

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

National School Lunch Program FY 2025 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, 2024 ([Public Law 118-42](#)) for the Equipment Assistance Grant to eligible School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) during School Year 2024-2025. As a result, Arizona expects to award \$209,178 under this grant. Selected funding applications are limited to \$25,000.00 per SFA with a minimum award of \$1000.01. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Health and Nutrition Services (HNS) Division administers the Equipment Grant.

ADE HNS will award competitive grant funds using a scoring rubric to applicants indicating a need for equipment to support any of the following: serving healthier meals, updating outdated equipment, assisting with scratch cooking efforts, improving food safety, storing fresh food, upgrading equipment, and/or to help support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the School Breakfast Program (SBP).

1.2 Promoting Health Through Equipment

The Equipment Assistance Grant aims to serve healthier meals with increased nutritional benefits to all students. SFAs may experience challenges and have limited access to resources to aid in improving the nutritional value and quality of school meals. This may be due to outdated kitchen equipment and/or a lack of appropriate storage facilities.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 Equipment requests may be for new equipment, renovation, or replacement of outdated equipment. Some examples include but are not limited to, the following: convection ovens, refrigerators, freezers, blast chillers, steamers, and food slicers. 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. These beneficial changes positively impact students' health 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 menu 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

updated nutrition requirements for school meals. This leads to more efficient procurement practices while creating more variety among the menu items.

Consistent with the authorizing language referenced in **SP 20-2024**, USDA intends to invest in funding applications to improve the school's ability to store fresh food from local producers and receive food deliveries more efficiently. 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 opportunities to receive, store, and serve local food items.

1.4 Selection Criteria

For the FY 2025 Equipment Grant, ADE will use the following selection criteria to award School Food Authorities (SFA). Applicants must meet at least 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, including supporting the implementation of updated nutrition requirements for school meals.
- The availability of existing State and local funding for equipment purchases; and,
- Strategies for adopting cafeteria changes that provide more convenience and appeal to students.

1.5 Bonus Priorities

ADE HNS is growing our efforts to advance healthier meals through piloting kitchen operations technical assistance program Creating Your Kitchen, standardizing recipes, expanding nutrition platforms, and actioning statewide local food procurement strategies. To reflect this, the FY 2025 Equipment Grant will offer priority scoring to applications from SFAs participating in School Year 2024-2025 Creating Your Kitchen.

II. Federal Award Information

2.1 Award Amounts

Award amounts will vary by applicant. Awards will range up to \$25,000.00, 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 must plan accordingly to achieve project deliverables within the award performance period.

The performance period is 15 months, beginning from the award date. All procurement expenditure activities must be completed no later than September 30, 2026, at the close of business. Awardees are encouraged to expend all funds by June 30, 2026, to allow 90 days to fulfill the requirements of the Completion Report.

Important Dates	
January 6, 2025	Applications open
February 7, 2025, 11:59 p.m.	Applications due
April 1, 2025	Initial award phase; grant funds awarded to SFAs
September 30, 2025	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, 2026	Completion Reports open
September 30, 2026	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 2025 Equipment Assistance Grant, Congress has specified that the minimum threshold for purchase of equipment has been lowered to \$1,000.01. 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 in 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 are

unallowable.

Items less than \$1,000.01: 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 \$1,000.01.

Personnel: Grant funds cannot be used to reimburse staff time during equipment delivery or installation nor train staff on operating new equipment.

III. Eligible Applicants

School Food Authorities operating the National School Lunch Program in School Year 2024-2025. Priority will be given to SFAs that have not exhibited excess cash on their most recent Annual Financial Report (AFR). Applicant SFAs that are current or former equipment grant awardees are not subject to any restrictions based on 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: 2025

Grant Name: NSLP Equipment Grant

All sites and multiple equipment requests will be submitted through a 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 received via mail or email.

4.2 Funding Application

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 the 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.

Quote(s): Upload the original quote(s) for the equipment requested for all sites. The Quote must include: LEA name and address; vendor name (or website address); equipment to be purchased, with all necessary accessories required to make it functional (including installation, shipping/freight, and taxes). A screen shot of the vendor webpage is not a valid quote. Only the quote to be used for purchase should be uploaded. SFAs submitting multiple quotes must include a document indicating rank ordering of priority. The cost must match the uploaded quote(s) amount, including installation, shipping/freight, and taxes. The total for the equipment requested for the site must match the one on the Capital Outlay Worksheet.

Applicants will indicate the reason for the 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.
- Opportunities to realize meaningful impacts on nutrition and quality of meals, including supporting the implementation of updated nutrition requirements for school meals.
- The availability of existing State and local funding for equipment purchases; and,
- Strategies for adopting cafeteria changes that provide more convenience and appeal to students.

Required Section: Award Narrative

- Provide a detailed overview of the proposed equipment and how this grant will impact the 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 that this individual will obligate the grant funds promptly (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 (February 7, 2025). Incomplete applications will not be ranked. ADE will determine the existence of excess cash based on the most recent Annual Financial Report (AFR).

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 the demonstrated need for the requested equipment and the 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.

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 the award will be made via e-blast.

6.2 Fiscal Reporting Requirements

Awardees will submit reimbursement requests through GME for payment. Requests must include invoices and/or proof of outlay detailing the item(s) purchased (including shipping & handling, installation charges, and date of delivery/installation).

Reimbursement Request/Completion Report

Invoice(s): Upload the original invoice(s) for the equipment purchased for all sites. The same type of equipment listed in the award letter must be purchased. The invoice should include: LEA name and address; vendor name; date of purchase; items purchased, with quantity and cost for each item (including installation, shipping/freight, and taxes); delivery date; payment terms and acknowledgement of receipt. The SFA shall retain grant files and supporting documentation for five (5) years after final payment.

Progress Reporting Requirements

Progress experienced by the SFA in the expenditure of funds will be requested by the ADE quarterly and 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)

6.3 Regulations and Requirements

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

GOVERNMENT-WIDE REGULATIONS

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- 2 CFR 200 Part 25: "Universal Identifier and System for Award Management"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 170: "Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 175: "Award Term for Trafficking in Persons"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 180: "OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 200: "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 400: USDA Implementing regulations" Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 415: USDA "General Program Administrative Regulations"
- 2 CFR 200 Part 416: USDA "General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments"
- 2 CFR 200 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)



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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

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