

NourishMD Grant Program

Program Guidelines



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**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT - NOURISHMD GRANT PROGRAM**

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NourishMD Grant Program

Program Guidelines

Program Overview

The **NourishMD Grant Program** is a strategic and targeted investment by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) designed to address the persistent issue of fresh food unavailability in communities across the state.

This program supports the development, stabilization, and expansion of retail outlets that provide fresh food in areas where residents have limited or no access to nutritious food options. By facilitating access to fresh produce and other essential grocery items, this initiative is a key step toward building stronger, healthier, and more economically resilient communities across Maryland.

Funding Overview

Eligible projects may receive grants ranging from **\$25,000 to \$150,000** to support capital-related needs that contribute to business stabilization or expansion. A total of **up to \$2 million** in grant funding is available under this program.

In addition to the grant opportunity, applicants may request **supplemental loan funding** in the form of a loan through DHCD's **Neighborhood BusinessWorks (NBW)** business development division. Loan requests will undergo a thorough financial review to assess the applicant's capacity to manage debt.

Learn more, please visit: [Neighborhood BusinessWorks](#) for DHCD's flagship small business lending program, offering flexible financing to support business startup, expansion, and commercial revitalization projects across Maryland.

Partnership with Maryland Market Money Program Administered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture

[The MDA Maryland Market Money \(MMM\) program](#) removes economic barriers for Marylanders experiencing food insecurity, providing a dollar-for-dollar match for purchases made using federal nutrition benefits at participating Maryland farmers

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markets, farm stands, and CSAs while providing technical assistance, training, marketing, and additional services to stakeholders.

MDA has agreed to co-award grants to NourishMD grant recipients so that we can help recipients in a holistic approach of capital support, technical assistance, and maximization of income.

Program application timelines will align and applications will be linked. Eligible applicants for either program will be referred to the other. This partnership demonstrates the Moore-Miller Administration's commitment to addressing food insecurity for Marylanders across the state.

Eligible Use of Funds

Funds must be used for the sole purpose of improving or providing healthy food access in the following manners:

- Purchase of furniture, fixtures, and /or equipment (e.g., refrigeration, shelving, etc.);
- Renovation and build-out;
- Facility upgrades;
- Capital needs related to Inventory expansion (non-prepared foods);
- Working capital involved with expansion or renovations/construction; and
- Infrastructure/technology for SNAP/EBT setup.

Eligibility Criteria

For the purpose of this program, "Food Deserts" is defined as any area with a Maryland Community Business Compass fresh food gap score of 60% or higher pursuant to Annotated Code of Maryland - Housing and Community Development Article §6-308.

For-profit and nonprofit businesses engaged in retail activity are eligible, provided that they:

- Serve a community with a high fresh food gap score per the Maryland Community Business Compass
 - High fresh food gap score is defined as a score of 60% or higher
 - Exceptions may be granted on an individual basis.
- Operate at least 5 days per week, year round (farmer's markets/on-farm markets exempt from 5-day requirement but must operate year round)
- Employ a maximum number of 500 workers;

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- Are registered and in good standing with the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT);
- Offer, or plan to use grant to offer, a variety of high-quality fresh produce, or a mix of fresh, frozen, and preserved produce, as well as other healthy grocery items (e.g., whole grains, dairy products, fresh meats/proteins);
- Ensure that **at least 20%** of their retail inventory **or** floor space dedicated to food sales will be comprised of healthy food items;
 - This percentage may be based on:
 - Square footage of food display space, or;
 - Dollar value of inventory for sale.
 - Applicants must provide documentation, photos, or a store layout to confirm compliance with the requirements.

Food retailers include, but are not limited to:

- Grocery stores;
- Corner stores;
- Farm stands and other on-farm markets;
- Farmers' markets;
- Food co-ops; and
- Delivery retailers serving a population with low fresh food access; and
- Small retail stores with the majority of inventory or sales are food-related (If no more than 25% of gross sales are derived from alcohol/ tobacco products.

Healthy Food Threshold Criteria

For the purposes of this program, healthy food is defined as items from the following categories:

- Fresh, whole, or frozen fruits and vegetables (preferably local and seasonal);
- Whole grains (e.g., brown rice, oats, whole grain breads);
- Dairy products;
- Fresh, frozen, or lean proteins (e.g., poultry, fish, beans, tofu, eggs);
- Minimally processed items (low in added sugar, sodium, and saturated fats); and
- Healthy pantry staples (e.g., olive oil, canned vegetables, dried beans, spices)

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Program Priorities

Awards will be provided on a competitive basis. Prioritization will be provided to applicants that are:

- Located in an ENOUGH ACT-awarded area or Just Community designated zone;
- An existing MMM Access Point;
- Able to accept SNAP benefits
 - Either currently accepting SNAP benefits or having the infrastructure in place to do so upon completion of capital improvements.
 - Only those with SNAP participation will be eligible for the NourishMD + MMM award partnership.
- Committed to local sourcing of inventory; and
- Using or planning to use funds for the purchase or installation of equipment to reduce fossil fuel reliance or energy consumption.

Required Documentation

To be considered a complete application, all applicants must submit the following materials:

Use of Grant Funds

Submit a detailed written plan describing how grant funds will be used. If the grant funds will support, but not entirely finance, a broader project, this should be clearly indicated here, and this should NOT exceed two (2) pages.

Healthy Food Criteria

Provide information demonstrating how your business currently meets, or will meet, NourishMD's healthy and fresh food criteria to dedicate at least 20% of inventory or food-sales space to healthy food items.

Financial Documentation

Upload one (1) year of business tax returns or audited financial statements. If the business has been operating for less than one year, submit alternative documentation sufficient to demonstrate financial viability.

Relocation and Expansion Documentation (if applicable)

If the project involves relocation or expansion, provide supporting documentation such as a lease agreement, letter of intent (LOI), or proof of site control.

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Only applications that include all required documentation and are fully complete at the time of submission will be eligible for review and consideration for funding under the Healthy Food Access Grant Pilot Program.

Processing Fee

A **\$250 processing fee** is required for all applications. If the applicant is approved for funding, this fee may be paid directly from the awarded grant funds.

Review Committee

Members of the NourishMD Grant Review Committee will include:

1. Assistant Secretary of DHCD Division of Business Development (DBD);
2. Director of Operations, DHCD Division of Business Development (DBD);
3. Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Representative;
4. Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Representative; and
5. DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization (NR) Representative.

Program Timeline

Completed applications will be accepted and reviewed on a **competitive basis**. To be considered, applicants MUST include all required documents at the time of submission. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed until all missing components are submitted and verified.

The timeline for the NourishMD Grant Pilot Program is as follows:

- **December** – Notice of Funding Availability
Notice of grant funding will be made public, along with the program's website, which will provide full information and guidelines.
- **January 20th** – Application portal opens at 12:00 p.m. EST.
Applicants may begin submitting completed applications through the online portal.
- **February 20th** – Application portal closes at 5:00 p.m. EST.
No applications will be accepted after the deadline.
- **February - March** – Application review period
DHCD staff will evaluate eligible applications for completeness, impact, and alignment with program priorities and then refer the final list of eligible applications to the Review Committee for determinations.

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- **April** – Funding recommendations finalized
Selected applications will be forwarded for internal approval.
- **May** – Award announcements
Applicants will be notified of funding decisions, and award agreements will begin processing.
- **June** - Board of Public Works (BPW) approves grants and disbursements are made.