- A documented plan for local and regional fundraising efforts and marketing campaigns
- An explanation of how the project will impact the community and how it relates to prior, current, or future placemaking efforts

Types of Activities Allowed

Successful projects must address or fill an expressed want or need of their community. Prior to submitting an application, there must be established public awareness and local enthusiasm for the project.

- Streetscape beautification and walkability projects¹
- Playgrounds (preferences for inclusive and accessible spaces with clear signage about public use)
- Public plaza development/activation
- Access to public amenities (river walks, canoe livery/launches, pier enhancements)
- Farmer’s markets, community kitchens, Maker’s and incubator spaces, or other pop-up retail
- Alley activations
- Park creation or improvements
- Bike and pedestrian pathways
- Bandshells and amphitheaters
- Community theater rehabilitation (community or non-profit)
- Public space enhancements (wayfinding signage, public Wi-Fi, local branding, interactive educational components, etc.)
- Event implementation²
- Other projects that activate a public or community space, may be proposed and considered on a case-by-case basis

¹ Public art projects must include a community engagement component

² Any event-based activation of public space will be limited to a \$10,000 maximum grant amount. Preference is made to event-based projects that feature multiple scheduled events that take place over at least a 3-month period, especially those utilizing multiple locations/spaces. Established festivals and entertainment series are not eligible.

Grant Dollars

Eligible projects must have a minimum total development cost of \$10,000. Projects at this minimum level would have a fund-raising goal of \$5,000, which would be matched with \$5,000 in IHCDAs funds if their fundraising goal is met.

Projects that do not meet their fundraising goal by the set date will not receive any IHCDAs matching grant dollars.

The maximum CreatINg Places grant amount is \$50,000, which would require a project to meet their \$50,000 fundraising goal to receive the \$50,000 grant.

In the event that a fundraising campaign raises more funds than their goal amount, those additional funds can be used to improve their project, however, IHCDAs will only match the target amount.

Projects with total development costs greater than \$100,000 are eligible for the CreatINg Places program, however, these projects must have all other prior committed funding³ sources secured prior to application. Additionally, projects with total development costs greater than \$100,000 still must adhere to the CreatINg Places completion timeline (must be complete within one year after receiving IHCDAs funds).

For example:	Project A: Total project development costs -	\$30,000
	• CreatINg Places campaign goal:	\$15,000
	• Funds raised during campaign:	\$16,741
	• <u>IHCDAs matching grant:</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>
	• Total funds available for Project A:	\$31,741

	Project B: Total project development costs -	\$160,000
	• Prior committed funding:	\$85,000
	• Project funding gap:	\$75,000
	• CreatINg Places campaign goal:	\$37,500
	• Funds raised during campaign:	\$40,125
	• <u>IHCDAs matching grant:</u>	<u>\$37,500</u>
	• Total funds available for Project B:	\$162,625

³ "Prior committed funding" constitutes any funds provided by a project stakeholder (the local unit of government, a non-profit entity, a private source, or other state or federal agencies) which are necessary for the completion of the project and have been committed to the project before or at the time of application to the CreatINg Places program. Prior committed funding is considered separate from the crowdfunding campaign and will not be matched by IHCDAs.

Site Control Requirements:

- If an applicant to CreatINg Places does not own the **land** on which the project will take place, some additional documentation may be required, including an explanation of why the property owner is not the applicant, and a legally binding agreement with the property owner to utilize the site.
- If an applicant to CreatINg Places does not own the **building** in which the project will take place, there must be a lease agreement in place with a 5-year term or longer. (event-based projects are exempt from this requirement)

Historic District and Floodplain Requirements:

- Project sites that are within historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places may require additional approval from the Department of National Resources, as required with the use of State funds.⁴
- Projects with the new construction or rehabilitation of buildings located within a floodplain as defined by FEMA will not be eligible for funding. The eligibility of other projects located within a floodplain will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Crowdfunding Campaign Requirements:

- Applicants will utilize the online crowdfunding system provided by Patronicity whom, along with IHCD, will provide project development technical assistance, as well as fundraising and marketing assistance.
- Applicants must identify a target campaign start date and target completion date, generally 30, 45, or 60 days after launch.
- Projects must achieve their crowdfunding goal by the deadline decided upon by the applicant.
- The maximum donation by any one donor or entity to any one campaign is either \$10,000 or 35% of the campaign goal (whichever is the lesser amount). Any amount raised above the approved crowdfunding goal is not subject to this requirement. If a donation that exceeds the maximum is made online, you will work with your Patronicity coach to ensure you meet program community engagement requirements.
- Applicants may not donate to their own crowdfunding campaign – donations need to come from the community and community partners.
- The production of promotional videos is not a requirement for campaigns, but this is also recommended, especially for projects with goals greater than \$25,000. Applicants will receive guidance on what to include in promotional videos, including language that correctly explains the matching grant component.
- Projects should not announce or advertise their crowdfunding campaigns or their participation in CreatINg Places until their project has been approved by IHCD, their campaign has officially launched, and their fundraising Patronicity page is “live” to accept donations. You may inform

⁴ If the project is located within a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it may require additional time for project review prior to approval to launch a campaign. For additional guidance, please contact Patronicity with questions early in your campaign development process.

key stakeholders of your interest in the program, but do not share your link with the public prior to launch.

Grant Funds Requirements:

- All crowdfunded and matching grant funds must be used for costs directly related to the project itself. They may not be used to pay for the applicant's organizational or programmatic goals.
- IHCDAs will only match donations made by cash, check, or charge; in-kind donations will not be accepted towards achieving the fundraising goal to receive the match. For employer match programs, the donor and project are responsible for collecting donations, but can only be counted if received during the campaign dates.
- Projects may use a fiscal sponsor to accept IHCDAs funds. Any entity that acts as the fiscal sponsor will be considered by IHCDAs and Patronicity as the program applicant and grantee in the event the campaign is successful. As applicant/grantee, the fiscal sponsor must sign the grantee agreement in order to receive IHCDAs matching funds. Any understanding or agreement between the fiscal sponsor and the entity managing the project is entirely between those organizations – the only agreements that IHCDAs and Patronicity will have will be with the fiscal sponsor as applicant/grantee.
- All applicants must be ready to implement their project once 100% of total development costs have been raised through crowdfunded funds, IHCDAs's matching grant, and all previously committed funds (if applicable).
- IHCDAs matching grant funds and any funds raised on the Patronicity platform will be disbursed to the applicant upon the successful completion of their campaign and after documentation of offline donations and a signed grantee agreement is submitted and received.
- IHCDAs does not require that projects are competitively bid, but it is highly recommended that applicants do so.

Close-Out Requirements

- In order to receive IHCDAs's matching funds after a campaign is completed and successful, the applicant organization must sign a grantee agreement with Patronicity, stating that they will continue to follow the rules of this program until the project is completed (and in some cases beyond that time). That agreement will be emailed to Patronicity along with copies of offline donations; only after they are received will Patronicity make the request for a project's matching funds.
- Once a project has received IHCDAs's matching funds as well as funds raised through online crowdfunding, the project team MUST respond to monthly requests for updates from Patronicity until the project is closed out.
- Project completion must occur within one year of receiving IHCDAs grant dollars once the crowdfunding goal is met.
- Projects that are unable to be completed within one year of receiving IHCDAs funds must submit a written request for a project extension to Patronicity which includes:
 - a description of what has been completed
 - a brief explanation of the delay
 - a proposed extension date

- a detailed timeline of for completion for remaining project elements
- Within three months of project completion, project leadership must submit before and after photo(s) of the project, a project report and a project budget using templates provided by Patronicity. IHCDCA and Patronicity may use the photos and written stories in IHCDCA-related marketing materials.
- Once the project report, budget and photos are submitted, if IHCDCA and Patronicity approve of both, the project team will receive a signed letter stating that they have met the requirements for CreatINg Places. Information on expectations for future correspondence will also be provided.
- Although project receipts are not required as a part of close-out, documentation for expenditures and funds received regarding the project should be maintained. CreatINg Places is made possible by state funding and is therefore subject to monitoring in the future.
- IHDCDA may request that applicant share their experience by providing marketing materials and/or be asked to present their project in-person or online.

IHCDCA Legal Requirements

- IHCDCA funds cannot be used to participate or intervene, directly or indirectly, in the campaign of any candidate or political party.
- IHCDCA funds cannot be used to or used to publicly criticize, ridicule, disparage or defame any person or institution.
- The applicant covenants that it will not use IHCDCA funds in a way to discriminate against person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital, parental status, familial status, sexual orientation, status as a veteran, physical, mental, emotional or learning disability, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law (“Protected Characteristics”). Furthermore, the applicable certifies compliance with applicable federal laws, regulations, and executive orders prohibiting discrimination based on the Protected Characteristics in the provision of services.

Notes on Application Timeline

There is no deadline to apply to CreatINg Places; applications will be accepted on a rolling basis while funding is available. Contact Patronicity with any questions about available funds. Due to the approval process at Patronicity and IHCDCA, it normally takes at least a few weeks to complete a campaign page, have it approved and have a campaign ready to launch.⁵ Projects should try to start their campaign pages at least two months in advance of when they want to launch a crowdfunding campaign.

Project Process Workflow

STEP 1 - Tell Us About Your Project

Applicants will utilize the Patronicity website to build out a basic crowdfunding page for their project. This page is the initial application and is directed/focused to the project audience and potential donors.

⁵ Unless the project is located within a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which may add additional time for project review prior to approval to launch a campaign. For additional guidance, please contact Patronicity with questions early in your campaign development process.

Once a project page is started, Patronicity will contact the applicant.

1. Go to www.Patronicity.com/CreatINgPlaces
2. Click "Apply Now!"
3. Begin filling in your crowdfunding page
4. Wait to receive additional materials from Patronicity staff

STEP 2 - Patronicity Review

Patronicity will perform an initial screening of the project and profile. Patronicity staff may request additional information to determine the project's appropriateness for crowdfunding and its eligibility to the CreatINg Places grant program.

1. Schedule a conversation with your Patronicity coach to discuss your project and campaign plans
2. Complete your crowdfunding page with Patronicity assistance (as needed)
3. Click "Submit for Review" in the top right corner for final Patronicity review
4. Make final adjustments based on Patronicity questions or suggestions

STEP 3 - IHCD A Review

If the project passes initial Patronicity review and the project page is complete, projects will be forwarded to the IHCD A review team and evaluated on the criteria noted in this document. IHCD A staff may contact the applicant for more information.

STEP 4- Patronicity Polish

If approved by the IHCD A review team, Patronicity will then engage fully with the applicant to polish off the project page, develop a marketing strategy, and build out the crowdfunding campaign.

1. IHCD A review and approval process (up to three days)
2. After approval, finalize plans for crowdfunding campaign
3. IHCD A submits a Press Release for every project with a quote from Indiana's Lt. Governor. Patronicity will complete a draft press release, with project input, and provide to IHCD A for review by the Lt. Governor's office at least 14 days prior to a project's official launch date.

STEP 5- Project Goes Live

Start crowdfunding! Patronicity will provide technical assistance throughout the raise period. The applicant has up to 60 days to achieve crowdfunding toward their goal. This timeline is established on a project basis prior to crowdfunding launch. A 45-day campaign is usually recommended.

STEP 6- Implementation and Reporting

If the crowdfunding campaign is successful, IHCD A will match the funds raised and project implementation can begin

1. Provide necessary materials for funds disbursement (agreement and donation copies).
2. Provide monthly updates on project progress.
3. Provide necessary close-out materials after the project is completed (report, budget and photos).
4. Receive letter of approval and complete CreatINg Places requirements.



Public Art for Neighborhoods Fund: 2024 Community Connection Grants

*Funded by the City of Indianapolis
through the Public Art for Neighborhoods Program*

Guidelines and Application Instructions

Apply Here: <http://indyarts.grantplatform.com>

Apply anytime before October 6, 2024
for projects that will be completed by June 30, 2025.
Awards will be made quarterly through 2024.

Program Calendar

Application period closes @ 11:59 p.m. <i>Applications uploaded after 11:59 p.m. on the indicated date will be reviewed with the next group.</i>	Decision Meeting (public)	Grant Paperwork Sent to Awardees <i>(for digital signing)</i>	Earliest Check Mailed <i>(if paperwork completed before Monday morning)</i>
Sunday, April 7, 2024	Wednesday, April 24, 2024 @ 4:30 p.m.	Friday, May 3, 2024	Friday, May 10, 2024
Sunday, July 7, 2024	Wednesday, July 24, 2024 @ 4:30 p.m.	Friday, August 9, 2024	Friday, August 16, 2024
Sunday, October 6, 2024	Tuesday, October 22, 2024 @ 4:30 p.m.	Friday, November 8, 2024	Friday, November 15, 2024

Grant Application Assistance

Live application workshops: Locations TBD

- Saturday, February 17, 2024, 11:00 a.m.
- Saturday, April 13, 2024, 11:00 a.m.
- Saturday, July 13, 2024, 11:00 a.m.

For personalized assistance, [self-schedule a 30-minute consultation](#) or email jmoore@indyarts.org.

Public Art for Neighborhoods Fund: 2023-24 Community Connection Grants *GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS*

About Public Art for Neighborhoods

Public Art for Neighborhoods is a City of Indianapolis program that ensures that City incentive funding for private development in certain districts returns benefits to neighborhoods in the form of increased arts and cultural activity. The program is authorized by Chapter 271 of the Indianapolis-Marion County Code of Ordinances.

About the 2023–24 Community Connection Grants

This is a City of Indianapolis grant program administered by the Indy Arts Council. The funds to be granted have been provided to the City by private developers in partial or full satisfaction of their public art requirement as outlined in Ch. 271 of the City Code of Ordinances.

At least 50% of funds granted through this program will support projects in neighborhoods where the average household income is less than 138% of the current Federal poverty line.

The Community Connection Grants are designed to support the work of artists leading in their own communities, partnering with their neighborhoods and neighborhood-based organizations, to help address community-based challenges. Projects that address needs identified in the 2022 [Public Art for All](#) equity census will be prioritized for funding; however, any neighborhood-based arts project is eligible. Through this funding, artists can help envision a more connected, just, and equitable future for everyone.

- A total of \$105,000 has been reserved to make grants between \$500 and \$5,000 for projects that fit this purpose.
- **Apply anytime before October 6, 2024 for projects that will be completed no later than June 30, 2025.**
- Applications will be reviewed quarterly in April, July, and October 2024.
- Grant awards will be made until funds are depleted.

The Arts Council will work to ensure equity of opportunity and funding for artists of color and will actively support neighborhoods with lesser resources as they develop projects, look for artists, and write their funding application.

Am I Eligible to Apply for This Grant?

This is a PARTNERSHIP opportunity for artists and communities to work together.

Each project submitted for funding must have a **Lead Applicant, a Participating Artist** (who may also serve as the Lead Applicant), and, if the Lead Applicant is also the Participating Artist, at least one **Community Partner**.

Eligible Lead Applicants

Funding will be provided to the Lead Applicant, who may be required to declare the grant payment as income with their annual tax return. They are responsible for paying expenses, tracking payments, and reporting on the project at the end of the grant period.

- Individual artists (literary, performing, visual, etc.), or a group or collective of artists.
- Neighborhood-based and neighborhood-serving ***non-arts*** organizations, such as a neighborhood association, a community development corporation, a resident association, a neighborhood group, a social service organization, etc. with a defined mission to serve a specific neighborhood. This organizational Lead Applicant must be physically based in the Marion County neighborhood where the project is planned to take place.
- *(sorry, organizations with an arts-based mission cannot be a Lead Applicant for this project)*

Eligible Participating Artists

If the Lead Applicant is an organization, they **MUST** identify at least one Participating Artist by name. ***The Participating Artist must be paid for their participation in the project.*** The Participating Artist (if not the Lead Applicant) must provide a letter committing to work with the Lead Applicant if the Lead Applicant's proposed project is funded through this program.

- Artists in any creative medium can be a Participating Artist.
- Lead Applicants who are artists can also serve as the Participating Artist on the project if they want to commit to do the creative work—or, they can choose a different Participating Artist.
- Organizations with an arts-based mission may serve as a secondary Participating Artist, and may be paid using grant funds, if their primary role is to support another, individual Participating Artist who is named in the application.

