



COVID-19 Relief Funding Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Updated March 2022

Contents

A- American Rescue Plan Act Requirements for Districts	2
Written Plan Requirements	2
District Mitigation Plan	2
District ARP Plan	3
B- Allocations.....	5
Awards	5
Duration of Funds	5
C- Use of Funds.....	6
General Questions	6
Serving Students.....	7
Staffing.....	8
Construction, Renovation, & Repair	8
Other.....	10
D- Maintenance of Equity.....	12
E- DEED Support & Required Set Asides.....	14





A- American Rescue Plan Act Requirements for Districts

Written Plan Requirements

1. **What plans under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act are the district required to publicly post on their website and how frequently must these be updated?** (New March 2022)
Districts are required to publicly post a District ARP Plan and a District Mitigation Plan on their website. The District ARP Plan must be updated annually when the district prepares their COVID-19 Relief Funding Application, and the district must consult with stakeholders (see question A-10 below). The District Mitigation Plan must be updated no less frequently than every six months and must take public comment into consideration.
2. **May the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) waive the requirement that each district develop a District ARP plan and a Mitigation Plan?**
No. DEED does not have the authority to waive any of the statutory or regulatory requirements related to the ARP Act including requirements related to the development of district plans for the use of ARP funds (District ARP Plan) and plans for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services (District Mitigation Plan).
3. **Does DEED collect these plans?** (New March 2022)
Yes. Districts are required to publicly post both the District ARP Plan and the District Mitigation Plan on their individual district websites and DEED is required to collect and publish a listing of the links to all district plans. DEED maintains that listing [here](https://publish.smartsheet.com/2df5f8edb3344b00b7256b79bc8e76d5) (publish.smartsheet.com/2df5f8edb3344b00b7256b79bc8e76d5).

District Mitigation Plan

4. **What is required in a District Mitigation Plan?** (Updated March 2022)
Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires that districts receiving Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds develop and make publicly available on their website a written mitigation plan for the safe return and/or continuation of in-person instruction and continuity of services. The district must seek public comment on the mitigation plan and take such comments into account in the development and updating of the plan. The district must review and revise, as appropriate, the mitigation every six months.

DEED has created a [District Mitigation Plan Template](https://education.alaska.gov/Media/Default/arp-plan/District%20Mitigation%20Plan%20Template%205-20-21.docx) (education.alaska.gov/Media/Default/arp-plan/District Mitigation Plan Template 5-20-21.docx). Districts may use the sample template as a framework for the information to be included in their District Mitigation Plan. Districts are not required to follow this sample template or framework; however, a completed plan includes all the components listed in the template.

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22





5. Must the district follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)? (New March 2022)

Districts must implement, to the greatest extent practicable, prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the reopening and operation of school facilities to effectively maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff.

6. Does DEED approve the District Mitigation Plans? Is funding contingent upon certain mitigation factors? (New March 2022)

DEED is required to examine the plans and ensure that each district's District Mitigation Plan addresses all eight required elements: masking, social distancing, handwashing, cleaning, contact tracing, diagnostic testing, vaccination efforts, and accommodations for children with disabilities. DEED is required to publish a [listing of all plans](https://publish.smartsheet.com/2df5f8edb3344b00b7256b79bc8e76d5) (publish.smartsheet.com/2df5f8edb3344b00b7256b79bc8e76d5).

There is a separate process DEED engages in to approve the district's application for ESSER funds. Approval for the ESSER grant money is not linked to any element present or not present in a district's mitigation plan. However, it is important to note that a district must have a publicly posted mitigation plan that takes public comment into account, is updated every six months, and addresses all eight required elements to maintain their funding.

