Summer Camps for Children with Special Needs
Request for Applications

OVERVIEW:

The Children's Services Council of Leon County (CSC Leon) proposes a short-term, mini-funding cycle to support nonprofit organizations that provide inclusive and enriching summer camp experiences for children with special needs. If approved, an organization may be awarded up to $75,000 in funding for a period of four months (May 1 – August 30). These funds are to be used exclusively to provide an eligible child with financial support (scholarship) to attend camp for up to two weeks during the 2024 summer.

INVESTMENT RATIONALE:

An estimated 1 in 4 children in Leon County has special needs or disabilities, to include: autism and related disorders, cerebral palsy, intellectual or physical disabilities, Down's syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, Phelan Mcdermid syndrome or spina bifida. Summer camp experiences for this group of children offer a unique opportunity for growth, development, inclusion, and fun. They provide a platform for children to explore their interests, build relationships, and develop skills in a supportive and inclusive setting. Additionally, these experiences can have a lasting positive impact on their overall well-being and pave a way for a more inclusive and accepting society. Specialty summer camps also provide much-needed respite for families and caregivers of children with special needs by allowing them to have some time for themselves, attend to other responsibilities, or simply recharge. The peace of mind that families and caregivers can have from knowing their child is in a safe and supportive environment leads to rejuvenation and reduced stress.

Despite the benefits, many children with special needs in Leon Couty do not have access to these camp experiences due to limited availability or cost-prohibitive expense.

CSC Leon is seeking to provide funds to organizations dedicated to creating a safe and engaging environment where children with special needs can participate in a range of activities, such as arts and crafts, sports, outdoor adventures, and educational workshops. This funding opportunity aims to empower organizations to continue or expand their summer camp programs for children with special needs, thereby fostering their social, emotional, and cognitive growth. To be eligible, organizations must demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and provide detailed plans for accommodating the specific needs of the children they serve.

Also, applicants should outline how the funding will be used to enhance the camp experience and ensure the well-being and development of the participants.

ELIGIBILITY:
To be eligible for this funding opportunity, the applicant must:
1. Be legally authorized to conduct business in the State of Florida.
2. Be a 501(c)(3) nonprofit as determined by the IRS (IRS Nonprofit Status Determination Letter must be provided).
3. Attest/demonstrate that the **majority** of children served by the program are considered "special needs."
4. Ensure scholarship recipients are Leon County residents.
5. Submit a detailed application identifying how many unduplicated children will receive scholarships from the funds. Note: an eligible child can only be awarded one (1) scholarship to a single camp during the four-month period.

APPLICATION PROCESS:
CSC Leon staff will review applications for (1) eligibility to receive funding, (2) alignment with funding priorities, and (3) amount of funding requested. All eligible applications will be presented to the Council for final review and approval. Approved applications will be notified via email. Funds will be dispersed after the approved applicant completes a funding agreement specifying exact data collection and reporting expectations.

All funding must be spent within four (4) months following the award.

TIMELINE:
- Release Funding Opportunity: March 12, 2024
- Applications Due: April 5, 2024
- Council Selects Recipients: April 18, 2024
- Funds Dispersed: May 15, 2024
- Final Reports Due: August 30, 2024

TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDING: $375,000