2019 NSLP Equipment Grant Application Process FAQs

Applying for awards

Q.1:   I got this email that says I have an award. How much is it for?

A.1:   The email you received is a **notification of your eligibility to apply, not an award. You must apply** for this grant at http://www.squaremeals.org/FandNResources/FundingGrants/2019SFAEquipmentGrantApplication.aspx to be considered. **Your application does not guarantee you will receive an award**. You will only be notified again if you receive an award.

Q.2:   A vendor called me and said they are working with TDA for this grant to make sure I get the right equipment. Do I need to apply if they'll get me set up?

A.2:   TDA does not work directly with equipment vendors for this grant. You must apply for this grant to be considered. **Do not contact** third-party vendors about this grant. Instead contact TDA at (877) TEX-MEAL and let the operator know you have a question about a 2019 NSLP Equipment Grant.

Entering the application website portal

Q.3:   What is my username and password?

A.3:   Your username is your CE ID. You may include or exclude leading zeroes. Your district's password was recently emailed to your district's Superintendent and Child Nutrition Director.

Q.4:   What if we did not receive the email with our password?

A.4:   Check your spam folder. If you still cannot find it contact your ESC or call TDA at (877) TEX MEAL and let the operator know you need your district's 2019 NSLP Equipment Grant password.

When funds must be spent

Q.5:   The application says I have to spend the money by today. Is that right?

A.5:   No. You should be prepared to have all funds spent by August 31, 2020. If you see today's date instead, refresh your browser and clear your cache and that should resolve the issue. Contact your IT department if you need help refreshing your browser and clearing your cache.

Fund balance and operating expense

Q.6:   What is my Current Fund Balance?

A.6:   Your current balance is your opening balance, plus revenues, and minus expenditures.

You can find your district's most recently reported balance in TX-UNPS under School Nutrition Programs > Applications > Financial Report > View [most recent school year available] > line 4, "Closing Balance = Item 1 + Item 2f - Item 3j".

Q.7:   What if my Current Fund Balance is zero or negative?

A.7:   Enter "0" if you current fund balance is $0.00 or less. The application portal will not accept a negative value but will accept "0".

Q.8:   What is my Food Service Average 3-Months Operating Expense?

A.8:   Your 3-months operating expense is your district's total expenditures for an operating year divided by your district's operating months, which is then multiplied by 3 to get a 3-month operating cost average.

You can find your district's most recently reported balance in TX-UNPS under School Nutrition Programs > Applications > Financial Report > View [most recent school year available] > line 6.b, "Three Month Average Operating Cost = (Item 3j/Item 6a)*3".

Q.9:   Why am I getting the error, "Please enter a value greater than or equal to 0," if I entered a value greater than $0.00?

A.9:   The application portal does not accept special characters like "," or "-" when a numeric value is required. Enter "0" for a negative value and enter large values without any commas. For example, enter "38739.73" instead of "38,739.73".

Equipment requests
Q.10: What if I want a piece of kitchen equipment that is not in the pop-up list?

A.10: Only the listed equipment selections have been approved by USDA for this grant. Other equipment not listed is not eligible for this grant.

Q.11: May I apply for a piece of equipment that costs less than $5,000?

A.11: Yes, but the equipment must still have an acquisition cost of at least $1,000. The $1,000 minimum threshold only applies to this 2019 equipment grant.

Q.12: May I apply for a piece of equipment that costs less than $1,000?

A.12: No. The minimum threshold for the 2019 equipment grant is $1,000.

Q.12: Can I specify which equipment I want most or which site needs equipment most?

A.12: No, equipment is awarded competitively based on which site(s) already received awards and TDA's scoring criteria. The scoring criteria includes CE-level, site-level, and equipment-specific criteria that are factored into the score. See the posted 2019 Scoring Criteria for more details.

TDA recommends applying for only the equipment most needed for the district.

Q.13: Is there a limit to the number of pieces of equipment or dollar value of value of equipment?

