

June 1, 2018

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
Governor  
State of Maryland Executive Department  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Application Report – MSAR #11393

Dear Governor Hogan:

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is required to submit to the Maryland General Assembly as well as the Department of Legislative Services the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Application report. This requirement is in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article and stated under House Bill 356 (Ch. 718 of the Acts of 2016).

If you should require additional information please contact the Office of Government Affairs at 410-767-8543.

Sincerely,



Lourdes R. Padilla  
Secretary



**REPORT ON THE FOOD INSECURITY NUTRITION INCENTIVE  
(FINI) GRANT APPLICATION**

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

*Completed pursuant to Chapter 718 (House Bill 356), Acts of 2016*

June 1, 2018

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## REPORT REQUIREMENT

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This report is hereby submitted in response to the following reporting requirement found under Chapter 718 (House Bill 356), Acts of 2016:

*(a) The Department of Human Resources shall submit a grant application to the United States Department of Agriculture under the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program:*

- (1) to support a pilot project that provides incentives to directly and efficiently increase the purchase and consumption of eligible fruits and vegetables by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants; and*
- (2) in response to the next opportunity for available funding after July 1, 2016.*

*(b) On or before January 1, 2017, and on or before January 1, 2018, the Department of Human Resources shall submit a report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly on the status of the submitted grant application.*

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## BACKGROUND

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The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grants support projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase. There are three categories of projects: (1) FINI Pilot Projects (awards not to exceed a total of \$100,000 over one year); (2) Multi-year, community-based FINI Projects (awards not to exceed a total of \$500,000 over no more than four years); and (3) Multi-year, Large-Scale FINI Projects (awards of \$500,000 or more over no more than four years).

This report addresses the following:

- The status of FINI grant application;
- Other FINI programs in Maryland; and
- The Department of Human Services' coordination with existing FINI recipients.

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## STATUS OF FINI GRANT APPLICATION

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In December 2016, DHS submitted a Large-Scale FINI grant application to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The application proposed a robust partnership between DHS, Maryland Farmers Market Association, Baltimore City Health Department, Farm Alliance of Baltimore, and the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension. The goals of the proposed program were to develop a food network that would increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables in communities with high SNAP participation rates, to increase the use of SNAP benefits at participating retailers, and to strengthen SNAP customers' knowledge regarding healthy food choices. The targeted jurisdictions included the Baltimore metro area which was identified as Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County. The target area represented 48% of households receiving SNAP in Maryland. Data elements utilized to determine the geographic

focus consisted of metrics from the Food Trust's Report which documented that the Baltimore urban center had the largest gap in food access in the State. In addition, the Baltimore City Health Department's Neighborhood Health Profile indicates that communities with greater than 31% poverty rates have significantly higher rates of food carryout and corner stores resulting in less access to healthy food.

Unfortunately, the Department's grant application was rejected in August 2017. The USDA indicated that it only funded 38% of the applications received in the 2017 grant circle. Only two Large-Scale Projects (the same category as Maryland's application) were awarded nationwide.

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### **OTHER FINI PROGRAMS IN MARYLAND**

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The Department of Human Services continued to move forward with plans to partner with organizations in the Baltimore metro area to address the nutritional need identified in the Department's grant proposal. Two local non-profit organizations submitted smaller, separate grant applications and were successfully awarded FINI grants.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), an international organization with a presence in Silver Spring and Baltimore, received FINI funding as part of a multi-state initiative which included a project in its Baltimore Office. The broad goal is to increase access to healthy food, specifically locally grown fruits and vegetables, among SNAP-eligible immigrants and refugees. IRC achieves this goal by coordinating a match incentive at farmers and mobile markets located in the Baltimore area. Any Electric Benefits Transfer (EBT) user can take advantage of the match. For every \$1 a SNAP recipient spends at a market, she or he will receive a match of up to \$10. This project serves approximately 200 individuals per year.

Crossroads Community Food Network, Inc., a non-profit organization based in Takoma Park, received FINI funding to support access to healthy food. Crossroads works to bolster the local food system through programs that support and unite those who grow, make, and eat fresh and healthy food. One of the organization's Healthy Eating Initiatives, which is funded with FINI funds, connects potential food business entrepreneurs with community resources, mentorship, and skills development— further improving community food security by bringing more affordably priced foods into the local market.

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### **DHS COORDINATION WITH THE EXISTING FINI PROGRAMS**

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DHS partners with IRC to serve refugees and other humanitarian immigrants. To ensure efficient use of public resources, FINI funds are coordinated with refugee programs that orient newly arrived refugees to their new communities including guidance on how to access health foods.

Through a signed Collaborator Agreement, Crossroads Markets closely coordinate FINI activities with the Department's SNAP Education Program (SNAP-Ed) administered by the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension. The goals of SNAP-Ed overlap with those of the FINI grants. SNAP-Ed is an evidence-based program that teaches SNAP eligible populations about good nutrition and how to make their food dollars stretch further. SNAP-Ed participants

also learn to be physically active and make healthy food choices. Through SNAP-Ed, DHS provides nutrition education on site at Crossroads Markets and tastings locations.