

\$5.5 million earmark to the Iowa Department of Education to continue the Harkin Grant Program

The omnibus spending bill earmarks \$5.5 million for the Iowa Department of Education to continue the Harkin Grant Program.

According to the Iowa Department of Education website, the Harkin Grant program is to help school districts correct fire safety problems and to help leverage local resources to construct new schools or remodel and modernize existing buildings. The funds are discretionary grants for fire safety repairs, and for the new construction, reconstruction, repairing, improving, modernizing or remodeling a schoolhouse or acquiring an existing building and converting it for use as a schoolhouse. The funds are for public school districts only.

Approximately 35 percent of the available funds are allocated each year for Life Safety Grants, which address fire safety issues, and 65 percent are allocated for School Construction and Modernization Grants.¹ Small school districts can apply for up to \$25,000, medium districts are eligible to receive up to \$100,000 and large school districts can apply for up to \$150,000. For School Construction and Modernization Grants, a local match of 75% is required and the maximum grant for all size districts is \$500,000.² Outdoor recreation, playgrounds, athletic complexes, gymnasium additions, or stadiums are not eligible.

The Harkin Grant Program has received nearly \$125 million in the last ten years, collecting as much as \$50 million in one year

The Harkin Grant program, also referred to as the “Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program”, was proposed by Sen. Harkin and originally funded for \$8 million in the FY 1998 Labor/HHS/Ed Senate appropriations bill. The program has received nearly \$125 million in federal funds since its creation. The table below shows funding amounts for the past ten fiscal years:

Fiscal Year	Amount
1998	\$ 8,000,000
1999	\$ 10,000,000

¹ <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/97/328/>

² <http://harkin.senate.gov/column.cfm?id=226604>

2000	\$ 9,249,813
2001	\$ 9,000,000
2002	\$ 50,000,000
2003	\$ 6,954,499
2004	\$ 6,958,699
2005	\$ 14,880,000
2008	\$ 4,694,034
Total	\$119,737,045
FY 2009 Omni Request	\$ 5,471,000
Updated Total	\$125,208,045

Harkin Grant program is “the only appropriation of its type in the nation”

An August 2006 article in *The Des Moines Register* titled, “Grouching grows in D.C. about local 'pork' projects,” notes that earmarks have played a role in congressional scandals this year and have emerged as an issue in congressional races.

The article points out the uniqueness of Harkin’s self-named grant program:³

“One memorable year, Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Ia., obtained \$50 million that could be used to supplement local money for school construction grants called “Harkin Grants,” the only appropriation of its type in the nation... Aides say that in the past eight years, Harkin has secured \$116 million used by the state to leverage repair and modernization of schools in 260 districts.”

³ “Grouching grows in D.C. about local 'pork' projects.” August 20, 2006. *The Des Moines Register*. Jane Norman. MAIN NEWS; Pg. 1A.