



Competitive National School Lunch Program Equipment Federal FY2022 Equipment Grant Opportunity

- TO:** Superintendents of Minnesota public schools and charter school executive directors, non-profit school food authorities, sponsoring authority contacts, business managers and food service directors
- FROM:** Monica L. Herrera, Director, Nutrition Program Services
- DUE DATE:** Applications must be received via [Alchemer](#) (formerly Survey Gizmo) by June 2, 2023, 11:59 p.m., Central Standard Time

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Education, Nutrition Program Services Team is pleased to announce that Minnesota has received \$874,003 from the USDA to award Federal Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Equipment Assistance Grants. This opportunity is provided by the FY22 Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan Act. Funds will be distributed through a competitive grant process.

Eligibility

All school food authorities (SFAs) in Minnesota are eligible to apply if they participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The purpose of this competitive grant opportunity is for school food authorities in the National School Lunch Program in Minnesota to purchase new equipment needed to 1) serve healthier meals; 2) improve food safety; or 3) help support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the School Breakfast Program.

Funding

SFA's may apply for **one piece** of equipment costing between **\$1,000 and \$25,000**. Multiple items whose per-unit acquisition cost is less than \$1,000 may **not** be combined together to meet the \$1,000 threshold.

Though not required, School Food Authorities awarded grant funds are encouraged to purchase equipment made domestically.

The department reserves the right to award an amount that differs from the applicant's request. Preliminary grant awards will be based on informal price quotes.

The SFA must have the ability to complete their procurement and expenditure activities by September 30, 2024. **Equipment must be received and installed no later than September 30, 2024.** All final invoices must be received by October 30, 2024.

Proposed Grant Period

The estimated grant period will range from April 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024.

Use of Funds

If selected for a grant, funds may be used to purchase new equipment or replace existing equipment. Grant amount requests should consider other costs related to the purchase of the equipment such as accessories, delivery and removal of old equipment, warranties and/or maintenance agreements and installation costs.

Grant funding may **not** be used for capital expenditures related to remodeling, plumbing or electrical to accommodate the equipment purchase that result in an improvement to the building.

Federal regulations, 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 210 and federal Office of Management and Budget Circulars are available to view and they define equipment as articles of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the governmental unit or \$5,000.

As with all Federal grant funds, procurement regulations at 7 CFR Part 210.21 and 2 CFR Part 200.317-326 applies, and equipment competitively procured using these grant funds must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable.

Expectations of Grantees

All SFA sponsors selected for funding and who receive an executed grant agreement must use proper procurement procedures that align with federal, state, and local regulations and ensure the equipment is fully operational by the end of the grant period. **SFAs are expected to apply for an equipment Energy Rebate as appropriate.** Any rebate received must accrue to the non-profit school food service account or the UFARS 02 fund for public schools.

Federal regulations require all purchases using Child Nutrition funds to be conducted in a manner that promotes maximum open and free competition. As with all Federal grant funds, procurement regulations at 7 CFR Part 210.21 and 2 CFR Part 200.317-326 applies, and equipment competitively procured using these grant funds must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable.

The maximum award of this grant is under the small purchase threshold, and as such, applicants may use informal procurement procedures to solicit written price quotations. Solicitation documents, including product specifications, must be written by the SFA and provide sufficient information to permit more than one eligible supplier to respond. This procedure must take place as part of the grant application process. Per 2 CFR Part 200.319 *“contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, and invitations for bids or requests for proposals must be excluded from competing for such procurements”*.

Installed equipment must meet all local health, safety and building code regulations. All sponsors will be expected to maintain their equipment after purchase. All equipment specifications and procurement documentation must be retained.

Reporting and Final Payment

The grantee will be responsible for submitting financial reports to MDE and maintaining all documentation associated with the purchase of each equipment item, including the purchase of warranties or maintenance agreements, delivery, installation and removal, rebates, contributions, etc.

Final grant payments will be made for approved equipment purchases based on actual costs incurred up to the amount of award. Request for reimbursement must be submitted with proof of payment and documentation identifying application for energy rebates from local energy providers as well as invoice(s) for equipment, installation, labor, or other fees associated with the equipment. Applicable energy rebates will offset the final grant award.

Minnesota public school districts and charter schools must report expenditures using Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) coding, finance code 499 and object code 530 for other equipment purchases.

Questions and Answers

The following program contact representative is available to provide information or answer questions.

Name: Nicole Barron
Email: nicole.barron@state.mn.us

All questions must be submitted through email to the contact person above. All questions must be submitted by **May 15, 2023, 4 p.m., Central Standard Time**. A question and answer document will be published after May 22, 2023 on the Competitive National School Lunch Program Equipment grant page, which is found [on MDE's grant opportunity site](#).

