



## **RIDE Get the Foam Out Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Q - My school already uses reusable trays, am I still eligible for this grant?**

A – Yes. You can apply for a grant to expand the reach of your existing reusables program (i.e. transitioning to reusable flatware or other service ware not already in place) or to add a complimentary food waste diversion program to your existing cafeteria sustainability efforts.

**2. Q - Are other types of educational facilities (such as HeadStart Programs) eligible for the Get the Foam Out Grant?**

A – No. Because the source of funding comes from the School Building Authority Capital Fund, only public Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are eligible for Get the Foam Out funding. However, we encourage all interested parties to visit our [Get the Foam Out webpage](#) to see the resources and technical assistance available through our partners as you may be able to access those resources independently of the Get the Foam Out program.

**3. Q - Can you explain how impact will be measured in the application scoring criteria? How will a smaller district be compared to a larger district given that their overall impact is smaller?**

A – While the scoring criteria does take student enrollment into consideration as one scoring factor, there are other ways that small schools can expand the impact of their project to achieve maximum points. This grant is designed to maximize the diversion of waste materials from the RI landfill; projects that go beyond a transition from Styrofoam to reusable trays by including items such as composting, reusable utensils, and tie-ins to other school-wide sustainability efforts will be given the highest consideration.

**4. Q - Can funds be used for materials and efforts made prior to the announcement of the grant?**

A – No. Grant funds can only be used for new program investments (or ongoing expenses such as compost hauling, please see FAQ # 8)

**5. Q- How well-established does a school recycling program need to be to qualify for the grant? Is 'in process' OK?**

A – Schools in varying stages of implementing a recycling program (i.e. just starting vs. well-established) will be considered under this program. The goal of this funding is to help each school implement their own plan to create a more efficient and sustainable child nutrition program based on that school’s individual needs. In your application you will need to explain how what you are proposing to do with the grant funds will increase sustainable practices at your school above what you are already doing and how your efforts will be sustained beyond the life of the funding.

6. **Q - Can upgrades to electrical needs in order to support new and upgraded dishwashers be used with funding?**

A – Yes.

7. **Q - How will this new law be regulated?**

A – When the new law takes effect on January 1, 2025, retail food service operations will be reviewed for compliance first. State legislators do not want this law to be about penalizing schools but encouraging more sustainable practices. When the RIDE Child Nutrition program personnel visit your schools for compliance monitoring visits for the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, we envision asking questions about these programs in order to best connect schools that may need help to funding and/or technical assistance to resources that will support compliance.

8. **Q - Can schools apply for grants that already have ongoing composting hauling programs to maintain their service? Or is it only for starting service at new schools/districts?**

A – Yes, but your application will need to justify how these funds will expand upon your existing program and what measure will be taken to ensure sustainability beyond the life of the funding. The goal of this grant program is to help each school implement their own plan to create a more efficient and sustainable child nutrition program. In your application you will need to explain how what you are proposing to do with the grant funds will increase sustainable practices at your school above what you are already doing.

9. **Q - Can the match come from the actual fund balance of the Nutrition fund?**

A – Yes. You can use the Nutrition fund balance to support the match as long as they are allowable uses of nutrition funds. Capital improvements that extend the value the life of a building (such as fixing a roof) are not allowable uses of these funds, but items like updated electricity to install a new dishwasher are allowable uses. For more information related to allowable expenses of school nutrition funds, review the [USDA’s Guidance](#) on allowable costs in the Child Nutrition Programs and review [RIDE’s pre-approved equipment list](#) for purchases from the non-profit school lunch account.

**10. Q - What items can be paid for from the grant awards and what items are eligible to be paid for with the matching funds from the Nutrition fund?**

All expenses for both sources of funds must be new expenses. The grant funds cannot be used to cover previously incurred expenses.

School Building Authority Get the Foam Out funding can be used to pay for costs directly related to the design, installation, construction, materials, equipment, and compost hauling agreements related to activities to improve sustainability in the school kitchen and cafeteria. Nutrition Fund dollars can be used to support many of the same activities, however there are certain limitations related to construction and capital improvements. Reach out to the Child Nutrition Programs team for more information about limitations that may apply to your specific project.

The School Building Authority Get the Foam Out funds **cannot** be used to cover salaries.

The Nutrition Fund dollars **can** be used to pay for the portion of salaries that are directly related to the activities that improve sustainability within the cafeteria and Child Nutrition Programs. If part of your proposal includes hiring a sustainability coordinator, for example, the Nutrition fund dollars can only be used to support the time that they spend working directly on cafeteria related activities (as documented through time & effort sheets), and not general school wide sustainability initiatives.

**11. Q - Can a school apply that has a compost program but is shifting to compostable trays and silverware be eligible?**

A. Yes. In your application you will need to explain how what you are proposing to do with the grant funds will increase sustainable practices at your school above what you are already doing.

**12. Q - Are any compostable trays and containers OK to use instead of Styrofoam?**

A – No. If LEAs switch to compostable trays or containers, they must be certified Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) free. Visit Farm to Institution New England's **PFAS and Foodware** Resource Page ( <https://www.farmtoinstitution.org/PFAS-in-foodware> ) for more information and links to PFAS-free compostable products.

**13. Q – When will the matching funds from the SBA Award be available?**

A - The funds would be available immediately after the recipient signs the grant agreement. Please note however, that these funds are paid on a reimbursement basis, so the grantees will have to submit invoices from their vendors in order to be reimbursed. If the payment terms of your invoice is Net-30 days, for example, after you sign the grant

agreement you could request funds from the SBA and potentially receive them in time to pay the invoice with the grant award.