Navigating ESSER Funding for School Districts

NDCEL SUMMER CONFERENCE 2021

LAURIE MATZKE, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Purpose

The purpose of today's training is to share updates and reminders regarding the spending and federal regulations governing the ESSER I, II, and III grants.

Overarching ESSER Guidelines

Districts need to ensure ESSER funding is used for:

- Activities to prevent, prepare for, or respond to COVID-19.

- Activities that are an allowable use of ESSER funds.

- Activities that meet the necessary and reasonable standards set by the Uniform Grants Guidance (UGG).

New NDDPI ESSER Process

The NDDPI is going to be adjusting both the personnel and process for administering the ESSER grants.

- <u>Hire ESSER Program Manager</u> – Currently advertising for this position.

- <u>Hire Two Fiscal Technicians</u> – Currently updating the job description which will be advertised soon.

Status of ESSER III Funding

<u>Phase 1</u>: Districts will submit an "Initial Application" and receive two-thirds of their ESSER III funding.

- The NDDPI is working diligently to complete phase one for ESSER III funding so we can begin approving ESSER II applications. Currently, there are 8 districts with missing information.

<u>Phase 2</u>: Districts will submit an ESSER III supplemental application by August 17, 2021. Once approved, districts will receive the remaining one-third of funding.

Phase II – ESSER III Funding

The ARP requires states collect school district ESSER III applications within 90 days of awarding funding (August 24, 2021).

- Training will be held on the ESSER III supplemental application requirements

- Supplemental application released to school districts in July 2021

- School districts consult with stakeholders to obtain input

- ESSER III supplemental application submitted by August 17, 2021

ESSER III Supplemental Application Details

- The ESSER III supplemental application will be built in WebGrants.

- The initial application will be uploaded into WebGrants, so it is part of your continuing application.

- Districts will need to outline their budget plans, including specifics on activities to address learning loss.

- The application will include four narrative questions.

ESSER III Supplemental Application Narratives

The ESSER III supplemental application includes four narrative questions districts will need to address:

1. Describe how ARP ESSER III funds will be used by the district to implement prevention and mitigation strategies.

2. Describe how the district will use the mandatory 20% set-aside to address the academic impact of learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions.

3. Describe how the district will respond to the needs of students disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. (Address each stakeholder group.)

4. Describe how the district consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders when developing the spending plan. (Address each stakeholder group.)

Status of ESSER II Applications

- The ESSER II applications are due on June 30, 2021.

- To date, the NDDPI has received 37 ESSER II applications.

- To date, the NDDPI has approved 22 ESSER II applications.

- Once approved, the district authorized representative, business manager, and school board president will receive an approval notice.

- The district authorized representative who is registered in WebGrants will then need to log into WebGrants to electronically sign the contract, which is also referred to as the grant award.

Common Problems on ESSER II Applications

Stakeholder Consultation
- Responses that only discuss what will be done in the future to get input
- One sentence responses
- Responses that only mention one stakeholder group

Learning Loss
- Responses that address construction or other non-academic activities <u>only</u>
- No funds set aside for learning loss/acceleration
- Example of a great learning loss narrative <u>here</u>

Additional Issues
- Total on part C doesn't match ESSER II allocation

Learning Loss Requirement

- School districts must reserve not less than 20% of its total ARP ESSER III allocation to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions.

- School districts will be required to submit a copy of their accounting ledger documenting that 20% of the ESSER III allocation was spent to address learning loss. Districts need to use project code 112 to account for all learning loss expenditures.

Learning Loss Requirement, Continued

- The guidance outlines numerous activities that can be coded to the 20% learning loss requirement, most of which are direct student services (summer school, afterschool, extended year).

- In addition, the guidance indicates that curriculum, professional development, and embedded assessments can be coded to learning loss if they are evidence-based.

Evidence-Based Interventions

Requirement:
Activities paid with the 80% of ESSER III funding <u>do not</u> have to meet the evidence-based requirement. However, activities coded to the 20% required learning loss set-aside <u>do</u> need to meet one of the four tiers of evidence-based interventions.

