

Paid Lunch Equity (PLE)

The purpose of the Paid Lunch Equity is to ensure that schools are charging an equitable price for the paying student lunch price. Along with Federal reimbursement to be balanced with the reimbursement given for Federal free meals and reduced meals served. The USDA expects SFAs to not subsidize paid meals with Federal free reimbursement.

If you have any questions regarding the paid lunch equity (PLE), please contact our staff via email (cnp@isbe.net) or phone (217-782.2491).

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/paid-lunch-equity-guidance-school-year-2024-2025>

When is the PLE Tool *not* required?

There are two situations in which you will *not* have to fill out the PLE Tool:

- a. Charging above the USDA Target Rates:
 - \$3.85 (2024-2025)
 - \$3.56 (2023-2024)
 - \$ (2022-23)
- b. Your program is a part of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program all of your meals are served free of charge to students. (*Not required, but it would be best to keep up with the PLE Tool for documentation purposes in the event the SFA leaves the CEP program, this will help set lunch prices)

What do I need to complete the PLE Tool?

1. The previous SY lunch prices (ex. if it is SY 2024-2025, you will need SY 2023-2024) (*If the SFA has never completed the PLE Tool before or does not have one on record.)
2. Current lunch prices

What are the options if we are required to raise prices?

- a. Raise lunch prices
- b. Contribute non-federal funds to the National School Lunch Program Account
- c. Apply for a waiver, if available

Option A: Raising Lunch Prices

- \$0.10 Cap
 - \$0.10 is the maximum ISBE can enforce raising lunch prices to be in compliance.

- School Food Authority (SFA) has the right to raise lunch prices as much as they desire and approved by administration.
- ISBE is only responsible for requiring \$0.10, what the SFA raises above \$0.10 is at their discretion.
- \$0.10 requirement to raise lunch prices only applies to PAID LUNCHES.
- Reduced lunches are required to be no more than \$0.40.
 - Recently we have noticed several SFAs raising Reduced Price lunches \$0.10 with paid lunches.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/paid-lunch-equity-guidance-school-year-2024-2025>

Option B: Contributing Nonfederal funds

- If choosing the SFA chooses to use nonfederal funds instead of raising lunch prices, you must:
 - Complete the tab on the PLE tool with prior year's annual paid lunch count
 - *SFAs already running a deficit:*
 - Board approval to not raise lunch price
 - Acknowledgement of shortfall from nonfederal contribution tab (PLE tool)
 - *SFAs with positive balance year:*
 - Board approval to contribute nonfederal funds
 - General ledger statement showing the transaction required

Option C: Waivers

- SFA's with zero or positive balance are allowed to exempt out of raising lunch prices for student
- If a SFA is approaching its net case resources (for profit threshold), the SFA may request an exemption from ISBEE to not raise lunch prices, for that it will result in going over the threshold
- [Exception Form](#)

Possible Citations Under PLE

- "Failure to complete Paid Lunch Equity Tool"
- "Failure to raise lunch prices or contribute nonfederal funds adequately to satisfy tool requirements"

Additional Resources

[Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for SY 2024-25](#)

[Paid Lunch Equity Tool](#)

[Exception Form](#)

[Resource Management Webinar Video](#)

