PART C: USES OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUNDS

Section 18003 of Division B of the CARES Act provides in relevant part that grants awarded under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund be used to support the ability of local educational agencies (LEAs) to continue to provide educational services to their students. The Department requests the following:
1. Information that the SEA may request LEAs to include in their subgrant applications to the SEA. For example, an SEA might propose to include the following in developing its subgrant application:
   - How the LEA will determine its most important educational needs as a result of COVID19.
   - The LEA's proposed timeline for providing services and assistance to students and staff in both public and non-public schools.
   - The extent to which the LEA intends to use ESSER funds to promote remote learning.
   - How the LEA intends to assess and address student learning gaps resulting from the disruption in educational services.

The above considerations are in addition to the application information requirements from sections 442 and 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232e and §1228a).

For the ESSER Fund, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) will use its online planning and grants management system, ePlan, for local education agency (LEA) subgrant applications. The LEA funding application will include the following components: cover page with district POC for CARES Act; program pages with identified needs; data collection; information on requested use of funds; and narratives on how this relates to the need.

Specifically, the TDOE intends to include the following information from districts as part of the application and review processes:
- Planning
  - A detailed and comprehensive Re-Entry and Continuous Learning Plan that addresses re-opening schools, academic and non-academic needs, and plans for school closures moving forward (should those ever happen in the future), including how educational needs as a result of COVID-19 were determined; the extent to which districts intend to use funds to promote remote learning; and how districts intend to address learning gaps resulting from disruption of educational services
- Timeline
  - Timeline for providing services to students and staff in public and non-public schools
- Data
  - Information about academic opportunities for students in their districts, by grade band, and how they plan to measure student progress, including how districts intend to address learning gaps resulting from disruption of educational services; and ways in which the district conducted checks on students
- Budget and Spending
  - Information related to budget constraints, re-allocations, and detailed plans related to how they will expend grant funds
- Other
  - Detail on how equitable services are delivered and how input from charter schools was considered
- Assurances
  - A list of assurances from LEAs, aligned to those provided in the federal application

Districts will receive training via webinar and office hours on the timeline, application and review process, equitable services requirements, and budget so they can plan accordingly.

The department has identified and assembled a cross-program review team, with representatives from ESEA, IDEA, CTE, early childhood, and fiscal. This review team will be trained on the application to ensure consistency across reviewers. They will utilize a checklist in the review process to ensure that all applications (and subsequent comments) are documented.

- April 13: CARES Act surveys close; data team compiles analysis of survey comments
- April 15: Superintendent call: share general information as well as forthcoming resources
- April 17: FPO special edition update for federal programs directors
- May 18: Webinar on LEA application released
- May 26: Application opens in ePlan (tentative)
- June 15: Application closes (tentative)
- June 30: Applications reviewed & awarded (tentative)

2. The extent to which the SEA intends to use any portion of its SEA reserve (up to 10 percent of its ESSER Fund award) to support: • technological capacity and access – including hardware and software, connectivity, and instructional expertise – to support remote learning. If so, please describe the strategies the SEA intends to use to serve disadvantaged populations listed in Sec. 18003(d)(4) of the CARES Act; and • remote learning by developing new informational and academic resources and expanding awareness of, and access to, best practices and innovations in remote learning and support for students, families, and educators.

Since March 13, the department has been hosting calls with LEA superintendents three times per week to provide updates, address questions, and share COVID-19 guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies. Through these calls, district leaders have identified needs and barriers to providing basic services (such as meals); the focus has now shifted to ensuring that education in Tennessee continues. The department has also hosted calls with charter and non-public leaders who have similar concerns about the provision of educational services to students.

On April 2, the department released district-facing and public surveys to gather feedback from stakeholders on the needs that COVID-19 pandemic have surfaced. Reponses to the superintendent survey identified technology access and remote learning resources to be some of the top priorities for the state to address. Responses to the public survey mirrored this feedback, with slightly higher requests for high-quality online materials being accessible to families and educators.

- Over 75% of superintendents identified hardware and technology as a priority.
- Sixty-two percent identified special populations as a priority; and almost half identified mental health and distance learning as a priority.

Based on this feedback and other data, the TDOE plans to allocate a significant portion of its SEA reserve to technological capacity and access, remote learning, and academic resources. The TDOE expects that at least 50% of the state reserves will be spent on these areas.

State Reservation (10%): $25,989,115.40		
Amount	**Initiative**	**Rationale**
$.9 million	ESSER fund administration	Existing TDOE staff will utilize administrative funding in the application review and ongoing monitoring of the state reservation and district subgrants. These positions will also monitor the provision of equitable services where applicable.
$.5 million	Leadership development	Digital badging as a new version of articulated pathways and district leadership networks. District Innovation grants are funds to 1-2 districts to innovate new professional development models.
$1.5 million	Mental Health and Special Populations online tool	Mental health was a major identified issue, so want to build that into the new tool for support. This funding would be utilized to support the infrastructure for students with disabilities, as well as community mapping and whole child supports.
$4 million	Online tool and PBS	Identified as a need for distance learning. These funds would support the build-out for full systems integration and access.
$13 million	Technology	Connectivity, technology, hardware
$3 million	Innovation	Competitive grants for districts supporting the innovation of new instructional models. We anticipate awarding 1-3 districts who are serving the state's disadvantaged populations.
$2 million	Grow Your Own	Funding to support local districts in strengthening their teacher pipelines through local partnerships with institutions of higher education.
$1 million	Accelerator	Supports small dollar gaps for district strategies that CARES does not completely fund.
$25.9 million	**TOTAL**	

As the TDOE develops and implements the initiatives noted in the table above, the department will develop needs-based processes and practices for eligibility and participation. This will include developing specific eligibility, criteria, and scoring for competitive opportunities. In addition, the department will utilize data from the Appalachian Regional Commission's annual identification of the economically distressed districts in Tennessee found here. Economic status designations are identified through a composite measure of each county's three-year average unemployment rate, per capita market income, and poverty rate.

In addition, we will identify districts that have large populations of disadvantaged populations who have also been identified as academically underperforming in the state's school accountability model.