



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2025-2026

LFIR # 3176

1. **Project Title**
2. **Senate Sponsor**
3. **Date of Request**

4. Project/Program Description

The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Lion's Camp Education Center project is a transformative initiative that will significantly enhance educational opportunities in North Florida. By relocating and expanding the education campus, we aim to foster lifelong learning, equip students with essential 21st-century skills, and promote STEAM education. This project will have a tremendous impact in the region by increasing access to quality education, supporting economic development, and enhancing the state's educational landscape.

5. **State Agency to receive requested funds**
- State Agency contacted?**

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Type of Funding	Amount
Operating	0
Fixed Capital Outlay	610,000
Total State Funds Requested	610,000

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	610,000	3%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	19,390,000	97%
Other	0	0%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2025-2026	20,000,000	100%

8. **Has this project previously received state funding?**
- If yes, provide the most recent instance:**

Fiscal Year (YYYY-YY)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		

9. **Is future-year funding likely to be requested?**
- a. **If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.**
- b. **Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.**
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Complete questions 10 and 11 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects



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10. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

- Planning
 Design
 Construction
 N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)? No

c. What is the estimated start date of construction? 2/1/2026

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction? 12/1/2028

e. What funding stream will be used for ongoing operations and maintenance of the project?

City of Jacksonville matching funding and private funding.

11. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

The owner of the Zoo is the City of Jacksonville. The entity receiving funding to implement the improvements is the Jacksonville Zoological Society Inc., which has a long-term contractual relationship with the City to manage the Zoo and deliver infrastructure investments.

12. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits		0
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Operational Costs		
Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering	Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens Lion's Camp Education Center. Funds will support the renovation and construction of the Lion Camp Education Center to expand and modernize the existing facility.	610,000
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		610,000

13. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?

The requested funds will support the renovation and construction of the Lion Camp Education Center to expand and modernize the existing facility of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens' 26,000 sq. ft. entry facility into the Lion Camp Education Center. This project will enhance educational access for homeschoolers and children with disabilities, promote community engagement, and contribute to regional economic development. The renovated space will feature flexible classrooms, interactive exhibits, and a tropical lobby habitat, with a focus on expanding STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education. Additionally, the center will bolster workforce development and tourism by growing the zoo's educational programs, which currently serve over 50,000 students annually.



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b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

To achieve the intended goals, the project will include site preparation, construction of the education center, and installation of essential utilities. Once complete, the center will provide statewide educational programs, hands-on science-based workshops, and career-focused events that promote workforce development, lifelong learning, and community engagement. These activities will give students and adults the opportunity to gain valuable skills in STEAM fields, with a particular emphasis on science and technology. The center will also serve as a model for similar initiatives across Florida, driving economic growth, tourism, and expanding educational opportunities statewide.

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

The appropriation project will provide direct services through educational programs, hands-on workshops, and community events, all supported by the newly renovated and constructed facility. These services will increase access to lifelong learning, offer career development opportunities, and foster community engagement. By focusing on STEAM education and workforce readiness, the project will enhance residents' quality of life and contribute to regional growth and opportunity.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

The project will serve residents and visitors from Duval County and surrounding areas. The target populations include K-12 students, higher education institutions, economically disadvantaged individuals, seniors, and people with physical disabilities. The Zoo currently serves approximately 900,000 visitors annually, with numbers approaching pre-COVID levels of 1 million. The expanded education center will increase access to educational programs and community engagement, reaching even more individuals across these groups.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?

The expected benefits of this project include more community engagement, better access to educational resources, and an overall improvement in residents' quality of life. The outcomes will be measured by tracking attendance and program participation, as well as collecting feedback through surveys and community forums to evaluate satisfaction and long-term impact.

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for in the contract?

Reversion of funds.

14. Is this project related to mitigation, response, or recovery from a natural disaster? No

a. If Yes, what phase best describes the project?

- Mitigation (reducing or eliminating potential loss of life or property)
- Response (addressing the immediate and short-term effects of a natural disaster)
- Recovery (assisting communities return to normal operations, including rebuilding damaged infrastructure)

b. Name of the natural disaster (or Executive Order # for events not under a federal declaration):

15. Has the entity applied for or received federal assistance for this project?

- Yes, Applied
- Yes, Received
- No



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No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, provide the FEMA project worksheet ID#:

b. Provide the total project cost listed on the FEMA project worksheet:

16. Has the entity applied for or received state assistance for this project (other than this request)?

Yes, Applied

Yes, Received

No

No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, specify the program and state agency (ex. Local Government Emergency Bridge Loan, Department of Commerce):

17. Requester Contact Information

a. First Name **Last Name**

b. Organization

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number **Ext.**

18. Recipient Contact Information

a. Organization

b. Municipality and County

c. Organization Type

- For Profit Entity
- Non Profit 501(c)(3)
- Non Profit 501(c)(4)
- Local Entity
- University or College
- Other (please specify)

d. First Name **Last Name**



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e. E-mail Address

f. Phone Number Ext.

19. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. Name

b. Firm Name

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number

The information provided will be posted to the Florida Senate website for public viewing if sponsored by a Senator.