
MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Business Managers
FROM: Jess DeCarolis, Student Pathways Division Director
SUBJECT: ARP ESSER Benchmark Assessment Grant Application
DATE: April 21, 2023

Purpose

This memo serves as a notification to Vermont Supervisory Unions and Districts (SU/SDs) that the application for the ARP ESSER Benchmark Assessment Grant Round 2 is now available in the [Grant Management System](#) (GMS). ARP ESSER funds allocated for this competitive grant opportunity are available as part of the [ARP Act of 2021](#). Applications will be due May 17, 2023. Awarded funds will cover the performance period from the date of the executed agreement through September 30, 2024.

Overview

Established by ARP ESSER Section 2001(f)(1), this funding is set aside for specific activities that help address learning loss by supporting actions that respond to students' academic, social and emotional needs. This grant encourages SU/SDs to strengthen Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems (LCAS) by purchasing new or expanding on existing benchmark assessment system(s) for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics that report Lexile and Quantile measures, and/or by supporting staff participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

Benchmark assessments are an essential component of a responsive, high-quality LCAS. They provide a point of reference against which a learner's level of proficiency can be measured and should be used to collect data for future planning of instruction and curriculum, as well as communicating to learners their progress toward proficiency. Consistent with the state's primary education recovery strategy and goals, effective benchmark assessments are a critical tool for systems to meet the needs of students who require additional support and in identifying opportunities to accelerate student learning. Assessments that report Lexile and Quantile measures equip SU/SDs and schools with common measures through which to connect data received from both local and statewide assessments.

If you have not previously completed the [SY22-23 Universal Screener, Interim or Benchmark Census](#) for your SU/SD, please do so by May 17, 2023, to be eligible for

Contact Information: If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact: Pat Fitzsimmons, Student Pathways, at Pat.Fitzsimmons@vermont.gov.

this competitive grant opportunity. The purpose of this survey is to gather information on the type(s) of assessments SU/SDs are using to measure growth for English Language Arts, math and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) throughout the school year. If you are unsure if your district has completed the survey, please contact us and we can check.

Connected Investments

Purchasing an assessment tool alone is not sufficient for improving student outcomes; administering assessments and interpreting results requires training and support. The AOE has solicited proposals to offer wrap-around professional learning and coaching on the effective use of benchmark assessment data as a component of its statewide responsibility for supporting the development of high-quality LCASs at the local level. The AOE is currently engaged in the procurement process and hopes to announce additional information about this statewide support soon.

Creating and Editing the Application in the Grant Management System

All superintendents and business managers have permission in the GMS to create and edit the application. If desired, a superintendent can delegate the ability to create and edit the application to additional staff, by assigning the role "leaESSER" to any staff member with a GMS account. Note that, as with all other grant applications, only the superintendent can agree to assurances and complete the final submission to the AOE.

LEAs should direct questions about this grant opportunity to [Pat Fitzsimmons](#).