

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 COVID-19.
 - 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).

NJDOE Response:

All LEAs will be required to submit a subgrant application through the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) Electronic Web Enabled Grant (EWEG) system, the platform through which the NJDOE subgrants all federal funds. Within EWEG, an LEA will identify and explain how it will use its ESSER funds in a manner consistent with local needs for activities or expenses allowable under section 18003(d) of the CARES Act incurred on or after March 13, 2020. Such activities include those that promote remote learning, address student learning gaps resulting from the disruption in educational services, and specific activities to address the needs of the most vulnerable subgroups, including those listed in Section 18003(d)(4) of the CARES Act. The application will also require an LEA to identify how it will provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools as required under section 18005 of the CARES Act.

Additionally, the application will include all required assurances, including assurances that the LEA shall to the greatest extent practicable continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of disruption or closure due to coronavirus, and that the LEA agrees to budget and obligate ESSER funds for the purposes authorized in section 18003 of CARES Act.

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.

NJDOE Response:

The NJDOE has conducted multiple assessments of the barriers to implementing effective remote learning for all students. These surveys administered by NJDOE to each LEA in the State yield meaningful and actionable data regarding the specific challenges surrounding delivery of remote instruction at the LEA-, region- or state-level. Specifically, the data help quantify shortcomings in technological capacity and access, effectively positioning the NJDOE to incorporate this critical element of the COVID-19 emergency into its planning regarding use of the ESSERF SEA reservation. Data like these, and other metrics detailing the State's obstacles in ensuring continuity of critical school services during the COVID-19 emergency, will form the basis of the NJDOE's efforts to target its reservation toward areas of greatest need. The NJDOE will prioritize the most significant impacts of COVID-19, empowering LEAs and the State to sustain high-quality instruction, behavioral supports, and other key services meeting the needs of all students and with particular attention to at-risk subgroups of students both during school closures and as LEAs resume standard operations.