



Farm to School Showcase: Grant Writing for Farm to School

Video Transcript

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GINGER BUCHANAN: Hello my name is Ginger Buchanan and I'm the food service director for Huntley Project Schools in Worden, Montana. I'm also a farm to school coach for Montana Team Nutrition. I want to welcome y'all to our grant showcase. We're so happy that you're joining and hope you have your notebook and pen ready to take some notes. Okay, this event is hosted by Montana Team Nutrition program at Montana State University. Montana Team Nutrition works in close collaboration with Montana Office of Public Instruction to provide training and guidance to Montana schools in nutrition education, school wellness and school nutrition programs, Montana Office of Public Instruction School Nutrition Programs, Montana food courts and partners. This event is funded in part by a USDA Farm to School grant and Montana Farm Bureau Foundation's promotion and education committee. My name is Ginger and welcome to our grant showcase. I've been a food service director here at Huntley Project School for about four years. And I've been a farm to school coach for the last year and a half. This last year is when I really started applying for grants. It's been a ton of fun and very rewarding. When Aubree asked me and Faith to start thinking about showcase ideas several months ago, I immediately knew mine was going to be grants. When I first came into this kitchen, it was primarily set up for just heat and serve items. There was some scratch cooking, but nothing to the extent of what we're doing now. Right now, about 80% of our meals are made from scratch. There wasn't even any baking powder in the kitchen when I started. So, I had to borrow some cornstarch from the home economics class the first time I needed it. Oh yeah, I still owe them for that cornstarch.

Things have really changed since then, what helped change everything was grant money. One of the first things we purchased was a big orange salad spinner that we now call the beast. We were so

excited about that thing that it has really exploded since then, not the salad spinner, it didn't explode, I'm just talking about the purchases we have been able to make to improve the kitchen. Now during my talk, we're gonna be rotating through some pictures of the items I bought with the grant money. So, if you have any questions about any of that, please type them in the chat box or write them down and we'll talk about it at the end of my presentation.

In this showcase, we're going to learn about how to find grants and win them, how to organize your paperwork so that if you're audited, you have everything in order and ready to go. And your school Clerk will love you for that. We have several knowledgeable presenters who specialize in grants, and they're here to help you get the information that you need to get started on your grant search. It can be overwhelming at first because when I started, my first thoughts were, I don't have time to fill out all those forms and write all that down. I had no interest in that. I also thought it was way over my head and that I didn't have the right background to even be able to tackle it. So, I put it off. It was a confidence issue, because I thought it was bigger than I was. Until one day, I was looking at the Chef Ann Foundation website and I saw the salad bar to schools tab. I thought I just looked at the application process to see what it was all about. But to my surprise, it was a very short form. I filled it out. I did have to get a few pieces of information from our school clerk Rita, who you'll meet in a little bit. But other than that, I had it done in a matter of minutes. About 30 days later, I got an email that we won. And it was so exciting. We now had a little kids salad bar so they could actually make their own salads. And they just loved it. After that it was all on like a pile of neck bones. I was on the hunt. It started steamrolling. We won \$30,000 from the state of Montana and purchased a new oven, a globe 42-quart mixer, we had a mixer that was older than my grandma here and it was leaking a little bit of oil into the nose. So, I mean it needed to go. So, we got a new one. We got two portable warmers and paid for their installation. Now for the state grants, you need to report on them and we'll discuss that in a minute. We won a couple Albertsons grants that totaled around 15,000 and then I applied for another grant. And won it from No Kid Hungry for about 50,000. With those two grants were able to purchase our Oliver system with all the tray carriers and the paper trays and those paper trays, you get a price break if you order them by the pallet. Well, our grants pay for all of them. We bought a pizza press and that thing has not only been a ton of fun to operate, but it has cut our cost in half on pizza day. So instead of purchasing par-bay crust from Cisco or US foods, we are making our own and cutting out the middleman. And that's a huge savings. We bought a two-burner cooktop with a stand, we purchased an external freezer is a 10 by 16. With our freezer here in the school small so we're able to put all of our beef and any our proteins in our school, internal freezer and all of our bread items, vegetables, that sort of thing, we're going to outdoor freezer, so we've got double the amount of freezer space now, because of a grant. We bought a portable smoker that is just out of this world, you'll see that picture here in a little bit, for outdoor use, and too many other small items to mention. The total grant set we won this past year came to a total of over \$130,000. The point of telling you all this is that you can do it, and it's worth it. I hope that got you excited. Okay, so now I'm going to go through a list of steps to help you get your thoughts in order. The most important part of this process is to have a plan. So, get out your notebook and your pen. Now let's talk about prioritizing your needs. So first, determine what your needs and wants are. Get estimates and then organize those costs. Order from greatest needs to least needs. Some grants you

will have to combine with others to purchase more costly items. The problem with this is the timeframe you're allowed to spend the money. So, make sure you have a calendar that you can mark all those important dates on. You may need to rearrange your needs according to the amount of money you are awarded and what your estimates are for. You may have a grant though, that will award up to 100,000. But they only give you half, you only win half, you won't find that out until you're actually awarded. So that's going to change your lists, so be prepared for that. Because there's potential for that to happen. Some grants are way more complicated than others, the government grants are long, and some of them require dialogue. I have not applied for one of those yet.

The Farm to School grant is a grant that requires a little more than just filling out a simple form. Aubree will discuss that with you later. On the bigger grants and larger ticket items, you need to get several quotes. Remember, you can negotiate with those vendors. They have a cushion on those items, so don't be afraid to negotiate. They know you have several companies that you could purchase from and they want your business. So, building the relationship with the vendor is okay too.

There are several positives to that. The vendor is working to keep your business and is willing to do more for you because of that. The main thing you need to remember is that these are school funds to be used to help you through a crisis and replace broken or obsolete equipment. And to upgrade your kitchen like we did. We made our kitchen more functional and efficient. We need to make sure we are good stewards of grant money and taxpayer dollars. This is not a restaurant, and sometimes the vendor needs to be reminded of that.

