



## **COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grants Frequently Asked Questions**

*Last Revised: July 20, 2020*

### **GENERAL PROGRAM QUESTIONS**

#### **Where is this money coming from?**

Both grants in the Food Security Initiative (the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant and the COVID-19 Food Security and Wisconsin Products Grant) are supported by \$15 million provided by Governor Tony Evers from the funding Wisconsin received through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

#### **What is the difference between the two grant programs in the Food Security Initiative?**

The first grant being released is the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant. This grant is focused on reimbursing or covering costs incurred by non-profit food banks and food pantries to meet the unique challenges of the COVID-19 public health crisis. These costs could be associated with supplies, equipment or temporary infrastructure for food supply and delivery to food insecure Wisconsin residents.

The second grant, the COVID-19 Food Security and Wisconsin Products Grant, focuses on building and strengthening partnerships between agriculture and the food security network to provide Wisconsin food products to Wisconsin residents experiencing food insecurity.

#### **Who should I talk to if I have questions?**

For questions that are not answered here, please send an email to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) at [datcpfoodsecurityinitiative@wisconsin.gov](mailto:datcpfoodsecurityinitiative@wisconsin.gov).

### **HOW TO APPLY**

#### **Who is eligible to apply for this grant?**

This grant is focused on reimbursing or covering costs incurred by non-profit food banks and food pantries to meet the unique challenges of the COVID-19 public health crisis. These costs could be associated with supplies, equipment or temporary infrastructure for food supply and delivery to food insecure Wisconsin residents.

### **Can food pantries submit separately from food banks?**

Technically, food pantries are eligible to submit an application for a grant independent of food banks. However, the department prefers that food banks submit comprehensive applications that include the food bank and their network pantry needs. Applications that demonstrate these partnerships will be given higher-ranking values.

### **How can I participate in this program if my organization is not a food bank, pantry, or other eligible nonprofit?**

If your organization is not a food bank, pantry, or other eligible nonprofit (such as a Tribal Nation), you should work in partnership with eligible organizations to ensure that your needs are represented in their application.

### **If multiple organizations work together to submit a joint proposal, how should the budget workbook be completed?**

Organizations should feel free to apply in the way that makes sense for them. As the department has laid out in the application process, food bank and food pantry proposed costs must be documented. Applications that utilize our budget workbooks in a modified way may be considered, as long as the costs for all entities is documented in the application.

### **How do I apply for the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant?**

To apply, please visit DATCP's website: [FoodSecurity.wi.gov](https://www.foodsecurity.wi.gov)

### **What documents do I have to submit with my application?**

Applicants are required to include the following documents as part of their application:

- W-9 tax form
- Proof of non-profit status
- Completed [budget workbook](#)
- Letters of commitment from all Wisconsin food product partners

If for any reason you are not able to provide any of these required documents, please provide an explanation in the "Purpose Statement" section of your application.

## **ELIGIBLE EXPENSES**

### **Can I be reimbursed for a COVID-19 related purchase that was made prior to the application period?**

Yes, the federal funding used in this grant program allows for reimbursement of eligible costs incurred from March 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020. The department is allowing and encouraging applicants to submit for reimbursement of eligible costs that were incurred prior to the signing of the grant contract.

### **What kind of verification will I need to provide in order to get reimbursed for COVID-19 related purchases?**

Before DATCP issues payments, the grantee will need to provide an invoice documenting eligible expenses incurred. Invoices must include receipts or other proof of payment, which will

be accepted with monthly reporting as established by the program.

**Can I be reimbursed for purchases that I intend to make by December 30, 2020 but have not yet made?**

No, this grant will be a reimbursement grant. Payments will be made after DATCP receives an invoice documenting the grantee's expenses.

**Can I be reimbursed for food purchases?**

For the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant, the primary focus is on equipment, services and supplies needed by food banks/pantries to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 public health crisis. While the grant does allow for the inclusion of food purchases as part of grant applications, food ideally should not be the primary expense in an application.