A.13: No. We do not place a specific cap on the number of items or dollar value for which you can apply. Do keep in mind, however, that requests must be reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the equipment grant. Each district will be capped once it exceeds a certain dollar threshold.

Q.14: May I apply for equipment for a new campus?

A.14: No. Data is based on your October 2018 claim data. If no claim was submitted for that time period, the site is not eligible for the award. If the site is not available to select from the website application it is not eligible.

Q.15: Do I need to get and/ or submit a quote with my application?

A.15: No. TDA does not require quotes to be submitted with your application. However, you must follow all applicable local, state, and federal purchasing policies and procedures when you make the equipment purchase. **Do** research the price point of the equipment you want to get a good estimate of the price before you apply. Each district will be capped once it exceeds a certain dollar limit and applications cannot be revised once the application period has closed.

Q.16: What if I change my mind on the equipment I want?

A.16: You **must** purchase the type of equipment for which you were awarded. For example, if you are awarded a "grab and go" cart, you will not be reimbursed for a pass-through cabinet. Keep in mind you will only be reimbursed the lesser of the amount awarded or the actual invoice cost. TDA does require the equipment price/ brand/ model number etc. prior to reimbursement.

__Free and reduced__
Q.17   Is free and reduced eligibility based on the campus or the district as a whole?

A.17: Eligibility for a site is based on the free and reduced percentage of that site. The exception is the central kitchen; that is based on the free and reduced percentage of the district as a whole.

Q.18: What time period will you use to determine our free and reduced percentage?

A.18: TDA will use your October 2018 Claim data.

Q.19: What if my district has students who are eligible for free and reduced but didn't apply for free and reduced?

A.19: TDA will use your October 2018 Claim data. Students not reported during that time will be excluded from calculating the district and site's free and reduced percentage.

Q.20: None of our sites meet the free and reduced requirement, but we really need kitchen equipment. Are applications open for any other grants?

A.20: Not at this time. TDA Food and Nutrition (F&N) does not have any other open kitchen equipment grants at this time.

__Purchase timing eligibility__

Q.20: I really need the equipment now. Can I purchase it now and be reimbursed later if awarded?

A.20: No. Items purchased prior to the TDA award date are not eligible for reimbursement. The intended award date is August 2019, but this is subject to change. Your district will be notified if awarded.

__Scoring__

Q.21: My district applies every year but we never get awarded a grant. What can we do differently to increase our chances?

A.21: Review the criteria and eligibility criteria carefully to ensure your district and site are eligible for this grant.

The USDA Southwest Regional Office (SWRO) requested for the 2019 NSLP Equipment Grant that TDA give preference for sites that never received a prior award. For this grant TDA will award eligible applications from sites that never received a 2009 or 2010 ARRA or 2014-2018 NSLP equipment grant before awarding eligible applications from sites that received one or more prior awards.

Q.21: What all will I be scored on?

A.21: Your application will be scored using multiple criteria. Please review the scoring criteria, linked at http://www.squaremeals.org/FandNResources/FundingGrants/SFAEquipmentGrant.aspx and your application notification email.

Q.22: I'm worried because I noticed the item we really need has a lower score than some of the other equipment in our application. Can I do anything to show which piece I want most?

A.22: No, but you may consider limiting the application to the items your district most needs. If you receive an award, the highest scoring items will be awarded first, then lower-scoring items.

After applying

Q.23: I already submitted my application. May I still modify it?

A.23: Yes, you may modify your application up until the deadline. Make sure to **click the "Submit" button each time you modify your application.**

Q.24: I just submitted my application. Do I need to do anything else?

A.24: Not at this time. TDA notify you if any issues arise.

Q.24: Can you confirm you received my application?

A.25: Unfortunately no. TDA's IT department will send Food and Nutrition all of the application data after the application closes. We recommend that you print a copy of your application and document when the application was submitted.

Q.25: Where can I get a copy of my application?

A.24: TDA does not maintain copies of your application and will only pull application data after the application period is closed. **We highly recommend you print a copy of your application, as you complete it, for your records.**