



Committee: HHS
Committee Review: Completed
Staff: Tara Clemons Johnson, Legislative Analyst
Purpose: To receive testimony/final action — vote expected
Keywords: #Food Security #HHS

AGENDA ITEM #9
October 25, 2022
Public Hearing/Action

SUBJECT

Special Appropriation #23-27 to the Fiscal Year 2023 Operating Budget Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services: Montgomery County Food Staples Program - \$8,150,000

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Executive and DHHS Leadership

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- This special appropriation was introduced on October 11, 2022.
- The HHS Committee held a worksession on October 20, 2022 and recommends approval (3-0).¹
- Councilmember Glass introduced a funding request for So What Else, Inc., an organization supporting food recovery and emergency hunger relief. The Committee requested that Council staff provide detailed information on the item to be discussed when the takes up the special appropriation for action.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

As the County enters a post COVID-19 recovery response to food insecurity, close monitoring of the needs, funding and operations is essential to establish the scope of the food staple program. The economic impact of COVID-19 continues to cause significant hardships for the County's vulnerable residents including access to healthy foods.

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Councilmembers highlighted the work of the food assistance providers and the need for an ongoing sustainability plan. The Service Consolidation Hubs have increased the food systems network providing additional access to nutritious food, case management services, diapers and connections to other resources.
- The Committee referenced the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health (WHNH) and noted there are opportunities for coordination and the potential for grants. Councilmember Rice expressed that the County is well positioned to participate in these efforts going forward utilizing the food security network that has been established.
- The Executive branch continues to pursue reimbursement from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for all pandemic-related food assistance purchases.

¹ Due to scheduling constraints, the Committee worksession was held prior to the public hearing. The Committee can decide to schedule additional review in response to any issues raised at the public hearing if needed

- The Department of Health and Human Services stated that the special appropriation will sustain the Food Staples program through the remainder of FY23.
- The County’s Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice says that this special appropriation will advance racial equity and social justice as the Department of Health and Human Services’ Food Staples program support the targeting and prioritizing of communities of color and low-income households that are at greatest risk of experiencing food insecurity. While this special appropriation is unlikely to address the underlying structures creating food insecurity in the County, it will provide resources to those who are disproportionately impacted by the financial strain imposed by current levels of inflation, and the high cost of housing and childcare.

So What Else, Inc.

- The organization, So What Else, Inc. (SWE) seeks to improve the lives of children and families living in underserved communities in the Baltimore-Washington Metro Area by providing food security and other social supports.
- SWE provided additional information on the food recovery request which is summarized in the council staff document (see ©1).

This report contains:

Council staff summary – FY23 So What Else, Inc. funding request	© 1-2
County Executive transmittal memo	© 3-4
Special Appropriation Resolution	© 5-6
Racial Equity Impact Assessment	© 7-9
DHHS – So What Else, Inc. Food Recovery Funding Request	© 10-13

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Council Staff Summary
FY23 So What Else, Inc. Request for Funding – Food Security
October 25, 2022

So What Else, Inc. (SWE) is requesting funding to support the Food Recovery – Emergency Hunger Relief Program. The goal of the Emergency Hunger Relief Program is to provide highly accessible food security to “high need” individuals with food access insecurity, who are unable to receive adequate food assistance elsewhere.

SWE participates in the County’s Food Assistance Provider network distributing recovered food via neighborhood distributions, home delivery services, and a walk-up pantry. They currently serve four of the Service Consolidation Hubs providing recovered food sourced from local partners. SWA reports their current hub food distribution support is as follows:

- Hughes Methodist Church: 2000 lbs. per week
- Gaithersburg Cares: 500 lbs. per week
- Clifton Baptist Church: 2500 lbs. per week
- Seneca Creek Olney: 500 lbs. per week

The hubs are a large focus of SWE recovered food distribution. With the additional funding requested, SWE plans to expand efforts and increase engagement at hub locations across the County. SWE will increase the recovered food provided at the Hubs they serve by 4,000 lbs. per week, and at least 500 lbs. per site.