Okay, that leads us to another issue that may arise. This one's from my own experiences this past year. With all the purchasing we were doing, we received a few incorrect orders, damaged items, and incorrectly installing items. Make sure you watch for the credits and keep a copy of those because that stuff has got to be fixed. So, make sure they get credited and ironed out from your vendors. You can lose a lot of money by not chasing those issues down. And again, communicate all of those issues as they arise with your administration clerk and maintenance manager. Now let's talk about finding the grants. If you're employed at a school, be sure that you are subscribed to OPI's emails; don't throw them in the trash. Look at them, read them. There are little gems of good information in those and grants. I have found a few in there. Sign up for a Farm to School through Montana Team Nutrition. Start getting involved in what's going on in our state is very rewarding and you will network with people who know things. There is also great information in those emails.

Again, there's a big Farm to School grant that Aubree, Katie and Andrea will talk about later. No Kid Hungry grants are also great. So, make sure you sign up for their emails as well. Sign up for the state of Montana emails. One other way to find grants is Google.

Google public school grants available. I found grants from Ford, Chevrolet, Chick-Fil-A Exxon and many others. I hadn't applied for those yet, but they're out there and there's money available.

Some are some grants for car matching funds and Rita is going to talk more about that.

Make sure you're clear on what your administration on this with your administration on this because some schools don't like that and you need to know before you apply with the match in the grant. So, in other words, if you if they say they'll give you 50,000, but you have to have 50,000, you need to discuss that with your admin or your school clerk.

So now it's time to apply for the grants.

If you're new to this, it's okay to ask for help from other people, you know, that have experienced with these grants. I know I have to bounce questions off of Rita and Aubree, very often. She's a veteran on grants, the different kinds out there, and the processes. I don't even have 10% of the knowledge that they have, so, I try and learn from them.

Does your school have our grant writer employed? If they do ask for their help! Call one of us here with Team Nutrition. I know any one of us would be glad to help you through this process. When you're filling out the grant form, make sure to describe your project clearly. So that someone who doesn't know anything about your school or organization or about the project can understand your goals.

When answering the questions on those grant forms, be concise and to the point. Make sure you answer all the questions thoroughly address all the requirements. Have somebody to review your application before you submit it. Some grants will have a checklist- use it.

Have your review person use it as well. Don't let all that hard work that you did go down the drain because you forgot an attachment or didn't answer a required question.

Read and follow the instructions. If the instructions say use Times New Roman 12- point font then do that. I'm a terrible proofreader. I have to have somebody who is great at proofreading, review your dialogue so that it reads smoothly and make sense. Same thing with your budget. Have someone who's good at math review your numbers. If the grant is due May 1, don't wait until May 1 to submit it. Have your deadline be a couple days before. Aubree told me a story the other day about her and another person submitting a grant and they had put 80 hours into it. They submitted it the day it was due, but their internet went down. The submission didn't go through and all that work was lost, and they didn't win. So, learn from each other's mistakes and make your own deadlines to prevent this sort of thing from happening.

So next thing is communication.

Communication so important when it comes to the grant process. Make sure you communicate with your superintendent and school clerk with your plans on applying for grants. Make a list of what grants or grants you will not apply for. Explain the application process and what you need to spend the money on. Follow that conversation up with an email so that it's documented. There have been conversations I've had with administration that I did not follow up with an email and I remember one thing and they remembered something completely different. Once they agree that you can apply for that grant, you need to not linger on it. Start going through your steps and get the work done.

Alright, so record keeping is gonna be the third thing we'll talk about. Record keeping is one of the most, if not the most important part of the process. Make sure you start from the very beginning with documentation, send your administration a copy of the application and you keep a copy as well. You need to start a file for each grant and start putting everything pertaining to that

In that file, everything from the emails, applications, award letters, estimate quotes, all of it. If you have items that need repaired or returned, make sure you take note of that. One big mistake I made this year is I just thought everything I ordered would come in, get installed, and we were good to go. That never happens. I did not plan on having ovens that didn't work correctly, brand new, when they

came in, or a freezer that did not get installed correctly. I didn't keep good notes. So, make sure you take good notes on every hiccup you might have, and be prepared for that.

One last thing, when you win grants, make sure you send a thank you. Email pictures, make a phone call, just something to show appreciation and gratitude. These companies love that and they remember you for it. And that's to your advantage for the future.

ANDREA ALMA: So when you get sometimes when you get a grant, it's a one-time sum of money. And I was just wondering how you think about, like what you're going to use the grant for so that it's not too much, you know, to maintain and use and do the project that you were aiming to do with the grant? You know, on into the long term, it seems like you're really strategic about that. And I was just wondering if you could talk about that.

GINGER BUCHANAN: Well, you gotta I mean, I hope I understand your question, right. But I mean, the main thing to look at is, yes, your timeframe. And once you know what you're going to be awarded, let's say you apply for \$100,000. Grant, and let's just say you get the 100,000. So, everything you have, hopefully you've listed what you wanted for that 100,000 if you want it, I would go by that list. Now at that, if that grant came back and only one half that, then I'm gonna have to really prioritize that list that I had made for that 100,000. So okay, I can't get everything on my list, but I can get the top two things.

ANDREA ALMA: Yeah. And then when that \$100,000 grant stops, how are you planning to kind of keep going with some of that/those projects?

GINGER BUCHANAN: Well, you just apply for more grants.

I mean, that that's, that's kind of what we've done here. I mean, I had a long list of things that I wanted to do with this kitchen. And I just had to, like I talked about in the beginning of my speech, just kind of patch things together. That's about all you can do.

AUBREE ROTH: Can I add in there, Ginger? Um, so I think one thing that might help with that sustainability piece is in Ginger's case, Ginger has done an incredible job of really leveraging funds to get new equipment and totally overhaul the school nutrition program there. And I'm sure there's been an increase in participation with the students to which brings in more money over the long term. So especially for those of you who are school food service directors by increasing participation in school meals, you're increasing the funding that comes in over the long term.

