



**FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION
BUREAU OF SPECIAL GRANTS
MARYLAND EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAM**

PROGRAM INFORMATION AND FUNDING GUIDELINES

The Maryland Department of Human Services' Family Investment Administration is pleased to announce the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Maryland Emergency Food Program (MEFP) Guidelines. All MEFP grantees must follow the provisions and requirements listed in this document. **Please read the Guidelines carefully before completing the FY 2021 MEFP application.**

Purpose of MEFP

MEFP provides grants to Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) to provide groceries and meals, at no cost, to households and individuals in need. These organizations are tax exempt agencies as well as local government-run agencies and include: soup kitchens, food banks, food pantries, shelters, residential treatment programs, and after-school programs.

EFPs are also required to encourage MEFP recipients to become self-sufficient and disseminate information regarding the State's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). A federally funded program, EITC provides a tax credit for low to moderate-income individuals, couples, and families. Each food site must display the EITC flyers in a prominent location for customers and make copies available for distribution. Supplemental information on the EITC can be found at:

http://taxes.marylandtaxes.com/Individual_Taxes/Individual_Tax_Types/Income_Tax/Filing_Information/Determine_Tax_Credits_and_Deductions/Earned_Income_Tax_Credit.shtml

and: <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit>

Reference: Md. Code Ann., Human Services Article §§ 6-409- 414; COMAR 07.01.20.01-.09

MEFP grantees are encouraged, but not required, to accept applications for the Food Supplement Program (also referred to as SNAP or food stamps), and conduct outreach to promote and assist MEFP recipients with applying for this benefit. Additional information regarding the Food Supplement Program outreach and application process will be made available throughout the year and upon request.

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, if not administered through a local government agency, an organization interested in serving as an EFP must:

1. Be a verifiable tax-exempt organization as defined by the Federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
2. Be located within an established location that provides related services (community services, church outreach services, housing services).
3. Have existed as an Emergency Food Provider for at least three years.
4. Be able to demonstrate community support in the form of cash or food donations from outside entities (as examples: local schools, churches, community food drives).

MEFP Fund Allocation

Funds allocated to each jurisdiction in Maryland are based on available funding and indicators of need such as: number of individuals/families living in poverty; unemployment; and number of individuals/families receiving benefits from the Food Supplement Program.

The minimum award amount is \$2,000.00 and organizations that have not received an award in the past three years (July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018) will receive no more than that amount.

MEFP Application

Please answer all the questions on the application accurately and thoroughly. You may use additional pages, as needed, in order to answer questions completely. Applications that are incomplete, submitted without required signatures, or without the required documentation will be deemed ineligible.

Applications are evaluated based on factors such as: the inclusion of all required **documentation and signatures**, thorough completion of all **information requested in each section** of the application, and proposed outcomes, including: specific description of how Grant funds will be used, goals for increased outreach, and explanation of need. **DHS will also review prior performance of applicants that have previously received MEFP funding when considering their new applications.**

Applicants granted MEFP funds will receive an award letter stating the terms of the agreement including: the award amount, grant year, deliverables with timelines, and DHS contact information.

MEFP funds are approved for one fiscal year. For FY 2021, the award period is **July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021.**

It is no longer required that an organization administering more than one food distribution program in a jurisdiction apply separately for each site or food program. The umbrella organization and fiduciary agent may submit one application for a grant that will be used to purchase food for all of their food programs in that jurisdiction. In the single application, all organizations utilizing MEFP funds for food should be identified by location, program type and population served.

It is the responsibility of each applicant to read and become familiar with the MEFP Guidelines. A grantee's failure to meet any of the grant requirements, such as timely reporting and submission of receipts, may be prohibited from receiving subsequent grants from DHS and may be required to return the current year's grant to the State of Maryland. **Signing and submitting the application constitutes the organization's agreement to abide by the MEFP Guidelines.**

Application Deadline and Submission Information

The FY 2021 MEFP applications must be received by DHS no later than 4:00 PM on Friday, April 17, 2020. Late applications will not be considered.

An application will be considered late if it was not received in the MEFP Coordinator's email inbox or, in the case of a hard copy received by DHS, by 4:00 P.M. on the due date. **It is preferable that applications are emailed.** If a grantee chooses to mail its application, DHS recommends that it only use Express Mail, Priority Mail, or Certified Mail as these are the methods for which verification can be provided of both the date and time of receipt.

Organizations submitting late applications will be notified of their ineligibility in writing. Please note that, with the exception of additional pages on which to complete an answer, changes to the application will not be permitted without prior approval of DHS.

