



# Leveraging ESSER Funds - Virtual Conference

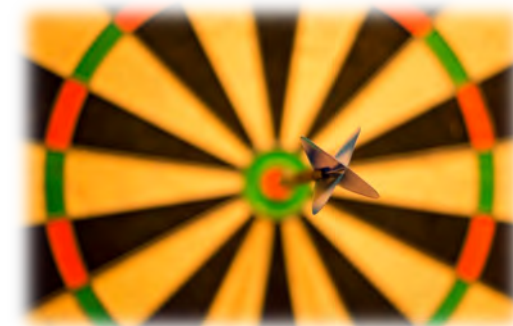
## ESSER Impacts

*Prepare, Prevent, and Respond*

August 9, 2022

# Goals For This Session

- Background – Where Were We?
- Perspective – Where Are We Now?
- Promotion – Sharing Your Use of ESSER Funds
  - Why: Compliance and the Cliff
  - How: Style and Structure/Content
    - Publicity, publications, templates, examples, borrow and modify
  - Where: Target Audience and Goal
- ESSER System of Support - Advocate and Auditor



Presenters: **Wendi Fawns**, ESSER/EANS Director  
**Rebecca Brown**, ESSER Program Manager

# BACKGROUND



Where Were We?

# Background – Where Were We?

- The ESSER grant came about as an emergency response in a time of unknown.
- At its beginning, the priority was to utilize the funds quickly and effectively to help students in the new world of Covid.

COVID Related Funding Received By Montana Schools



MT < \$ 1 Billion, WA = \$1 < \$9 Billion, CA > \$10 Billion



# Background – Grant Cycle – High Level Summary

ESSER CARES I, ESSER CRRSA II, and ESSER ARP III  
ESSER ARP Afterschool and ESSER ARP Summer  
ESSER ARP Homeless and ESSER GEERS and.....



- DOE awards funds to States per Title I type formula
- State distributes funds to districts based on Title I type formula
- Districts develop a plan for use of funds and begin to spend funds
- DOE adds grant requirements, plans, data collection, 40% FRL, impacts...
- Districts continue to spend, track, report, ... repeat

# Background – Emergency – Short Term vs. Long Term

- Funds awarded before needs assessment
- Funds have strings attached
- Administration of grant changing
- Transparency required

This slide was  
also presented  
at MASBO  
6/16/2022



- Apollo 13 square peg round hole

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ry55--J4\\_VQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ry55--J4_VQ)





# Background – Emergency – Short Term vs. Long Term



This slide was  
also presented  
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# Background – What is ESSER Used For?

- Allowable vs Reasonable
- Department of [Education FAQ](#)
- Department of Education Fact Sheets
  - [DOE Construction and Late Liquidation Letter May 2022](#)
  - [CCSSO memo on ESSER Funds for Construction December 2021](#)
  - [DOE Construction Slides September 2, 2021](#)
  - [DOE Staffing Labor Shortages April 14, 2021](#)
  - [DOE DUN UEI Fact Sheet May 2022](#)
- Try to use the most restrictive funds first
- Cost effective solutions
- The greatest gain to student-specific outcomes







# Background – What is ESSER Used For?

Various ED guidance documents state that addressing challenges that existed *before* the pandemic can be a reasonable *response to the pandemic*.

- [ESSER and GEER FAQs May 2021](#)
- 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 ... p. 9
- Implementing or expanding art programs, sports programs, or clubs. C-3
- Improving existing data systems. C-12
- Sustaining and maximizing enrollment in existing summer programs. C-25
- Continuing to pay existing employees and contractors. D-3
- ED says SEAs and LEAs can use ESSER funds for mental health services and supports for students that were experiencing trauma before the pandemic. C-14
- Curriculum, including related professional development. ([ARP Public Safety Guidance](#), pp.5-6)

# Background – What is ESSER Used For?

## ESSER Funds for Construction, Renovation, and Minor Remodeling

- Allowable uses to “do what they can to address other infrastructure issues, **such as ensuring that preexisting ventilation, roofing, and plumbing needs do not inhibit healthy learning environments.**” (COVID-19 Handbook, Vol. 2, p. 16)

