



Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

Strategies to Consider

Summary

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act includes a \$3 billion Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund which governors can use at their discretion to provide support for early childhood education, K-12 education, higher education, and other education entities.

Per the legislation, these flexible funds can be utilized to provide emergency support through:

- Grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) that the state education agency (SEA) deems to have been significantly impacted by the pandemic; and
- Grants to institutions of higher education (IHEs) serving students that the governor determines have been significantly impacted by the pandemic; and
- Grants to other education-related entities deemed essential for carrying out emergency education services, the provision of child care and early childhood education, social and emotional support, and the protection of education-related jobs.

To access the funds, Governors must complete a simple Certification and Agreement Form and submit it to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) no later than June 1, 2020. Funds will remain available for obligation through September 30, 2022. Governors must award funds to eligible entities (i.e., LEAs, IHEs, and education-related entities) within one year of receiving the State's GEER Fund allocation from the U.S. Department of Education. A more detailed summary of the legislation can be found [here](#).

In response to the new opportunities available in the GEER Fund, this document provides an overview of some of the strategies governors can use to determine how best to allocate these funds. It also highlights several general issue areas in early childhood, K-12, and higher education that could potentially be addressed through these funds.

Strategies to Consider

In determining how best to use these funds, governors and state officials should consider GEER funding alongside other important funding streams at the federal, state, and local levels and consider various sources of evidence regarding state and community needs. The GEER Fund requires initial reporting to ED within 45 days of receiving funds which will include the criteria used by states to determine which grantees were most impacted by COVID and essential for carrying out educational services. This timeline will require governors' offices to quickly establish these criteria in collaboration with their state agency and education leaders. These monies are intended to address emergency needs across the entire education spectrum, from early care to postsecondary education, and there will doubtlessly be urgent requests for these funds from agencies, localities, and advocacy groups. This leaves governors' offices with the unenviable task of quickly assessing gaps, establishing metrics, and developing priorities for these time-limited funds.



In order to identify present and projected needs, states can consider:

- Obtaining feedback from key stakeholders to provide recommendations about current and future areas of need. States should keep in mind equity and diversity of voices when seeking input and feedback. Specific cross-sector stakeholders represented could include:
 - Early care and education leaders, such as state child care administrators, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, state early learning directors, and IDEA Part C Coordinators.
 - Pre-K-12 leaders, such as district superintendents, school principals, and teachers.
 - SEA officials, such as the chief state superintendent, chief finance officer, and chief academic officer.
 - State higher education leaders, such as the state higher education executive officers (SHEEOs) and representatives of statewide university systems, public and private institutions, and community and technical colleges.
 - Community-based organizations that provide education or ancillary supports like after school programs or support services.
 - Other state agency representatives, such as human services representatives and Department of Corrections representative(s);
 - Legislators, especially those that are members of or chair education-related committees;
 - Parents and students.
- Collecting and analyzing data from districts, postsecondary institutions, community surveys, and outreach to community-based organizations to identify which communities and student populations have been impacted most significantly by the pandemic.
- Analyzing asset maps of current federal, state, and local education funding streams and reviewing where predicted declines in revenue or state cuts budget are expected to affect the education continuum.
- Targeting historically underserved populations and identifying the resources needed to better support them, including student parents with child care expenses, foster youth, Pre-K-12 and postsecondary students that experience housing and/or food insecurity, students from lower-income backgrounds, DACA recipients, etc.
- Developing both short- and long-term goals and priorities based on data and identified gaps. Consider establishing metrics for evaluating progress over time.

After determining allocation of funding, states should plan to develop:

- A timeline for disbursing funds, taking into consideration:
 - The state's public health strategy
 - How fits into broader state recovery efforts
- Reporting guidelines for funding recipients, balancing the need for urgent and easy use with quality control measures and necessary data collection.
- A communications strategy to share funding and implementation plans with:
 - LEA's and IHE's



- Students and parents
- Community leaders and advocates
- Legislators
- The general public

Issue Areas to Consider

Governors can use GEER funds, in coordination with funding from other CARES Act provisions, to address a variety of potential areas across early care and education, Pre-K-12 education, and higher education. Some specific suggestions include:

