

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program

Program Summary: The Montgomery County Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR), in partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Manna Food Center (Manna), is soliciting grant applications for the County's FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program from non-profit and for-profit entities currently engaged in both 1) food security initiatives that benefit underserved communities in Montgomery County, **and** 2) County-based food recovery **AND/OR** local food purchasing efforts.

\$230,000 in total grant funding is available to support the purchase, installation, and/or repair of cold-storage infrastructure that will contribute to a more interconnected, resilient County and regional food value chain. These County infrastructure investments will increase the availability of food resources to address nutrition insecurity in our community by facilitating the procurement and distribution of food produced by local farms and other businesses as well as increase the recovery of food from regional sources. In turn, this will increase economic opportunity and market access for County food producers and reduce resource loss and the climate impacts of wasted food.

This grant program was established as a component of Special Appropriation #24-37, which was approved by the Montgomery County Council in December 2023 to support the implementation of programs related to the Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger. One of the objectives of this plan is a geographically diverse distribution of cold-storage infrastructure throughout Montgomery County that will build the capacity of the local and regional food value chains to support access to locally produced foods for County residents experiencing food insecurity.

Proposals must describe a project model to establish cold storage infrastructure that will yield measurable outcomes within the performance period. The minimum award that applicants may request is \$5,000 and maximum award is \$75,000. Final award amounts may be lower than \$5,000.

Key Program Dates:

- **Application Opens:** March 11, 2024
- **Virtual Grant Program Information Session:** Wednesday, March 13, 2024 from 10:00am to 11:00am. Click [here](#) to join the information session on Zoom.

- **Submission Deadline:** Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 11:59 PM
- **Grantees Notified:** Anticipated to be on/about April 26, 2024
- **Funds Dispersed:** Anticipated to be on/about April 29, 2024
- **Performance Period:** Anticipated to be on/about April 29, 2024, to on/about April 28, 2025.
 - **Mid-cycle Reporting:** September 30, 2024
 - **End-of-cycle Reporting:** April 30, 2025
 - **Two-year Reporting:** April 30, 2026

Key Program Resources:

- **Grant Application:** [Google Forms](#)
- **Grant Application:** <https://www.communityfoodrescue.org/grants/>
- **Grant Program Page:** <https://www.communityfoodrescue.org/grants/>
- **[Click here](#) to join the Information Session**

Grant Program Details, Submissions, and Support: Applications are due no later than **Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, at 11:59 PM.** Applications received after the deadline will be disqualified and will not be forwarded to the Review Panel for funding consideration. Applications with incomplete, illegible, or corrupted digital materials will not be considered.

Applications can be submitted in two ways:

- **Google Forms:** <https://forms.gle/FJN9fU7stmfNysxA6>. Supporting documents will need to be emailed separately to mfcgrants@gmail.com.
- **Email:** Application questions may be copied into a Word document from the [PDF application](#) then saved as a new application PDF and emailed to mfcgrants@gmail.com with supporting documents.

For technical questions related to the application, please contact:

Morgan Crull – Senior Program Manager for Food Resources

Manna Food Center
 (301) 578-5475
Mfcgrants@gmail.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I	Grant Program Information	4
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	Background	4
	Target Population	5
	Funding Priorities	5
	Eligible Organizations	7
	Award Amounts and Duration	7
	Application Review & Awards	7
	Award Notification	8
Section II	Application Tasks	9
	Applicant Information	9
	Applicant Background	10
	Project Strategy	10
	Strategy Narrative	11
	Project Budget	12
	Project Work Plan/Timeline	13
	Performance Plan	13

SECTION I – GRANT PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Background

The Montgomery County Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR), in partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Manna Food Center (Manna), is soliciting grant applications for the County's FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program from non-profit and for-profit entities currently engaged in both 1) food security initiatives that benefit underserved communities in Montgomery County, **and** 2) County-based food recovery **AND/OR** local food purchasing efforts.

This grant program was established as a component of [Special Appropriation #24-37](#), which was approved by the Montgomery County Council in December 2023 to support the implementation of programs related to the [Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger](#). One of the objectives of this plan is a geographically diverse distribution of cold-storage infrastructure throughout Montgomery County that will build the capacity of the local and regional food value chains to support access to locally produced foods for County residents experiencing food insecurity.

