



**Date:** November 13, 2023

**To:** Authorized Representatives of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Participating in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

**From:** Jessica Sharkus, RDN, CD  
Director, School Nutrition Team

**Subject:** Get Ready to Apply for the 2023 NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant!

The School Nutrition Team is pleased to announce Wisconsin has received \$405,639 from the USDA to award fiscal year 2023 (FY23) Equipment Assistance Grants. This opportunity is provided by the FY23 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Funds will be distributed through a competitive grant process.

### Eligibility

All SFAs with a NSLP contract in school year 2023-24, including public school districts, charter schools, private schools, and residential child care institutions (RCCI), are eligible to apply.

### Equipment

For the purposes of this grant:

- **Equipment** means tangible personal property, including information technology systems, having a useful life of more than one year. For this year's grant, the piece of equipment requested does not need to exceed the SFA's capitalization threshold.  
*Note: Information technology systems means computing devices, ancillary equipment, software, firmware, and similar procedures, services (including support services), and related resources.*
- **Congress has specified for the FY23 Equipment Assistance Grant that each piece of equipment must exceed \$1,000.** Therefore, items like school lunch trays, knives, and utensils will not be approved, as it is unlikely that these would meet the \$1,000 minimum.
- The equipment must primarily be used in the NSLP and School Breakfast Program (SBP).
- If the equipment is to be used for other school or non-school programs and events, the grant award will be prorated based on the usage.
- If requesting new equipment, equipment already purchased is not eligible for grant funds.
- Existing equipment may be renovated or refurbished using Equipment Grant funds.

*Note: Any renovations completed before an official grant award are not eligible for grant funds.*

### Funding

SFAs can request a maximum total of \$25,000 for up to two pieces of equipment.

Additional guidelines:

- Equipment may be requested for more than one school within the same SFA.
- SFAs may request equipment for use in a centralized kitchen that serves multiple schools.

- A school may request to buy a piece of equipment in part with their own funding. If other funding is available, include this information in the narrative section of the application.
- Repair costs, including parts and labor for capital equipment, are allowed under this grant.
- When acquiring replacement equipment, the SFA may use the equipment to be replaced as a trade-in or sell the property and use the proceeds to offset the cost of the replacement property.
- SFAs will receive funds for approved equipment as a reimbursement through the use of the [PI-1086 Claim Form](#) accompanied by a copy of the paid invoice showing the approved make and model information.

### Key Areas of Focus

Grant funding aims to help schools meet one or more of these key areas with equipment that:

- Improves the safety of food served in the school meal programs (e.g., cold/hot holding equipment, dishwashing equipment, refrigeration, milk coolers, freezers, and blast chillers).
- Promotes innovative practices or use of local foods (including increasing scratch cooking).
- Allows schools to support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the SBP (e.g., breakfast carts, display case).
- Expands participation in NSLP (e.g., lunchroom changes that provide more convenience and appeal to the student population).
- Supports service of healthier school meals (e.g., salad bars, additional refrigeration units, steamers).

### Best Practices

- SFAs interested in applying should review the materials on the [USDA NSLP Equipment Grant Webpage](#) before starting their application:
  - [Tip Sheet](#)
  - [Timeline](#)
  - [Specification Writing Webinar](#)
- School officials and local policymakers should work collaboratively with parents, teachers, students, and funders to identify and implement strategies for meeting equipment, infrastructure, and training needs.
- Nonprofit and for-profit organizations that have an interest in improving children's health, education, school infrastructure, and community wellness should aid schools in acquiring the necessary equipment.

### Application Process

Application resources are available on the [Equipment Grant webpage](#).

Applying for the Equipment Assistance Grant is a two-step process. SFAs will first complete and submit an application and completed PI-6208 form(s) via Qualtrics to the Department of Public Instruction School Nutrition Team (DPI SNT). The DPI SNT will review the submitted applications and specifications, and SFAs will be notified if they are selected to proceed to part two, the bidding process.