Districts will need to reference or include supporting documentation, research articles, websites, etc., that support the practices utilized when the desk audits occur.

Focus on Data and Student Achievement

- School districts must reserve not less than 20% of its total ARP ESSER III allocation and some of their ESSER II funding to address learning loss.

- The 67th North Dakota Legislative Assembly requires in HB 1013 that school districts receiving ESSER relief funds provide two narrative summary reports to the superintendent of public instruction.

- Although the NDDPI received an Accountability waiver and will not be identifying new schools for improvement, we will still be creating school accountability reports. This will allow schools and districts the opportunity to assess their strengths and weaknesses for continuous improvement. The accountability results will be shared statewide.

- Choice Ready data will be compiled and shared statewide in the fall.

Paying Staff with ESSER Funds

- The USED, this past week, clarified that ESSER funds may be used to pay for staff salaries in order to stabilize the staff workforce, return to in-person instruction, avoid layoffs, and address educator shortages.

- It is allowable to use ESSER funding to provide "premium pay" or "bonus pay" if it is reasonable and necessary and provided as part of an established plan or written policy.

In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

The ARP Act requires school districts to develop an in-person instruction and continuity of services plan.

- Plan must address how the district will ensure continuity of services and a description of the policies and practices for following health and safety strategies.

- Districts must obtain stakeholder input in the plan's development.

- Plan must be publicly available on the district website by June 24, 2021.

- Districts need to **update** the *In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* **at least every six months** through September 30, 2024, and must seek ongoing public input on the plan and any revisions.

Capital Expenses –
Prior Approval for ESSER Funding Form

- Recipients of federal funds must obtain prior written approval before spending funds on capital expenditures. The Capital Expenses – Prior Approval for ESSER Funding form (SFN 61974) has been revised to allow districts to list both the total cost of a project and the amount of ESSER funds that will be utilized. Please use this updated form for all future requests.

- This SFN 61974 can be submitted to Lisa Johnson at lisaajohnson@nd.gov.

- Districts will also need to submit SFN 52304 (School Construction Approval Request) for any requests in excess of $150,000 to Adam Tescher at atescher@nd.gov.

- Per request, the NDDPI is sharing the list of approved capital expense requests to date here.

Tracking/Coding Funds

Districts must track these funds separately to report use of funds and expenses in the future. The following codes have been established and align with NDSDFARM.

- Project Expense Coding: 110 – ESSER III

- Learning Loss Coding: 112 – ESSER III

- Project Expense Coding: 109 – ESSER II

- Learning Loss Coding: 111 – ESSER II

The NDDPI recently updated the coding chart, adding codes for new COVID funding grants.

ESSER Quarterly Reports (Status Reports)

The CARES Act requires LEAs that currently receive ESSER funds to report certain information regarding their spending. Districts meet this requirement by completing and submitting quarterly reports within WebGrants; however, the NDDPI is adjusting the reporting process for ESSER II and III.

ESSER I: Districts will continue to complete quarterly reports for ESSER I funding. The next quarterly report is due July 8, 2021.

ESSER II and III: Districts will only complete and submit a status report once per year. The first report will be due in October 2021.

ARP ESSER State Plan

All State Education Agencies (SEAs) were required to submit an ARP ESSER State Plan to the United States Education Department by June 7, 2021. The North Dakota State Plan can be accessed here.

State Set-Aside Funding

- The NDDPI can set-aside 10% of both ESSER II and III grants for state-level activities.

- The NDDPI has received a significant amount of input on the spending of these dollars.

- North Dakota's state plan outlines our intended uses of the state set-aside funding, which includes a strong focus on addressing learning loss.

  - ✓ Exact Path
  - ✓ Fund Additional CLSD sites
  - ✓ Extended Learning
  - ✓ Science of Reading
  - ✓ Early Learning
  - ✓ Equity Gaps
  - ✓ MTSS

COVID Funding Training Series

The NDDPI has been conducting a "COVID Funding Training Series" highlighting key provisions in the law. An updated training series chart is available here.

