


MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Business Managers
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education 
SUBJECT: CARES Act (ESSER) Application for SU/SDs
DATE: Issued July 15, 2020; Updated November 10, 2020

Purpose

By this memo you are notified that the application for Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER) allocations for Vermont school districts and supervisory unions (SU/SDs) is now available in the [Grant Management System](#) (GMS). ESSER funds are available as part of the [CARES Act of 2020](#).

UPDATED This memo was updated Nov. 10, 2020, to reflect updates to the timeline for the ESSER application process, pre-award costs and period of performance.

Background

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law on March 27, 2020. It includes a grant program to help K-12 educational entities prevent, prepare for and respond to the coronavirus pandemic: the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER).

Creating and Editing the Application in the Grant Management System

All district administrators (superintendents) and business managers have permissions in the GMS to create and edit the application. If desired, a district administrator can delegate the ability to create and edit the application to additional staff, by assigning the role "leaCARES" to any staff members with a GMS account. See the [GMS login page](#)'s Training section for the four-page instructions and the User Management for District Administrators training video to learn how to assign this role. Note that, as with all other grant applications, only the district administrator can agree to assurances and do the final submission to the Agency of Education.

Use of Funds

UPDATED The CARES ESSER funds allocated to your LEA must be budgeted in an approved award prior to April 29, 2021. LEAs must submit their ESSER applications or grant amendments by March 20, 2021 in order for us to be able to review and approve their applications prior to the April 29 deadline. LEAs will permanently lose access to allocated funds that have not been budgeted in an approved Grant Award and those funds will be returned to the Federal

Government. If you have any questions on this critical component to the CARES ESSER funding, please contact John Leu (john.leu@vermont.gov).

UPDATED Due to the nature of these funds, the Agency is approving pre-award costs as of March 13, 2020, resulting in a period of performance start date of March 13, 2020 to September 30, 2022.

If you have any questions regarding pre-award costs, please contact Robert Coathup (robert.coathup@vermont.gov).

Equitable Services to qualifying independent schools are required under ESSER. Questions regarding Equitable Services should be directed to Jesse Roy (jesse.roy@vermont.gov). Any questions pertaining to budgets or other financial topics should be sent to John Leu (john.leu@vermont.gov). Any technical issues in GMS can be addressed to the GMS Help Desk (AOE.GMSHelp@vermont.gov).

LEAs that receive ESSER funds may spend them on the following allowable uses:

1. Purchase educational technology (including hardware, software, connectivity and assistive technology) for students,
2. Purchase sanitation supplies/contract with vendors to sanitize and clean LEA facilities,
3. Provide mental health services and supports,
4. Plan and implement summer, extended and afterschool learning opportunities for students,
5. Support other activities necessary to maintain LEA operations, services and employment of existing staff,
6. Plan for and coordinate continuity of learning and continuity of operations during long-term closures,
7. Support activities to meet the unique needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and other vulnerable populations,
8. Provide professional development and training for LEA staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious disease,
9. Coordinate COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts with local units of government,
10. Provide principals and other school leaders with resources to address individual school needs,
11. Develop and implement procedures and systems to improve LEA preparedness and response efforts,
12. Support any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as amended (ESEA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Carl C. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins), or the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, not addressed above.

The US Department of Education has said LEAs may not spend ESSER funds on:

- Bonuses, merit pay or similar expenditures, unless related to disruptions or closures caused by COVID-19,
- Subsidizing or offsetting executive salaries and benefits of individuals who are not LEA employees, or

- Expenditures related to state or local teacher or faculty unions or associations.

Please review the [Agency of Education Federal Education Funding Planning](#) guidance for more specific details on allowable uses, braiding of funds, fiscal considerations and other related issues.