**Oregon Department of Education**

**Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund**

**GEER 45 Day Initial Report**

***Submitted on July 31, 2020***

* 1. **1. Please describe the State’s process for awarding GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities, including:**

Oregon’s share of the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund is $32,507,956. To evaluate how best to support Oregon’s Local Education Agencies (LEAs); Institutes of Higher Education; and other education related entities in addressing the most essential needs for providing education services during the pandemic, the Governor convened the leaders of three primary state agencies and divisions. This included the Oregon Department of Education (ODE); the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC), and the Early Learning Division (ELD).

ODE oversees the education of over 580,000 students in Oregon’s public K-12 education systems. While ODE isn’t in the classroom directly providing services, the agency, along with the State Board of Education, focuses on helping Local Education Agencies (school districts) achieve both local and statewide goals and priorities through strategies such as: developing policies and standards; providing accurate and timely data to inform instruction; training teachers on how to use data effectively; administering numerous state and federal grant programs; and sharing and helping school districts implement best practices.

HECC is the primary state entity responsible for ensuring pathways to postsecondary education success for Oregonians statewide, and serves as a convener of the groups and institutions working across the public and private higher education arena. The agency develops and implements policies and programs to ensure that Oregon’s network of colleges, universities, workforce development initiatives and pre-college outreach programs are well-coordinated to foster student success.

ELD is a division within ODE in which its Director is appointed by the Governor. ELD’s mission is to support all of Oregon’s young children and families to learn and thrive. ELD works to prepare Oregon’s children for Kindergarten, help create stable and attached families, and bring services for children and families statewide. ELD programs range from Early Head Start, serving children three and under, to Preschool Promise, serving children at 200% of the poverty level. In addition, the Division provides support programs to families that may need a little extra help as they start their parenting journey and those families that may have particular needs.

In convening the leadership of ODE, HECC, and ELD, the Governor requested their assistance in shaping a plan for the use of the GEER Fund. In developing this plan, the agencies and division outreached to stakeholders and partners to assess the overall needs and critical unmet service needs that were created by COVID-19 in meeting the educational needs of Oregon’s children and students. Input was sought from school districts, education service districts, public and private universities, early learning providers, child care facilities, non-profit service providers, tribal government, private business industry representatives, and other community based organizations.

Not surprisingly, there was a widespread list of needs that far exceeded the available resources in which GEER offered. However, there were three common areas that were outlined as being essential to ensuring ongoing educational services. These include:

* Ensuring public schools, universities, and colleges are equipped with the tools needed to provide high quality distance learning for students.
* Providing supports to children, students, and families that ensure resiliency through an extended period of distance learning.
* Enhancing intervention services that effectively disrupt the increase risk of child abuse and neglect for young children and families during the pandemic.

Overlying these three essential areas, is the fact that the pandemic has created an even greater disparate impact on low-income, and historically underserved and economically disadvantaged children, students, and families. It has placed these populations at increased risk of poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity and has significantly impacted opportunities for students to meet their educational goals. In implementing strategies that effective address each area, there will be a focus to prioritize populations that are at greater risk.

To address these needs, Governor Brown has approved Oregon’s $32.5 million of GEER Funds for the following purposes:



* 1. **a. Timeline(s) for awarding GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities.**
  2. All funding awards are planned to occur in the month of August or September 2020, with distribution of proceeds occurring between August 2020 and June 2021.

**b. The criteria, process and deliberations you use to determine which LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related agencies are: i. “Most significantly impacted by coronavirus;” and/or ii. “Essential” for carrying out emergency educational service**.

ODE Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) Program

All Oregon schools are facing the real possibility of not being able to open in the fall of 2020. To address this, school districts are required to complete plans that ensure they have the ability to implement some form of distance learning platform for their schools and students. The Governor has identified this as an essential service for the state’s K-12 education system, and since all schools will need to have the ability to provide this service, all 197 Oregon LEAs will receive funding from the ODE CDL Program. The funding will be allocated to ensure that larger shares of funding is allocated to school districts with higher severities of poverty, larger populations of migrant students, and are identified as small, rural, or remote areas of the state.

