



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



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Colt Gill

Director of the Oregon Department of Education

May 26, 2020

To the House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use:

Hello Chair Clem, members of the Committee, I'm Rick Sherman, the Farm to School & School Garden Coordinator for the Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Program.

Thank you for asking us to provide an update of how the Farm to School Grant is going, especially in regards to changes with COVID-19.

Here are key points on what has happened with the grant lately.

Procurement Grant (*Non-Competitive Grant for Reimbursement of Oregon Grown or Processed Food*):

- When HB 2579 passed it allowed many additional grantees to take advantage of the grant (*including sponsors of Child and Adult Care Feeding Programs*). We have awarded the Procurement Grant to almost 400 Sponsors, doubling the amount of sponsors from last biennium.
- Since the outbreak of COVID-19 and closing of schools, the reimbursement claims from Sponsors have slowed tremendously. Although a few Sponsors will always go over and above the call of duty and try their hardest to offer local items in lunches delivered to Oregon schoolchildren, the majority are simply concerned with getting (any) food to children – not necessarily Oregon grown or processed food. To date the Sponsors have claimed almost thirty percent of their initial allotment statewide.
- School meals are now served remotely or for pick up on site, and are all “Grab-n-Go.”
- Typically I've heard reports that most Nutrition Service Directors (NSD's) are seeking packaged, “grab and go” type foods exclusively, where the food hasn't been touched by human hands. These reports include comments that parents will refuse food that isn't packaged.
- With this in mind, many NSD's are waiting for the second year of the biennium to hit their stride with the Procurement Grant – when school returns to “normal” next Fall, hopefully.
- The Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network polled Oregon's Nutrition Service Directors to reinforce this comment. They reported: *“School food service staff have been overwhelmed by the new meal service structure and have had decreased capacity to work with local producers. ODE worked with agency and non-profit partners to survey nutrition services staff regarding needs and challenges. The survey indicated a high need for minimally processed, pre-packaged grab-and-go food items, in particular fruits and vegetables.”*
- We've been able to help Sponsors meet some challenges with the above issue, by reminding them that they can use a portion of their funds for labor for prepping this local food. Also, allowing them to use a portion for things like packaging, transportation and sourcing of local food as well.

Education Grant (Competitive Grant for Reimbursement of Farm-; Agriculture-; and Food-Based Educational Activities)

- The Education Grant has been awarded to 56 grantees. Most if not all grantees have revised their budgets to include many innovative solutions to COVID-19 challenges, like teaching virtually from gardens, farms/farm field trips and instructional videos.

Update on our Budget: How the Dollars Have Been Allocated for the Farm to School Grant

The following table shows how we've allocated dollars to the different categories of the Farm to School Grant:

Administration (including \$50,000 to ODA)	\$300,000
procurement initial award NSLP	\$5,410,000
competitive procurement	\$2,880,000
Education Grants	\$4,100,000
Technical Assistance Grants	\$1,200,000
Evaluation	\$60,000
Infrastructure(ODA) Grants	\$1,050,000
total avail funds	\$15,000,000

Budget Reductions: We've recommended to our department that if there are cuts to be made, we suggested the reduction would come out of the "competitive procurement" and "administration" section of the grants. The competitive procurement funds are unencumbered funds that have not been assigned to anyone yet. The intention was to use these funds to award additional funds to those Sponsors who have shown that they have spent all their funds, and have a solid plan for ensuring they can spend more funds. The administration funds are those allocated for ODE staff to administer the grant. The recommended cut would equate to \$1,375,000.

Possible Consequences of the Potential Cuts:

- Fewer funds to go to sponsors in purchasing locally grown and processed Oregon funds as part of their meal services.
- Fewer funds to go back into an Oregon economy that desperately needs the funds

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this update. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



[Rick Sherman](#)

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