



## MARION NONPROFIT SECTOR RELIEF PLAN

### SUMMARY

The Community Foundation for Ocala/Marion County will manage a pool of grant funds from the most recent federal “American Rescue Plan” passed by Congress and signed by the president. Our Community Foundation’s Nonprofit Relief Plan is designed to mitigate the continued impact of COVID-19 on Marion County nonprofit organizations, helping them weather further uncertainty through building more capacity for Marion County’s most vulnerable residents and designating projects that are specifically critical to rebuilding our local economy that align with both the intent of the federal legislation and Marion County’s key priorities for community services.

### PROPOSED PROGRAMS

The Community Foundation will manage the following grant programs for Marion County nonprofits, including promoting the programs, providing technical assistance to applicants, developing the application process, coordinating application review, administering funding, overseeing reporting, tracking outcomes for report to the County, and submitting an impact evaluation at the commencement of the expenditures’ deadline:

***Critical Services Grants:*** Grants will help Marion County nonprofits that provide critical services, (including but not limited to affordable housing, homelessness, special needs, mental health, elderly, veterans, and youth) navigate lingering COVID-19 uncertainty so that they can continue to serve and significantly impact our Marion County community in a positive manner. Nonprofits will complete an application process documenting their history of service to the community and the continued negative effects of COVID-19 on funding available for operations.

***Investment in Community Infrastructure Grants:*** Grants will be designated specifically to infrastructure projects that align with U.S. Treasury guidance related to water, sewer, broadband, etc., as an investment for strengthening nonprofit capacity and economic sustainability.

***Operations Response Grants:*** Grants will help to specifically address offsetting costs associated with pandemic protocols such as social distancing guidelines and other modifications that impact nonprofit delivery of services. Grants will be available, based on the nonprofit’s pre-COVID operating budget size and prior CARES project funding that may cover operating expenses such as rent, utilities, and salaries. Other examples include costs for COVID-related public health/emergency services, volunteer vacancy needs that

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must be occupied by staff, and technology required during the transition for providing services online and under reconstructed settings.

**Sustainability & Technical Assistance:** Understanding the issue of sustainability is even more significant from the effects of COVID-19, the following will be offered:

- A series of webinars, all available free of charge to Marion County nonprofits. Experts will present on critical topics related to providing services and maintaining financial sustainability in a post-COVID era. In addition, scholarships geared towards training in nonprofit management and leadership in governance and other related crucial areas will be included as well.
- An impact assessment centered on sustainability, in partnership through the University of Florida's Survey Research Center which specializes in program evaluations. Ultimately, a comprehensive report will be generated for Marion County that will help identify successes and gaps for nonprofit participants moving forward in a post-COVID world.

## FUNDING BREAKDOWN

<b>MARION COUNTY NONPROFIT RELIEF PLAN</b>		<b>COST</b>
Grant Programs		
	Critical Services	Up to \$4,000,000
	Investment in Community Infrastructure	Up to \$2,152,000
	Operations Response	Up to \$1,500,000
Sustainability & Technical Assistance		
	Management/Leadership Scholarships & Post-COVID Realities Webinar Series	Up to \$100,000
	Impact Assessment & Sustainability Support	Up to \$60,000
Service Fee (7%)		Up to \$588,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDING</b>		Up to \$8,400,000

*\*Once U.S. Department of Treasury guidelines are published and released, budgetary figures may shift.*

## FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

As the applications are approved, the Foundation will request transfer of funds from the County, which will include the funding amounts and the related administrative fee.

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## DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

**Grant Programs:** The Community Foundation will market the grant programs and provide information and assistance on the application via a free webinar, also archived on the Community Foundation's website and YouTube channel, as well as a FAQ webpage and 1:1 consultation by phone or email.

**Qualifications:** Nonprofit organizations will be eligible for the grant programs if they

- Provide services to Marion County residents
- Are a 501c3 nonprofit with at least a two-year history of providing services
- Are in good standing and up to date with required filings with the State of Florida and the IRS
- Have suffered losses in fundraising or earned income revenue due to COVID-19, or have increased program delivery expenses due to COVID-19

**Application Process:** Applicants will submit financial documentation including but not limited to audits, profit and loss statements, and balance sheets for the past two years. They will be required to detail the financial impact of COVID-19 on the organization, any changes necessary in how services are provided, and the plans for the use of grant funds. If salary related, applicants for grant programs may also be required to submit FY' 21 budgets and payroll reports (941s).

The Community Foundation will review applications to ensure they are complete, and then distribute them similar to the CARES review process for scoring based on a rubric created by the Community Foundation. Following review and discussion of applications, the Community Foundation will forward recommendations to the County for final approval.

### **Reporting Process:**

The Community Foundation will oversee reporting from grantees and communicate the program's impact back to Marion County once all funding has been utilized. As part of the reporting process, some grantees may be asked to develop a fund development or business plan that responds to sustainability in a post-COVID environment.

