



PART C: USES OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUNDS
Submission by the Montana Office of Public Instruction
April 24, 2020

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).

Since the Governor issued the directive to close Montana schools, the OPI has held at least weekly statewide conference calls with School Superintendents. From those calls, emails, and one to one conversations it is apparent the needs of LEAs vary greatly throughout Montana. The theme we hear repeatedly is "Give us flexibility" which aligns with Montana's status as a local control state. We have issued the CARES Act guidance on allowable expenditures which is well understood by LEA personnel. Therefore, we will have two questions on the LEA application:

1. Describe the activities which the LEA will use the funds to support. Please highlight any technology and professional development support related to remote learning.
2. What can the OPI provide in terms of technical assistance that would most help your district?

The OPI has established parameters in the Montana statewide school accounting system that will allow both the OPI and the LEAs to track expenditures of these funds. We will ask to provide a summary of expenditures at appropriate intervals.

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.

The OPI will set aside 10%, or \$4,129,500 for discretionary funding.

As of this date, the OPI has committed funds as follows:

1. The OPI will supplement the 90% allocation to LEAs to provide a minimum of \$10,000 to each LEA including the 32 districts who do not participate and receive Title I funds. The total disbursement of this allocation will total \$615,025.
2. The OPI will use 0.5%, or \$206,475, for administrative costs related to the management of this grant. The funds will be used to create a module for this grant in the state's grant management system and to hire 1 FTE to administer this grant.

The OPI has not firmly committed funding amounts, but the balance of the reserve will address needs expressed Montana education stakeholders:

1. Support the additional expenditures required to provide special education services during this time period. Montana is a rural state and the school closures have presented challenges in how to provide services to Montana students with disabilities. The OPI is working on an equitable method to provide funds to Special Education Cooperatives serving small schools and those schools that do not belong to cooperatives.
2. Support community-based organizations that are not LEAs but provide vital community support to our students. Examples may include out of school providers, summer learning loss, etc.
3. Address districts needs in more COVID impacted areas of the state as specific help is requested.
4. Provide technical assistance to LEAs as requested in the LEA grant applications.