Boys & Girls Club of Marion County respectfully requests funding, via the attached proposal, to invest in upgrading the Dunnellon Club facility. The upgrades would be to meet the standards required to utilize this space as a Special Needs Hurricane shelter, just outside the City limits of Dunnellon, Fl. Upgrades are needed to meet current design standards to withstand hurricane force winds, including window strength and protection, wind and debris exposure, and storm surge inundation.

The Dunnellon Boys & Girls Club is located at 20077 SW 110th St, Dunnellon. This building is an existing commercial space, constructed in 2014 in partnership with private funders, Marion County and the Marion County School Board. Initiating the proposed upgrades to the structure will enable the facility to lessen the burden, currently placed on the Marion County Public School system, for sheltering individuals with special needs during Hurricanes or other severe weather incidents. The Dunnellon Club location could also provide shelter for nearby coastal counties of Dixie, Gilchrest, Levy, Citrus and Hernando.

Marion County currently covers a span of about 1600 square miles and has a population of 365,579. The hazards of a hurricane will require the evacuation of an estimated 32,759 persons in Marion County, depending on the nature of the storm and predicted impact coast. Due to the central location of Marion County and proximity to Interstate 75, we often host evacuees from other counties. In the case of a West Coast storm, 45% of Marion County shelter users consist of residents from outlying counties. It should be noted that the rate of reduction of hurricane-force winds after the hurricane makes its closest point of approach largely unpredictable. Therefore, it is assumed that the mobile-home residents in the inland counties will have to evacuate regardless of the type or intensity of the hypothetical hurricane tracks modeled.

2019 was the fourth consecutive year with above normal storm activity with eighteen named storms and six hurricanes, three of which were major hurricanes. Tampa Bay evacuation data has been analyzed by the Florida Bureau of Emergency Management to estimate the number of evacuees expected to enter the Withlacoochee Region. It is estimated that 114,455 persons will enter the region on U.S. 301 and 1-75 and U.S. 41. Of these evacuees, about 36,800 will seek public shelter in the inland counties of Marion and Sumter. Marion County currently has 14 shelter sites, two of which are designated as Special needs shelters. This makes up enough shelter space for about 29,000 evacuees.

The length of stay at a shelter, varies based on the strength of the storm. General population shelters will release individuals after the storm has been downgraded or winds are no longer at Tropical Force (39 mph). However, Special Needs shelters do not release residents until it has been verified that every individual has functioning electric and water services at their primary residence. This can take several weeks, which requires Emergency Operations to place these individuals in alternative housing or county school reopening may be delayed. There are two Special needs shelters in Marion County. One of these shelters are located approximately 15 miles from the Dunnellon site and the second is about 22 miles from the Dunnellon site.

The Dunnellon Club is located within a low income census tract, with many of the nearby residents lacking reliable transportation. The lack of reliable transportation may prevent these residents from seeking safe shelter during severe weather.
The required upgrades will be completed by a licensed builder, with experience constructing Public School sites. Project funding requirements were determined based on a proposal submitted by Southern Heritage Developers LLC. For the purpose of this proposed project, all Davis-Bacon requirements will be followed.

The property will continue to serve a primary function as youth Development organization. The maintenance of the facility will be a part of the annual operational budget of the Boys & Girls Club of Marion County.