Eligible Community Partners

If the Lead Applicant is an individual artist (literary, performing, visual, etc.) or a group or collective of artists, the Lead Applicant MUST identify at least one Community Partner by name. The Community Partner(s) must submit a letter outlining their role and commitment to the project at the time of application.

- Neighborhood-based and neighborhood-serving organizations (such as a neighborhood association, a community development corporation, a resident association, or a neighborhood group), a *non-arts* non-profit organization, a unit of city government, a school, a church, or anyone else that can help the Lead Applicant complete the project successfully. ***They do not need to be a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.***
- The Community Partner(s) must be physically based within the neighborhood where the project is planned to take place.

Is My Project Eligible to be Funded?

- The proposed project must be an arts- or culture-based event, program, activity, installation, or idea that is open to the general public to access free of any admission charge.
- The proposed project must take place in Marion County.
- The proposed project must have a defined beginning and end.
- The proposed project must be completed on or before June 30, 2025.

What Kind of Project Are You Looking For?

- Any project that pairs artists with communities to address neighborhood priorities or goals is eligible for funding.
- We are preferring projects that address issues of public art equity that were raised in the 2022 [Public Art for All](#) census report. These issues include (but are not limited to):
 - Placing permanent or temporary artwork or conducting other arts-based activities in identified “[public art deserts](#)”
 - Addressing maintenance issues with existing public art
 - Providing opportunities for women, transgender, non-binary, Black, Indigenous, and people of color to receive public art commissions
- We are looking for a strong, authentic, collaborative partnership between an artist and the community--ideally, with an artist who lives in the community (although that is not a requirement).
- We are looking for an approach that is artistically relevant to the community, and one that the community members will connect with and appreciate.

Potential projects to consider include:

- For neighborhoods who don't already have public art in their census tract or within one mile, creating a "first" public art project
 - Typically this is an artwork created on a traffic signal box
 - This funding opportunity will make up to 20 \$750 grants (one per neighborhood/community) to create new traffic signal box art or to maintain/repair existing traffic signal box art
 - **You can apply with this same form!** Simply use the checkbox on the grant application to indicate whether you are applying for this type of project
- Using a neighborhood's public space to present or engage in arts activities
- Maintaining (cleaning, sealing, etc.) existing public art
- Repairing/repainting public art that is in poor condition
- Adding an arts component to an existing community festival
- Combining the arts with other community initiatives, such as education, public safety, neighborhood vibrancy, food justice, or health services
- Open to all ideas! Please contact jmoore@indyarts.org to see if this grant could fund your project

What Cannot Be Funded?

The following types of **organizations** may offer space, promotion, support, or staff involvement, and may serve as a Community Partner (or, in some circumstances, a secondary Participating Artist), but may not be a Lead Applicant as the grantee:

- **Schools**
- **Units of city government**
- **Non-profit organizations with an arts-based mission**

The following types of **projects** cannot be funded:

- **Fundraisers**
- **General operating support**
- **Religious ceremonies or celebrations**
- **Signage**
 - Please review the [City's definition of the sign types they regulate](#).
 - Any of the sign types the City would need to issue a permit for, are considered "signage" for the purposes of this grant and are not eligible for funding.
 - The City of Indianapolis/Marion County uses this definition of "sign" as separate from "art": *A work of art is considered a sign if it contains a business name, brand name or business logo other than the creator's signature or mark, unless it constitutes a sponsorship element no larger*

than 5% of the size of the work. Works of art that are classified as signs according to this definition are not eligible for funding.

- For the purposes of this grant, a neighborhood identity marker containing text proclaiming the name of the neighborhood would be considered a sign and is not eligible for funding.
- According to the signage code, “public signs” do not require a permit. Memorial plaques and signs of historical interest are considered public signs *if* they are placed or maintained by federal, state, or local government. If a project includes a public sign that includes an artistic element, it could potentially be funded through this grant.

How Much Can I Request?

- You can request any amount between \$500 and \$5,000.
- The amount you request **can** be the entire cost of the project. There is no requirement to match the grant with outside funds.

When Do I Apply?

You can apply anytime. Applications will be reviewed quarterly in April 2024, July 2024, and October 2024. If funds remain and the project can be completed by June 30, 2025, an additional round of applications may be reviewed in January 2025.

The cutoff period for review groups is the first Sunday of the month when a review will take place. Applications received after that date will be held for the next review period.

Because this program is authorized by a City ordinance, **all application materials are considered public information** and will be made available on the grant program website for review and comment several days before the public meeting at which funding decisions will be made. They are also subject to review as part of a Freedom of Information Act request.

Applicants will be notified within two weeks of the review period closing date and project activities may begin as soon as the grant agreement is signed.

NOTE: Awards will be given until funds are depleted, so deadlines are tentative based upon available funding.

How Do I Apply?

Apply online at <http://indyarts.grantplatform.com>. Look for the application graphic that says “Public Art for Neighborhoods Grants”. You must be registered on the platform to apply—registration is free and can be done at the time of application.

You do not have to complete your application in one sitting! You can save your unfinished application and return as many times as you like until you are done. You can even edit your application after it has been submitted, up until the quarterly application deadline.

How Will My Application Be Reviewed?

- Each application will be reviewed and scored in a public meeting by the City-appointed Public Art for Neighborhoods Selection Committee. Meetings are held in person at the Arts Council's offices.
- Applications will be scored on a 100-point scale. Applications scoring 80 points or more will be recommended for funding.

Reviewers are looking for the following:

- **25 points - Envisioning a Connected, Just, and Equitable Future for Neighborhoods Through the Arts:** They will be looking at the project's ability to meaningfully engage its community through the proposed artistic activity.
- **25 points - Lead Applicant Capacity:** They will be looking at the Lead Applicant's ability to successfully plan and manage this project to conclusion.
- **50 points - Artistic Quality and Cultural Vibrancy:** They will be looking at the project's ability to create a high-quality and culturally rich artistic experience for the public.

What are the Reporting Requirements?

Each grant requires a grant agreement and a final grant report.

Grant agreement

- If the Lead Applicant is an organization, the grant agreement must be signed by the organization's highest official. Please let us know if you are unsure who that might be for your organization.
- **If the Lead Applicant is an organization,** documentation must be provided that verifies its status as an organization. The Lead Applicant does not have to be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Arts Council staff can help organizational Lead Applicants determine which verification documents to submit.
- If the Lead Applicant is an individual artist, they must provide a [Form W-9](#) in addition to the signed grant agreement.

Final report (due within 60 days of project completion): Grantees will be sent a link to a final report template to fill out online that includes both narrative and financial sections. The second grant payment will be sent after the final report is submitted.

How do I Get the Grant Funds?

The first payment of 90% of the grant award will be issued once the Lead Applicant has submitted their grant agreement materials and pending the Arts Council's receipt of funds from the City of Indianapolis.

The second payment of 10% will be made within 30 days of the Arts Council's receipt and approval of a final report. The Arts Council will send a link to an online final report template with both narrative and financial sections.

Can I Reapply if I Don't Receive a Grant?

Depending on the timeline of your project, yes. We recommend [contacting an Arts Council staff member](#) to review your project and application if it was unsuccessful the first time. There may be very simple adjustments to ensure success when you reapply.

QUESTIONS? We are here to help!

First, check the [FAQ document](#) to see if your question has already been answered.

If you have other questions concerning Public Art for Neighborhoods or the Community Connections Grant guidelines, wish to talk about your grant idea, or want to have your application reviewed before submitting it, [self-schedule a phone consultation](#) with Julia Moore, Director of Public Art or email jmoore@indyarts.org. Julia can also assist you if you are having difficulty with the online application form.

If you have a question about effective grant writing, check the [Grantwriting Tip Sheet](#).

About the Indy Arts Council

The mission of the Indy Arts Council is to foster meaningful engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations thrive. The Arts Council is an organization that advocates for the need and importance of broad community funding and support for a thriving arts scene; innovates by constantly pursuing and promoting innovative ideas and programs that better serve the area, its artists, and arts organizations; and connects artists, audiences, businesses, foundations, and arts and cultural organizations with opportunities to explore and expand central Indiana's creative vitality.

The Indy Arts Council is committed to working with the arts and cultural community to cultivate a sector that serves, celebrates, and values every resident of Indianapolis. We envision a city where engagement in the arts is not pre-determined by socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. We also believe that Black lives matter and we are committed to supporting Indianapolis' Black artists--whom we need more than ever to help imagine a different world. Read our full statement about our commitment to racial justice in the arts here <https://indyarts.org/statement> and our full equity statement here. <https://indyarts.org/about/equity-statement>

924 N. Pennsylvania St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204-1021
Phone: 317.631.3301 Fax: 317.624.0246
Grants information: grants@indyarts.org

The Public Art for Neighborhoods Program is authorized by Ch. 271 of the City of Indianapolis-Marion County Code of Ordinances.



How to Apply

Apply at <http://indyarts.grantplatform.com> and look for the City of Indianapolis logo. Click the blue “Start Application” button to begin.

You can register for a free account on the platform at the time of application.

- All you will need to get started is an email address and a self-selected password, but you can choose to fill out a complete profile at any time.

The grant application consists of the following parts:

- Partnership Information
- Project Location Information
- Proposal Narrative Questions (3)
- Project Budget
- Artistic Documentation
- Support Letters
- Demographic Questions

Each part is located on a separate tab on the online application form.

Tab 1: “Start Here”

This is where you will find basic information about the grant program, and where you will select the project name and the program name.

- Your registered account name will be pre-loaded into the “Applicant” blank
- For “Program,” use the drop-down menu to select the current year program (the one noted as “2024”)
- For “Application Name,” you can type in any text that describes how you wish your application to be referenced. It could be a project name, a team name, etc. or it could simply repeat the “applicant” name from above.
- There is a link to the full application guidelines that you can use for reference, if you haven’t yet read them. We recommend that you review them before you start your application.
- There is a link to download a PDF version of the application form that you can use for reference.

When you are done, click the blue “Save and Next” button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click “Save and Close” to exit the application.

Tab 2: Applicant Information

This is where you will provide information about who's applying for the grant (the Lead Applicant), and their contact information.

- Name
- Street address
- Email
- Phone number (optional)
- Website (optional)

We also ask you to choose your correct type of Lead Applicant—an artist or an organization—and the answer to this question will be used to help direct you to the right additional questions throughout the application. You will only see and fill in information that pertains to your type of application.

- On this page, if you're applying as an organization, you will see a box that asks you to briefly describe your organization and who you serve.

When you are done adding information, click the blue "Save and Next" button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click "Save and Close" to exit the application.

Tab 3: Project Partnership Information

On this tab you will add information about the partners for the project.

- (for organizational Lead Applicants) You will be asked to provide the Participating Artist(s) name(s) and contact information.
 - Remember that later in the application you will need to upload a letter of support from this artist!
- (for artist Lead Applicants) You will be asked to provide the Community Partner(s) name(s) and contact information
 - Remember that later in the application you will need to upload a letter of support from this partner!
 - There is also a box for you to check indicating whether you intend to serve as the Participating Artist
 - You can also add the names of additional artists, or the Participating Artist if it is not you. You will later add letters of support from these artists.

When you are done, click the blue "Save and Next" button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click "Save and Close" to exit the application.

Tab 4: Project Location Information

On this tab you will provide information about where the project will take place.

- Because this is a place-based grant, your project must take place at a defined location in Marion County, Indiana.
- You will need the following information about the project location:
 - Name of neighborhood (as you define it)
 - Street address or closest intersection
 - ZIP code
- If you know it, you can provide the Council district number and/or the name of your City-County Councillor. Find the district and Council member here: <https://www.indy.gov/workflow/find-your-elected-official> (when entering the address, do NOT include any form of the N / S / E / W designation before the street name) ***This is optional.***
- **Public Art Desert information:** Use the appropriate checkbox to indicate whether your project will take place in an identified public art desert. We ask the question because these locations are prioritized for funding. [Check the maps here](#) for more information.
- **Traffic Signal Box Artwork information:** Use the checkbox to indicate whether your project includes ONE traffic signal box mural and you want access to the special pool of funds for this type of project.
 - Check “yes” if it is a single traffic signal box
 - Check “no” if you are going for several traffic signal boxes, or if your project includes both a traffic signal box mural and other arts activity, or if you aren’t doing any kind of traffic signal box mural project

When you are done, click the blue “Save and Next” button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click “Save and Close” to exit the application.

Tab 5: Proposal Narrative

The narrative section is where you tell your project’s ‘story’ in as much detail as possible. Be sure to answer each of the questions. Proof the narrative carefully and have someone else read through it prior to submission to make sure it’s clearly written.

How to Format your Narrative Responses

Each narrative question will be answered in its own individual text box and has a set limit of characters per question. We recommend that you first compose your responses in a word processing program, then **copy & paste** your text into the appropriate text box on the online application form. If you choose to copy & paste your responses, **do not** bold, italicize, underline, bullet, number, indent, embed hyperlinks or use any other formatting options available. This type of formatting may cause your text to become illegible when you copy and paste it.

We recommend that you use this free online Notepad application to compose your text: rapidtables.com/tools/notepad.htm. Review your pasted text carefully to ensure that it does not contain unwanted characters, symbols, etc. that may result from the use of formatted text.

Project Type Checkbox

So that we may report progress on Public Art for Neighborhoods Ordinance goals, the form will ask you to answer the following questions. ***Your answer will not be used to evaluate your application***: it is for statistical purposes only.

Which of the following Public Art for Neighborhoods Ordinance goals most closely aligns with your project? (check as many as apply)

- Provides artistic experiences in a public place
- Beautifies a public place
- Promotes cultural heritage
- Promotes artistic development
- Enhances the city's character and identity
- Contributes to neighborhood economic development
- Contributes to tourism
- Improves public safety

Project Narrative Questions: This is where you will give the details of your project, and why it is important to the community at the location you provided earlier. ***You do NOT have to complete it all in one sitting!*** You can save your work and come back later to add or edit.

1. **What do you want to do, and when will you do it? Who will do it, and how will you do it? (5,000 character limit)**

What is your project? Who is involved? How will you do it? Include as much information as possible about the arts-based project and how it will be carried out. Talk about what roles the Lead Applicant, Participating Artist/s (if not the Lead Applicant), and Community Partner (if not the Lead Applicant) will play, and where, when and how it will all come together. If the project results in a physical installation or object, be sure to talk about how long it's meant to remain in place after it is installed, how and by whom it will be maintained during that time period, and when/by whom it will be removed. Finally, when stating your timeline, **remember that the project must be completed by June 30, 2025** in order to receive funding through this grant opportunity. New works of public art need not be removed by June 30, but they must be installed by that date.

2. **How has or will the project engage neighborhood residents? (2,000 character limit)**

Explain how the artistic aspects of the project were developed *with the community* to address the neighborhood condition or goal, and how the artist and

the community will work together to make the project happen. If the artist lives in the neighborhood, be sure to point that out.

3. **How does this project connect to the needs or desires of the community? (5,000 character limit)**

Explain how the project came about (the “origin story” of your project), and what it means to your community. If the project is inspired by an incident, statistic, or condition in the community or by a goal the community wants to reach (perhaps as part of a community plan), be sure to describe or explain it.

When you are done, click the blue “Save and Next” button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click “Save and Close” to exit the application.

Questions about writing your narrative? Contact Julia Moore, Director of Public Art (jmoore@indyarts.org) for assistance.

Tab 6: Project Budget

Provide a project budget by listing the expense and income items in the blanks provided on the application form.

Every project must have **at least one expense item**, which is the total amount of the fees you plan to provide to the Participating Artist(s). Most projects, however, will have more than one expense item.

- The form allows you to list up to five total expense items.
- We recommend grouping the expenses into logical categories and using the associated text field to provide a brief description of the amount.
- We recommend that you budget at least one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) of your grant request just for artist fees. This will start you towards paying your artists fairly.

Every project must have **at least one income source**, which is the grant amount you are requesting. You may request any amount from \$500 to \$5,000.

- The form allows you to list up to three additional income sources.
- We recommend grouping the income sources into logical categories and using the associated text field to provide a brief description of the amount.

Your Total Project Income must equal your Total Project Expenses. Projects where the income and expenses are not equal will be held for your revision, and reviewed in the next round.

You can use the tables below to write out your budget before filling in the form and make sure income and expenses are equal.