District ARP Plan

7. What is required for a District ARP Plan? (New March 2022)

According to the [U.S. Department of Education](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/22/2021-08359/american-rescue-plan-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund) (federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/22/2021-08359/american-rescue-plan-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund), districts that receive ESSER III funds must develop a plan for the use of ESSER III Funds (District ARP Plan) and submit it to DEED for review. The plan must contain, at a minimum, the extent to which and how the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies that are, to the extent practicable, consistent with CDC guidance; how the district will use the funds it reserves under section 2001(e)(1) of the ARP Act to address the academic impact of lost instructional time; how the district will use its remaining ESSER III funds; and how the district will ensure the interventions it implements will respond to the social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs of all students and particularly those students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In developing its plan, a district must engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders (listed below in question A-10). A district must provide the public the opportunity to provide input on the development of the plan, take such input into account, and post the District ARP Plan on its website.

8. Does DEED have a template for the District ARP Plan? (New March 2022)

DEED developed the ESSER III program details page in the Grants Management System (GMS) to meet these requirements. To satisfy this requirement, districts must post on their website one of the following: directions for how to access the district's program details page in GMS, a copy of the district's program details page, or a district created document that satisfies the requirements in the preceding question.

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22





9. Does DEED approve District ARP Plans? (New March 2022)

Yes, unlike the District Mitigation Plan, DEED reviews and approves the contents of the District ARP Plan for compliance with federal funding regulations. DEED approves the district's District ARP Plan when reviewing the district's grant application in GMS as a normal part of approving any federal grant application.

10. Which stakeholders must the district consult when creating or updating the District ARP Plan?

Stakeholder engagement is a core element of the state and district planning process for the use of ESSER III funds. The [Interim Final Rule \(IFR\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/22/2021-08359/american-rescue-plan-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund) ([federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/22/2021-08359/american-rescue-plan-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/04/22/2021-08359/american-rescue-plan-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund)) and the [ARP ESSER State Plan template](https://www.oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Template-04-20-2021_130PM.pdf) ([oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Template-04-20-2021_130PM.pdf](https://www.oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Template-04-20-2021_130PM.pdf)) include a specific list of stakeholders with which a state or district must consult in the planning of how to spend COVID-19 Relief Funding.

Meaningful consultation may take different forms. The U.S. Department of Education recognizes and respects the work that states and school districts are already doing and have been doing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to engage their communities.

Districts must engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- i. students;
- ii. families;
- iii. school and district administrators (including special education administrators); and,
- iv. teachers, principals, school leaders, other educators, school staff, and their unions.

Districts must also engage in meaningful consultation with each of the following, to the extent present in or served by the district:

- i. tribes;
- ii. civil rights organizations (including disability rights organizations); and,
- iii. stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, children who are incarcerated, and other underserved students.

Districts must provide the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the district plan for the use of ESSER III funds (District ARP Plan) and take such input into account.

DEED has created a [Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit](https://education.alaska.gov/safeschools/infectiousdisease/StakeholderEngagementtoolkit.pdf) (education.alaska.gov/safeschools/infectiousdisease/StakeholderEngagementtoolkit.pdf). Districts can review this resource for further support.



B- Allocations

Awards

1. When are districts able to use ESSER III funds?

ESSER III funds are available for expenses beginning July 1, 2021. If the district has allowable expenses prior to July 1, 2021, please reach out directly to DEED by emailing DEED.CARES@alaska.gov to discuss potential options. Any balance from FY2022 will be carried over to FY2023 and will be available through June 30, 2023. Any remaining balance at that point will be carried over to FY2024 and will be available through June 30, 2024. Carry forward will continue until the entire grant is spent, or until September 30, 2024, when the grant period ends.

2. How does DEED calculate the allocation for districts' ESSER III funds?

Each district's allocation is calculated based on the proportion of Title I-A they received in FY2021. For example, if District A received 5% of funding dispersed through the Title I-A formula grant in FY2021, then District A would receive 5% of the portion of ESSER III funds allocated to districts.

Duration of Funds

3. What is the timeline for a district to obligate ESSER III funds?

A district has until September 30, 2024, to spend the ESSER III funds it receives. This includes the 12-month Tydings Amendment period. For additional information on awarding and obligating funds, please see the [U.S. Department of Education's ARP ESSER Fact Sheet](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf).

