

# DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE GUIDE

A Comprehensive Buyer's Resource Guide

Maryland Mortgage Program 2025 to 2026 Edition

*Created by: Kourtnei Langley  
Housing Opportunity Certified (HOC) REALTOR®*

HOC REALTOR® Workforce and Affordable Housing

As a Housing Opportunity Certified (HOC) REALTOR® I specialize in workforce and affordable housing programs throughout Maryland. I created this comprehensive guide to walk you through every major program available to Maryland homebuyers, eligibility requirements, how much you can receive, and how to apply.

In my experience working with buyers across Maryland, the down payment is the single biggest barrier standing between my clients and homeownership. The GREAT news: Maryland offers some of the strongest assistance programs in the country, and I see buyers who had no idea these resources existed qualify every day.

## 1 WHAT IS DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE?

When I talk about down payment assistance (DPA) with my clients, I explain it this way: these are funds (grants, deferred loans, or forgivable loans) that help cover the real upfront costs of buying a home. That typically means:

- › The down payment (usually 3.5%–20% of the purchase price)
- › Closing costs (lender fees, title, escrow, prepaid items)
- › Prepaid expenses such as homeowner's insurance and property taxes held in escrow

Here's what I want you to understand: DPA doesn't lower your mortgage balance; it lowers the cash you need at the closing table. For many of my clients, that difference means buying a home now instead of waiting years to save.

## 2 THE MARYLAND MORTGAGE PROGRAM (MMP)

The MMP is the foundation of nearly every transaction I do with first-time and workforce buyers. It's the State of Maryland's flagship homebuyer assistance initiative, administered by DHCD, and it pairs competitive 30-year fixed-rate mortgages with down payment and closing cost assistance. If you're buying in Maryland, this program should be your starting point.

### Who Administers It?

Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)  
[mmp.maryland.gov](http://mmp.maryland.gov)

### Core Eligibility Requirements

#### MMP GENERAL ELIGIBILITY: ALL APPLICANTS MUST

- › Be at least 18 years of age
- › Have a valid Social Security number (U.S. citizenship is NOT required)
- › Not currently own other residential property\*
- › Occupy the purchased home as their primary residence
- › Have liquid assets no greater than 20% of the purchase price
- › Meet household income limits (vary by county and household size)

› Minimum credit score of 640 (some products may require higher)

## First-Time vs. Repeat Buyers

One question I get all the time: 'I owned a home before, do I still qualify?' MMP's answer surprises a lot of people. If you haven't owned residential property in the last three years, you qualify as a first-time buyer. Sold your home four or more years ago? You've regained that status.

- › **First-time buyers:** eligible for all MMP loan products and the lowest available interest rates
- › **Repeat buyers:** eligible for Flex loan products statewide, or any MMP product if purchasing in a Targeted Area
- › **Veterans** using their exemption for the first time do not need to meet the first-time buyer requirement

## Targeted Areas

Targeted Areas are one of the most underused advantages I share with my clients. These are census-designated communities where the state wants to drive homeownership investment, and buyers there get higher income limits and don't need first-time buyer status to access any MMP product.

**Areas Include the following Counties\*:** Allegany, Baltimore City, Caroline, Dorchester, Garrett, Kent, and Somerset., Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Frederick, Harford, Montgomery, Prince George's, Washington

*I verify Targeted Areas during our consultation as neighborhoods vary*

## 3 MMP DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

### 3A | 1st Time Advantage Loan Products

These are the products I reach for first with my first-time buyers. They carry the lowest fixed interest rates in the MMP lineup, and several come with meaningful cash assistance built right in.

#### 1st Time Advantage Direct

If you've already saved your down payment and simply want the best rate available through MMP, this is your product. I recommend it for buyers who are cash-ready but want the security of a state-backed loan with competitive pricing.

#### 1st Time Advantage 6000

This is one of my go-to products. You receive \$6,000 at zero interest with no monthly payments, and you only repay it when you sell, refinance, or pay off the loan. Stack it with a Partner Match and you can add another \$2,500 on top. I've helped buyers close with very little out of pocket using this combination.

