



USDA Grants Needed to Help North Dakota Serve Healthy School Meals

Only 8 schools in the state received grants to help enhance school kitchens

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.

North Dakota at a Glance

- 74 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 \$18,000 in the 2012-13 school year, compared with approximately \$37,000 nationally.[†]
- The state received \$56,315 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 35 percent of school districts in North Dakota have at least some budget for kitchen equipment upgrades,² U.S. Department of Agriculture grants are critical to helping schools with greater needs. Eight schools 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 North Dakota school food authority, amount, and items purchased, FY 2014

| School food authority | School | Grant | Item purchased |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Selfridge Public Schools | Selfridge Public School | \$8,540.00 | Gas range |
| Devils Lake Public Schools | Sweetwater Elementary School | \$13,037.00 | Dishwasher |
| West Fargo Public Schools | L.E. Berger Elementary School | \$6,826.94 | Refrigerator |
| Montpelier Public Schools | Montpelier Public School | \$5,485.00 | Freezer |
| Grand Forks Public Schools | Wilder Elementary School | \$5,000.00 | Convection oven |
| Fairmount Public Schools | Fairmount Public School | \$5,153.13 | Freezer |
| McClusky Public Schools | McClusky Public School | \$5,675.00 | Convection oven |
| Solen Public Schools | Cannon Ball Elementary School | \$7,444.00 | Convection oven |

Note: 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.

Source: North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

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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 North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 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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