



**Social Environment Initiative
2026 Youth Volunteer Summer Service Grant
Request for Applications**

Online submission deadline: 1:00 p.m., Friday, January 16, 2026

(Grant forms must be submitted using the Foundation's online application process.)

Background: The Rapides Foundation's Social Environment Initiative seeks to address social capital by supporting leadership and nonprofit development, and increased community engagement. In Fall 2016, the My Civic Life program was launched.

My Civic Life is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide linkages among students, schools, and nonprofits for community service.
- Build leadership and 21st-century skills among junior high and high school students.
- Promote student achievement of Louisiana Department of Education Community Service Diploma Endorsement.
- Foster a commitment to being engaged in the community and make volunteerism a lifelong habit.

The program is for community organizations to implement a service club using the Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC) model to facilitate service-learning opportunities and increase soft skills.

To support the My Civic Life Program, The Rapides Foundation is accepting applications for the 2026 Youth Volunteer Summer Service Grant. Awards of up to \$5,000 are available. This grant opportunity is designed to provide participating partners with sufficient funds to implement the **community service club component** of the My Civic Life program and to integrate community service clubs into local summer programs. As mentioned above, each applicant will be required to use the YVC model to facilitate their service clubs.

Under this component, nonprofits, municipalities, and other community-based organizations operating within The Rapides Foundation's nine-parish service area are eligible to apply as a host site to coordinate community-based service opportunities for 11- to 18-year old youth. Funds will allow youth to participate in a minimum of six service projects throughout the summer. Projects are to be led by trained staff using the Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC) model. YVC is a nationally recognized community service nonprofit, and The Rapides Foundation is the only YVC affiliate in Louisiana. For 2026, the YVC Headquarters will host their annual summit in New Orleans, LA from Oct 2 through Oct 3. While summit participation is not required or funded by the grant, all programs are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity. This is the first time the summit has been held in Louisiana.

The YVC model is designed to serve the needs of the community; to engage teams of youth in volunteer service projects that are challenging, rewarding and educational; to foster the development of 21st-century skills. When youth engage in at least 30 volunteer hours, they have shown to make improvements in life and career skills such as critical thinking, project planning, collaboration/teamwork and necessary soft skills; to promote a greater understanding of diversity in their community; and to inspire a lifetime ethic of service.

In 2025, YVC released a third-party evaluation measuring the impact of the program. Youth reported positive improvements in life and career skills, and results indicated that 20 hours of service yields a significant improvement in positive youth outcomes. The highest amount of positive change was seen in youth who reached at least 30 hours of service.

Grant Events and Activities: Each grantee will identify qualified staff to serve as the **YVC Team Leader** for their site. Team Leaders will be responsible for the following:

- Attend the mandatory one-day training.
- Submitting to, and passing, a comprehensive background check.
- Identify and recruit a minimum of 10 youth to participate in the YVC activities.
- Plan, coordinate and supervise a minimum of six community service projects that follow the YVC model.
- Track volunteer hours in the YVC database.
- Ensure that all relevant paperwork is completed for YVC activities, including club applications, waivers, surveys and documentation for Louisiana Department of Education Community Service Diploma Endorsement for eligible youth.
- Provide regularly scheduled updates to The Rapides Foundation's Grant Monitor on the progress of club activities.

A **Program Supervisor** will be identified to offer administrative support for YVC Team Leaders. Executive Directors may serve as a Program Supervisor for their organization. The Program Supervisor and YVC Team Leader roles must not be assigned to the same person. The Program Supervisor will be responsible for the following:

- Development and oversight of the applicant organization's youth protection policy.
- Ensure all staff working directly with youth have submitted to background checks.
- Oversight of purchases made from grant funds.
- Submission of official reports to The Rapides Foundation.
- Communicate with the Foundation's Grant Monitor and Programs Department staff for any needs related to the program.

Grant term: The grant term is from May 1, 2026 – August 31, 2026. Approved applicants will be notified by Monday, March 9, 2026.

