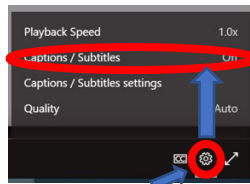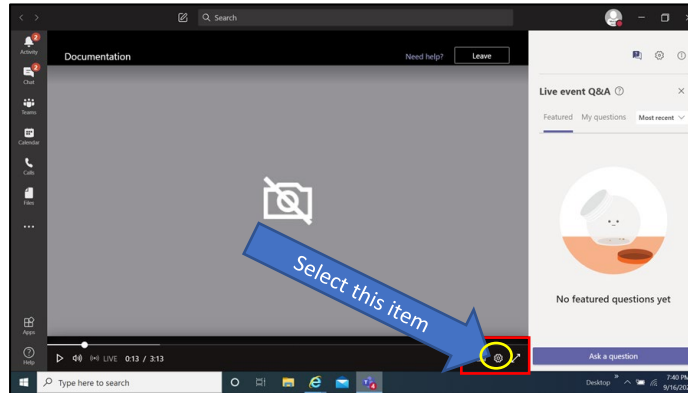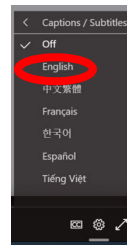# FY25 Community Food Assistance Grant Information Session
August 28, 2024

How you can view the multi-lingual closed captions:

When you select it a menu appears, choose **captions / subtitles**

You then select the language of choice

It will then display the language chosen

Disclaimer

The translations provided in this application use what is referred to as mechanical translation technology. Although this method of translation is very effective and provides a high rate of accuracy it is NOT 100% word for word accurate. Things that may affect it are the quality of the microphone used and potentially a person speaking that may have an accent.

Welcome!

Information Session Agenda:

1. Provide an overview of the program
2. Walk through the application platform
3. Open up for participant questions (put your questions in the Q&A box)

This meeting will be recorded and the slides will be posted for future viewing on the Office of Grants Management online application portal. Any questions we cannot answer during the Information Session will be addressed and posted on the platform.

Online Application Platform Home Page: https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org

Grant Program Page: https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org/prog/FY25CFA

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Office of Food Systems Resilience

- OFSR was created based on the recommendation of the Montgomery County COVID-19 Food Security Task Force and established by the County Council in July 2022 under Bill 20-22.

- The mission of the OFSR is to develop and implement interagency budgetary, regulatory, and operational strategies to build a more equitable, efficient, resilient, and sustainable food system in Montgomery County.

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OFSR Values & Priorities

OFSR Core Values: Equity, Systems-based, Innovation, and Data-driven

Strategic Priorities

- Build racial equity and social justice in the local food system.
- Expand local food production (including commercial farms, urban agriculture, community production).
- Strengthen processing and distribution infrastructure.
- Guide strategic investment in food security.
- Coordinate capacity for future crises (plans, mechanisms).
- Establish food system strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Increase economic opportunities in food systems.

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Community Food Assistance Grant History

Transition in Emergency Response
- The Food Staples Program was launched as a pandemic response initiative in 2020
- For FY25, existing Food Staples partners can continue receiving credits through the Community Food Assistance program, a new funding model focused on supporting food purchases for distribution to food insecure residents
- CFA is designed and managed by the OFSR, in partnership with the Office of Grants Management

Focus on Sustainability
- Long-term strategic investment in food security initiatives and strengthening capacity
- Community partnerships to support food assistance providers
- Strengthening the capacity of the County's network of food assistance organizations

Alignment with Food System Priorities
- Increase resident food security & nutritious food access
- Build racial equity and social justice in the local food system
- Increase economic opportunities in food systems
- Improve emotional and physical well-being of residents
- Support networks and distribution systems within the community

Outgoing Grants

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Key Program Details

Total Funding Available:	**$3,500,000**
Award Range:	**$5,000 Minimum to $300,000 Maximum** *Final award amounts may be lower than $5,000*
Performance Period:	**October 15, 2024 to October 15, 2025**
Where to Apply:	https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org/prog/FY25CFA
Application Opening:	**Friday, August 23, 2024 at 4:00 PM**
Application Deadline:	**Monday, September 23, 2024 at 3:00 PM (revised)**

Program Goals

The goal of this program is to **ensure ongoing support for critical food assistance providers in Montgomery County** by addressing food insecurity, closing service gaps, and enhancing program impact through flexible, transparent, and data-driven funding, with a focus on culturally relevant and sustainable practices.

- Target Populations: Montgomery County households in underserved communities and are experiencing or at risk of experiencing food insecurity.

