

ESSER Fund FAQs

- What is the purpose of the ARP ESSER III funds?

The purpose of ESSER in general is to award subgrants to local educational agencies (LEAs) such as Berlin Brothersvalley School District to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools.

- How much funding is available to Pennsylvania LEAs?

A total of \$12,418,588,778 is available to the state. Ninety percent, or \$11,176,729,900, will be awarded to eligible LEAs. Note that only two-thirds of the total state allocation (\$8,279,059,186) is available at this time.

- How will LEAs know their grant amounts?

Grant allocations have been posted on the PDE Website.

Funds may be used for allowable activities from March 13, 2020 (with approved pre-award) through Sept. 30, 2023.

- What are the federal requirements around the LEA ESSER III Use of Funds Plan?

The LEA must engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders and give the public an opportunity to provide input in the development of its plan for the uses of ARP ESSER III funds.

The LEA must provide its plan for the uses of ARP ESSER III funds in an understandable and uniform format.

The LEA's plan for the uses of ARP ESSER III funds will be posted to the LEA's website within 30 days of receiving its ESSER III Notice of Grant Award.

- Are the ESSER III funds required to be used for specific purposes?

Yes, LEAs must expend a minimum of 20 percent of their grant funds on:

1. Evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning, extended day comprehensive after school programs, or extended school year programs; and
2. Ensure interventions respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of coronavirus on student populations as defined in ESEA, Title I, Part A, students experiencing homelessness, and youth in foster care.

- Are there recommended uses of ESSER III funds that will assist LEAs in addressing the impact of the COVID pandemic and disruptions leading to learning loss?

While keeping in mind the purpose and requirements under ESSER III related to accelerating student learning, PDE strongly encourages school systems to plan for how to use these one-time federal funds expeditiously over the entire covered period to facilitate a more comprehensive long-term approach to learning acceleration. This may include aligned strategies that are currently part of a district's current plans and strategies. A qualitative review of draft local learning acceleration plans revealed the following trends and suggestions are possibilities for school districts: These include but are not limited to:

1. Professional Development: comprehensive reading academies, high-quality instructional materials, dyslexia training, professional development stipends, technology integration training;
2. Extended Instructional Time: extended day, extended year, high-dosage tutoring, summer learning;
3. Staffing: tutors, reduced class sizes, small group instruction, staff retention and recruitment incentive pay, after school enrichment programs, instructional coaching and leadership;
4. Facilities: ventilation, cleaning, HVAC systems, specialized instructional spaces;
5. Technology: devices, infrastructure upgrades, learning management systems, digital tools, educational application;
6. Mental Health and Behavioral Supports: social workers, at-risk coordinators, additional counseling services, teacher training and programming, wrap-around and community partnerships.

- What are some of the allowable uses of the ARP ESSER III funds?

ESSER funds are designated to be used in a variety of ways, which include addressing learning loss, providing professional development, improving indoor air quality, providing social and emotional supports, updating and providing technology, and others.

Since the large influx of ESSER funding into LEAs can result in funding deficits when it ends, the BBSD must plan for how to effectively and efficiently use the ESSER funds. It is recommended to use the ESSER grant funds for one-time or short-term expenditures to address the identified needs caused by the pandemic. Although long-term uses of the ESSER funds are also allowable, these types of uses may cause the LEA to not have funding to continue these activities after the ESSER period of availability ends, thus creating fiscal deficits.