- Capital Expenditure preapproval form:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdp7YZU\\_ksHyOOFic\\_oHMJgLiGEceAknUYBMacuMCqAgFrChg/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdp7YZU_ksHyOOFic_oHMJgLiGEceAknUYBMacuMCqAgFrChg/viewform?usp=sf_link)

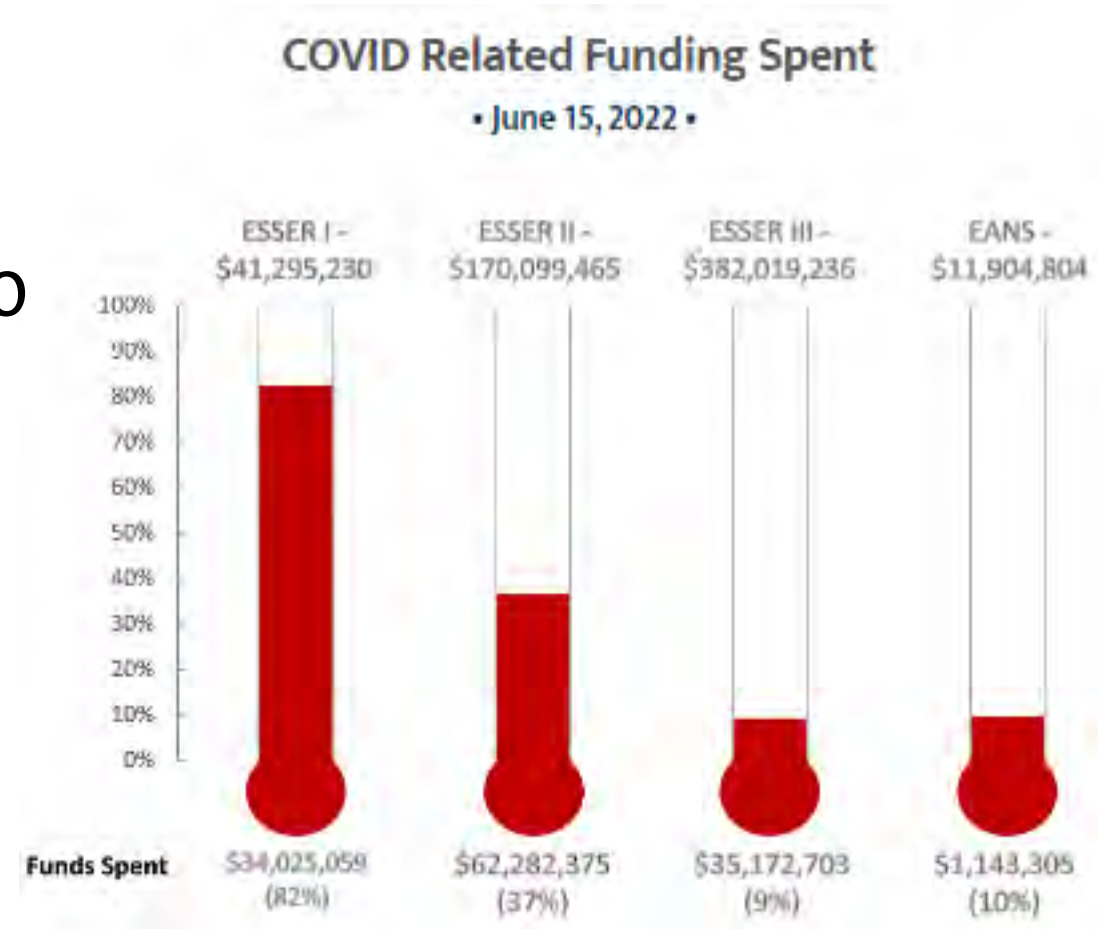
# PERSPECTIVE



Where Are We Now?

