

North Carolina

School Nutrition Weekly Update



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Equipment Assistance Grants (EAG)

- [2015 Equipment Assistance Grant & Application Letter](#)
- [EAG Application Forms](#)

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Agriculture Appropriations Act (AAA) provides a one-time appropriation of \$800,382 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 new 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, 2016.**

Verification Timeline Reminders

The verification process is well under way for the 2015-2016 School Year. As a reminder please adhere to the following dates:

November 16 (Mon)	Verification process ends at the close of business.
November 17 (Tues)	The State Agency will send out a survey and the online Verification Summary Report will be opened in the School Nutrition Technology System.
December, 18, 2015 (Fri)	The online Verification Summary Report in the Schools Nutrition Technology System will be closed to the School Food Authorities at the close of business.
February 19, 2016 (Fri)	The State Agency will send out a survey to report the number of Non-Response applicants that responded to verification after the November 16 deadline.

Production Record Survey is Open

School Nutrition Directors have received email notification of a survey regarding the current commercial kitchen production record template. The NC production record template is currently being reviewed for potential modifications. Consideration is being given to modifications of the production record template that will still allow our production record to meet regulatory requirements as well as the request of some SFAs to “simplify” the production record.

The following link will open a production record redesign survey. Information you provide in the survey may be used to make modifications to the NC production record template. Please complete the survey

whether you currently use the NC production record template or an approved variation of the production record.

Please forward this link to any other School Nutrition staff members in your SFA, including School Nutrition Managers, who would like to provide helpful feedback about potential modifications to the production record.

The production record redesign survey will be open until close of business on **Monday, October 26, 2015**. Click on the link below to access the survey and follow the directions to complete it. Thank you for taking time to participate in the survey.

Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ProductionRecordFeedback>

USDA Infographic and Letter

USDA has developed a new infographic and letter from USDA Deputy Under Secretary Katie Wilson to all School Food Authorities (SFA). This letter recognizes the hard work and effort of school nutrition professionals in serving healthy meals to over 30 million students nationwide.

The new infographic provides some tips on achieving sodium reduction while boosting the flavor of foods served in schools. We encourage SFAs to check out this infographic for ideas and resources. The letter and infographic are available on the PartnerWeb, located in both the Resources folder and in What's New.

- [National School Lunch Week letter](#)
- [What's Shaking Infographic](#)

Group Purchasing Organizations Q&A

QUESTION

My School Food Authority (SFA) has recently been invited to join a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO). The GPO promises to save my SFA money by securing pricing for items that I use in my SFA at a deeper discount than I'm currently paying. Additionally, the GPO will automatically file for rebates, incentives and other discounts to which my School Nutrition Program may be entitled, and issue a check the SFA less a small administrative fee. Is this legal and may my SFA purchase from a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) or other buying group of this type?

ANSWER

In general, a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) is an entity that is created to leverage the purchasing power of a group of organizations (business, SFAs, etc.) in order to obtain discounts from vendors. GPOs are normally funded by administrative fees. These fees may be paid directly to the GPO, from vendors contracted by the GPO; or they may be paid directly to the GPO, by GPO members. Administrative fees may also be set as a percentage of the purchase, or as an annual flat rate. Some GPOs are funded by a combination of both of these methods.

A Purchasing Cooperative is an autonomous association of School Food Authorities (SFAs) that voluntarily cooperate in purchasing practices and share resources for their mutual economic benefit in gaining the greatest competitive pricing and discounts, as well as access to needed products, goods and services. Membership to purchasing cooperatives is voluntary; its membership is used to leverage buying power, share knowledge, and pool administrative resources.

Competition is always the key to any procurement activities. All SFAs must follow Federal procurement regulations when entering into contractual agreements with entities for purchasing goods or services. As a result, SFAs are required to conduct procurement transactions in a manner providing full and open competition, in accordance with Federal regulations 7 CFR 210.9, 210.21 and 2 CFR 200.319. Those requirements apply when an SFA seeks the services of an entity such as a purchasing cooperative, group purchasing organization or group buying organization, or an entity offering to facilitate access to those types of entities. This is true even when services are offered free of charge. Competition ensures the best quality product or service at the lowest price and ensures the lowest responsive offer or bid is always considered.