#### 1st Time Advantage DPA

I use this product for buyers who need a larger cushion. You choose 3%, 4%, or 5% of your loan amount as assistance. Yes, a slightly higher rate comes with more help, but when I run the numbers with my clients, the monthly difference is almost always worth it for what you save upfront.

#### HomeStart

HomeStart is designed for moderate-income buyers, and it's one of the most generous options in the portfolio. If your household income is at or above 50% of the Area Median Income, you can receive up to 6% of your loan amount. I've seen this make an enormous difference for working families.

### 3B | Flex Loan Products

One thing I love about Flex products: they're available to repeat buyers statewide, not just first-timers. If you've owned before and thought you'd missed your window for assistance. These are for you.

#### Flex 6000

Same \$6,000, zero-interest structure as the 1st Time Advantage 6000, but open to repeat buyers everywhere in Maryland. It's also Partner Match eligible, which means I can often layer an employer or community match on top for clients who qualify.

#### Flex 3% DPA

The percentage-based DPA option for repeat buyers with the same mechanics as the 1st Time Advantage DPA, just with a broader eligibility net. If you're moving up within Maryland and need closing cost help, this is worth a close look.

### 3C | Summary Comparison

| PROGRAM                   | ASSISTANCE AMOUNT | TYPE          | WHO QUALIFIES          |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1st Time Advantage Direct | No DPA            | —             | First-time buyers only |
| 1st Time Advantage 6000   | \$6,000           | Deferred loan | First-time buyers      |
| 1st Time Advantage DPA    | 3%, 4%, or 5%     | Deferred loan | First-time buyers      |
| HomeStart                 | Up to 6%          | Deferred loan | Income ≥ 50% AMI       |
| Flex 6000                 | \$6,000           | Deferred loan | First-time & repeat    |
| Flex 3/4/5% DPA           | 3%, 4%, or 5%     | Deferred loan | First-time & repeat    |

## 4 PARTNER MATCH PROGRAM

This is one of the best-kept secrets in Maryland homebuying, and I make it a point to check Partner Match eligibility for every client using a 6000 product. When your employer, builder, or a community organization contributes assistance, the state matches it dollar-for-dollar, up to an additional \$2,500 at zero interest. That's potentially \$5,000 in combined funds on top of your base assistance.

### Types of MMP Partners

- › **Employer Partners:** Companies that invest in workforce homeownership. Ask your HR department if your employer participates.
- › **Homebuilder Partners:** Developers offering buyer incentives that can be folded into your MMP loan.
- › **Community Partners:** Local governments, nonprofits, and community organizations that provide buyer assistance.

### HOW PARTNER MATCH WORKS

1. Secure a 1st Time Advantage 6000 or Flex 6000 MMP loan
2. Identify a certified MMP Partner (search at [mmp.maryland.gov](http://mmp.maryland.gov))
3. Partner provides assistance (e.g., \$2,500 from your employer)
4. MMP matches up to \$2,500 as an additional zero-interest deferred loan
5. **Total potential match: \$5,000 in combined Partner + State assistance**

## 5 SPECIALTY MMP LOAN PROGRAMS

### HomeAbility

HomeAbility is a program I'm proud to know well. It's built for buyers with disabilities, or households that include a family member with a documented disability, and it pairs a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage with a zero-interest second mortgage for down payment help. There are no monthly payments on that second mortgage, and every eligible buyer I've worked with has been grateful to know this exists.

### Maryland SmartBuy

Student debt is one of the most common reasons I see buyers hesitate. Maryland SmartBuy was created specifically for them. It not only finances your home purchase but also allocates funds at closing to pay down your student loans. In my experience this program genuinely changes the math for younger buyers. You need at least \$1,000 in outstanding student debt to qualify.

### FHA 203K Limited Loan

I recommend the FHA 203K to buyers who fall in love with a home that needs some work. You can roll up to \$75,000 in repairs into your purchase loan with no separate renovation financing needed. I help my clients coordinate the contractor timeline from day one so work is completed well within the six-month post-closing window.