There is currently a significant lack of available infrastructure within Montgomery County to support the safe storage and distribution of fresh foods. The results of a food security community survey developed and distributed by the OFSR in October 2023 indicate that at least **41%** of the County's food assistance providers do **not have any access** to cold storage, including refrigeration and freezer space, for the safe storage of fresh foods that the provider is distributing to residents. Additionally, food assistance providers and farms involved in the Farm to Food Bank Program and other local food access projects have reported significant challenges with being able to store fresh produce and other fresh farm products due to limited cold storage capacity, which impacts the viability and shelf life of locally produced foods that are available for distribution to residents.

Simultaneously, residents accessing food assistance services have expressed an ongoing preference for nutritious, fresh, and culturally appropriate foods, including local vegetables, fruit, dairy, and meat items that require cold storage. Access to additional cold storage could improve the scheduling and logistical challenges associated with distributing locally produced food to food assistance providers and other buyers within the local food system. The FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program will award funding to support new and existing cold storage projects that will build the capacity of food security partners engaged in food recovery and/or local sourcing initiatives to support the safe storage and distribution of foods to residents experiencing food insecurity, and ensure more resilient, self-sufficient local food system and local supply chains.

B. Target Population

According to the 2023 Hunger Report from Capital Area Food Bank, an estimated 27% of households in Montgomery County “experienced food insecurity at some point in the last year.”¹ The target population served through this grant program are Montgomery County residents living in underserved communities², who are experiencing food insecurity and are accessing food assistance services through providers that are engaged in local food recovery and/or local sourcing initiatives.

C. Funding Priorities

The goal of this program is to fund projects that address gaps in cold storage infrastructure to support engagement with food security initiatives that are connected to local food production and/or food recovery efforts. Priorities for this funding include:

- Alignment with the programs and recommendations of the [Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger](#), including the FY24 School-Based Food Assistance and FY24 “Food as Medicine” grant programs;
- Alignment with the County’s food system resilience and food sovereignty goals:
 - Equity: Efforts address social injustice and racial disparities to build equity in our community and make progress toward food sovereignty;
 - Systems-Based: Strategies focus on identifying, maximizing, and addressing the interconnections of food issue areas, simultaneously contextualizing their benefits and their impacts on production, access, natural resources, education, and economy;
 - Innovative: To transform our food system, novel approaches, creative ideas, and best practices models from other jurisdictions are used to inform projects; and
 - Data-Driven: Intentional and reliable data collection and analysis, and solutions with clearly defined success metrics and measurable impact, are the foundation for proposals.
- Geographically diverse investments in areas of the County that are currently lacking cold-storage infrastructure;
- Collaborative approaches that would allow for capacity building amongst the broad network of food system stakeholders.

Other considerations include:

- Climate impacts of infrastructure and equipment, including the energy source, project implementation considerations, and long-term use of infrastructure;
- Ability to leverage external investment and/or resources to support the success of the proposed project.

The OFSR, DHHS, and Manna anticipate many applications and total funding requests that will greatly exceed the resources available for the FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program.

Prioritization will also be given to proposals that:

- Propose medium-to-large scale cold storage projects that will advance local food aggregation and/or food processing opportunities;
- Include multiple partners that will have shared access to the cold storage infrastructure and/or will allow for food to be distributed to multiple recipient organizations;
- Include a budget that is well-researched and reflects a realistic cost of purchasing, installing, and operating the cold-storage equipment/-infrastructure, including any necessary utility upgrades, repairs, and/or other related capital costs;
- Describe in detail the project timeline from start to finish, including:
 - Purchase, installation, and electricity hook-ups for cold storage infrastructure;
 - Clearly defined usage strategy that supports food recovery and/or local sourcing to address food insecurity; and
 - Any partners involved will be accessing or benefiting from the cold storage infrastructure.
- Include a data collection, analysis, and reporting strategy with comprehensive and achievable performance metrics related to the project's impact on food security and access in Montgomery County, **AND** impact on food recovery **AND/OR** local sourcing for both short-term (1 year) and long-term (2 years) post-award periods.

¹Source: [Hunger Report 2023 - CAFB Hunger Report \(capitalareafoodbank.org\)](https://capitalareafoodbank.org)

²This program uses the same definition of underserved communities as the January 20, 2021 Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality

D. Eligible Organizations

Lead applicants may only submit one application, and must meet all of the following conditions:

- The organization must be a nonprofit or for-profit organization based in Montgomery County that is engaged in both 1) food security initiatives that benefit underserved communities in Montgomery County, **and** 2) County-based food recovery **AND/OR** local food purchasing efforts;
- The organization must be currently registered and in Good Standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT);
- The organization's principal place of business must be located in Montgomery County; if a national or regional organization, it must have a location in Montgomery County through which it provides related services;
- All activities and expenditures under this grant program must be provided in Montgomery County;
- Current Montgomery County contract or grant award winners must be current on all reporting obligations for other awards and those reports must reflect substantial progress towards the goals of their awards; and
- Proposed expenses must be for a new activity, expansion of existing activities, or a combination of both. Grant funding **cannot** be used for: any purchase which has already been made; purchases or activities unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by Montgomery County; prior obligations of and/or fines; debts and penalties imposed on the grantee; lobbying expenses; alcoholic beverages; or supplanting (replacing) other funds.