A SFA may participate in a purchasing cooperative comprised solely of SFAs if the local cooperative was created by the SFAs banding together to form a purchasing cooperative in order to increase purchasing power. This type of purchasing cooperative would follow Federal procurement regulations, including free and open competition for procuring goods and services for its members. In other words, a cooperative that is comprised solely of SFAs procuring as a collective group of SFAs must procure goods in the same manner as an individual SFA.

SFAs wishing to enter into a Group Purchasing Organization (GPO) must follow Federal regulations that require all procurement to be conducted in a manner providing full free and open competition, consistent with 7 CFR 210.9, 210.21 and 2 CFR 200.319. The SFA may only enter into a contractual GPO agreement for purchasing the services of the GPO that adheres to all Federal procurement regulations. Therefore, if an SFA wants to participate in a GPO that procures the goods and/or services of vendors, the SFA must competitively procure the services of the GPO.

Also, remember that Federal regulations prohibit contracts based on cost plus a percentage by SFAs; a firm, fixed price fee should be established during the competitive procurement process. Furthermore, when selling products to SFA members, it is not allowable for GPOs to collect administrative fees based on a percentage of an SFA's sales volume, rebates, incentives or other discounts from the vendors with whom they have negotiated a contract.

USDA Policy Memo SP 35-2012, Procuring Services of Purchasing Cooperatives, Group Purchasing Organizations, Group Buying Organizations, is attached for further guidance.

Please contact your Zone Operations and Management Consultant about any questions you may have regarding GPOs and buying organizations.

Important School Nutrition Dates

October

Oct 28..... NC Procurement Alliance Member Meeting
Oct 28-30..... *Annual Conference for School Nutrition Administrators*

November

Nov 1 Self-Assessment Due for RCCI/Charter/NonPublic (File in SFA)
Nov 3 SummerPalooza Summit!...Expanding Summer Nutrition for NC Kids (*New Bern*)
Nov 5 SummerPalooza Summit!...Expanding Summer Nutrition for NC Kids (*Greenville*)
Nov 10 (Tues) *NSLP/SBP/ASSP/SFSP/SSO* - Deadline to submit claim for reimbursement (for Oct 2015)
Nov 11 Veterans Day Observed – State Offices Closed
Nov 12 SummerPalooza Summit!...Expanding Summer Nutrition for NC Kids (*Greensboro*)
Nov 13 SummerPalooza Summit!...Expanding Summer Nutrition for NC Kids (*Asheville*)
Nov 15 (Sun)..... *FFVP* - Deadline to submit claim for reimbursement (for Oct 2015)
Nov 16 Verification Process Ends
Nov 17 Verification Reporting Process begins for SFAs
Nov 26-27..... Thanksgiving Holidays – State Offices Closed

December

Dec 10 (Thurs)*NSLP/SBP/ASSP/SFSP/SSO* - Deadline to submit claim for reimbursement (for Nov 2015)
Dec 15 (Tues)*FFVP* - Deadline to submit claim for reimbursement (for Nov 2015)

Dec 15Twice Yearly Analysis Reports Due (Submit to Nutrition Specialists)
Dec 18Deadline to complete online Verification Report (SN Tech System Verification Report Closes)
Dec 24-25Christmas Holidays – State Offices Closed

In the Previous Issue of SN Weekly...

SN Weekly Update – [October 12, 2015](#)

- It's National School Lunch Week!
- 2015-2016 Bonus Pay – Q&A
- Continuing Education Opportunities
- *REMINDER* Workshop - SummerPalooza Summit!...Expanding Summer Nutrition for NC Kids
- Important School Nutrition Dates

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