



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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January 29, 2015

TO: School Nutrition Administrators

FROM: Lynn Harvey, Chief 
School Nutrition Services

**SUBJECT: Request for Equipment Assistance Grant Applications/Proposals
(Applications/Proposals are due to NCDPI by Tuesday, March 10, 2015)**

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Agriculture Appropriations Act (AAA) provides a one-time appropriation of \$1,165,000 to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for grants to eligible School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). As stipulated in the AAA, these funds must be used to purchase equipment to serve healthier school meals that meet the updated meal pattern, to increase student participation, to improve food safety practices and other purposes that are consistent with the program's overall goals of providing nutritious, appealing affordable meals to students. These funds are time-limited **and must be fully expended by September 1, 2015**. *If an SFA is unable to expend the grant funds in their entirety before September 1, 2015, please do not apply for this round of grants as funds not expended by this time will revert to the USDA.*

Funding

Grants will be awarded to SFAs using an Application/Proposal process. Consistent with Federal requirements, priority will be given to high need schools where fifty percent or more of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or for schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), those with the highest Identified Student Percentage (ISP). Priority will also be given to schools with limited access to other resources to support the purchase of equipment; therefore, SFAs with three (3) months operating balance or greater (as of June, 2014) will not be eligible for this grant opportunity. Priority will also be given to schools with old equipment that no longer effectively nor efficiently serves the program and should be replaced. In addition, in accordance with Federal guidance, priority must be given to schools that did not receive a previous Equipment Assistance Grant award under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* and the FY 2010 and FY 2013 Agriculture Appropriations Acts.

When considering the equipment needs of the various schools within the SFA, please remember 2 CFR 225 defines equipment as *"nonexpendable, tangible property with a useful*

SCHOOL NUTRITION SERVICES

SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS SUPPORT DIVISION

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

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life of more than one year and a per unit acquisition cost of \$5,000". No grants will be awarded for less than \$5,000 regardless of the SFA's fixed asset threshold.

Funds from the NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant may be used to cover the actual cost of equipment only; the SFA is expected to cover the sales tax and all costs associated with delivery, installation, warranties or any other costs. As with all Federal funds, equipment purchases made with NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant funds must be necessary, reasonable and allowable, and the equipment must be procured in accordance with 7 CFR 3016.36 and 60. For example, use of the NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant funds to purchase a steamer for the School Nutrition Program would be a necessary, reasonable and allowable cost. However, renovation of the school nutrition area would fall under the category of construction costs and are therefore unallowable; renovation expenses must be borne by the Local Education Agency's general fund. Given the short turnaround associated with this grant opportunity, we discourage the use of these funds for custom fabricated equipment.

Depending upon the SFA's small purchase threshold, competitive quotes or formal bids must be obtained from at least three prospective vendors. For equipment that exceeds the district's small purchase threshold, a formal Invitation for Bid (IFB) must be used to seek competition. For purchases under the district's small purchase threshold, a written Request for Quotes (RFQ) will be acceptable. Please comply with the district's board-approved School Nutrition Procurement Plan to determine whether a formal or informal procurement method is indicated. If an RFQ is indicated, equipment specifications must be clearly defined and all required terms and conditions must be included in a written document. For any IFB or RFQ, please include a statement indicating the SFA has the right to reject any and all bids or quotes in the event the SFA is not awarded an Equipment Assistance Grant.

How to Apply for NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant Funds

Instructions for successfully preparing and submitting a grant Application/Proposal are described in this communication. Instructions for managing the grant funds at the local level and responding to Federal reporting requirements are also included.

This communication includes the:

- (1) SFA Application Summary and**
- (2) School Application**

(1) SFA Application Summary: The purpose of the SFA Application Summary is to enable SFA officials to prioritize equipment assistance grant requests. Ideally, funds would be available for all applications; however, this is highly unlikely given the limited funding. Therefore, each SFA must prioritize its requests. Where possible, priority for Equipment Assistance Grants will be given in the same order of preference as listed by the SFA on the SFA Application Summary.

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The SFA must provide the student enrollment and Average Daily Participation (ADP) for lunch as of October 31, 2014. A brief description of the equipment is required along with the age of the current equipment if the Equipment Assistance Grant will be used to replace old equipment. The SFA must indicate whether the grant funds may be fully expended by September 1, 2015 and whether equipment requested will have a useful life of one or more years; no grants will be awarded for equipment that does not meet these criterion. Finally, the SFA Application Summary must be signed by the School Nutrition Administrator and Superintendent.

(2) School Application: A School Application must be completed for each piece of equipment for which grant funds are requested. If one school is in need of three (3) pieces of equipment, then three (3) School Applications must be completed. The School Application must include the total school enrollment, the percentage of students that qualify for free or reduced price meals OR the Identified Student Percentage, if the school participates in the Community Eligibility Provision, and the average daily participation (for lunch) as of October 31, 2014.

