Office of the Food Security Advocate

Measuring Military Food Insecurity (MMFI): A Survey of Active & Retired Military Households in New Jersey

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

November 20, 2026

Proposals Due: December 21, 2026 at 5pm ET

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Background & Purpose

Since 1995, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducted an annual measurement of the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in U.S. households at the national and state levels. Survey data collected by the United States Census Bureau via the American Community Survey (ACS) provided supplemental data specific to poverty and enrollment in federal safety net programs. In 2025, the USDA announced that data collection around national food insecurity would cease with the publication of the 2024 Household Food Security in the United States report. The loss of this data will have a significant impact on assessing and evaluating food insecurity, particularly among specific populations. This includes active and veteran military households.

Tangential to the collection of national food insecurity data by the USDA, both the Miliary Families Advisory Network and Blue Star Families publish semi-regular reports specific to food insecurity among military families. Both surveys include national samples and include topics unique to military families including housing costs and the impact of relocation. While both reports provide state-specific data, the sample size may lack sufficient power and may not properly represent families from all 21 New Jersey counties, twelve bases, members of the coast guard and the state's many reservists.

In 2025, a team of non-profit groups, state agencies, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, military organizations, and agencies representing New Jersey's military base charitable food sector launched a statewide coalition to address military food insecurity. The coalition was advocated by the office of Senator Andy Kim. The coalition is in response to both a Community Health Assessment of Joint Base McGuire along with the November 2025 federal shutdown, which curtailed payments to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants, including participants in active and retired military households. The coalition was brought together to take a collective approach to reducing food insecurity among these households and members knew the key was to take a data informed approach. This would begin with a statewide survey of military households.

On February 17, 2026, the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) released the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan. This Strategic Plan, developed through cross-sector community engagement, identified enhanced information exchange and access to improve public awareness, optimize programs, and support data-driven decision-making as one of the primary focus areas (see Focus Area 1).

Focus Area 1 promotes data infrastructure and advances a coordinated, data-informed approach to food security by strengthening how information is collected, shared, visualized, and applied across sectors. It promotes coordination among agencies and

supports the development of community-facing data tools with localized analyses that illustrate the economic, health, and lived impacts of food insecurity in New Jersey.

Given gaps in existing available data, and in support of advancing this focus area, OFSA is launching the Measuring Military Food Insecurity (MMFI): A Survey of Active & Retired Military Households in New Jersey project to identify a research partner that will support and enhance survey administration including the collection of supplemental data in conjunction with or post initial survey, provide data storage and security, support data-informed development of programming or initiatives to address food insecurity among military families, and in the long-term position their institution as a leader in the area of military food insecurity measurement, assessment and evaluation, and programmatic development.

Intended outcomes from implementing this project include:

- Increase awareness around the number of active and retired military families experiencing food insecurity either for the long or short term
- Using five of the six dimensions of food security, provide a measure beyond merely access and include additional dimensions of agency, stability, utilization, and availability.
- Supplement data collected via the OFSA-developed survey that will include validated measures to assess the six dimensions
- The release of a statewide report on the state of military food insecurity to be made available on the OFSA website.
- Inform future programmatic and initiatives to be developed either by the state coalition on military food insecurity or the grantee itself
- Publish literature in peer-reviewed journals specific to this work and any supplemental work undertaken by the grantee
- Position an academic partner as a leader in the area of military food security measurement, assessment and evaluation, and programmatic development

Program Overview

Available Funding

A total of $100,000 is available for MMFI, of which a percentage will be used to provide incentives to households that participate in the survey ($25 per household is suggested). Purchasing incentives, along with their distribution, will be the responsibility of the grantee. Funding will be awarded through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for funds. The project period is anticipated to begin January 1, 2027, with project periods extending up to 12 calendar months.

Grantee Responsibilities

In applying for funding as part of this partnership with OFSA, the grantee agrees to:

- The utilization of the grantee's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval of the initial study and OFSA-developed survey
    - OFSA will serve as an External Co-Investigator
    - OFSA will assist in preparing all study materials for IRB submission in partnership with the grantee including protocol, consent forms, and solicitation material
    - All modifications will be jointly agreed upon before submission to the IRB
    - Progress reporting and study closure will be the responsibility of the grantee
- Grantee will source incentives for survey participants and facilitate getting the incentive to the recipient household. The mechanism preferred by the grantee should be indicated in the grant proposal.
- Grantee will host OFSA survey on a licensed copy of Qualtrics or similar software allowing more than 1000 responses
    - OFSA will be granted access to software to allow programming and data analysis
- Data will be jointly owned by OFSA and grantee.
- Grantee will assist OFSA with marketing the survey including grantee websites and social media utilizing IRB- and OFSA-approved solicitation materials
- As part of the RFP, grantee must describe how the remaining funds, after sourcing participant incentives, will be used. Examples of eligible projects are outlined out below.
- As part of the RFP, grantee needs to describe how the initial data will be built upon including future research and programmatic work, how the organization will further position and grow itself into a leader in this sector, as well as describe any further role it envisions for OFSA, understanding that future funding will be at the responsibility of the grantee.
- In submitting a proposal, applicant agrees to abide by all State of New Jersey Standard Terms and Conditions.