# Perspective – Where Are We Now?

- ~82% of ESSER I has been spent
- ESSER I must be spent by Sept.30
  - Check in: Where is your district at?
- ESSER II spent by Sept.30, 2023
- ESSER III spent by Sept.30, 2024



# Perspective – Where Are We Now?

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- Now that ESSER has been around for a while, we need to start publicizing all of the GOOD it has enabled us to accomplish.
- Across the state, we are seeing schools and organizations use ESSER in innovative, valuable ways which are truly benefitting the students.





# Perspective – Where Are We Now?

- ESSER has enabled schools and organizations to implement highly effective and beneficial programs, which come at a cost.
- What happens when ESSER ends and there is no more federal money to continue these programs? We don't want them to stop!



# Perspective – Where Are We Now?

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It's a hard question to think about:

How do you continue a  
program after the  
funding stops?

# PROMOTION



## Sharing Your Use of ESSER Funds

# Promoting Your Use of ESSER Funds

- INVOLVE YOUR COMMUNITY!
- Be very public with everything ESSER allows you to accomplish - show student gain.
  - Publish your plan, and take progress pictures, ...
- Bring in the newspaper or the TV station, and show them all that is being achieved.
- Host events and give tours, so the public has a chance to come in and see your success.



# Promoting Your Use of ESSER Funds

## WHY?

- If the community has a partnership and a vested interest in your organization, then the ESSER funding “cliff” won’t pose a threat.
- When the federal funding ends, the community partnership will continue.
- In Montana, **our communities make us strong.** And community support will ensure your program carries on even after the federal monies stop.





# Promoting Use of ESSER Funds



- **Think backwards** from end to beginning- sit back and enjoy the view
- Think system, broad and innovative
  - What data and photos will help tell your best story
  - What can students, parents, teachers, school, and community gain through data and photos
  - Who can we engage and what can we gain
  - *The community will support successful schools but are unlikely to support perceived failing ones*

<b>Accountants</b>	Free audit checks with desire to help solve before problem is identified
<b>NHS and Key Club students</b>	CTE credit, real work that students can earn credit for during study hall, senior release, ... fliers, website design, excel sheets (\$1.5 Connecticut story)
<b>Rotary and PEO members, retired teachers ...</b>	Trained professionals often new to the community wanting to be connected in a meaningful way can produce reports, powerpoint presentations, perform research, conduct outreach
<b>Hospitals and other businesses</b>	Have great ideas about CTE, Internships, and often are attached to Foundation funding that can later help with the 'cliff'

# Promoting Your Use of ESSER Funds

## WHY?

- Always keep in mind, this is for our **students**. Everything you're doing with ESSER will benefit the students and give them a better future. Make sure you're helping your community see that as well.



# SUBSTANCE



What should publicity/publications  
look like?



## An article in the paper can be as simple as a photo with a caption...

ABC Schools invites YOU, the community, to our Ground Breaking Ceremony for the new Playground!

In 2020 when ESSER (Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief) funds were given to schools nationwide, ABC Schools came up with a plan to put those funds to good use for our students. Our facilities were outdated and in dire need of repair, with a focus on cleanliness and sanitation to prevent the spread of infectious disease. (Our School Plan can be found on our website at <https://abcschools.plan.info/>)

Part of our ESSER funds are being used to replace the elementary school playset. The existing playset is made from wood which, while sturdy, is beginning to crack and splinter, posing a safety concern for our students. None of us want your students to come home with a torn shirt or infected scrape from a wood splinter!

(Fig. 1: Old playset at ABC Elementary)

The new playset is made of PVC Vinyl and Poly Lumber, which won't splinter or hurt children. The smoother surfaces will be easier to sanitize so we can prevent the spread of infectious disease. AND, the new playset will be big enough to accommodate 15 students at a time, giving more opportunities for students to interact socially and emotionally!

Please join us on Monday, July 18<sup>th</sup> at the ABC Elementary School Playground at 11am, to help break ground on our brand new playground! We hope to see you there.