### **Part One: Application, Due January 12, 2024**

On November 27, 2023, the Authorized Representative and Food Service Director listed on the school nutrition contract of eligible SFAs will receive an email with a unique link to the Qualtrics application for their SFA.

- Application Form (PI-6201) –link to Qualtrics application emailed to Authorized Representative and Food Service Director
  - Emailed PDF applications will **NOT** be accepted.
- Equipment Specification Sheets (PI-6208)
  - Complete for each piece of equipment requested.
    - A maximum of 2 pieces can be requested per SFA.
    - **If requesting two of the same piece of equipment, separate specification sheets are still required.**
    - The PI-6208 form(s) should be uploaded into the Qualtrics Application Form (PI-6201).
      - Emailed PDF PI-6208 (specification forms) will **NOT** be accepted.
- **SFAs should NOT go out for bid during Part One.**

### **Part Two: Going Out to Bid, Spring 2024**

The DPI SNT will review the Equipment Assistance Grant Application (PI-6201) and Specification Sheet(s) (PI-6208). All SFAs that applied will receive an email in spring 2024 informing them whether or not they have been selected to proceed with part two, going out to bid. Those selected to proceed with part two of the Equipment Grant process will receive more information regarding next steps at that time.

### **Awards**

If selected to receive an Equipment Assistance Grant, a Notification of Federal Grant Subaward Letter will be sent via email to each SFA in late spring of 2024. Once notified, SFAs need to complete their own procurement and expenditure activities within six months of the award. The Equipment Grant Team understands supply chain challenges may result in long lead times and/or delays. SFAs are responsible for communicating these challenges to the DPI SNT in a timely manner and prior to missing any established deadlines.

If the SFA is unable to purchase a piece of equipment within this timeframe, consider requesting funding for a different piece of equipment.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Each equipment request is evaluated separately based on the following criteria:

**Part One:** The PI-6201 Qualtrics Application, including PI-6208 specification(s) are complete and submitted by January 12, 2024.

1. Priority will be given to SFAs that have never received an Equipment Assistance Grant.
  - SFAs that have previously received funding may still apply.
2. Free and reduced percentage based on the October 2023 site based NSLP claim within 50-75% will be given priority. The free and reduced percentage from the site or sites benefitting from the equipment as indicated in the application.

Priority will be given to schools with a free and reduced percentage between 50-70%.

- SFAs with sites above or below this threshold may still apply.
- The free and reduced percentage will be based on the October 2023 site based NSLP claim and will be assessed for the site or sites benefitting from the equipment as indicated in the application.
- SFAs without an October 2023 NSLP claim will not be considered.

3. Requested equipment specifically addresses one or more of the key focus areas in the application. The narrative should clearly explain how the equipment will impact the applicable focus areas.

**Part Two: Going Out to Bid** (*SFAs will be notified if/when they can proceed with part two*)

- SFAs must use their *approved* PI-6208 forms when going out to bid.
- Documentation of three bids for each equipment request is submitted by the specified deadline.
  - PI-6210 Bidder Information Form from each bidder
  - PI-6209 Bidder Evaluation Matrix
  - Supporting bid documentation from each bidder.
- Costs appear reasonable.

**Procurement**

Equipment purchases must follow all federal, state, and local procurement laws. Keep in mind:

- As with all Federal grant funds, procurement regulations at 7 CFR Part 210.21 and 2 CFR Part 200.317-326 apply, and equipment competitively procured using these grant funds must be necessary, reasonable, and allocable.
- All Federal, State, and local procurement laws must be followed when purchasing equipment with grant funds.
- Formal Sealed Bids or Competitive Proposal procedures are not required unless the equipment purchase is valued over \$250,000. For equipment purchases valued under \$250,000, informal, small purchase, procedures are required. When using the small purchase procedure, if possible, three bids should be obtained from three different vendors.
- Equipment with a value less than \$10,000 may be acquired using non-competitive micro-purchase procedures.
- A specification is a list of the features you are requesting in a piece of equipment. It is NOT a manufacturer's product sheet that lists all options available.
- Obligations to purchase made prior to a grant award are ineligible for funding.
- Bids are valid for a specified length of time. **The specification should require that bids are valid for six months.**

**Note:** *Bids should not be procured until the SFA is approved to move forward to part two of the grant process.*

- Grant recipients are expected to fully expend grant funds within six months of the issued grant award.
- **Federal regulations prohibit the selections of vendors based solely on the fact they are local vendors.** Refer to 2 C.F.R Part 200.319 (7b).

