2021 Equipment Grant Processing  
Texas Dept of Agriculture – Food & Nutrition Division

I. The award amount for Texas is $3,816,551. The goal is to have the awards announced by October 2021.

II. The grant applications will be processed by using an internally designed on-line application on the Texas Department of Agriculture’s agency website. District Superintendents and Child Nutrition Directors of all eligible SFAs will be emailed an invitation to apply.

III. Grant payments will be processed through the Texas Dept of Agriculture after the SFA has completed the purchase of equipment. To request a reimbursement for their purchase, the SFAs will provide the following forms and information to TDA:
   a. TDA Claim Cover sheet & the purchasing invoice.
   b. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued from SAM.gov.
   c. “System for Award Management” (SAM #) number. To set up a record, the CE must go to https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/#1.
   d. Form 74-176 “Vendor Direct Deposit Authorization” if one is not currently on file for TDA.

IV. Memo SP 13-2021 dated June 2, 2021, from USDA defines the minimum threshold for the purchase of equipment at $1,000, as specified by Congress. Based on this memo, any equipment requests with a “per unit value” of less than $1,000 will be marked as ineligible.

V. Due to the limited funds available and prior experience, there will be a limit to the number of awards given to any one SFA. Initial selection will be based on the score and a $76,000 limit. This $76,000 value was determined by allowing for roughly 2% of the 2021 total grant value. This threshold is subject to adjustment based on equipment necessity.

VI. Based on guidance from USDA’s Southwest Regional Office (SWRO), eligible sites that never received a prior year equipment grant will be given priority to receive a 2021 NSLP Equipment Grant.
   a. All eligible applications from sites that have not received a prior year award from the 2009 or 2010 ARRA grant, or the 2014-2020 NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants will be ranked first (based on scoring criteria listed below) and awarded in the initial round of funding, until the entire grant is exhausted.

VII. Based on the directions in the USDA guidance regarding the Equipment Grants, all equipment will be scored based on the following criteria:
   a. Schools with limited access to other financial resources will receive additional points. The SFAs will be required to provide us with their 2020-2021 fund balance. A fund balance that covers more than 3 months of average expenses will be ineligible.
   b. Schools will receive additional points for a higher percentage of free and reduced students / CEP claiming. This data will be pre-loaded into the application data base and is derived using the February 2020 claim data.
   c. Priority to schools (not SFAs) that did not receive previous NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant (either 2009 or 2010 ARRA grant, or the 2014-2020 equipment grants).

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1 Equipment is defined as tangible, nonexpendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit. For the FY 2021 Equipment Assistance Grants, Congress has specified that the threshold for the purchase of equipment has been lowered to $1,000.
d. All eligible types of equipment have been pre-scored to allow for expedited award processing. Scoring Criteria can be found on the squaremeals.org website. All equipment is scored with consideration to the USDA requirements to:
   1) Improve the safety of the food served in the school meals.
   2) Improve overall nutrition and food quality.
   3) Improve or expand participation in NSLP/SBP.
   4) Improves availability of healthier choices.
   5) Improves overall student convenience and appeal.

e. The SFAs will need to report the age of the existing equipment that is being replaced with the grant funds. Priority will be provided for older or non-existent equipment.

f. The SFAs will indicate whether equipment will be utilized to expand the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, or both.

VIII. Scoring would be based upon a possible total of 100 points.

IX. Tie-breaker process: We will use the following tiebreaker schematic for those site requests involved in the tiebreaker process.

   a. If the site is already receiving one or more awards from the current award process (as in they submitted a request for multiple items and it is their 2nd, 3rd, or more requests that is in the tie breaker) – the additional request(s) that fell into the tie breaker list would be excluded.

   b. If there is still a tie after the first process, the next step would be to rank them in order of their free and reduced % / CEP Claiming %; highest % wins.

   c. If there is still a tie after the second process, we will rank the SFAs on the ratio of available funds. A higher ratio indicates a lower fund balance available. Highest available funds ratio wins.

   d. If there is still a tie after the third process, we would use the specific equipment score for the following criteria:
      1. Equipment that aids in healthier meals
      2. Equipment that improves food safety
      3. Equipment that improves or expands participation in the NSLP/SBP.

X. For grant year 2021, SFAs operating Seamless Summer Option and Summer Food Service Program in school year 2020 – 2021 are considered eligible to apply.

XI. The Compliance Department will include equipment awards during all future Administrative Reviews.