



2024 Opportunities for All Business Assistance Funds Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of the Opportunities for All (OFA) Business Assistance Funds Program?

The Business Assistance Funds Program aims to provide crucial support to minority small business owners and non-profit organizations, empowering them with the necessary resources to foster growth and prosperity within our local business community.

Who is eligible to apply?

Ethnic minority-owned small businesses (51% or more ownership) providing services or products in the Sarasota/Manatee region.

How much is the grant?

Start-ups and those in business for fewer than 3 years may qualify for up to \$5,000. Businesses open 3 years or more may qualify for up to \$10,000.

If I am a past OFA grant recipient, can I re-apply this year?

Yes, past recipients can submit a new application.

How do I apply?

Eligible business owners can submit an application on the Sarasota Chamber website at www.sarasotachamber.com/opportunities-for-all.

When is the application window open?

Applications open **Tuesday, August 24th**. The deadline to submit applications is **September 30th**, at midnight.

What do I need to apply for a grant?

To apply, the application should take about 15 minutes to complete. Some additional materials will be requested:

1. Completed Business Plan
2. Expense budget for the requested grant funds
3. Business must be registered on sunbiz.org
4. A copy of your 2022 and 2023 business tax returns (if applicable)
5. Applicants must have a business checking account in good standing
6. Two letters of recommendation must be emailed to mlavender@sarasotachamber.com. The letters must be from the recommending party and include the name of the business and the owner's name.

What happens after I submit my application?

After your application, an Opportunities for All team member will contact you to schedule a short interview. The purpose of this interview is to gain a better understanding of your business plan and funding request. This is also an opportunity for staff to ask any clarifying question regarding

your application and if any improvements can be made before final submittal is made to the Selection Council.

What is the selection process?

An independent selection committee will review and evaluate all applications and select recipients.

When will I know if my business has been awarded funding?

All applicants will be notified of their selection status by the first week of November.

When will grants be disbursed?

Applicants may save-the-date for our OFA Business Assistance Funds Program Award Ceremony, to be held Wednesday, November 18th. Formal invite will be sent following the selection process.

Besides the funding, what else is part of the grant program?

In addition to funding, grant recipients will receive:

- A one-year complimentary membership with the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce
- Public promotion on the Sarasota Chamber website, newsletter, social and local media
- Access to business resources and workshops

What is expected of my company, should I be awarded Business Assistance Funds?

Grant recipient must agree to the following:

1. Attend a minimum of three Chamber events/programs in 2025 - *Events include monthly Chamber Connect, Good Morning Sarasota, Shumaker Chamber University, Power Hour Lunch, OFA Networking to Collaboration, or a Signature Chamber Annual Event. Visit www.sarasotachamber.com/events for a full calendar.*
2. Demonstrate transparent and responsible use of grant fund by providing quarterly progress reports detailing funded expenditures
3. Participate in OFA program evaluation by sharing outcomes and impacts the grant funding has on your business

How is the Business Assistance Funds Program funded?

As a program of the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, the funding is made possible through the generous support of the Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation.

What if I have additional questions?

The Opportunities for All team is here to assist you. If you have additional questions, please contact:

Melanie Lavender

Opportunities for All Program Manager

mlavender@sarasotachamber.com or 941-556-4058

*Opportunities for All is a program of the
Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce*