Eligible Projects

Projects must address the intended outcomes addressed in the **Background and Purpose** including:

- Increase awareness around the number of active and retired military families experiencing food insecurity either for the long or short term
- Using the six dimensions of food security, provide a measure beyond merely access and include agency, stability, utilization, sustainability, and availability.
- Supplement data collected via the OFSA-developed survey that will include validated measures to assess the six dimensions

- Inform future programmatic and initiatives to be developed either by the state coalition on military food insecurity or the grantee itself
- Publish literature in peer-reviewed journals specific to this work and any supplemental work undertaken by the grantee. Literature will be publicly shared and accessible through the OFSA website.
- Position an academic partner as a leader in the area of military food security measurement, assessment and evaluation, and programmatic development

Projects must also directly advance focus area 1 of the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan: *Enhance information exchange and access to improve public awareness, optimize programs, and support data-driven decision-making as one of the primary focus areas*. This Focus Area promotes data infrastructure and advances a coordinated, data-informed approach to food security by strengthening how information is collected, shared, visualized, and applied across sectors. It promotes coordination among agencies and supports the development of community-facing data tools with localized analyses that illustrate the economic, health, and lived impacts of food insecurity in New Jersey.

Projects will include one or more of the following strategies:

- **Data Coordination:** Coordinate state agencies across sectors to make existing food security–related data available across programs, voluntarily and where possible.
- **Impact Analysis and Research:** Conduct analyses on the health and economic impacts of food insecurity and research the effectiveness and cost-benefit of food security initiatives and policies.
- **Data Visualization and Dissemination:** Invest in coordinated, intuitive, asset-based data dashboards and visualization tools that can be customized to support community initiatives.

Explore Appendix A for expanded descriptions of each of these strategies.

Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Eligible MMFI applicants include:

- **Colleges and Universities:** US-based research colleges and universities, both public and private institutions. Preference will be given to institutions based in the State of New Jersey.

- **Research Organizations:** US-based agencies that specialize in conducting qualitative and quantitative research specific to the social sciences with preference given to agencies that have done work with both state and federal agencies. Preference will be given to research organizations based in New Jersey.

Applicants must be physically located and operate in the United States.

Proposals will be evaluated in part on the extent to which the project aligns with intended outcomes, supplements and/or enhances the data being collected via the survey, and/or identifies an opportunity to enhance the impact of this work. Further, the RFP will be evaluated based on the vision and direction for future work in the sector, as well as how the grantee will continue positioning the institution as a future leader in military food insecurity measurement, evaluation and assessment, and programmatic development.

Eligibility Restrictions

The following entities are ineligible for funding:

- Local, state, and federal agencies, departments, or offices including State of New Jersey
- Institutions who serve a closed group, or otherwise limited constituencies
- Institutions whose missions and visions do not align with those of OFSA
- Institutions that lack an internal IRB
- Institutions that do not advance diversity, equity and inclusion within their faculty, staff, and student body

Allowable Expenses

Budgets can include direct costs related to personnel, contractors, equipment, meeting expenses, travel, postage, incentives, training specific to the operationalization of the grant, and partner subawards/regrants. Budgets may also include costs specific to the grantee's providing incentives to households participating in the primary survey. Direct costs are costs specific to the grant itself and do not include costs associated with operating the business/agency. All applicants will be limited to no more than 10 percent allowed indirect costs. Additional Information on allowable expenses is outlined below:

- Equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of $5,000 or more) that are purchased using MFFI funds must be used during the grant period for the sole purpose of accomplishing the stated project objectives. The project must reflect appropriate equipment depreciation or request depreciation flexibility. If purchased equipment is not fully dedicated to the grant project, including extension beyond the grant period end date, the

applicant must determine what percentage of the equipment's time or space will be dedicated to project activities when developing a budget.

