

2026 Equipment Grant Processing
Texas Dept of Agriculture (TDA)–Food & Nutrition Division

- I. Texas has an award amount of \$2,362,417. TDA intends to have the equipment grant awards announced by September 2026.
- II. TDA will use an internally designed on-line application within the Texas Department of Agriculture’s (TDA) agency website for grant applications. TDA will email invitations to apply for the grants to all Superintendents and Child Nutrition Directors of eligible School Food Authorities (SFAs). The Word document “Application Design” is a mock-up of the grant application flow for applicants.
- III. TDA will process grant payments through its CAPPS Financial system after the SFA has completed the purchase and installation of approved equipment. To request reimbursement, SFAs will provide the following forms and information to TDA:
 - a. TDA Claim Cover Sheet & the purchasing invoice.
 - b. Form 74-176 “Vendor Direct Deposit Authorization,” for TDA if necessary.
 - c. An active Unique Entity ID (UEI) issued by SAM.gov. To register with SAM.gov, the CE must go to <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>.
- IV. The Fiscal Year 2026 National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Equipment Assistance Grants Request for Application (RFA) dated April 16, 2026, from USDA defines the minimum threshold for the purchase of equipment at \$1,000. Based on this RFA, equipment requests with a “per unit value” of less than \$1,000 will be ineligible.
- V. Due to the limited funds available and prior experience, TDA will limit the award amount any one SFA can receive to \$60,000. This threshold has worked well in past awards, and TDA recommends that it should be utilized again for 2026.
- VI. TDA will only award 2026 equipment grants to SFA sites that have not received one in a prior year.
- VII. Per the USDA guidance regarding the Equipment Grants, TDA will score requests based on the following criteria:
 - a. TDA will provide additional points to schools with limited access to other financial resources. SFAs must provide TDA their 2025-2026 fund balance as of August 31, 2026. SFAs with more than a 3-month average fund balance will be ineligible.
 - b. TDA will provide additional points for higher free and reduced-price percentages/CEP designations. TDA will preload this information based on the September 2026 NSLP and SBP claim data into its application database.
 - c. TDA will prioritize awards to school sites in SFAs where no other sites have received prior-year awards.
 - d. TDA has pre-scored all eligible equipment to allow expedited application processing. The attached scoring spreadsheet demonstrates how applications and eligible equipment meet USDA requirements to:
 - 1) Improve the safety of the food served in school meals.
 - 2) Improve overall nutrition and food quality.
 - 3) Improve or expand participation in NSLP/SBP programs.
 - 4) Improve the availability of healthier food choices.
 - 5) Improve overall student convenience and appeal.
 - e. TDA will require SFAs to report the age of the existing equipment to be replaced with the grant funds. Scoring will give priority to older or non-existent equipment.
 - f. SFAs must indicate whether the equipment requested will be used to expand the School Breakfast Program (SBP). This serves only to highlight the approach requested in USDA RFA¹ and will not be considered in the application scoring.

¹“The purpose of the NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant is to help ensure that schools have the equipment they need to serve healthier meals, improve food safety, and to support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the School Breakfast Program (SBP).”

- VIII. Application scoring will be based on a total of 100 points. See spreadsheet for the specific scoring criteria.
- IX. Tie-breaker process: TDA will use the following tiebreaker schematic if needed:
- a. If a site is already receiving one or more awards from the current award process (as in they submitted a request for multiple items and their 2nd, 3rd, or more requests are in the tiebreaker)–TDA will exclude those request(s) that fell into the tiebreaker.
 - b. If a tiebreaker remains after the first process, TDA will rank requests in order of free and reduced percentages / CEP claiming percentage. The highest percentage wins.
 - c. If a tiebreaker remains after the second process, TDA will rank the SFAs on the ratio of available funds. A lower ratio indicates a lower fund balance available. The lowest available funds ratio wins.
 - d. If a tiebreaker exists after the third process, TDA will use equipment age. The oldest or non-existent equipment would be awarded.
 - e. For ties within a single CE, the CE's chosen priority would dictate the winner. If the CE has not specified a priority, TDA will award the site with the highest enrollment so that more students may benefit from the grant award.
- X. For grant year 2026, SFAs operating Seamless Summer Option in school year 2026 – 2027 are eligible to apply.
- XI. Deadlines, performance period, and links to governing CFRs will be posted on TDA's squaremeals.org website and linked on the FAQs posted online and emailed to sub-awardees.
- XII. TDA Compliance will assess equipment awards use during the Administrative Review process.
- XIII. Other Requirements:
1. Quarterly and Final FNS-425 financial report for the grant – 30 days after each quarter's end and 120 days after the performance end date.
 2. Reporting for the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) once awarded.
 3. A Final FNS-908 Performance Progress Report will be submitted to USDA.
 4. Preliminary Timeline:
 - a. 08/26 – Anticipated award announcement made by USDA including approval of scoring methodology
 - b. 09/01/26 – Announce upcoming grants application to SFAs.
 - c. 10/01/26 – Open application process for SFAs to submit requests.
 - d. 10/31/26 – Close application process for SFAs (11:59pm)
 - e. 11/01/26 – 11/30/26 – Scoring of applications and preparing award letters and documents.
 - f. 12/01/26 – Announce awards via emailed award letter and email to both Superintendent and Child Nutrition Director.
 - g. 01/05/28 – Deadline to SFAs to document obligation of allocated funds and to indicate the amount of funding unobligated.
 - h. 01/05/28 – 01/31/28 – Scoring of original applications to determine the subgrantees of reallocated funds.
 - i. 9/30/28 – All reimbursement requests must be submitted by this date. Equipment must be purchased, delivered, and installed by this date to qualify for reimbursement. Any equipment installed after this date will not be eligible for reimbursement.