

## **Rural Health Transformation Program Initiative 1.1 School Kitchen Modernization Grants Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Where can I find the request for applications (RFA) for the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Initiative 1.1?**

The RFA for RHTP Initiative 1.1 can be found at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Grant-Opportunities.aspx>.

### **Aside from equipment, are there any other allowable expenses, such as installation costs of the equipment, upgrade of electrical if needed to support new equipment, training of staff to use the equipment, etc.?**

The kitchen modernization RFA's allowable expenses are for only equipment. It does not allow for the cost of staff time or other expenses. Each piece of equipment included in an application must have a value of \$10,000 or greater to be considered equipment. Items costing less than \$10,000 are considered supplies and are not allowable costs. If installation costs are an inseparable part of placing the approved equipment into service, the cost is allowable. However, installation costs are not allowable if they constitute construction, building modification, or other standalone work.

Basic assembly, placement, connecting to existing utilities, etc. would generally be allowable; the installation costs must be identified and itemized separately.

Costs associated with remediation, repair, or alterations to a school building (i.e. plumbing, heating, air conditioning) would add to the permanent value of the school building and are unallowable. Costs of new electrical, plumbing, structural work, or other building modifications would not be allowable.

### **We have two school buildings. Are we able to submit a request for each building or just one?**

Your application can request allowable equipment for all school kitchen locations in your district. The total value of the award for your district cannot exceed \$100,000.

### **Can my school apply to receive grant funds for kitchen equipment I already purchased in 2026?**

The period of performance is 6/1/2026-6/30/2027. Purchases of qualifying equipment may be dated as early as 6/1/2026. Your grant application must clearly identify how the equipment purchased as early as 6/1/2026 supports service of more semi-scratch and scratch cooked items, including locally produced and minimally processed protein items.

### **What is the minimum value per piece of kitchen equipment?**

Each piece of requested equipment must have a purchase price of \$10,000 or more. Each school is eligible to receive up to \$100,000 for their requested equipment.

**Is the required 5% increase in the frequency of minimally processed and locally produced protein items per month or for the entire grant period?**

The required 5% increase in frequency of minimally processed, locally produced protein foods must be incorporated in each month's menu. The menu changes are expected to be sustained for the useful life of the equipment purchased with grant funds.

**Should I submit one application per piece of equipment or one in total with multiple pieces of equipment on it?**

Your school should complete and submit a single application.

**What is the definition of rural and frontier county?**

All Nebraska counties except Douglas, Sarpy, Hall, Dodge, and Lancaster are rural or frontier counties.

**What happens if a 10% increase in number of meals served to students is not achieved?**

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) will provide support for achieving required menu changes. Schools must demonstrate meaningful effort to achieve the 5% increase in locally sourced, minimally processed proteins and the required 5% decrease in heat and serve menu items. The NDE may reduce, withhold, or recover funding if an organization fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress, does not submit required reports, misuses funds, or otherwise does not comply with the terms of the agreement.

**Does the 1.1 Kitchen Modernization funding apply to the purchase of greenhouse equipment?**

Yes. The 1.1 Kitchen Modernization funding may be used for the purchase of greenhouse equipment.

**What if a school district is already serving 100% of students, since the school has a closed campus and is located in a very rural community? How can it show a 10% increase in student participation?**

A school with 100% school meal participation will not be able to increase participation. However, the school can maintain 100% school meal participation and increase the percentage of locally sourced protein menu items by 5% and decrease heat-and-serve items on the menu by 5%.

**Does the 5% increase in frequency of locally sourced proteins apply to schools currently using and serving locally produced proteins?**

Yes. The RFA and funding requirement to increase by 5% the frequency of locally sourced, minimally processed proteins applies to all schools awarded funds.

**Is the Local Foods for Schools Grant still available?**

No. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Local Food for Schools funding ended on December 31, 2025.

The Rural Health Transformation Program is supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (US HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$218,529,075.01 with 100 percent funded by CMS/US HHS. The contents are those of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CMS/US HHS, or the U.S. Government.