E. Award Amounts and Duration

Award sizes will vary and will be determined by the project components and the anticipated impact that the project will have in contributing to County food security initiatives. Applicants may request a minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$75,000; final funding amounts may be lower than \$5,000. The grants are anticipated to have a 12-month performance period from on/about April 29, 2024, through on/about April 28, 2025. Programs must be run and evaluated during this period.

F. Application Review & Awards

The OFSR, DHHS, and Manna will establish a Review Committee composed of neutral, qualified individuals from Montgomery County Government, and the broader Montgomery County community, selected for their experiences in the grant program's subject area, grants administration, project management, and/or ability to analyze programs from a Racial Equity and Social Justice lens. The panel members will review and score applicant proposals based on the criteria outlined in this document and submit recommendations for awards. Final decisions will be made based on the scores and such other factors and considerations as deemed relevant at the time of award. These may include the expert opinion of grant administrators that have prior experience

with applicants, updates to priorities, or other factors.

G. Award Notification

Award notification letters are expected to be released roughly three weeks after the application deadline via email. For successful applicants, the Grant Agreement will contain the total amount awarded and funding restrictions; programmatic, administrative, and policy requirements; reporting requirements; and payment terms.

SECTION II – APPLICATION SECTIONS

Applicants are required to follow the content requirements and submission instructions listed within the online application platform and in this document.

Please submit all parts of your proposal and supporting documentation in one of the three formats listed on page 3 above. The final application should have clearly titled sections and sub-sections. Applications will be considered incomplete if any part of any section is missing.

A. Applicant Information

Organizations must provide the following information and documents. Supporting documents will be used to assess legal eligibility for the Grant Program. The information provided will be used in any resulting grant agreement. Applicants should provide this information as if they were drafting a contract using specific and exact information.

- Legal Name of Applying Organization as registered with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) Organization's Maryland SDAT Department ID Number - Applicants can verify their SDAT status via this link: <https://egov.maryland.gov/BusinessExpress/EntitySearch>
- Organization's Federal Tax Identification Number
- Organization's website (optional)
- Contact Information for the organization's proposal point-of-contact (POC)
- Contact Information for the Organization's Legally Authorized Signatory
- Description of Organization's Grant and Financial Management Practices
- Description of Organization's Data Collection and Management Practices
- Upload of IRS Tax Exempt Determination Letter for Nonprofit Organizations as applicable
- Upload of Most recent IRS 990 Form for Nonprofit Organizations or an explanation of why your organization is exempt from filing 990s 990s
- Upload of Public Copy of Most Recent Independent Audit Report, Financial Review, Agreed Upon Procedures. If not available, please submit a brief statement of explanation.
- Although proof of Good Standing is not required as a component of the application, it is critical that applicants remain registered and in Good Standing with SDAT as applicants will be disqualified from a grant competition, delay or even lose a grant award, and/or face delays in grant payments if they are not in Good Standing.

B. Applicant Background

Organization or business's estimated staffing size serving Montgomery County in a given year

- Organizational leadership, including CEO, Executive Director and Board Members (if applicable), or business owners' race and ethnic information

C. Project Strategy (500-word limit)

The Project Strategy should include several data components related to the proposal:

- **Project Title** – If awarded, Project Title will become the grant agreement name
- **Project Overview** – Brief description of the project (100 word maximum)
- **Current data collection**– Please share how you are currently measuring success of any existing projects/initiatives that relate to this application. See requested indicators below listed by focus area. In the Project Strategy, please speak to any/all of these that are applicable.
- **FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program Funding Request** – Total amount requested through this grant proposal
- **Total Project Cost** – Total cost of project from all funding sources

Food Recovery

- **(if applicable) Current Food Recovery Efforts** – Brief description for organizations currently engaged in food recovery initiatives (250 word maximum)
- **(if applicable) Pounds of Food Recovered in Calendar Year 2023** – For applicants currently engaged in food recovery
- **(if applicable) Pounds of Recovered Food Directly or Indirectly Redistributed in Calendar Year 2023** – For organizations currently engaged in food recovery
- **(if applicable) Partnerships with Local¹ Food Assistance Providers** – For organizations currently engaged in food recovery, please describe partnerships with other Montgomery County-based food assistance providers that receive and distribute recovered foods (250 word maximum)

