

NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant FAQs

Applying

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

A: The email you received is a notification of your eligibility to apply, not an award. You must apply for this grant to be considered. Your application does not guarantee you will receive an award. You will be notified via email if you receive an award.

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

A: 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 requesting information for this grant.

Application Portal

Q: What is my username and password?

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

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

A: Check your spam folder. If you still cannot find it contact your ESC or send an email to po.bops@texasagriculture.gov and let the us know you need your NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant password.

Fund Balance & Operating Expense

Q: What is my fund balance?

A: Your fund balance is your opening balance, plus revenues, and minus expenditures. It is also known as your Net Cash Resource.

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

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

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

A: The district's total expenditures for an operating year divided by your district's operating months, then multiplied by 3. This results in a 3-month operating cost average.

Due to COVID-19, only use total expenditures through February 2020. Do not include March 2020 – July 2020 in your calculation



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Q: What does this error mean: “Please enter a value greater than or equal to 0”

A: The application portal does not accept special characters like “,” (comma) or “-” (dash) when a numeric value is required. Enter “0” for a negative value and enter large values without any commas. Example: If you enter 56,739.73 you will receive an error message. You must use 56739.73 without commas.

Equipment

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

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

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

A: Yes, but the equipment must still have an acquisition cost of at least \$1,000. The \$1,000 minimum value only applies to this 2020 grant.

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

A: No. The minimum acquisition cost for the grant is \$1,000.

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

A: No, equipment is awarded competitively and individually. The scoring criteria includes CE-level, site-level, and equipment-specific criteria that are factored into the score. See the posted Scoring Criteria for more details. ***TDA recommends applying for equipment that is essential to kitchen operations for critical sites in need.

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

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

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

A: No. Data is based on your 2019-2020 NSLP participation. If the site was not active, then the site is not eligible for the award. If the site is not available to select from in the application, then it is not eligible.



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Q: Do I need to submit a quote with my application?

A: No. TDA does not require quotes submitted with your application. However, you must follow all applicable local, state, and federal purchasing policies and procedures when you make the equipment purchase. ***TDA recommends you 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: What if I change my mind on the equipment I want?

A: Once the equipment grant is awarded, you **must** purchase the type of equipment in the award. 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 & Reduced %

Q: Is there a Free & Reduced threshold of eligibility for this grant ?

A: No. The 2020 grant does not have a minimum threshold as in prior years. However, the free and reduce percentage is part of the scoring criteria.

Q: Is free and reduced % based on the campus or the district as a whole?

A: It is calculated per site. The exception is the central kitchen; that is based on the free and reduced percentage of the district.

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

A: TDA will use your February 2020 claim data.

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

A: TDA will use your February 2020 claim data. Students not reported during that time will be excluded from calculating the district and site's free and reduced percentage.

Q: None of our sites have a high free and reduced percentage, but we really need kitchen equipment. Are applications open for any other grants?

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



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Scoring

Q: My district applies every year, but we never receive a grant award. What can we do differently to increase our chances?

A: Review the eligibility criteria carefully to ensure your district and site are eligible for this grant. Review the Scoring Criteria document to evaluate why your district did not receive a high score.

Q: What all will I be scored on?

A: Your application will be scored using multiple criteria. Please review the Scoring Criteria document posted on squaremeals.org.

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

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

After Applying

Q: I already submitted my application; can I still modify it?

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

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

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

Q: Can you confirm you received my application?

A: No. TDA's IT department will send Food and Nutrition all the application data after the application deadline passes. We recommend that you print a copy of your application, as you complete it, and record when the application was submitted.

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

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



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Purchasing

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

A: No. You should be prepared to have all funds spent by August 31, 2022 . 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.

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

A: No. Items purchased prior to the TDA award date are not eligible for reimbursement. The intended award date is September 2020, but this is subject to change. Your district will be notified if awarded.

