


MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Business Managers
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education 
SUBJECT: Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER) II Application for SU/SDs
DATE: March 22, 2021

Purpose

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

Background

On December 27, 2020 the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 or CRRSA Act was signed into law. CRRSA provided significant additional funding for educational entities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) II Fund.

Similar to the earlier CARES Act, states received ESSER II funds based on their share of Title I funding. Ninety percent of funds received by an SEA must be allocated to LEAs based on each LEA's Title I share, leaving 10% for SEA-level activities.

- Total award to Vermont: \$126,973,363.
- Total award to LEAs: \$114,276,027.
- The period of performance for ESSER II is March 13, 2020 – September 30, 2023.
- There is no Supplement not Supplant requirement for ESSER II, but LEAs should ensure when replacing state or local funds with ESSER II funds, that Maintenance of Effort (MOE) or match requirements for other federal programs are still met.
- There is no Equitable Services Requirement for ESSER II.

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

The ESSER II funds allocated to your LEA must be budgeted in an approved award prior to January 5, 2022. LEAs must submit their ESSER applications by November 1, 2021, in order for the AOE to be able to review and approve their applications prior to the January 5, 2022 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 ESSER II funding, please contact John Leu at john.leu@vermont.gov.

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, 2023. If you have any questions regarding accounting and coding for pre-award costs, please contact Robert Coathup at robert.coathup@vermont.gov.

State Level Priorities and Recovery Planning

As LEAs contemplate the use of ESSER II funds they should have their Recovery Plan firmly in mind. In addition, we encourage LEAs to think about how to braid their other federal funds with ESSER II to meet the goals of their Recovery Plan and to plan for future needs that may go beyond the September 30, 2023 period of performance. We encourage LEAs to utilize the [Federal Education Funding Planning Guidance](#) document as a quick reference in determining which source(s) of funding may be most appropriate.

As a part of this planning process, LEAs should bear in mind the Recovery Plan statewide priorities which are outlined in [Vermont's Education Recovery Introductory Framework](#) which centers on three priorities:

1. Socioemotional functioning, mental health, and well-being
2. Student Engagement and Truancy
3. Academic Achievement and Success

Allowable Costs for ESSER II Funds

Please note: this numbered list follows the allowable categories list in the Grants Management System (GMS) and matches the ESSER Categories in the Federal Education Funding Planning Guidance document. The list of eligible activities below each category is **not** exhaustive.

1. Purchase educational technology (including hardware, software, connectivity and assistive technology) for students.
 - a. District, school or student level technology (including hardware, software, connectivity, assistive technology, platforms for Personal Learning Plans, learning management systems, etc.) that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and children with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.
2. Purchase sanitation supplies/contract with vendors to sanitize and clean LEA facilities.

- a. Sanitation supplies/contracts and/or PPE for staff or students (e.g., masks, gloves, medical supplies, etc.)
3. Provide mental health services and supports.
4. Plan and implement summer, extended and afterschool learning opportunities for students.
 - a. Costs associated with summer, afterschool or extended learning programming for students, to address learning loss and social-emotional-behavioral-mental health (SEB/MH) needs, including materials, staffing, space, etc.
5. Support other activities necessary to maintain LEA operations, services and employment of existing staff.
 - a. Costs associated with paying Family and Medical Leave or Emergency Paid Sick Leave benefits mandated in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (both of which expired on December 31, 2020) or for extending such benefits after January 1, 2021, for staff who cannot work due to need to care for self or family or isolation/quarantine requirements due to COVID-19.
 - b. Replacement of local funds for any allowable activity, including salaries for staff paid with local funds, including: staffing costs beyond contract - e.g., not budgeted, extra days, overtime, extra duty, etc. and/or salary and benefits for hourly staff who were paid despite not working (unscheduled time).
 - c. Costs associated with need for increased non-professional staffing (such as food service, transportation and custodial) necessitated by COVID-19 response and recovery, including new hires and contract changes.
 - d. Childcare/instructional supervision for instructional staff and non-instructional staff of the school/LEA (teachers, administrators, instructional paraeducators, etc.). For specific details on how to use ESSER funds to support these costs, please refer to the [Federal Education Funding Planning Guidance document](#).
6. Plan for and coordinate continuity of learning and continuity of operations during long-term closures.
 - a. Costs associated with providing meals to eligible students.
 - b. Cost associated with providing technology for online learning to all students.
 - c. Providing guidance for carrying out requirements under the IDEA.
 - d. Ensuring other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all federal, state, and local requirements.
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.
 - a. Compensatory services for students with disabilities.
 - b. Translation of instructional materials/purchase of multilingual materials
 - c. Costs associated with summer, afterschool, or extended learning programming for students, to address learning loss and social-emotional-behavioral-mental health (SEB/MH) needs, including materials, staffing, space, etc.
 - d. Training for families/parents in how to support students in remote learning environments and address learning loss.

- e. Childcare/instructional support to assist students successfully to complete instructional assignments when learning remotely, when parents are working/unable to assist.
8. Provide professional development and training for LEA staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious disease.
9. Coordinate preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies with State, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments, and other relevant agencies, to improve coordinated responses among such entities to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus.
10. Provide principals and other school leaders with resources to address individual school needs.
 - a. Childcare/instructional support to assist students successfully to complete instructional assignments when learning remotely when parents are working/unable to assist
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, that is not addressed above.
 - a. Please note that in the ESSER I GMS application, the ESEA programs are listed as allowable costs 12-21 on the Program Narrative tab. They will be consolidated in the ESSER II application.
13. Address learning loss among students of the local educational agency, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care by:
 - a. Administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable to accurately assess students' academic progress and assist educators in meeting students' academic needs, including through differentiating instruction.
 - b. Implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students.
 - c. Providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment.
 - d. Tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education.
 - e. Tracking student academic progress with evaluating and comparing to pre-pandemic grades and progress to identify students that experienced learning loss.
14. Costs associated with construction projects including inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement and upgrade to:
 - a. Improve indoor air quality including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; filtering, purification and other air cleaning; fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement.
 - b. Comply with social distancing, hygiene and other health guidelines including facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of

- virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs.
- c. Please be aware that per 34 CFR § 76.600 construction projects must be approved by the AOE prior to bidding. In addition, for construction contracts over \$2,000 using laborers and mechanics and financed by ESSER II funds, LEAs must meet all Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements and include language in the construction contracts that all contractors or subcontractors must pay wages that are not less than those established for the locality of the project (prevailing wage rates) for all construction contracts financed with ESSER II funds. (See 20 U.S.C. 1232b Labor Standards.)
 - i. For construction projects started prior to your award please contact [Josh Souliere](#).

LEAs should direct programmatic questions to [Josh Souliere](#). Any questions pertaining to budgets or other financial topics should be sent to [John Leu](#).