
MEMORANDUM

TO: Prospective Applicants, FY 2027 Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program
FROM: Piers Duffell, Grants and Strategic Initiatives Coordinator
Office of Grants and Strategic Initiatives
DATE: October 2, 2026
RE: Questions and Answers from the September 30, 2026 Applicant Webinar

This memo answers the questions raised during the FY 2027 Hunger-Free Campus (HFC) Grant Program applicant webinar held on September 30, 2026. It covers questions answered during the session, questions OGSi took back for follow-up, and corrections to several answers given during the session. **Where this memo differs from an answer given during the webinar, this memo controls.**

OGSi has issued Amendment 1 to the Request for Proposals (RFP) with this memo. It revises the RFP, the Standardized Student Hunger Survey, the Annual Student Hunger Survey Aggregate Results Reporting Tool, and the Designation Certification Form. Appendix I of the RFP lists every change, and Section 7 of this memo summarizes them. **The application deadline is unchanged: October 19, 2026, at 11:59 PM ET.**

Send further questions to ogsi.mhec@maryland.gov. OGSi will post answers on the program page so all applicants work from the same information.

1. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

Q1. Should the proposal PDF include a copy of the Budget Summary workbook?

No. Send one email to ogsi.mhec@maryland.gov with two attachments:

1. The proposal as a single PDF: Cover Sheet, Table of Contents, Grant Narrative, Budget Narrative (Appendix C), Statement of Assurances (Appendix D), Hunger Task Force and Key Personnel Form (Appendix E), and, if applicable, the ENOUGH Alignment Letter (Appendix F) and any labeled food pantry attachments.
2. The Budget Summary as the Excel workbook (.xlsx) itself.

Do not convert the workbook to PDF or CSV. Reviewers need the formulas and built-in checks intact. A copy of the workbook inside the PDF is not required.

Q2. Must Section II of the narrative repeat the information in Appendix E?

No. Section II may summarize the Hunger Task Force and refer reviewers to Appendix E for the membership roster, meeting schedule, and strategic action plan. The detail needs to appear only once, in Appendix E, which does not count toward the ten-page narrative limit. Use Section II to describe how the task force operates and how its goals connect to the proposed project.

Q3. The scoring slide uses categories that do not match the narrative sections. How do they relate?

The categories are from the FY 2027 scoring rubric. Reviewers score by category; the narrative is organized by designation criterion, so each category draws on several sections. Amendment 1 adds

a project management prompt to Section II, an evaluation plan prompt to Section IX, and an optional one-page project timeline attachment that does not count toward the page limit.

Rubric category (points)	Where reviewers look
Needs Assessment (15)	Section I; Appendix F
Organizational Capacity (20)	Sections II through IX (designation criteria); Appendix E; prior HFC work
Project Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes (10)	Section I; Section II goals; Sections III and IV
Operations Plan (10)	Sections III through VIII; project timeline attachment
Management Plan (10)	Section II management prompt; Appendix E; Budget Narrative, Category A
Project Evaluation (20)	Section IX evaluation plan
Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (15)	Budget Summary workbook; Appendix C

Q4. Must the Hunger Task Force serve a particular purpose?

No. The criterion requires a task force that meets at least three times per academic year and sets at least two goals with action plans. The RFP does not prescribe the goals, and a goal such as raising funds for the campus pantry meets the requirement.

Reviewers will look for goals that connect to the program purposes: addressing student hunger, building sustainable food access, raising awareness of services, building partnerships, and enrolling eligible students in SNAP. At least one goal tied to those purposes, with a measure of success on campus, will strengthen the application.

Q5. Can the ENOUGH letter come from any partner in an ENOUGH community?

The letter must come from an **ENOUGH Quarterback**, the lead organization for the ENOUGH community the project will serve. Quarterbacks are listed on the Governor's Office for Children ENOUGH Grantees page linked in the RFP. A letter from another community partner does not meet Appendix F, although those partners may still be described in the narrative.

2. STANDARDIZED STUDENT HUNGER SURVEY

Q6. Can we embed the MHEC survey in a survey our campus already runs? Must the wording match exactly?