- Allowable purposes for this grant: Applicants can apply for a combination of a grant and/or Food Staples Credits to address critical gaps in healthy food access through existing and/or enhanced models.

Applicants will outline how the program service delivery will work from start to finish within the Strategy Narrative.

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Eligibility (1 of 2)

- The organization **must be a Federal 501(c)(3)** tax-exempt status **food assistance provider based in Montgomery County**;

- The organization **must submit a Letter of Support** from organizational leadership or partner(s) confirming commitment to allow use of all key physical infrastructure assets and/or resources (storage space, packing or distribution location, vehicles, etc.) outlined in the proposal for the entire grant period.

- The organization's **principal place of business must be in Montgomery County**; if a national or regional organization, it must have a location in Montgomery County through which it provides related services;

- The **organization has provided regularly scheduled, uninterrupted food assistance services** <u>at least once per month</u>, at one consistent site, for <u>a minimum of two years</u>;

- The organization must be currently registered and in good standing with the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT);

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Eligibility (2 of 2)

- All activities and expenditures funded through this grant program must be **exclusively for Montgomery County residents to provide food assistance services that are <u>free of charge</u>**;

- Proposed projects must not exclude any potential beneficiaries and/or participants based on their race, ethnicity, gender, or other protected class;

- Proposed expenses must be for sustaining or enhancing existing activities. Grant funding cannot be used for any purchase already made; purchases or activities unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes; prior obligations and/or fines; debts and penalties; lobbying expenses; alcoholic beverages; or supplanting other funds; and

- 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.

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Priority for funding will focus on projects that:

- **Address critical gaps in healthy food access for households in various underserved communities in Montgomery County via existing and enhanced programming**, including:
  - Choice pantry model, offering participants a choice model with access to a variety of culturally relevant, healthy shelf-stable, and fresh food items;
  - Pre-packed box/bag distribution that includes healthy, locally sourced food options; or
  - Delivery and/or distribution of nutritious, medically and/or preference-tailored prepared meals to meet unique needs.

- **Offer a range in programming and incorporate data-driven recommendations that demonstrate strong understanding of community food access needs and that will have greatest impact**

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Funding Priorities (2 of 4)

Priority for funding will focus on projects that:

- Demonstrate a strong track record of delivering food assistance services consistently in underserved communities in Montgomery County;
- Demonstrate a strong understanding of community food access needs and cultural competency;
- Have a detailed program proposal that includes distribution process, sourcing strategy, and accurate budget;
- Include financial management, data collection, analysis, and reporting strategy for compliance;
- Clearly identify minimum and maximum number of households that could be supported, including details on format of food assistance; and
- Seek to enhance their existing food assistance model.

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Funding Priorities (3 of 4)

Priority for funding will focus on projects that:

- Support the local food economy through purchasing partnerships with County farms, locally-owned retailers, and/or DMV-region businesses owned/operated by individuals from historically underserved communities;

- Operate a participant choice model for food access (participants select what food they receive); and

- Leverage additional resources to support the program (in-kind, direct organizational investment, non-county public dollars, outside grant funds).

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Funding Priorities (4 of 4)

Priority for funding will focus on projects that align with the OFSR's core values:

- **Equity**: all efforts should address social injustice and racial disparities to build equity and food sovereignty in our community;

- **Systems-based**: strategies should 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 critical; and

- **Data-driven**: strategic policy and investment decisions require intentional and reliable data collection and analysis, and solutions with clearly defined success metrics and measurable impact.

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Submission Guidelines

1. Submit applications through the Montgomery County Office of Grants Management Grants Application portal at https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org
2. Create an SM Apply account, select the FY25 Community Food Assistance Program, and access the grant application.
3. Applicants requesting an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation should contact the Office of Grants Management to discuss alternative submission options.
4. No additions or deletions will be accepted after the deadline unless requested by OFSR and OGM. Incomplete, illegible, or corrupted applications will not be considered.

All applications must be fully submitted online by
Monday, September 16, 2024 at 4:00 PM.
<u>**Late submissions will be disqualified.**</u>

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Application Tasks

- **Applicant Information (Reusable) Task:** Organization contact information and supporting documents (data fields and uploads)

- **Applicant Background (Reusable and Optional) Task:** Organization size and leadership demographics (data collected will never be seen by Review Committees or used for awarding)

- **Applicant Food System overview (Reusable) Task:** Covers budget, service details, food types, frequency, and eligibility.

