GOVERNOR’S EMERGENCY EDUCATION RELIEF FUND

45 Day Plan

*North Dakota -- Office of the Governor*

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

*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;*

*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; and*

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

**Section 1 (a)**

GEER funds will be awarded to three different entities: State Education Agency (SEA), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and Institutions for Higher Education (IHEs). The North Dakota SEA will receive their funding request prior to the start of the academic school year 2020-2021. LEAs will have the opportunity to apply for GEER funds through a competitive grant process that will open mid-August. Depending on the number of grantees awarded, there may be multiple rounds for LEAs to apply for GEER funds until they are expended. Institutions of Higher Education will have the opportunity to apply for GEER funds through a competitive grant process that will open in early August 2020 with the first round to be selected and distributed by the first week of September. If additional funds are available or not all funds are utilized by April of 2021. If needed, another round of grants will be made available.

**Section 1 (b)**

The North Dakota SEA requested funding to support an adaptive learning platform that will be available to all K-12 students, including those attending public schools, non-public schools, those schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, and home educated students. This resource will be accessible within the school setting and/or at home. In recognizing the need to quickly transition from a face-to-face environment to a distance learning model, this platform provides the framework for precise personalization of instructional practice that can support educational delivery during a COVID-19 disruption. The SEA determined this as an essential resource to assuring educational delivery during the upcoming academic year. Another determination made by the SEA was a plan to address the shortage of special education staff. The Para-to-Teacher Pathway (PTP) provides a response to the shortage of qualified special education teachers in North Dakota. The program is designed to transition experienced paraprofessionals in special education classrooms into licensed special education teachers. Individualized Education Plans require a team to determine needs, set goals and work to evaluate progress. COVID-19 emphasized the vital delivery of special education as the disruption to in-school learning was felt by families of students with special needs. This program intends to increase human capacity across the state while keeping paraprofessionals in their home communities and maintaining their employment within the school setting.

LEAs will be given the opportunity to apply for a competitive grant. Within the grant application, the LEA must provide data indicators that identify a targeted student population that was most impacted by COVID-19. Their proposal must provide a detailed rationale of who the funds are intended to serve, why this group was determined to be most impacted, and how the proposal will work to meet the needs of the targeted population of students.

The IHEs will have the opportunity to apply for a competitive grant called the Higher Education COVID Impact grant. Grant applications will be accepted by representatives from the North Dakota University System and the Governor’s Office. These representatives will score and rank the application based on criteria outlined within the grant application. The primary requirement of the grant will be to identify how the institution, students and educators were impacted by COVID-19 and how this grant will be utilized to remove barriers or support the development of online curriculum to enhance the delivery of modified education. Due to the fact that a portion of the North Dakota Coronavirus Relief Fund was utilized to assist higher education institutions with adapting to modified education needs, the grant will also be made available for institutions to develop workforce development curriculum and programs to respond to in-demand workforce training due to the pandemic.

**Section 1 (c)**

The North Dakota SEA is combining the ESSER and GEER funds to support the adaptive learning platform and the Para-to-Teacher Pathway. The SEA used a request for proposal (RFP) process to determine the vendor that met the qualifications for the online platform. The PTP program will be handled with a contract between the SEA and the program provider.

The LEA portion of the GEER funds will be available through a competitive grant process that will include an application submission and a team review with scoring criteria.

The IHEs portion of the GEER funding will be available through a competitive grant process. The funds will be held within the North Dakota University System (NDUS) until applications are received and reviewed by representatives from the NDUS and the Governor’s Office, at which point they will be distributed directly to the institutions.

**Section 1 (d)**

The competitive grant for LEAs will outline specific criteria to be considered for the GEER funds. Each application must include: Rationale (including COVID-19 impacts) including Creative Solution; Prioritized Needs, Evaluation Strategy including Creative Solution Metric(s); Communication Engagement; Budget Proposal and Description. The essence of the competitive grant is for LEAs to use creative solutions and innovative approaches to accelerate learning and educational delivery to students most impacted by COVID-19.

Similar to the LEAs competitive grant process, the IHEs will also be required to outline criteria to be considered for the GEER funds. The applicants will need to identify how their institutions were impacted by COVID-19, how the funds will be utilized to address barriers to modified educational delivery or how they will be utilized to address in-demand workforce needs and what the anticipated outcomes will be for each goal.

*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 §200.303.*

**Section 2**

The North Dakota SEA will use the state GEER funds directed to LEAs and will require a budget proposal with an itemized list of proposed expenses. This portion of the application will ensure that funds are aligned for allowable expenses. In addition, the LEAs awarded funds must provide a written summary of the overall proposal implementation and must include a final itemized budget of actual expenses.

North Dakota will continue its current practices that call for equity among all statewide educational programs.

* ND’s compliance with Section 427 of GEPA is based on current policies and adds program specific actions to further erase barriers when necessary.
* Specifically with these GEER funds, the state will provide funding to the State Education Agency to support an adaptive learning platform to provide a distance learning model that will be available to all K-12 students, including those attending public schools, non-public schools, schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Education, and home educated students.
* The GEER funds will also address the shortage of special education staff. The Para-to-Teacher Pathway assists experienced paraprofessionals in special education classroom into licensed special education teachers to increase capacity across the entire state.
* All competitive grants funded with GEER federal funds will include their own provisions on how each subrecipient will comply with barrier free programs in their specific grant proposal.

*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.*

**Section 3**

North Dakota is not planning to award or use payments 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.

**Section 4**

In order for an LEA to receive GEER funds, the competitive grant application includes a specific section in which the LEA assures to providing equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within the LEA. If a LEA does not have non-public schools within the school boundary, they will need to state that in the application.