Embedding. Yes. Institutions may choose the delivery platform, adjust layout and design, add their own questions before or after the MHEC questions, and embed the instrument in a broader campus survey.

Wording. Question wording and response options are fixed, with one exception. In Sections One and Three, if your campus survey already asks the same question, you may drop the MHEC question and report your question's counts under the MHEC response options. Each of your response options must fit within one MHEC response option. List the dropped MHEC question numbers on the Reporting Tool.

- **Section Two (Questions 10 through 15) may not be changed.** The six questions appear together, in order, as written, with nothing between them.
- All MHEC questions, or the campus questions used in their place, must be asked in **one survey to the same respondents**. Data from separate surveys may not be combined.

This replaces the answer given during the webinar that rewording is acceptable “within reason.”

Q7. Is the fixed order and wording of Section Two a USDA requirement?

The requirement that binds grantees is MHEC’s, stated in the RFP. The reason for it comes from USDA. Questions 10 through 15 are the USDA six-item short form, a validated food security measure. Its 0 to 6 score and food security categories are only valid when the six items are asked as written, together, and in order. USDA does not impose requirements on campuses that use the measure.

Q8. We are seeking IRB review for another survey. Can we combine the two?

Yes, under the conditions in Q6. Whether IRB review is required is the institution’s determination; the HFC materials neither require nor waive it.

To simplify IRB review, an institution may omit the two items that collect identifying information:

Question 3 (program or major, which is optional and not reported to MHEC) and the **Name and Contact Information fields** under Consent for Follow-Up in Section Four. Record any omission on the Reporting Tool. If the contact fields are omitted, tell students in the survey how to request help directly, for example by giving the name and email of the designated SNAP staff member, so Question 21 still connects students to assistance. All other MHEC questions must be asked.

If Section Four contact information is collected, store it separately from survey responses, with access limited to staff conducting follow-up. It is never sent to MHEC.

Q9. How do we exclude students under 18 if the MHEC questions are part of a broader campus survey?

Survey participants must be 18 or older. For a standalone survey, exclude students under 18 from the distribution list.

For a broader campus survey that reaches students under 18, keep the MHEC questions from those students, either by limiting the MHEC portion to a roster of students 18 or older or by placing an age screen with skip logic before the MHEC questions. Exclude any response from a student under 18 from all counts on the Reporting Tool. Question 2 has no under-18 option, so the MHEC questions alone cannot identify these responses; the screen must come first.

Institutions with an arrangement that does not fit these options should contact OGSi at ogsi.mhec@maryland.gov with the specifics before fielding the survey.

Q10. Our fall census headcount includes dual-enrolled students under 18. Won’t that understate our response rate?

Yes. Amendment 1 revises the Reporting Tool to collect three figures: total fall census headcount, fall census headcount of students age 18 or older, and the number of students the survey was distributed to. For a census, the last figure equals the 18 or older headcount; for a sample, it is the sample size. The response rate is completed surveys divided by the number of students the survey was distributed to.

Q11. What does “dual enrolled” mean for the survey? Can dual-enrolled students still be served?

The terms in this memo and the survey materials are used as follows:

Term	Meaning
Dual-enrolled student	A high school student who is also enrolled in college courses at the institution.
Student under 18	A student younger than 18 on the first day of the survey window.
Unduplicated headcount	Each enrolled student counted once, regardless of the number of programs or courses.
Fall census headcount	Unduplicated enrolled headcount as of the institution's fall census date for the academic year surveyed.
Census	The survey is distributed to every enrolled student age 18 or older.
Sample	The survey is distributed to a documented subset of enrolled students age 18 or older, drawn by a method described on the Reporting Tool.
Fall census headcount, 18 or older	Fall census headcount limited to students age 18 or older on the first day of the survey window.
Distribution count	The number of students the survey was distributed to.

The exclusion is based on **age, not enrollment status**. Dual-enrolled students are excluded because most are under 18; a dual-enrolled student who is 18 or older may be surveyed. A student enrolled in more than one program at the same institution is one student, surveyed and counted once. Each institution surveys and reports its own enrolled students.