Electronic submissions must be sent to: BureauOf.SpecialGrants@maryland.gov

All mailed and hand-delivered applications must be sent to:

Maryland Department of Human Services
311 W. Saratoga Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Attention: Annette Jones-Wilson, 2nd Floor

Tax Exemption Documentation

If applicable, documentation of your tax exempt status must be included with your application. The name of the organization on the IRS tax exemption letter must match the name on the application. If you are included in an IRS tax exemption group ruling as a member of a larger or parent organization, you must provide a statement, on official letterhead, from your parent organization verifying your inclusion in the group ruling.

If you do not have a recent version of your tax exemption documentation, please use the link to the IRS website below, locate your status information, and submit it with your application (s).

<http://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/pub78Search.do?dispatchMethod=navigateSearch&pathName=forwardToPub78Search&searchChoice=pub78>.

Please note that if your organization is not in good standing and/or has a tax offset or lien, your organization will not be eligible for a Fiscal Year 2021 MEFP grant.

Provider Information and Program Changes

MEFP applications must include the **full legal name** of the food program, food program director and, if applicable, the name of the sponsoring organization (church, government agency, etc.) responsible for the program. MEFP award checks will be made payable to the **legal name of the applicant organization**.

Any changes to the food program structure, including a change in leadership or food program closure, must be communicated to the MEFP Coordinator via email within 30 days of the event. Programs that close or suspend operations for more than 60 days must return all unspent award funds before terminating operations.

Demographics Data Reporting

Applicants must accurately complete the section of the application that requests demographic and service data; population served; and number of meals and/or groceries provided. Please complete the appropriate information for your type of food program. For example, a soup kitchen, shelter, or residential treatment program should provide the number of meals served per month; whereas, a food pantry should provide the number of bags of groceries distributed per month. Applications will not be considered without this information.

Budget Information and References

The budget section of the application must be accurately and thoroughly completed. MEFP funds should be kept separate from other funds on a financial statement or bookkeeping system. Records and customer files should be stored securely, in a locked room or filing cabinet. All supporting documentation must be maintained in your program files and available for review at the annual site visit and retained for a period of three years.

If your organization has not received a MEFP grant from DHS in the last three years, you must provide two letters of reference with original signatures. The letters must be from community groups or businesses with which the organization has done business. Additionally, letters of reference may be from an agency that refers customers to your organization or provides volunteers for your program. The letters must be on official letterhead, sealed in a separate envelope and mailed to Annette Jones-Wilson at the above address. The letters may not come from members of your own organization or congregation, clients of your feeding program or employees of DHS.

Award Use and Prohibitions

The MEFP grant is to be used **only** to purchase food for meals and/or groceries and distributed at no cost to individuals and households identified as eligible and in need. MEFP funds may not be used for other purchases including food-related items such as cutlery, food storage containers, grocery store or other gift cards (unless designated as “food only”), paper or cleaning products. Providers are strongly encouraged to purchase food that is produced, grown and harvested in the State of Maryland and to purchase from local farmers markets when feasible and cost-effective.

Invoices alone do not constitute proof of purchase; therefore, those must be accompanied by a copy of the canceled check with the amount of the check matching the amount on the invoice.

Organizations must distribute food purchased with MEFP funds at no cost to eligible individuals or households and may not require individuals or households to purchase MEFP foods. This includes purchase through Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards (EBT). Food Supplement Program (FSP) benefits are intended for the recipient and his/her household exclusively.

MEFP Food Storage and Facility Management

All MEFP food, perishable and non-perishable, must be kept in a designated area and labeled “MEFP.” Food may be stored in a separate unit or separated by labeling the individual shelves designated for MEFP food storage. MEFP storage areas and/or containers must be locked when not in use. You must also ensure that you do not distribute expired foods or dented cans and that a consistent inventory system is in place. Storage areas will be inspected during the MEFP monitoring visit.

If your organization repackages loose non-perishable or large packages of perishable food (e.g. separating bulk grains or bulk chicken breast packages into individual servings), kitchen and pantry workers must follow USDA’s safe food handling program protocols. If you have questions about those protocols, please contact the MEFP Coordinator for clarification.

MEFP food programs must follow their local health department regulations for sanitation, food service, quality control and cleanliness. All MEFP providers must have rodent and insect infestation controls for their facility.

Record Keeping

Grantees must maintain accurate and detailed records regarding the use of MEFP funds. The grantees’ records must include: information on the demographics of the patrons of the food program (adults, children, families, etc.) and number of bags of food distributed or number of meals served (“Units of Service”) by the program to needy individuals.