(Figure 1: New flooring and cabinets being installed in Classroom A1)

The remodel project includes all new modern HVAC equipment to keep air filtered and clean. Old carpets will be removed and replaced with laminate flooring which is much easier to clean and sanitize. Many of our school's windows were unable to open to let in fresh air, and none of our windows had bug screens, so all windows are being replaced with energy-efficient screened windows. We are also replacing the elementary school playset with a newer version which is made out of PVC Vinyl and Poly

Lumber, which won't splinter or hurt children, and will be easier to sanitize.

(Figure 2: Old/outdated HVAC equipment to be replaced)

Plans for the construction of this remodel project were drawn up by local contractors ABC Builders, and all building materials are being ordered through the local lumberyard. ABC Schools greatly appreciates the community support in this project. Our community is what makes us strong!

Construction in the school began on June 3, 2022 and is due to be finished by December 20, 2022. We look forward to ringing in the new year with newly updated facilities!



(Figure 3: Principal Smith's dog, Spot, helps supervise the hallway remodel)

Playground equipment has been replaced, and we are working on putting down new mulch underneath to provide a soft landing for kiddos.

For more information, or to come see the updated facilities, please contact the Superintendent's office at 406-123-4567.



(Figure 4: The new windows in Classroom A1 open to the school garden)



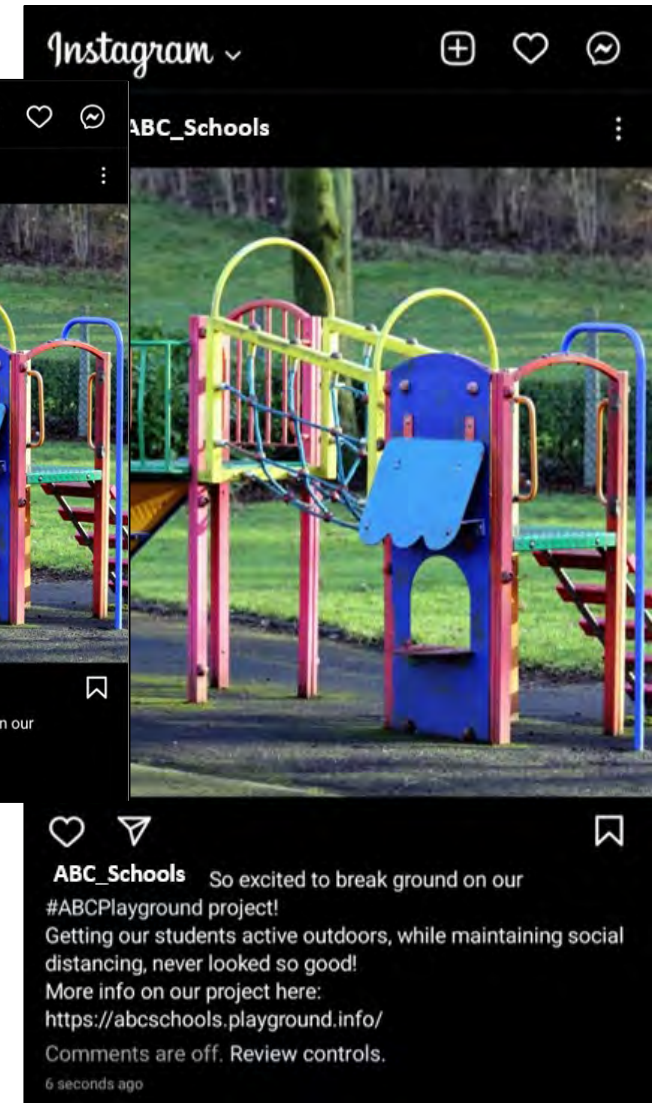
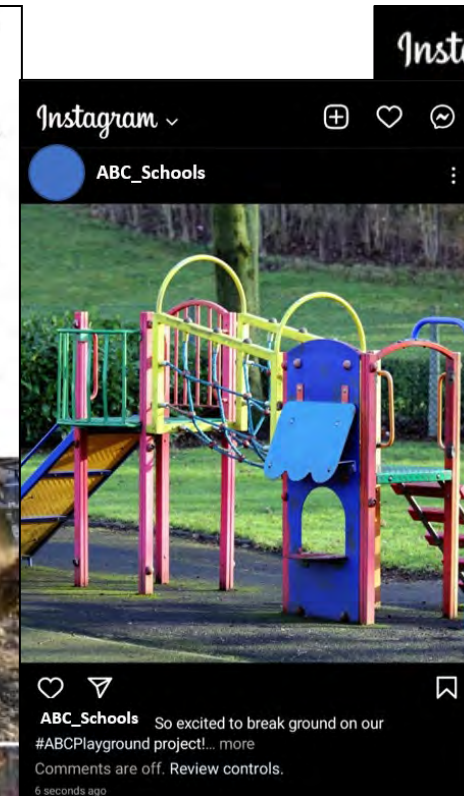
School Custodian John Smith hard at work cutting material for cabinets to be installed in ABC School's newly remodeled ADA-Accessible multipurpose room.