We do have a question in the chat box. Um, you mentioned grants for coolers and freezers, how do I go about applying for that it would cost us 50 to \$75,000.

GINGER BUCHANAN: So, the freezer that we got here, the external freezer, um, I got my notes on there, I believe it was about 21,000. So, you must be looking to put one inside your school? Which I guess it doesn't matter, 'cause you're asking about the amount. I just applied for a grant, it was \$100,000 grant. So, look for those big grants, or look for grants where you have a few, you know, a few different grants that kind of have the same time frame that they're in to know that you have to spend the money by. There's no way of guaranteeing that you're going to win all those grants. So that's a tough one. I think I would probably just go for the big grants and I plan on winning one of them eventually and using that money to buy that freezer.

We're going to introduce our next presenter and that is Linda with no kid No Kid Hungry. Linda, do you want to go ahead?

LINDA CLEAUTS: Yeah, thanks, Ginger. Um, okay. Yeah. So, I work with Montana No Kid Hungry. We are a nonprofit that is a public private partnership between the Department of Public Health and Human Services. I'm specifically in the Early Childhood and Family Support Division, and a national nonprofit Share Our Strength that works on addressing poverty and hunger in the US and around the world. And so, prior to the pandemic, our focus was addressing childhood food insecurity through increased access of school meals, so specifically school breakfast, after school meals and summer meals. And so, my specific focus was school breakfast. So, I would help connect schools with grants to make breakfast more accessible to students, particularly food insecure students, those students that rely on free lunch and reduced lunch.

And so, we would provide technical assistance, but also grants to make breakfast available after the bell rings in the classroom or between a passing period. Next slide.

And so, at Montana No Kid Hungry our vision is that we want to ensure that every Montana kid has access to three nutritious meals a day to grow and thrive. We recognize the importance of culturally meaningful food, as well as local ag in educational and healthcare food systems. And we also do a lot of work with people with lived experience of poverty and hunger. They are vital when we're at the table trying to work at long-term solutions of poverty and hunger. Next slide.

And so, we partner with many organizations across the state to address food insecurity, including OPI and Team Nutrition, this is just a snapshot. I'll have our website link at the end of this presentation, and you can see a more comprehensive list. Next slide.

And so, as you all pivoted from the beginning of the pandemic, so did we. And so, since March of 2020, we've granted nearly \$1.4 million to Montana communities. Not only did we grant to schools, but we expanded our grants to food banks and other food access orgs to ensure that they had what they need to get food to people during this emergency time. And so, what was included, were mobile summer meals, grabbing everything needed for grab and go meals during school closures. And yeah, equipment for this school year, which Ginger mentioned, and I will continue to elaborate on. Next slide.

And so, we have a lot of generous thunders and these are just a few you can find a more comprehensive list on our website, but a to mention are Town Pump, First Interstate Bank, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and BNSF Railway. Next slide.

And so, at the beginning of the pandemic, a lot of our applicants were just asking for funds to get like grocery bags, paper bags, paper plates, utensils, little twisty ties to just individually wrap food and packaged food that they had in bulk that they thought they were going to be serving in the cafeteria but had to close school.

Next slide.

Early on in the pandemic as well we did a lot of grants for additional labor hours the tedious work of individually packing, packaging all these meals. Next slide.

As this school year began, like ginger mentioned there were a lot of schools that wanted to get away from the prepackaged stuff, if possible, a few days a week and wanted to do more scratch cooking or

wanted to serve warm meals. And so, we did grant for a variety of equipment for scratch cooking and for warm meals including this Oliver speed seal system which ginger was the one that got me into and I will say in my work what I tried to do is be, as I imagine most of us is trying to be a connector of people and Ginger has been pretty generous with her time and insights because I've asked her when other food service have reached out to me have had questions I've asked her to connect with them to talk about this speed sale system or other things she had received grants for. And as you know, she's a wealth of knowledge and very generous with her time. Next slide.

And so not only do we provide grants, but we try to connect people with other grant opportunities if we don't have any grant funds, or we can't provide grants for the needs of certain districts.

At the beginning of the closures, they were using their school bus to deliver school meals, in Hardin and surrounding areas and the operating expenses to use that bus was not sustainable. So, we connected them with grant opportunities, so they could purchase this vehicle and make it more a sustainable option, which they will also be using for their Summer Meals Program. Next slide.

Um, I put this picture because reminding myself, it's been a long time, this was my last breakfast visit, before the school closures. And this is who we all work for. This was the breakfast after the bell program at evergreen junior high. And what was so beautiful about this program was they utilized their students in their life skills program, who had a variety of physical or mental health challenges. These are students that otherwise would be invisible or stigmatized by the school community. But now, they were the ones delivering this vital need to students, and they were now acknowledged, you know, as school breakfast champions. And you just could be you could see the pride that they had to be part of the school community and just the confidence that they built. So I do cherish that time, and I look forward to when I can see them again. Next slide.

So, this is our website where you can find more information on all the work we're doing and our grant opportunities.

I would say that Ginger can give her perspective as she's applied for a lot of grants. I feel like our grants are not too complicated. I've had a lot of food service directors come up to me and say, you know that they are intimidated and never filled out a grant, and myself and are No Kid Hungry staff, we always are available to answer questions. And I have walked people through applications. Because we want to ensure like we can get the funds you need to do what you need to do for your students. When Ginger mentioned communication, communication is really important in my work, because like when Ginger was applying for our grant, there were changes that happen because life happened. And so as long as she communicated to me like, 'Hey, I applied for this, but then this happened. So could we use this these funds for something else.' Then, if she laid out the context that would allow me to explain to our national partners, you know, we really need to fund Huntley School Project, but they don't need this now, because of this, this and this. And all the information that food service directors give me what their original needs are, when their needs changes gives me the information to advocate because our staff like we advocate for grant applicants, and we have to go through a process with our national partners to figure how much we can give. And, like Ginger said, there's negotiation with vendors, but there's also negotiation. And with us, sometimes we don't have enough to fully grant everybody. And so, then I will circle back with applicants and be like, well, what are your top two things are? Or what could you do with this amount, even though this is how much

you said you originally needed. So, for us, it's an organic process, but it's back and forth, and the communication is intentional. We also have a reporting component.

