

Conor Floyd
Agency of Education
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Farm to School Awareness Day

Good morning for the record, my name is Conor Floyd. I'm a Grants Program Manager at the Agency of Education. I manage the Local Foods Incentive. We submitted our annual report about a week ago. If you haven't had the time to look at it, I'm just going to provide some of those highlights. So a brief overview: the Local Foods Incentive as a \$500,000 annual appropriation. If grant awards don't hit that amount, \$500,000, whatever's left, it just goes back to the state.

So the Local Foods Incentive is broken into these two different grant tracks. There is the baseline year, which every school food authority can apply to once, and that's meant to be an on ramp, so there's no purchasing requirement for that first year. Whenever a school food authority becomes interested in engaging the local foods incentive, they'll do that first. We have a really simple application that's really set up to give them the tools to start shifting their purchasing. They also receive a 15 cents per lunch serve grant award with that baseline year grant that gives them some of that initial capital to start making those local purchases.

Once they've applied to that, every year thereafter, they're eligible to apply to our subsequent year grant award, and that's where you start needing to hit that at least 15% purchasing threshold. There's three tiers to the grant award or to the grant program. That's 15%, 20%, and 25% – there's a 15 cents, 20 cents, 25 cent per lunch served grant award associated with those tiers. That really makes up the bulk of the grant program. Eventually, all schools interested will have applied to the baseline year, and we'll really just be talking about subsequent year grant awards. So for this year's report, I really focused on four main kinds of numbers or themes that we found.

- First, **subsequent year grantees doubled**. So in the previous year, we had six school food authorities with at least 15% local purchasing, and we're up to 12 this year. So we saw growth with the grantees.
- There is some additional diversity in terms of those school food authorities that received the grant award. We saw a broader range of free and reduced eligible percent schools engaging with the program. But that being said, a third of all school food authorities in the state still haven't engaged at all with the local foods incentive. And so that, baseline year grant, it's frankly pretty easy to get that initial award, and you can get that initial award and then never apply again. You're not committing to

anything by applying. We're continuing to work on outreach to those schools to get them interested. I think some are just really hesitant... I think they may perceive that there's some kind of commitment there. But it also means that **two-thirds of all school food authorities have at least applied for that baseline year grant**. And we are seeing other schools submit purchasing numbers, even if they're not getting that 15% grant award, which is really useful for us.

- Thirdly, we're seeing **increased grant funding going out the door**. So it was kind of declining year after year for a little bit, and that was really because as those baseline year grants were sent out, it's much harder to get a subsequent year grant award. So this is the first year that we saw that uptick, and that's largely because that doubling of subsequent year grantees to 12. And in total, there was a \$384,818 that went out in grant awards.
- And then lastly, generally speaking, we're seeing that **for every \$1 of grant funding that's sent to those subsequent year grantees, that's representing \$3 of Vermont local purchasing that they're doing**. So, broadly speaking, we kind of think of it now is that there's that three to one investment.