Do not submit this page—you must put your budget in the application form!

Project Expenses

Expense Item	Expense Amount
Artist Fees	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
Total Project Expenses	\$

Project Income

Income Source	Income Amount
Grant Request	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
Total Project Income	\$

When you are done, click the blue “Save and Next” button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click “Save and Close” to exit the application.

Tab 7: Artistic Documentation

In this part of the application you will attach supporting material that will help the reviewers understand the artistic aspects of your application. There is a 10 MB limit PER UPLOAD, and there is space for up to 5 uploads.

The following types of items are good examples of artistic documentation. This documentation should primarily represent the artistic work of the Participating Artist, and should give a flavor of the audience’s experience of that work. You can also provide information specific to the project described in the narrative questions.

Uploaded still image, video, or audio files of less than 10MB each, showing or presenting work by the Participating Artist

Links to the website or other online profile of the Participating Artist.

- Do not link to an Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or other social media account unless that account is (1) specifically dedicated to the artist's work and (2) set to public viewing.

Links to online videos or audio clips showing or describing work by the Participating Artist.

- A document with a page of live links is an efficient way to get more information across in only one upload!

Images showing the location where the project will take place: for example, a photograph of a spot in a park, the wall of a building, a plaza where an artwork will be installed, etc.

Images showing or describing any artworks that will be produced or giving an idea of the production plan: for example, a site plan, sketch, mockup, or other visual depiction of the planned project. ***Still images should be of good quality, in focus, and in full color.***

Resumes and/or artist statements for the Participating Artist,

Other artistic content directly related to the project, such as a score, script, etc.

Arts Council staff can preview your artistic documentation and provide an assessment of its usefulness for the application.

When you are done adding material, click the blue "Save and Next" button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click "Save and Close" to exit the application.

Tab 8: Support Letters

In this part of the application, you will attach your required and optional letters of support. There is a 10MB limit PER UPLOAD, and there is space for up to 5 uploads.

- **Required if the Lead Applicant is also the Participating Artist:** Upload a letter of support from the Community Partner, committing to work with the Lead Applicant on the project if it is funded.
- **Required if the Lead Applicant is a neighborhood-based organization:** Upload a letter of support from the selected Participating Artist(s), committing to work with the Lead Applicant on the project if it is funded.
- **Optional:** Up to 4 additional letters of support and/or commitment from additional artists or community partners, as relevant to the project

Please note that community members will have the opportunity to provide brief comments and express support for your proposal when it is scheduled for review in a public meeting, so limit your uploaded support letters to confirm those individuals and groups who will be directly participating in the work of the project.

When you are done adding your support letters, click the blue “Save and Next” button to move to the next tab. You can also choose to click “Save and Close” to exit the application.

Tab 9: Demographic Information

Equity is extremely important to us! We ask you to fill out a demographic questionnaire relating to your organization and your artist(s), so we can be sure that we are serving our community equitably. We publicly report on our applicant and funded project demographics, but only in an aggregated format with no information released specific to your application.

All questions are required, but there is a “prefer not to say” answer option for each question. We appreciate your honesty and your support for our equity mission!

Finishing the Application

When you’re done with the demographic questions, click the green “Submit Application” button. You will get an onscreen acknowledgement of receipt, plus you will get an emailed confirmation to the email address associated with your account. If you get either or both of these, you’re done!

If you do not receive the emailed confirmation, check your spam or junk folder. Also, some systems may take up to several hours to send the email. If you haven’t received it within a reasonable time, please contact jmoore@indyarts.org and we’ll verify that we received your application. In most cases, if you see the onscreen acknowledgment we have indeed received it even if you never get the email.

If at any point you have missed adding required information, the application system will flag it onscreen when you try to submit the application. It will be fairly obvious what is missing—the system will direct you to the tab(s) you need to finish. Simply add the missing information and click the green “Submit Application” button again.

If you get error messages that you do not understand, or you keep adding information but for some reason your application still won’t submit, please take screenshots and email them to jmoore@indyarts.org so we can help figure out what’s wrong.

And—even after you’ve successfully submitted your application, you can go back into it and edit it, up until the quarterly deadline. If you don’t receive an award in one round, you can go into the same application and edit it for resubmission for the next round. We encourage you to ask what you can do to make your application more successful next time.

QUESTIONS? We are here to help!

Consult the [FAQ document](#) to see if your question has already been answered.

If you have an unanswered question about Public Art for Neighborhoods or the Community Connection grant guidelines, want to talk about your project idea, or have your application draft reviewed before submitting it, [self-schedule a phone consultation](#) or email jmoore@indyarts.org

If you have a question about how to write a grant application, **check the [Grantwriting Tips](#) informational document.**

ADVISORY BOARD POSITIONS

In order to give credibility to any grant review process, field experts in the respective fields need to be employed to properly provide advice.

Properly Vetting grant proposals is a critical process for the County to evaluate and assess potential projects, investments, or partnerships before committing resources. It involves a thorough examination to determine the suitability, feasibility, risks and overall alignment with the programs goals.

By carefully vetting proposals, the County can make informed decisions, minimize risks, and maximize the chances of successful outcomes.

A bank does not allow friends of the loan applicant to do a home inspection or review the applicants financials. They have experts provide the reports necessary for the bank to decide whether or not this loan meets the standards in order to be successful.

County Advisory Boards charged with vetting proposals to spend tax dollars should be using the same philosophy.

While it would be difficult to fill 9 positions with Field Experts there should be an effort made to try and fill as many as possible with individuals who fill specific needs.

ECHO Advisory Board Positions

#1 Field Expert - Accountant - reviews all financials of the grant application including budget, bids and match money as well as the financials of the organization to ensure long term success for operations. (Can possibly be accomplished by the County in house Auditor)

#2 Field Expert - Architect - reviews all construction designs and documents

#3 Field Expert - Construction Project Manager - With ECHO being a Bricks and Mortar program this individual brings knowledge with the construction process. Reviews the construction timeline providing insight to possible challenges. Experience can help point out potential trouble spots

#4 Field Expert - Non-Profit Operations - Reviews By-Laws, Business Plan and Board Minutes for the discussion of the Project. Ensures the organization is operating under best Practices.

#5 Field Expert - Historic Preservation - This individual is familiar with the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Historic Preservation. (This position can also be accommodated by using the County Historic Preservation Board for advice on applications dealing with Historic Preservation)

#6 Field Expert - Marketing - this individual should be familiar with SWAT Analysis and current marketing trends including print, digital and social media plans.

#7 - Past Applicant Representative - This position represents the perspective of an applicant who has successfully completed an ECHO project. (2 Year Term Limit)

#8 - Citizen Representative - This individual does not necessarily have expertise in any of the Field Expert Categories but represents the User perspective. (2 Year term limit)



2024-25 | Support the Community Art Grant

Eligibility:

Artists, artist collectives, cultural groups, or organizations providing arts programming in the City of Maricopa are eligible to apply. Applicants must be Maricopa-based non-profit organizations (501c3 status required), providing inclusive arts and cultural programming. Projects must occur within the City of Maricopa. Applicants are only eligible to receive one (1) Maricopa Celebration of the Arts grant within a 12-month period.

Application & Review Process:

Applicants must complete the Grant Application Form (available for download on the City of Maricopa website) and submit completed application by dropping off or mailing to:

City of Maricopa
Community Enrichment Department
39700 W Civic Center Plaza
Maricopa, Arizona 85138
OR

Submit electronically by emailing: ArtsMaricopa@maricopa-az.gov

The application review process is competitive and based on available funds, therefore, some applications may receive partial or no funding. The application review panel will recommend awards. The Cultural Services Department will verify that recipients meet grant requirements and then submit eligible projects to the City Manager for final approval.

Grant Disbursement & Funding Restrictions:

The Support the Community Art Grant can be awarded up to the amount of \$3,000 (no match required). Funds must be allocated for covering the costs of the deliverable art project. Projects may include; performances, residencies/workshops, pop-up art events, etc.

The Grant **does not** fund; activities that occur outside the City of Maricopa, organizations with an annual budget over \$50,000, entirely virtual programming (activities can simultaneously occur in person/virtual), permanent enhancements or infrastructure (i.e. murals or public art—unless approved and mutually agreed upon by the Grant Administrator & the City of Maricopa), construction or renovation of facilities, reduction of debt, feasibility studies, fundraising, re-granting, scholarship programs or awards, or an applicant whom failed to submit a Final Report for a previously awarded grant.

Awarded funds will be dispersed via check, within 60 (sixty) days of award selection.

Notification Process & Expectations:

Successful applicants will be notified via email of their grant award.

If awarded, Grant recipient agrees to submit a Final Report of the funded project, which is to include a summary of the project, final budget overview, and professional quality photos. Projects must be completed within 6 (six) months from the date of grant award. The Final Report must be submitted within 60 (sixty) days of project completion. The Grant recipient agrees to give the City of Maricopa the rights to use any materials submitted in the Final Report for data collection and promotional purposes. Grant recipients must comply with all terms and conditions outlined above. Grant recipients that fail to comply will be subject to reimbursement of awarded funds to the City and forfeiture of future grant eligibility. The grant recipient is solely responsible for all project maintenance, upkeep, removal, or disposal needs and for any necessary coordination of these tasks.

Assurances & Acknowledgements:

I have completely read and understand the Celebration of the Arts Grant Program Packet and agree to its contents in full. I acknowledge that all information I have provided in my application is real and true, and I agree to the terms outlined. The terms of this agreement are subject to change at the discretion and approval of the city.

Applicant Name: _____

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____



2024-25 | Vibrant City Art Grant

Eligibility:

Artists, artist collectives, cultural groups, or organizations providing arts programming in the City of Maricopa are eligible to apply. Applicants do not need to be Maricopa-based, but their projects must occur in the City of Maricopa. Applicants are only eligible to receive one (1) Maricopa Celebration of the Arts grant per year.

Application & Review Process:

Applicants must complete the Grant Application Form (available for download on the City of Maricopa website) and submit completed application by dropping off or mailing to:

City of Maricopa
Community Enrichment Department
39700 W Civic Center Plaza
Maricopa, Arizona 85138

OR

Submit electronically by emailing: ArtsMaricopa@maricopa-az.gov

The application review process is competitive and based on available funds, therefore, some applications may receive partial or no funding. The application review panel will recommend awards. The Cultural Services Department will verify that recipients meet grant requirements and then submit eligible projects to the City Manager for final approval.

Grant Disbursement & Funding Restrictions:

The Vibrant City Art Grant can be awarded up to the amount of \$1,500 (no match required). Funds must be allocated for covering the costs of the deliverable art project. Projects may include; performances, residencies/workshops, pop-up art events, etc.

The Grant **does not** fund; activities that occur outside the City of Maricopa, organizations with an annual budget over \$50,000, entirely virtual programming (activities can simultaneously occur in person/virtual), permanent enhancements or infrastructure (i.e. murals or public art—unless approved and mutually agreed upon by the Grant Administrator & the City of Maricopa), construction or renovation of facilities, reduction of debt, feasibility studies, fundraising, re-granting, scholarship programs or awards, or an applicant whom failed to submit a Final Report for a previously awarded grant.

Awarded funds will be dispersed via check, within 60 (sixty) days of award selection.

Notification Process & Expectations:

Successful applicants will be notified via email of their grant award.

If awarded, Grant recipient agrees to submit a Final Report of the funded project, which is to include a summary of the project, final budget overview, and professional quality photos. Projects must be completed within 6 (six) months from the date of grant award. The Final Report must be submitted within 60 (sixty) days of project completion. The Grant recipient agrees to give the City of Maricopa the rights to use any materials submitted in the Final Report for data collection and promotional purposes. Grant recipients must comply with all terms and conditions outlined above. Grant recipients that fail to comply will be subject to reimbursement of awarded funds to the City and forfeiture of future grant eligibility. The grant recipient is solely responsible for all project maintenance, upkeep, removal, or disposal needs and for any necessary coordination of these tasks.

Assurances & Acknowledgements:

I have completely read and understand the Celebration of the Arts Grant Program Packet and agree to its contents in full. I acknowledge that all information I have provided in my application is real and true, and I agree to the terms outlined. The terms of this agreement are subject to change at the discretion and approval of the city.

Applicant Name: _____

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

2024-25



Grant Program

2024-25 | Support the Community Art Grant Application

The City of Maricopa "Celebration of the Arts" Grant Program supports a commitment to advancing Maricopa as a vibrant and progressive community for cultural and artistic activity. It aims to increase and promote community-initiated arts projects, support community festivals that celebrate cultural diversity, and continue, expand, and enhance private and non-profit art programming provided in community settings. This initiative aims to activate Maricopa as a home for community creativity in all its forms!





2024-25 | Support the Community Art Grant Application

Applicant Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone _____ **Email** _____

Applicant Background/Bio _____

Applicant/Collective/Organization's Purpose or Mission Statement _____

Project Summary (Please provide a statement explaining your artistic vision, and how the work will align with the commitment of the Celebration of the Arts initiative.) _____

Project Objectives & Timeline (Please provide a statement including project goals and timeline.) _____



2024-25 | Support the Community Art Grant Application

PROJECT PROPOSAL

What will you do? What activities will take place and where? What about this project is unique, interesting, or needed? _____

Who are the participants? Who will participate and how will they be invited or included? How are artists/ creatives involved? _____

Why is this project important? How does this connect to and impact Maricopa? How will you know if your project is successful? _____

How will you use the Grant funds? How much do you need for this project? Explain any additional partnerships and community support. _____

2024-25



Grant Program

2024-25 | Vibrant City Art Grant Application

The City of Maricopa "Celebration of the Arts" Grant Program supports a commitment to advancing Maricopa as a vibrant and progressive community for cultural and artistic activity. It aims to increase and promote community-initiated arts projects, support community festivals that celebrate cultural diversity, and continue, expand, and enhance private and non-profit art programming provided in community settings. This initiative aims to activate Maricopa as a home for community creativity in all its forms!





2024-25 | Vibrant City Art Grant Application

Applicant Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone _____ **Email** _____

Applicant Background/Bio _____

Applicant/Collective/Organization's Purpose or Mission Statement _____

Project Summary (Please include a statement explaining your artistic vision, and how the work will align with the commitment of the Celebration of the Arts initiative.) _____

Project Objectives & Timeline (Please provide a statement including project goals and timeline.) _____



2024-25 | Vibrant City Art Grant Application

PROJECT PROPOSAL

What will you do? What activities will take place and where? What about this project is unique, interesting, or needed? _____

Who are the participants? Who will participate and how will they be invited or included? How are artists/ creatives involved? _____

Why is this project important? How does this connect to and impact Maricopa? How will you know if your project is successful? _____

How will you use the Grant funds? How much do you need for this project? Explain any additional partnerships and community support. _____

City of Maricopa and the Cultural Affairs and Arts Advisory Committee present

2021 MARICOPA WILD HORSES

A Public Art Project



Applications due: October 7, 2021

PUBLIC ART PROJECT ARTIST PACKET

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IX. CONTACT INFORMATION 9

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I. Project Scope

All Artist – Please read this entire packet and submit all the required forms by the deadline to be able to create one of the “Wild Horses”.

Your participation in the City Manager's “Maricopa Arts Initiative – Wild Horses” public art project can be a great way to gain public recognition. All accepted artists will be promoted in digital, print, and social media.

Artists who wish to participate must create colored sketches of their designs for a three-dimensional (3D) fiberglass Wild Horse that is approximately 51" tall at head and 84" long from nose to tail and weighs approximately 50-60 pounds. This packet includes an outline of the wild horse to use as a design template. The wild horse will be mounted with the appropriate hardware and displayed in public places throughout the City of Maricopa. Make sure your sketch/design is nicely detailed so that the deciding members have a clear example of what the finished product will look like.

We ask that you submit a minimum of two orientations of your design with your application on or before **October 7, 2021**.

We are relying on the creative minds that we know exist right here in our own community and we can hardly wait to see the incredible artwork that will be created.

II. Background

In celebration of the City of Maricopa's growth, it is important to honor our roots and look to the future.

In the early 1800's horse and mule drawn freight trains would pass through the area carrying goods from east to west.

The mid 1800's brought the first continental Butterfield Overland Mail Line providing mail service and was the method used for communicating from coast to coast. The Pony Express were young, hardy riders traveling at great speeds by horse delivering catalogs and goods to the doorstep.