4. When do all COVID-19 Relief Funds expire?

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds (ESSER I, GEER I) expire September 30, 2022. The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act funds (ESSER II) expire September 30, 2023. The ARP Act funds (ESSER III) expire September 30, 2024. DEED encourages districts to spend their oldest funds first.

5. Do all services purchased with ESSER III funds have to be completed by September 30, 2024? Or can districts have an ongoing service into 2025 if all services were ordered and payments rendered before the deadline? (New March 2022)

All services must be performed and completed prior to September 30, 2024. This includes salaries as well. Salaries would be eligible to be paid through September 30, 2024.

6. Does a district have to budget all of their COVID-19 funds when completing their application? (Updated March 2022)

No. Districts may leave funds unallocated in any of the COVID-19 Relief grants. DEED will generally only approve budgeted activities for the current fiscal year; however, if a district needs to budget for future years in their application, they should contact DEED for preapproval.

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22





C- Use of Funds

General Questions

1. What is the purpose of COVID-19 Relief Funds? (New March 2022)

The CARES, CRRSA, and ARP Acts provide vital support to states, districts, and schools as they work to reopen schools safely, maximize in-person instructional time, safely sustain in-person instruction, and address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students, educators, and families. These Federal emergency resources are available for a wide range of activities to address diverse needs arising from or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, or to emerge stronger post-pandemic, including responding to students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs.

2. What are the allowable uses of COVID-19 Relief Funds? (Updated March 2022)

There are 16 broad allowable uses for COVID-19 Relief Funds to help meet a wide range of needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic, including reopening schools safely, sustaining their safe operation, and addressing students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs resulting from the pandemic. You can find an in-depth list and sample activities in our [COVID Relief Funding Guidelines](https://education.alaska.gov/Media/Default/arp-plan/COVIDFundingGuidelines05-21-2021_FINAL.pdf) (education.alaska.gov/Media/Default/arp-plan/COVIDFundingGuidelines05-21-2021_FINAL.pdf).

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education indicated flexibility in their [Supplemental FAQs released on December 29, 2021](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Fact-Sheet_COVID_connection_12.29.21_Final.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Fact-Sheet_COVID_connection_12.29.21_Final.pdf). They encourage districts and states to “think holistically about their response to COVID-19 in order to address the impact of lost instructional time from the pandemic on all students and to address pre-existing challenges that, if left unaddressed, will impede recovery from the pandemic.”

3. Is there anything different about ESSER III funds, from ESSER I and ESSER II?

Yes. Districts must set aside at least 20% of their ESSER III funds to address learning loss. Districts must also create a mitigation plan and a district ARP plan. There is also a maintenance of equity provision, please see A-4 of the [federal FAQ document](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30af953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30af953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf).

4. Do the requirements in the Uniform Grant Guidance apply to ESSER and GEER funds?

Yes. The requirements in the [Uniform Grant Guidance](https://e CFR.federalregister.gov/on/2021-03-31/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200) (e CFR.federalregister.gov/on/2021-03-31/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200) apply. Please see A-16 of the [federal FAQ document](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30af953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30af953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf) for further details.

5. Is there a “supplement not supplant” requirement for ESSER and GEER funds?

No. However, there is a maintenance of effort provision that keep states from substantially reducing support for education. Furthermore, districts should be mindful that other federal funds such as IDEA and ESEA still have maintenance of effort requirements that must be met. For more details, please

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22





check out the [federal maintenance of effort FAQ document](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/MOE-Chart_with-waiver-FAQs_FINAL_4.19.21_12pm.pdf) (https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/MOE-Chart_with-waiver-FAQs_FINAL_4.19.21_12pm.pdf).

6. Where can districts find more ideas for allowable uses of funds?

For use of funds ideas and resources, please check out DEED's comprehensive resource [COVID Relief Funding Guidelines](https://education.alaska.gov/Media/Default/arp-plan/COVID%20Funding%20Guidelines%2005-21-2021_FINAL.pdf) (education.alaska.gov/Media/Default/arp-plan/COVID Funding Guidelines 05-21-2021_FINAL.pdf).