DHHS provided the following summary on So What Else, Inc. involvement with the Food Security programs:

The food security effort undertaken by Montgomery County includes both food acquisition (purchases of fresh and shelf-stable food as well as food recovery) and food distribution. All food assistance providers engage in food distribution, and many also engage in food recovery. The existing food security appropriations as well as the request for supplemental funds that Council is currently considering are intended to support the full range of acquisition and distribution activities but rely more heavily on purchases of fresh and shelf-stable food and less on food recovery, since recovered food is often more perishable and harder to store. The agreements with Capital Area Food Bank and Manna Food do not prohibit them from supporting food recovery efforts, and So What Else already receives a small amount of support through the Capital Area Food Bank. The amount of that support, however, is considerably less than what So What Else is requesting. The support received is food for their distributions, not funding for capacity building and staff, consistent with the support provided to all the other organizations. While food recovery fills an important role in the food security effort, it has often been a more decentralized effort. So What Else and others provide valuable services through some existing contracts that started as a community grants that have since been moved to the DHHS base budget.

The total amount SWE has requested is \$260,000, with a current program budget of \$795,600. SWE stated the difference in funding needed will be raised by the organization. Key expenses under the requested operating budget include staff, employee training, transportation, storage, and facility/vehicle maintenance costs.

The HHS committee discussion referenced \$130,000 as the discussion point/figure for the Council session. A breakdown of the total budget request is below. The \$130,000 would provide half of the amount requested for the Emergency Hunger Relief program.

FY23 So What Else, Inc	
Category	Requested Amount
Personnel	\$192,800
Personnel Subtotal	\$192,800
Direct Operating	
Transportation	\$23,500
Rent & Utilities	\$24,000
Supplies & Equipment	\$14,700
Communications	\$5,000
Direct Operating Subtotal	\$67,200
Personnel and Direct Operating Total	\$260,000

Council Staff notes the following:

- The funding is for operations only, no direct services or goods.
- The funding request appears to support the operational needs (gaps) for the organization, not just the Emergency Hunger Relief program.
- Council may want to clarify whether this requested is intended to be one time funding or ongoing




OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

October 6, 2022

TO: Gabe Albornoz, President
Montgomery County Council

FROM: Marc Elrich, County Executive 

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation #23-27 to the FY23 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Health and Human Services
\$8,150,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund: Undesignated Reserves)
Food Staples Program

I am recommending a Special Appropriation to the FY23 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in the amount of \$8,150,000 to support our food assistance providers. This Appropriation will fund continued food supplies to the utilizing partnerships with Capital Area Food Bank and Manna Food Center to distribute food to over 70 Food Assistance Partners (FAP) throughout the County. This program provides our diverse community with access to food.

This increase is needed as residents' demand for food support resources continues to increase. The latest pressure on our high-risk populations is inflation and the high cost of housing and childcare. Without this addition, the present food staples program will run out of funding in November 2022.

I recommend this Special Appropriation in the amount of \$8,150,000 and specify the source of funds as General Fund: Undesignated Reserves.

ME:dl

Enclosure: Special Appropriation #23-27

Special Appropriation #23-27 to the FY23 Operating Budget

October 6, 2022

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cc: Earl Stoddard, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
Jennifer R. Bryant, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Jeremy Criss, Director, Office of Agriculture Services
Dr. Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D., Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Resolution No: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: Council President at the Request of the County Executive

SUBJECT: Special Appropriation #23-27 to the FY23 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Government
Department of Health and Human Services
\$8,150,000 (Source of Funds: General Fund: Undesignated Reserves)
Food Staples Program

Background

1. Section 307 of the Montgomery County Charter provides that any special appropriation shall be recommended by the County Executive who shall specify the source of funds to finance it. The Council shall hold a public hearing on each proposed special appropriation after at least one week's notice. A special appropriation that would comply with, avail the County of, or put into effect a grant or a Federal, State or County law or regulation, or one that is approved after January 1 of any fiscal year, requires an affirmative vote of five Councilmembers. A special appropriation for any other purpose that is approved before January 1 of any fiscal year requires an affirmative vote of six Councilmembers. The Council may, in a single action, approve more than one special appropriation. The Executive may disapprove or reduce a special appropriation, and the Council may reapprove the appropriation as if it were an item in the annual budget.
2. The County Executive has requested the following FY23 Operating Budget appropriation increase for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

