

NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant Application 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 email NSLPEquipmentGrants@TexasAgriculture.gov to let 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".



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Q: What is my Food Service Average Monthly Operating Expense?

A: The district's total expenditures for the 26-27 School Year are divided by your district's operating months. This results in an average monthly operating cost.

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 on 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 2026 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: You can rank the priority of each piece of equipment you apply for, but this will only be considered when breaking a tie within your CE. Equipment will be awarded competitively and individually. The scoring criteria include 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.



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

A: No. We do not place a specific cap on the number of items, or the dollar amount you can apply for. However, the initial award amount that any one SFA can receive is \$60,000, or one item if the cost of that item exceeds \$60,000. This threshold is subject to adjustment based on equipment necessity. Each district will be capped once it exceeds a certain dollar threshold. Please refrain from applying for an unreasonable amount of equipment. Keep to the equipment that you need the most. Requests must be reasonable, necessary, and allocable to the equipment grant.

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

A: No. Data is based on your 2026-2027 NSLP or SBP participation. SFAs operating Seamless Summer Option (SSO) in school year 2026-2027 are eligible to apply. 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.

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. Specifically, but not limited to [Title 7 CFR Part 210.21](#) and [Title 2 CFR Part 200.317-326](#). ***TDA recommends you research the price point of the equipment for a fair estimate of the price before you apply. Each district will be capped once it exceeds a certain dollar limit, and applications cannot be revised after the application period closes.

Q: Do I need to submit a Capital Expenditure Request (CER) before I purchase the equipment?

A: It depends. The Equipment Grant Award itself is permission to purchase the assigned equipment. However, if the equipment is going to be \$10,000 more than what was originally awarded to you, then you would need to submit a CER. For example, if you were awarded \$7,000 for an oven but it will cost you \$18,000, you would need to submit a CER for the additional \$11,000. If a CER is needed, please make sure to state in the equipment justification that this is part of the Equipment Grant.



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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 or decline the award. For example, if you are awarded a “walk-in freezer,” you will not be reimbursed for a “compressor.” Keep in mind you will only be reimbursed for the less of the amount awarded or the actual invoice cost. TDA does require the equipment price/ brand/ model number, etc., prior to reimbursement. If you are unable to purchase the equipment in the award, you must notify TDA immediately, so the funds may be reallocated to another site.

Q: If I am awarded multiple pieces of equipment, can I move funds from one piece of equipment to cover an overage on another?

A: Yes, on a case-by-case basis. Please submit requests to NSLPEquipmentGrants@TexasAgriculture.gov.

Free & Reduced / CEP Claiming %

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

A: No. The 2026 grant does not have a minimum threshold as in prior years. However, the free and reduced CEP Claiming percentage is part of the scoring criteria.

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

A: It is calculated per site. The exception is the central kitchen; it is based on the district's claiming percentage.

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

A: TDA will use your September 2026 Free & Reduced or CEP 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 September 2026 claim data. Students not reported during that time will be excluded from the calculation of the districts and site's free and reduced/CEP Claiming percentages.



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

A: TDA Food and Nutrition (F&N) does not have any other open kitchen equipment grants, but you are still welcome to apply to the NSLP Equipment Assistance Grant.

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 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 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 the lower-scoring items.



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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: No. TDA will notify you if any issues arise.

Q: Can you confirm you received my application?

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

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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