In the late 1800's four and six-horse Concord coaches would provide passenger service to and from Phoenix for those arriving by train.

To the South, in the early 1900's horse drawn farming instruments were used by our native neighbors whose 16,000 acre Ak-Chin Farm is one of the most successful farming enterprises today.

Entering Maricopa from the North passengers can likely find a herd of wild horses roaming the open fields and are living symbols of the historic and pioneer spirit of the West.

In the heart of Maricopa lives the Heritage District. This unique district is generally defined as the “old part” of town where many “horse properties” still exist today.

This is why the wild horse is relevant to the City of Maricopa's History.

We encourage each artist to use their own imagination in creating the design of their wild horse.

III. Selection & Creation Process

1. This competition is open to artists located in the Maricopa planning area (and includes our winter visitors).
2. The Cultural Affairs and Arts Advisory Committee (CAAAC) will review all submitted packets for the project.
3. The top 20 designs that are accepted by the CAAAC will be presented to City staff at one of the CAAAC's scheduled meetings.
4. Artists are invited to attend the CAAAC meeting on Thursday, October 21, 2021 where the final 10 designs will be selected.
 - a. This meeting is held at the City of Maricopa City Hall (39700 W Civic Center Plaza) at 5pm. You are not required to attend this meeting.
5. Only artwork that meets general community standards will be considered as recommended by the CAAAC and approved in the sole and absolute discretion of the Community Services Department.
6. All applicants will be informed of acceptance status by October 22, 2021.
7. Each artist whose design has been chosen will receive a total honorarium of \$1,000. The total honorarium of \$1,000 includes an initial \$400 payment to go towards the cost of creative materials and supplies. This \$400 payment will be available when their horse is picked up.
8. The wild horses will be available for pick up starting on October 25 – 30th at the catering kitchen entrance at Copper Sky Multigenerational Center. You will need to schedule your pick-up time in advance by contacting Brandelyn Hughes at 520-316-6852. You will be responsible for all damage caused to your issued horse during the time that you have possession of the horse.
9. During the duration of the creation of your wild horse, there will be 2 progress updates:
 - a. The first one will be 4 weeks in. We will request photos of the progress and a short summary of the steps that you have taken so far.
 - b. The second progress will be 8 weeks in. We will schedule a site visit to see the horse in person. At that time, the artist will receive an additional payment of \$300.
10. Once the horse is completed and returned to the City of Maricopa, the artist will receive the final \$300 payment.
11. We will notify the selected artist to the location of where their wild horse will reside within the City of Maricopa after the horses are returned to the City. This will include the timeframe as to when it will be placed at designated location as well.

IV. Acknowledgment of Artist

Artists participating in “Maricopa Arts Initiative -- Wild Horses” public art project will be acknowledged in the following ways:

- The name of the artist, title of the wild horse
- The artist, title, listed on the City of Maricopa website
- The horse, along with its artist, will be featured in digital, print, and social media
- Artist and horse (along with the horse sponsor) will all be revealed at a reception on March 16, 2021 at 6pm at City Hall and announced at the City Council Meeting at 7pm

V. Timeline

August 9, 2021	Artist Packets available for pick up or online www.maricopa-az.gov/CAAAC
October 7, 2021	Deadline for Artist Submission by 5pm No Exceptions
October 21, 2021	Cultural Affairs and Arts Advisory Committee Meeting *Final selection of Artists for all 5 horses – Artists are not required to be present
October 22, 2021	Notify Selected Artists
October 25 – 30 th , 2021	Artists pick up fiberglass horse. Materials payment.
Week of December 2, 2022	First Progress Update
Week of January 3, 2022	Second Progress Update and site visit. Second payment.
January 24, 2022	Completed horse returned to the City of Maricopa by 1pm. Third and final payment.
February 1, 2022	Artist and Wild Horse unveiling at City Council Reception at 6pm

VI. Items to be Submitted

The following items must be submitted by the deadline.

- ❑ Artist Agreement (must be signed)
- ❑ Copyright Assignment – one page (must be signed)
- ❑ A color sketch/design of your horse on 8 ½" x 11" paper (one design per page, minimum of two designs required)
- ❑ Your artist bio or resume – this helps us promote you and your horse design
 - Don't know what to say? Tell us a bit about yourself, your art experience or life experience, including some information on your design. Everyone has something interesting to say about herself or himself, and the evolution of their drawings.
 - You may also include samples of other pieces of your work/portfolio.

Submit your designs and ALL completed forms:

Drop off or mail to:

City of Maricopa
Community Services Department
39700 W Civic Center Plaza
Maricopa, AZ 85138

or

Submit electronically by emailing: artsmaricopa@maricopa-az.gov

VII. Design Criteria

1. Artist may alter the basic horse form but cannot compromise its structural integrity. The contact points by which the horse is attached to its base cannot be altered or obstructed. Structural alterations that result in fundamental change to the basic horse form must be carried out under the direct supervision of an auto body shop or fiberglass fabricator.
2. The artist may paint, sculpt, transform or adorn the horse using mosaic, mirrors, tiles or other media. Although objects may be attached to the horse, vandalism may and, unfortunately does occur. Any object that is affixed must be attached in a way that it cannot easily be removed and must be weather resistant.

3. The horse will be placed in outdoor areas fully accessible to the public. Artist should consider the weather and other elements including sun, rain, wind and dirt. Artist must develop designs, and choose materials that will not absorb water and that can withstand the weather.
4. Icon Poly, the company producing the wild horses, recommends using Acrylic Paint. Artist should be mindful that not all acrylic paint or all colors are lightfast (colorfast) and could possibly fade in strong sunlight. Oil-based enamels, whether from an aerosol can, brushed or applied with professional paint, can be used, but can be more difficult to work with. Primers typically used for drywall are NOT recommended and latex paints are NOT recommended.
5. Regarding adhesives, there has been success with epoxy. Polystyrene body fillers such as Bondo and Evercoat are excellent for use both as an adhesive and as a material for sculpting shapes and textures. Liquid nails and other such construction adhesives may be used as well although the drying time is longer. Please assure that decoupage surfaces are secure and will withstand the elements.
6. After the Artist has finished their horse, they should apply a varnish to protect it until it receives professionally applied automotive clear coat. Artist must determine the compatibility of their varnish with the particular paints they have used. It is extremely important to follow the recommendations of the respective manufacturers. An exterior grade of sealer that is non-reactive, non-toxic, UV resistant and waterproof is strongly recommended. A minimum of two coats of varnish is required. Either a matte or gloss finish is acceptable. Please read section VIII on page 7.
7. We cannot overemphasize the risk of paint failure that can result if instructions are not followed.
8. "Maricopa Arts Initiative -- Wild Horses" is a public art exhibit. The horses will be placed in highly public, accessible locations where the public can touch the designs. Public safety is a significant concern. Designs should be created with durability AND safety in mind.
9. Designs must be appropriate for public display. The City desires to create an opportunity for artistic expression, without offending members of the public. For this reason, designs which promote drugs or alcohol, or are sexually explicit in nature will not be displayed. The City also desires to maintain a position of neutrality on political or religious views. Therefore, applicants are discouraged from submitting entries with political or religious themes. The City reserves the right to not select or display any design which it believes will be offensive to the public or violate the law. The City has the sole discretion to accept or reject any design.

VIII. Prep & Painting Tips

Preparation

Lightly sand entire surface with 100-220 grit prior to painting. This sanding is more to clean the surface, not to remove the primer. Do not over sand. Wear plastic gloves when doing this, and when touching the raw sculpture after sanding. This will keep oils from your hands off the surface which could cause an adhesion problem when painting. Do not wear powdered latex gloves because powder residue will remain in the sculpture. If any primer flakes off when sanding, sand back to where the primer is stuck, abrading the raw resins. Then re-prime that area. We suggest using any brand of Gesso and almost all paint manufacturers have an exterior grade primer that will work.

Paint and Varnish

Using high quality exterior acrylic paint is recommended. Recommended acrylics are by Golden, Windsor-Newton, Daler-Rowney, Pebeo, Lascaux, Liquitex and other professional-grade paint. We recommend staying away from oil paints if you do not have a lot of experience with them. Avoid latex wall paint. Read your paint labels carefully and avoid paints that do not have a high colorfast rating. You don't want your design to disappear in the sunlight!

It is vital that you protect your artwork before the form leaves your studio by varnishing with two coats of Lascaux UV-1 gloss varnish. It is the best. Order one 250 ml bottle from Jerry's Artarama Catalog (800-827-8478) or Dick Blick Art Supply (www.dickblick.com). Two coats of Lascaux, diluted 3 parts varnish to 1 part water, will protect your work until it is clear-coated. An alternative to Lascaux is Ronan's Aquathane (call 800-247-6626 to find your nearest retailer). **DO NOT USE GOLDEN UVLS GLOSS VARNISH. IT IS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR OUTDOOR USE.**

Clear-Coat

The City of Maricopa will arrange a final finish with an auto-body clear coat, which will create a hard-shell high-gloss finish with a UV-protection component. Clear-coat will not be applied over mosaic or mirrored surfaces.

Additions and Extensions

Remember that anything you add to the horse will be vulnerable. Vandals (and the weather) will try to remove add-ons, so think "permanence" when planning and executing your design. If an artist plans to cover the entire surface with materials other than paint, such as tile or mosaic work, it may be necessary to remove as much primer as possible. When attaching items with adhesive, be sure to sand or rasp down into the material of the sculpture. Gluing direct to the primed surface may not yield the best results. If attaching items, we recommend using physical attachment (i.e., screws, bolts) in conjunction with adhesives. If you wish to sculpt forms onto your fiberglass form, use epoxy putty. Go to www.magicsculpt.com and/or www.restorersupplies.com for epoxy putty and product tech support. To glue stuff onto your creature, use liquid nails or jewelers cement, epoxy adhesives or Bond 527 multi-purpose cement. We do NOT recommend that you add hats, bags, or other items made of fabric. We also do NOT recommend that you use paper or photocopied due to the reaction between inks and strong light. Fabric items will deteriorate outside and ink and paper will fade.

IX. Contact Information

Resources for Artists

The wild horses were produced by Icon Poly of Gibbon, Nebraska. The folks at Icon Poly are happy to talk with artists regarding materials, adhesives, or other technical questions that might arise. Icon Poly maintains a website listing programs for which they supply forms www.iconpolystudio.com. Their phone number is (308) 468-9411 and hours are Monday through Friday 9-5 Central Time.

Project Contact Info

Please feel free to contact us with questions. The Community Service Department is open Monday through Thursday, 7am to 6pm.

(520) 316-6966
artsmaricopa@maricopa-az.gov
www.maricopa-az.gov/CAAAC

X. Maricopa Wild Horses Artist Agreement

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: October 7, 2021

Artist Name: _____
(Exactly as you want it to appear on the plaque and in print)

Mailing Address: _____

City, State & Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Title of your Wild Horse: _____
(Exactly as you want it to appear on the plaque and in print)

Design Statement: Describe your design, what materials you plan to use, and what inspired you and/or how the design will be executed. (Feel free to attach an additional document here.)

Biography (or attach short resume):

Assurances: I have completely read the 2021 Public Art Artist Packet and agree to its contents in full. I acknowledge that all application materials will become the property of the City of Maricopa and no materials will be returned to the artist. I agree to all terms of the Artist Agreement and the Maricopa Wild Horses Work for Hire Agreement.

Artist Signature: _____ Date: _____

XI. Maricopa Wild Horses Work for Hire Agreement

WHEREAS, _____ (artist's name), an individual having an address at _____ is the Author of the design and sketches (collectively referred to as the "Design") attached to the application submitted to the City of Maricopa on the same date of this Agreement;

WHEREAS, the Artist understands and acknowledges that, as part of the application process, it is intended that the City of Maricopa, with an address of 39700 W Civic Center Plaza, Maricopa, AZ 85138, owns the entire right, title and interest in and to the Design;

WHEREAS, the Artist understands and acknowledges that he/she will be notified in writing by the City of Maricopa Community Services Department whether his/her design has been approved and selected;

WHEREAS, the Artist understands and acknowledges that, upon the artist's receipt of written notification that his/her design has been selected and approved, he/she shall apply that design to a wild horse sculpture provided by the City of Maricopa, thereby creating a "finished wild horse" ready for outdoor display;

WHEREAS, the finished wild horse shall be entirely City of Maricopa property in perpetuity throughout the universe, free of any claim whatsoever by me, or by any persons or entities deriving any rights or interests from me;

WHEREAS, the Artist understands and acknowledges that the City of Maricopa shall continue to be the sole and exclusive owner of the entire right, title and interest in and to the Design, including, but not limited to, all derivative works based on the Design of the "finished wild horse" as approved for exhibition as described in detail in the Artist Packet for "Maricopa Arts Initiative -- Wild Horses" 2021 Public Art Project and that in such case the City of Maricopa, along with the help from a public art grant, will provide the artist a stipend of a total of \$1,000 to help defray the cost of materials used in the decoration of the wild horse chosen for exhibition and the time spent on each piece. The Artist may retain the right to show the work as their own in their portfolio. In its sole and absolute discretion and at any time, the City of Maricopa may withdraw Artist's right to identify the work as his/her own in their portfolio;

NOW, THEREFORE, for good and valuable consideration, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, and intending to be legally bound hereby, the Artist hereby acknowledges that the City of Maricopa owns all right, title and interest in and to the Design and to any derivative works based on the Design including but not limited to any rights in the finished wild horse, together with all copyright rights, application and registrations therefore. The City of Maricopa shall not be liable for any distortion, mutilation, modification or destruction of the finished wild horse by accident, act of God or person. The City reserves the right to remove, replace or alter the Design in its sole and absolute discretion. The Artist hereby waives his/her rights under the Copyright Act of 1976 ("CPA"), Title 17 U.S.C. and any amendments thereto, as against the City of Maricopa in the event of such distortion, mutilation, modification or destruction. The Artist further acknowledges and agrees that if the finished wild horse is vandalized, damaged, or otherwise modified and the Artist is unable or unwilling to promptly repair such alteration, the City of Maricopa shall have the right to make, or have made, such repairs, even if the repairs would constitute distortion, mutilation or modification under the CPA. The Artist hereby waives his/her rights under the CPA in the event and to the extent the City of Maricopa deems such repair necessary. The Artist represents to the City of Maricopa that he/she is the sole author of the Design and that the Design is an original work of authorship which does not infringe upon the copyright rights or on intellectual property rights of others, and that he/she has the unencumbered right to enter into this Agreement. In the event the Design is not approved or selected for exhibition, as described in the Artist Packet, the City of Maricopa shall release back to the Artist all its right, titles, and interest in and to the Design.

Artist Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

Wild Horse Title: _____

Date: _____

XII. Design Template



Orange County Arts & Cultural Affairs FY24 Cultural Facilities Funding Review Panel

CONFLICT of INTEREST FORM for Panelists

Conflict of Interest – please review, sign and return to Trudy@UnitedArtsCFL.org in advance of the panel meeting.

Panelists must serve without self-interest, and for the benefit of the entire community. All potential conflicts should be explained to Orange County Arts & Cultural Affairs; who will evaluate whether a **significant conflict is in place that would prevent the panelist from discussing or voting on that application**. Undisclosed conflicts of interest are grounds for immediate removal from the panel.

A conflict of interest includes but is not limited to:

- Would receive direct financial benefit from the applicant organization or the project;
- Serves on/as an employee or governing board member of the applicant organization; or as a consultant, assistant, or advisor to the applicant organization, with or without payment;
- Has a familial relationship with the applicant or a staff member or governing board member of the applicant organization; or
- Has a real or perceived bias regarding the applicant or its work that would make it difficult or impossible to render a fair assessment and/or funding decision; particularly if prior actions or statements have indicated bias.

Panelists with conflicts regarding one applicant may review all other applicants' requests, keeping objectivity for other applicants and peers.

I have read and agree with the conflict of interest policy. I hereby state that I have a conflict of interest with the following applicant(s), OR indicate "No conflict":

and **will recuse from discussion and vote** on said applicant(s).

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Typed name will serve as signature)

Return to: Trudy@UnitedArtsCFL.org by Friday, April 19, 2024.

