UNITED WAY Connecticut

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DSS Emergency Assistance Program for Non-Foodshare Pantries in Connecticut

Frequently Asked Questions

UPDATED November 19, 2026

We are pleased to share **several important updates** to the **DSS Emergency Assistance Program (DSS EAP) for Non-Foodshare Pantries in Connecticut**. These changes expand eligibility and increase potential funding awards, helping organizations better support people experiencing food insecurity.

Recent updates include:

Expanded Eligibility

- Eligibility has been expanded to include food pantries that **serve a specific customer or member population associated with their organization, as well as the general public.** Examples include:
  - School food pantries serving students and their families
  - Homeless shelters operating food pantries for individuals they serve
  - Housing programs with on-site food pantries for residents
- Connecticut-based organizations designated as **Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) or Community Action Agencies (CAAs)** are now eligible to apply, regardless of their participation in the Connecticut Foodshare network.

Larger Awards

- Applicants may now **request funding of up to 50%** of their documented annual food pantry costs from the previous fiscal year.
- **Additional food pantry expenses** may now be included when calculating award amounts, including:
  - Gift cards distributed through pantry operations
  - The value of donated food
  - Direct staffing costs associated with food pantry operations

Important Funding Requirements

Please note that DSS EAP funding **must be used exclusively to purchase food for human consumption**. Funding must supplement, not replace, an awardee's existing food purchasing budget.

55 Capital Blvd, Rocky Hill, Connecticut 06067

Where do I apply?

https://ctunitedway.submittable.com/submit

ELIGIBILITY

My organization is part of the Connecticut Foodshare Agency Network. Am I eligible to apply?

Connecticut Foodshare agency partners are not eligible for this program, except organizations that are designated as Community Action Agencies (CAAs) or Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). State funding has been provided to Connecticut Foodshare for food purchases that will be made available at no cost to organizations partnered with Connecticut Foodshare.

My organization's food pantry has only been in operation for a year. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes. To be eligible, organizations must be able to substantiate food for human consumption, gift cards, donated food, and direct staffing expenses for the most recent fiscal year along with an annual food budget for the current fiscal year.

Does my organization need to be a nonprofit 501c3 to apply?

Nonprofit 501c3 organizations and municipalities are eligible to apply. Organizations must be incorporated as nonprofit, 501c3 organization in good standing, or be an entity that is legally represented by a 501c3 organization (such as a fiscal sponsor).

A 501c3 organization must be the applicant for the funding opportunity and meet all eligibility requirements. If successfully awarded funding, the applying 501c3 organization will be the grantee and will be expected to meet all the eligibility requirements and commitments of the grant.

What if my organization is operated under a municipality. Can I apply?

Organizations, e.g. schools, that are operating under a municipality are eligible to apply and must provide municipal authorization documentation such as a letter from mayor, first selectman, town manager, municipal department head, or finance director confirming the pantry is municipally operated or authorized to apply.

My organization provides services to people in Connecticut, but my organization is located outside CT. Am I eligible to apply?

No. Your organization must serve people in Connecticut from a business location in Connecticut.

My organization has been operating as a food pantry for the last 6 months. Am I eligible to apply?

No. Applying food pantry(ies) must provide food to the general public or a specific customer group associated with the applicant in Connecticut at no charge for at least twelve (12) months prior to submission of application.

My organization doesn't have a 211 listing can we still apply?

Yes, as long as you agree to create a listing within 30 days if awarded funding. You can create a 211CT listing for the pantry by signing up via: https://www.211ct.org/users/sign_up

FUNDING QUESTIONS

Do I need to request an amount when applying?

Yes. Applying organizations can request up to fifty percent (50%) of the food pantry's substantiated annual costs, including the dollar value of purchased food, donated food, gift cards, and direct staffing costs. The application has an Annual Food Pantry Costs Calculator to help you determine how much you are eligible to apply for.

When will I hear if my application is successful?

Grants will be issued as soon as individual applications are complete, fully reviewed, and processed.

If awarded, when will my organization receive the funds?

Funding will be distributed over four payments. Upon completion of the execution of the Letter of Award, 25% of the grant award will be advanced, and the remaining 75% of grant funds to be distributed on a cost reimbursement basis pending submission of documentation that the previously released funds were spent in accordance with the grant conditions.

Can my organization use the grant funding for staff salaries, shelving, transportation, or other administration costs?

No. Grant funding is for the purchase of food for human consumption only.

Is there any reporting required?

Yes. Grantees are required to submit a report once you have expended your 25% advance for your award and whenever a request is submitted for cost reimbursement. The cost reimbursement requires you to:

1) Document all expenditures from your prior payment, and

2) Document the impact of the grant on your food pantry, including the estimated number of unduplicated households served per month with this funding and how your pantry services have

increased with this funding: increased number of households served, served more food to each household, increased the number of days and/or hours of food distribution.