- **Project Strategy Task:** Project data & narrative (100 Words Maximum)

- **Program Budget and Narrative Task:** Provide a detailed budget with itemized costs, funding sources, and explanations for expenses. (Budget Template MS Excel format,)

- **Performance Plan:** Outline of metrics and outputs to be achieved (2-page limit, PDF uploads)

- **Project Staffing Plan Task:** Outline of staff roles (1-page limit, PDF upload)

- **Performance History:** Outcomes already achieved (1000-word limit)

*Full Task requirements and guidance on **FY25 Community Food Assistance Grant Page***

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Project Strategy Narrative (1 of 2)

The Project Strategy data fields will include:

- **Service Delivery**: Outline the full process from outreach to food distribution, including sourcing and participant management.
- **Target Populations**: Identify and describe the underserved communities you will reach.
- **Annual Goals**: Compare your goals for the coming year to the previous year, noting any changes.
- **Program Resources**: List resources used for program development and refinement.
- **Community Insight**: Describe your connection to and feedback from the communities served.
- **Cultural Proficiency**: Assess your ability to deliver the project with cultural and technical sensitivity.
- **Unique Suitability**: Justify why your organization is well-suited for this project and detail key partnerships.

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Project Strategy Narrative (2 of 2)

The Strategy Narrative should cover:

- **Service Delivery**: Describe outreach, food sourcing, and tailored assistance strategies.
- **Underserved Populations**: Specify which groups you will support and how.
- **Goals Comparison**: Compare your service goals year-over-year and note changes.
- **Development Resources**: Outline resources guiding program improvements.
- **Community Engagement**: Explain how community feedback shapes your program.
- **Implementation Capability**: Evaluate your cultural and technical execution ability.
- **Organizational Fit**: Justify your organization's unique impact and key partnerships.

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Project Budget

All applicants must submit their project budget using the required template for the grant term (Oct 15, 2024 - Oct 14, 2025).

The budget should include:
- **Expenses:** Itemize costs for food sourcing (direct purchases, Staples credits, etc.), and operating costs (staffing, supplies, rent, transportation, indirect expenses). Operating costs are capped at 15% of the grant.
- **Other Revenues:** Detail direct funding, remaining Staples credits, and in-kind resources. Include the value of pre-allocated produce boxes.
- **Budget Narrative:** Provide detailed explanations for expenditures, the impact of funding changes, alignment with service levels, and how funds will exclusively benefit Montgomery County residents.

Use the Budget Template to input values and justify costs, ensuring consistency across the application. The budget should be submitted in MS Excel format with the file named "[ORGANIZATIONNAME]CFAbudget2025."

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Project Budget Narrative

- **Expenditure Details:** Explain the purpose of costs and how they were calculated, including specific breakdowns for food types (shelf-stable, produce, protein) and any specialized sourcing.
- **Impact of Funding Reduction:** Describe how the project would be affected by less funding, including whether it can be completed with a smaller budget and the effect on projected outcomes.
- **Alignment and Efficiency:** Outline how the funding request aligns with current service levels, whether it will reduce, sustain, or expand services, and detail strategies for cost efficiency.
- **Benefit to Montgomery County:** If providing services outside the county, explain how the grant will be used exclusively for Montgomery County residents.

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Performance Plan (1 of 2)

The Performance Plan outlines how you will measure the success for your proposed project.

- **Objective:** Outline methods for measuring, collecting, and tracking success metrics, including reporting requirements and performance milestones.
- **Milestone Estimates:** Provide estimates for key metrics at 6 months (mid-cycle) and 12 months (end-cycle) of the grant term, including:
    - Number of individual service deliveries per month.
    - Number of households receiving food assistance per month.
    - *Ensure figures are unduplicated, and explain any barriers if unduplicated data is not possible.*
- **Evaluation Methods:** Describe how you will track and report service data and financial metrics. Include strategies for gathering participant feedback and assessing the program's impact on the target population.

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Performance Plan (2 of 2)

Additional [Reporting Requirements](#) for Awarded Applicants:

- Submit quarterly reports to OFSR, including:
  - Service data and financial reporting
  - Narrative feedback:
    - The implementation or experience running this program, including unexpected challenges and success stories.
    - Efforts to ensure cultural proficiency, inclusivity of underserved community members, and the use of a racial equity lens in providing services.
    - How would you rate and self-evaluate the effectiveness of communication and collaboration with the residents served?
    - Cultural or medically tailored diet accommodations offered.

Awardees must also:

- Be available to host OFSR staff for one onsite visit during the grant period;
- Circulate the OFSR participant satisfaction survey to program participants.

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Project Staffing Plan

If your budget proposal includes funding for staff expenses, please submit a staffing plan.