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July 30, 2021

Dear Mr. Bouyounes,

Investing significantly in our community's nonprofit organizations is an investment in our community's residents. On behalf of our board members and the nonprofit members of your local Community Foundation, we sincerely appreciate your inclusion of nonprofit relief in the original American Rescue Plan federal relief proposal that you submitted to the County Commission on June 1 this year. The legislation's intended purpose allows recipient counties "**considerable flexibility**" in providing "assistance to households, small businesses, and **nonprofits**, or to aid impacted industries" in order to "meet the varied needs of their communities" (*U.S. Treasury Guidance*, p. 7; 78). The federal government showed tremendous trust that local governments closest to the people and their problems are best positioned to decide the best ways to spend their allocated resources to meet local needs.

Nonprofits are front-line experts and still stand ready to partner with Marion County in order to provide community solutions. Local area nonprofits reach deeply into our community with food distribution, outreach to the most despondent and disparate populations, support for people with disabilities, enrichment and educational opportunities for children, quality health care, and more. They are significant employers and economic drivers – representing **5,029 employees in Marion County alone, not to mention over 100,000 persons served**. Just in our North Central Florida region, the **nonprofit sector brings in over \$5.25B of revenue to the economy** (*Florida Nonprofit Alliance Data Dashboard*).

Despite being revenue generators, nonprofits also have lost significantly due to the pandemic and have faced significant increases in costs as a result of increased demand for services. Even before the pandemic hit, during 2011-2018, Marion County nonprofits had taken a 27.6% hit in charitable giving despite its population growth (*IRS Business Master File, August 2019*). Yet, they still face the same pressures as other businesses of meeting payroll, recruiting and retaining staff, managing facilities, and maintaining safety for employees and clients.

Since the June 1 County Commission meeting, our Foundation surveyed local area nonprofits to assess the level of loss due to COVID, how it has impacted them, and the specific projects needed to help regain function and address increased demand of clientele. The results were astonishing with 50 nonprofit respondents who reported **a need for over \$13.2M in items to help cover critical staff, operating expenses, mortgage/rent, infrastructure, and expanded services directly related to COVID19**.



**Other local governments throughout Florida** - Collier County, Gadsden County, Leon County/Tallahassee, and Winter Park - have exercised their own flexibility in committed assistance towards eligible nonprofits according in devolved ability to transfer funding for such (*U.S. Treasury Guidance*, p. 105). Gadsden County, for example, permits nonprofits to seek assistance if they can demonstrate COVID impacted the delivery of goods, services, or programming. This includes nonprofits that provide medical, food, and educational/childcare services as well as faith-based entities hit with negative financial impacts connected to the pandemic (*Tallahassee Democrat*, 6/15/2021).

In addition, City of Gainesville recently voted to exercise their own flexibility using federal relief funds for a much-needed community grocery store in their lower-income, heavily minority Eastside (*WCJB News*, 7/29/2021). A new national report, *Strengthening State and Local Economies in Partnership with Nonprofits*, further asserts that nonprofits are perfectly positioned to maximize public benefits flowing from the American Rescue Plan due to their deep knowledge of community needs, reach, and existing relationships, particularly in low-income and underserved or hard-to-reach populations (<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/trends-policy-issues/strengthening-state-and-local-economies-partnership-nonprofits>). County governments are allowed to allocate relief for nonprofits to provide services that respond to the “negative economic impacts of the pandemic” and “Treasury **encourages** recipients to provide assistance to those households, businesses, and **non-profits** in communities most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic” (*U.S. Treasury Guidance*, p. 11; 141).

Nonprofits must remain at the forefront of Marion County’s investment priorities. The pressure on our area’s local nonprofits has been substantial when considering the millions that have been lost and even more that they must make up for and cover new services in order to meet client demand. **On behalf of all our nonprofit partners, we urge you to retain and hold firm on the initial level of relief support as you had proposed to the County Commission on June 1, 2021.**

Providing direct relief to nonprofits to pay bills, hire more staff, and ramp up services that will serve our community members ensures that our community is prepared to rebuild and thrive as we emerge from the pandemic. Investing in our community’s nonprofits and the residents they serve is a sound investment as partnership with and direct relief funds for nonprofits in our community will help deliver the economic recovery that Marion County citizens need.

Our community not only needs our nonprofits, but also cherishes them. Nonprofits are the vehicles through which Marion County residents care for one another. Try to imagine our community without nonprofits. And then imagine what our community could be if we could put nonprofits on course to thrive as an extended partner with a significant investment of American Rescue Plan funds. **All Marion County citizens benefit from a thriving nonprofit sector, and we are stronger when we invest together.**

If we can assist with any further information that will help in recovery and greater impact for the public good, please let us know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren B. Deiorio".

Lauren B. Deiorio  
Executive Director/President  
Community Foundation for Ocala/Marion County