Arlington County FY26 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Food Security Mini-Grants Supporting the Food Security Strategic Plan

June 2025

General Information

The Arlington County Department of Human Services announces a grant funding opportunity to support the implementation of its Food Security Strategic Plan ("Strategic Plan"). The Strategic Plan was published in October 2022 and identified 28 strategies in five categories that would support strengthening food security in Arlington.

Funding will be available to local organizations implementing selected aspects of the Strategic Plan. As a part of the FY26 budget, a total of $150,000 in one-time funding is available through this Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). Two previous rounds of grants have been issued.

Awards will be granted based in part on an organization's ability to address selected goals and strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan. Organizations may apply for a single project and the maximum grant award is $25,000. Funding awards will be announced in September 2025. Funds must be spent by organizations by June 30, 2026.

Eligible Activities

To be eligible, projects must support at least one of the following strategies of the Strategic Plan.

Systemic Change
1.2   Improve nutrition equity by working to eliminate, reduce, and prevent disparities in food security policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that all those in need of food assistance receive the support they need.

Food Access
2.1   Enhance school-based supplemental food offerings, including food pantries, in-school snacks, and weekend food support.

2.2   Establish new charitable food distributions in neighborhoods with unmet need.
2.3   Increase capacity to deliver charitable food to those unable to access available resources.
2.5   Increase food rescue & redistribution operations.
2.6   Enhance and improve existing food assistance programs serving Arlington residents.

Outreach & Education
3.1   Promote food assistance resources and assist residents with enrolling in programs for which they may be eligible.
3.4   Implement a coordinated SNAP outreach campaign.
3.5   Increase nutrition education opportunities for residents of all ages.
3.6   Partner with resident community leaders to share information about resources in key languages and provide compensation for their work.

Capacity Building
4.2   Provide trauma-informed care training for staff & volunteers working with food insecure residents.
4.4   Increase the capacity to share locally-grown produce from gardeners and farms with food pantries through expanded donation processing infrastructure.
4.6   Collaborate with Arlington Public Schools (APS) through its forums to review existing programs and practices and address food equity.

Informed Decision Making
5.2   Use varied levels of engagement to encourage food assistance recipients to provide valuable feedback on programs and services.
5.3   Collect data from food assistance organizations that provides information about usage trends and services provided.

Examples of Funding Uses

- A food pantry purchasing software to better track clients and usage data. (Strategy 5.3)
- A food pantry, meal program, or housing program purchasing reusable bags or boxes to use in delivery efforts or single-use containers to distribute rescued food. (Strategies 2.3 & 2.5)
- A nutrition education provider who will teach a nutrition curriculum with a certain population of residents. (Strategy 3.5)
- A small food pantry purchasing a refrigerator or freezer to be able to offer produce, dairy and/or meat to clients. (Strategy 2.6)

A list of previous grantees and their funded projects is available on the grant website.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible organizations must be an IRS designated 501c3 organization or public institution of higher education and serve or wish to serve Arlington residents through one of the above-listed strategies outlined in the Food Security Strategic Plan.

Organizations may be based in other jurisdictions, provided that the proposed project benefits eligible Arlington County residents. School parent teacher associations/organizations (PTAs) and faith-based organizations are eligible as long as they have the 501c3 designation.

If applicants are faith-based organizations, projects, including outreach efforts and services, must be provided to any eligible beneficiary, regardless of religious affiliation (or lack thereof). Programs cannot

be marketed exclusively to members of the sponsoring organization's religious affiliation or denomination, and proselytizing while providing services related to this grant funding is prohibited.

Submission Requirements

All applications, including the required budget worksheet and 501c3 verification letter, must be submitted electronically through *Submittable* at https://arlingtoncounty.submittable.com/submit no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 9, 2025.

The full application is in this document as Appendix 1 and the budget worksheet is Appendix 2. These documents are also available on the grants website at https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/DHS/Food-Security-Coalition/Food-Security-Mini-Grants.

Evaluation Process

Grants will be awarded through a competitive evaluation process. Applications will be evaluated by a review panel, which will use the rubric (Appendix 3) to consider all aspects of the application. Funding amounts may be adjusted to maximize impact among selected projects.

Each scored question on the application has various subsections. Applicants may choose to respond to each subsection separately as a bulleted response or provide an integrated response. Each subsection will be scored on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5 points) to Strongly Disagree (1 point).

Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be required to submit quarterly financial and programmatic reports. Programmatic reports will indicate progress towards indicated goals and outcomes and estimated numbers and anonymous aggregate demographics of households served by their project(s) as applicable. Financial reports will indicate amounts spent in each budget category with accompanying documentation. Reports will be due in January, April, and July 2026. The County will conduct training on reporting requirements at the beginning of the project period for all Grantees.

Grant Awards

Following the award announcement, each organization awarded a grant will be required to execute a grant agreement with the County's terms and conditions. A copy of the grant agreement template is available on the Food Security Mini-Grants webpage. Organizations will need to submit a W-9 form to receive funding.

