



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – October 16, 2024 Agenda Item 2

Work Session/Presentation

Presentation on the FY25 Food Insecurity Reduction Grant Award Recommendations.

Recommended Council Action

Adopt the Grants Review Committee FY25 Food Insecurity Reduction Grant Award Recommendations.

Context with Key Issues

In October 2021, The City issued an RFP for services to reduce food insecurity among city residents through one of two tracks, either food distribution or increased access to SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). Four contracts were awarded for FY23 and renewed in FY24, three for food distribution and one for SNAP outreach, funded through ARPA.

In lieu of renewing existing contracts for FY25, the City instead created a competitive grant program in order to open up the opportunity to a greater number of applicants, as well as invite innovative ideas for addressing food insecurity beyond those set by the City.

The City of Takoma Park's Food Insecurity Reduction Grants provide financial support to specific programs, projects, and events that reduce or prevent food insecurity among residents of Takoma Park. Grant awards range from \$10,000-\$30,000 for the 15-month period beginning October 1, 2024 and ending December 31, 2025. All funded projects must be completed by December 31, 2025, with the possibility of a 6-month extension if necessary. There is no match required by the grantee.

The program is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development and staffed by the City's Grants Coordinator. Based on the Community Quality of Life model, the Grants Review Committee, comprised of residents appointed by the City Council, reviewed all completed applications and developed funding recommendations forwarded to the City Council.

The \$215,000 of ARPA funds identified for food insecurity reduction in the FY25 budget was augmented by reallocating unencumbered ARPA funds in the amount of \$4,388 from the Community Quality of Life grant program. These funds were a combination of a small surplus over initially-awarded funds, and the reduction of a grant award at the request of a grantee organization. This results in a total of \$219,388 in ARPA funding available for Food Insecurity Reduction Grants, which must be encumbered by December 31, 2024.

Eleven applicants requested a total of \$ 300,978.00 in funding. Eight applications were from organizations that have not received previous food insecurity reduction funding from the City. The Grant Review Committee recommends funding the following nine programs at the levels indicated. *Note that some projects were funded at less than requested levels in order to award funds to a greater number of worthy projects. Should additional ARPA funds become available, the Grants Review Committee requests that they be distributed to those under-funded projects.*

Seven Food Distribution Projects

Small Things Matter: "Kokua Foods" to provide the residents at several low-income housing complexes access to fresh produce and culturally appropriate foods on a bi-weekly basis on the first and third Thursday of each month. Residents will select the foods they want in a "grocery shopping" format. \$30,000

Meals on Wheels of Takoma Park/Silver Spring: "Daily Delivery: Fighting Neighborhood Food Insecurity in Takoma Park" to deliver two meals/weekday to approximately 50 unique homebound clients each year. One meal is served hot off the stove, and the other is a deli lunch with sides and salads. \$30,000

EduCare Support Services Inc: "The Takoma Park Food Pantry: Pantry on the Go" to deliver perishable and non-perishable food items to seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income families in Takoma Park and surrounding communities on a monthly distribution cycle, with participants receiving a 3-day supply of food tailored to their family size. \$30,000

So What Else Inc: "Food Distributions at Takoma Park Elementary School" to deliver 60 to-go bags on a biweekly basis, providing an assortment of both fresh and shelf-stable goods designed to supplement a family's food usage. \$30,000

CHEER: "Ensure Food Security through Culturally Appropriate Food Distribution" to provide two cohorts of 50 community members with bi-weekly vouchers to be used at two partner local grocery stores that serve the community with their own cultural and religiously sensitive foods. \$30,000

Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington Inc.: "Mother and Child Nutrition Program" to provide a consistent and stable supply of healthy food/nutrition for enrolled pregnant and lactating mothers and their children from neonatal to age two. \$28,278

Enterprise Community Development: "Food Pantry at Essex House" to establish a food pantry at Essex House, an affordable housing property to address the persistent issue of food insecurity among residents. \$20,000

One Workforce Development Project

Crossroads Community Food Network: "A Holistic Approach to Reducing Food Insecurity in the Takoma Langleigh Crossroads" to Address the underlying factors contributing to food insecurity, namely poverty and unemployment. Empower residents to start and grow their food businesses, through a combination of outreach, resources, and one-on-one technical support. \$10,555

One Sustainability/Education Project

Community Food Forest Collective: "Community Food Forest Expansion Project" to expand the food forest program beyond school sites, and provide workshops for the community on regenerative urban agriculture, ecologically-sound food production and land stewardship. \$10,555

Council Priority

Advancing a Community of Belonging

Community Development for an Improved & Equitable Quality of Life

Environmental Considerations

Small Things Matter's grocery store model of food distribution and Enterprise's choice model minimize food waste by allowing beneficiaries to select only the items they like and will use. Meals on Wheels and So What Else partner with local food recovery organizations, also reducing food waste. The Community Food Forest Collective focuses on hyper-local regenerative urban agriculture, ecologically-sound food production and land stewardship.

Fiscal Considerations

Full funding of this grant program comes from ARPA funds, which must be encumbered by December 31, 2024 in order to be used to benefit of Takoma Park residents.

Racial Equity Considerations

The Food Insecurity Reduction grant application requires that every applicant for funding explain how their proposed project incorporates racial equity, and the Grants Review Committee scores those responses. The average race equity score for the nine recommended programs is 4.23 out of 5. Crossroads Community Food Network's proposed project focuses primarily on Black, Brown, and immigrant food entrepreneurs in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads. CHEER includes bilingual outreach staff in their pilot project.

Attachments and Links

- Single Reading Ordinance
- Recommended Project Summaries
- FY25 Food Insecurity Reduction Grants Presentation