But I'm always there, nudge people and remind them and bottom line is we are working with our applicants. It's not trying to be punitive or being harsh. And I think most people that offer grants are like that. We're here to support you, and all the work you do for our kids. So that's all I got. And thank you for your time. You know, there'll be a point where we'll answer questions. I don't know if it's now or a little bit later, but thank you.

GINGER BUCHANAN: Thanks, Linda. Yeah, we'll hold questions for a little bit. But um, just to speak on a couple things. You pointed out, yeah, that the No Kid Hungry grants, they're very easy to fill out, they really are. So, make sure you guys are looking at that stuff when they pop up. So, make sure you sign up for those emails and look through them because there's some grants in there. And Linda was wonderful to work with as far as, like she talked about that negotiation part because yeah, I would. There was a point where I won two grants at one time. So, I'm like, okay, I put on those same two grants the same items, because I didn't know if I was gonna win one or the other and I wound up getting both of them. So, you know, Linda was great to work with because I had to make a few adjustments. So that's a big advantage to those No Kid Hungry grants. So, thanks again, Linda. And, um, we're gonna move on to Erin Turner with Office of Public Instruction. She's with school nutrition programs and she's an expert on the USDA equipment grant. So Erin, if you want to go ahead.

ERIN TURNER: Thank you, Ginger. Yes. I'm Erin Turner. I'm a school nutrition program specialist with the Office of Public Instruction. And I also manage that USDA equipment grant from Montana, which is what I'm going to talk about today.

All right, next slide. So, the purpose of the equipment grant is to help schools improve the nutrition and quality of school meals to improve overall efficiency of school food service operations, both energy and labor efficiency, and to improve food safety, and to increase participation in school meals. This grant is only open to Montana schools that operate the National School Lunch Program or to schools who normally would operate the National School Lunch Program, but may be operating the Summer Food Service Program or Seamless Summer Option as available during the school year. All right, next slide.

So, my tenant gets about \$70,000 per year for the equipment grant award on two schools. And the application packet can be found on our website. And it's also advertised through your lunchtime emails and OPI newsletters, like Ginger had mentioned on the application usually opens around October every year. The applications are normally due around November, and school districts are notified of their award by December. And the grant funds must be spent by the following June. And then schools must also submit an easy fiscal report about their spending, and a final report to OPI to share about your equipment purchases.

Right next slide.

There is \$1,000 minimum award for one piece of equipment with this grant. There's a maximum of \$5,000 for a piece of equipment usually, but the equipment can cost more than that. For example, you may need a \$15,000 freezer.

But you can still apply for that freezer. And we would just award a maximum of \$5,000 to go towards that purchase.

All right, next slide.

So, this grant has been available for over 10 years and the application is very short and easy to complete. The application packet includes information on how it will also be scored, which can change from year to year. But as you can see each section of the application is tied to receiving points for your answers. And we really want to hear about your specific need for this equipment and how this equipment will improve your food service goals for improving the quality safety, overall efficiency, convenience and participation in the school meal programs. So, make sure you answer each section thoughtfully and thoroughly along with submitting price quotes from three different vendors to receive those maximum points on your application.

All right, next slide.

So, the grant is competitive, as many schools need equipment and do apply for this grant. So, I just want to provide you some tips for success. First, be sure to apply for this grant; apply every year. If you're not awarded it, don't be discouraged; apply again. You never know how many other schools may apply that year.

And also, be sure to fill out that application completely and thoroughly to get those maximum points. That scoring rubric is provided in the application packet so you know what you're being scored on. And then just make sure your answers are complete. And of course, submit that application before the deadline along with those price quotes from different vendors.

All right, next slide.

Here are some actual photos and examples of equipment pieces that schools have purchased with their equipment grant funds in the past few years. Besides the top requested pieces of refrigerators, freezers, ovens, salad bars, cold food carts, proofers, warmers, and steam tables. I also want to give you some other examples of equipment that your school may have a need for, especially after this past year.

This includes a food processor, maybe a mechanical vegetable slicer or a dough sheeter to help minimize your labor hours, or maybe a convenience store style cooler or breakfast cart for grab and go pre-packaged, bagged meals, for salads, yogurt parfaits, their smoothies, as having a separate point of service cart around the school may help to increase their school's participation.

All right, next slide.

So, we are so proud of our amazing school nutrition staff throughout Montana. I just wanted to point out all the pictures on the bottom are of Montana school meals from this current school year. It looks so bright, beautiful, fresh and creative.

And we hope that you can start planning now on what your equipment if your school has a need to help improve the quality of your school meals. Get a plan in place for what equipment you could use. And we hope to see your equipment grant application next fall to help fund your program goals.

All right, next slide.

Well, um, yeah, please let me know if you have any questions or you can reach out to me later as my contact information is provided here. And again, that equipment grant application should be

available on our OPI website along with being advertised on our lunch line emails and OPI School Nutrition Program newsletters.

And yeah, we hope to see your application come this October.

GINGER BUCHANAN: Thanks, Erin, that was super good and informative.

And something you said that I'll just kind of touch base on is how easy those forms are to fill out. I'm going to try to tackle that one. So, um, people make sure you write down all these presenters, phone numbers and contact information because some are really important because they're going to be good resources for coaching through the application process. Um, next is Miss Katie Bark. She's the program director with Montana Team Nutrition. Take it away, Katie.