- At any time, during or after the Grant Period, if OFSA determines any equipment purchased using these grant funds are no longer being used in alignment with the purposes of this program, or have been sold, OFSA may demand that the property or funds be returned. All property associated with this grant program are purchased using funds from OFSA and are therefore property of OFSA.
- Travel costs should be limited to mileage and paid at the prevailing IRS rate. Any travel costs beyond mileage must have a justification. A grantee cannot take both actual costs and mileage. It must be one or the other.
- Funds may only be expended during the grant period of performance. Any unspent funds at grant period end must be returned to OFSA within fifteen (15) business days of grant end date.
- Partner subawards/regrants must be spent down by the end of the grant period.
- Giveaways can cost no more than $4.00 in value each and if branded, must include the OFSA logo

Budgets may not include:

- Supplies (e.g., office supplies for general use)
- Travel expenses not related to project activities, including the travel costs specific to conference attendance
- Reimbursement for pre-award costs
- Lobbying or advocacy
- Competitive sub-grant process

Grantee Requirements

Project Monitoring and Reporting

OFSA and grantee will conduct a quarterly project meeting to provide updates specific to survey administration and grantee proposed projects/research, express concerns, and discuss on-going results. This may include any proposed modifications to the survey or grantee project protocol, consent, or solicitation material. Additional meetings can be scheduled at the request of either OFSA or the grantee should either identify a need.

Grantees will submit a brief midpoint project report and one final project report at the conclusion of the funding period and submit any materials (e.g., educational, promotional, interview guides, data collection) developed as a part of this project with their final reports.

OFSA will provide templates for all reports.

Financial Reporting

MMFI will be administered by OFSA with support from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) fiscal team. Grantees are required to track monthly expenses and retain receipts, which must be made available upon request. Grantees are required to submit quarterly financial reports using templates and guidance provided. Documentation must be retained for three years from the date of submission of the final financial report. All reports are subject to audit from OFSA, NJDA, or the state's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Grantees should prepare all reports with the expectation that an audit will occur at some point over the grant period.

Participation in Overarching Evaluation

All grantees will be required to participate in an overarching evaluation of the research grant program led by OFSA. The evaluation is designed to be streamlined, supportive, and minimally burdensome for grantees, and is intended to inform continuous improvement and statewide learning rather than assess individual grantee performance.

OFSA will conduct the majority of evaluation activities using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data. Evaluation activities will focus on both process and outcome metrics and will primarily include brief surveys and facilitated focus group or interview discussions.

Grantee participation may include:

- Completing short surveys related to program implementation and outcomes;
- Participating in interviews or focus groups conducted by OFSA or its evaluation partners; and
- Providing relevant administrative or programmatic data when available and applicable.

OFSA will provide clear guidance, standardized tools, and reasonable timelines for all evaluation activities. Evaluation expectations will be proportionate to grant size and scope, and grantees will not be responsible for designing or conducting independent evaluations. Findings will be used to strengthen future investments, elevate effective practices, and support shared learning across the field.

Proposal Submission Information

Proposals Due: December 21, 2026, at 5pm ET
Questions Due: December 7, 2026, at 5pm ET

Question Answers Posted to Funding Opportunities' page: December 11, 2026
Initiative Term: One year, to begin January 1, 2027; timeline may be subject to change.

All interested applicants should submit a completed MMFI proposal including an itemized budget and budget narrative (Budget Template download) and Risk Assessment form (Risk Assessment download) in a single (combined) PDF file to ofsa@ag.nj.gov by **December 21, 2026 at 5pm ET**. Use the email subject line, "MMFI Proposal" when submitting the proposal. Incomplete or late proposals will not be accepted.

For questions about this funding opportunity, please contact OFSA at ofsa@ag.nj.gov. In accordance with state policies, all questions received by December 7, 2026 will be answered by December 11, 2026 and available to all interested applicants via a link on OFSA's Funding Opportunities page.

Proposal Content Requirements

The following information should be incorporated into the proposal.

Section 1. Applicant Information

- Applicant Institution Information and Description
    - If multiple departments within an institution are applying, ensure description is specific to applicant's department
- Primary Contact/Investigator
- Budget Manager Contact

Section 2. Summary of Proposed Companion Research

- A summary overview of the proposed companion research, goals, and alignment with intended research outcomes.
- Research/Project title
- Duration
- The strategy area under Focus Area One best aligning with the proposed research including how.

Section 3. Project Need & Community Assets

- Specific need this project will address among military households
- Community resources or assets that inform the project
- How the project advances equity for communities disproportionately impacted by food insecurity within the military community

Section 4. Research Design

- Alignment with the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan Focus 1
- Specific tactic and objectives

- Planned activities, roles, and timeline
- Project team members (including an abbreviated CV for each member)
- Community engagement in the planning and implementation of the project
- Summary of how this proposed companion research supports longer term sustainability of food security research within this population and the longer-term vision of the grantee post grant period

Section 5. Project Learnings/Future Vision

- Plans for analyzing and disseminating results of the companion study in conjunction with primary data collection and as stand-alone research
- Grantee's long-term vision for this work and summary plans of how it will work to position itself as a leader in this field of food security work with military households
    - Overall strategy and targeted methodologies/models
    - Proposed timeline
    - Goals, both short- and long-term
    - Describe OFSA's desired role, if any
- Plans for how learnings will be incorporated into grantee's longer-term vision for food security work with this population
- Acknowledgement of compliance with grantee requirements
    - Please include the following statement in your proposal to acknowledge these requirements: *"[Enter lead applicant organization name here] and our project partners will participate in required reporting and evaluation activities*."