Information received from staff other than the person above could result in misinformation.

Notice of Right to Cancel Notification

This notification of grant opportunity **does not** obligate the state to make an award. The state reserves the right to cancel this notification if it is considered to be in the state's best interest or if funding is terminated from USDA.

Instructions – Required Application Components

You must respond to all items on the Equipment Grant Application. Failure to respond to all required questions or include required uploaded documents may forfeit your application.

Applicant Information

Each SFA must provide general demographic and district financial information.

Equipment Request

Each SFA must provide information about the site in need of equipment and the equipment needed.

Recipient Agency Needs

Applicants will explain why grant funding is needed to purchase the equipment. The narrative should indicate why the food service fund balance, federal and state meal reimbursements, and local funding are not sufficient for the purchase of the equipment.

Program Improvement

Applicants will develop a narrative response for the equipment item requested. The narrative should address only **one** of these three focus areas:

1. Focus 1: Improved Food Quality

Equipment will provide an opportunity to realize meaningful impacts on nutrition and quality of meals (e.g. serving more local foods, implementing or increasing scratch cooking, replacing fryers with combination steamer-ovens, improving cooking methods, implementing strategies for lunchroom changes that provide more appeal to the student population, or highlighting healthier choices.)

2. Focus 2: Improved Food Safety

Equipment that improves the safety of food served in the school nutrition programs (e.g. cold/hot holding equipment, dishwashing equipment, refrigeration, milk coolers, freezers, blast coolers, storing fresh food from local producers, receiving food deliveries in a more efficient manner, etc.)

3. Focus Area 3: Expanded School Breakfast Program

Equipment that will help support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the School Breakfast Program, such as increasing locations and times for breakfast service, offering grab-n-go, classroom and “Breakfast After the Bell” opportunities and offering additional food choices.

Procurement Process

Each SFA must provide a copy of the documentation sent to vendors requesting price quotes for the equipment. For assistance writing specifications, access [MDE’s Tips for Writing Equipment Specifications](#).

Each SFA must provide a list of the vendors who were sent the documentation requesting price quotes.

Each SFA must provide cost projections. Installation costs must **not** include capital improvements or capital expenditure costs to upgrade electrical or plumbing or remodels to accommodate equipment purchase. However, total costs should consider any necessary accessories, minor installation including plumbing or electrical work, warranties, rebates and old equipment removal costs. In addition, if funding will be contributed from the SFA or from external sources, that should be reflected in the cost calculation.

Statement of Assurances

All SFA applicants must sign their applications and comply with the assurances herein and all other federal, state and local regulations and policies that apply to this funding.

Submission Requirements

Applications must be received by June 2, 2023, at 11:59 PM Central Standard Time, via [Alchemer submission](#) to be considered. Late applications will not be accepted. **We will not accept applications via fax, through the SERVS system, saved as Google docs, or hand delivered.**

A complete submittal in Alchemer must include:

- Uploaded NSLP FY22 Statement of Assurances signed by the Superintendent or Executive Director
- Uploaded price quotes from two vendors dated April 1, 2023 or later
- Uploaded copy of documentation sent to vendors requesting quotes
- Uploaded list vendors who were contacted to provide a quote
- Complete and accurate responses to grant application questions

Costs associated with preparing the application must be borne by the applicant. The burden of proof of timely submission is on the applicant.

Screening and Review Process

Phase 1: Screening for Eligibility

Each SFA application meeting the criteria below will be forwarded on to Phase 2, 3, and 4 reviews.

- Application received via Alchemer by June 2, 2023 by 11:59 PM CST.
- Eligible SFA applicant – The site requesting the equipment must currently be operating a NSLP in good standing. The Local Education Authority (LEA) must also be in good financial standing.
- Application is complete and contains required documentation.

Phase 2: Award Points and Evaluation Criteria

Each application will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Scoring
LEA did not receive an FY20 or FY21 Equipment Assistance Grant award for this site.	20 points

Current year Free and Reduced Meal Eligibility is greater than or equal to 50% for this site.	5 points
Equipment is essential to operations AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current equipment being replaced is older than 15 years, OR • Current equipment being replaced is inoperable, OR • Site does not currently have the equipment. 	20 points
Recipient Agency Needs - Narrative	25 points
Program Improvement – Narrative	30 points
Total Evaluation Points Possible	Maximum 100 points

Phase 3: Review

Method of Reviewing Grants

Each school site equipment request that meets the eligibility criteria in Phase 1 will be reviewed based on the criteria outlined in Phase 2.

Two reviewers will score the narrative section of criteria. The scores of the reviewers will be averaged to obtain the final average score.

A third review will be performed if there is a difference of more than eight (8) points between the two scores. In cases where a third review is necessary, all three scores will be averaged to obtain the final average score.

