



**FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY 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) 2026 Maryland Emergency Food Program (MEFP) Guidelines. All MEFP grantees must follow the provisions and requirements listed in this document. **Please read the FY2026 MEFP Guidelines carefully before completing the [FY 2026 MEFP application](#).**

**Purpose of MEFP**

MEFP provides grants to Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) to provide groceries and meals, at no cost, to eligible households and individuals. Emergency Food Providers are tax exempt or local government-run programs including soup kitchens, food banks, food pantries, shelters, residential treatment programs, and after-school programs.

EFPs are required to refer program participants to employment and training programs in their jurisdictions and disseminate information regarding state and federal Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC). EITC provides tax credits 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: [Maryland Comptroller Tax Credit and Deductions/Earned Income Tax Credit](#) and: [Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#)

Reference: [Md. Code Ann., Human Services Article §§ 6-409- 414](#); [COMAR 07.01.20.01-09](#)

MEFP grantees are encouraged, but not required, to help MEFP participants submit an application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

During a grantee orientation at the beginning of each State Fiscal Year, DHS will provide information regarding the process for becoming a SNAP outreach partner. In the meantime, MEFP applicants may view SNAP Outreach Program information on our [website](#).

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for MEFP funding, applicants must meet the following criteria :

1. Be a local government run program. These programs are administered and operated directly by a government agency or in partnership with a government entity; or
2. Be an Emergency Food Provider. EFPs must be:
  - a. a verifiable tax-exempt entity as defined by the Federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
  - b. have a physical location that provides related services (community services, church outreach services, housing services).
  - c. an EFP for at least three years.
  - d. able to demonstrate community support in the form of cash or food donations from outside entities (as examples: local schools, churches, community food drives).
  - e. In "good standing" with SDAT, the State Department of Assessment and Taxation. If applicants are not in good standing and/or have a tax offset or lien, the applicant's organization will not be eligible for the Fiscal Year 2026 MEFP grant.

### **MEFP Fund Allocation**

We will award a total of \$1,241,661 to jurisdictions in Maryland based on indicators such as: number of individuals/families living in poverty; unemployment; and number of individuals/families receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The maximum FY26 MEFP grant award is \$50,000. The minimum FY26 MEFP award amount is \$2,000.00. If awarded, first-time grantees and those who have not received a MEFP award in the past three years will receive funding capped at \$2,000.00

### **MEFP Application**

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

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

### **Parent and Umbrella Organizations**

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 failing to meet any of the grant requirements, such as timely reporting and submission of receipts, may be prohibited from receiving subsequent grants. The grantee may be required to return the current year's grant to the State of Maryland. Signing and submitting the application constitutes an organization's agreement to abide by the MEFP Guidelines.

### **Application Deadline and Submission Information**

Electronic submissions must be sent to: [FY26 MEFP Application Submission Form](#).

The FY26 MEFP applications must be received no later than **5:00 PM on May 9, 2025**. **Late applications will not be considered.**

The FY26 MEFP Application can be found here: [FY 2026 MEFP Application](#).

An application will be considered late if it is not received electronically using the [FY26 MEFP Application Submission Form](#) by 5:00 P.M. on **May 9, 2025**. The

MEFP application and all **required documents must be submitted at the same time.**

Late applicants will be notified in writing of their ineligibility. Please note that, except for additional pages on which to complete an answer, changes to the application will not be permitted without prior agency approval.

### **Tax Exemption and EIN**

If applicable, documentation of tax-exempt status must be included with the application. The name of the organization on the IRS 501(c)(3) tax exemption letter must match the name of the organization applying. If you are included in an IRS 501(c)(3) group ruling as a member of a larger or parent organization you must verify your inclusion in the group ruling by providing a statement from your parent organization on official letterhead.

If you do not have a recent version of your tax exemption documentation, please use this link to the IRS website [Tax Exemption Documentation](#), or contact the Maryland Office of Taxation and Assessments to locate your current tax-exempt status information. Submit the current tax-exempt information with your application.

The applicant organization must provide their current EIN. Please upload a screenshot of your EIN on the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) website with your application submission.

Visit the [Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation website](#) and search for your business:

1. Enter the organization's name in the search box;
2. Look for your organization in the *Search Results* and click on your organization's name;
  - a. Your organization's *General Information* page will open in a new tab.
3. Take a screenshot of the *General Information* page and upload it to the field below.

