



STATE OF ALABAMA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



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State Superintendent of Education

**American Rescue Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief  
(ARP ESSER)  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
May 27, 2021**

*Disclaimer: This information is subject to change as final guidance and information is released by the U.S. Department of Education (USED).*

**General Information:**

**1. What is ARP ESSER?**

ARP ESSER is an emergency COVID relief funding stream authorized as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, enacted in March 2021.

**2. Who is eligible to receive ARP ESSER funding?**

Public school districts and charter schools that are LEAs are eligible for ARP ESSER funding. The allocation is formula-based and is based on the district's proportional share of the Title I allocation.

**3. How much funding will I receive?**

The ALSDE has sent a memo with all allocations, which can be found [HERE](#).

**4. What are our next steps?**

**STEP 1:** Sign and return the assurances following the May 24, 2021 memorandum instructions. ([ARApps@alsde.edu](mailto:ARApps@alsde.edu))

**STEP 2:** Develop a *Return to In-Person Instruction Plan* or modify the previously developed *Reopening Plan*, that includes ARP ESSER requirements and post the plan on the LEA's website by June 23, 2021.

**STEP 3:** Complete the ARP ESSER eGAP application, providing the ALSDE with a description, timeline, and budget for all expenditures, by August 23, 2021.

**5. Can I charge an indirect cost rate to this grant?**

Yes. An LEA can charge indirect costs to this grant up to the unrestricted rate.

**6. What administrative percentage does the grant allow?**

ARP ESSER statute does not stipulate a specific amount for administrative costs; therefore, LEAs are encouraged to budget a reasonable amount. A general guideline is that LEAs should not charge more than 10 percent.

**7. What pre-award costs are allowed?**

The ARP ESSER period of allowability is March 13, 2020, to September 30, 2024. This means approved activities dating back to March 13, 2020, are allowed, and all approved activities must occur by September 30, 2024.

**8. What are the grant timelines?**

The ARP ESSER funds must be encumbered (meaning all approved activities have occurred) by September 30, 2024. The last date for liquidation and final reimbursement is December 15, 2024.

**9. What steps do LEAs need to take regarding Equitable Services?**

ARP ESSER does not require an equitable share to be calculated for non-public schools. Non-public schools will apply directly to ALSDE through the Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) program.

**10. Do I need to track expenditures for each COVID Relief fund separately?**

Yes, LEAs will track expenditures for ESSER I, ESSER II, and ARP ESSER separately, using the designated codes provided by LEA accounting.

**11. What are the allowable ARP ESSER activities?**

ARP ESSER has a wide array of allowable activities including:

- Activities **reducing virus transmission** and **other health hazards**
- Activities **improving air quality**
- **Addressing learning loss** among students, **including low-income students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care** including by:
  - Administering and using **high-quality assessments** that are valid and reliable
  - Implementing evidence-based activities to **meet the comprehensive needs of students**
  - Providing information and **assistance to parents and families** on how they can effectively support students
  - Tracking student attendance and **improving student engagement in distance education**
- Activities allowable under ESSER I & ESSER II
- Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the LEA

**12. What set-aside is required for grantees?**

LEAs are required to set aside 20% of the total ARP ESSER allocation to specifically address learning loss through implementation of evidence-based interventions including, summer learning/enrichment programs, extended day or school year, and afterschool programs.

**13. Can these funds be used to repair or replace our failing HVAC system?**

Yes, activities to reduce virus transmission, other health hazards, and improve indoor air quality are allowed.

**14. Can funds be used to pay for transportation?**

Yes. Transportation is allowable if associated costs are as a result of the pandemic.

**15. Can funds be used to pay for early staff retirement?**

No. This is not related to the ARP ESSER allowable activities.

**16. Can we buy Smartboards to help carry out virtual learning for in-person use?**

Yes. Educational technology is allowable both to address learning loss and accelerated learning and allows the schools to better meet the needs of students.

**17. Can it be used to bring in mental health services? We have seen an increased need for supports since COVID.**

Yes, mental health support is an allowable use of funds.

**18. Can ARP ESSER funds be used for staff bonuses?**

No. However, LEAs are allowed to pay staff for COVID-related work that occurred beyond regular contract hours.

**19. Will LEAs and schools be monitored?**

Yes. Both the ALSDE and USED will monitor district implementation of ARP ESSER funds.

**20. What is maintenance of equity (MEQ) and what will LEAs need to know?**

MEQ is a new requirement at both the LEA and SEA levels; ALSDE is awaiting additional guidance from US DOE on MEQ requirements. However, it will prevent LEAs from disproportionately underfunding and understaffing (in FTE) the highest-poverty districts.

**21. What if I have additional questions? Who do I contact?**

Office Hours are scheduled over the next couple of weeks according to the following schedule:

Wednesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:00-11:30 am

Friday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 12:00-1:30 pm

Tuesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1:00-2:30 pm

Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-11:30 am

Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 10:00-11:30 am

**Link to Office Hours:** [ARP ESSER Office Hours](#)

You can also send and email to [ARPPaps@aslde.edu](mailto:ARPPaps@aslde.edu) with any additional questions.

*This document will be updated as additional guidance is received.*