The age rule applies to the survey only. Nothing in the RFP restricts serving dual-enrolled students or students under 18 with grant-funded services. Institutions follow their own policies for serving minors.

During the webinar, OGSi said “dual enrolled” referred to students enrolled in more than one program. That answer was incorrect; the definitions above control.

Q12. Does MHEC intend to use the aggregate results for any purpose beyond the statutory requirement?

Yes. MHEC uses the aggregate results to understand how widespread food insecurity is among students at participating campuses, to compare campuses on a single instrument, and to track change from year to year. MHEC also uses the results to show policymakers what the program reaches and achieves, which supports the case for continued and expanded funding.

MHEC may publish aggregate figures. Any published figure representing fewer than ten respondents is suppressed, and MHEC never receives individual responses or contact information. Campuses keep their own response-level data and can use it to plan services.

Q13. How are Questions 10 through 15 scored? Which scores count as food insecure?

The categories in the RFP and Reporting Tool are correct and match USDA. Count one point for each affirmative answer across Questions 10 through 15; blanks and all other answers score zero.

Raw score	Food security status	USDA grouping
0 to 1	High or marginal food security	Food secure
2 to 4	Low food security	Food insecure
5 to 6	Very low food security	Food insecure

Scores of 2 through 6 together are food insecure. The institution scores each completed response **on campus** before submitting; MHEC cannot calculate scores from question-level counts.

The error is in the webinar deck: the scoring slide did not show that scores of 2 through 6 together are food insecure. The deck has been edited to add it. During the session, scoring was also misstated as happening “off campus”; it happens on campus.

Q14. The Reporting Tool link on the program page asks me to sign in.

OGSI was unable to reproduce the error. If the link does not open for you, email ogsi.mhec@maryland.gov and OGSI will send the file directly.

Q15. Can grant funds buy gift cards for a survey incentive, such as a raffle for respondents?

Yes, under the following conditions. The RFP does not prohibit survey incentives, and administering the survey is a requirement of Hunger-Free Campus designation.

- The incentive is included in the application budget and explained in the Budget Narrative.
- The amount is reasonable for the response it is meant to produce.
- If the MHEC questions are embedded in a broader campus survey, only the share of the incentive cost attributable to the MHEC portion is charged to the grant.
- Gift cards are cash equivalents and are held under the same controls as Emergency Assistance under Category G.1, including a sequential log and dual custody (see Q18). Cash is not allowed.
- Grant funds do not replace incentives the institution already funds for an existing survey (Statement of Assurances, item 4).
- Only eligible participants, age 18 or older, may receive an incentive.
- The grantee is responsible for any information reporting obligation, as with other payments to students.

Incentives the institution funds itself may count as in-kind or matching funds if they meet the same conditions and the match valuation standards.

3. ALLOWABLE COSTS, BUDGET, AND MATCH

Q16. Can the cost of administering the survey count as match?

Yes. Direct costs of administering the survey may be budgeted as grant funds, match, or both: staff time to build, distribute, score, and report the survey (Categories A and B), a contracted survey vendor (Category F), or a platform license used for the survey (Category E). Document these costs like any other match. Costs your institution normally recovers through its indirect cost rate cannot be reclassified as direct costs to serve as match. If the MHEC questions are part of a broader campus survey, count only the share attributable to them.

Q17. Can grant funds buy non-food pantry items such as diapers, wipes, and hygiene products?

Yes. The RFP does not prohibit non-food items, and they may be budgeted as pantry supplies under Materials and Supplies or provided as Emergency Assistance under Category G.1.

The program exists to address student hunger, and reviewers score applications against that purpose. The rubric asks whether the proposed activities and services are appropriate to a Hunger-Free Campus (Operations Plan), whether the project addresses the overarching goal of combating student hunger (Project Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes), and whether costs are reasonable and adequate to the project objectives (Budget and Cost-Effectiveness). Non-food items within a program centered on food access are appropriate. A program in which non-food items make up a large share of the design or budget, at the expense of food access, may score lower in those categories. Including them is not a reason for rejection.