Applications will be ranked according to score from highest to lowest. In a case where two or more applicants receive the same evaluation score and funds are not available to fully fund those applications, the site enrollment will be used as a tie-breaker. Awards will be made for applications in rank order of average final score until funds are exhausted or there are no fundable applications remaining. If any remaining funds are insufficient to award the next-highest ranked eligible application in full, that applicant will be offered a partial award.

Minnesota Department of Education will not consider any unallowable or inappropriate items from the SFA’s requests. Awards will be made for specific equipment pieces for specific dollar amounts.

Phase 4: Final Recommendations

MDE-Nutrition Program Services division management will review the outcomes. During this phase of the review, management may take into consideration additional factors including, but not limited to, past performance in meeting program operational and administrative regulations, priority changes in the agency, etc. **All funding decisions made by MDE are final.**

Clarifications may be necessary before final approval is granted. Successful applications may be partially or fully-funded, depending on the availability of funding. Applications may need to be revised prior to the grant award.

Phase 5: Pre-Award

We anticipate that the review will be completed by early August 2023. Applicants will be contacted regarding the outcomes at that time.

Selected grantees must wait until they receive the Official Grant Award Notification (OGAN) before obligating funds and expending funds. **Any expenses incurred prior to the full execution of the OGAN are not reimbursable and are the responsibility of the grantee.**

Resources

Grant Preparation

For guidance on preparing a grant application, sponsors are encouraged to review the links below.

[Preparing Grant Proposals](#) (USDA)

[Grant Terminology](#) (USDA)

[Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

[Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points \(HACCP\)](#) (ICN)

[Smarter Lunchroom Movement](#) (Let's Eat Healthy)

Rebates

CenterPoint Energy Equipment Rebate Program [CenterPoint Energy Foodservice Rebates](#)

NSP Food Service Equipment Rebate [Program Food Service Equipment Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#)

MN Energy Resources [MN Energy Food Service Equipment Rebates](#)

State and Federal Regulations and Uniform Standards

[Office of Management and Budget Super-Circular 2 CFR Part 200.](#)

Compliance with Regulations, Principles, and Assurances

Grant recipients chosen for an award from the RFA process must comply with the following regulations, principles, and assurances.

Government-Wide Regulations

- 2 CFR Part 25: “Universal Identifier and System for Award Management”
- 2 CFR Part 170: “Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information”
- 2 CFR Part 175: “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons”
- 2 CFR Part 180: “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)”
- 2 CFR Part 200: “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 400: USDA Implementing regulations “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- 2 CFR Part 415: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations”
- 2 CFR Part 416: USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”
- 2 CFR Part 417: USDA “Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension”
- 2 CFR Part 418: USDA “New Restrictions on Lobbying”
- 2 CFR Part 421: USDA “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
- 41 USC Section 22 “Interest of Member of Congress”
- Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, Public Law 110-417
- Sections 738 and 739 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55)
- “The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) dated September 26, 2006”

Cost Principles

- 2 CFR Part 200: Subpart E, Cost Principles

USDA Regulations

7 CFR Part 15: “Nondiscrimination”

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA. Public access to Federal Financial Assistance records shall not be limited, except when such records must be kept confidential and would have been excepted from disclosure pursuant to the “Freedom of Information” regulation (5 U.S.C. 552).

Assurance of Civil rights Compliance

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d- et seq.), USDA regulations at 7 CFR Part 15, Nondiscrimination, and Department of Justice regulations at 28 CFR Part 42, Nondiscrimination; Equal Employment Opportunity: Policies And Procedures;

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) and USDA regulations at 7 CFR Part 15a, Education Programs or Activities Receiving or Benefiting from Federal Financial Assistance;

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 1681 et seq.) and USDA regulations at 7 CFR Part 15a, Education Programs or Activities Receiving or Benefiting from Federal Financial Assistance, and Department of Justice regulations at 28 CFR Part 41, Implementation of Executive Order 12250, Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap In Federally Assisted Programs; and

Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.) The Grantee assures that it will immediately take any measures necessary to effectuate the requirements in these laws, regulations, and directives. The Grantee gives this assurance in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining the funds provided under this agreement.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment (Title I), state & local government services (Title II), places of public accommodation and commercial facilities (Title III) (42 U.S.C. 12101-12213).

Appeals

If a state agency disapproves an application under applicable federal programs, the applicant may submit an appeal to the state with regard to the disapproval by filing a notice and stating what state or federal statutes were violated. Refer to Title 34, CFR 76.401 for more information.

Applicants should contact the Grant Coordinator, Bette Benson, bette.benson@state.mn.us, if they have questions about the process or wish to appeal the process.

Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55413
T: (651) 582-8200
TTY: (651) 582-8201
<http://education.mn.gov>

Non-Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and

policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.