KATIE BARK: Thank you, Ginger, I'm so pleased to be with you today. As you may know, Montana Team Nutrition is 100% grant funded. And we're so excited to be celebrating our 25th year this year. So, what I hope to do in the next few minutes is to give you my five top tips for writing a successful grant application and make sure you're aware of one grant funding opportunity that's available right now, and then one grant writing resource I found that you may want to check out. Next slide please. Okay, before I do that, I just wanted to go over these terms, because I do find just like ginger said, it can be really intimidating to write a grant proposal. And sometimes the terms that are used can intimidate you. I know they did with me when I first started. So, when you hear about a Request for Application, or what's known as an RFA, or a request for proposal, RFP, that just means that's the grant application. So that's all it means. The grant proposal usually is the same thing as a grant narrative. It's basically the entire grant or the meat of the proposal. And except for the budget, and then the budget is basically you know what you're going to spend to complete the project. And then budget narrative just explains and gives the rationale for why you're asking for what and details it so expect. For example, if you're asking for one person to work 20 hours at \$25 an hour to do something for you in the grant project. That would be you know, \$500, you explain. And then a mini grant or a sub grant is again, the same thing, it's something that often an agency will provide an opportunity to a school to complete a small grant. I think what Ginger said with being intimidated, I think the best advice is just start small. Start with an easy, simple grant to gain your confidence.

So this grant, you might have heard that before, and it's one that's available now, it may not be one you want to look at, because it's due next Wednesday, the 28th. But I want to use this one as an example of going through my five tips. It's called Fuel Up to Play 60. It's provided by the National Dairy Association, and the Football League. And it's really focused on empowering youth to implement some healthy eating and physical activity habits within their own selves, but also at the school. And it's about a \$4,000 grant. And it would be if you did apply, it would be for next school year. Okay, next slide, please. So the first tip is you just have to take time to read the application, and really know the requirements. So what I usually do is read, print off the application, take a highlighter, and read it and highlight it and read it one or two times. And while I'm reading it, I'm making my task list of what I have to do to get the information to complete the grant application before I even start doing that. So, it just helps you decide who you have to talk to who you'd have to

get your approval from, maybe you meet need a letter of reference, but it just is making sure you take time to know what's required.

So in looking at this grant, let's say you wanted to apply for this next week, you obviously can go to the website to find what you need to know; the application even gives you an example, which really is helpful. This is an easy grant application, it's online, it just basically has you fill out the information. So in that grant application, they talk about a healthy eating and physical activity play that you have to implement. And the other requirement is, you have to also include how you're going to help increase access and consumption of dairy products with your students.=

So if I was going to apply for this grant, I would do my research on again, finding out which healthy eating and which physical activity play do I want to do? Who do I need to talk to figure out what we're going to do? So obviously, if you were going to do something physical activity, you'd want to talk to your health enhancement teacher and maybe have them take the lead on that component of the grant and figure out what is needed and when you're going to complete the activities. So just really getting to the details of the grant.

Okay, so if we looked again, this application to do this, some key things with this are you have to join Fuel Up to Play 60, which you can easily do on their website, and you have to register an advisor. It can be you, as the food service director or the wellness coordinator or can be somebody else in your school, you just have to determine that the requirement is you have to be part of this National School Lunch Program. And then you'll have to select a healthy eating and a physical activity play. And one reason I brought this grant up is because one of the healthy eating plays is Farm to School. It's all about knowing your own foods. And so it might help your Farm to School program, you do have to select a physical activity play, which again, you'd want to get your health enhancement teacher on board to do that. And if you're writing this grant, you would again write down all the costs that it's going to cost, it's going to require to implement the grant and then make sure that you have it submitted by the deadline April 28. Like Ginger said, having somebody that knows nothing about what you're trying to do, read your proposal. And they sometimes have to read, obviously, the grant application to know what's required beforehand is key for success. And I would, since you're in a school, get that language arts or English teacher to help you because they will make sure your statements are complete sentences, and you know, are clear.

Okay, so this is where you really want to make sure that your proposal is easy to read, concise, and understandable. Less is often more, you don't have to write long amount, just so you're answering the question. And really being clear on what you're going to do. I would make sure that if you, we all have acronyms in our world, but you want to make sure you define what that acronym means. So, for example, we obviously, a lot of times, address Harvest of the Month as HOM, but whenever we use it the first time in the grant proposal, we write out what it means before and then we put HOM, in parentheses, and then we can start using that term throughout the application, but people won't know what it is if you don't define it. And again, what we do is, once I've written the draft, we have a team of people that will then read it, cut it, and make it more clear. So, you are sort of like writing a paper. If you've ever written a paper or writing a letter to a friend, and you want to keep editing it, it's not hard, it just takes time. So that's where again, just know, give yourself some time to not just write it, but review it and edit it.

These are examples of just how to be clear and concise in your responses. This is an example of Harvest of the Month mini grants that we provide in the past, we ask what is your school going to do to implement Harvest of the Month. So if you look on the left hand side, that gives three specific things that a school is going to do to implement Harvest of the Month, it's very clear, it gives, what the kindergarten teacher is going to do, what the food service director is going to do, and the librarian. It's much more clear than on the right hand side that it just one sentence. So, the reviewer really has a good picture of what you're doing. So just, you know, take some time to write out the steps. It's sort of like writing a recipe. Think of it as writing a recipe you just don't want to forget a critical step.

In looking at the Fuel Up to Play 60 grant, I just gave you some examples here of how to write up and answer the question on what you're going to do. If you're going to do that healthy eating play of farm to school. In my school, I'm going to implement the Harvest of the Month program next school year. And so, I give an explanation of what that is because you can assume that the reviewer doesn't know what that is. Then I'm going to promote dairy foods because as you know, dairy is one of the Harvest of the Month foods. And I'm going to mix it with our cherries, which is another Montana food and have the kids try a new recipe a Montana cherry smoothie through a taste test at lunch one day in May. And this target audience is elementary students in first through third grade. So, what we're also going to do is have some field trips, and teachers are going to do a lesson on dairy to the kids. So those just give some specifics.