- **Position Titles & Time Commitment:**
  - List each position with title and percentage of full-time equivalent (FTE) or weekly hours dedicated to the program.
- **Role Description & Qualifications:**
  - Describe each position's role in the program.
  - Include relevant degrees, licenses, certifications, and any language skills or cultural competencies.
- **Employment Type & Compensation:**
  - Specify if positions are salaried employees, contractors, or volunteers.
  - Provide details on salary, fringe rates, hourly rates, and benefits for each position funded through the grant.
- **Additional Notes:**
  - If staff are 100% grant-funded, ensure their full professional time is devoted to the program, excluding routine administrative tasks.
  - Optionally, include resumes or position descriptions as additional materials.

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Performance History

- **Organizational Experience:** Summarize your non-profit's history of providing consistent, monthly food assistance in Montgomery County for at least two years. Highlight key service data, outputs, and outcomes from recent programs.
- **Evidence of Impact:** Demonstrate how past outcomes show your ability to achieve similar results with the proposed project. Include results from county-funded and other sources.
- **Operational Capacity:** Provide examples that illustrate your ability to:
    - Comply with performance and financial reporting requirements.
    - Manage food procurement, storage, transportation, and distribution effectively.
    - Conduct culturally competent outreach and engage priority populations.
    - Adapt program operations as needed.
- **Focus:** Offer insights not covered elsewhere in the application, focusing on past performance to support future success.

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Supporting Document Uploads

- **Letter of support** from organizational leadership or partner(s) **confirming commitment to allow use of all key physical infrastructure assets and/or resources** (storage space, packing or distribution location, vehicles, etc.) outlined in the proposal for the entire grant period **(required)**

- Collaborative partner materials, if applicable (optional)

- Program Related Materials (optional)

- Other Supporting Materials (optional)

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Ethics Questions

- **Does your organization employ current employees or contractors of the Montgomery County Government?** This applies for employees that are paid by your organization but are also paid by Montgomery County Government.

- **Does your organization's Board of Directors include current employees or contractors of the Montgomery County Government?** This applies to volunteer board of director positions.

- **If you answered "yes" to either question, please describe the employee(s) role and function as it applies to your organization.** Answering "yes" to either question does not exclude your organization from being eligible to apply.

- Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, and WorkSource Montgomery do not count as Montgomery County Government employees for the purpose of this Grant Program.

If you are unsure if a position applies., please contact the Office of Grants Management.

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Other REQUIRED Preparations

- **Register and create a profile on the online application platform** for each team member who will be working on your application.

- **Verify that your organization is registered with the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT).** Click **here** to go to the SDAT Business Express site to confirm. Even if your organization is registered in another jurisdiction, you must be registered with SDAT for Montgomery County to finalize an award with your organization.

- **If your organization is not in Good Standing with SDAT, take the necessary steps to get back into Good Standing.** SDAT will advise what steps are required. Montgomery County cannot finalize an award with you or organization if you are not in Good Standing. Your application for a grant could be disqualified if you are not in Good Standing.

- **Register with the Montgomery County Central Vendor Registration System (CVRS)** by clicking **here**. If you or your organization receives an award from the County, you will need to be registered with CVRS to receive payments.

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Review Process

- The Office of Food Systems Resilience will recruit an independent Review Committee made up of qualified neutral individuals in Montgomery County Government, and possibly the broader Montgomery County community

- The panel members will review and score applicant proposals based on the criteria and priorities established in the NOFO and submit recommendations for awards

- **Confidence Ratings:** Evaluators use confidence ratings to assess the proposal holistically, beyond specific criteria, to gauge overall success likelihood.
  - 3 – Confident: The proposal shows a clear understanding of requirements, presents a strong project, and is likely to succeed.
  - 2 – Somewhat Confident: The proposal shows partial understanding and relevance but has some uncertainties about success.
  - 1 – Not Confident: The proposal lacks understanding, relevance, and appears unlikely to succeed.

- **Purpose**: Confidence ratings help capture both strengths and weaknesses, supporting smaller organizations and improving evaluation efficiency.

- **Scoring Adjustments:** Scores may be statistically rescaled for fairness, depending on the number of applications and reviewers.

Scoring – 100 Possible Points

A. Project Goals and Grant Program Priorities (1-3 rating; weighted 25/100 pts)

- Applicant demonstrates a strong understanding of their target population's/ community's needs, experiences, and preferences, based on recent data and literature available, and describes an effective program strategy to effectively meet these needs of the underserved/target populations (5 points);

- Clearly identifies the minimum and maximum number of individuals/households that could be supported by the funding request, including details on the format, types, estimated amounts, and frequency of food assistance that would be provided (10 points);

- Demonstrates technical, cultural, and linguistically proficient services, inclusivity of underserved community members, and the use of a racial equity lens in providing services within this proposal (5 points); and

- Program design is well researched, strategically and efficiently structured, and designed intentionally to address the unique needs of the population served, including distributing a wide variety of food products (produce, meat, etc.) and offering culturally considerate products whenever possible (5 points).