Column1	Overview	Brief History of Grant	Planning Grant Specifics	Additional Relevant Information	Notes
<p>Keystone Historic Preservation Planning Grant</p>	<p>The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission administers the Keystone Planning Grant as a tool for historic preservation. Awards range between \$5,000 and \$25,000 to support archival research, national register nominations, cultural-resource surveys, feasibility studies, and other analytical work to support future capital investment. The grant is a yearly cycle and is funded by real-estate transfer tax revenues</p>	<p>For 30 years the Planning Grant has financed many studies. Key studies include the 2017 nomination and condition assessment for Highland Park in Pittsburgh. This study allowed the city to compete for a 2019 Keystone Construction grant to repair a pedestrian stone tunnel.</p>	<p>Applications for the FY 2026 round are due March 3 2025. PHMC issues award letters in June and executes contracts by September 1 2025. Expenses may begin only after the contract is signed. Each grantee must supply a 50% cash match and must verify the full match within 3 months of contract execution. Reimbursement is processed at a 50:50 ratio against paid invoices, with the final 20% retained until PHMC approves the work product and a close-out report. Quarterly narrative and photographic updates are required on January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1 each year of the grant term. All project documentation flows through the PA-SHARE online portal.</p>	<p>Planning grants carry no "deed covenant"- but PHMC reviews proposed scope to make sure it meet the Secretary of Interior's standard. Only cash can satisfy the match meaning pledges and in-kind services are not eligible.</p>	<p>Strong example of a good planning grant</p>
<p>Mass Cultural Council : Cultural Facilities Fund</p>	<p>The Feasibility and Technical Assistance tier of the Cultural Facilities Fund helps nonprofits, municipalities, and college institutions obtain the objective information they need before building physical infrastructure. FTA awards up to \$35,000 for architectural and engineering studies. Additionally, business or market analysis, capital-campaign feasibility, accessibility audits, and energy efficiency plans may qualify. The Fund is supported by the Governor's capital spending plan and is administered by MassDevelopment.</p>	<p>This pipeline to capital is demonstrated by the 51 Walden Performing Arts Center in Concord. The Center secured \$8,000 from the FTA grant in 2016 for HVAC design and phasing study. They then utilized that study and won \$40,000 in 2019 for restroom upgrades and \$130,000 in 2021 to install fresh air and cooling systems from the original plan.</p>	<p>Two month window to submit application. Recipients were made aware 5-6 months later. Every grant requires 1:1 secured cash match, pledges and in-kind services are not accepted. Grantees have 12 months to raise the match and complete the work. Funds are reimbursable upon submission of paid invoices- there is no disbursement until full match is documented. Allowable costs include consultant fees, drawings, cost estimating, market research, and capital campaign tests. The program does not allow non-facility strategic plans, staff salaries, fundraising implementation, and publications. Applications are scored on statutory threshold criteria and "Quality of Planning" and "Quality of Implementation" which examine consultant qualifications, community impact, and tourism benefits.</p>	<p>FTA grantees may not apply for another Cultural Facilities Fund grant until final invoices and a completion report have been accepted (this serves as a check to make sure projects move sequentially from study to construction). The program encourages engagement of minority and women owned planning firms and sets a 2 year maximum window for capital projects following the FTA study</p>	<p>Note: Award for the larger Mass Cultural Council Cultural Facilities fund are: Capital Grants (up to \$200k), Feasibility and Technical Assistance Grant (up to \$35k), and Systems Replacement Plan Grants (\$8k to \$14k) depending on facility size</p>
<p>Illinois Cultural Capital Grant</p>	<p>The Rebuild Illinois Cultural Capital Planning Grant is a technical-assistance tier inside the state's Rebuild Illinois Capital program designed to help arts and cultural organizations secure information they may need before capital projects. Information includes architectural studies, feasibility analysis, site screenings, etc. Awards are state funded and are reserved for Illinois based 501(c)(3) nonprofits, government municipalities and entities, and public higher-ed institutions that deliver arts programming to state residents</p>	<p>The Rebuild Illinois Cultural Capital Planning Grant is a technical-assistance tier inside the state's Rebuild Illinois Capital program designed to help arts and cultural organizations secure information they may need before capital projects. Information includes architectural studies, feasibility analysis, site screenings, etc. Awards are state funded and are reserved for Illinois based 501(c)(3) nonprofits, government municipalities and entities, and public higher-ed institutions that deliver arts programming to state residents</p>	<p>The first full planning round closed on October 25, 2023 and received more than one-hundred applications requesting \$4.5 million; fourteen projects were funded with the \$500,000 appropriation. Recipients serve 11 cities statewide and include the International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago, Quincy Society of Fine Arts, Definition Theatre, and Bunker Hill CUSD #8, with awards between \$16,900 and \$50,000 for early-stage capital planning. These grantees now hold a path to the larger Rebuild Illinois Cultural Capital Construction Grants expected in future cycles.</p>	<p>The Rebuild Illinois Cultural Capital Planning Grant was created by the 2019 capital bill House Bill 0900 and authorizes the Illinois Arts Council Agency to issue up-front technical-assistance awards so arts organizations can secure studies before seeking construction funding. Applicants may request between \$5,000 and \$50,000 without a match and must file by the annual deadline. Funds are provided in a single disbursement once the contract is signed, but recipients must be pre-qualified in the Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act system, hold an active SAM.gov Unique Entity ID, and follow federal procurement standards in 2 CFR 200.317-200.327; the agency also encourages use of certified Business Enterprise Program vendors for equity purposes. Eligible assessment types include architectural schematics, site-selection and feasibility studies, energy-efficiency and ADA assessments, environmental screenings, and business or operational plans, while consultant fees are capped at 15% of the award and</p>	<p>Requires no match funding up front to reduce barriers for small and rural entities that lack capital for consultants. Program does not allow expenditures tied directly to permanent improvements or full construction drawings.</p>

beautifies here.
explores here.
gathers here.
performs here.
plays here.
enjoys here.

RAD works here.

2024
Annual
Report

relaxes here.
provides here.
excites here.
inspires here.
creates here.
moves here.



The Allegheny Regional Asset District — RAD — invests in Allegheny County’s quality of life through financial support of libraries, parks and trails, arts and cultural organizations, regional attractions, sports and civic facilities, and public transit.

With half of the proceeds from Allegheny County’s additional one percent sales and use tax, RAD has invested more than \$2.5 billion in our regional assets since its inception. An additional \$2.5 billion has gone directly to the County and its 128 municipalities for property tax relief and local government services. RAD is a time-tested solution that works for the economy, for assets, for citizens, for municipalities — for all. **RAD works here.**

Letter from the Chair

Where in Pittsburgh do you like to go to spend time with the people you love?

A quarter-century ago, the great historian David McCullough challenged Pittsburghers to make our riverfronts into places “where people want to bring those they love — their children, their family from some other place, some other city, to live here.” The late Mr. McCullough would be happy to see the trails and greenery that have been built along the rivers in the decades since.

At RAD, we’re proud to support that transformative work — but it doesn’t stop at the riverfront. We want all of Allegheny County to be filled with places to bring the people you love.

Whether it’s children’s story time at your local library, a walk through a beautiful regional park, a family trip to see some favorite animals, a date night capped off by a world-class performing arts show, or gathering with friends to root for the black and gold, we at RAD do what we can to support the outings and gatherings that make living in the Pittsburgh area so special.

We believe RAD is for everyone, and our budget priorities reflect that; in 2024, nearly two-thirds of RAD’s investments went to the public libraries, parks and trails that are open to everyone, 52 weeks per year. Every corner of our county receives support from RAD, with more than 100 organizations benefiting from the public investment annually. No matter where you are, a park, a library or a cultural venue with a ‘RAD works here’ sticker is just a short trip away.

In 2024, I was honored to be re-appointed to the RAD Board by newly-elected Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato, with whom I share a vision of a county that works for all of us.

You might notice something about the board photo on the opposite page: for the first time in RAD’s history, all seven of our board members are women. I consider myself fortunate to be surrounded by such a group of accomplished, intelligent and driven women, all of whom

are generous with their time to serve the people of Allegheny County. Members with years of experience on the RAD Board have been joined by members with fresh ideas and perspective, and I am energized by the possibilities for public investments in our region's quality of life.

I also want to offer my sincere thanks to our outgoing RAD Board members, who all served the people of Allegheny County selflessly for many years. Jackie Dixon, Anthony J. Ross, and Dr. Daniel Rosen all contributed mightily to our work as good stewards of RAD tax dollars. I am especially grateful to Daniel J. Griffin for his unwavering commitment to this work for more than 26 years. He has been a great leader and mentor to all of us, and I am certain our assets are better off because of Dan's service.

While the work is vitally important, we never forget about the fun experiences that RAD helps bring to life. As you read this annual report, think back on the joyous times you've had with your loved ones. From summertime strolls to wintertime skating, the Steel Curtain to curtain calls, a trail run before work or a library visit after school, RAD will be there for you and the people you love for many years to come.

Dusty Elias Kirk
RAD BOARD CHAIR



RAD Board, from left to right: Joy Evans, Dusty Elias Kirk (Chair), Bridget Daley, Jamie Ducar, Kendra J. Ross (Secretary/Treasurer), Sylvia Fields (Vice-Chair), Monica Malik

2024 Budget Distribution

LIBRARIES

\$40,307,905 (29.9%)

PARKS & TRAILS

\$44,674,764 (33.1%)

ARTS & CULTURE

\$19,565,633 (14.5%)

SPORTS & CIVIC FACILITIES

\$14,200,000 (10.5%)

REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS

\$11,725,359 (8.7%)

PUBLIC TRANSIT

\$3,000,000 (2.2%)

ADMINISTRATION

\$1,101,891 (0.8%)

PARTNERSHIPS & INITIATIVES

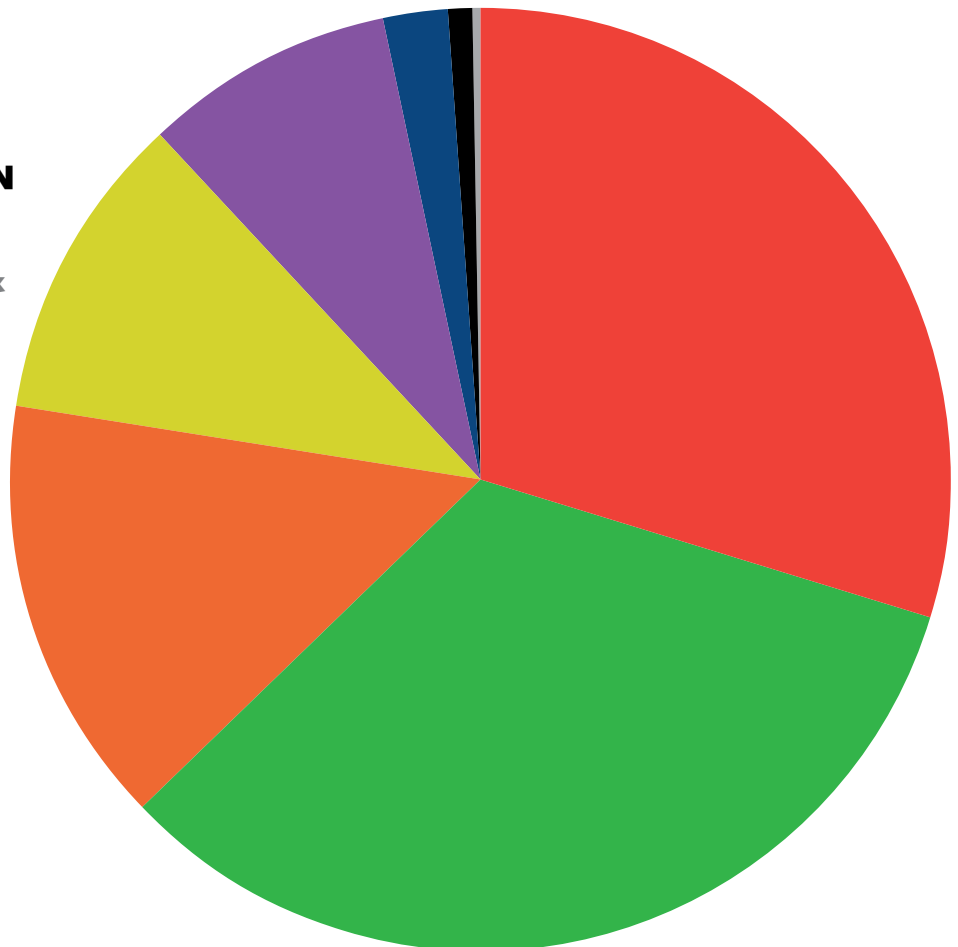
\$279,766 (0.2%)

Total

\$134,855,318

DID YOU KNOW?

Allegheny County's 1% sales tax has generated more than \$5 billion in funding since 1994.



2024 Stats & Figures

47,660,306

public participation & attendance at RAD assets

11,132,785

items circulated by RAD-funded libraries

\$1,057,583,752

contributed by RAD assets to our local economy, including \$36,119,943 in contract with Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

32,131,389

visits to regional parks and trails

53,697

free visits through RAD Summer Staycation

13,922

employees and contractors, including 4,297 artists, employed by RAD assets

4,124,234

eResources circulated to library users across Allegheny County

1,886,028

free tickets provided by RAD assets

\$451,393,801

wages and salaries paid to asset employees

\$28,527,248

value in free tickets

Source: RAD 2024 Close-Out Reports provided by Regional Assets

Libraries

2024 RAD FUNDING

\$40,307,905

TO LIBRARIES

What is your third place? We don't mean a bronze medal, we mean a place you can go other than work or home to spend time, linger, and interact with others. For a growing number of families, that 'third place' is the public library.

RAD gathers here.

CHECKING OUT THE LIBRARY

Pittsburghers love their library. CLP saw 1,683,664 visits, up 17% from 2023.



CLP partnered with Carnegie Science Center, CitiParks and Pittsburgh Public Schools for its biggest summer reading program yet — over 67,000 books were logged, up 42% from the previous summer. The Penguins mascot Iceburgh kept things cool at the “Read-A-Palooza Book Bowl” finale event.



Following a community outreach process that included one-on-one interviews with 17 community leaders in Braddock Hills, C.C. Mellor received a half-million-dollar RAD grant aimed at transforming its library to accommodate larger flexible meeting spaces.

Here in Allegheny County, libraries are shaking off the rollbacks in hours caused by the pandemic and using support from RAD to stay open for longer into the evening. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) increased open hours by 10% in 2024, ensuring every location — with the exception of Downtown and the Library of Accessible Media for Pennsylvanians — is open until 8:00 PM at least three nights per week. And Pittsburghers are taking advantage, with some libraries seeing visitor totals grow up to 53% after hours increased.

Outside of the city, every public library in the county that is capable of being open on Saturday is now open for operation, and many more are considering Sunday hours. RAD grants are helping to ensure that these libraries can serve their communities with open arms instead of locked doors.

Northland Public Library, the largest suburban library in Allegheny County, began construction on a two-story expansion, supported by a one-time funding increase for libraries from RAD in 2023. The “New Northland” will feature a new entrance area, better accessibility and more meeting and social spaces — important aspects of any great third place.

RAD’s Transformative Community Library Fund continues to provide important grants for projects that serve lower-income communities. In 2024, RAD approved a \$500,000 grant for renovations to the century-old C.C. Mellor Memorial Library, which serves the Braddock Hills community among its five municipalities. A \$78,324 grant to the Sharpsburg Community Library will go toward courtyard renovations, and remote locker installations in Sharpsburg and Blawnox.

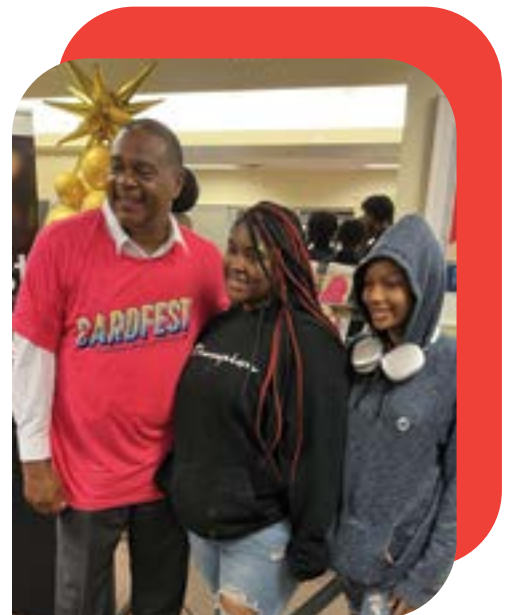
The grants follow more than \$4 million in previous commitments to libraries in Braddock, Swissvale, McKeesport, Clairton, Homestead and Millvale — all historic manufacturing towns where the library serves as an important community hub.