## ... or as thorough as a full-page spread!



# Social Media Posts

Social Media like Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter can be quick, easy ways to get info out and engage the community.





# AUDIENCE



Who should you send the  
publications to?

# Newspapers – Local and Regional

- If your community has a local newspaper, utilize that! And don't just stop there, reach out to your regional paper as well.
- **For example**, someone in Conrad could contact both the Independent Observer (local) and the Great Falls Tribune (regional) newspapers.



# Newspapers – Local and Regional

Billings Gazette (Billings)



Great Falls Tribune (Great Falls)



Helena Independent (Helena)



Kalispell Daily Interlake (Kalispell)



Montana Standard (Butte)



The Missoulian (Missoula)



Missoula Independent (Missoula)



Bozeman Daily Chronicle (Bozeman)



# TV News Station

- Invite your local TV news station to be a part of the project! Send them the information in an email, or talk to them on the phone, to introduce the project and invite them to your community.
- TV spots can include a **before-and-after** of the project once it's completed. **Personal interviews** with administration, teachers, students, or community members can show the need for, or the benefit of, the improvements you've been making.



# Montana TV Stations

KTVQ-2 (CBS, Billings)

KULR-8 (NBC, Billings)

KSVI-6 (ABC) & KHMT-4 (Fox) (Billings)

KUSM (PBS, Bozeman)

KTVM-6/42 (NBC, Butte/Bozeman)

KTGF-16 (NBC, Great Falls)

KFBB-5 (ABC, Great Falls)

KRTV-3 (CBS, Great Falls)

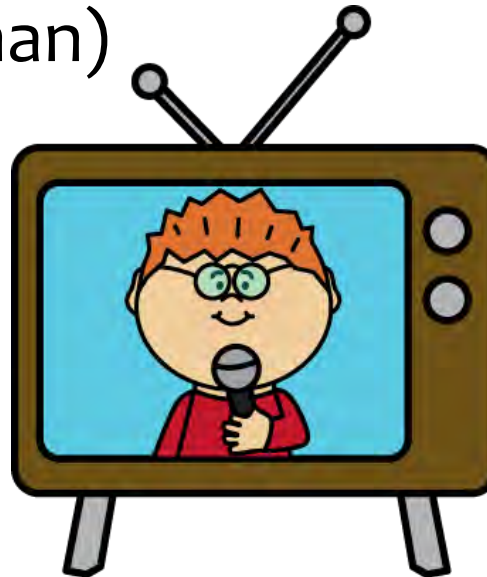
KCFW-9 (NBC, Kalispell)

KECI-13 (NBC, Missoula)

KTMF-23/59 (CBS,  
Missoula/Kalispell)

KPAX-8 (CBS, Missoula)

KUFM (PBS, Missoula)





# Radio Stations

- What local radio stations play in your community?
- Get on their website or give them a call - reach out to them and ask if they will do a news spot on your project.
- You might send them an article you've written and ask them to read it on air, or perhaps invite them to your location so they can see the project for themselves and report back on it.



