

2026 JumpStart Grant and Event FAQs

What is the 2026 JumpStart Grant and JumpStart Event program?

The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation (NRAEF)'s 2026 JumpStart grant program is designed to provide opportunities to bring students from a ProStart high school classroom to the National Restaurant Association Show as part of an immersive industry experience to see and learn all that the restaurant and foodservice industry has to offer, to meet with industry experts, and to "JumpStart" their career journey. One ProStart school applicant will be selected to bring up to eight (8) ProStart students (age 16 or older) and two (2) adult chaperones to attend the 2026 JumpStart event in Chicago, IL on May 15-18, 2026. As part of the grant award, the Foundation would arrange for and cover certain costs of travel, accommodation and participation fees for such recipient school's selected ProStart students and their chaperones. Grant funds (up to \$5,000) would also be awarded to the selected ProStart School to cover certain other incidental costs such attendees incur during their stay in Chicago.

How does the JumpStart Grant program work?

Schools with existing ProStart programs must apply for the grant to attend the JumpStart event and the National Restaurant Association Show, May 15-19, 2026 in Chicago, IL ("The Restaurant Show"). When applying, the school should be prepared to demonstrate how this opportunity and experience will impact their ProStart students and help launch and support their career journeys in the industry.

What are the criteria to apply for the grant?

- Have an active ProStart program at their school.
- Have at least eight (8) students age 16, or older, interested in and available to attend the JumpStart event, including The Restaurant Show, May 15 – 19, 2026 in Chicago, IL.
- Have at least two (2) teacher/chaperones interested and available to travel with their students. The Restaurant Show requires a ratio of one adult for every four students under the age of 18.
- Applicants should be available to participate in a virtual follow-up meeting and fill out a survey six months after their participation. This applies to all students and teacher participants.

What does the 2026 JumpStart program grant cover?

Awarded funding from the JumpStart grant covers certain travel and other costs affiliated with sending the award recipient's selected group of up to 10 people (8 ProStart Students and 2 chaperones) to the JumpStart event in Chicago, IL. This includes airfare, hotel accommodations and registration fees for those selected and able to attend The Restaurant Show and any other required events, such costs will be coordinated and paid directly by NRAEF to the hotel and travel agent, etc. In addition to paying directly for these costs, NRAEF will also provide the grant recipient school with a stipend, of up to \$5,000, to cover certain other incidental costs the school and its attendees may incur while they are in Chicago for JumpStart, such as meals, local transportation, supplies, etc..

Who needs to submit the application?

Applications can be submitted on behalf of the ProStart school by ProStart educators, teachers of family and consumer sciences, school administrators or other individuals who are authorized by the school to

apply. The application can be found at this link here – Apply today at <https://webportalapp.com/webform/jumpstartgrant>

What is the timeline?

NRAEF will be accepting applications between October 10 and November 12. The school will be notified by November 21, 2026 if they have been selected for the grant. A representative will contact the selected school via email and will share important information as to the requirements to claim and receive the grant funds. Once notified, the selected school will have until January 10, 2026 to complete all the necessary paperwork to meet the requirements to claim the grant and to agree to the associated terms and conditions for the grant award and JumpStart event attendance, otherwise the grant award will be forfeited and the school with the next highest combined judging score will be selected and notified.

How is the grant recipient school chosen?

NRAEF assembles an impartial panel of judges to review the grant applications. During a one-week judging period, the panel will independently review each application using a defined rubric based on the underlying grant purpose and considering other criteria such as that outlined below as part of the selection process to help select the recipient. The ProStart school that receives the highest combined score from the judging panel will be selected for award of the 2026 JumpStart grant. The applications will be evaluated generally based on the following criteria expressed in the application:

- Overall impact the experience will have on the school in support of ProStart student exploration and advancement of industry careers
- Overall impact the experience will have on the ProStart students and their career journeys

Who decides which students and chaperones are selected?

The selected school will identify **a minimum of six (6) and maximum of eight (8)** current ProStart students (ages 16 and older) and two (2) chaperones to attend the JumpStart Event. The Restaurant Show requires a ratio of one adult for every four students (under 18) to attend. The selection of such students and chaperones is at the sole discretion of the school and made in accordance with the school's established policies, guidelines, requirements and processes for the same, including any vetting process for students and chaperones previously established by the school for participation in school field trips. Students who are under the age of majority in their state of residence (18 in most states) must have written permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate in and attend the JumpStart Event.

For more information, please contact scholars@nraef.org.