Emergency assistance. The statute defines emergency assistance as immediate direct assistance provided to a student facing an unanticipated financial crisis or hardship. Non-food essentials provided this way follow the G.1 rules: no cash, documented controls, and no student names in reports.

An existing emergency fund. Grant funds may add to an existing institutional or donor-funded emergency fund but may not replace those contributions (Statement of Assurances, item 4). The existing fund may count as match if it is documented and meets the rule in Q19.

Q18. What do “sequential logs” and “dual custody” mean for gift cards and other cash equivalents?

- **Sequential logging.** Every card or voucher is numbered and recorded when received and each time it is issued: serial number, value, date, issuing staff member, and a transaction ID. The log carries a running balance reconciled to the cards on hand. Student identity stays in campus records and never appears in reports to MHEC.
- **Dual custody.** No single person has sole control of the cards. For example, two people are present when cards are counted or restocked, and someone other than the issuer performs the reconciliation.

The RFP gives these controls as examples. Applicants describe their own controls in the Budget Narrative and may propose equivalent controls that achieve the same result.

Q19. The RFP says match may not be “counted toward any other state or federal award” and elsewhere that costs may not be “used to satisfy the cost sharing or matching requirement of any other state or federal award.” Which rule applies?

The passages are worded differently but state one rule. Amendment 1 adds this sentence to the end of the Match section:

These restrictions mean that the same funds, goods, or services may not be counted as match or cost sharing under this grant and under any other state or federal award.

Applied to the questions raised:

- **Can the same funds be counted as match here and as match or cost sharing on another state or federal award?** No.
- **Can foundation funds already counted as match on a state or federal grant be counted here?** No.

- **Does the rule cover private awards?** The RFP restricts double counting under state and federal awards. If the same funds are counted under a private award, check that award's terms.
- **Can costs paid with another award's funds count as match here?** The HFC RFP does not address this beyond the rule above. Many federal awards prohibit their funds from being used as match for another award; check the other award's terms before budgeting.

Q20. Could a project provide hot meals made by campus food services to students in need?

Yes. Food for students is an allowable cost, and the RFP lists campus dining dollars and meal cards among the alternative food access arrangements under Option B. The food access criterion requires a separate, stigma-free process, so describe in Section VII how students receive meals privately, for example through meal credits loaded to a student ID that look the same at the register as paid meals. If the institution pays an outside dining contractor, the procurement standards in the RFP apply.

During the webinar, OGSi said applications are not scored on stigma. Stigma-free delivery is part of the statutory food access criterion, and reviewers consider it.

Q21. Can we participate in the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program alongside this grant?

SNAP E&T is a federal program administered in Maryland by the Department of Human Services (DHS). It is outside the HFC program, and OGSi cannot advise on E&T eligibility or terms. Nothing in the RFP restricts participating in both. The same costs cannot count under both: costs charged to the HFC grant may not be charged to SNAP E&T, and match claimed under the HFC grant may not be counted as match or cost sharing for it (see Q19). Contact Maryland DHS for information about E&T partnerships.

4. DESIGNATION CRITERIA

Q22. Our campus has an unlimited dining plan, so students have no unused credits to donate. We run an emergency meal fund that gives students in need ten swipes. Can that serve as our meal-sharing program?

Yes, provided students have a way to donate to it. The purpose of the meal-sharing criterion is to get meals to students who need them. The statute describes a program that allows students to donate unused meal plan credits to students in need, so the one required element is a student donation option. **Donations do not have to be the main source of meals.** The institution, dining services, grant funds, or match may supply most or all of the swipes in the fund.

Most unlimited plans include something a student can give, such as guest swipes, dining dollars, or a per-semester meal allotment. Work with dining services to let students donate one of these into the emergency meal fund, for example through a donation option at plan sign-up or at the end of each semester. In Section VIII, describe:

1. How students donate.
2. How students in need request meals, privately and without stigma.
3. How the fund is supplied, including any grant or match contribution.

Grant funds added to the fund must supplement, not replace, existing institutional contributions. If your dining plans contain nothing a student can donate, explain that in Section VIII, describe the emergency meal fund, and contact OGSi before submitting.

