



Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) Biennial Meeting Handout

The Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA) Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) is a state program that supports local emergency food providers and is administered through WSDA's Food Assistance (FA) programs. Through this state and federally funded program, financial support is provided to participating agencies (Lead Agencies, Food Banks, and Food Pantries) to help offset the costs of providing hunger relief services (such as food, equipment, training, repairs, and operational expenses). EFAP funding is unique in that it is locally driven. The power to decide how each county will spend their allocated budget is determined by the participating Food Pantries and county Lead Agencies.

Every biennium the current Lead Agency for your county is required to hold a meeting (or multiple meetings) before the start of the biennium, (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025). The purpose of the meeting is to give Food Pantries an opportunity to vote and voice their opinion on how the funds would best serve their county, or multi-county region, for the next two-year EFAP Agreement period. It is important to discuss future funding possibilities now, so that you have a plan in place should additional funding be shifted to the program. For additional guidance please see the EFAP Procedures Manual (AGR-483). Note that the manual is in a draft format and is subject to change prior to its finalization in June.

Attendance Required

Attendance is mandatory for all Food Pantries that receive funding and/or services supported with EFAP funding. All interested eligible organizations wishing to participate as a Lead Agency, Food Pantry, or Food Bank must also attend. Please see the Biennial Meeting Presentation Guidelines for Interested Parties (AGR-130).

If the director cannot be present, they should appoint another person such as a board member or the next highest-ranking staff or volunteer to attend. Meetings may be conducted in-person or virtually.

In extreme cases, the Lead Agencies may excuse a Food Pantry from attending the meeting and still provide EFAP funding to that Food Pantry. A Food Pantry that has been excused from being present may submit an absentee ballot. A Food Pantry that misses the discussions and presentations will not have an informed vote and may want to consider abstaining from the vote.

Decisions and Voting

All decisions are made with a two-thirds vote of participating Food Pantries and the Lead Agency, as applicable. Only Food Pantries who will be entering into an Agreement with the Lead Agency are allowed to vote. Food Bank (distribution centers) are **not** allowed a vote. The Lead Agency (which might also serve as a Food Bank) may vote on everything other than who should be the Lead Agency.

- If the Lead Agency is also a Food Pantry, then they may only get one vote.
- If there are not enough eligible voters for determining a two-thirds majority for Lead Agency, then FA may cast deciding vote (i.e., there are less than three votes in the county).

Note: Should a Food Pantry not be present at the meeting, two-thirds refers to all Food Pantries in a county receiving EFAP funds and food for the next biennium, not two-thirds of those present at the meeting. All votes should be made and reported separately in the meeting minutes.

Voting Structure

Lead Agencies wishing to clarify the voting structure for the biennial meeting should hold a pre-meeting to determine voting structures which may include:

- One vote per agency – regardless of the number of sites. Each separate organization gets a vote (an organization might have more than one site).
- One vote per Food Pantry site. Each Food Pantry **site** gets a vote.

Multi-County Considerations

If a Lead Agency serves multiple counties, they can propose to pool all of the counties' funds. Each county would need to have a two-thirds vote from the Food Pantries involved. If agreed upon, all of the counties' funding would be combined into one single allocation and considered a single allocation.

FA encourages multi-county areas to consider pooling funds as a means to evenly disperse funding and resources among all of the service area's Food Pantries and to ease the administrative burden on the Lead Agency.

If a county's Food Pantries receive fewer funds by doing this, they can vote to remove their county's funds from the multi-county group with a two-thirds vote. The other counties may continue to vote as a bloc.

Meeting Topics

The following topics must be covered during the meeting in the order listed:

