



USDA Grants Needed to Help Kansas Serve Healthy School Meals

Only 53% of the state's districts have a budget for essential school kitchen upgrades

This fact sheet is one in a 10-part series highlighting the need for more school kitchen equipment grants to help ensure that children receive healthy school meals.

Overview

The nutritional quality of school meals has a significant impact on the health of the children who eat them. Each day, the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs serve more than 30 million and 14 million children, respectively, providing healthy food for kids.¹ However, this frequently requires schools to work around equipment and infrastructure challenges in ways that are expensive, inefficient, and unsustainable.

Kansas at a Glance

- 72 percent of school districts needed at least one piece of equipment to better serve nutritious foods as of the 2012-13 school year.*
- The median cost of equipment needs per school was \$16,000 in the 2012-13 school year, compared with approximately \$37,000 nationally.†
- The state received \$315,184 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for school kitchen equipment upgrades in fiscal year 2014.‡

* The Pew Charitable Trusts, "States Need Updated School Kitchen Equipment," accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/03/26/states-need-updated-school-kitchen-equipment-b>.

† Ibid.

‡ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "Fiscal Year 2014 National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistance Grants for School Food Authorities" (memorandum, April 18, 2014).

Although 53 percent of school districts in Kansas have at least some budget for kitchen equipment upgrades,² U.S. Department of Agriculture grants are critical to helping schools with greater needs. Thirteen school food authorities in the state received funding in fiscal 2014 to purchase kitchen equipment.³ (See Table 1.)

Policymakers have a chance to make a big difference in many school systems by helping them purchase the new and better tools they need to serve healthier foods more efficiently. Congress has provided such support since 2009 in the form of grant funding through annual appropriations, including \$30 million in fiscal 2016, which is distributed to school districts via state agencies.⁴ For fiscal 2017, the president's budget includes \$35 million for the grants.⁵ Now Congress has the opportunity to match that request and make certain that more schools have access to these much-needed resources.

Additionally, the bipartisan School Food Modernization Act (S. 540/H.R. 3316) would maintain schools' access to modern kitchen equipment and infrastructure, and strengthen workforce training through the child nutrition reauthorization legislation.⁶ By co-sponsoring the act, members of Congress can help make upgrading school kitchens and ensuring that students receive the healthy meals they need a national priority.

Table 1

Congress Should Appropriate Funding to Help More Schools

USDA grants by Kansas congressional district, school food authority, amount, and items purchased, FY 2014

Congressional district	School food authority	Grant	Item purchased
KS-1	USD 110 Thunder Ridge Schools	\$2,490.00	Salad bar
KS-1	USD 216 Deerfield Schools	\$1,840.00	Electric hot food table
KS-1	USD 316 Golden Plains Schools	\$15,193.00	Dishwasher and table
KS-1	USD 457 Garden City Public Schools	\$13,835.00	Convection steamer [†]
KS-2	USD 345 Seaman Schools	\$13,464.36	Double convection oven
KS-2	USD 345 Seaman Schools	\$20,852.25	Steam jacketed kettle [†]
KS-2	USD 377 Atchison County Community Schools	\$5,480.00	Two double-door reach-in refrigerators
KS-2	USD 387 Altoona-Midway Schools	\$5,610.00	Reach-in freezer
KS-2	USD 461 Neodesha Public Schools	\$22,401.32	Walk-in refrigerator

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Congressional district	School food authority	Grant	Item purchased
KS-2	USD 497 Lawrence Public Schools	\$70,400.00	Combi oven [‡]
KS-2	USD 497 Lawrence Public Schools	\$49,358.00	Serving line
KS-3	USD 165 KidsTLC Private RCCI	\$4,771.00	Two commercial refrigerators
KS-4	USD 286 Chautauqua County Community Schools	\$8,843.00	Convection oven
KS-4	USD 286 Chautauqua County Community Schools	\$19,030.50	Combi oven
KS-4	USD 286 Chautauqua County Community Schools	\$7,200.00	Hot food serving counter [§]
KS-4	USD 470 Arkansas City Schools	\$13,890.00	Double convection oven
KS-4	USD 470 Arkansas City Schools	\$4,050.00	Two milk coolers
KS-4	USD 470 Arkansas City Schools	\$24,150.00	Three reach-in freezers
KS-4	USD 470 Arkansas City Schools	\$6,750.00	Half-size proofer cabinet
KS-4	USD 836 Wichita Children's Home	\$5,535.00	Convection steamer

Notes: Total dollars allocated from the USDA to states and from states to schools may be different because of variation between projected and final equipment costs.

^{*} Convection steamers use internal fans to circulate steam and air around food to cook it more quickly than a traditional steaming method.

[†] Steam-jacketed kettles heat indirectly by blasting the exterior of the cooking chamber with a superheated pressurized steam, a technique that is helpful for thoroughly cooking but not scorching high volumes of food.

[‡] Combination (combi) ovens bake, roast, grill, steam, braise, blanch, and poach foods in shorter cooking times. This technique preserves vitamins and nutrients at higher levels than traditional cooking methods.

[§] Hot food serving line counters hold foods at safe, warm temperatures.

Source: Kansas State Department of Education

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Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "National School Lunch Program: Participation and Lunches Served (Data as of April 8, 2016)"; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "School Breakfast Program: Participation and Meals Served (Data as of April 8, 2016)," <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>.
- 2 The Pew Charitable Trusts, "States Need Updated School Kitchen Equipment," accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/03/26/states-need-updated-school-kitchen-equipment-b>.
- 3 Kansas State Department of Education, pers. comm., April 1, 2016.
- 4 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "2016 NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants," last modified Feb. 1, 2016, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/2016-nslp-equipment-assistance-grants>.
- 5 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "2017 Explanatory Notes," accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.obpa.usda.gov/32fns2017notes.pdf>.
- 6 The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Give Schools the Tools to Prepare Healthy, Delicious Meals" (Feb. 20, 2015), <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2015/02/give-schools-the-tools-to-prepare-healthy-delicious-meals>.

For further information, please visit:

pewtrusts.org/kitchen-equipment

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