

School Breakfast Program Start-Up and Expansion Grants

An Analysis of Grants Awarded by the California Department of Education from 2005-2009

Markell Lewis, December 19th, 2011, California Food Policy Advocates

Executive Summary

Since 1990, the California Department of Education (CDE) has awarded competitive grants, up to \$15,000 per school site, to public school districts, direct funded charter schools, and county superintendents of school for the one-time-only equipment, outreach, and training costs associated with starting or expanding the School Breakfast Program (SBP) or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) analyzed a sample of SBP grants awarded from 2005-06 SY through 2008-09 SY. The purpose of this analysis was to assess the impact of the grants on access, participation, and nutritional quality in the School Breakfast Program at recipient sites.

This report details the results of the grant analysis, which included interviews with district Nutrition Services Directors regarding grant award details, meal quality and appeal, and an assessment of school-level participation data that were collected before and after the grants were awarded.

The key findings of this analysis:

1. Suggest that the grants increase access to and participation in the School Breakfast Program. In the schools that provided quantitative data for this analysis, 16 percent of students participated in SBP before the grant award while 33 percent of students participated during 2009-10 (after the grant award).
2. Support the use of innovative breakfast service models to increase participation,
3. Demonstrate the importance of thoughtful and comprehensive strategies for school breakfast promotion and outreach,
4. Highlight the need for support of school breakfast programs among teachers, students, parents, staff, and especially site administrators, and
5. Show that electronic POS systems are a valuable tool in strengthening school breakfast programs.

These findings can serve to inform school districts as they apply for grant funding and work to implement new breakfast practices.

Recommendations

1. The governor and legislature should preserve and expand funding for school breakfast startup and expansion grants awarded to school districts by CDE. This small investment of state funds enables schools to draw down significant, on-going federal funds through per meal reimbursements.
2. CDE should administer the funds to achieve their statutory purpose: maximum participation of low-income students in the School Breakfast Program. Often this

will encourage grants to be made to the schools with the largest number of low-income students. But CDE should not adopt a methodology that excludes any school, particularly schools with low ADA, from consideration. Therefore, CDE should work in conjunction with stakeholders to develop a formula that includes a variety of factors, e.g. cafeteria fund balance, percentage of free or reduced-price eligible students, average daily attendance, current meal program participation, and other criteria.

3. CDE should continue to prioritize innovative service models, awarding points to grant applications with well articulated plans to implement or expand such models as Classroom Breakfast, Second Chance Breakfast, and Grab n' Go.
4. CDE should require applicants to use multiple outreach and promotion strategies. To facilitate this important expansion component, CDE should include in the grant applications descriptions of model outreach and promotion plans that use a variety of methods (e.g. flyers, parent meetings, automated phone system) and are developed by a diverse group of stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students, parents).
5. CDE should prioritize grant applications for sites that have secured the support of a school administrator, as demonstrated by the administrator's signature on the application.
6. Grant awardees should maintain and provide to CDE upon request, the following information from each awarded site for the three years following the award: breakfast participation data, average daily attendance, standardized test scores, and a brief description of the breakfast model being operated (e.g. the timing and location of breakfast service).

California Food Policy Advocates

California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

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