



COLORADO

Governor Jared Polis

## Colorado GEER 45-Day Report

*\*\*please note this will be public\*\**

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

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.

The state of Colorado plans to award funds to LEAs, IHE, and other education-related entities in four ways:

1. **\$33 million in grants to school districts, public schools, public institutions of higher education, and other education-related entities to support equity and innovation to address the COVID-19 crisis.** The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing achievement gaps for students who already face challenges, including low-income students, minority students, English-language learners, students with disabilities, and students experiencing homelessness or in foster care. With the majority of the GEER funding, the State will accept applications for a P-20 equity and innovation fund to address the learning challenges related to the economic, social, and health impacts of COVID-19 in a manner that creates lasting innovations and improved student learning across both pre-K-12 and higher education. These grants will focus on student-centered learning, rethinking the student experience, strengthening and formalizing linkages between higher education, pK-12, and industry, and catalyzing innovations that can drive long-term impact and be sustainable after the life of the grant. The State of Colorado is pursuing research funding that will allow projects to be evaluated and to inform future efforts to address learning gaps for high-needs students. Priority will be given to proposals that serve children and families who have been disproportionately impacted from the health or economic effects of the virus, or rural areas, or to serve schools or school districts in priority improvement or turnaround.
2. **\$5-6 million for dramatically increasing capacity for Colorado Empowered Learning:** The State of Colorado will utilize GEER funding to dramatically increase capacity for Colorado Empowered Learning, our state-supported supplemental online program that provides Colorado school districts, BOCES, and charter schools with access to fully-designed online courses, LMS platform options, professional development, and technical assistance for implementing blended and online learning models. These funds will allow school districts, BOCES, and charter schools greater access to this already developed and adaptive virtual content at low or no cost, and will help to build the capacity of our teachers by expanding access to professional development and coaching, whether in person or virtual, in blended instructional models.



3. **\$1 million for ensuring that all Colorado students with financial need receive direct support from institutions of higher education.** The Governor's office plans to utilize a portion of GEER funds to provide resources to institutions of higher education to help ensure students with financial need receive the support they need to weather this crisis. Funds will be provided to students with financial need who did not receive support under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Grant.
4. **\$3 million for investing in educator recruitment and retention to provide stability for school districts.** The Governor's office plans to utilize funds for two years of support for the Quality Teacher Recruitment program. This program provides support to organizations to recruit, select, train, and retain highly qualified teachers in areas that have had historic difficulty in attracting and keeping quality teachers. This program is even more important in an economic downturn, when school districts need support and stability in this area. Ensuring two years of funding for this program will help to support school districts that face significant challenges in the face of even further challenges with educator recruitment and retention this year.

**Timeline:** The State plans to award funding for Colorado Empowered Learning, student financial needs, and education recruitment and retention in July. The State will release a request for proposals for the P-20 Equity and Innovation Fund in August, with two deadlines: one in October and one in January.

**Criteria, process, and deliberations:** The Governor's office chose the four uses of funds because they all provide support to those schools, schools districts, institutions of higher education, and other education-related entities that are both significantly impacted by COVID-19 and essential for carrying out emergency services. Detailed description:

- The P-20 Equity and Innovation Fund will target schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, and Tribes, that have been most significantly impacted by COVID by taking into account the applicants that serve high-needs students such as low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, homeless students, and students in foster care.
- Dramatically expanding Colorado Empowered Learning (CEL) will target students in rural areas who may not have access to high-quality remote learning options to ensure that they can learn during periods of remote or hybrid learning as a result of COVID-19. CEL will provide resources for students in school districts that might not have had access to coursework last spring, making them disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.
- Providing support for students with financial need who did not receive assistance under the HEERF fund will help to support students who lack sufficient income or resources to stay in school and complete their studies as a result of COVID-19.
- The Quality Teacher Recruitment program will provide support to education-related entities that are essential for ensuring school districts with difficulty retaining educators are able to hire and keep their staff during this economic downturn.

**Funding Mechanism:** The Governor's office will distribute funding in the following ways:

- The **P-20 Equity and Innovation Fund**: Grants will be distributed directly from the Governor's office to schools, school districts, institutions of higher education, and Tribes.
- The Governor's office will provide funding for **Colorado Empowered Learning** to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) through an interagency agreement. CDE will provide funding to Colorado Empowered Learning through a grant.
- The Governor's office will provide funding for **students with financial need** to the Colorado Department of Higher Education through an interagency agreement. Funding will be distributed to institutions through the Colorado Opportunity Scholarship Initiative (COSI). Institutions will provide funding to students with financial need who did not receive a HEERF award.



- The Governor’s office will provide funding for the **Quality Teacher Recruitment Program** through an interagency agreement with CDE. CDE will distribute grant funding to awardees under the Quality Teacher Recruitment Program.

**Specific Conditions or Requirements:** As described above, each of the four uses of GEER funds has specific requirements and conditions attached. The Governor’s office grant manager will ensure that grantees utilize federal funds for their intended purposes and that administrative costs remain under the state’s indirect cost limitation. There are a few specific conditions worth noting:

- **Colorado Empowered Learning:** Under state law (22-5-119(6), C.R.S.), the Colorado River BOCES, as the state’s “administering BOCES” is allowed to contract with private nonprofit providers, but only through a stakeholder-supervised and competitive bid process as specified by the statute. Given that the BOCES already has contracts in place with two non-profit providers under this statutory process ([22-5-119\(6\), C.R.S.](#)), we believe that, should the administering BOCES need to amend or modify its existing procurement contracts to facilitate this Grant, the Disaster Emergency described in the Governor’s Executive Orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic, constitutes a public exigency or emergency within the meaning of 2 C.F.R. § 200.320(f)(2) that would allow them to fully implement this project. As such we believe they should have flexibility to complete this work quickly so that they are able to quickly respond to the emergency need.

**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.**

The State of Colorado hired a GEER Grant Manager who will be responsible for ensuring that GEER funds are expended for allowable purposes and in accordance with cash management principles and the Uniform Guidance. The GEER Grant Manager reports directly to the Senior Education Policy Advisor responsible for overseeing grant activities. Financial monitoring will be built on the existing grant cycle frameworks. Review effectiveness of systems and controls will be performed by the GEER Grant Manager including reviewing expenditure, cash disbursements and receipts, sampling and auditing invoice supporting documents, periodic field visits if needed etc. The GEER Grant Manager also works closely with the Governor’s accounting team to carry out financial monitoring, ensure strong internal controls, fiscal responsibility as well as in compliance with the state’s fiscal rule and accounting principles.

**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.**

The State of Colorado will not allowing funding to be utilized for these purposes.

**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 State of Colorado has requested additional clarifications regarding section 1117 and will update this question accordingly as soon as this information is provided.