### Montgomery County Programs

If you're buying in Montgomery County, I always flag the Montgomery Homeownership Program first. County-dedicated MMP products there can deliver up to \$25,000 in down payment and closing cost assistance, which is one of the highest county-level amounts available. Income and purchase price limits apply, and I verify your eligibility before we go under contract.

## 6 LOCAL COUNTY & CITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Stacking local assistance on top of MMP funds is where I really earn my keep for my clients. Many Maryland counties and cities run their own programs, and in most cases, you can layer them directly with your MMP loan. Here's what I look at by area:

### Baltimore City

- › Buying Into Baltimore: \$5,000 for down payment and closing costs, forgiven over five years
- › Baybrook Boost: \$10,000 to \$20,500 for buyers in the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay neighborhoods; zero-interest deferred loan

### Frederick County

- ›House Keys4Employees (HK4E): Matches the MMP \$8,500 zero-interest deferred loan with an additional \$8,500, for a total of \$17,000 in DPA. Available to full-time county employees.

### Montgomery County

- ›Revolving ClosingCost Assistance Program (RCCAP): Up to \$10,000 (5% of purchase price) as a loan at 5% interest over 10 years
- › MPP Option 2: Up to 3% of purchase price as a forgivable loan after five years

### Anne Arundel County

- ›ACDSMortgageAssistance Program: Zero-percent interest deferred loan for closing costs, down payment, and mortgage write-downs. Requires 1% contribution from buyer. Income must be at or below 100% of the Area Median Income.

### Howard County

- ›SettlementDownpayment Loan Program (SDLP): Deferred loan payable upon sale, refinance, or default. payable upon sale, refinance, or default. Amounts vary based on buyer qualifications.

### Prince George's County

- ›PGCPAP (Purchase Assistance Program): Assistance for first-time buyers purchasing in Prince George's County. Contact the county housing office for current amounts and eligibility.

*A note from my desk: local programs move fast. Funding runs out, amounts change, and new programs launch. I stay current on every county I serve, and I verify availability before every transaction. Reach out before you assume a program is gone.*

## 7 QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE

### Credit Score

The minimum for most MMP products is a 640 credit score; some scenarios require 660+. I tell my clients: Maryland programs don't demand perfection. What underwriters look for is stability and a consistent repayment pattern. If your score needs work, I can refer you to a trusted housing counselor before we start the process.

### Income Limits

Income limits are county-specific and household-size-specific, so I look these up for every client individually. One thing that trips people up: the total income of every adult living in the home counts, not just the borrowers on the loan. I always walk through this calculation together so there are no surprises at pre-approval.

### Debt-to-Income Ratio

Most MMP lenders want your total monthly debt, including the new mortgage, to stay at or below 45–50% of your gross monthly income. If your DTI is on the higher end, a stronger credit score can sometimes make up the difference. I work through these numbers with my clients before we ever submit an application.

### Purchase Price Limits

Every county has its own purchase price ceiling, and they're updated regularly to reflect local markets. I check these limits before my clients start touring homes because it's much easier to set the right search range from day one than to fall in love with a home that falls outside the program.

### Homebuyer Education

Every MMP borrower completes an approved homebuyer education course before closing, typically 6 to 8 hours, available online or in person. I always encourage my clients to do this early. Beyond the certificate requirement, the material is genuinely useful, and prepared buyers have smoother closings.

## 8 STEP-BY-STEP: HOW TO APPLY

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Check your eligibility</b>               | I start every buyer consultation here. We check your income against county limits, review credit requirements, and run the property address through the MMP Mapper together.  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Complete homebuyer education</b>         | Complete this early because it is required to close, and the knowledge it gives you will make every step after this one easier. I can point you to approved providers.  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Find an MMP-approved lender</b>          | Not every lender can originate MMP loans. You need someone on the state-approved list. I work regularly with several experienced MMP lenders and can make a warm introduction.  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Get pre-approved</b>                     | Pre-approval tells us your exact budget, which MMP product fits best, and how much assistance you qualify for. This is when the strategy really takes shape.  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Find your home</b>                       | As your HOC-certified buyer's agent, I search for homes that fit your MMP parameters: single-family homes, condos, and townhomes that will be your primary residence.   |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Identify Partner Match opportunities</b> | If you're using a 6000 product, I check Partner Match eligibility as a standard part of my process. Your employer or a local nonprofit may add thousands more.  |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Close on your home</b>                   | Your lender handles coordination with DHCD. At closing, your DPA funds are applied directly, reducing the cash you bring to the table. My job is to make sure everything is lined up so closing day is straightforward. |