HECC Higher Education Student Assistance Grants

HECC will make grant awards to colleges and universities for the purpose of helping students successfully continue their college career despite the various barriers created by the pandemic. The grants will be based on headcount of students that were not eligible for CARES funding (i.e. ABE, GED) or are facing equity gaps including racial/ethnic minority, first-generation college, and low-income (received an Oregon Opportunity Grant) students. Colleges and universities will use grant funding to support students with meeting technology needs, health care needs, child care needs, or financial aid.

HECC Higher Education Distance Learning Initiative

Similar to K-12, all higher education institutions in Oregon have acknowledged the rapid transition to remote and on-line learning has been both a testament to the innovation and adaptability of faculty, staff, and students, and that the quality of the learning has not matched that of face-to-face for many students. In order to support institutions address these concerns and expand access to high quality courses for students across Oregon, the HECC will be awarding grants to all participating colleges and universities to help address 1) improving quality of courses delivered in an online or remote environment through course redesign, faculty professional development, and improvements to student supports, and 2) identifying on-line platforms where high-quality online courses can be made available to students across the state, regardless of primary institution

ODE – ELD Child Care Safety Grant

Early Childhood Programs (ECPs), which include licensed child care centers, homes, and Head Start facilities, are education-related agencies that are essential for carrying our emergency educational services. ECPs are responsible for ensuring children learn in the most critical years for brain development, the birth-through-five period. Many in Oregon’s essential workforce and others who must go to work to support their families need ECPs in order to ensure children are healthy, safe, and learning while they are at work. However, many of these facilities rely on family’s to pay tuition and operate with budgets that are tight in non-pandemic times. The additional expenses of keeping children safe during COVID-19, including enhanced sanitation protocols and safety measures like face coverings, are difficult for ECPs to bear and most of Oregon’s families cannot pay more to cover these costs. The ELD will use funding to directly procure and acquire essential supplies such as Environmental Protection Agency approved cleaners, gloves, bleach, face masks, face shields, and other necessities. These supplies will then be made available and distributed to all ECPs on a request basis.

ODE – ELD Relief Nurseries Program and Child Care Foster Families Grants

During the pandemic, many children may not have a safe place to engage in learning – distanced or otherwise. This includes children whose families were already under duress, which may be exacerbated by the economic impacts and disconnection caused by COVID-19. This is especially concerning for families who are involved with or at-risk of involvement with Oregon’s Child Welfare system. Families with young children, or school-aged children who may not be physically at school, will benefit from safe and healthy respite care in order to reduce family stress and increase protective factors. The ELD will distribute grants to different organizations to provide respite care on a continuing basis to families who are involved with Indian Child Welfare (communities that have been disproportionally affected by the pandemic), Oregon’s Department of Human Services Child Welfare division, or who are otherwise deemed at-risk for involvement in Child Welfare. The organization which receive these resources will be based on those serving children and families, including foster families that are receiving support through the child welfare system. These organization will include Relief Nurseries, Head Start Agencies, and Indian Child Welfare partners with Tribes.

**c. The funding mechanisms (e.g., grants, contracts) the State will use to provide GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities.**

For programs operated through the ODE, including the ELD programs, in which funding will be provided to LEAs and other education-related entities, the funding mechanism will be a grant. For the HECC programs, ODE will enter into an interagency agreement with HECC to pass through funding that will be expended as grants to colleges and universities.

**d. Any specific funding conditions or requirements the State will place on awards to ensure the funds are spent for specific purposes or activities.**

For all ODE grants, the recipients will be required to complete an application that outlines specifically how the funds will be expended for each eligible use. ODE will review and approve all applications and ensure a legal agreement is put in place that outlines the approved uses. Each recipient will then be required to submit quarterly financial reports that support the funds they have expended with each approved usage. Within each agreement, ODE will have the right to perform periodic audits of recipient financial records to verify report.