Okay, the budget is key, because you have to make sure that what you ask for supports what you just talked about in your plan. So you just want to make sure that if you make your list of all your expenses of what you are required to carry out your plan, then you can determine what's in the budget narrative. Check the math at least twice to ensure it's correct. A lot of times we have somebody again, that hasn't been involved in the grant writing check it because, like Ginger, I am terrible at proofing. And you'll look over things because you think, you know, you're just assuming if you're not paying attention. So this is just an example of the field trip cost that I need \$300 for bus expenses for three field trips, to take three teachers and 60 students to the farm field trips.

Other calculations would be in the grant. That's why you want to know that grant application by heart, it tells me that I can only spend 60 cents per student for a taste test. So I determined I'm going to have it for 300 students time 60 cents, I need \$180, I also have to buy a Vitamix blender and immersion blender for it. So you can put those costs in this grant also limits the physical activity played budget to \$2,000. So you have to know you can't ask for more than 2000. But if you don't need any money for the physical activity play, it does allow you to ask up to \$4,000 for just healthy eating. So those are just examples of budget calculations. The last tip is just ask for help. I think everybody has emphasize this today, and see if there is somebody in your school district that can help you, or a parent organization to help you be able to really write the grant or find grants. It just makes it so much easier if you have a team. And that's why I mean, if you have a Harvest of the Month team already, that you can look at to help, you know implement the program. Maybe they can help again with certain sections of the grant to write or to review.

Ginger already said it. But it's so important to have somebody that doesn't know anything about what you're doing read your grant application before you submit. Because we found that very

helpful in that sometimes we were assuming, you know, you assume they know something, but you can add a statement to make it more clear and just make a stronger application. I did find this resource, which is simple. If you're looking to really learn more about grant writing, this is a quick, dirty resource that you might find helpful called the Quick, Wise Guide to Writing Grant Proposals. And it's very inexpensive. So I think that's all I have. I think the next slide is my contact information. Again, if we can help you in any way, please let us know.

GINGER BUCHANAN: And our next presenter, her name is Andrea Alma, and she's the Farm to School Mountain Plains Regional Director with USDA. Take it away, Andrea.

ANDREA ALMA: Thank you, Ginger. And Hi, everyone. It's great to be with you today and talk about grants. I'm going to talk today about the USDA Farm to School grant programs.

So my name is Andrea Alma. And as an intervention, I focus on Farm to School for one of the seven USDA regions. It's the region there in green, you'll notice that includes Montana. And so I'm kind of the person who helps support everyone in our region who receives USDA Farm to School grants. So I'm going to talk about the grant program. And you can know that kind of I'm your gal for any questions you might have. And I'm also kind of the person who would be supporting you if you do indeed receive one of these grants.

I want to talk a little bit about what the grant program is for it was actually designed or defined in a law written by Congress, the 2010, Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, know what these grants would focus on. And that is to increase the availability of local foods in schools, whether that's helping you get started with buying local in your school meal program, or expanding those efforts. And Congress fortunately gave us a lot of latitude in how to define what a Farm to School program looks like. And what we can find. And so I think you'll find with this this USDA Farm to School grant program, you get to determine what Farm to School looks like in your community. And this grant is here to help you accomplish your goals as long as they incorporate that element of increasing access to local food in your meal programs.

So I'm going to go through a couple of examples of Montana communities that have received these USDA Farm to School grants. This is a picture from farm to school with Park county and the Livingston area. They've actually received a couple of our grants to expand their farm to school programming both their garden work, as well as their local procurement work in the kitchen. The Intertribal Buffalo Council actually did a lot of work in Montana when they were implementing a USDA Farm to School grant to increase bison served in school meals and to conduct some educational programming around the traditional importance of bison. So they were actually an early grantee, I believe a 2013 or 2014 grantee.

These are some pictures from Hardin School District, they have currently one of our grants. And I wanted to highlight these pictures because you know, Hardin is using some funds from this federal grant, and leveraging some Montana resources, right. So if you're, let's say participating in Harvest of the Month, you could actually use some Farm to School grant funds to do that sort of work. So these types of grants can kind of complement some of the farm to school work you may already be doing.

And here is a picture from Red Cloud Indian School. They're another current grantee, and they're actually focusing on expanding their greenhouse and garden program in serving those foods in their lunchroom. So they are currently a partner of ours.

And finally, these are some pictures from French town School District. They're also largely focusing on their greenhouse efforts engaging youth in the greenhouse program and, and again, getting that greenhouse grown food into their school meal program. So just wanted to give you a couple of examples of Montana programs that have received farm to school grant programs. Montana Team Nutrition, some of the statewide Farm to School efforts are funded also through Farm to School grant. So just so you can see where it's happening in Montana. I will say, currently, we have about \$500,000 in grant fund grant programming in Montana right now. And since the program started in 2013, I believe we've infused over a million dollars into Montana Farm to School programs.

So who can apply for these grants, actually quite a variety of different types of organizations. So you could apply as a school, let's say, or a nonprofit, a partner could apply to this grant program, and partner with a school. A farm even could apply to our grant program, quite a wide variety of folks can apply.

We have a couple of different types of grants based on where you are in your Farm to School journey. The first are called turnkey grants. These are smaller grants for a very defined type of project and I'm going to dig into them a little bit more here later. With implementation grants. These are bigger grants to help you implement a project you really already have in mind and are kind of ready to go with and then we have state agency grants which are specifically for state agencies like the department of education or Department of Agriculture, in your case of OPI or the Department of Agriculture.

So when it comes to what you can spend money on with your grant, similar to how we you define what your farm to school project is going to look like, you also define what you're going to spend money on. And that can range from staffing, contractors, different types of equipment. So some of the types of equipment that we've been talking about. Let's say expenses. If you're hosting a meeting and renting a space training on travel let's say you want to go to a conference or go visit Ginger and hear more about all the great work she's doing. If you want to count those miles and pay Ginger a nice hourly rate for those services, you sure could with this grant and so you can see some examples listed there. And hopefully this can give you an idea of what you could spend those funds on. And quite frankly, it's quite a few things. It's quite broad.