Each School Application must include a brief description and specification for the equipment requested. Competitive formal bids or written quotes must be obtained for each piece of equipment included in the Application/Proposal. The SFA must select the most responsive and responsible bid or quote from all bids or quotes submitted. The amount of the most competitive bid or quote, as determined by the SFA, must be provided. A copy of the original solicitation and the bid or quote provided by the most responsive and responsible Vendor must be attached to the School Application

Equipment purchases using AAA funds must achieve one or more of the following goals:

1. Improve the safety of food served in the School Nutrition Programs;
2. Increase the overall energy efficiency of the School Nutrition operations;
3. Increase student participation;
4. Improve the quality of meals in the School Nutrition Programs;
5. Allow for the adoption of innovative meal service strategies (i.e. changes in the meal service or dining environment that provide lunchroom changes that provide more convenience and appeal to the student population, highlighting healthier choices, redesigning menus that target healthier entrees/options); and
6. Promote the storage, preparation and/or service of locally grown agricultural products.

For each piece of equipment requested, please complete the checklist. The justification must be based on one, more or all of the goals listed above.

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Submitting the SFA Application Summary and School Application(s)

In order to complete the application process, the SFA must submit two (2) copies each of the SFA Application Summary and School Application, each with original signatures.

The applications must be received on or before 5:00 pm, Tuesday, March 10, 2015 by the School Nutrition Services Section at the address shown below:

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

School Nutrition Services Section

301 N. Wilmington Street

Raleigh, NC 27601

ATTENTION: Equipment Assistance Grant Applications/Proposals

We recommend applications be delivered to the section by traceable means in a manner that enables the SFA to receive written confirmation of delivery. **Applications/Proposals that arrive after 5:00 PM on March 10, 2015 will not be considered.**

Criteria for Application/Proposal Selection

To be selected for an Equipment Assistance Grant, the SFA must:

- Operate in compliance with the Regulations of the Federally-funded School Nutrition Programs for which the SFA is approved;
- Submit the completed SFA Application Summary with schools and equipment prioritized;
- Submit one (1) School Application per piece of equipment, per school;
- Include a copy of the solicitation document and the competitive bid or written quote submitted by the most responsive and responsible Vendor with each School Application;
- Be able to spend the Equipment Assistance Grant funds in their entirety no later than **September 1, 2015**;
- Indicate the percentage of students that qualify for Free/Reduced Price meals OR the Identified Student Percentage for each school for which funds are requested;
- Indicate the Average Daily Participation for lunch in each school for which an application is submitted;

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- Justify the need for the equipment based on one or more of the equipment goals;
- Comply with the requirement to have not more than Three (3) Months Operating Balance; and
- Submit complete and accurate SFA Application Summary and School Applications by **March 10, 2015**. Please remember, for accuracy's sake, sales tax may not be included in the Vendor's Bid/Quote since this amount will not be part of the grant award

Notification of and Management of Equipment Assistance Grant Funds

A Selection Committee will review all Equipment Assistance Grant Applications/Proposals. The applications/proposals will be scored based on the criteria listed in the previous section. Applications/Proposals receiving the highest total scores will be ranked by score. Available funds will be allocated to the Applications/Proposals receiving the highest scores. All reasonable efforts will be made to distribute funds equitably based on district size and geographic location. The State Board of Education will approve the final grant awards during its May meeting. SFAs will be notified of their grant award(s); grant funds will be transferred to the SFAs no later than May 30, 2015. SFAs should be prepared to expend the grant funds, in their entirety, by September 1, 2015. A final report of expenditures will be due to the NCDPI by September 15, 2015. If the entire amount of the grant is not expended, remaining funds must be returned to NCDPI.

Equipment Assistance Grant funds cannot be co-mingled with other program funds and must be maintained separately from any other funds. The USDA has not provided final reporting requirements at this time. Reporting requirements will be issued simultaneously with the grant award.

The Equipment Assistance Grant Proposal forms were created as word documents. Please type information in the attached forms and complete the checklist as provided in the directions; this will enable the Selection Committee to review the proposals more quickly than if they are hand-written. Completing the electronic forms will also allow the SFA to use additional space on the forms as needed.

Should you have questions about the Equipment Assistance Grant Application/Proposal requirements or process, please contact Stephanie Tatum at Stephanie.Tatum@dpi.nc.gov or Tara Tyson at Tara.Tyson@dpi.nc.gov. On behalf of the School Nutrition Services section, good luck with this endeavor! We look forward to receiving your SFA's Application/Proposal.

c: Superintendents
Finance Directors

Enclosure: Equipment Assistant Grant Application/Proposal Forms