For HECC grants, each college and university must enter into a legal agreement that defines the specific uses in which funding may be used. All recipients will be monitored to ensure that funding is expended in accordance to the agreement.

**2. Describe the system of internal controls the State will use to ensure that GEER funds are expended for allowable purposes and in accordance with cash management principles and the Uniform Guidance. See 2 CFR §200.313.**

ODE will administer and monitor all funds expended by the CDL Program; ELD Relief Nurseries Program; and ELD Child Care Safety Grant through its Electronic Grant Management System (EGMS). All grant recipients will have access to EGMS to request a funding claim on a cost reimbursement basis. School district recipients will be required to take an additional step by submitting a reimbursement request form via secure file transfer which includes supporting information regarding the claim placed in (EGMS). The reimbursement request form requires expenses to be reported using the accounting structure defined in the Program Budgeting and Accounting Manual (PBAM) published by ODE. The reimbursement request form contains general ledger information including function and object codes from the PBAM and plugs directly into established ODE datasets for quarterly reporting

Each grant award in EGMS will have an assigned ODE or ELD Grant Manager that is responsible to review claims made in EGMS and ensure there is sufficient documentation the claim include allowable expenses and that expenses align with the grant agreement and the application submitted. If a claim includes a non-eligible cost, the claim is rejected so the claimant can resubmit a correct request. Reimbursement request forms and claims in EGMS must match prior to approval. Approved reimbursement request forms will be saved to electronic project files.

Once claims in EGMS are approved by the Grant Manager, EGMS staff process the claims and send them in batches to the Financial Services Unit. The Financial Services staff then complete the claims process by reviewing, then releasing payments to Oregon’s financial system of record (SFMA) for payment to the LEAs. Claims batch documentation, including the Grant Manager approval for payment, are saved in Financial Services for audit. The Financial Services staff also ensure the Federal Funds from the GEER award are drawn from the USDOE in a timely manner to support the payment of funds.

For all grant awards, ODE reserves the right to conduct onsite or ad-hoc desks audits. Upon request, recipients are required to provide documentation necessary to complete these reviews. Additionally, ODE requires all LEAs to submit Single Audit reports annually. Single Audits are reviewed for risks, and if found, the identified risks are forwarded to the Grant Manager and the recipient to work toward resolution.

In terms of the two programs administered by HECC, as well as the ELD Child Care Foster Families Grant, ODE will be entering into Interagency Agreements with HECC for administering the Higher Education Student Assistance Grants and the Higher Education Distance Learning Initiative; and with the Oregon Department of Human Services for administering the ELD Child Care Foster Families Grant. As part of these agreements, ODE will require each state agency to describe their internal controls to ensure they are meeting the standards in the Uniform Guidance. This will be affirmed prior to transfer of any funding.

**3. If GEER funds are being awarded or used for payments to SEA or IHE administrators, executives, and/or state or local teachers’ unions or associations, please describe your process for reporting the amount of funds used for this purpose, and how the funds are consistent with allowable uses of funds under section 18002(c) of the CARES Act.**

None of the GEER funds will be used to pay for SEA or IHE administrators, executives, and/or state or local teachers’ unions or associations.

**4. If you intend to provide GEER funds to LEAs, please describe the process you will use to ensure that LEAs receiving GEER funds provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA.**

The Governor has approved $20 million of the GEER funds to be allocated directly to LEAs for the CDL Grant Program. ODE has an existing and permanent staff position that works with private and public schools to provide guidance that ensures compliance with section 1117 of the ESEA. This position has been deployed to support the team charged with administering the GEER funds and works directly with all 197 districts to help ensure understanding and compliance with the law. In addition, ODE will build into its existing monitoring process for LEAs and review of documentation to ensure compliance with section 1117 of the ESEA.