

Deputy Minister's Bulletin

Ministry of Education and Child Care



Feeding Futures School Food Programs Fund – Instructions to School Districts

April 4, 2023

The Ministry is allocating \$71.5 million per year in dedicated, multi-year funding to school districts to increase food security for students by expanding or creating school food programs.

This new funding is part of government's broader Feeding Futures School Food Programs Framework, which is a commitment to ensure students are properly fed for learning in order to enhance positive academic and healthy outcomes. Feeding Futures School Food Programs (FFSFP) funding addresses the top two barriers identified by schools in the province: sustainable and consistent food funding and human resources.

Funding is allocated in a similar manner to the Student and Family Affordability Fund (SFAF). This means it is proportional to preliminary September operating grants, with a floor funding level of \$350,000. This first year of funding is intentionally flexible to provide districts with time to develop a longer-term approach to delivering school food programs.

School Year (SY) 23/24 Foundational Year

Districts will have the flexibility over the foundational year (SY 2023/24), to continue supports established with SFAF that increase student food security as longer-term food programming supports are put into place. Criteria will be adjusted over time; districts can expect standardized FFSFP spending criteria in place for SY 2025/26.

This new FFSFP funding may free up district operating funding that has been previously dedicated to school food program budgets to use for other non-educational supports (e.g., mental health).

FFSFP spending criteria:

- Food
 - Must be towards the delivery of food programs to feed students who need it most (e.g., maintain current programs, increase number of students served, increase nutrition of food).
 - Spending may support Culinary Arts programs if the food produced by the program is provided to students in need.
 - Program delivery may include the procurement of third-party food service providers, or expansion of existing contracts.
 - Districts are encouraged to use nutritious and B.C. grown/produced food where possible.
 - Program delivery should be stigma-free, flexible, and respect student privacy.
- Staff
 - Flexibility to hire up to one School Food Coordinator FTE if needed or offset existing costs to a School Food Coordinator.
 - Functions of role may include coordination and/or delivery of the program (e.g., prepare food, build community connections, seek local partnerships and procurement opportunities, work with local First Nations and Indigenous partners).
- Other (for foundational year only)
 - Small appliances or equipment to prepare, store, cook and transport food from a school with a kitchen to another school (e.g., kitchen utensils, insulated containers, microwaves).
 - Continuity of SFAF supports that improve student food security (e.g., grocery store gift cards, food for weekends and school closures).

Reporting

- Spending plans will be required in July 2023.
- A draft spending plan reporting template will be distributed shortly and will ask for budgeted **Spending on Food Security** including:
 - Utilization of third-party food service providers: caterers; food distributors; First Nations; and not-for-profit organizations or non-government organizations.
 - Food purchased and provided using district staff: food produced in BC; and other.
 - Other goods, services and/or programs to feed students that are within the policy direction.
 - Spending to provide food security supports.
 - Staffing costs to directly support the provision of food programs: Administration; Management/Professionals; Teachers; and Support Staff.
 - Operational spending targeted to food programs prior to the FFSFP funding announcement redirected to supporting educational programs.
 - There should be no space enhancement spending in this category.
 - Administration or overhead spending (e.g., equipment, non-food supplies) in this category must be minimal and limited to SY 2023/24 only to transition to longer-term sustainable programming.
- An interim report will be required in early spring 2024 to support Ministry understanding of spending patterns.
- Reporting will be required at the end of the school year, in addition to the reporting in the Annual Budget and audited Financial Statements for 2023/24. Reporting categories will mirror those in the Spending Plan.
- School districts will also be asked to report on decisions making processes regarding the funding:
 - What processes were used to identify students who could benefit from this funding, including those from diverse communities where equity is a consideration?
 - Did you engage with your Indigenous Education Council (IEC or local equivalent) to identify the needs of Indigenous students?
 - If so, who did you engage with and how?
 - If not, what other engagement with Indigenous peoples did you undertake?
 - How did you support First Nations students living on reserve/other First Nations students and other Indigenous students attending your schools with this funding?
 - Number of students
 - Amount of funding
 - Types of support

Future Considerations

- Building the capacity in each district to work towards stigma-free access to nutritious food for any students who need it will take time.
- Each district's long-term delivery model of school food programs is expected to be stigma-free in addition to supplementing with coordination from the surrounding community.
- Community inclusion (e.g., non-profit organizations, corporate donors and parent advisory councils) will be an essential component of each district's long-term model. District Parent Advisory Councils should be included in the long-term planning process.
- The multi-year funding commitment supports districts to enter into long-term agreements (e.g., food service management companies, non-profit organizations, local catering companies and food suppliers/distributors).

