Leveraging ESSER Funds - Virtual Conference
Reporting and Data Compliance
Prepare, Prevent, and Respond

August 9, 2022
Goals For This Session

- ESSER Allocations
- Significance of allocation funding formula
  - Title I source anchor and subset allocations
- ESSER Grant Cycle
- Grant compliance (target focus and outcomes)
  - Allowable and Reasonable per Federal guidelines (FAQ)
  - Transparent and Traceable grant management
    - Safe Return and ESSER ARP (use) Plans
    - Federal Annual Report and Ongoing stakeholder engagement
- ESSER System of Support - Advocate and Auditor

Presenters: Wendi Fawns, ESSER/EANS Director
            Mindi Askelson, Grant Management Systems Analyst
ESSER Allocations

- ESSER I (CARES) expires 2022
- ESSER II (CRRSA) expires 2023
- ESSER III (ARP) expires 2024

Data retrieved from DOE site: https://covid-relief-data.ed.gov/
Significance of Funding Formula

Title I and ESSER Connection

• Funds are awarded based on Title I guidelines/proportions
  o Title I and ESSER funds allocation and use are very similar
  o Identified and reported Title I student count matters

• Grant guidelines and reports are similar
  o Participation numbers
  o What funding was spent on
  o Annual data collection
  o Outcomes per grant funds – braiding not blending
Year 1: 2020 ESSER I (CARES)
Year 2: 2021 ESSER II (CRRSA) and ESSER III (ARP)

- DOE awards funds to States per Title I type formula
- The state distributes funds to districts per 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
- Districts continue to spend, track, report... repeat
Short vs Long Term Compliance

• Funds awarded before a needs assessment
• Funds have strings attached
• Administration of grant not fully disclosed
• Transparency required

• Tips for long-term compliance
  o Don’t hide behind the computer
  o Manage and document spending
  o Document and measure outcomes
  o Write down your logic for making a decision
Grant Compliance – Allowable/Reasonable

- Grant compliance (target and outcomes)
  - Allowable and Reasonable per Federal guidelines
    - FAQ May 2021
    - Charts comparing grant cycles from DOE and OPI

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
Capital Expenditures

• Project not pieces
• Relate project/purchase to student gains
• Project Scope can be used to track status and outcomes
  o Project Scope can be submitted to ESSER team before completing the form and used to copy/paste into the form, amendments, and cash requests as the project progresses
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)
Includes examples of allowable projects from ED (with citations):

- Improving school security,
- Improving drinking water including lead remediation,
- Servicing or upgrading HVAC systems,
- Stipends for teachers,
- Lap tops, internet routers,
- Repairing windows and/or doors so they can open to let fresh air in,
- Fencing and playground equipment,
- Professional Development,
- Curriculum, text books/online, remote learning,
- Field trips, and .....
Allowable/Reasonable exercise

• Allowable AND Reasonable

• Under what circumstances are the items below allowable.
  
  o Outdoor shed for storing ‘extra’ covid items
  o Tent or gazebo for outdoor presentations fresh air
  o iPads with bar code readers for internship skill and knowledge documentation
  o Provide workshops for 4-H and other community partners to develop mentoring fall programming around animal care
  o Establish mentoring and/or tutoring programs for students
  o Establish a collaborative team of district personnel and stakeholders to create, implement, and review action plans around system preparedness and innovative learning
  o Hiring professional coach to manage a pilot team tasked with developing proficiency based assessment for hospital and restaurant interns to gain out of seat time credit for math, health, and accounting
• Transparent and Trackable grant management
• **ESSER ARP** (use) **Plans**, December and June
• **Safe Return Plans** Glendive Evergreen, Dec and June
Federal annual report
  - Funding and outcomes attached
  - Participation numbers and spending categories

Ongoing ESSER stakeholder engagement
  - The active process of involving those who may be affected by ESSER decisions (students, parents, teachers, community)
    - Connecticut is giving students $1.5 Million ESSER funds to make decisions on allocation
• **Think backwards** from end to beginning- sit back and enjoy the view
• **Think system, broad and innovative**
  o What data do I need at the end to prove results and gains
  o What can students, parents, teachers, school, and community gain through data
  o Who can we engage and what can we gain (aside from compliance and short-term funds)

*The community will support successful schools but are unlikely to support perceived failing ones.*

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<tr>
<th><strong>Accountants</strong></th>
<th>Free audit checks with desire to help solve before problem is identified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NHS and Key Club students</strong></td>
<td>CTE credit, real work that students can earn credit for during study hall, senior release, … fliers, website design, excel sheets</td>
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<td><strong>Rotary and PEO members, retired teachers ...</strong></td>
<td>Trained professionals often new to the community wanting to be connected in a meaningful way can produce reports, powerpoint presentations, perform research, conduct outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hospitals and other businesses</strong></td>
<td>Have great ideas about CTE, Internships, and often are attached to Foundation funding that can later help with the ‘cliff’</td>
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Reality of the Setting: Auditors beware

• Setting generated by ESSER is challenging
  o Grant is changing and will continue to change
  o different from other grants
• Creates stress of the unknown
• Stress increases the likelihood of errors/mistakes
• Winning the lottery is not always fun
# OPI’s System of Support

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<th>Advocate</th>
<th>Auditor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assist in securing operationally, technically, and financially feasible solutions</td>
<td>Documentation templates and report reviews; plans, data collection, projects</td>
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<td>Helping to reduce work effort by demonstrating how one task can lead to more than one gain (public awareness of ESSER spending leading to future funding)</td>
<td>Monitoring and reporting on grant compliance</td>
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<td>Training passing along information, regulations, guidelines</td>
<td>DOE ongoing training passing along information, regulations, guidelines</td>
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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.
Thank you!

For questions or additional information please contact:

ESSER Program Questions
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Rebecca Brown at rebecca.brown@mt.gov or 406-444-0783