Funding will be issued in quarterly reimbursements based on the Grantee's eligible expenses. Grantees will need to submit for approval by the County an invoice of project expenses that correlate to the line items in the budget submitted with their proposal.

Other Requirements

- Grantees will host the Food Security Coordinator for a site visit showing the funded project.

- Grantees must have a representative participate in the Arlington Food Security Coalition's monthly meetings.

Timeline

- Monday, June 2, 2025 – Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) released.
- Wednesday, June 9, 2025, at 2:00 PM – Virtual information session. [Meeting link here.](#)
- Thursday, July 10, 2025, at 5:00 PM – Applications Due.
- Late September 2025 – Grantees and awards announced; agreements executed.
- October 2025 through June 30, 2026 – Funds available to be spent by organizations.

Contact

Any questions about this NOFA should be directed to Stephanie Hopkins, Food Security Coordinator, at shopkins@arlingtonva.us or (703) 228-1065 before the application deadline. A summary of questions asked, the County's responses to these questions, and information covered in the information session will be posted on the Mini-Grants webpage.

Appendix 1 – Application

<u>Organization Information</u> [This section is not scored]
1. **Organization Name**
2. **Main Contact Info**
   a. Name
   b. Email
   c. Phone
3. **Organization Address**
4. **Organization Website**
5. **Contact Information of Executive Director or Grant Agreement Signee**
   a. Name
   b. Title
   c. Email
6. **Provide a brief description of your organization.** *(300 word limit)*

<u>Project Overview</u> [This section is not scored]
7. **Project Name**
8. **Funding Request**
9. **In 1-3 sentences, provide an overview of your project.** *(100 word limit)*
10. **Indicate up to 3 elements of the Food Security Strategic Plan that your project addresses.**
    Systemic Change
    ☐ 1.2 Improve nutrition equity by working to eliminate, reduce, and prevent disparities in food security policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that all those in need of food assistance receive the support they need.
    Food Access
    ☐ 2.1 Enhance school-based supplemental food offerings, including food pantries, in-school snacks, and weekend food support.
    ☐ 2.2 Establish new charitable food distributions in neighborhoods with unmet need.
    ☐ 2.3 Increase capacity to deliver charitable food to those unable to access available resources.
    ☐ 2.5 Increase food rescue & redistribution operations.
    ☐ 2.6 Enhance and improve existing food assistance programs serving Arlington residents.
    Outreach & Education
    ☐ 3.1 Promote food assistance resources and assist residents with enrolling in programs for which they may be eligible.
    ☐ 3.4 Implement a coordinated SNAP outreach campaign.
    ☐ 3.5 Increase nutrition education opportunities for residents of all ages.
    ☐ 3.6 Partner with resident community leaders to share information about resources in key languages and provide compensation for their work.
    Capacity Building
    ☐ 4.2 Provide trauma-informed care training for staff & volunteers working with food insecure residents.
    ☐ 4.4 Increase the capacity to share locally-grown produce from gardeners and farms with food pantries through expanded donation processing infrastructure.

☐ 4.6   Collaborate with APS through its forums to review existing programs and practices and address food equity.

Informed Decision Making

☐ 5.2   Use varied levels of engagement to encourage food assistance recipients to provide valuable feedback on programs and services.

☐ 5.3   Collect data from food assistance organizations that provides information about usage trends and services provided.

11. **Indicate up to 2 target population(s) that your project seeks to serve.**

☐ Children, youth and families

☐ Individuals or households with low income and/or wealth

☐ Individuals or households with health needs or disabilities

☐ Individuals or households facing a crisis, including unemployment

☐ Individuals or households who are unhoused or unstably housed

☐ Older adults

☐ Historically marginalized communities

☐ Individuals involved in the justice system

☐ Immigrants or refugees

12. **How does this project relate to your existing programming?** (select only one)

☐ New programming or service (or pilot)

☐ Enhancement or expansion of an existing program

☐ Restart of a past program

☐ Sustain existing program

Project Description

Describe your project in the questions below. **All bullets are part of the questions and will be scored.** Feel free to answer each question as a whole or divide your answer to address each component separately, but **make sure your response addresses all bullet points.**

13. **Describe your project.** *(500 word limit)*

    Include **ALL** of the following elements in your response:
    a. Describe your project and what it hopes to achieve.
    b. How will this project relate to the organization's mission or existing programming? Please expand on your response above.
    c. Describe any community resources or partnerships this project will leverage or utilize.

14. **Who will you serve?** *(500 word limit)*

    Include **ALL** of the following elements in your response:
    a. Who is the target population for this project? Why was this population chosen to benefit from this project?
    b. How will the target population be identified and served?
    c. How many people or households do you expect to serve?

15. **What area of need is this project addressing?** *(500 word limit)*

    Include **ALL** of the following elements in your response:
    a. What need or gap in service will this project address? Please include relevant data to demonstrate the need.

b. How does this project connect to the food security strategic plan?
c. Why is this project an effective response to the need? Please include relevant research or data.