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Feeding Futures School Food Programs Funding – Questions and Answers

April 4, 2023

What is the purpose of the new school food programs funding?

- Budget 2023 commits \$214.5 million in operating funding over three years to make sure all students are fed and ready to learn, by expanding existing school food programs in districts and schools that already have them and creating new ones in districts and schools without.

How much funding has been committed to school food programs in the 2023/24 school year?

- For the 2023/24 school year, Budget 2023 includes:
 - \$71.5 million for districts for targeted food funding and school food coordinators staffing,
 - \$5.0 million for capital enhancements required for school food programs.
- The allocation formula is consistent with the one-time Student and Family Affordability Fund (SFAF), but with the funding floor increased to \$350,000.

Who qualifies for this funding?

- The 60 public school districts in B.C.
- The funding is expected to reach the 20% of the students who are facing food insecurity across the province.

When will we know each district's allocation?

- District allocations are available [here](#).

What can this money be used for?

- School districts will have the flexibility to use the funding provided in the 2023/24 school year to address the immediate need of feeding hungry students in a stigma and barrier-free manner.
- Funding can be used for food purchases and staffing up to one FTE for school food program coordination in their school district.
- Stable, on-going funding will help districts to enter into long-term agreements and partnerships with non-profit organizations, local catering companies and food suppliers/distributors.

Can salaries at the school level be paid for under this funding? For example, staff to organize and provide food services (food bags etc.)?

- The intent is to directly support students, making sure all students are fed and ready to learn.
- There are reasonable exceptions though, like where there are additional staff required, such as kitchen staff to make and prepare the additional food and meals.
- However, the intent is not to allow for administrative overhead (e.g., reporting costs, HR costs, costs of paperwork, additional insurance, the consultation, engagement costs, etc.).

Can the 2023/24 school year funding be used over multiple years? For example, if a district has an allocation of \$800,000 can they plan to spend \$200,000 per year on lunches for the next four years?

- No, this commitment provides multi-year funding to address the immediate need of student hunger in the province.
- There should be no need to hold back funding for future years as districts now have a commitment of on-going funding to plan for each year.

Is CommunityLINK funding impacted in any way by new school food funding?

- CommunityLINK is not changing at this time.
- Many districts use CommunityLINK funding for school food programs; you can expect funding to continue and, if food programs are already robust, districts can redirect this funding to other student supports.

Are districts expected to offer universal food programs to students? What about weekend and holiday supports?

- The funding is expected to reach the 20% of the students who are facing food insecurity across the province.
- Building the capacity in each school community to work towards stigma and barrier-free access to nutritious food for any students who need it, will take time.
- The delivery of food programs is expected to be stigma-free, considering models such as opt-in and pay-what-you-can, in addition to supplementing with coordination with the surrounding community.
- The support from community non-profit organizations, corporate donors and parent advisory councils will continue to play a vital role alongside schools to address student hunger for weekends and school closures (e.g., spring break).

Can capital, for example fridges, or other equipment be purchased with this funding?

- The intent of the funding is that it should be used to expand existing processes and practices where it can have the most impact, rather than in purchasing capital items and equipment.
- However, if a school district can justify that it needs to purchase equipment to allow food programs to be delivered at a school, then this is permissible in the first year of funding.
- Alternatively, capital investments to enhance food security can be supported through the Feeding Futures School Food Infrastructure Program (FIP), a \$5 million per year program to assist boards of education with creating, improving, or expanding the delivery of food programs.
- Districts will receive FIP instructions in April.

Can we keep working with non-profit organizations or current community partners?

- Yes, community inclusion is essential for a long-term model of feeding students; non-profit organizations, corporate donors and parent advisory councils will continue to play a vital role alongside schools to deliver school food programs.

How do we start building a school food program in our district?

- Please visit www.gov.bc.ca/bcschoolfood, which contains information on how to start and/or expand a school food program. Additional resources will continue to be added to the website as they are developed.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?

- Please reach out to your local school district or contact ECC.schoolfood@gov.bc.ca.