- **Early care and education**

- Coordinate with key state early childhood officials, including Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, child care administrators, state early learning directors, IDEA Part C Coordinators, and state legislators (and consider establishing a point person in the governor's office to coordinate early care and education response) to:
 - Establish guidance and best practices for provision of emergency child care and develop comprehensive plans for reopening child care programs.
 - Provide additional compensation for those providing emergency care given their higher risk for contracting the virus.
 - Cover costs of additional staff needed to accommodate distancing measures and to allow for substitutes for staff who are sick or unable to return to work.
 - Cover child care costs for essential frontline workers who are in emergency child care, regardless of income, during both COVID-19 crisis and recovery periods.
 - Support the ongoing sanitization of child care facilities for emergency care and in preparation for reopening of child care programs.
 - Provide access to supplies and equipment to child care and early childhood education programs to ensure safe, continued education and protect the workforce.
 - Ensure infants and toddlers with disabilities receive access to services through tele-intervention, distance learning technology or non-technological delivery methods (e.g., phone calls, print materials, etc).

- **Pre-K-12:**

- Support continuity of learning during school closures.
 - Provide guidance for districts and schools to develop and implement distance learning plans for students, including online learning and alternative forms of instructional delivery.
 - Ensure student access to appropriate educational materials through multiple technology and non-technology delivery models, platforms, and options (e.g. internet, electronic devices, handouts and packets of materials).
 - Collect and analyze data for identifying school and community needs and gaps in student and family access to technology and connectivity, and ensure student,



family, and educator access to technology, including working with community partners and businesses to identify internet hotspots and provide internet access and/or devices for teaching and learning.

- Design instructional activities, experiences, and learning goals aligned with the skills, abilities, and developmental needs of students.
- Provide professional development and support for teachers to deliver distance/online learning models.
- Build systems to track student engagement with online learning and create plans to engage with students who do not log on to online learning or are otherwise “absent” from distance learning.
- Support the provision of school meals and other support services for students during school closures.
- Provide for improved sanitization of school facilities by purchasing cleaning supplies and developing enhanced sanitization procedures and processes.
- Support academic recovery efforts in the 2020-21 school year to mitigate learning loss, particularly among historically underserved student populations (i.e. low-income children, children with disabilities, English-language learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth).
 - Plan and implement summer learning and supplemental after-school programs, including enrichment programs and online or classroom-based instruction.
 - Maintain school staffing, including the salaries and employment of teachers, principals, counselors, and other personnel who work directly with students.
 - Provide social, emotional, behavioral and mental health supports for staff and students, particularly students experiencing trauma.
 - Provide professional development for teachers and principals, especially in the areas of blended learning and individualized instruction.
 - Design and implement diagnostic tests to assess students’ academic standing and social-emotional development when schools reopen.
 - Develop data-informed individualized support plans for students who are academically or developmentally behind as a result of the closures.
- **Postsecondary Education:**
 - Fill funding gaps for postsecondary institutions that are likely to arise due to:
 - losses in tuition and fee revenue;
 - losses in campus auxiliary revenue (room refunds, refunds of dining fees, lost parking revenue, cancelled events, etc.);
 - increases in costs due to the transition to online instruction (costs to move employees to remote access, consultants, purchase of laptops, webcams, etc.);
 - decreases in research, endowment and philanthropic revenue;
 - increases in health, safety, cleaning and sanitations costs;
 - declines in enrollment due to a precipitous decline in family resources



- Provide supports for underserved student populations, including students experiencing homelessness and food insecurity, who are dependent on on-campus services
- Provide professional development support for faculty, especially in the areas of blended learning and distance education.
- Support apprenticeship and other work-based learning programs that have had in-person or job site training postponed or otherwise affected by the pandemic.
- Provide emergency grant aid to students who are not Title-IV eligible, this could include students in apprenticeship and workforce programs.
- Provide assistance for students to update their FAFSA submissions to reflect the effect of COVID 19 on their financial resources for the upcoming academic year.
- Support expanding broadband access, acquiring technology, increasing hotspot zones, and other means of ensuring that postsecondary students can remain connected to virtual learning.
- **P-16 Transition Supports:**
 - Provide supports for families and children transitioning into Pre-K and Kindergarten, with a focus on easing transitions using developmentally appropriate practices and robust family engagement processes.

Provide transitional supports to help students transition from K-12 to higher education, such as:

 - Supporting virtual advising resources
 - Increasing FAFSA completion efforts
 - Prioritizing academic catch up for next year's senior class so students can meet admissions requirements. This could take many forms including allowing rising seniors to attend summer programs or supporting the creation of university summer bridge programs
 - Clearly communicating application requirements for colleges and universities
 - Campaigns targeted towards students who may not be able to return on schedule