



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2026-2027

LFIR # 1116

1. Project Title Easterseals Better Together-Improving Autism and Disability Services Statewide Through Collaboration

2. Senate Sponsor Jim Boyd

3. Date of Request 11/13/2025

4. Project/Program Description

The four Easterseals affiliates across Florida are dedicated to sharing, scaling, and expanding innovative programs and proven successes. Our efforts center on key priorities such as early autism diagnosis and intervention, comprehensive behavioral and mental health services, supported employment and job training, and intensive education and therapy programs. We also share technological advancements that enhance the diagnosis and treatment of autism and related disabilities. By leveraging our collective outcomes, we work to establish and strengthen best practices in autism and disability services statewide.

5. State Agency to receive requested funds Agency for Persons with Disabilities

State Agency contacted? Yes

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Type of Funding	Amount
Operating	7,000,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
Total State Funds Requested	7,000,000

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	7,000,000	44%
Matching Funds		
Federal	1,000,000	6%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	235,584	1%
Other	7,803,237	49%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2026-2027	16,038,821	100%

8. Has this project previously received state funding? Yes

If yes, provide the most recent instance:

Fiscal Year (yyyy-yy)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		
2025-26	0	5,000,000	241A	No

9. Is future-year funding likely to be requested? Yes

a. If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year. 7,000,000

b. Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.

Philanthropy and fees for service.



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Complete questions 10 and 11 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

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)?

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

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

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.

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	Administrative Cost Allocation	300,000
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Operational Costs		
Salary and Benefits	Salaries/Wages; Benefits	2,614,000
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Program Supplies: Training, Rent, Supplies, Travel, Diagnostic Supplies, Educational Supplies, Continuing Education, IT, Telephone/Utilities, Equipment lease/purchase, Maintenance/Repairs, Postage, Bank Fees, Licensure Fees, Subscriptions, Misc.	273,000
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	Professional Fees (Equine Specialists in Mental Health and Learning, PLAY home consultants, Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructors, fourth year clinical psychologist interns, mental health clinicians, pediatrician, virtual reality consultant) Subcontracted affiliates.	3,813,000
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering		0
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		7,000,000

13. Program Performance

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



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Easterseals affiliates across Florida are dedicated to sharing, scaling, and expanding innovative programs and proven successes in both urban and rural communities. Our efforts focus on critical areas such as early autism diagnosis and intervention, comprehensive behavioral and mental health services, psychological and psychiatric evaluations, supported employment training, and intensive education and therapy programs. Through a strengthened statewide network and improved collective outcomes, we aim to advance best practices in diagnostics, education, specialized therapies, life skills, and employment—empowering individuals with autism and related disabilities to reach their full potential.

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

Each affiliate has a successful client approach appropriate for scaling across affiliates via direct service delivery, virtual services, consultation, technical assistance training, and community education. Together, affiliates will identify capacity gaps and expand local access to diagnostics, early intervention, clinical therapies, supported workforce training, intensive specialized education, and comprehensive behavioral health/mental health services. Easterseals will provide comprehensive family support services including case management and post-diagnostic wrap around services. We will work together with universities and colleges throughout the state to support doctoral psychology programs and therapy programs, providing externships for their students in autism and related disability services.

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

Autism Early Interventions (Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, Play Project, Autism Navigator)
Behavioral Health-Psychology, Psychiatry for children with autism and other disabilities
Diagnostics using eye gaze technology
Therapies-Speech, Occupational, Physical, Behavioral, Equine
STRIVE - vocational skills towards industry-recognized certifications in hospitality and healthcare
Life skills training focusing on employment goals and workforce readiness
Virtual Reality - digital simulation training in social skills and simulated work environments
K-12 specialized education programs
Case management and family support

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

Each Florida Easterseals' target populations are (1) children and adults with autism and other developmental disabilities that reside in Florida, as well as their families/caregivers, (2) Local businesses and industries who rely on a qualified, dependable workforce, and (3) Members of the local community who benefit from an inclusive and diverse society. Up to 8000+ children and adults with autism and/or related disabilities are expected to be served directly through our collaborative efforts.

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

More children and adults with autism and related disabilities will benefit by our collective sharing of innovative programming in key areas that impact independence and early developmental skills (1) autism early diagnosis and cost-effective interventions that result in increased functional levels, (2) vocational skills training that respects the person's own choices and leads to industry-recognized certifications for increased independence and employability, (3) employment skills to improve management/communication, financial/service, self management adaptive skills; (4) comprehensive behavioral/mental health therapeutic and educational services that reduce maladaptive behaviors, learning disabilities and improve overall independence and self-esteem. In-depth performance measures across multiple programs will include data collection/analysis, diagnostic testing, treatment plans, job placements, retention, skills improvement, case management notes, and improved economic status.

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?

Since we are proposing a direct services contract, we would expect not to be paid until the monthly reporting of performance levels met the contract expectation.

14. Is this project related to mitigation, response, or recovery from a natural disaster?

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

- ☐ Mitigation (reducing or eliminating potential loss of life or property)



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- ☐ 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
- ☐ 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



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- ☐ 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

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.