**Timeline**

- Application links will be sent out in late November 2023.
- **Part One** (PI-6201 [Qualtrics application] and 6208) due to DPI SNT: January 12, 2024
  - DPI SNT will notify SFAs if they are selected or not to move forward with part two in the spring of 2024.
- **Part Two** (Bid documents) due to DPI SNT: To be determined.
  - Notification of awards: Late spring of 2024
- Additional funding will be reallocated in fall of 2024.

## For More Information

Please refer to the [SNT Equipment Grant](#) webpage for the most up-to-date information, including:

- USDA and SNT guidance memos
- Resources to assist in completing the application, writing equipment specifications, and deciding which pieces of equipment to purchase.
- Equipment Grant Tip Sheet and Timeline

For more information on how to create equipment specifications and obtain bids, watch [Equipment Grant Specification Form PI 6208 Tutorial 11](#).

If awarded, all procurement must be completed by the deadline specified in the Notification of Federal Grant Subaward Letter. This grant performance period officially ends September 30, 2025.

Questions regarding this funding opportunity can be directed to [DPIEquipGnt@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:DPIEquipGnt@dpi.wi.gov).

**SFAs that are awarded a FY 2023 Equipment Assistance Grant 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)”
- 7 CFR Part 3: “Debt Management”
- 7 CFR Part 16: “Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations”
- 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”
- Privacy Act. The Cooperator/Grantee shall follow the rules and procedures of disclosure set forth in the [Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. 552a](#), and implementing regulations and policies, with respect to systems of records determined to be subject to the Privacy Act.

### 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. 794)
- Title II and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended by the ADA Amendment Act of 2008 (42 U.S.C. 12131-12189)
- Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." (August 11, 2000)
- All provisions required by the implementing regulations of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) (7 CFR Part 15 et seq.)
- Department of Justice Enforcement Guidelines (28 CFR Parts 35, 42 and 50.3)
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) directives and guidelines to the effect that, no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subject to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Program applicant receives Federal financial assistance from USDA; and hereby gives assurance that it will immediately take measures necessary to effectuate this Agreement.
- The USDA non-discrimination statement that in accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). This assurance is given in consideration of and for the purpose of obtaining any and all Federal financial assistance, grants, and loans of Federal funds, reimbursable expenditures, grant, or donation of Federal property and interest in property, the detail of Federal personnel, the sale and lease of, and the permission to use Federal property or interest in such property or the furnishing of services without consideration or at a nominal consideration, or at a consideration that is reduced for the purpose of assisting the recipient, or in recognition of the public interest to be served by such sale, lease, or furnishing of services to the recipient, or any improvements made with Federal financial assistance extended to the Program applicant by USDA. This includes any Federal agreement, arrangement, or other contract that has as one of its purposes the provision of cash assistance for the purchase of food, and cash assistance for purchase or rental of food service equipment or any other financial assistance extended in reliance on the representations and agreements made in this assurance. By accepting this assurance, the Grantee agrees to compile data, maintain records, and submit records and reports as required, to permit

effective enforcement of nondiscrimination laws and permit authorized USDA personnel during hours of program operation to review and copy such records, books, and accounts, access such facilities and interview such personnel as needed to ascertain compliance with the nondiscrimination laws. If there are any violations of this assurance, the Department of Agriculture, FNS, shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance. This assurance is binding on the Grantee, its successors, transferees and assignees as long as it receives assistance or retains possession of any assistance from USDA.

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## **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, audiotope, 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/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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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