Grantees must document all purchases made using the MEFP award and include proof of payment. Proof of payment documentation consists of an invoice(s) with copy of the canceled check(s) and/or receipt(s) showing payment at point of sale. Receipts must: be legible; include the store name and date of purchase; reflect only MEFP eligible food items; and not exceed the MEFP grant amount **by more than a**

reasonable amount (within one hundred dollars whenever possible). Invoices not paid in full at point of sale must be accompanied by a canceled check. All canceled checks must show legible front and back sides.

MEFP Purchases should be made separately from other funding sources. This will help alleviate any perception of misuse of state funds. Quarterly reports with receipts, canceled checks and services provided must be submitted with a total number of individuals and families served and meals and/or groceries provided using MEFP funds. **Receipts reflecting purchases funded by sources other than MEFP will not be accepted.** In this case, DHS will notify the provider, within two business days following its review of a grantee's documentation, of the grantee's requirement to submit only those receipts which reflect MEFP purchases. Receipts should already be calculated before submission. Grantees must keep copies of documents and records relating to the MEFP award in their files. The Quarterly Report template will be included with your award letter.

Reporting Deadlines

Quarterly reports are due to the MEFP Coordinator Annette Jones-Wilson on or before the deadlines listed on the following page. It is preferred that the reports be emailed to: annette.jones-wilson@maryland.gov, copying Bureau of Special Grants Director, Bonnie Ariano at bonnie.ariano@maryland.gov. Grantees may mail or hand-deliver reports to the following address:

Maryland Department of Human Services
311 W. Saratoga Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Attention: Annette Jones-Wilson, 2nd Floor

The reports are due each quarter, regardless of whether funds were spent during the reporting period. When MEFP funds have not been used in a particular quarter, the food program's director **must still submit an Activity Report for that quarter noting that no MEFP funds were expended and the reason why they were not used. Once all funds have been expended and the accompanying reports submitted, no further quarterly report submissions are required.**

All records, receipts and documentation to provide proof of expenditure of grant award funds must be maintained by the recipient organization for three years.

Late submissions of reports will be documented and noted in the grantee's MEFP file as "non-compliant" for that quarter. **All instances of non-compliance will be considered when reviewing and scoring applications for subsequent MEFP grants.**

Reminder e-mails or phone calls will not be sent out or made to programs. Please note that the deadline for the final quarter has been shortened and fourth quarter receipts must be submitted earlier than previous quarters.

Grantees must expend all MEFP funds by June 01, 2021 unless special permission has been given; any unexpended funds must be returned to DHS by June 30, 2021.

FY 2019 MEFP Quarterly Closing and Reporting Deadlines			
Quarter	Eligible Purchases	Quarter Ends	Submission Deadline
1 st	July 1 - September 30, 2020	September 30, 2020	October 09, 2020
2 nd	October 1- December 31, 2020	December 31, 2020	January 08, 2021
3 rd	January 1- March 31, 2021	March 31, 2021	April 09, 2021
4 th	April 1- June 1, 2021	June 1, 2021	June 11, 2021

Site Visits

Grantees will receive an annual or, in some cases, semi-annual site visit. New programs under consideration for funding may receive a site visit prior to the award decision. Returning grantees will be scheduled for a Site Monitoring Visit during the fiscal year covered by the Grant. Whenever possible, BSG will provide a two week notice before a Monitoring Visit and will make every reasonable effort to accommodate scheduling conflicts on the part of the grantee. The Bureau may opt to conduct unannounced visits in special circumstances (i.e. report of misuse of funds, when the grantee cannot be reached). A Bureau of Special Grants staff person will tour the program’s facility, storage areas and review program records. Included among the financial records to be reviewed should **be copies of current year financial statements and/or 990 Audit, if not already on file with DHS and** originals or copies of the receipts from all purchases of food items provided to individuals and households during the award year.

Grantees with an unsatisfactory site review will be granted a 60-day period to submit a corrective action plan and address the problem areas. All MEFP spending shall be suspended until the corrective action plan has been accepted and a satisfactory site review is achieved. If the corrective action plan is not implemented or is not successful, the program’s award will be revoked and any unspent funds must be returned to DHS.

If you have any questions during the application process or the award year, please contact: Annette Jones-Wilson at 410-767-7965 or, by email to: annette.jones-wilson@maryland.gov

Thank you for your interest in the Maryland Emergency Food Program and for your service to Maryland residents in need.