<u>Personal Services</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Capital Outlay</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$8,150,000	\$0	\$8,150,000	General Fund: Undesignated Reserves

3. This increase is needed to support food resources for community members as the present demand for food support from residents continues to increase. The latest pressure on our high-risk populations is inflation, high cost of housing, and high cost of childcare. Without this addition, the present food staples program will run out of funding in November 2022.
4. Notice of public hearing was given, and a public hearing was held.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following action:

1. A special appropriation to the FY23 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is approved as follows:

<u>Personnel Services</u>	<u>Operating Expenses</u>	<u>Capital Outlay</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Source of Funds</u>
\$0	\$8,150,000	\$0	\$8,150,000	General Fund: Undesignated Reserves

2. The County Council declares that this action is necessary to act without delay in the public interest, and that this appropriation is needed to meet the emergency.

This is a correct copy of the Council action.

Judy Rupp
Clerk of the Council



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

October 21, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment for Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 FY23
Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services
(DHHS) Food Staples Program

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Special Appropriation #23-27 FY23 Montgomery County Government Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Food Staples Program aligns with the County's overall objective to reduce and eliminate racial disparities and inequities and could ultimately advance equitable outcomes for those at greatest risk of experiencing food insecurity.

ORESJ's assessment finds that funding from this special appropriation will primarily provide resources to communities identified as low-income (who are disproportionately communities of color) as well as low-income communities that are unable to access governmental food support due to their immigration status. This assessment is based on how food distribution will be targeted using an approach that responds to the structural inequities influencing racial disparities in food insecurity within Montgomery County. It is important to note however that funding from this special appropriation will not address the underlying structures creating food insecurity in the County, however, it will provide resources to those who are disproportionately impacted by the financial strain imposed by current levels of inflation, and the high cost of housing and childcare.

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Special Appropriation #23-27 FY23 DHHS Food Staples Program is to support food assistance providers within Montgomery County. Specifically, this appropriation is intended to fund continued supplies of food to over 70

Racial Equity Impact Assessment for Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 FY23 Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Food Staples Program

October 21, 2022

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Food Assistance Partners (FAP) throughout the County in partnership with Capital Area Food Bank and Manna Food Center which will distribute the food to identified local providers. The current financial strain created by inflation in the global economy has led to increased demand for food support. As a result, this funding increase is needed to support residents struggling with food insecurity as the present food staples program is on track to run out of financial resources by November 2022.

Unsurprisingly, DHHS's research has found that the burden of food insecurity has most acutely affected low-income communities of the County, particularly those with higher concentrations of immigrants as they are most often excluded from governmental supports such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and housing assistance due to their status as undocumented. Information accompanying this funding request specifically identified Hispanic/Latino populations as those with the highest level of need in addition to significant populations of African and African American individuals in the down and east county areas.

Utilizing Geographic Information System (GIS) data to map areas of the County with high concentrations of poverty and other determinants of health, in addition to research from the Capital Area Food Bank's *2022 Hunger Report*¹, DHHS developed a methodology that enables them to support local partners in their efforts to purchase food (including produce, meat, staples, and canned goods) based on community need. In this effort, DHHS will partner with organizations serving high-need communities in a culturally responsive manner including those who observe kosher restrictions and those who identify as Muslim and may also observe strict dietary needs. DHHS will also work to connect food insecure residents with additional resources such as diapers, Community Health Workers, and case management to connect them with other vital services from nonprofit partners and County agencies—bringing a holistic approach to food assistance that aims to eliminate barriers to accessing services.