Q23. What is the training process for staff fulfilling the SNAP-related roles?

Training is not provided by MHEC. A nonprofit organization named Maryland Hunger Solutions offers trainings that include:

- **SNAP 101: Introduction to SNAP**, which covers basic information on the SNAP program. This training provides knowledge on eligibility requirements for certain populations, where SNAP recipients can use their benefits, and recent data and trends in SNAP participation. SNAP 101 is open to any and all individuals seeking more information on the program.
- **SNAP 102: Application Assistance on Maryland Benefits**, which explores the Maryland Benefits website and how to submit SNAP applications online. This training should only be attended by those who have completed SNAP 101.

The designation criteria require a staff member who assists students with SNAP enrollment **or** connects them with outreach partners. Referring students to an outreach partner such as Maryland Hunger Solutions meets the enrollment assistance criterion.

Why the work-study role matters. Under federal SNAP rules, students enrolled at least half time in an institution of higher education are generally ineligible for SNAP unless they meet an exemption. Exemptions include participating in a state or federally financed work-study program, working at least 20 hours per week in paid employment, and caring for a dependent child under specified ages, among others. This is why the criteria require a staff member to tell work-study students they may be eligible. Federal SNAP rules change; staff should confirm current rules with Maryland DHS or Maryland Hunger Solutions.

5. GRANT PERIOD

Q24. Will the grant period return to a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year?

The FY 2027 grant period is **October 30, 2026 through July 15, 2027**. Grantees may complete their spending by June 30, 2027 to align with their own fiscal year and report program activity through the full grant period. The Final Report is due October 15, 2027 and may be submitted early. OGSi will consider fiscal year alignment when setting future grant periods.

Q25. Could institutions set custom grant periods?

No. The FY 2027 RFP sets one grant period for all grantees. A grantee may finish its activities and spending before July 15, 2027. Costs incurred before October 30, 2026 are not allowable.

6. CLARIFICATIONS TO ANSWERS GIVEN DURING THE WEBINAR

- **2-year institutions** are exempt from narrative Sections V (SNAP at campus retailers) and VIII (meal-sharing) only. Section IV, informing work-study students of their SNAP eligibility, applies to every institution.
- **Extensions** require OGSi's prior written approval. Request one no later than June 15, 2027, with an estimate of unobligated funds and a plan for their use. Only one extension is available, and it is not automatic.
- **The interim report is due March 15, 2027**, as stated in the RFP Timetable. It was stated as March 3 during the webinar.
- **Survey wording** follows the rule in Q6.
- **Dual enrollment** follows the definitions in Q11.
- **Food security scoring** is done on campus by the institution (Q13).

- **Stigma-free delivery** is part of the food access criterion (Q20).
- **The ENOUGH letter** must come from a Quarterback (Q5).
- **Records** are kept for five years after completion of the grant program, under the Records section of the RFP and item 6 of the Statement of Assurances.

7. REVISED DOCUMENTS

Amendment 1 revises the documents below. Each is posted as a clean copy and as a marked copy showing every change. Appendix I of the RFP lists each change.

- **Request for Proposals.** Match clarification (Q19); survey rules (Q6, Q8); headcount and response rate (Q10); management and evaluation prompts and the optional timeline (Q3); Budget Summary submitted as an .xlsx file (Q1); Section II may reference Appendix E (Q2); Appendix G updated to match the standalone survey; terminology corrections; new Appendix I.
- **Standardized Student Hunger Survey.** Instructions updated for the survey rules and distribution to students 18 or older; survey text identical to Appendix G.
- **Annual Student Hunger Survey Aggregate Results Reporting Tool.** Fields for one-survey administration, dropped questions, IRB omissions, and exclusion of students under 18; three headcount figures and revised response rate.
- **Designation Certification Form.** Designation remains in effect until the next determination; portfolios may be submitted early, with determinations within 60 days and no later than December 15, 2027.
- **Webinar slides.** Edited to match this memo.

Unchanged: the application deadline, all Timetable dates, the Appendix A through E forms, the Budget Summary workbook, and the Interim and Final Report forms.