# Takeaways

- ESSER benefits the students which benefits the community
- Anywhere people **gather** visually present ESSER student gains
- Use ESSER funds to make your Community strong
- Know your community strengths through partnerships with
  - Booster club, parent/family committee
  - Other Guilds or Unions in your community
  - Mayor's Office or Chamber of Commerce
  - Local Churches or Restaurants
  - Post Office, Community Center, or Community Bulletin Board



# Resources at OPI.MT.GOV

## Montana Office of Public Instruction



### Welcome to the Office of Public Instruction

Superintendent Elsie Arntzen is proud to serve our Montana families, students, and teachers. **Families are the foundation of learning as our parents are our first teachers.** Our students are our most precious resource and the future of this great state. As a teacher of 23 years, the Superintendent knows the importance of quality educators in the classroom and is working to ensure Montana teachers have the flexibility needed to put our Montana students first.

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) is charged with the responsibility of providing technical assistance in:

- School Finance
- School Law
- Teacher Certification and Licensing
- School Accreditation
- Teaching and Learning Standards

The OPI staff administer a number of federally funded programs and provide a variety of information services, including the information systems necessary to assess student achievement and the quality of Montana's elementary and secondary school systems.

OFFICE OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT

MEET EXECUTIVE STAFF

OPI ORGANIZATIONAL  
CHART

SEE OPI PRESS RELEASES

ESSER



[Wendi Fawns](#)  
ESSER/EANS Director

Wendi's grandmothers were elementary teachers and her parents' college professors. They shaped Wendi's passion for learning anywhere, anytime and in varied formats. Wendi has taught dyslexic readers in elementary schools and provided college/career program support to schools and families across Montana. Her career in social work, information technology, and education have centered around helping customers identify goals and gain the resources necessary to succeed. She holds a BA in Sociology with MIS focus and a MA in Education Leadership. She is a strong customer advocate, member of Rotary and P.E.O. International, and mother of a Montana high school teacher and Arizona college advisor.

406-437-8595



[Rebecca Brown](#)  
ESSER Program Manager

Rebecca Brown is joining us from the Bozeman School District where she worked as an ICTE instructor, teaching Metals, Woods, and Auto shop classes. Rebecca holds a BS in Technology Education from Montana State University Bozeman. She has just recently moved to Helena with her husband, cats, and parakeet. Born and raised in Montana, Rebecca feels nothing can beat a gorgeous Montana summer weekend spent camping and floating on the river.

406-444-0783

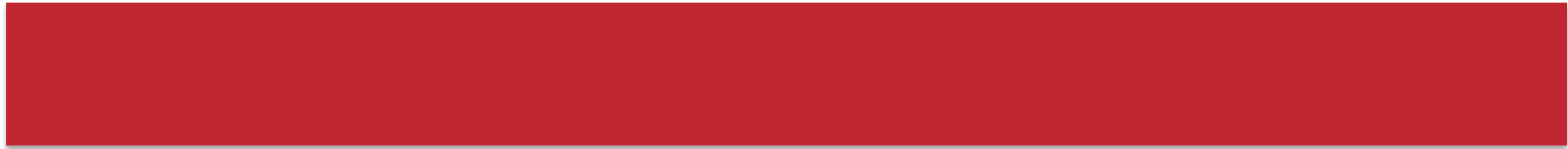


[Victoria Hoeftler](#)  
Broadband Data Specialist

Victoria Hoeftler relocated to Montana from the Atlanta, Georgia area. Victoria's previous roles in Corporate America include IT Support, Project Management, B2B Client Support, Software Training and Copywriting. In her secondary job, Victoria serves as the Founder and President of a 501(c)(3) Charity bringing awareness to mental health needs of Military Veterans and better quality of life for Military Families. She is looking forward to identifying effective ways to improve broadband internet data in the school throughout Montana.

406-438-3601

# Thank you!



For questions or additional information please contact  
Wendi Fawns at [wendi.fawns@mt.gov](mailto:wendi.fawns@mt.gov) or 406-437-8595  
Rebecca Brown at [rebecca.brown@mt.gov](mailto:rebecca.brown@mt.gov) or 406-437-4795