The “New Northland” will feature a new café space operated by Commonplace Coffee.

DID YOU KNOW?

Library resources go beyond the doors of a branch. The circulation of eResources grew 14% for CLP year-over-year and 18% countywide.



Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey joined the effort to ensure every public-school student in the city has a library card. Through the CardFest initiative, nearly 14,000 new library cards were issued to PPS students who did not previously have a library card. They join the 36,000+ students who have received cards through Allegheny County Library Association programs over the past four years.

Libraries

In the 2020s, public libraries have become more vital than ever before as technology hubs for their communities. Remote-learning students and remote-working employees rely on their libraries for Wi-Fi hotspots and reliable internet access.

When “work from home” really means “work from any computer,” the computers themselves must remain top-notch.

With that in mind, RAD leaders decided that every public library in Allegheny County deserves the finest in performance PCs, regardless of where the library is located. The RAD Board announced a \$3,123,075 grant for eiNetwork to purchase PCs at all Allegheny County Libraries.

That announcement came in February, and thanks to the quick work of eiNetwork, the job was done by summertime at every library location. In all, the new technology included:

- 1,643 all-in-one computers
- 515 laptops
- 306 desktops
- 262 monitors
- 78 servers



Northland Public Library

RAD upgrades here.



Braddock Carnegie Library

“The benefit of this generous RAD grant extends beyond simply paying for the replacement and upgrade of the library equipment. It frees up budget dollars for each library to enhance the services and outreach to their communities.”

— Carlos Correa, Executive Director at eiNetwork

\$3,123,075

for new PCs across
Allegheny County

“I briefly stopped in the library earlier today to use the computer room. Your new computers are outstanding and it’s great to see resources being utilized for an important upgrade that will benefit many.”

— Northland Public Library patron



Andrew Carnegie Free Library

Some specs, for the true computer nerds — Lenovo ThinkCentre M75; Processor: AMD Ryzen 7 Pro 5750G with Radeon Graphics 3.80 GHz; Installed RAM: 32 GB; System Type: 64-bit; Operating system: Windows 11 Education Version 23H2.

The new PCs came as welcome news to libraries operating computers well beyond their useful life — for both staff members and patrons. Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed eiNetwork past its typical four-year rolling schedule of library equipment refreshes, and the costs of leasing new equipment have increased substantially.

No more out-of-date equipment, and no more leases. Today, every Allegheny County library patron can walk into their closest branch and find state-of-the-art hardware needed to keep up in today’s world.

Penn Hills Public Library



Parks & Trails

2024 RAD FUNDING

\$44,674,764

TO PARKS AND TRAILS

The former Dean of the University of Washington School of Public Health, Dr. Howard Frumkin, once said “If we had a medicine that delivered as many benefits as parks, we would all be taking it,” citing the benefits for cardiovascular health, reducing stress, fighting osteoporosis, and alleviating loneliness.

RAD refreshes here.



NEW REGIONAL ASSETS FOR 2024:

- Allegheny RiverTrail Park
- Frick Environmental Center
- Venture Outdoors

RAD capital grants help all of us become “social climbers” at the new Boyce Bouldering Park and Pump Track, one of the biggest outdoor public climbing facilities in the U.S.



DINO-MITE! Anderson Playground at Schenley Park, known as the Dinosaur Playground, re-opened after a major RAD-funded renovation and the hard work of the City of Pittsburgh, CitiParks, and the partners and workers — who completed a project 65 million years in the making.

The medicine provided by Allegheny County’s regional parks and trails could fight an even longer list of ailments. Suffering from an H₂O deficiency? The County Parks welcomed 195,269 patrons to its four pools at Boyce Park, North Park, Settlers Cabin and South Park — upwards of 40,000 more visitors than the previous summer.

Afflicted with the need for Family Time? Boyce Mayview Park in Upper St. Clair increased free and low-cost programs like Story Time and Family Art in the Park to ensure more South Hills residents had the ability to participate in meaningful activities at a regional park.

Pittsburgh ranked in the top 20 park systems (out of the 100 most populous U.S. cities) for the third straight year, as rated by the Trust for Public Land. That’s good news for overall health too; the Trust found that people in the top 25 park systems were 9% less likely to suffer from poor mental health, and 21% less likely to be physically inactive than those in lower-ranked cities.

While a walk in the park is no replacement for your physician, we’ll always recommend a dose of greenery and a prescription for sunshine at RAD parks — the only Regional Assets open 365 days per year.

RECORD ATTENDANCE

The Pittsburgh Botanic Garden saw record attendance in July 2024, welcoming more than 6,000 visitors in one month for the first time ever.





Originally built to host the 1936 U.S. Olympic Swimming Trials, the North Park pool wasn't finished in time. Still, the pool has a rich history of recreation for swimmers young and old — and RAD support helped create a new \$4.2 million baby pool area to keep families swimming for generations to come.



DID YOU KNOW?

South Park is home to a historic herd of bison, purchased for the Allegheny County Parks nearly 100 years ago. Two new additions arrived in March 2024: baby Riis (named for the founder of the County Parks) and baby Roddey (named for the late County Executive).



A grant of \$2 million from RAD provided CitiParks with the ability to replace the aging chiller system at the Schenley Park Ice Skating Rink. The rink re-opened on November 19, just in time for its 50th birthday!



BY THE NUMBERS
RAD funding helps maintain and improve about 15,000 acres of parkland throughout Allegheny County. What's the largest? North Park, with 3,075 acres for hiking, golfing, kayaking, swimming, running, skating, biking, fishing, and so much more!

Arts & Culture

2024 RAD FUNDING

\$19,565,633

TO ARTS & CULTURE

For Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, the arts & culture sector provides world-class entertainment, delivers countless free opportunities for local residents to engage with the arts, and sustains a steady flow of economic impact.

RAD takes center stage here.





Supporting that free programming is at the core of RAD — as we say, RAD is for everyone. From school performances to RAD Days concerts to complimentary ticket offers for human services organizations, RAD’s annual operating grants help defray the costs associated with bringing more people to shows and exhibitions.

Another piece of the puzzle is making the cultural scene attractive to outside visitors. A 2024 report from the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, using research from Americans for the Arts, found that arts attendees from outside Allegheny County spend more than \$91 per person, per event — far above the national average of \$61 — with many non-local visitors choosing to spend their money to spend the night in Pittsburgh, boosting the economic impact further.

Arts & culture also represent the future of Downtown Pittsburgh. In October, Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro announced a \$600 million revitalization plan for Downtown. The largest public space of that plan is the Arts Landing civic space in the Cultural District, which will be supported by a \$5 million RAD capital grant as well as continued support for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust and for Regional Assets that will use the space for free community programming.

Perhaps RAD’s biggest impact comes “behind the curtain” with capital support for major building renovation projects that may be otherwise difficult to fundraise (have you ever tried to install a plaque on an AC duct?). These were RAD’s largest capital grants for the Arts & Culture category in 2024:

- \$800,000 to replace the roof at the **Pittsburgh CLO Construction Center**
- \$600,000 to support HVAC replacement at **Senator John Heinz History Center**
- \$410,000 for HVAC and A/V equipment at **August Wilson African American Cultural Center**
- \$300,000 for accessibility improvements and climate control at **The Frick Pittsburgh**
- \$225,000 to replace **WYEP’s** aging FM transmitter
- \$220,000 for lighting upgrades at the **Pittsburgh Cultural Trust’s** Benedum Center
- \$200,000 toward the terra cotta project at Heinz Hall, home to the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra**

FREE MUSIC

1 out of every 5 people who experience the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra did so free of charge in 2024 — with RAD funding supplementing the costs — and free attendees were up 18% over the previous year.



PARTNERSHIPS & INITIATIVES

See pages 20 and 21 to see how RAD’s new Partnerships & Initiatives are making even more free opportunities available for Allegheny County residents.

Big Moments by Month

JANUARY

Carnegie Science Center received an unprecedented gift of \$65 million from the Kamin family that will support expanded programming, exhibit upgrades and ultimately a brighter future. In recognition of their generosity, the museum will become the Daniel G. and Carole L. Kamin Science Center, a prime example of the private funding RAD encourages its Regional Assets to pursue.



FEBRUARY

Senator John Heinz History Center added another title for the City of Champions, when readers of USA Today 10best voted it the #1 history museum in the U.S. The Children's Museum was voted the #2 children's museum. Both attractions, along with The Warhol, had previously made the 10best list, which was celebrated in 2023 with a month of free admission thanks to RAD's 3 For Free program.



MARCH

Carnegie Music Hall of Oakland reopened after a \$9 million renovation, a project that won honors from the American Institute of Architects and included capital support from RAD. Guest experience was at the forefront of the upgrades, with the addition of air conditioning, new sound and lighting, bigger seats, and a re-sloped floor for accessibility. The 1895 hall is currently home to Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures, a proud Regional Asset.



APRIL

The Frick Pittsburgh opened *Vermeer, Monet, Rembrandt: Forging the Frick Collections in Pittsburgh & New York*, made possible by renovation work in Manhattan that temporarily forced a move for works of the great masters. The show sold out day after day, making it the highest-attended exhibition in the history of The Frick Pittsburgh.

MAY

City Theatre, Pittsburgh CLO, Quantum Theatre and Pittsburgh Public Theater all received plaudits from Broadway World, which named our city one of the 15 best cities to see theatre. All are longtime Regional Assets who share RAD's mission to make the arts open and available to residents.

JUNE

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra showed its impact as it wrapped its 128th season. The PSO saw a 30% increase in households attending its shows, and released a study finding it generates \$125 million in economic impact (\$4 for every \$1 spent) and sustains 1,900 jobs. It then capped off the month with two sold-out shows featuring Gen-Z jazz superstar Laufey in concert.



JULY

Carnegie Museum of Natural History celebrated 125 years since the excavation of *Diplodocus carnegii*, better known as Dippy. The fossils became an international sensation, and prompted Andrew Carnegie to expand his institute so it would be big enough for his dinosaur skeleton, making his natural history museum known as “The House That Dippy Built.”



AUGUST

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre and **August Wilson House** opened their coproduction of *Radio Golf*, staged outside Wilson’s boyhood home in the Hill District. The show appeared on multiple “Best Of” lists for Pittsburgh theater in 2024, with the Tribune-Review calling *Radio Golf* “a triumph from beginning to end.”



SEPTEMBER

The **Pittsburgh Cultural Trust** welcomed back *Hamilton* to the Benedum Center, and along with it a big boost for Downtown Pittsburgh’s economy. The musical brought 64,000 people to the Cultural District for an estimated \$25 million in economic activity over the show’s three-week run — a fine way to mark the 40th anniversary of the Cultural Trust’s founding.



OCTOBER

Pittsburgh Glass Center capped off its expansion project with a two-day Grand Reopening Community Celebration during RAD Days. Support from RAD ensured the Glass Center was made accessible to all visitors and will help sustain PGC’s free programming like glassblowing demonstrations, open house events, and more.

NOVEMBER

Film Pittsburgh pulled off one of its most-award winning editions yet of the Three Rivers Film Festival, where five of its screened films went on to be nominated for Academy Awards and two (*A Real Pain* and *FLOW*) became Oscar winners. As for the festival itself, Best Narrative was shared by *Bob Trevino Likes It* and *The Strangers’ Case*, while opening-night darling *Clemente* won Best Documentary.



DECEMBER

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre’s production of *The Nutcracker* had more than just the Sugar Plum Fairy dancing with joy. By the time it closed on December 27, it was the highest-grossing *Nutcracker* in PBT history, helping the ballet to the highest-grossing year overall in the dance company’s history.



PBT Principal Artists Lucius Kirst and Hannah Carter in *The Nutcracker*

Regional Attractions

2024 RAD FUNDING

\$11,725,359

TO REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS

The history and creation of a Regional Asset District for Allegheny County was intertwined with the direction of the Aviary, Phipps, and the Zoo just a generation ago.

RAD soars, grows, and blooms here.

FULL ACCREDITATION

The Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium has once again earned accreditation from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, signifying excellence in and commitment to animal management, safety, conservation, and education. AZA inspectors noted the excellent animal health, green initiatives and conservation education.





Phipps earned national accolades in 2024, including the IMLS National Medal for Museums for community impact and the EPA Green Power Leadership Award for renewable energy.

In the early 1990s, the cash-strapped City of Pittsburgh was the sole underwriter for all three attractions, even though more than two-thirds of visitors came from outside the city.

The Pittsburgh Aviary was perhaps in the worst shape, and then-Mayor Sophie Masloff considered closing the Aviary permanently. A community coalition called Save The Aviary, Inc. banded together to save the venue and have it declared the National Aviary. In need of a permanent funding solution, the newly-privatized Aviary began to be funded by a newly-created Allegheny Regional Asset District. Similar arrangements followed for the Zoo and Phipps to go from line items on the city budget to 501(c)(3) entities supported by RAD.

Today, the National Aviary, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, and Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium are all thriving examples of public-private partnerships, boasting attendance, staffing levels and earned revenue far above the doldrums of the early '90s.

In 2024, RAD provided vital upgrades that may be otherwise be difficult for the organizations to fund through donations — \$1.5 million for security, ADA and restroom upgrades at the Zoo; \$400,000 to restore the Sunken Room at Phipps; and \$252,000 to replace roofs over the Grasslands, Treetops and staff offices at the Aviary. From pathways to plaster, RAD can do it all.

Looking ahead to the future, the Zoo has announced a new 20-year master plan that lays out upgrades for nearly the entire campus — from modernizing the front gates to expanding the animal habitats, all in phases over the next two decades.

BY THE NUMBERS

In 1995, RAD covered more than 75% of the budgets of the Aviary, Phipps and the Zoo. Today, those numbers have flipped — RAD now accounts for less than 25% of their annual budgets. The Aviary alone has seen individual donations soar by 287% since 2019.



After being declared extinct in the wild in 1988, Guam Kingfishers have thrived at the National Aviary. Three of the Guam Kingfishers that hatched at the Aviary are now living in the wild.

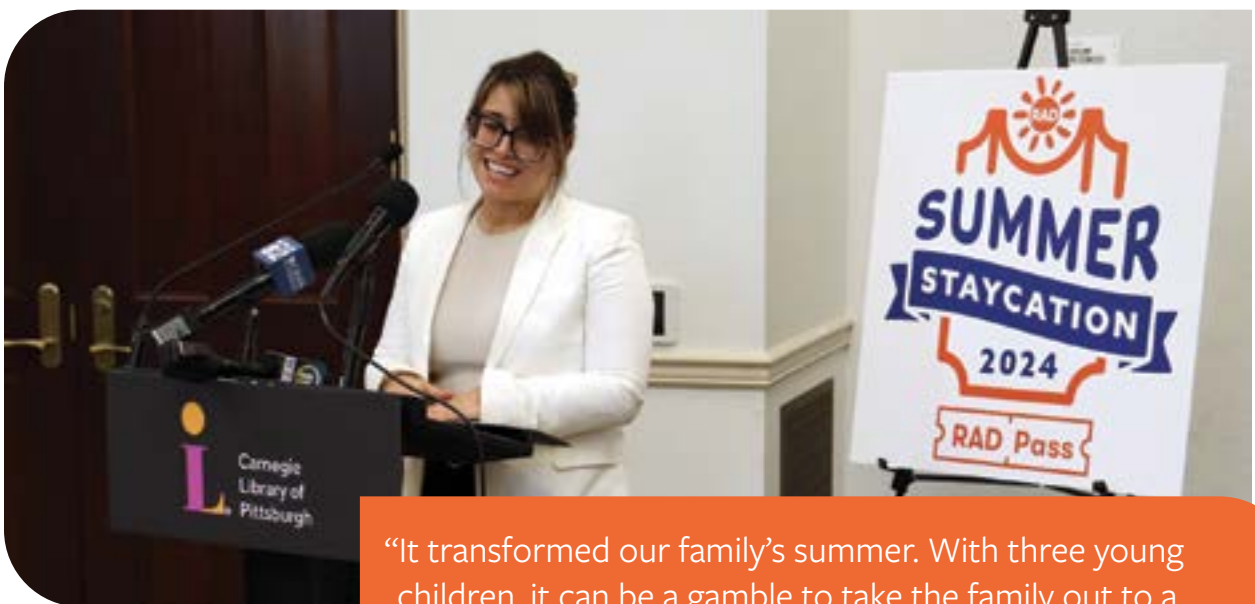
HERE TO STAY IS A NEW BIRD

57 new birds representing 31 species joined the Aviary's flock in 2024, including a peregrine falcon, two critically endangered Eastern Loggerhead shrikes and a critically endangered Baer's pochard.

