**GEER Clarifications**

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

1. Timeline(s) for awarding GEER funds to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities;
2. The criteria, process and deliberations you use to determine which LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related agencies are:
3. “Most significantly impacted by coronavirus”; and/or
4. “Essential” for carrying out emergency educational service;

 c. The funding mechanisms (e.g., grants, contracts) the state will use to

 provide GEER fund to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities;

 and

 d. Any specific funding conditions or requirements the state will place on

 awards to ensure they funds are spent for specific purposes or activities.

The Alabama State Department of Education received an allocation of $48,851,495 from the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, with priority categories identified as follows:

1. To equip school buses with WIFI capabilities to increase internet connectivity and help bridge the digital divide within the LEA
2. To provide additional academic support to bridge learning and achievement gaps of students within the LEA
3. 3) To provide before- and after-school tutoring as defined in the *Alabama Literacy Act* for learning and remediation in schools

As a result, to allocate funding for each LEA, the ALSDE awards funds to districts based on needs. The following data were used to determine weighting factors:

* Academic achievement (Level 1 & 2)
* SPED students
* Direct Cert
* EL students
* COVID factor (the extent to which the pandemic impacted communities)

A weight was assigned to each of the data points, and computations made to determine amounts. Afterwards, an application was developed for LEAs to complete.

On July 23, 2020, the ALSDE sent notice to LEAs regarding the availability of GEER funds, the purpose of the funds, amount allocated to each LEA, and instructions on the application process.

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 s200.313)

LEAs will submit an application to the state, detailing how the funds will be spent. The application calls for districts to complete programmatic, fiscal, and reporting assurances, as well as ensuring equitable services. Additionally, LEAs report how GEER funds will be used to support specific areas, as well as the expected impact.

Once the application is received, a GEER checklist will be used to approve applications based on identified criteria.

Approved applications are given to LEA Accounting for processing. Payment transactions are entered into the State of Alabama Accounting and Resource System (STAARS) by an LEA Fund Accountant. The SDE Accounting Control Unit reviews each transaction while in pending state. A report is then generated in STAARS for a list of all pending transactions that are associated with a federal award. This report provides the grant award and the amount of the drawdown through G5. Once the drawdown is complete and the funds have been certified in STAARS, the initial payment transactions are then submitted to the State Comptroller’s office for final approval. The Comptroller issues an EFT payment to the vendor / LEA.

 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 © of the CARES Act.

GEER funds totaling the amount of $48,851,495 was awarded to the ALSDE. The ALSDE did not retain any funds at the state level. All funds were allocated to districts.

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.

Prior to submitting an application for GEER funds, each LEA must send out an Intent to Apply to all private schools in their geographical location. Once that information is obtained, they must submit a private school survey to ALSDE, indicating which schools will be served and the enrollment at each participating private school as well as the enrollment of the LEA. After this information is obtained, LEAs can submit the application.

Within the application is a section on Equitable Services that each LEA must complete, identifying the private school allocation, or indicating that no private schools are in the geographic location.

When calculating the equitable share for private schools, LEAs have 2 options. They can choose to calculate based on total enrollment where all students are able to participate in the GEER funding, or they can calculate it based on the Title I formula, and only serve eligible Title I schools.

If, after consultation with the LEA, a private school questions equitable services, the state ombudsman is charged with mediating and resolving the issue.