The timing of the request for cost reimbursement is determined by the grantee; requests for reimbursement submitted by the 15th of each month will be processed for payment by the end of that month. Any requests received after the 15th will be reviewed the following month.

Can I use this funding to replace or supplant other funding committed to my food pantry?

No. This funding must be used to supplement, not supplant, funding for your food pantry. On a quarterly basis, UWCT will randomly select grantees to be reviewed to affirm compliance with use of funds per the terms of the award, including verifications that grant funds are used 1) only to purchase food for human consumption and 2) to supplement not supplant food pantry funding.

If my organization received funding, when do I need to expend the funds?

All funds must be expended by May 31, 2027.

What happens if I don't expend all the funds by May 31, 2027?

Any funds not expended or not expended in compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant award must be returned to United Way of Connecticut by July 1, 2027.

APPLICATION

I don't have a Submittable account. How do I go about getting one?

Find out how to create a Submittable account via https://submittable.help/en/articles/7940128-getting-started-as-a-new-submitter

Can more than one person in my organization collaborate on the application?

Yes. Once you login to Submittable and start the application, you can invite collaborators onboard. Find out how to invite a collaborator onto this submission via https://submittable.help/en/articles/3654810-inviting-collaborators-on-submissions-and-additional-forms

Who is meant to fill out the application and who should e-sign the application before submitting it?

Anyone in your organization can fill out the application. However, you must include information about your organization's authorized signatory, and this person must e-sign the application before submission. You can invite people to collaborate with you on the application. Find out how via https://submittable.help/en/articles/3654810-inviting-collaborators-on-submissions-and-additional-forms

I'm having technical issues with Submittable, can someone help me?

Check out the **Submitter Resource Center** (https://submittable.help/en/collections/185534-submitters) or contact **Submittable Customer Support** (https://www.submittable.com/help/submitter/.)

The Annual Food Pantry Costs Calculator isn't working for me. Can you help?

The calculator only uses numbers. Try removing all ($ and ,). You must tab or click on next cell to see calculations and/or changes made.

Why do I have to fill out the conditional award section?

These are conditions and attestations required by DSS to receive funding. UWCT is putting these in the application to create a more streamlined process and therefore, if awarded, the applying organization will receive funding faster.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Applying organizations must provide the following documents at the application stage and we suggest that you gather these documents and have them ready before you begin the application.

What documents will I need to complete the Organization Verification section in the application?

1. NONPROFITS: must provide a copy of your organization's IRS exemption letter and a Certificate of Legal Existence from the Connecticut Secretary of State. You can find more information about the Certificate of Legal Existence via https://portal.ct.gov/sots/business-services/legal-existence.

   MUNICIPALITIES: must provide municipal authorization documentation such as a letter from mayor, first selectman, town manager, municipal department head, or finance director confirming the pantry is municipally operated or authorized to apply.
2. All organizations must upload a completed and signed W9. Find a blank form via https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf.

What documents will I need to complete the Substantiation of Eligible Food Pantry Expenditures section in the application?

Applicants must upload expenditures from the most recent fiscal year's annual food pantry budget, if applicable, in the following categories: food for human consumption, gift cards, donated food, and direct staffing expenses.

1. Food for human consumption: Substantiation is needed for expenditures on food for human consumption. Examples include: general ledger report showing food purchases, accounting system expense report, vendor statements, invoices, receipts, check register or payment report, and credit card statements tied to food purchases.

2. Gift cards: Substantiation is needed for expenditures of gift cards distributed through pantry operations. Examples include: gift card logs, general ledger report showing gift card purchases, accounting system expense report, vendor statements, invoices, receipts, check register or payment report, and credit card statements tied to gift card purchases.
3. Donated food: Applicants must provide the dollar value of food donated to the pantry in the most recent fiscal year. It is up to each applicant to determine and attest to the value of donated food. Examples of obtaining donated food value include: the dollar value of donated food reported in your organization's most recent tax filing, and the Feeding America Calendar Year 2025 Wholesale Donated Value Per Pound rate of $1.92.
4. Direct staffing: Substantiation is needed for expenditures on direct staffing (does not include volunteer hours) to operate the food pantry. Examples include: general ledger report showing direct staffing expenditures, and payroll reports.

All applicants must provide their budgeted amount for food expenditures for the current fiscal year, as this is one of the ways UWCT, on behalf of DSS, will be monitoring that funding provided by DSS EAP is used for supplementing, not supplanting, food purchases. Additionally, all organizations must be prepared to show proof of operation as a food pantry in Connecticut.

OTHER

What is United Way of Connecticut (UWCT)'s role in this opportunity?

UWCT is contracting with DSS to provide grant administration of this emergency food funding opportunity.

Why isn't funding being provided to Connecticut Foodshare agency partners?

State funding has been provided to Connecticut Foodshare for food purchases that will be made available at no cost to organizations partnered with Connecticut Foodshare. Please note that organizations who are designated as Community Action Agencies (CAAs) or Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) are eligible for funding regardless of Connecticut Foodshare membership status.