### **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 (i.e. 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.

### **Population and Service Data**

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 will provide the number of meals served per month; whereas a food pantry will provide the number of bags of groceries distributed per month. **Applications will not be considered without information.**

### **Budget Information**

The budget section of the application must be accurately and thoroughly completed.

MEFP funds must be kept separate from other funds on a financial statement or bookkeeping system. Records and customer files must be securely stored. All supporting documentation must be maintained in your program files, available for review at the annual site visit, and retained for a period of three years.

### **References**

If your organization has not received a MEFP grant from our agency 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 the applicants' organization or provides volunteers for the applicants' program. The letters must be uploaded along with the [FY 2026 MEFP Application](#) through the [FY26 MEFP Application](#)

[Submission Form](#). The letters may not come from members of the applicants' organization or State agency employees.

### **Award Use and Prohibitions**

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. Grantees will also be required to sign a [DHS 655](#) Grant Agreement.

MEFP funds are approved for one fiscal year. For FY 2026, the award period is **July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026**.

The MEFP grant is to be used **only** to purchase food for meals and/or groceries and distributed at no cost to eligible individuals and households. 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"), or paper or cleaning products. Grantees 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. Invoices must be accompanied by a copy of the canceled check with the amount of the check matching the amount on the invoice.

Grantees 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). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) 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. Grantees must also ensure that expired foods or dented cans are not distributed, and a consistent inventory system is in place. Storage areas will be inspected during the MEFP monitoring visit.

Any grantees repackaging loose non-perishable or large packages of perishable food (e.g. separating bulk grains or bulk chicken breast packages into individual servings), must ensure that kitchen and pantry staff follow USDA 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 grantee organizations 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 food program customer demographic information (adults, children, families, etc.) and number of bags of food distributed or number of meals served ("Units of Service") by the program.

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 a copy of the canceled check(s) and/or receipt(s) showing payment at point of sale. Receipts must:

1. be legible,
2. include the store name and date of purchase,
3. reflect only MEFP eligible food items, and
4. 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.

### **Quarterly Reports**

The Quarterly Report template will be included with the Grantee's award letter.

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 should already be calculated before submission.

**Receipts reflecting purchases funded by sources other than MEFP will not be accepted.** MEFP purchases should be made separately from other funding sources. This will help prevent the perception of misused state funds.

If receipts reflect purchases made with non-MEFP funds, Grantees will be notified of the requirement to only submit receipts reflecting MEFP purchases. Grantee's will be notified within two business days following our agency review of a grantee's documentation.

Grantees must keep copies of documents and records relating to the MEFP award in their files.

### **Reporting Deadlines**

MEFP Quarterly reports are due on or before the deadlines listed on the following page. The [FY26 MEFP Quarterly Report](#) will be submitted through the [FY26 MEFP Quarterly Report Submission](#) link. The reports are due each quarter, by the dates outlined in the chart below, 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. All records, receipts, and documentation providing proof that grant funds were expended must be maintained by the grantee for three years.

Late report submissions 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 future MEFP grant applications.

Please note that the deadline for the final quarter is shorter and fourth quarter receipts must be submitted earlier than previous quarters.

**Grantees must expend all MEFP funds by June 1, 2026, unless special permission is given; any unexpended funds must be returned to our agency by June 30, 2026.**



<b>FY 2026 MEFP Quarterly Closing and Reporting Deadlines</b>		
<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Date Purchase</b>	<b>Submission Deadline</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	July 1, 2025 - September 30, 2025	October 10, 2025
2 <sup>nd</sup>	October 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025	January 9, 2026
3 <sup>rd</sup>	January 1, 2026 - March 31, 2026	April 10, 2026
4 <sup>th</sup>	April 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026	July 10, 2026

**Site Visits**

Grantees will receive an annual or, in some cases, semi-annual site visit. New programs under consideration for funding will receive a site visit prior to the award decision. Returning grantees will be scheduled for an onsite visit during the fiscal year covered by the grant. During a site visit, our staff will tour the food storage areas and review program records. We may request to review copies of current year financial statements, single audit reports, receipts for MEFP purchases, and any other items that may be needed for evaluation during the site visit.

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 will 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 our agency.

If you have any questions during the application process or the award year, please contact Judith Potter-Brown, MEFP Coordinator by email at: [judith.potterbrown1@maryland.gov](mailto:judith.potterbrown1@maryland.gov).

Thank you for your interest in the Maryland Emergency Food Program and for your service to the people of Maryland.