How to Participate: Organizations interested in becoming a host site for the 2026 Youth Volunteer Summer Service Grant should complete the Participation Application using the Foundation's online application process. A copy of your organization's Youth Protection Policy, IRS Form 990, member list of Board of Directors, and a completed Signature Page will need to be uploaded into the online portal. Funds from this opportunity are only able to be used for the activities outlined above. In addition, each grantee will be required to attend a one-day, in-person training on the YVC service model at The Rapides Foundation building. This is a competitive grant application, and all applicants may not be funded. Necessary documents are located on the Foundation's website at www.rapidesfoundation.org under the "Grants" tab. Submission deadline is no later than 1:00 p.m., Friday, January 16, 2026.

Funding Availability: Grant funds are available to implement all aspects of the 2026 Youth Volunteer Summer of Service Grant.

- **Incentive pay, stipend** up to \$2,000 for the **YVC Team Leader** to plan, coordinate and supervise the six required community service activities.
- **Incentive pay, stipend** up to \$800 for the **Program Supervisor** to provide administrative support for grant activities.
- **Supplies and Activities** up to \$600 for service project materials.
- **Convening and Facilitating** up to \$600 for club meetings, transportation, and snacks/meals for service projects. If purchasing food items, they must meet the criteria listed below unless it is for a large party or awards ceremony. Contact Grant Monitor for prior approval:
 - Beverages: water, sparkling water
 - Snacks: must meet Smart Snack guidelines
 - Meals: healthy balanced meals based on MyPlate guidelines
- **Overhead costs** up to \$1,000 to cover background checks and other indirect costs associated with

the program.

In addition, the Foundation will be responsible for ordering YVC branded supplies and providing technical assistance through Grant Monitors to ensure the activities of the Youth Volunteer Summer of Service Grant are carried out according to the grant terms. Grant Monitors are available to the Program Supervisor and Team Leaders to assist with ensuring all groups have the materials and supplies needed for all activities and offer technical assistance as needed. For more information on Youth Volunteer Corps (YVC) and their service model, visit: <https://yvc.org/>



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

2026 Host Site Participation Application

(Completed online through The Rapides Foundation's grant portal)

Organization Name:

Parish(es)/Communities Served:

Executive Director:

Email:

Telephone:

Program Supervisor:

Program Supervisor Email:

Team Leader:

Team Leader Email:

Estimated Number of Youth Participating:

- 1) Describe your organization's existing summer programs (activities, frequency, location, staffing, etc.).**
- 2) How many youth participate in your summer programs? Tell us about the youth you serve and share demographic information (age, race, gender, neighborhood/community, etc.).**
- 3) Identify and describe the qualifications and related experience of the Program Supervisor and Team Leader who will oversee the grant-funded activities. Will current staff take on these additional roles, or will new staff be hired?**

- 4) How will you incorporate the required community service activities within your summer program?**
- 5) Describe your organization's capacity to add this program to your organization's offerings. What resources and supports do you have in place to be successful?**
- 6) What motivated you to apply for this opportunity?**
- 7) Commitments if funded. Check the appropriate box:**
- a. My organization has a youth protection policy that all YVC Summer Service Grant staff will be trained on.**
 - ☐ I agree
 - ☐ I do not agree
 - b. My organization will require that all staff directly working with youth submit to and pass a comprehensive background check.**
 - ☐ I agree
 - ☐ I do not agree
 - c. My organization will not charge Youth Volunteers to participate in the service program. I understand that YVC participants may not receive payment or incentives for participation.**
 - ☐ I agree
 - ☐ I do not agree
 - d. My organization agrees that grant funds will only be used as described in the Request for Proposals, line-item changes will not be permitted**
 - ☐ I agree
 - ☐ I do not agree
- 8) Attachments to be uploaded to the online grant portal.**
- a. Your organization's Youth Protection Policy**
 - b. Your organization's most current 990, annual audit or financial report.**
 - c. A list of applicant organization's board members. Include member name and address, professional/community affiliations and board tenure.**
 - d. Signature page (template provided)**
 - e. Applicant organization's 501(c)(3) or government entity exemption determination letter.**