Local Food Purchasing, Procurement and Production

- **(if applicable) Current Local¹ Food Procurement Partnerships** – Brief description for organizations currently engaged in local food sourcing. Please include the names and locations of the partners you work with and what foods you are currently sourcing. (250 word maximum)
- **(if applicable) Pounds of Locally¹ Grown or Produced Food Procured in Calendar Year 2023** – For not-for-profit applicants currently engaged in local food sourcing

- **(if applicable) Pounds of Local¹ Food Sold or Donated to Food Assistance Organizations in Calendar Year 2023** – For organizations currently engaged in in local¹ food production who have sold or donated product to programs such as Farm to Foodbank, Community Farm Share, Capital Area Food Bank, etc.
- **Zip Code(s) Currently Served** – For food assistance provider organizations, please list all zip codes that your organization currently serves

¹In this context, local refers to food recovery or production that occurs within Montgomery County, Maryland.

D. Strategy Narrative (500-word limit)

This part of the proposal should provide the following information and answer the following questions.

Outline the infrastructure project proposal from start to finish, specifically addressing the following:

Food Recovery AND/OR Local Food Sourcing

- A detailed description of the cold storage infrastructure project your organization or business is positioned to complete, including a timeline for the project;
- How the project will increase capacity for local food recovery AND/OR local food sourcing;
- Why your organization is uniquely suited to have a positive impact on Montgomery County local food recovery AND/OR local food sourcing with additional cold storage infrastructure;
- The primary need that this proposal will address for your organization or business;
- How the proposed project will address this issue or need; whether/how this project will benefit other businesses with local food recovery or food sourcing;
- Way(s) your organization will ensure that the proposed project reaches and positively impacts the target population;
- Describe your sustainability plan for maintaining this infrastructure investment;
- Describe your organization's past experience and results related to food recovery or local food procurement;
- For non-profit food assistance providers only: please list the specific zip code(s) your organization currently serves and your relationship to the population/geographic community in these zip codes.

E. Project Budget (No word limit, Spreadsheet format preferred)

The FY24 Food System Infrastructure Grant Program funding supports the **capital costs** associated with proposed cold storage infrastructure projects. Operating costs, including staff time/labor, ongoing maintenance or utilities, insurance, and land/space rental are **NOT** eligible expenses.

The Program Budget should be sent as a separate document, preferably in MS Excel format.

The budget for this proposal should contain:

- **Expenses:** detailed itemized cost information for all proposed expenses, including capital costs (equipment, associated utility upgrades, fees, installation expenses, etc.) Include repairs of existing infrastructure and warranties on new equipment.
- **Revenues:** include the value of any cost-shares such as donations, other grants received, and in-kind or pro bono services that you anticipate being donated and that are related to this proposal

In addition to a Program Budget, the proposal **must include a Budget Narrative** that briefly describes how the proposed costs were calculated and their justification. If an organization wishes to include quotes or screenshots to verify any prices listed, they may attach these as supplemental materials to the project budget.

- Outline the purpose of the expenditures and an explanation of how costs were calculated.
- Please specify how your project would be affected if total funding awarded were less than the amount requested. State whether your project could be completed with a smaller amount, and how your projected outcomes would be affected by any funding reduction.

For non-profit food assistance providers ONLY:

- Please provide specific details around how this grant would contribute to the organization's **total food programs budget** for calendar year 2024 and how this grant funding will specifically expand the organization's budget to support food recovery, food rescue, and/or local procurement efforts.
- If your organization provides services outside of Montgomery County, please describe in detail how your organization will ensure that funding provided through this grant will exclusively build the capacity of initiatives that serve Montgomery County residents.

F. Project Work Plan/Timeline (500-word limit)

This section should outline the schedule for implementation of the proposed program over the 12-month grant performance period.

The implementation schedule over the performance period should list:

- The program's objectives and related activities, including the purchase, installation, and operation of cold storage infrastructure;
- Timeline for implementation and completion of each objective and/or activity; and
- Responsible staff or parties, including partner organizations, farms, etc. involved in the project.

G. Performance Plan (500-word limit)

The Performance Plan should outline how you will measure the success of your proposed project. Please also include any historical outcomes achieved by similar projects that are being emulated or expanded through this proposal.