Section 6. Budget (download the Budget Template here)

- Itemized budget
    - Include amount allocated to participant incentives, how paid (e.g., physical gift card, e-gift card, etc.)
    - Include any costs specific to providing household with incentive
- Budget narrative

Section 7. Risk Assessment Form (download the Risk Assessment form here)

- Organization funding and accounting information

Selection Process

- Following an initial screening process for confirmation of the applicant organization's eligibility, OFSA will review and determine the technical merits of each proposal.
- Reviewers will independently score each proposal based on the criteria outlined in the Scoring Rubric section of this RFP.
- OFSA will require all reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the proposal review and evaluation process.
- Award notifications will be delivered to applicants via email up to four weeks after the RFP due date.
    - OFSA reserves the right to partially fund a grant proposal based on number of qualifying submissions, available funds, and proposal score.

Scoring Rubric

Point Value (out of 100)	**Proposal Scoring**
3 Points	Section 1. Applicant Information
20 Points	Section 2. Summary of Proposed Companion Research
10 Points	Section 3. Project Need & Community Assets
30 Points	Section 4. Research Design ● 4.1 Strategic Plan Alignment - 2 Points ● 4.2 Project Tactic and Objectives - 8 Points ● 4.3 Project Activities, Roles, & Timeline - 8 Points ● 4.4 Project Team Members - 2 Points ● 4.5 Community Engagement - 5 Points ● 4.6 Longer term Vision - 5 Points
20 Points	Section 5. Project Learnings/Future Work
15 Points	Section 6. Budget ● 6.1 Itemized Budget - 5 Points ● 6.2 Budget Narrative Justification - 10 Points
2 Points	Section 7. Risk Assessment

Appendix A.

New Jersey Food Security 3-Year Strategic Plan

Focus Area 1: Enhance Information Exchange and Access to Improve Public Awareness, Optimize Programs, and Support Data-Driven Decision-Making

FOCUS AREA 1 | STRATEGY 1

***Data Coordination**: Coordinate state agencies across sectors to make existing food security–related data available across programs, voluntarily and where possible.*

This strategy supports the development of a voluntary, coordinated, cross-agency/organization data infrastructure to improve data collection, tracking, analysis, and program responsiveness. By aligning definitions of terms and measures, establishing formal data-sharing agreements, and developing common indicators of food security across state programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC, Medicaid, education, childcare, employment, charitable food, family services, and housing), New Jersey can improve its ability to identify food insecurity trends and related factors, which can be useful to inform real-time decision-making. An interagency governance framework and accompanying shared data inventory can help agencies work together as peers, co-developing an understanding of who is being served, where gaps exist, and how systems can operate more efficiently together toward shared, positive outcomes. Enhance transparency by sharing data collection methods and providing de-identified, aggregate data publicly while preserving individual data privacy.

FOCUS AREA 1 | STRATEGY 2

***Impact Analysis and Research:** Conduct analyses on the health and economic impacts of food insecurity and research the effectiveness and cost-benefit of food security initiatives and policies.*

Quantifying the impacts of food insecurity, especially on health and healthcare costs, educational, developmental, and economic outcomes, and across all life stages, can provide crucial information to help drive investment and policy change. This strategy promotes partnerships with researchers, healthcare systems, and public agencies to estimate the costs of food insecurity and the return on investment in addressing it. An example that includes evaluating the impacts associated with food is medicine programs (e.g., produce prescriptions, medically tailored groceries). Findings should be translated into plain language and used to inform program design, public awareness, and advocacy.

FOCUS AREA 1 | STRATEGY 3

Data Visualization and Dissemination: *Invest in coordinated, intuitive, asset-based data dashboards and visualization tools that can be customized to support community initiatives.*

Community-facing dashboards can be developed through an optional opt-in model with data from state agencies (and other entities with access to relevant data), supporting data transparency and accountability. These tools can make data actionable by translating complex information into visually appealing, accessible tools that provide information for data-driven and effective program planning, policy advocacy, and funding applications, while protecting individual privacy and data confidentiality. This strategy supports investment in a shared, multi-sector, interactive dashboard that maps food insecurity trends, highlights community assets, and integrates program data from multiple sectors. Tools can be co-designed with community-based organizations to ensure usability and relevance and paired with training or mini-grants to support local implementation when possible.

For a full description of Focus Area 1, please see the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan.