

February 17, 2026

Press Contact:

Alisha Sheth, BoatUS PR Manager

[alisha@boatus.com](mailto:alisha@boatus.com)



## BoatUS Foundation Accepting Applications for New Life Jacket Loaner Pilot Program

Local organizations, businesses encouraged to apply to expand access to essential boating safety equipment in their communities



**SPRINGFIELD, Va. – February 17, 2026** – The [BoatUS Foundation for Boating Safety and Clean Water](#) announced that it is now [accepting applications](#) for new pilot program for their Life Jacket Loaner Program. The pilot will introduce digital check out technology to make borrowing life jackets for a day or weekend easier and more accessible for boaters. Organizations such as parks, marinas, campgrounds, fire departments, fuel docks, and waterfront businesses are encouraged to apply before March 27, 2026. The program removes cost and access barriers, helping more families, especially children, stay safe on the water.

Organizations can apply to participate in one or more of the three pilot options:

- Unstaffed locations such as loaner boards and dock boxes where life jackets are available 24/7

- Staffed locations like marinas and boat shops where staff hand out the life jackets
- Digital locker that use a secure, automated storage system equipped with electronic locks to store life jackets “These pilot models represent the next evolution of our long-standing Life Jacket Loaner Program”, said Tiffany Gonzalez, BoatUS Foundation Program Manager. “They allow us to connect with sites and borrowers in smarter ways, helping us better understand community needs, best practices, and program impact.”

Insights collected during these pilots will help inform the industry with data driven best practices for increasing access to life jackets and improving proper wear. “BoatUS Foundation is committed to finding innovative ways to expand access while reducing potential loss to ensure programs like this have the greatest impact,” said Gonzalez.

This project is supported by a \$375,000 grant through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Originally piloted in 1996, BoatUS Foundation’s Life Jacket Loaner Program became the first national effort focused on keeping boaters, especially children, safe by providing properly fitted life jackets. On average, BoatUS Foundation loans 140,000 life jackets each year and has more than 600 loaner sites currently.

If you are interested in hosting a BoatUS Foundation Life Jacket Loaner Program pilot site, visit [BoatUS.org/Life-Jacket-Loaner/Apply](https://www.boatus.org/Life-Jacket-Loaner/Apply) to apply. The deadline to apply is March 27, 2026.