There are currently two ESSER funding trainings yet to be scheduled:

- Completing the ESSER III Supplemental Application

- An overview of the Maintenance of Equity provision

Monitoring of ESSER Funding

The ESSER grants are providing a significant onetime influx of federal funding for school districts.

Due to the vast amount of funding within the ESSER I, II, and III grants, there most certainly will be scrutiny on the spending of these funds.

The NDDPI intends to contract with three to four retired educators to conduct ESSER desk monitoring, beginning in the 2021-2022 school year.

ESSER Timeline Reminders

June 24, 2021
The ARP Act requires school districts to develop in-person instruction and continuity of service plans. Plans must be publicly available on the district website within 30 days of receiving the funds (June 24, 2021).

June 30, 2021
The NDDPI has extended the submission deadline for ESSER II applications to June 30, 2021. This extension will allow districts more time to gather stakeholder input.

- ESSER II Application
- Submit to dpiasstsupt@nd.gov

August 17, 2021
The deadline to submit the supplemental ESSER III application is Tuesday, August 17, 2021. The NDDPI is working to create the supplemental application which will be distributed to school personnel in the coming weeks.

Laurie Matzke, Assistant Superintendent
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
lmatzke@nd.gov
(701) 328-2284

Example of Learning Loss

Part D: Narratives

1. **Addressing Learning Loss**

Rolette School District 29 is using a variety of data (NWEA; NDSA; Study Island; Reading Eggs; Math Seeds; Exact Path; test scores and teacher input) and earmarked a minimum of (10%) ten percent to Learning Loss. This will be in the area of $40,000 minimum. Services will be integrated with Title I, Title II, and Title IV which RSD 29 currently comingles.

EXACT PATH/and Edmentum.

RSD 29 has had a long-lasting use of Edmentum products. We've utilized Study Island; Reading Eggs; Math Seeds; and now Exact Path to assist students and teachers with assessments, support, and additional learning for Reading/Literacy; math; and Language skills. Using Exact Path and its ability to tie into NWEA/MAPS will allow for specific learning loss/interventions for all students, but especially students identified as at risk.

Literacy/Reading Fluency

Professional Development (PD) will be provided to address reading/comprehension gaps in our targeted populations and individual students identified with the data provided.

Updated PD using LindaMood Bell (LiPS, Visualizing & Verbalizing), Read Naturally, and blending it with Study Island/Exact Path and Steve Dun Writing to create a more well-rounded language aware culture (reading, writing, and speaking) to create students with stronger, well-rounded, literate foundations. This PD will be on-going from summer courses; working with NESC, our area REA; throughout the school year; and by sending staff to the All Educators' Conference and other professional development opportunities.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

RSD 29 has implemented Sources of Strength, but has now hired a new/full-time counselor and has hired many new staff that will need training and support with Sources of Strength; resilience/grit; and how to support and empower students and staff in a new, ever-changing world and culture that is enhanced and complicated with the availability of technology.

RSD 29 also realizes that clubs, arts and sports play a solid benefit to assisting in creating a well-rounded SEL environment. Funding to enhance supplemental services that will benefit students' specific interests will be reviewed and created.

Programs, training, and tools to motivate students and support and engage students/staff/families to create a safe and engaging climate within/outside of the school building will be encouraged and supplied.

Tutoring

RSD 29 is reviewing Evidence-Based Before/Afterschool programs that work under the guidelines of ESSA. With this, our district has historically contract our busing services. This has hindered After-school tutoring for the most needy students. Rolette School District will be purchasing a bus to help supply transportation to students affected by lack of busing services and hiring a bus driver for those after-hours needs.

Creating Partnerships

RSD 29 will work to develop partnerships with Turtle Mountain Community College and Lake Region College regarding cultural awareness, dual credit, and various career, culture, and college opportunities.