

## **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:**

- **How the LEA will determine its most important educational needs as a result of COVID19.**
- **The LEA's proposed timeline for providing services and assistance to students and staff in both public and non-public schools.**
- **The extent to which the LEA intends to use ESSER funds to promote remote learning.**
- **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).**

To assess needs across all LEAs, The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has already conducted several surveys to gather information about how school systems are providing distance education and the barriers to providing services to all students. From that data and guidance from leading experts and stakeholders, LDOE has developed a Strong Start 2020 Framework to highlight key priorities school systems should consider to both address gaps resulting from the disruption to educational services and to ensure continuous learning for all students in the event of future closures or modified operations.

Strong Start 2020 builds on the academic priorities and decisions to which LEAs have already committed in their approved consolidated school system plans, which address ESEA, IDEA, and Perkins requirements. To facilitate the continued implementation of this plans, the Strong Start 2020 will ensure:

- **Every student's learning level is identified** at the beginning of the year using high-quality, standards-aligned diagnostic tools and assessments.
- **There is a plan for every student, including extra time and support for students** with the greatest unfinished learning from the prior year.
  - Curricular tools, enhancements, and supports to address unfinished learning
  - Compensatory education and support for students with disabilities
  - Emotional, behavioral, mental health screening and external services
  - An updated professional development plan with options for versatile delivery of

training on curriculum, as well as online mentor training and content modules

- **There are clear next steps for every high school student and recent graduate, who will enter a new economy.**
  - Funding for updated individual graduation plans (IGPs)
  - Transitional support for recent graduates through December 2020

As part of the application, which LDOE has streamlined to allow LEAs to access these funds as efficiently and expediently as possible, LEAs will respond to these key priorities through a combination of short answers and assurances.

**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:**

- **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**
- **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.**

LDOE plans to use the vast majority of its SEA reserve to offer incentive grants to LEAs in support of key priorities for Strong Start 2020. These priorities include:

- **1:1 device and internet access**, including assistive technology for students with disabilities
- **Versatile delivery methods** for instruction, related services, and professional development
- **Adaptive staffing models** that enable feedback on students' work and frequent communication with students and families
- **Flexible and opportunistic calendars and school schedules** that maximize learning opportunities in a dynamic public health context

Regarding expansion of technological capacity and access, LDOE is working closely with the Governor's Office to coordinate the distribution of GEER and SEA ESSER funds, with particular focus on closing the digital divide for disadvantaged populations. To meet the needs of as many students as possible, LDOE has already negotiated bulk purchasing rates that all LEAs and nonpublic schools can use to maximize the impact of these dollars.

To ensure that all students have access to robust remote learning opportunities, LDOE has issued a suite of tools that help school systems start or continue to make academic and workforce decisions based on the unique needs of their communities. Key documents include:

- [Continuous Education Guide](#): Guidance and tools to support school system leaders as they analyze available instructional and technology resources, develop an approach to providing distance learning opportunities, and implement a distance learning plan.
- [Academic Resources Guide](#): A comprehensive listing of academic resources available for distance learning formats, organized by subject and curriculum provider.
- [Staffing Guide](#): A guide for support school system leaders as they determine which essential functions must continue during school facility closures and how to create a staffing plan to ensure the continuation of those functions.

The LDOE also has released resources to specifically support the continuous learning needs of students with disabilities and students receiving services under Section 504. Key documents include:

- [Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services](#): A guide to providing related and direct services to students with disabilities in distance learning environments. This guide complements the [Partnerships for Success Guide](#), released in Fall 2019, which highlights professional development and direct services provider organizations that support students with disabilities through innovative approaches, like virtual services.
- [Continuous Education for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities](#): Guidance to address additional considerations for instructional and service design and delivery for students with complex needs.
- [IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closures](#): Guidance and tools to help school systems maintain compliance with special education timelines and requirements, including up-to-date guidance from ED.
- [Family Toolbox: Ways to Support Students with Disabilities During School Closures](#): A resource for families supporting students with disabilities during continuous learning, including tips and resources on organization, accommodations, and accessibility.