**Can I be reimbursed for short-term leases on dry storage, refrigeration storage, and mobile storage?**

Yes, the grant will allow reimbursement for short-term lease costs that fall within the funded period and for eligible types of expenses.

**Can I be reimbursed for long-term leased space?**

Yes, long-term lease costs can be eligible as long as they are only for the funding period of the grant, March 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020.

**Can I be reimbursed for equipment?**

Yes, eligible equipment, such as refrigeration systems, delivery equipment, etc. are eligible and expected expenses for the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant.

**What is "commercial grade equipment"?**

Commercial grade equipment is equipment that is certified or classified for sanitation by an American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-accredited certification program. Equipment such as refrigerators should bear the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) certification to meet this requirement.

**Can I be reimbursed for staffing costs if they are directly supporting or building food bank or pantry capacity for COVID-19 response?**

If the expenses are related to and documented as COVID-19-related, staffing expenses may be considered.

**Can I be reimbursed for temporary staffing costs due to hiring staff to temporarily backfill volunteer positions (volunteers self-quarantined during pandemic since high-risk population)?**

Yes, this is considered an eligible expense for the funding period of the grant. The budget worksheet provides an area to capture these types of expenses for food banks and pantries.

**The grant application requires monthly work plans to be submitted. Are grantees required to complete the work exactly as recorded in the application, or is there flexibility in when the costs will be reimbursed?**

The department is requiring monthly work plans in the applications to allow for program planning. It is understood that flexibility is needed and that some costs may be billed in alternate months.

**What if my actual expense is less than I proposed? Will I have flexibility to utilize this funding for other eligible expenses?**

Each contract will specify the final grant requirements. It is anticipated that the grantee will have some flexibility within the budgets to adjust costs to ensure that the funding is used for eligible purposes. The grantee will not be allowed to exceed the contracted funding amount.

**Can I apply for funding and determine its purpose later on in the process?**

The department cannot approve an open dollar amount without some description of the purpose for the funds that is COVID-19 related. We understand there may be many unknowns given the nature of the pandemic. The Food Security Network Support Grants program aims to help food banks and pantries cover expenses they have already incurred or plan to incur due to COVID-19.

## **CONTRACTS, REPORTING, BILLING, AND AWARDS**

**What are the reporting requirements?**

Monthly reports will be required for the COVID-19 Food Security Network Support Grant. A template for these monthly reports will be provided to the grantees as part of the contracting process. Grantees will be required to summarize the work that was completed and expenses submitted for reimbursement for the completed work for the previous month. Grantees will be required to submit proof of payment along with their monthly report in order to receive payment. The first monthly report/billing date will be August 15, 2020 with the final monthly report/billing date on November 15, 2020.

**If the contract goes through December 30, 2020, why is the final report/billing on November 15, 2020?**

The funding for this program was provided by Governor Tony Evers from the money Wisconsin received through the federal CARES Act. In accordance with federal requirements, the department must close the program and use the full grant funding by December 30, 2020. In order to meet that deadline, we must receive the final reporting and billing from grantees by November 15, 2020.

**What are the terms and conditions of accepting a grant?**

If awarded a grant, grantees will be required to enter into a contract with the department. A sample contract is available [here](#) that outlines the anticipated terms and conditions expected as part of this grant program.

**How will the department decide awards if more requests are made than funding**

**available?**

Depending on the number and amounts of requests, the department may not be able to fund the full amount of the requests. The department may contact grantees to determine what alternate work plan is possible if a lower funding amount is possible. Grantees are highly encouraged to consider prioritization within their proposals as they develop them. The department is not requiring that this prioritization be submitted with the application, but to be available for discussion if needed.

**What will you do if there is more funding available after all grants are awarded?**

Given the federal requirements for this grant funding; the many infrastructure challenges COVID-19 has posed to organizations throughout Wisconsin's food security network; and the amount of Wisconsinites experiencing food insecurity, DATCP expects that the full amount of the funding will be awarded.