Unfortunately, here are some of the things that you can't spend money on with this grant. And hopefully these won't be too limiting for you know, vehicles construction or purchase of lands and things like that. And you can't directly buy a lot of food with this grant program. The goal is that the grant helps you pave the way to serve local food in your school meals, you're not buying the food with the grant, if that makes sense.

We do have a match requirement, whereby your community has to put forth about 25% of the funds or more. And this can be in the form of in-kind services. So let's say you have volunteers engaged, you can count the value of their time, you know, certain staff who are perhaps working on the project, but not pulling down funds from the federal grant, you know, their salary time can count towards this, there's quite a few different ways that you can get to this match requirement.

Now, like Katie said, there's a document called a request for applications. And this is kind of your key to how to apply to this grant program. And you know, how it's going to be scored when you need to have everything in, etc. And what I want to do is, because our grant program is not open at the moment, you can look at, you have to scroll down a little bit on this list, but you can look at our request for applications document from last go around. And that can give you a really good idea of where you might, where we might be going for the next request for applications. The next one will come out in October ish, of 2021 of this year. So you've got a few months to think about if this might be a good opportunity for you. It'll come out in October, it'll be due in December, and you'll receive the funding on the following spring. So keep your eyes and ears out for that. I wanted to say if you want to be on the list, to get an email notification, as soon as this comes out, you may want to sign up for our E newsletter, I've just dropped that link in the chat. It's called The Dirt. Maybe some of you have heard of it. But the dirt will be the best way to get this information about the grant into your inbox.

And finally, this USDA Farm to School grant is one of many USDA grant opportunities. Now, these are often pretty big grants, they take it they take a little bit to manage however, these grants can help along the whole entire food chain. And what I'm going to do is drop the link to this fact sheet in the chat because all of these little opportunities are linked in this fact sheet. So, if they look like they might fit for you just click on them, it'll take you to that the website that describes the opportunity. So hopefully this can be helpful if you're sort of thinking bigger than just Farm to School and looking at more funding for a broader food systems effort. Now, I didn't talk a lot about the turnkey grants. Those are, as I mentioned, that track the turnkey grants are a set list of activities that you would accomplish. In a very defined type of project. One of them is focusing on action planning, one of them is focused on edible gardening. They're kind of like a like a mini project that's already sort of been designed for you and so if that sounds like something that might be up your alley, keep an eye on those tracks. Otherwise, the implementation track is a little bit more of a Choose Your Own Adventure type of track for this grant program. And here's my contact info, feel free to reach out to me. I also wanted to highlight one more resource here which is this website I just dropped in the chat has a list of all the types of organizations that have received these grants in the past. So you can get a feel for what the projects look like. It's just like a paragraph summary of different projects that have been funded. And that can help you understand kind of what the grant program really has to offer. So that is all for me. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

GINGER BUCHANAN: Thank you, Andrea. So now we're going to go to Aubree, whom you already have had an introduction to.

AUBREE ROTH: Hello again, everyone. And thank you, Ginger. So you've learned about the process, tips and several grant opportunities, and I'm going to provide you with a few more ways you can find grants as well as a few specific opportunities you might consider that support Farm to School efforts. So shown on this slide are the three core elements of farm to school and you're probably already familiar with this, but there's the school gardens education and procurement, which is buying or serving local foods in school meals. As Ginger discussed, it is important to get specific about what

you want funding for grants that support building school gardens are probably not the grants that you would apply for if you need kitchen equipment. I've broken down a few suggestions in the next few slides with general Farm to School grants that could fund more than one of these core elements, and then opportunities specific to each core element. As I go through the next few slides, don't worry about jotting all of these down, we will send out the slides with the recording to everyone who registered, and there'll be posted on our training events archive page, and Jamie will provide that link to our trainings page at the end.

The grants that are available are always changing and as you've heard from previous presenters, the dates that they open change the dates that they closed change may be the priority changes. So several years ago, Lowe's toolbox for education grants were mainstay with school gardens and Farm to School efforts. But in preparing for this presentation, I could not find any information about their 2021 grant. So it really shows that funders will change their funding focus over time, they'll skip years, they'll change their deadlines or they'll stop providing grants all together. With that in mind, I want to point out several of the links that you'll see are places where you can find grants rather than individual grant opportunities. I recommend being vigilant for grants and other funding opportunities that fit your needs and goals. And other presenters have mentioned this as well. Just getting on those awesome lists. When we see relevant grants, we post them on the Montana Farm to School Facebook page and we share them via our monthly newsletter that goes to registered Montana harvest of the month sites. National Farm to School Network's This Week newsletter also has funding opportunities as does USDA's The Dirt and Andrea mentioned how to sign up for that. A couple general Farm to School grants include Whole Kids Foundation, who has a different grant opportunities depending on their current focus, such as salad bar and school garden grants. So it's worth checking out their site from time to time to see what they're currently funding and what they have available. Although it isn't a grant per se, we are offering scholarships to attend the Montana Farm to School summit, which will be held in August in Helena applications are due May 6 and it is a short easy application and it can get you funding for travel lodging and waived registration. I also highly recommend checking with local businesses, community foundation's, educational foundations and your school's PTA. These opportunities will be specific to your area and a few examples of some past Farm to School funders for different areas are and the West philanthropies that funds in Gallatin and Park counties, Town Pump, Murdoch's, Bozeman schools foundations, and local chapters of organizations like Montana Farm Bureau Foundation. If you need tangible items like lumber and soil for raised beds, sometimes it can be easier to have those items donated from a local business. Rather than write a grant to get the money to then purchase them. It really just depends on what you need. So let's look at a few school garden grant resources.