Partnerships & Initiatives

Free experiences are part of RAD’s DNA. Since 2002, we’ve worked with our Regional Assets to connect the people of Allegheny County with free events (think RAD Days) as a “thank you” for their long-term support of RAD funding — more than \$2.5 billion to our regional assets since its inception — and encouraging them to enjoy the fruits of their public investment.

RAD staycations here.



Allegheny County Executive Sara Innamorato helped RAD and library leaders unveil RAD Summer Staycation 2024 with a media event on April 25.

“It transformed our family’s summer. With three young children, it can be a gamble to take the family out to a new place. We got to try new places that we had not experienced before and we might not have otherwise decided to visit, and we will certainly be going back.”
— Staycation user



2024 RAD FUNDING
\$279,766
TO PARTNERSHIPS
& INITIATIVES

In April 2024, RAD announced an expansion of free offerings at Regional Assets that are open regularly but typically charge admission fees. RAD Summer Staycation encouraged Allegheny County residents with a library card to enjoy being a tourist in their own city. These attractions were:

- The Andy Warhol Museum
- Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History
- Carnegie Science Center
- Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh
- The Frick Pittsburgh
- Heinz History Center
- Mattress Factory
- National Aviary
- Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
- Pittsburgh Botanic Garden
- Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium
- Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum

“I had attended these attractions on previous RAD Days in years past but it was so crowded that I felt like I couldn’t really enjoy it if I could even get in at all. I love that four packs of tickets are offered for families! It could save \$100 on admission prices alone, what a value!!”

— Staycation user

Instead of a single RAD Day at each attraction, free admissions were available on RAD Pass and spread out over multiple months from mid-May through September, allowing residents to visit on the dates most convenient for them.

In partnership with these Regional Assets and with Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, which provided staffers to maintain the IT infrastructure and answer patron questions throughout the summer, RAD has already committed to a second edition of RAD Summer Staycation in 2025, expecting tens of thousands of additional visitors to enjoy Pittsburgh experiences they may not otherwise be able to enjoy.

PASS-ING THROUGH

53,697 free-admission visits came via RAD Summer Staycation, with RAD incurring costs under \$5 per visitor.

NEW LIBRARY CARDS

Allegheny County libraries created more than 36,000 new library cards in summer 2024 — a 68% increase in new cards year-over-year.

STAYCATION STATS

97% were ‘very likely’ to recommend RAD Pass to another library-card holder, and 57% went to an attraction they had never visited before.

Sports & Civic Facilities

RAD plays ball here.

Pittsburgh's North Shore stadiums are quickly approaching their 25th birthdays, and support from RAD allows these venues — along with the David L. Lawrence Convention Center and PPG Paints Arena — to stay on top of maintenance and capital needs.

These sports and civic facilities welcomed more than 4.6 million attendees in 2024 — including 120,000 fans free of charge (a donation valued at more than \$3.8 million) — which can create plenty of wear and tear.

In addition to RAD's annual commitment to debt service on facility bonds, RAD provides funding to the Sports and Exhibition Authority's Multi-Facility Reserve Fund. Upgrades including new heaters and carpeting at Acrisure Stadium, tiling and painting at PNC Park, and additional capital repairs at the Convention Center help keep Pittsburgh a top market for sporting events and trade shows.

The venues also provide sites for community events free of charge, including the Convention Center hosting a massive two-day, free dental clinic with Mission of Mercy, as well as a Christmas Outreach Celebration for more than 500 local families.

2024 RAD FUNDING

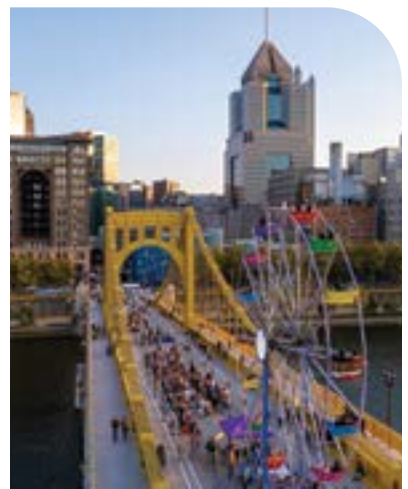
\$14,200,000

TO SPORTS & CIVIC FACILITIES



FOOD DONATION

15,533 pounds of ready-to-eat food were donated by Levy Restaurants on behalf of the Sports and Exhibition Authority to Jubilee Kitchen and 412 Food Rescue.



Public Transit

2024 RAD FUNDING
\$3,000,000
TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

RAD rides here.

For more than a decade, RAD has supported Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) with a multi-million-dollar annual grant, ensuring that everyone can access their Regional Assets — regardless of whether or not they have a car.

That support helps PRT pursue other initiatives that benefit the community, including the latest partnership with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services to benefit lower-income riders.

The Allegheny Go program offers a 50% discount to county residents ages 12-64 who receive SNAP benefits. In the first year, the program has already attracted more than 5,000 unique riders — all of whom are currently benefiting from half-off fares.

Annual support from RAD will continue to unlock an additional 8-to-1 match from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, all aimed at providing transit service to Regional Assets well into the future. RAD support helps Regional Asset employees and artists get to work, and visitors to enjoy a day out without worrying about driving or parking.



SAVING ON FARES

As of March 2025, Allegheny Go has saved participating riders more than \$779,000 through its discount fares.



Project Grants

2024 RAD FUNDING
\$642,015
TO PROJECT GRANTS

In recent years, RAD has substantially increased its commitment to funding projects that increase connections between Regional Assets and foster accessibility for all visitors.

RAD connects here.



RAD funding works hand in hand with other sources to complete big projects, as other private, foundation and government grants helped to create accessible trails at the Frick Environmental Center.



A record-breaking \$630,000 in project grants in 2023 gave way to *another* record-breaking \$642,015 in project grants in 2024. Applications are made to RAD separately from the annual cycle of operating and capital support, providing organizations with more opportunities to access funding for worthy projects.

ACCESSIBILITY GRANTS

For projects providing a long-term benefit of equitable access for people of all abilities and experiences

- \$50,000 to **Frick Environmental Center** to make a ground-level restroom fully accessible with an adult changing table for users of the Outdoor Sensory Classroom and Nature Play Trail
- \$36,300 to **Attack Theatre** to make the facility universally accessible by modifying three door and pathway areas and to improve organizational policies, practices, and programs for disability access by hiring an accessibility advisor and consultant
- \$25,000 to the **Heinz History Center** to make accessibility improvements to the History Center’s website

Part of Attack Theatre’s mission is to ‘provide accessible, creative learning opportunities,’ and RAD support provides an assist.



CONNECTION GRANTS

For projects that implement new, long-term efforts that improve the financial position of two or more Regional Assets

- \$215,000 to **August Wilson African American Cultural Center** to launch an August Wilson-centered marketing campaign with the **August Wilson House** and **Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre**
- \$150,000 to **Pittsburgh Public Theater** to formalize a residency program for **New Horizon Theater** to use the Public’s Helen Wayne Rauh Hall for their performances
- \$113,241 to **Attack Theatre** to hire and share an Enterprise Data Manager with **Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild** for strategic partnerships, donor management, and fee-for-service projects
- \$52,474 to **Radiant Hall Studios** for a shared facilities manager with **Sweetwater Center for the Arts**

Grant Distribution

RAD invests here.

ASSET	2024 OPERATING	2024 CAPITAL
CONTRACTUAL		
Allegheny County Library Association *	\$ 7,754,976	\$
Allegheny County — Regional Parks	25,557,932	5,565,000
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	24,481,188	
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh — Debt Service	1,000,000	
Carnegie Library eiNetwork	3,678,822	3,123,075
Carnegie Library eResources	269,844	
Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh	3,735,423	360,000
City of McKeesport — Renziehausen Park	839,312	500,000
City of Pittsburgh — Regional Parks	8,331,670	2,780,000
National Aviary in Pittsburgh	1,466,756	252,000
Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens	2,827,904	400,000
Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium	\$ 5,278,699	\$ 1,500,000

* See Allegheny County Library Association Distribution chart on page 29

MULTI-YEAR AGREEMENT

SEA Stadium Convention Center Bond Issue	\$ 13,400,000	\$
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ANNUAL

Afro-American Music Institute	\$ 24,500	\$
Allegheny Brass Band	3,800	
Allegheny Land Trust	30,000	253,850
Allegheny RiverTrail Park	5,000	50,000
Andrew Carnegie Music Hall	7,500	
Arcade Comedy Theater	8,000	5,000
Assemble	7,500	
Associated Artists of Pittsburgh	8,000	
Attack Theatre	65,000	
August Wilson African American Cultural Center	525,000	410,000
August Wilson House <i>a project of the Daisy Wilson Artist Community, Inc.</i>	25,000	
Avonworth Municipal Authority	35,000	
Bach Choir of Pittsburgh	9,120	
Balafon West African Dance Ensemble	3,000	
Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve <i>a project of the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania</i>	40,000	
Belle Voci	3,000	
Brew House Arts	\$ 3,500	\$

ASSET	2024 OPERATING	2024 CAPITAL
Bulgarian Macedonian National Educational & Cultural Center	\$ 5,000	\$
Calliope: The Pittsburgh Folk Music Society	10,000	
Chamber Music Pittsburgh	20,000	
Chatham Baroque	22,000	
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh	600,000	
City of Asylum/Pittsburgh	45,000	
City Theatre Company	175,000	15,000
Confluence Ballet Co.	3,000	
Contemporary Craft	89,000	
Dreams of Hope	12,500	
Edgewood Symphony Orchestra	4,800	
Film Pittsburgh	9,000	
Focus on Renewal (Father Ryan Arts Center)	10,500	
Frick Environmental Center	25,000	
Front Porch Theatricals	15,000	
Gemini Theater Company	7,500	
Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council	102,000	
Hill Dance Academy Theatre	30,000	
Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh	20,000	
Kelly Strayhorn Theater	95,000	121,186
Latin American Cultural Center	3,000	
Manchester Craftsmen's Guild	475,000	135,000
Mattress Factory	95,000	
Mendelssohn Choir	13,000	
New Hazlett Theater	50,000	45,000
New Horizon Theater	40,000	
North Hills Art Center	15,000	
North Pittsburgh Symphonic Band	2,000	
PearlArts Movement and Sound	7,500	75,000
Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures	36,000	
Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre	195,000	150,000
Pittsburgh Botanic Garden	75,000	
Pittsburgh Camerata	4,000	
Pittsburgh Center for Arts and Media	35,000	
Pittsburgh CLO	225,000	800,000
Pittsburgh Community Broadcasting Corp. — WYEP	45,000	225,000
Pittsburgh Concert Chorale	5,000	
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust	2,200,000	220,000
Pittsburgh Girls Choir	\$ 2,500	\$

Grant Distribution (CONTINUED)

ASSET	2024 OPERATING	2024 CAPITAL
Pittsburgh Glass Center	\$ 85,000	\$ 125,000
Pittsburgh Musical Theater	80,000	50,000
Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble	7,500	
Pittsburgh Opera	225,000	153,789
Pittsburgh Philharmonic	4,900	
Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre	50,000	141,000
Pittsburgh Public Theater	230,000	185,300
Pittsburgh Regional Transit	3,000,000	
Pittsburgh Savoyards Inc.	2,750	
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra	1,750,000	200,000
Pittsburgh Youth Chorus	15,000	
Pittsburgh Youth Concert Orchestra	3,000	
Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra	20,000	
Prime Stage Theatre	17,000	
Quantum Theatre	48,000	
Radiant Hall Studios	5,000	
Renaissance City Choir	5,000	
River City Brass	115,000	
Riverlife	15,000	398,800
Rivers of Steel Heritage Corporation	50,000	
Saltworks Theatre Company	11,600	
Senator John Heinz History Center	800,000	600,000
Silver Eye Center for Photography	24,500	
SLB Radio Productions	12,000	
Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum	360,000	
South Hills Chorale	4,500	
South Park Theatre	11,000	
Sports and Exhibition Authority	800,000	
Squonk Opera Inc.	17,500	
Sweetwater Center for the Arts	52,500	
The Frick Pittsburgh	185,000	300,000
Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestras	22,500	
Tickets for Kids	40,000	
Tuesday Musical Club	4,900	
Union Project	20,000	
Upper St. Clair Twp. Boyce-Mayview Regional Park	265,000	250,000
Venture Outdoors	3,000	100,000
Western PA Conservancy	97,000	
WQED Pittsburgh	\$ 525,000	\$ 84,750
TOTAL 2024 OPERATING/CAPITAL	\$ 113,257,896	\$ 19,573,750

Grant Distribution (CONTINUED)

ASSET	2024 OPERATING	2024 CAPITAL
ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURES		
Connection, Accessibility & Inclusion Grants	\$ 642,015	\$
Access & Opportunity	10,750	
Partnerships & Initiatives Reimbursements	271,622	
Summer Staycation Marketing	8,144	
RAD Administration	\$ 1,091,141	\$
GRAND TOTAL 2024 EXPENDITURES	\$134,855,318	

Allegheny County Library Association

Andrew Bayne Memorial Library	\$ 93,852	Millvale Community Library	\$ 83,205
Andrew Carnegie Free Library	180,917	Monroeville Public Library	236,711
Avalon Public Library	93,813	Moon Township Public Library	149,391
Baldwin Borough Public Library	113,579	Mt. Lebanon Public Library	339,327
Bethel Park Public Library	201,301	North Versailles Public Library	68,285
Braddock Carnegie Library	203,835	Northern Tier Regional Library	161,965
Brentwood Library	121,623	Northland Public Library	536,425
Bridgeville Public Library	103,161	Oakmont Carnegie Library	133,609
C.C. Mellor Memorial Library	164,832	Penn Hills Library	156,843
Carnegie Free Library of Swissvale	151,232	Pleasant Hills Public Library	112,803
Carnegie Library of Homestead	162,861	Plum Borough Community Library	93,178
Carnegie Library of McKeesport	367,728	Robinson Township Library	110,021
Clairton Public Library	126,379	Scott Township Public Library	81,160
Community Library of Allegheny Valley	191,448	Sewickley Public Library	264,695
Community Library of Castle Shannon	83,252	Shaler North Hills Library	264,570
Cooper-Siegel Community Library	217,250	South Fayette Township Library	97,202
Coraopolis Memorial Library	83,920	South Park Township Library	131,893
Crafton Public Library	94,006	Springdale Free Public Library	76,862
Dormont Public Library	79,201	Upper St. Clair Township Library	169,808
F.O.R. Sto-Rox Library	191,088	Western Allegheny Community Library	133,063
Green Tree Public Library	108,008	Whitehall Public Library	124,133
Hampton Community Library	102,696	Wilkinsburg Public Library	246,445
Jefferson Hills Public Library	\$ 80,038	ACLA Admin. And Mobile Services	\$ 667,355
		TOTAL ACLA FUNDING	\$7,754,976

ACLA's funding distribution formula is evaluated annually by its member libraries, with final approval from the RAD Board.

Municipal Funding

In addition to enhancing Allegheny County’s rich quality of place through support of its regional assets, the additional one percent sales and use tax also supports local municipalities. Allegheny County receives 25 percent, and the remaining 25 percent is distributed among its 128 municipalities on a state-calculated formula weighted to help distressed communities. The RAD tax has provided Allegheny County and its municipalities with a steady and predictable tax stream since 1994, allowing local governments to shift the tax burden away from property taxes, permanently eliminate the personal property tax, and fund a wide variety of local services from public safety to road repairs.