Districts may also reference the [federal ARP ESSER FAQ document](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30af953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf)

(oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_.FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30af953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf).

Serving Students

7. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to provide services to students to address needs identified prior to the pandemic? (New March 2022)

Yes. The U.S. Department of Education indicated that it is allowable to address students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs, including needs that existed prior to the pandemic but were worsened by the pandemic. Furthermore, it is allowable to provide activities to re-engage students, including addressing factors that contributed to student disengagement before the pandemic.

8. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to fund preschool activities? (New March 2022)

Yes. Providing early learning support is an allowable activity.

9. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to provide additional support to students with disabilities? (New March 2022)

Yes. It is an allowable activity to support the needs of children with disabilities, including infants and toddlers with disabilities and children with disabilities who are English learners, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), such as by eliminating evaluation backlogs and providing support and direct services for children with disabilities, including technical assistance, personnel preparation, and professional development and training.

10. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to provide additional support to students with a 504 plan? (New March 2022)

Yes. It is an allowable activity to provide educational and related services to students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 who are not eligible for services under IDEA but receive services in accordance with a 504 plan. This includes, but is not limited to, providing additional instruction and services to students with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, often referred to as compensatory services, to make up for any skills that might have been lost if it is individually determined that the student was unable to receive a free appropriate education as a result of the closure of school buildings or other disruption in services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22





Staffing

11. Are stipends to staff allowable?

It depends. Federal guidance indicates that staff may be compensated for additional duties required due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, teachers may have had to clean classrooms during break times and plan both in-person and distance lessons. Federal guidance has also indicated that these funds can be used to recruit and retain high quality candidates in those places most severely impacted by COVID-19. Keep in mind that the district must have a written policy regarding such payments (it can be a newly adopted written policy).

12. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to pay for COVID-19 leave?

Yes. Districts may use their ESSER funding to pay for staff that are on leave due to COVID-19. Staff leave needs to be coded to either 310 or 320 with applicable benefits coded to 360. Districts are also encouraged to consult their board policy, negotiated agreements, and any applicable local laws.

13. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to recruit and retain employees? (New March 2022)

Yes. The U.S. Department of Education indicated allowability for activities that ensure students have access to the teachers and other critical staff they need to support their success by hiring additional educators and school staff and improving compensation to recruit and retain educators and school staff. The district must have a written policy regarding any recruiting and retention incentive pay (it can be a newly adopted written policy).

14. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to fund the salary of an administrator to oversee additional COVID-19 related duties? (New March 2022)

Yes. Districts may use COVID-19 Relief Funds to hire additional staff members to oversee the grant, create and update health mitigation policies, comply with requirements and reporting as required by DEED, and attend to other COVID-19 related duties within the district.

Construction, Renovation, & Repair

15. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used for construction and renovation costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes. Construction is authorized under Title VII of the ESEA (Impact Aid) and therefore is an allowable use of GEER and ESSER funds under sections 18002(c)(3) and 18003(d)(1) of the CARES Act, sections 312(c)(3) and 313(d)(1) of the CRRSA Act, and section 2001(e)(2) of the ARP Act. The broad Impact Aid definition of “construction” includes new construction as well as remodeling, alterations, renovations, and repairs under which many activities related to COVID-19 would likely fall. Keep in mind that remodeling, renovation, and new construction are often time-consuming, which may not be workable under the shorter timelines associated with GEER and ESSER funds. These types of activities are also subject to a number of additional Federal requirements, as detailed below.

While construction is generally allowable, it is the responsibility of the district to assure that individual costs:

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22



- i. comply with the Cost Principles in 2 CFR Part 200, subpart E (e.g., the cost must be “necessary and reasonable” (2 CFR §§ 200.403-200.404));
- ii. meet the overall purpose of the CARES Act, CRRSA Act, or ARP Act programs, which is “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to” COVID-19; and,
- iii. are consistent with the proper and efficient administration of those programs.

Furthermore, the district must maintain the appropriate documentation to support the expenditure.

