



# The Florida Senate

## Local Funding Initiative Request

### Fiscal Year 2026-2027

LFIR # 1588

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

4. Project/Program Description

This project expands access to high-quality civic literacy and speech and debate programs, addressing geographic gaps that limit opportunities for many Florida students. By making these programs available statewide, the initiative equips K–20 students with essential life skills, including confidence, critical thinking, and effective communication. The program strengthens civil discourse, promotes a deeper understanding of America's founding principles, and reinforces civic pride and patriotism. Additionally, participation in structured speech and debate activities has been shown to improve Social Studies, English Language Arts (ELA), and English Language Proficiency (ELP) outcomes. This appropriation will ensure that students across Florida—regardless of location—benefit from these transformative academic and civic-learning opportunities.

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

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

Type of Funding	Amount
Operating	2,400,000
Fixed Capital Outlay	0
<b>Total State Funds Requested</b>	<b>2,400,000</b>

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)	2,400,000	100%
<b>Matching Funds</b>		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	0	0%
<b>Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2026-2027</b>	<b>2,400,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

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		
2025-26	0	2,400,000	106	No

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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There is no alternative funding source capable of replacing state support. While we secure in-kind donations to offset costs, these contributions cannot sustain a statewide program serving students across all 67 school districts. Without state funding, this nationally recognized initiative would not be able to continue.

## 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.

N/A

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

Spending Category	Description	Amount
<b>Administrative Costs:</b>		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits	FDI prioritizes fiscal responsibility and relies heavily on dedicated unpaid volunteers, emphasizing operational efficiency. However, there are necessary administrative expenses, which the President, who serves as both the project leader and manager, oversees diligently. This underscores our commitment to advancing our mission while maintaining prudent stewardship of resources.	200,008
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other	Website maintenance, payroll processing, rent, office maintenance, utilities, bank fees, technology, hardware and software licenses, audio/visual supplies, office supplies, memberships, dues, insurance, tournament operations, marketing, printing, postage, medals, trophies, and travel (both in state and out of state).	400,000
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	This line item is crucial for securing the services of our Accountant, Bookkeeper, and Auditor. It's important to highlight that these positions are contractual services, devoid of staff employment benefits, reflecting our commitment to prudent financial stewardship.	40,000
<b>Operational Costs</b>		
Salary and Benefits	FDI prioritizes fiscal responsibility and relies on unpaid volunteers, but sustaining our impact requires key roles: Dir. of Educational Programs, Program Manager, and Exec. Assistant/Dir. of Operations. This team ensures program execution, support, and engagement, maximizing opportunities for Florida students while maintaining prudent stewardship.	300,000



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Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/ Other	This line item covers programmatic/operational expenses encompassing tournament ops & travel costs. It also facilitates essential initiatives like DebateEd 101/201 for FL educators, ProCamps, Summer Camps, Civics Immersion Experience, FDI Fellows Program, Summer Debate Coach Learning Retreats, Elementary Program, American Dream Debate, Speech Contests, Turning Tides-DJJ & Salute to Service.	659,992
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study	This line item is dedicated to providing invaluable support to teachers, coaches and volunteers across the state as they guide students in civics, speech, and debate programming. Additionally, this line item is crucial for securing the services of our Development, Grants Management, Public Relations, Creative, Programs, Alumni Rel. Consultants, and Board Appointed Sr. Advisor. These positions are contractual, devoid of staff employment benefits.	800,000
<b>Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:</b>		
Construction/Renovation/Land/ Planning Engineering		0
<b>Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)</b>		<b>2,400,000</b>

### 13. Program Performance

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

The requested funds will expand access to high-quality civic literacy and speech and debate programs across Florida, eliminating the geographic gaps that prevent students in many regions from participating. This investment will equip K–20 students with essential life skills, confidence, critical thinking, and effective communication, while promoting civil discourse, patriotism, and a deeper understanding of our founding principles. The initiative also strengthens academic outcomes, improving Social Studies, ELA, and ELP performance in participating districts.

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

The requested funds will support the Florida Debate Initiative's statewide civic literacy and speech and debate programs across all 67 school districts, including American Dream Debates for ESOL students, the Veterans Day Speech Contest, Salute to Service, ProCamp for varsity competitors, DebatEd 101 and 201 for new and advanced coaches, Middle School Camp, High School Camp, the Summer Coach Retreat, the Civics Immersion trip to Washington, D.C., and the FDI Fellows college internship program. These funds will allow FDI to run tournaments, train and support coaches, expand access in rural and high-need areas, provide rehabilitation-focused programming in DJJ facilities, and deliver the communication, leadership, and civic learning experiences that improve academic outcomes and ensure equitable opportunities for students statewide.

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

The project will provide students across Florida with direct access to speech and debate instruction, civic literacy education, competitive debate opportunities, debate camps, leadership and civics immersion experiences, coach and teacher training, and rehabilitative debate programming for youth in DJJ facilities. These services give students essential skills in communication, critical thinking, and civic engagement, and ensure that youth in all 67 school districts, including ESOL, rural, high-need, and justice-involved students, receive meaningful educational enrichment and academic support.

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

The target population includes K–20 students across all 67 Florida school districts—approximately 2.8 million students, each of whom has access to the Florida Debate Initiative's statewide programs and services. Direct participants include ESOL students, rural and high-need communities, middle and high school speech and debate students, participants in programs such as American Dream Debates, the Veterans Day Speech Contest, Salute to Service, ProCamp, and debate camps, as well as novice and advanced coaches and justice-involved youth in DJJ facilities. Across all programs, the project is expected to directly serve more than 25,000 students and over 1,500 educators annually, with statewide access available to all.

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



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The project will improve civic literacy, communication skills, critical thinking, and academic performance for students across all 67 districts, while expanding access to high-quality speech and debate programs for ESOL students, rural and high-need communities, and justice-involved youth. Outcomes will be measured through student participation data, academic indicators, pre- and post-assessments, coach evaluations, DJJ behavioral measures, and statewide access tracking. The assessment process will be established by the FDOE.

**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?**

While we cannot foresee an applicable scenario under this question arising, if some unforeseeable event occurred where the deliverables/performance measures were not being met, the FDOE would have the discretion to restrict access to funding.

**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)
- ☐ 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):**



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#### 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

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.*