Team Nutrition Initiative works to alleviate childhood obesity and promote physical activity.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced investments across the country to help children develop positive nutrition and physical activity habits that can lead to healthier lifestyles.

The grants will provide nutrition education materials, resources for children and parents, and technical assistance and training for school food service providers and communities participating in the National School Lunch and Child and Adult Care Food Programs.

The $6.4 million in funding supports elementary and secondary schools applying for the HealthierUS School Challenge, a key component of the First Lady's Let's Move! initiative to end childhood obesity within a generation.

"If we want to build a strong economy and win the future, then we also need to win the race to educate our kids," said Vilsack. "And that means making sure that the 32 million kids who eat school lunches every day are fueled by nutritious food and healthy habits. With that winning combination we can help to reduce and prevent childhood obesity and ensure more healthful future for every child in America."

States will provide training and technical assistance to school food service staff in making school meals healthier, with more fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat milk products on the menu, during the two year grant period. Grantees will also promote the use of USDA Foods and teach children to make healthy food choices through hands-on nutrition education experiences. Parents in these states will be offered information on how to support healthy habits at home.

States had the opportunity to apply for up to two Team Nutrition Training Grants for fiscal year 2011, competitive and/or non-competitive. The non-competitive grant funds are awarded as a basis to support States in their efforts to significantly increase the number of schools applying for the HealthierUS School Challenge. States that guarantee a specific number of HUSSC applications during the grant period received a non-competitive award.

The 31 States receiving grants include:

Nebraska

Competetive, $251,641

Non-competitive, $35,600

Improving child nutrition is a focal point of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act that was signed by President Obama last December.

This legislation reauthorizes USDA's Child nutrition programs, including the Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program, which serves nearly 32 million children each day. It will allow USDA, for the first time in over 30 years, the chance to make real reforms to the school lunch and breakfast programs by improving the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for millions of children.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act is the legislative centerpiece of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! initiative. To learn more, visit www.LetsMove.gov.

More information on the Team Nutrition Training Grants and how schools can become Team Nutrition and HealthierUS School Challenge schools is available at teamnutrition.usda.gov.