

# **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)**

National School Lunch Program FY 2024 Equipment Grant

## **I. General Information**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to recognize the challenges facing schools nationwide. Higher food prices and supply chain disruptions have played a role in postponing other important food service purchases. Funding has been provided to USDA to support school food authorities (SFAs) in providing healthy and appealing meals by meeting vital food service equipment needs.

### **1.1 Funding Authority**

Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has received funding provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, ([Public Law 117-328](#)) for the Equipment Assistance Grant to eligible School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). As a result, Arizona expects to award \$648,525 under this grant. Selected funding applications are limited to no more than \$100,000 each. The Equipment Grant is administered by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Health and Nutrition Services (HNS) Division.

ADE HNS will award competitive grant funds designed to purchase equipment with a value of greater than \$1,000, needed to serve healthier meals, support scratch cooking, improve food safety, store fresh food, upgrade equipment, and to help support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the School Breakfast Program (SBP).

### **1.2 Promoting Health Through Equipment**

The purpose of the Equipment Assistance Grant is to serve healthier meals, with increased nutritional benefits, to all students. SFAs may experience challenges, and have limited access to resources, to aide in improving the nutritional value and quality of school meals. This may be due to outdated kitchen equipment and/or lack of appropriate storage facilities.

The Equipment Assistance Grant funds are available for SFAs to create kitchen, serving, and storage areas that promote serving fresh foods and scratch cooking for their individualized operation. Equipment requests may be for new equipment, renovation of equipment, or replacement of outdated equipment. Some examples include, but are not limited to, the following: convection ovens, refrigerators, freezers, blast chillers, steamers, food slicers, storage racks, and refrigerated trucks. SFAs may combine multiple equipment requests on their application.

The potential impact of the Equipment Assistance Grant is substantial; it directly benefits all students who participate in the NSLP and/or School Breakfast Program by improving their overall health and wellness. SFAs can serve meals with greater nutritional benefits, increase the volume of school meals produced, and offer a larger variety of appealing menu items. Students' health is positively impacted by these beneficial changes by being offered minimally processed foods and consuming more nutrient-dense foods, which equates to beneficial learning outcomes in the school setting.

### **1.3 Strengthening Agricultural Supply Chain Resiliency**

The receiving and storage capacity of the school can become a limiting factor in the school's ability to serve desired menus items. SFAs are encouraged to explore innovative ways to adapt to decreased delivery frequencies and receiving of unfamiliar items, while ensuring menus are compliant with the

meal pattern and nutritional standards. This leads to more efficient procurement practices, while creating more variety among the menu items being offered.

Consistent with the authorizing language referenced in **SP 18-2023, USDA** intends to invest in funding applications that will improve the school's ability to store fresh food from local producers and to receive food deliveries in a more efficient manner. These improvements will be used to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency by increasing the efficiency of SFA procurement. For example, by enabling a wider variety of food purchases to support scratch cooking. In addition, timely awards of Equipment Assistance Grants will benefit recipient SFAs by enabling them to meet emerging equipment needs associated with their utilization of the Supply Chain Assistance Funds and future opportunities to receive and serve local food items.

#### **1.4 Selection Criteria**

For the FY 2024 Equipment Grant, ADE will use the following selection criteria to award SFAs. Applicants only need to meet one of the criteria below.

- Age of food service equipment or lack of appropriate items;
- Ability of food service equipment to increase the efficiency of SFA procurement, food storage, and distribution/service;
- Opportunities to realize meaningful impacts on nutrition and quality of meals.

#### **1.5 Bonus Priorities**

The FY 2024 Equipment Grant identifies grant funding will work in concert with our other financial support assisting schools in navigating the current challenges – including supply chain allocation funds to purchase unprocessed or minimally processed domestic food for meal programs. Additionally, ADE HNS is growing our efforts to advancing healthier meals through piloting kitchen operations technical assistance program, standardizing recipes, expanding nutrition platforms, and actioning statewide local food procurement strategies. To reflect this, the FY 2024 Equipment Grant will offer priority scoring to applications indicating how the equipment purchase will do one or more of the following:

- Increase the efficiency of SFA procurement, food storage, and distribution/service
- Enable operations to obtain, receive, and store food from local producers
- Develop and serve semi-scratch and/or scratch recipes.

## **II. Federal Award Information**

### **2.1 Award Amounts**

Award amounts will vary by applicant. Awards will range up to \$100,000, with a minimum award amount of \$1,000.01

### **2.2 Period of Performance**

Applicants should anticipate all grant requirements including procurement, installation and grant closeout activities (completion reports and program reporting). Applicants are expected to plan accordingly to achieve project deliverables within the award performance period.

The period of performance is 15 months, beginning from the date of the award. All procurement expenditure activities must be completed no later than September 30, 2025, at close of business. Awardees are encouraged to expend all funds by June 30, 2024 to allow 90 days to fulfill the requirements of the Completion Report.

Important Dates	
February 9, 2024	Applications open
March 11, 2024, 11:59 p.m.	Applications due
April 1, 2024	Initial award phase; grant funds awarded to SFAs
September 30, 2024	ADE requires awarded SFAs to have obligated all grant funds; unobligated grant funds are subject to reallocation to another SFA after this date.
June 30, 2025	Completion Reports open
September 30, 2025	All procurement expenditure activities must be completed; Completion Reports submitted and in approved status

### 2.3 Allowable Costs

Budgets may include expenses related to equipment and acquisition costs including taxes, installation, and delivery. Renovation of existing equipment is also allowable.

Equipment is defined as an article 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 for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000 (2 CFR 200.439).

For the FY 2024 Equipment Assistance Grant, Congress has specified that the threshold for purchase of equipment has been lowered to \$1,000. Thus, the **individual** unit cost of equipment (including acquisition costs) must **exceed \$1,000**. New, used, or refurbished equipment is allowable.

