Colorado Department of Education

Section C: Budget Narrative

Attached to Form ED 524, pertaining to 10% State Reserve of Colorado’s ESSER Funds

The Colorado Department of Education is continuing to evaluate the needs of LEAs regarding COVID-19 relief before determining its budget for the SEA reserve.  The department recognizes that there are immediate needs for LEAs and that there will be continuing and evolving needs based on the epidemiology of the virus.  The immediate needs of LEAs are able to be addressed through two primary funding sources.  First, the application for the ESSER LEA funds is currently open, and the department is reviewing and approving applications as they are submitted.  This enables LEAs to receive funds quickly to meet their locally identified needs.  Second, Governor Polis,  signed Executive Order 20-070, which directed the transfer of $510 million from the State of Colorado’s CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to CDE to be awarded to school districts, the Charter School Institute, the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind and facility schools on a per pupil basis. Additionally, each BOCES in the state will receive $25,000.  These dollars are intended to support states with expenses due to COVID–19 incurred from March 1, 2020, to Dec. 30, 2020.  Because of the immediate time frame for use of these funds, the department has determined that additional time to thoughtfully consider how best to use the state share of ESSER funds to meet needs that are unable to be met through ESSER LEA funds and the CRF funds.

CDE continues to work with stakeholders and the State Board of Education to determine how best to deploy our state-level activities funds given the emergency needs in our state.  The department is working to solicit more input and triangulating data from multiple sources for this important decision. As noted in our ESSERF Certification and Agreement, we are considering data from two statewide surveys.  The Colorado Education Initiative (CEI), in partnership with CDE, conducted a survey to ascertain the needs of Colorado LEAs related to COVID-19. (See <http://www.cde.state.co.us/safeschools/communityneeds>).  Also, in May, CDE launched a stakeholder survey to solicit input from a broad range of stakeholders.  At the June State Board of Education meeting, the department initiated a discussion with board members regarding their priorities for the state level funds.  At the time of this submission, the deliberative process is still underway.  Once the budget has been determined, CDE will send a revised budget to the U.S. Department of Education.

The department anticipates using ESSER administrative funds to support the additional workload related to administration of ESSER funds, including but not limited to creation and launch of the ESSER LEA application, review of applications, distribution of ESSER funds, monitoring use of ESSER funds, and reporting requirements.  Currently, job descriptions for temporary positions and for added responsibilities for existing staff are being developed.  Once these are complete, the budget for personnel will be updated, and CDE will send a revised budget to the U.S. Department of Education.