As noted above, a district using GEER or ESSER funds for remodeling, renovation, and new construction must comply with additional federal requirements. For example, these projects require prior written approval by DEED (through the application in GMS). Approved construction projects (i.e., remodeling, renovation, and new construction) also must comply with applicable [Uniform Guidance](https://www.ecfr.gov/on/2021-03-31/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200) (ecfr.federalregister.gov/on/2021-03-31/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200) requirements, [Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements](https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/government-contracts/construction) (dol.gov/agencies/whd/government-contracts/construction), and all of the federal applicable regulations regarding construction at [34 CFR §§ 76.600](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-A/part-76/subpart-F/subject-group-ECFR0c65e40eca00876/section-76.600) (ecfr.federalregister.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-A/part-76/subpart-F/subject-group-ECFR0c65e40eca00876/section-76.600) and [75.600-75.618](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-A/part-75/subpart-E?toc=1) (ecfr.federalregister.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-A/part-75/subpart-E?toc=1)

Some of the relevant part 75 requirements that must be considered before a new construction project is initiated include:

- i. Has the district considered the probable effects of proposed construction on any district, site, building, or structure that is included or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (34 CFR § 75.602);
- ii. Does the district have title or other interest in the site, including right of access, that is sufficient to ensure that the grantee will have use and possession of the facility for 50 years or the useful life of the facility, whichever is longer (34 CFR § 75.603);
- iii. Can the district begin the approved construction in a reasonable time period and have the final plans been approved before the construction is advertised or placed on the market for bidding (34 CFR § 75.605);
- iv. Can a district complete the project in a reasonable time period and consistent with the approved plans and specifications (34 CFR § 75.606);
- v. Is the construction functional, economical, and not elaborate in design or extravagant in the use of materials as compared to other facilities in the state or other applicable geographic area (34 CFR § 75.607);
- vi. Do the district’s plans and designs for the facilities comply with applicable Federal, State and local health and safety standards, as well as Federal requirements regarding access by persons with disabilities. (34 CFR §§75.609 and 75.610); and,
- vii. Does the district have sufficient operational funds to operate and maintain the facility once the construction is complete and will the grantee operate and maintain the facility in accordance with all applicable Federal, State, and local requirements (34 CFR §§ 75.614 and 75.615).

Finally, if GEER and ESSER funds are used for construction, districts should also be aware that real property and equipment acquired or improved under a Federal award must be appropriately insured

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22





and districts must consult with DEED on disposition instructions in the event that the property or equipment is no longer needed. See, e.g., [2 CFR §§ 200.310-200.313](#) (ecfr.federalregister.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D/subject-group-ECFR8feb98c2e3e5ad2?toc=1).

16. What object code should districts use for construction expenses? (Updated March 2022)

When submitting the application in GMS please provide the name of the contractor, estimated dates of the project, a brief description of the project, and how it's COVID-19 related. Any design work should be coded to 410, whereas actual construction should be coded to 500.

17. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used for constructing or remodeling teacher housing?

Yes, if additional teacher housing is needed to help respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (example: hiring additional teachers due to reducing class sizes or hiring a new interventionist/counselor/etc.). Please see question C-15 above for a complete list of requirements.

18. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used for the increase in costs on existing construction projects? (New March 2022)

In some cases. The district would need to document and justify the increase in cost. The district may use a variety of documents to indicate this modification of scope or cost, such as: a request for information or design clarification variation of request, a change order request, or a price proposal. For further discussion, please email DEED.CARES@alaska.gov.

19. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to make necessary repairs to the school building that may not be directly related to the pandemic? (New March 2022)

In some cases. The U.S. Department of Education issued a [supplemental FAQ on December 29, 2021](#) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Fact-Sheet_COVID_connection_12.29.21_Final.pdf), indicating some flexibility for school repairs. They indicated support for a broad category of “maintaining healthy facilities,” which could include addressing pre-existing needs such as ventilation, roofing, or plumbing needs. Furthermore, they indicated allowability for addressing “needs that may inhibit healthy learning environments during full-time in-person learning,” which could include things such as reducing lead exposure, mold removal, asbestos remediation, or even facility updates such as upgrading a science lab.