16. **How will you capture the impact of your project?** *(500 word limit)*
    Include **ALL** of the following elements in your response:
    a. What data will you collect to measure the project?
    b. What are the lasting effects of this project and how will you evaluate them?
    c. How will you collect this information?

Project Budget

17. **Complete and attach the budget worksheet.** Provide a description of each line item in the narrative column, including rationale and description of the items/services/staff members.

18. **Describe the project budget.** Provide rationale for the expenses included. *(300 word limit)*

Appendix 2 – Budget Worksheet

Organization Name:

	Definition	Narrative	BUDGET
PERSONNEL			
Salaries & Benefits	Wages & benefits paid to staff for development and implementation of this project. Include each position in a separate line and indicate the number of hours allocated.		
TOTAL PERSONNEL			**$0.00**
NON-PERSONNEL			
Contracted Services	Payments to outside consultants or providers to work on this project.		
Food	Food purchased to be distributed or used for this project.		
Supplies & Equipment	Supplies and tools used to develop or implement this project.		
Direct Client Expenses	Payments to clients as part of the project – for example, gift cards or transportation vouchers to compensate or incentivize participation.		
Communications & Marketing	Publicity materials, printing costs, mailing and advertising expenses.		
Transportation	Mileage reimbursement, parking, gas, and vehicle maintenance.		
Other	Anything that doesn't fall into one of the above categories, with explanation.		
TOTAL NONPERSONNEL			**$0.00**
Overhead	Operational expenses, such as rent and other non-project costs – no more than 10% of project budget.		
TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST			**$0.00**

Appendix 3 – Rubric

Criteria	Description	Scoring					Score
Project Description		1	2	3	4	5	
Project Description & Objectives	Project description is thorough and provides a complete picture of the proposed idea. Project goals are clearly defined. The proposed services are aligned to support the project's intended impact, goals, and objectives.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Relation to Existing Programming	Project will provide a significant enhancement to organization's programming or will ensure maintenance of existing programming.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Leveraging	Project leverages other community resources or programs to better serve clients and doesn't try to recreate entire food security system to serve clients. Collaboration mutually benefits both organizations and serves target population.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Population		1	2	3	4	5	
Target population	Target population is clearly identified. Project serves a high-need population. Provides rationale as to why this population is in need of the service or will benefit from the service.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Finding and serving population	Proposal includes a clear plan for finding and serving this population, including specifics around outreach and communications activities. Provides detail about serving this population, including addressing transportation or language needs, if applicable.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Area of Need		1	2	3	4	5	
Gap in service	Clearly describes a need in the community and backs it up with data and examples. Filling this gap in services would provide a meaningful improvement in the community.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Connection to strategic plan	Each strategy selected has an outlined connection to the project. Connection between project and strategy is obvious.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Effective response	The proposal involves a creative or best practice approach to the issue. Project or rationale behind project is based in research or organization has explained the reason they believe it will be effective.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Impact		1	2	3	4	5	
Data collected	The proposal gives sufficient detail regarding intended data collection methods and makes clear connections between data collected and the use of it to inform project outcomes described.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Number served & Lasting effects	Quantity served is scaled to the complexity/level of impact of the project: Either provides a large, lasting impact to a small population or a more moderate impact to a larger population. [This item should be scored after reading responses to both the "Who will you serve?" and How will you capture the impact?" questions.]	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Collection methods	Data and feedback collection models provide quantitative and qualitative feedback opportunities to measure the impact and success of the project.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Budget		1	2	3	4	5	
Budget & Budget Narrative	The budget provides clear, concise descriptions of each budget line item. Budget costs are reflective of average market costs.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
TOTAL							

Appendix 4 – Programmatic Report Template

Food Security Mini-Grant Quarterly Report

Organization Name	Organization Name
Report Time Period *(select one)*	☐ October – December 2025 (Report #1) ☐ January – March 2026 (Report #2) ☐ April – June 2026 (Report #3)
Objectives	Objectives (pre-populated)

Progress and Impact Summaries

1. **What accomplishments has your project achieved this quarter? Provide an update on progress towards achieving your SMART Goal.**

2. **How has this project affected the people served? How are they better off?**

3. **FINAL REPORT ONLY: What lasting impact has resulted from this project?**

Locations Served

List below the names and addresses of locations where program activities took place throughout this project.

Numbers Served & Demographics

Please be as accurate as possible, but estimates are accepted.

Demographics Report	TOTAL to Date
Estimated Households served to date **Definition:** A household is a family unit living together. If your program only serves children in a school or similar setting, please use the following formula to convert number of children into number of households: # of children * .85 = # of households	
# of Client Visits **Definition:** Each time a household receives food or a service = 1 client visit	
Estimated # of Black households served	
Estimated # of White households served	
Estimated # of Asian households served	
Estimated # of Hispanic households served	
Estimated # of Other households served	
Estimated # of households with children (aged 0-18) served	
Estimated # of households with older adults (aged 60+) served	