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

B. Sound Fiscal Management & Budget (1-3 rating; weighted at 20/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates sound grant and fiscal management practices and will be able to submit financial reports and back-up documentation to meet administrative and audit requirements (5 points);

- Expenses listed in the Budget and Budget Justification are consistent with the Project Strategy, Staffing Plan, and other parts of the proposal (5 points);

- Applicant's Budget and Budget Justification reflect reasonable and realistic costs needed to implement the project, based upon robust research on a sourcing strategy (5 points); and

- Applicant demonstrates that they will achieve the stated outcomes for the target population/community and use resources efficiently (5 points).

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

C. Organizational Capability and Relevant Experience (1-3 rating, weighted at 20/100 points)

- Applicant organization and proposed staff/team members have demonstrated expertise and experience to deliver the proposed outcomes to the target population (5 points);

- Applicant has demonstrated the capability to effectively collaborate with residents and organizations in the community to coordinate regular food distributions and/or delivery, as evidenced by previous experience work (10 points); and

- Applicant demonstrates a strong history of serving Montgomery County individuals and families and can effectively conduct culturally competent participant outreach, engagement, and service delivery with the priority geographic and demographic populations identified (5 points).

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

D. Performance Plan & Performance History (1-3 rating; weighted at 15/100 points)

- Applicant demonstrates a clear process to measure/evaluate its project and comply with the required metrics and evaluation of participants, and provides service data and key outputs and outcomes of recent food assistance program(s) supporting Montgomery County residents (5 points);

- Performance History provides strong evidence that the organization has been providing nonprofit food assistance services based in Montgomery County that are regularly scheduled, and has been operating uninterrupted at least once per month, at one consistent site, for a minimum of two years (5 points); and

- The organization demonstrates the capacity to: (5 points)
  - Comply with performance and financial data collection and reporting requirements;
  - Successfully operate all aspects of the proposed food assistance program (including food procurement, safe storage, transportation, and distribution); and
  - Adapt program operations as needed to reflect challenges and opportunities that arise.

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

E. Soundness of the Overall Proposal (1-3 rating; weighted 20/100 points)

- Proposal clearly describes the problem(s) the organization seeks to address, target population/community, how activities will be completed, the effectiveness of proposed activities, and, if funded, how the work will accomplish the stated outcomes (5 points);

- The implementation plan within the proposal is clear, realistic, and achievable based on the proposed timeline (5 points); and

- Proposal considers challenges and strategies to address them and discusses contingency plans for a lower than requested funding amount that is realistic and still results in desired outcomes albeit at a lower level (5 points);

- Align with the OFSR's core values of equity, systems-based, innovation, and data-driven (5 points).

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Scoring – 100 Possible Points

F. Added Value Proposal Characteristics (1-3 rating; weighted 15/100 points)

- Support the local food economy through purchasing partnerships with County farms, locally owned retailers, and/or DMV-region businesses owned/operated by individuals representing historically underserved communities (3 points);

- Operate a "participant choice model" for food access, allowing participants to select what food they receive (3 points);

- Leverage additional resources to support this program, including in-kind contributions, direct organizational investment, non-county public dollars, and secured outside grant funds (3 points);

- Commit to completing an edible food diversion assessment with Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) (2 points);

- Commit to reporting service metrics beyond what is required for the grant program (2 points);

- Commit to grant-period participation in a Peer Learning Circle (2 points).

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Award Notification

- Award notification letters are expected to be released roughly 3-4 weeks after the application deadline via email.

- For successful applicants, the award agreement will contain funding restrictions; programmatic, administrative, and policy requirements; reporting documents including total budget along with the amount of grant funding for the program; and payment terms.

- Documentation standards are very high as we are subject to audits and must follow official procedures. If you are unable to provide documentation of how the funds were used, your organization may be required to return the grant funds to the County.

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General Recommendations

- **Read the guidelines and instructions in the NOFO and follow them.**

- Develop, coordinate, and finalize your application offline and then upload all materials into the application.

- Uploads in PDF format are preferred (except the Program Budget, MS Excel please) but other formats are also welcome.

- **The application platform cannot read Mac formatted documents** (i.e., Pages, Numbers, and Key Note), so these should be submitted as PDFs or converted to MS Office formats.

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Further Questions?

Montgomery County Office of Grants Management

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OGM Website
https://montgomerycountymd.gov/ogm/
OGM online grants application platform
https://mcmdgrants.smapply.org