Other

20. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds help pay for student activities costs such as travel and sports equipment?

In some cases. Districts may be able to charge certain costs if they are directly related to COVID-19. For example, excess lodging costs due to housing students in smaller groups. Furthermore, districts may choose to fund student trips and purchase sports equipment to support students' mental health needs or to encourage students to re-engage in in-person instruction.



21. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to purchase a van or SUV to transport students for activities? (New March 2022)

No. Districts may not use federal dollars to purchase passenger vehicles due to State of Alaska safety regulations. Districts may use COVID-19 Relief Funds to purchase a Type A bus. Please contact DEED.CARES@alaska.gov for further details.

22. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds pay for extra bandwidth or other internet costs for the district, district employees, and/or students at home? (New March 2022)

Yes. Districts may pay for internet fees that address issues of digital equity and access. Providing internet stipends for staff to use home internet to teach while quarantined is also allowable and would be budgeted in object code 360. If the district participates in the E-rate program, it's important to keep in mind that COVID-19 Relief Funding can only pay for any costs above and beyond what is reimbursable by E-rate.

23. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to purchase new curriculum? (New March 2022)

Yes. Continuing to address issues of digital equity and access and implementing rigorous curricula across PK-12 schools is an allowable use of funds.

24. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds pay for new playgrounds? (New March 2022)

Yes. Initially DEED thought playground expenses were unallowable; however, the U.S. Department of Education issued guidance allowing playground costs as supporting and improving children's mental health.

25. Can COVID-19 Relief Funds be used to upgrade the district's data reporting systems? (New March 2022)

Yes. Districts may use funds to create or improve existing data systems and collection to identify and respond in a timely manner to student needs in light of the pandemic.



D- Maintenance of Equity

1. What is Maintenance of Equity (MOEquity)? (New March 2022)

Maintenance of Equity (MOEquity) is a set of new fiscal equity requirements in the ARP Act. Specifically, MOEquity ensures the following:

- A state does not disproportionately reduce per-pupil State funding to high-need districts;
- A state does not reduce per-pupil State funding to the highest-poverty districts below their FY2019 level;
- A district does not disproportionately reduce State and local per-pupil funding in high-poverty schools; and,
- A district does not disproportionately reduce the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff per pupil in high-poverty schools.

2. Which districts are required to comply with MOEquity requirements? (New March 2022)

Of Alaska’s 54 districts all but 17 qualified for an automatic exception to the MOEquity requirements based on enrollment under 1,000 students and/or single school site. Districts currently listed as required to meet MOE requirements may apply for an exception at any time, though sooner is better as some exceptions require approval by the U.S. Department of Education and wait times are currently unknown.

Districts required to meet MOEquity requirements, unless granted an exception:
Anchorage School District
Bering Strait School District
Denali Borough School District
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
Galena City School District
Juneau Borough School District
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District
Kodiak Island Borough School District
Lower Kuskokwim School District
Lower Yukon School District
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Nenana City School District
North Slope Borough School District
Northwest Arctic Borough School District
Sitka School District
Yukon-Koyukuk School District



3. Are districts to prove MOEquity eligibility individually, or will the State be establishing its level of support which includes all districts? (New March 2022)

The MOEquity requirements apply at both the State and the District level. DEED has done the preliminary calculations to determine highest poverty schools within the district (see the second Excel file attached for Alaska in the table at [Maintenance of Equity - Office of Elementary and Secondary Education](https://oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/maintenance-of-equity/) (oese.ed.gov/offices/american-rescue-plan/american-rescue-plan-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief/maintenance-of-equity/)). However, districts will have to do the work to determine if each high poverty school has maintained both fiscal and staffing equity as DEED does not have access to that school level data. The U.S. Department of Education's guidance on MOEquity can be found [here](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf).