III. **ANALYSIS:** ORESJ has previously documented the increased need for food support for Montgomery County residents, primarily during the COVID-19 pandemic which has disproportionately impacted low-income communities of color, in the following Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIAs):

1. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation Food Security Bridge Funding Proposal
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/FoodSecurity.pdf>
2. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-27 Food Security Bridge Funding Proposal updated
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-27.pdf>

¹ Capital Area Food Bank. *2022 Hunger Report*. 2022. Available at: <https://hunger-report.capitalareafoodbank.org/report-2022/>

Racial Equity Impact Assessment for Supplemental Appropriation #23-27 FY23 Montgomery
County Government, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Food
Staples Program

October 21, 2022

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3. REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-79 Bridge Funding for the Food Security
Task Force

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-79.pdf>

The REIAs highlighted above provide readers with context regarding the state of food insecurity in Montgomery County—whose most affected and why. While the funding put forth by this special appropriation will undoubtedly serve those in greatest need of food support in a culturally responsive way while also connecting these communities with additional resources, these funds will not address the underlying structures that create food insecurity in the County. This would require the County to assess its systems and address the ways in which they exclude particular communities, pushing them further into poverty. These communities have been previously identified by the Montgomery County Food Council as residents with incomes below the County’s self-sufficiency standard of \$91,252 as well as populations facing the greatest risk of food insecurity, which includes²:

- residents lacking access to personal vehicles and adequate transit options; eligible but not enrolled in benefits programs; working multiple jobs and/or experiencing homelessness;
- children in school, and/or in single-parent households;
- seniors aging in place and/or with medical dietary restrictions;
- foreign-born residents with limited English proficiency in mixed immigration status families, with a lack of knowledge of or access to culturally appropriate services; and,
- people with disabilities with limited mobility and/or waiting for case mana.

cc: Raymond Crowel, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

² Montgomery County Food Council. *Montgomery County Food Security Plan*. 2017. Available at:
https://communityfoodrescue.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/moco_food_plan.pdf



So What Else, Inc. | www.sowhatelse.org

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
FY2022 Funding Request
Food Recovery: Emergency Hunger Relief Program
Applicant: So What Else, Inc. 501 (c)(3)

Organization: So What Else, Inc. (SWE), 501c3

[Redacted]

Organization's Mission Statement:

So What Else's mission is to improve the lives of children and families living in underserved communities in the Baltimore-Washington Metro Area by providing food security, access to basic necessities, and high-quality out-of-school time programs in literacy, athletics, and the visual and performing arts while inspiring young people to give back to the community by creating volunteer opportunities for citizens of all ages.

Executive Director: Dave Silbert

[Redacted]

Director of Grants and Development: Travis Whitcomb

[Redacted]

Funding Request:

Project Name: Food Recovery – Emergency Hunger Relief Program
Amount of Request: \$260,000
Total Project Budget: \$795,600

Support is being requested in the amount of \$260,000 to help the food recovery efforts of the So What Else mission. With a current program budget of \$795,600, the difference in funding needed will be raised by the So What Else organization. Key expenses under this operating budget include staff, employee Servsafe training, transportation, storage, and facility/vehicle maintenance costs.



So What Else, Inc. | www.sowhatelse.org

Program Overview & Scope of Work

The overall goal of the Emergency Hunger Relief Program is to provide highly accessible food security to “high need” individuals with food access insecurity, who are unable to receive adequate food assistance elsewhere. So What Else revolutionizes access to food security by transcending food access barriers and hand delivering nourishing meals, groceries and other basic necessities right to the doors and neighborhoods of any family that needs it most, no questions asked.

The efforts of our Emergency Hunger Relief Program are fueled by food that is rescued or recovered. This means that the food provided to the communities we serve is food that would otherwise have gone to waste thus creating a model of sustainability in waste reduction while alleviating food access concerns in said communities. Through our own sourcing efforts and the extensive network of partnerships So What Else has established, we keep hundreds of thousands of pounds of quality food out of landfills and redistribute this recovered food back into the communities that need it the most. This rescued food is food that may have imperfections that make items less appealing to mainstream grocers or food that may be nearing a Sell By date that is still of good quality.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and amid volatility on the national and global stage, food prices are at a near record high due to sourcing and supply channel disruption. With the So What Else model of utilizing recovered food to feed communities in need, we make food access free to these individuals while mitigating operational costs and supporting an environmentally sustainable vision for food access. Since the program’s inception in March 2020, So What Else has delivered and distributed 9 million pounds of food to over 65,000 individuals.