[Learn more at radworkshere.org/municipal-support](https://radworkshere.org/municipal-support)

MUNICIPALITY	2024 FUNDING	MUNICIPALITY	2024 FUNDING
Aleppo Twp	\$ 43,750.95	Collier Twp	\$ 248,341.89
Allegheny County	64,139,719.31	Coraopolis Boro	371,580.38
Aspinwall Boro	105,168.95	Crafton Boro	302,396.25
Avalon Boro	280,258.64	Crescent Twp	81,622.33
Baldwin Boro	831,129.11	Dormont Boro	457,298.87
Baldwin Twp	95,646.05	Dravosburg Boro	87,495.08
Bell Acres Boro	45,009.37	Duquesne City	696,382.90
Bellevue Boro	468,713.65	East Deer Twp	45,263.66
Ben Avon Boro	61,254.09	East McKeesport Boro	119,858.25
Ben Avon Heights Boro	14,630.75	East Pittsburgh Boro	157,991.04
Bethel Park Boro	982,095.41	Edgewood Boro	128,604.33
Blawnox Boro	65,224.25	Edgeworth Boro	46,643.58
Brackenridge Boro	143,437.27	Elizabeth Boro	81,733.41
Braddock Boro	178,320.45	Elizabeth Twp	353,397.52
Braddock Hills Boro	84,548.52	Emsworth Boro	85,253.84
Bradford Woods Boro	26,644.41	Etna Boro	181,702.86
Brentwood Boro	576,001.88	Fawn Twp	49,199.60
Bridgeville Boro	207,680.68	Findlay Twp	181,706.47
Carnegie Boro	352,748.05	Forest Hills Boro	295,182.91
Castle Shannon Boro	414,691.58	Forward Twp	56,930.65
Chalfant Boro	37,445.44	Fox Chapel Boro	122,997.58
Cheswick Boro	57,179.63	Franklin Park Boro	256,581.25
Churchill Boro	133,665.84	Frazer Twp	14,975.13
Clairton City	\$ 478,276.97	Glassport Boro	\$ 368,261.18

MUNICIPALITY	2024 FUNDING	MUNICIPALITY	2024 FUNDING
Glenfield Boro	\$ 2,558.99	Pleasant Hills Boro	\$ 355,926.51
Green Tree Boro	197,576.50	Plum Boro	811,289.03
Hampton Twp	428,908.14	Port Vue Boro	202,957.34
Harmar Twp	61,171.22	Rankin Boro	188,830.66
Harrison Twp	333,638.54	Reserve Twp	108,748.15
Haysville Boro	2,321.89	Richland Twp	240,068.50
Heidelberg Boro	54,529.87	Robinson Twp	366,078.06
Homestead Boro	205,753.29	Ross Twp	760,314.51
Indiana Twp	234,065.29	Rosslyn Farms Boro	17,677.18
Ingram Boro	131,581.69	Scott Twp	614,560.69
Jefferson Boro	411,212.75	Sewickley Boro	142,237.27
Kennedy Twp	188,400.62	Sewickley Heights Boro	27,464.72
Kilbuck Twp	18,110.50	Sewickley Hills Boro	15,321.45
Leet Twp	65,189.34	Shaler Twp	667,734.87
Leetsdale Boro	59,333.71	Sharpsburg Boro	166,408.11
Liberty Boro	111,605.85	South Fayette Twp	579,901.71
Lincoln Boro	42,553.86	South Park Twp	345,682.25
Marshall Twp	168,871.49	South Versailles Twp	7,494.85
McCandless Twp	567,271.44	Springdale Boro	166,502.49
McKees Rocks Boro	414,199.87	Springdale Twp	52,087.26
McKeesport City	1,872,768.99	Stowe Twp	373,220.58
Millvale Boro	206,337.80	Swissvale Boro	434,508.83
Monroeville Boro	1,365,877.70	Tarentum Boro	194,786.94
Moon Twp	608,318.75	Thornburg Boro	16,385.92
Mt Lebanon Twp	1,289,359.37	Turtle Creek Boro	328,215.59
Mt Oliver Boro	347,398.57	Upper St Clair Twp	731,406.14
Munhall Boro	630,976.22	Verona Boro	117,630.11
Neville Twp	28,571.76	Versailles Boro	81,461.57
North Braddock Boro	300,583.19	Wall Boro	28,440.03
North Fayette Twp	396,235.61	West Deer Twp	277,078.51
North Versailles Twp	483,303.70	West Elizabeth Boro	13,315.30
Oakdale Boro	45,427.02	West Homestead Boro	91,443.05
Oakmont Boro	168,751.95	West Mifflin Boro	1,099,260.87
O'Hara Twp	229,785.77	West View Boro	263,525.20
Ohio Twp	159,249.55	Whitaker Boro	77,836.14
Osborne Boro	17,944.55	White Oak Boro	354,836.06
Penn Hills Twp	2,574,158.45	Whitehall Boro	626,008.62
Pennsbury Village Boro	24,344.35	Wilkins Twp	289,244.08
Pine Twp	323,634.81	Wilkinsburg Boro	1,079,372.59
Pitcairn Boro	195,197.93	Wilmerding Boro	\$ 148,673.67
Pittsburgh City	\$ 26,233,780.11		
		TOTAL	\$128,279,438.62

Finances & Accountability

The RAD Board administers revenue from one half of the proceeds from the 1% Allegheny County Sales and Use Tax and interest earned on investments. The tax proceeds are collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, which retains a fee for its collection and audit services. All tax receipts are deposited into and grants paid from the Sales Tax Revenue Fund. The grant budget adopted for 2024 includes the 1% statutory allocation for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County Parks.

All administrative expenses are paid from the General Fund. The law permits RAD no more than 1% of its new tax revenue for administrative purposes. In 2024, the amount transferred to the General Fund for administrative costs was 0.82% of total new revenue received.

RAD’s operating investments were maintained in money markets, direct obligations guaranteed by the United States of America, and commercial paper.

In addition to written applications and contracts, RAD requires audits and close-out reports, conducts its own public hearings and reviews, and attends asset meetings and performances. In 2024, RAD conducted over 80 reviews and visits, not including public application review sessions.

The following chart outlines the activity in RAD’s two operating funds on a cash basis during 2024. Independently audited financial statements on actual 2024 results along with budgets and monthly updates are posted at RADworkshere.org and are also available through the RAD office.

2024 tax revenue of \$128.3 million was 4.3% lower than 2023, a year that saw a corporation pay a one-time sales tax penalty to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. RAD used \$3.1 million of its sales tax reserve balance at December 31, 2024.

	SALES TAX REVENUE FUND	GENERAL FUND
Grant Stabilization Reserve balance, (for future grants and debt service) at 12/31/23	\$ 47,231,220	\$
Unreserved balance 12/31/23		627,218
Actual tax revenue (cash basis)	128,279,439	
Interest earnings	3,362,119	39,517
Allocations authorized	(133,764,176)	
Transfer from Sales Tax Revenue Fund		1,245,702
Miscellaneous revenue, lapses, and adjustments	(901,135)	
Net administrative expenses		(1,091,141)
Grant Stabilization Reserve balance at 12/31/24 net of receivables	44,207,467	
Unreserved balance 12/31/24	\$	\$ 821,296

Source: RAD Audit 2024

2024 BOARD

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Wall-to-Wall Studios

PHOTO CREDITS

INSIDE FRONT COVER <i>(Clockwise from top left)</i> Jaden Adams/Children's Museum of Pittsburgh Phil Johnson II/ Phipps Conservatory Scott Goldsmith Photography Allegheny County Parks National Aviary The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust Allegheny County Parks Ed Massery/ Pittsburgh Glass Center Allegheny RiverTrail Park Jaden Adams/Children's Museum of Pittsburgh Jereme Guidas/ Pittsburgh Regional Transit Nancy Andrews/ Annie O'Neill Photography	PAGE 14 Joey Kennedy/Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra PAGE 15 Matthew Murphy for MurphyMade Carnegie Science Center PAGE 16 Carnegie Science Center Heinz History Center Seth Culp-Ressler/ The Frick Pittsburgh Josh Milteer/Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra PAGE 17 Carnegie Museum of Natural History August Wilson House Joan Marcus/ Hamilton National Tour Ed Massery/ Pittsburgh Glass Center Porter Loves/ Film Pittsburgh Aviana Adams/ Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre
PAGE 5 Paul g. Wiegman/ Phipps Conservatory	PAGE 18 Paul Selvaggio/ Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium
PAGE 6 Nancy Andrews/ Annie O'Neill Photography	PAGE 19 Paul g. Wiegman/ Phipps Conservatory Gene Kornman/ National Aviary
PAGE 7 C.C. Mellor Memorial Library R3A Architecture for Northland Public Library Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh	PAGE 21 Jaden Adams/Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
PAGE 9 Greg Sciulli/ Andrew Carnegie Free Library	PAGE 22 Kristi Jan Hoover Darin DiNapoli/Riverlife
PAGE 10 Allegheny County Parks	PAGE 23 Jereme Guidas/ Pittsburgh Regional Transit
PAGE 11 Scott Goldsmith Photography	PAGE 25 Heinz History Center Richard Kelly/ Attack Theatre
PAGE 12 Allegheny County Parks	
PAGE 13 Sue Lucas/CitiParks Allegheny County Parks	

Facts & statistics in this report were provided by organizations in their annual close-out reports.



Allegheny Regional Asset District

Koppers Building | 436 Seventh Ave. | Suite 2201
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

RADworkshere.org

Recommendation to Increase Administrative Funding for the ECHO Program

Overview:

The Volusia County Environmental, Cultural, Historical, and Outdoor (ECHO) program is a highly valued community investment initiative that has delivered significant public benefit for more than two decades. Currently, the program operates with administrative costs at approximately 3% of total fund revenue. According to the FY2023 internal audit, the operational oversight of the Direct County Expenditures (DCE) increased administrative costs to roughly 5% of total revenue.

While this reflects prudent fiscal management, it falls well below national best practices for sustainable grant program administration, particularly for initiatives managing complex capital projects and long-term public assets.

To strengthen ECHO's ability to ensure compliance, transparency, and the delivery of equitable and sustainable impact across Volusia County, we recommend increasing the program's administrative allocation to 10% of total fund revenue. This is not merely an increase in overhead; it is a strategic investment in program infrastructure, staffing capacity, and operational resilience. Aligning ECHO's administrative resources with peer programs and federal benchmarks will help safeguard public funds and maximize community benefits through 2040 and beyond.

Rationale:

Audit Findings Underscore Under-Resourced Operations

The FY2023 Volusia County internal audit recommended the creation of a DCE Handbook to formalize procedures, highlighting a current shortfall in administrative structure and capacity. Without additional investment, ECHO risks:

- Compliance gaps
- Procedural inconsistencies
- Limited capacity to manage increased project volume and complexity

Elevating the administrative allocation enables the proactive adoption of audit recommendations, including the use of enhanced grant management tools, formalized procedures, and more consistent oversight.

In addition, the Volusia County ECHO Vision 2040 Strategic Plan is expected to introduce new strategies, initiatives, and performance standards that will increase the administrative responsibilities of the program. As the scope of work expands, with more complex projects, community engagement expectations, and data tracking requirements, so too will the demand on staff time, systems, and operational oversight. Increasing the administrative allocation now will provide the necessary foundation to successfully implement the forthcoming strategic plan and meet its long-term goals.

Federal, State, and Local Benchmarks Support 10%+ Admin Rates

Numerous benchmarks from federal, state, and local governments, as well as the broader nonprofit sector, consistently support an administrative allocation of 8-15%, with 10% being a frequently accepted standard, especially for public capital grant programs.

Program/Standard	Admin %	Notes	Source
Volusia ECHO (FY 2023 Audit)	~3% (admin) / ~5% (DCE)	Audit flagged the need for a DCE Handbook and updated tracking systems, indicating under-resourced administrative capacity.	Volusia ECHO
City of South Daytona (ECHO Grantee Practice)	10%	Volusia County's practice of withholding 10% of ECHO grant funds until final closeout for grantees like South Daytona implicitly recognizes and supports necessary administrative overhead at the project level.	Florida Statute § 394.6591
Federal Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200.414(f))	Up to 15% (de minimis)	The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) updated its "de minimis" indirect cost rate to up to 15% in 2024 (from	2 CFR 200.414 -- Indirect costs. - eCFR. Sneak Preview: 2024 Uniform Guidance Raises De

		10%), explicitly allowing entities without a negotiated rate to recover these costs without extensive justification.	Minimis Rate - Thompson Grants.
Federal Program Caps (e.g., NTIA, HUD NSP, WIOA)	Up to 10%	Many federal competitive grant programs, including the NTIA Digital Equity Program, HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, commonly cap administrative costs at 10% of the total award.	NTIA Competitive Grant Program Digital Equity Act of 2021 Competitive Grant Program Applicant Training Part 5 What percentage of an NSP award can be used for administration costs? - HUD Exchange. 20 CFR § 683.205
HUD CDBG (Capital/Community Dev.)	Up to 20%	The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which funds complex capital and community development projects, explicitly allows up to 20% for planning and administration, recognizing the intensive oversight required.	HUD's Administration and Planning Activities in Support of CDBG-DR and MIT ICF
National Nonprofits / Rating Bodies (e.g., Charity Navigator, Blackbaud)	10–15% (healthy & standard)	Nonprofit leaders and rating bodies advocate that adequate investment in	Understanding Nonprofit Overhead: Strategies for Transparency and

		operations (10-15%) is essential for sustainability and impact, dispelling the "overhead myth".	Efficiency in 2025 – Blackbaud National Council of Nonprofits: Investing for Impact: Indirect Costs are Essential for Success
Leading Foundations (MacArthur, RWJF)	15–30%	Forward-thinking foundations have increased allowed indirect rates, recognizing the actual cost structures of their grantees and the need to fund robust administrative infrastructure for program success.	Indirect Cost Policy - MacArthur Foundation Indirect Cost Rate Policy - RWJF
GFOA / MRSC (Local Government Best Practices)	8–15% (full-cost accounting)	Government finance best practices emphasize that local governments routinely allocate 8-15% for indirect costs to reflect the full cost of service delivery, including shared central services like HR, IT, and finance.	Florida Statute § 290.047 Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government - Washington State Office of Financial Management Measuring the Full Cost of Government Service - GFOA

These precedents establish 10% as both a conservative and defensible threshold, especially for public capital grant programs like ECHO.

Capital Projects Require Higher Oversight and Administrative Investment

Unlike social service grants, ECHO projects involve:

- Multi-year construction timelines

- Contractor and site coordination
- Architectural plan review and permitting
- Environmental and legal compliance
- Performance tracking and fiscal closeout

These functions are administratively intense and require professional staff, systems, and technical support. Underinvesting in operations constrains project execution, slows timelines, and elevates risk.

Investing in Admin Capacity Improves Long-Term Impact

Public and philanthropic sectors increasingly recognize that underfunded “overhead” leads to program failure, not efficiency. Leading funders such as the MacArthur Foundation and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have raised their indirect cost allowances to 20-29% based on real-world nonprofit data. Similarly, national nonprofits like Families in Schools now allocate 10% for indirect costs, citing improved compliance, staff retention, and mission performance.

Recommendation Messaging:

Volusia ECHO has consistently delivered public value with strong fiscal stewardship. However, operating with administrative spending at approximately 3% and direct operational expenditures at roughly 5%, per the FY 2023 audit, places the program well below industry norms for public grant administration. For a capital grant program of this scale and complexity, such low investment in oversight and capacity is not sustainable.

Elevating ECHO’s administrative allocation to 10% of total revenue will directly address audit findings, enhance compliance and transparency, and ensure the program is positioned for long-term success. This increase is consistent with federal de minimis cost rate guidance and aligns with the allocation practices of peer public-sector programs, which typically dedicate 10% of their revenue to administration.

This is not merely an increase in overhead; it is a strategic investment in professional capacity, operational resilience, and the sustained delivery of equitable community impact across Volusia County.

Next Steps:

1. Formalize and document a 10% administrative allocation for ECHO.
2. Develop and implement the DCE Handbook as recommended in the FY 2023 audit.
3. Invest in upgraded tools and staffing to enhance compliance, monitoring, and service delivery.

4. Educate grant partners and stakeholders about the rationale, citing peer standards and improved oversight.
5. Monitor and evaluate the return on administrative investment, adjusting as needed.