## 9 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Can I combine multiple assistance programs?

Absolutely, and stacking programs is one of my specialties. I regularly combine MMP assistance, local county funds, Partner Match contributions, and seller concessions to minimize what my clients bring to closing. The key is sequencing them correctly, which is where my HOC expertise comes in.

### Do I have to repay the down payment assistance?

Yes, but it's structured to be as painless as possible. Most MMP assistance is a zero-interest deferred loan. You repay only the principal, and only when you sell, refinance, or pay off your mortgage. Some local programs forgive the loan entirely after five years. I always explain the repayment terms clearly before my clients commit to any program.

### Will using DPA affect my interest rate?

It can, but in my experience, the math almost always favors taking the assistance. Yes, a higher DPA amount typically means a slightly higher rate. But when I model it out with my clients, the monthly difference is usually modest and the cash you keep at closing is significant. I run those numbers for every buyer so you can decide with full information.

**I have student loans. Can I still qualify?**

Yes, and Maryland has a program built just for you. SmartBuy pairs your home purchase with student loan paydown at closing. I've helped several buyers tackle two financial goals at once with this program.

**What if I'm not a U.S. citizen?**

Citizenship is not required for MMP loans. You'll need a valid Social Security number and meet the standard eligibility criteria. I work with buyers from many backgrounds and this has never been a barrier.

**How long does the process take?**

Working with an experienced MMP-approved lender, most of my buyers go from pre-approval to closing in 30 to 60 days. The preparation we do upfront: the education certificate, income docs, and property checks. That preparation is what keeps that timeline on track. I coordinate closely with the lender throughout.

**10 KEY RESOURCES & CONTACTS**

| RESOURCE                        | DETAILS  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| MMP Main Site                   | <a href="http://mmp.maryland.gov">mmp.maryland.gov</a>   |
| MMP Eligibility & Income Limits | <a href="http://mmp.maryland.gov/Pages/Eligibility.aspx">mmp.maryland.gov/Pages/Eligibility.aspx</a>     |
| MMP Property Mapper             | <a href="http://mmp.maryland.gov">mmp.maryland.gov</a> (search 'Mapper')                                 |
| Find an Approved Lender         | <a href="http://mmp.maryland.gov/Pages/Find-A-Lender.aspx">mmp.maryland.gov/Pages/Find-A-Lender.aspx</a> |
| Homebuyer Education             | <a href="http://mmp.maryland.gov">mmp.maryland.gov</a> (search 'Education')                              |
| Partner Match Directory         | <a href="http://mmp.maryland.gov/Pages/Downpayment.aspx">mmp.maryland.gov/Pages/Downpayment.aspx</a>     |
| DHCD Main Office                | 7800 Harkins Road, Lanham, MD 20706  |
| Live Baltimore (City DPA)       | <a href="http://livebaltimore.com">livebaltimore.com</a>   |
| HomeFree-USA (Counseling)       | <a href="http://homefreeusa.org">homefreeusa.org</a>   |

**GET STARTED WITH ROOTED IN MARYLAND**

If this guide gave you a clearer picture of what's possible, I'd love to take the next step with you. As an HOC-certified REALTOR®, I bring specialized knowledge of workforce and affordable housing programs to every transaction, and I'm here to make sure you capture every dollar of assistance you've earned.

**Phone:** (410) 657-2846

**Email:** [kourtnei@mdrooted.com](mailto:kourtnei@mdrooted.com)

**Web:** [mdrooted.com](http://mdrooted.com)

**Disclaimer:** This guide is for informational purposes only and reflects program details as of 2026. Program terms, income limits, assistance amounts, and eligibility requirements are subject to change. I make every effort to keep this material current, but please verify all details directly with DHCD or an MMP-approved lender before making any financial decisions. I'm always happy to help you do exactly that.