Supporting our goal of distributing 105,000 lbs. of food per week, SWE operates a trifold approach to food access. So What Else will use this approach to meet the food access needs of Montgomery County communities by offering these services for community members. This approach entails the following:

- Through SWE’s community-based distribution model, a team of volunteers and staff make deliveries to 25 communities every week, setting up tables with recovered food and supplies. This “pop-up food pantry” ensures accessibility for those without transportation or who must stay home.
- As of May 18, 2020, SWE opened our warehouse to the public as a “walk-up” food pantry where we now serve recovered food and supplies to at least 2300 families per week.
- Our team answers an average of 200 emergency hunger calls each week, making personal home deliveries of food and baby supplies to families in dire need.

Lakeforest Walk-Up Pantry

So What Else currently operates our walk-up food pantry at a leased space in the Lakeforest Mall. The location provides adequate space for our walk-up food distribution services with on-site storage and staff accommodating facilities. Under the present terms of the lease, So What Else can be provided a notice to vacate with 30 days notice. While we maintain intention to



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utilize the current space until further notice, should eviction occur, So What Else is prepared for such contingencies. Contingency efforts include:

- Active talks with the Nellis Corporation and Lincoln Property Company regarding corporate real estate options
- Alternative property to lease for facility usage: 14014 Connecticut Ave
- Board engagement and grant opportunities for facility/property donation or funding for acquisition

Service Consolidation Hubs

So What Else currently serves four of the Service Consolidation Hubs consistently providing substantial volumes of recovered food. Current Hub support is as follows:

- Hughes Methodist Church: 2000 lbs. per week
- Gaithersburg Cares: 500 lbs. per week
- Clifton Baptist Church: 2500 lbs. per week
- Seneca Creek Olney: 500 lbs. per week

The recovered food provided at these sites includes a diverse array of produce, bread options, and poultry. Produce varies based on sourcing from our partners and consists of nutritious and culturally appropriate food items. All recovered food undergoes a thorough screening process to ensure quality control. This entails Servsafe staff and volunteers examining all recovered food items, discarding any items that have been deemed not viable for distribution. Due to the recovered nature of these items, the quality control process is imperative though many of our food sourcing partners are providing food items well before expiration due to their internal inventory standards. These hubs are a large focus of our recovered food distribution and with the additional funding support being requested, we will be able to expand our efforts and increase engagement at hub locations across the county.

Impact and Goals

Through the support of the Department of Health and Human Services, So What Else will leverage our experience and expertise in Emergency Hunger Relief through food recovery to serve high need communities and reduce food insecurity for those in need in these neighborhoods. Through food recovery, sourcing through various partners, and a strong relationship with food providers in the surrounding areas, the So What Else organization will bring much-needed support and relief.

Funding from the DHHS will help the So What Else organization expand our food recovery and distribution services while deepening the impact we have on the communities of Montgomery County. With the requested funds, we will not only continue our work distributing recovered food via neighborhood distributions, home delivery services, and our walk-up pantry, but we will be able to expand the access and volume of recovered food provided at the Service Consolidation Hubs across the County. So What Else will increase the recovered food provided at the Hubs we served by 4,000 lbs. per week, and at least 500 lbs. per site.



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We appreciate your time and thoughtful consideration to support So What Else. Under separate cover, you will find a quick reference all-in-one document highlighting our accomplishments and needs as well as a copy of our 2022 Emergency Hunger Relief Program budget. If you have any questions or would like to know more, please do not hesitate to reach out. We even offer a tour of our pantry, the largest in Montgomery County, which has seen a tremendous increase in demand and an incredible turnout from the community as we recently hit a record number of meals served.

Regards,

Dave Silbert

CEO/Co-Founder, So What Else, Inc.

[Redacted contact information]