From my experience school garden grants typically open in the winter and close late winter or early spring, which makes sense for the timeline of creating a school garden. Kids gardening may contains a list of grants as well as offers grants themselves. Whole Kids Foundation currently has a school garden grant. Annie's grants for Gardens is another opportunity. And then another list that is helpful is the SGN grants list. And with any of these some of these lists get outdated so at some point, it may not make sense to look at them anymore. Most of the grants that I've seen would support local procurement element to provide funding for equipment or professional development, but rarely

provide funding for food unless it's like a taste test or part of an educational opportunity. Chef Ann Foundation grants change over time, but in the past have funded salad bars as Ginger said as well as professional development. And Erin talked about the equipment grants that are available via OPI. Many education projects can be intertwined with school garden efforts, but a few additional opportunities include the bee cause grants, which fund pollinator education and bee hives at school. The Seed Your Future educator grants list is pretty impressive and would be useful for both education focused projects as well as garden based projects. And as I mentioned before your schools districts foundation may be good to check with for opportunities that they have or that they may be familiar with. I hope that this list demonstrates that there are many different grants available that you that can fit your project needs and goals and you should go out there and win one yourself. I do want to emphasize again to subscribe to newsletters and listservs and follow social media accounts like the like Montana Farm to School so you can get updates on available opportunities. And so with that, I will pass it back to Ginger.

GINGER BUCHANAN: So Rita if you want to go ahead.

RITA HUCK: Hi, my name is Rita Huck, and I am the business manager district clerk for Huntley Project Schools. And I have been I've been in this position for 20 years as the business manager. And for 22 years prior to that I was the elementary Secretary assistant clerk. So I've been in the business office for 42 years, and grants are a huge part of my job. And this year, the amount of grants that have been thrown on my plate is crazy. We're looking to hire somebody to help with the grants because I can't keep up with all of them. So I'm just going to talk to you a little bit about record keeping and all the reports that are out there that you have to do. So when looking into the possibility of applying for a grant, I recommend a form that we've started using here, the form that makes it possible for everyone that's involved in the application, the submission of the application, ordering receiving payments and reporting. All those people are on the same page. It's important that everybody involved is informed. I had money show up on our accounts, and I have no idea where it came from or who it was for. And so this form we are hoping is going to help with that we've only had a couple of applications come through with it since we started it. I got it from East Helena school. And she had gotten it from a national conference that we went to, and she's been using that and she said it's made a huge difference at their school. So this, this process will save a lot of time for everyone that's involved. You need to make sure that you have all the school district information listed correctly on your application. Make sure that all the names are spelled correctly with correct contact information. Most applications will require the school's Tax Identification Number, and you can get that from your district clerk business manager. Some of the grants will require matching funds from your school district. Be sure to check with your district clerk and business manager to make sure that you have the matching funds available for that grant. Once the grants are approved, be sure that you're spending the grant money on what you described in the grant application. If you need to change items, be sure that you've got prior approval from your grant provider. When an audit is done, the auditor will look at the grant and they will see now what was it that you were going to purchase with the grant money and did you purchase it, purchase the correct items. Make sure that your clerk

business manager has all the paperwork pertaining to the grant. This includes the grant application, the budget, the award letter, and then any amendments that may have been done with the grant. Also make sure that when your invoices come in, they may come to you make sure that they're forwarded to the business manager and make sure that they know what grant those are to be paid from grants are audited in the business office. A lot of times when you receive a grant, they'll say, Oh, you don't have any reporting required. But our auditors are going to look at every single grant that we get, they go through and they look at, and if something was done incorrectly, we get a fine for that. So make sure that you've got all of that paperwork in order. And we had a desk audit with this state on the corona relief funds that we got, our district got funds, and then we also got funds for our lunch program, the lunch program, one, I was required to send copies of the purchase orders, and the invoices, and the ledger that came out of our accounting program. So keeping good records are very, very important to make sure that you have all the reporting requirements at hand, and you don't have to go digging in the files for them. Because that takes time. Also, if you work together with your clerk, business manager, the process will be successful. And every everything will come out in the end the way you want it to and you'll get some great equipment and great supplies for your program. So good luck on your grants. I'll take any questions if anybody has any.

GINGER BUCHANAN: We're gonna wrap it up. And I'm gonna have Jamie talk about some upcoming events. So if you want to go ahead, Jamie.

JAMIE TAYLOR: I'm going to talk about some events and some resources. But, also be sure to check out the Montana Farm to School website, which has a lot more.

There's also on that website, there's several webinars and showcases archived, so be sure to check those out as well.

And then as has been mentioned, the Montana Farm to School Summit is coming up on August 11 through 12th in Helena. Registration and scholarship applications are now open so anyone in need of travel or lodging assistance is encouraged to apply for a scholarship which is due May 6. And then the \$65 early bird registration tickets for the summit ends on May 31. You can receive refunds on registration so be sure to apply early.

October is National Farm to School month and it's a perfect time to celebrate or launch your Farm to School program.

And Montana crunch time is a fun way to celebrate that month. Join us on October 21 by crunching on locally or regionally grown apples and register your crunch on October 31 to help Montana win the mountain plains regional crunch off.

There are two Montana farm to school coaches if anyone's looking for extra help to get your Farm to School initiative started or with expanding your current efforts. Ginger, who as you've learned is an expert in grant writing, school food service, and gardens, and then Faith Oakland is our second coach whose expertise includes school gardens, education, and administration. If you're interested in their help let our viewers know or just contact Ginger and Faith directly.

And lastly, we'd love for you to share any of your farm to school success stories. You can share photos, lessons, stories and recipe recipes using the share your story form on our website. And you

can also email me at any time we would love to feature your story in an upcoming training or on our website. Also use social media to get the word out and be sure to use these hashtags Montana harvest of the month and Montana Farm to School so that we can find your posts. And so Ginger, I'll turn it back over to you.

GINGER BUCHANAN: Thank you, Jamie. So I just want to thank all our presenters Rita, Andrea, Katie, Erin, Linda, Aubree, all y'all for being on here and our attendees. Thank you for being on here. I hope you picked up even a little bit of good information. Even if you got just something out of this, you know that it was worth it. So make sure you contact any of us we'll be more than happy to help you win those grants.