4. Can a district request a MOEquity exception? (New March 2022)

If your district is not facing overall budget reductions for State and Local funding, please review Appendix B of the U.S. Department of Education's [Maintenance of Equity FAQs](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf). If your district is not facing overall budget reductions in FY2022 you qualify for an exception. Please fill out Appendix B and submit it to us at DEED.CARES@alaska.gov as soon as possible, but not later than March 25, 2022, to be listed as excepted in the update to the U.S. Department of Education. This exception will also be available for FY2023, but will require submission of a separate Appendix B form at a later date.

If you do not qualify for an exception under Appendix B, but believe you qualify for an exception under [FAQ question 32](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf) for another reason, please submit a request for exception to the U.S. Department of Education using the process outlined at [LEA-Local-Maintenance-of-Equity-Exception-Process 2.10.22.pdf \(ed.gov\)](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/02/LEA-Local-Maintenance-of-Equity-Exception-Process_2.10.22.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2022/02/LEA-Local-Maintenance-of-Equity-Exception-Process_2.10.22.pdf). Please copy DEED.CARES@alaska.gov in your submittal to the U.S. Department of Education. For this exception, the district must directly contact the U.S. Department of Education.

5. Does a district need to include Federally funded staff in the MOEquity provision? (New March 2022)

Yes. Districts need to include all paid staff no matter the funding source. See question 28 of the [U.S. Department of Education's MoEquity FAQs](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf) (oese.ed.gov/files/2021/12/Maintenance-of-Equity-updated-FAQs_12.29.21_Final.pdf). State and local funding only applies to the fiscal portion of MOEquity, not the staffing portion.



E- DEED Support & Required Set Asides

- 1. What oversight will DEED provide throughout the duration of the COVID-19 Relief Funds?**
 DEED will review each district's application for funds to ensure services and activities are allowable under the grant award. DEED is also required to implement various data collection and reporting requirements throughout the grant period. Additionally, DEED will implement appropriate fiscal monitoring of and internal controls for all COVID-19 Relief Funds. Through this oversight, DEED will provide districts with technical assistance in the anticipated areas of greatest need. DEED will also reach out to districts every six months to ensure mitigation plans have been updated and that DEED's listing is accurate.
- 2. What type of funding did DEED receive at the state level and how is DEED required to spend it? (New March 2022)**
 DEED is required to reserve ARP funds for three State-level activities and interventions that respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups. DEED is required to set aside five percent of the total ARP allocation for the implementation of evidence-based interventions aimed specifically at addressing learning loss. DEED is also required to set aside one percent of the total ARP allocation for evidence-based summer enrichment programs and one percent of the total ARP allocation for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs.
- 3. Where can people submit an idea for projects that could be funded with DEED's required set asides? (New March 2022)**
 DEED has developed an [ARP Act State Activities Suggestion Form](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/47b482153c6e4093a6cbbcb9492ef289) (app.smartsheet.com/b/form/47b482153c6e4093a6cbbcb9492ef289). Members of the public and educational entities may submit ideas through the electronic suggestion form. It is important to note that the suggestion form is not an application for funds and there is no guarantee that suggestions will be considered for funding.
- 4. How is DEED providing support to the districts? (New March 2022)**
 DEED created the DEED.CARES@alaska.gov mailbox which is staffed by multiple team members at the department. DEED is also available for office hours on the first Wednesday of each month for a time called "COVID Coffee Break." This is an informal time for districts to ask questions, receive technical assistance, and network with other districts who may have similar questions. For the Zoom link, please email DEED.CARES@alaska.gov. DEED has also hosted a number of webinars and provided [resources online](https://education.alaska.gov/covid-19-information/resources-for-districts) (education.alaska.gov/covid-19-information/resources-for-districts).
- 5. How will DEED prove information to the public about how these funds are being spent?**
 DEED recently launched COVID-19 dashboards that provide COVID-19 Relief Funding grant and expenditure information for the state and each school district. The dashboard is located on DEED's main webpage and is [directly linked here](https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=0cfd777df5b94c0bbec27cc0631318a4) (app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=0cfd777df5b94c0bbec27cc0631318a4).

Questions?

Please contact us: DEED.CARES@alaska.gov

Last Updated: 3/22/22