Acquisition costs including taxes, installation, and delivery are allowable. ADE will reimburse the SFA, net of any rebates or discounts for the equipment purchased.

The procurement in relation to this award must comply with local, state, and Federal procurement guidelines, whichever is more restrictive. Ensure that all procurement for new equipment is conducted in a manner that provides, to the maximum extent possible, open and free competition. If there are questions regarding procurement procedures, the SFA should contact their procurement office. SFAs are encouraged to take advantage of cooperative or volume purchase agreements.

### 2.4 Unallowable Costs

Equipment must be purchased, used, managed and disposed of in accordance with the governing 2 CFR requirements. Activities such as renovation of the food service area is unallowable.

**Items less than \$1,000:** Smallware items such as trays and plates, utensils, pans, containers and the like will not be considered as the individual items do not meet the threshold of \$1,000.

**Personnel:** Grant funds cannot be used to reimburse for staff time during equipment delivery or installation, nor training staff on how to operate new equipment.

### **III. Eligible Applicants**

All LEAs participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. Priority will be given to SFAs that have not exhibited excess cash on their most recent Annual Financial Report (AFR) as well as to SFAs that participate in both NSLP and the School Breakfast Program. Applicant SFAs that are current or former equipment grant awardees are not subject to any restrictions based on a past Equipment Grant funding periods.

### **IV. Application and Submission Information**

#### **4.1 Content and Form of Application Submission**

Eligible applicants should submit a complete application form through the online Grants Management Enterprise system (GME). Applications not submitted via GME will not be considered.

The funding application will be accessed through:

**Fiscal Year: 2024**

#### **Grant Name: NSLP Equipment Grant**

All sites and multiple equipment requests will be requested through the single funding application. The funding application will include all assurances, contact information, budget and award narrative. All attachments must be uploaded directly within the funding application. ADE will not accept any documents mailed or emailed.

#### **4.2 Funding Application**

In order to apply for the NSLP Equipment Grant, applicants must complete all required sections within the funding application. Any documents will be uploaded under the Related Documents.

#### **Required Sections: Budget and Capital Outlay Worksheet**

Applicants will outline acquisition cost(s) of equipment requested for all sites, while clearly identifying for which site each piece of equipment is to be purchased. Provide accurate costs from bids or quotes. The cost listed must match the total amount of the uploaded quote(s), including installation, shipping/freight, and taxes.

Applicants will indicate the reason for equipment requested and describe which of the selection criteria(s) is/are met:

#### **Selection Criteria**

- Age of food service equipment or lack of appropriate items;
- Ability of food service equipment to increase the efficiency of SFA procurement, food storage, and distribution/service; or
- Opportunities to realize meaningful impacts on nutrition and quality of meals

## **Required Section: Award Narrative**

- Provide a detailed overview of the proposed equipment and how this grant will make meaningful impacts on nutrition and quality of meals and/or the efficiency of procurement, food storage, and distribution/service.
- Identify if impacts address any bonus priorities.
- Describe your plan for procuring the equipment, progress monitoring, and staff training.
- Upload a document on district/entity letterhead. Provide the name of the district's procurement officer (or other authorized individual) and a statement of assurance this individual will obligate the grant funds in a timely manner (within 5 months of receiving the award), including how this will be ensured. Multiple quotes require SFA rank ordering. Please attach documentation along with each quote indicating priority.

## **V. Application Review Information**

Complete applications must be submitted by eligible applicants and successfully submitted on or before the application deadline (March 11, 2024). Incomplete applications will not be ranked. ADE will determine the existence of excess cash based on the most recent Annual Financial Report (AFR) and participating in both NSLP and SBP.

### **5.1 Evaluation Factors and Criteria**

The review committee will use the answers to the narrative question provided in the application to determine ranking. Applications that best address this grant's priorities will score higher than those that do not meet the goals or bonus priorities of this Request for Applications (RFA).

When reviewing applications, the committee will evaluate the clarity of the SFA's submission of demonstrated need for the requested equipment and projected impact on the nutritional quality of the menu(s) served and/or the efficiency of SFA procurement, food storage, and distribution/service. Bonus points will be awarded for narratives that include impact specific to bonus priorities listed in 1.5 (page 2).

During the process, the grant contact may be contacted for clarification or additional information. Processing of submissions may be delayed until the requested information is received.

## **VI. Grant Administration Information**

### **6.1 Award Notice**

After final scoring, award recipients will be notified through GME via an approved status change. An email will be sent to all authorized users within GME. A general announcement of award will be made via e-blast.

### **6.2 Fiscal Reporting Requirements**

Awardees will submit reimbursement request through GME for payment. Requests must include invoices and/or proof of outlay detailing item(s) purchased (including shipping & handling, installation charges, date of delivery/install). The SFA shall retain grant files and supporting documentation for a term of five (5) years after final payment.

### 6.3 Progress Reporting Requirements

Progress experienced by the SFA in the expenditure of funds will be requested by the ADE quarterly as well as up to one year following the purchase/installation of the equipment. ADE may request any of the following:

- Media/photos
- Use of standardized recipe
- Narrative explaining barriers/challenges (if applicable)

### 6.4 Regulations and Requirements

Should the SFA be awarded funds, the following regulations and requirements are to be met. ADE requests the ability to collect a signed confirmation of adherence to procurement rules document.

#### 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 “Non-procurement 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 (Public Law 112-55)
- “The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), dated September 26, 2006”



### **COST PRINCIPALS**

- 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
- 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)





## NONDISCRIMINATION 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 a 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/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.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**

1) **email:**

**[Program.Intake@usda.gov](mailto:Program.Intake@usda.gov)**

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.