In this section of the application, applicants **MUST estimate the following milestone figures** (depending on focus area(s)) at 6 months (mid-cycle) and 12 months (end-cycle) of program implementation:

- For food assistance provider partners and non-profit agencies involved in **food recovery and/or rescue** please estimate progress on the following metrics at 6 month and 12 months:
 - Pounds of food from all sources recovered from being wasted;
 - Number of unique food assistance provider partners receiving recovered food;
 - Pounds of recovered food stored in grant-funded infrastructure;
 - (if applicable) Number of **unduplicated¹ households and individuals** receiving food assistance.
- For local agriculture and food garden partners involved in **local⁴ sourcing efforts** please estimate progress on the following metrics at 6 month and 12 months:
 - (if applicable) Pounds of locally produced food sold in connection to food assistance efforts;
 - (if applicable) Pounds of locally produced food donated in connection to food assistance efforts;
 - Total pounds of food stored in grant-funded infrastructure;
 - Sales/revenue generated as a result of grant-funded infrastructure.

Applicants should describe the data collection methods associated with the above milestone metrics and any additional metrics applicants will be using to measure the success of the proposed project.

Reporting Expectations

- If granted funds, your organization may be required to report on additional metrics as listed below. Grantees should expect to report against these targets during mid-cycle and

end-of-cycle reporting. Numbers reported in mid- and end-of-cycle reports should be unduplicated and not double-count residents.¹ **If providing unduplicated service data is not possible, please explain the barriers to doing so.**

- Mid- and end-of-cycle reports require documentation of all receipts and invoices for purchases made with the grant funds.

Section	Metrics
<p>Metrics for Food Recovery/Rescue Applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total pounds of food recovered³ from being wasted (required) • Pounds of recovered foods distributed directly to residents by applicant organization (required) • Pounds of recovered foods distributed to other food assistance providers (required if applicable) • Change from calendar year 2023 in pounds of recovered foods distributed to other food assistance providers (required if applicable) • Change from calendar year 2023 in total unique number of food assistance providers⁴ receiving recovered foods from applicant organization (required if applicable) • Pounds of recovered foods received from Montgomery County-based farm or garden partners (required) • Increase (square footage) in cold-storage capacity, including static units and/or refrigerated vehicles, as compared to March 2024 (required) • Total individuals and households receiving food assistance from lead applicant organization (required)
<p>Metrics for Local Sourcing Applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pounds of Montgomery County grown or produced food sold to Montgomery County food assistance providers (required) • Total revenue (\$) in sales of Montgomery County grown or produced food to food assistance providers (required) • Pounds of Montgomery County grown or produced food donated to Montgomery County food assistance providers (required) • Increase (square footage) in cold-storage capacity, including static units and/or refrigerated vehicles, as compared to March 2024 (required) • Estimated pounds of food stored as a result of grant-funded infrastructure (recommended) • Change from calendar year 2023 in total estimated pounds of food wasted (composted, mowed over, etc.) due to a lack of cold storage capacity (recommended) • Total value (\$) of food stored using grant-funded infrastructure (recommended) Non-food security revenue (\$) generated as a result of

	grant-funded infrastructure (recommended)
Collaboration and partnership with other food system stakeholders (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessed score (1-5): How would you rate the effectiveness of collaboration and partnership with any other proposed stakeholders? (<i>This answer will NOT be shared with other stakeholders</i>) (recommended). Please provide additional comments on your score provided.
Budget and Sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of the grant budget spent to date. Please provide additional comments on the percentage spent.
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative feedback about the change in amount of food wasted during the performance period as compared to calendar year 2023, indicating the return-on-investment of the cold storage infrastructure to prevent food waste. Narrative feedback about the implementation or experience running this program, including unexpected challenges and success stories. Narrative feedback about the grantee’s efforts to ensure cultural proficiency, inclusivity of underserved community members, and the use of a racial equity lens in providing services.

¹For this reporting, an **unduplicated household or individual** is defined as: a household or individual served at least once throughout the reporting period. For example, the mid-cycle report may indicate 500 unique individuals served. From mid-cycle to end-cycle, if only 100 additional individuals received assistance, whether the 500 individuals in the mid-cycle report return for assistance, the end-cycle report should indicate that 600 unique individuals received assistance.

²For this reporting, **local** is defined as within Montgomery County.

³For this reporting, **recovered food** includes any food that would have otherwise been wasted such as items from businesses, institutions, farms etc. Food that has been purchased for donation should not be considered recovered.

⁴For this reporting, a **unique food assistance provider** is defined as: a non-profit organization providing food directly to Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity at least once throughout the reporting period.

H. Scoring Criteria & Rubric

To review the scoring criteria and rubric, please visit the [Scoring Rubric](#).