1. New Food Pantries

- A. If a new Food Pantry in your county or multi-county region is interested in receiving EFAP funding and/or services, the first order of business must be a vote on whether or not to include the new pantry in EFAP services. This will allow the organization to participate in any subsequent voting.
- B. Prior to the meeting, the prospective agency must notify the Lead Agency of their intent to participate in the program. The Lead Agency must verify the following:
 - i. Be a nonprofit corporation or public nonprofit agency.
 - ii. Have had IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit status for at least one year prior to the beginning date of the Agreement.
 - a. Churches and religious organizations associated with a church are exempt from having to prove their 501(c)(3) designation.
 - iii. Be in operation as a Food Pantry for at least one year prior to the beginning date of the Agreement.
 - a. The Food Pantry has been distributing food, engaging in client data collection practices, and has had set hours of operation.
 - iv. Be able to provide adequate storage relative to the quantities needed to meet the demands of your service area for the Agreement.
 - v. Have and maintain active registration with the Secretary of State Office in Washington as a nonprofit corporation or public nonprofit agency throughout the Agreement period.
 - vi. Have and maintain active System for Award Management (SAM) registration throughout the Agreement period.
 - vii. Not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any federal or state department/agency.
- C. If the Food Pantry meets the criteria listed above, they may be denied EFAP funding **ONLY** if the existing group of EFAP Food Pantries and Lead Agency can substantiate and provide justification that the new Food Pantry provides services that are duplicative to that of current EFAP supported pantries.
 - i. Duplication of service seldom occurs. In determining duplication of service, the Lead Agency and participating Food Pantries should consider: other services the new Food Pantry would provide; proximity to other Food Pantries (if it is a hardship for clients to get to the currently funded Food Pantries); whether the new Food Pantry serves a different clientele; frequency of service or hours of nearby Food Pantries; and if the new Food Pantry has access to different kinds of food.
 - ii. FA is providing an **optional** EFAP Biennial Meeting Ballot Tool (AGR-2397) that Lead Agencies may provide to their voting Sub Agency Food Pantries in order to assist with vote tracking and justifications.

- D. Below are the standardized presentation topics. This is the minimum requirement. Voting agencies will likely have additional questions; be prepared to respond. Food Pantries are approved by two-third majority vote. Please see the Biennial Meeting Presentation Guidelines for Interested Parties (AGR-130) for more detail. The Lead Agency will typically collect this information from you in advance of the scheduled meeting and make your responses available to all voting Food Pantries.
- i. Be prepared to present at the Biennial Meeting.
 - a. Days of operation by week and/or month (frequency) and hours of operation.
 - b. Description of service(s):
 - Distribution method (home delivery, drive through, client choice, other) and location(s).
 - How often a client may receive services.
 - Types of food provided – fresh, frozen, shelf-stable, culturally familiar, and special dietary needs.
 - c. Description of the client management system.
 - Client data from previous year.
 - d. Service area, including any priority service populations.
 - Understanding that regardless of the Food Pantry's service area, any eligible client in the state of Washington must be served. Food Pantries must provide the same level of service to all clients regardless of where the client resides within the state of Washington.
 - e. Sourcing practices – donation, grocery rescue, purchasing, and farming/gleaning.

2. Lead Agency

- A. If the current Lead Agency or participating Food Pantry is contacted by an interested agency in your county or multi-county region that wants to serve as the Lead Agency, they must tell that agency to notify FA of its interest immediately via email at foodassistance@agr.wa.gov.
- B. Any agencies requesting to be the Lead Agency must be allowed to present their case prior to the vote.
 - i. The prospective agency must propose the following at the Biennial Meeting:
 - a. Plan for providing services to the Food Pantries.
 - b. Funding breakout (categories: admin, indirect, operations, food purchases, equipment).
 - c. Spending plan.
 - d. Allocation formula for distributing food among the Food Pantries.
- C. Only Food Pantries may vote to determine who will be the Lead Agency unless the current/potential Lead Agency is also a participating Food Pantry.
- D. Each county can have only one Lead Agency with the exception of King County, which may have up to three. An organization may be the Lead Agency for more than one county, but each county must vote separately for the Lead Agency.
- E. A Lead Agency has the right to take 10 percent of the county's EFAP allocation to cover its costs of administering the EFAP Agreement since administering the Agreement can be a time-consuming and challenging responsibility.
- F. If the Lead Agency performs two or more functions (e.g.: Lead Agency and/or Food Bank services and/or direct client Food Pantry services) they have the right to claim 15 percent administrative costs.
- G. There are no limitations to operational funding levels.

3. Food Bank

- A. If another agency in your county or multi-county region wants to serve as the Food Bank (distribution center), they must notify the current Lead Agency prior to the meeting. Both the Lead Agency and the Food Pantries have the ability to vote on this topic.
- B. Any current or prospective agencies requesting to be the Food Bank must be allowed to present their case prior to the vote.

