

## **PART C: USES OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUNDS**

*Section 18003 of Division B of the CARES Act provides in relevant part that grants awarded under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund be used to support the ability of local educational agencies (LEAs) to continue to provide educational services to their students. The Department requests the following:*

- 1. Information that the SEA may request LEAs to include in their subgrant applications to the SEA. For example, an SEA might propose to include the following in developing its subgrant application:**
  - a. How the LEA will determine its most important educational needs as a result of COVID19.**
  - b. The LEA's proposed timeline for providing services and assistance to students and staffing both public and non-public schools.**
  - c. The extent to which the LEA intends to use ESSER funds to promote remote learning.**
  - d. How the LEA intends to assess and address student learning gaps resulting from the disruption in educational services. The above considerations are in addition to the application information requirements from sections 442 and 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232e and §1228a).**

### **Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Response to Section 1:**

The CSDE is developing a streamlined application, similar to the federal application for the states, which asks local education agencies (LEAs) to certify that the funds will be used for COVID related activities and in accordance with all state and federal expenditure and reporting requirements. In addition, the department has provided all LEAs with guidance around four statewide priorities including: assuring that all students have access to appropriate technology and necessary connectivity; access to high quality curriculum that addresses the needs of all learners including our high needs populations, English language learners, and students with disabilities; addressing student learning gaps and safely reopening schools; and social and emotional supports for educators and students as they transition back to school.

The application will include specific questions asking how the district determined which areas of need to focus on, what strategies they anticipate utilizing, and how remote learning will be part of their solution. In an effort to get these funds to districts quickly the department plans on providing ongoing technical assistance to districts with a particular focus on those with the greatest needs. Regular feedback from districts will be expected as they solidify the strategies they plan to use to address student learning gaps, provide universal access to high quality remote learning, and safely reopen schools.

- 2. The extent to which the SEA intends to use any portion of its SEA reserve (up to 10 percent of its ESSER Fund award) to support:**
  - a. Technological capacity and access – including hardware and software, connectivity, and instructional expertise – to support remote learning. If so, please describe the strategies the SEA intends to use to serve disadvantaged populations listed in Sec. 18003(d)(4) of the CARES Act; and**

- b. Remote learning by developing new informational and academic resources and expanding awareness of, and access to, best practices and innovations in remote learning and support for students, families, and educators.*

**Connecticut's Response to Section 2:**

**Equitable Access to Technology** — Equity and access for students in Connecticut is a top priority for the Connecticut State Department of Education. At the forefront of providing equitable access, are our most vulnerable students, including but not limited to students with special needs, and EL students and those students who may face barriers in accessing high quality materials to support their learning. We will continue to work with districts and relevant partners to provide access to technology and connectivity for our most vulnerable populations.

To find these gaps the department will survey districts to determine outstanding needs for devices and connectivity. Depending on the outcome of these surveys, a pool of funds will support access, including but not limited to:

- Assisting districts in purchasing hot spots and implementing other measures to achieve district-wide connectivity, and/or
- Assisting districts in purchasing laptops, handheld devices and adaptive technology.

**Equitable Access to High Quality Online Curriculum including necessary supports** — Equity and excellence in learning is another top priority. To support this goal, the Connecticut State Department of Education plans to focus on this effort, including but not limited to the following ways:

- Develop and/or purchase a comprehensive high quality K-8 standards aligned curriculum with formative assessments that will be accessible statewide at no cost. This high quality online curriculum will cover the content areas of literacy, numeracy and science and be developed through a lens in which our most vulnerable students are prioritized including students with disabilities and EL students;
- Utilize our Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) and State Education Resource Center (SERC) for delivering professional development for educators around more effectively using online learning with a focus on reaching high needs populations; and/or
- Utilize the RESCs and SERC for developing and delivering a toolkit for parents to assist them in successfully accessing and assisting their children in using the district's online learning platform.