- C. The prospective agency must propose the following at the Biennial Meeting:
 - i. Plan for providing services to the Food Pantries.
 - a. Including storage and transportation capabilities.
 - b. Proposed pounds of food and/or services that will be provided.
 - ii. Funding breakout (categories: admin, indirect, operations, food purchases, equipment).
 - iii. Spending plan.
 - a. Types of food that will be purchased and/or delivered:
 - Fresh, frozen, shelf-stable, culturally familiar, special dietary, etc.
 - Food procurement policy and sources.
 - Sourcing practices – donation, grocery rescue, purchasing, farming/gleaning.
 - b. Food Bank operations.
 - c. Equipment.
 - d. Other.
 - iv. Transportation plan to get the food from the Food Bank to the Food Pantries.
- D. There can be more than one Food Bank per county.
- E. A Food Bank has the right to take up to 10 percent of its EFAP allocation for administrative purposes to cover its costs of being the county distribution center. FA strongly urges Food Pantries to consider providing the local Food Bank with operational funding as a means to receive substantially discounted or free food.

4. Funding Allocations

- A. Both the Lead Agency and the Food Pantries must decide how their county's EFAP funds should be spent. You may allocate funding for one or all of the following purposes in any combination or amount:
 - i. To individual Food Pantries for administrative costs (10 percent of total allocation), operational costs, equipment purchases, food, special dietary needs food, and dues. You will need to determine the formula for allocating funds among the Food Pantries. This formula can change from biennium to biennium, depending on the needs of your county. EFAP policies state that the formula must be based on substantiated need indicated for each Food Pantry. Lead Agencies report using service-count figures (new and/or returning clients), census tract poverty data, pounds of food distributed, adjusted backpack figures, a Sub Agency base, or a combination of measurements.
 - a. Note: While this must be at least a two-thirds vote, we encourage Lead Agencies to try to reach a consensus.
 - ii. To the Food Bank(s) or Lead Agency to provide food and support to the Food Pantries. Determine how many Food Bank(s) will be supporting the Food Pantries and the amount of funding to allocate to the Food Bank(s).
 - iii. Items or services that will benefit the entire group of Food Pantries that participate. These funds will be taken off the top before further allocating the EFAP funds. These costs may include:
 - a. Purchase of special dietary needs food.
 - b. Payment of dues for the WA Food Coalition or any other anti-hunger agency (up to 1 percent of allocation).
 - c. Equipment purchases that will benefit the entire service area.
 - iv. Once funds are allocated to any Food Pantry, that agency has the right to decide for itself how to spend its own funding within the EFAP guidelines, including up to 10 percent for administrative costs, along with operational costs, equipment purchases, special dietary needs food and dues.

Examples of a few possible funding decisions:

Example #1

10% Lead Agency admin
 1% for WA Food Coalition dues
 35% Food Bank
 54% Food Pantries

Example #2

10% Lead Agency admin
 75% Food Bank #1
 10% Food Bank #2
 5% Special dietary needs food purchases

Example #3

- 10% Lead Agency admin
- 69% Food Pantries
- 20% Shared equipment / funding reserve
- 1% for WA Food Coalition dues

Example #5

- 10% Lead Agency admin
- 90% Food Pantries
 - Sub Agency A - 40%
 - Sub Agency B - 32%
 - Sub Agency C - 18%

Example #4

- 7.0% Lead Agency admin
- 46.4% Food Pantries
- 40.9% Food Bank
- 0.7% WA Food Coalition dues
- 5.0% Equipment

Example #6

- 15% Lead Agency admin
- 80% Food Bank
 - Bulk Buy Program - 30%
 - Food Bank Operations - 50%
- 5% Equipment

5. Optional Decisions and Voting

- A. This is your opportunity to discuss any other decisions that need to be made for your county. Addressing any concerns at the meeting can eliminate the need to vote throughout the year and allow for easier management of the EFAP Agreement for both the Lead Agency and Sub Agencies.
- B. Some examples of optional decisions include:
 - i. Alternatives to in-person meetings that require a vote during the course of the biennium (electronic voting, conference call, web meetings etc.)
 - ii. An agreed-upon, spend-out procedure. Example: 80 percent of funds must be spent by May billing.
 - iii. A plan for a Sub Agency that cannot spend down their funds prior to the end of the state fiscal year. Example: Those funds could be redistributed to the nearest pantries, put into bulk buy, etc.
 - iv. A plan for reallocation if a Sub Agency closes or leaves the program.
 - v. An additional vote to confirm final allocation levels if EFAP actual funding varies considerably from estimated figures provided in County Allocations table (AGR-459). Example: If budget levels are 20 percent greater or less than estimated meeting budget levels a re-vote could be required.

If you feel that the process outline above was not properly carried out at your meeting, steps were missing, or coercion was used, and you have been unable to resolve the issue locally, please contact the FA Program Manager.

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