



ESSER Bulletin

December 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



ESSER Close Out Process: In partnership with the district, the ESSER Team is closing out the ESSER Grant. This process aims to ensure district documentation and processing comply with grant regulations and best accounting/grant management practices.

Thank you to the districts who have already completed their full ESSER Closeout. We greatly appreciate your working with us to ensure compliances are met.

Please schedule and view the ESSER Close Out resources ([video](#) and [pdf](#)) before your meeting. Note this process is different than the E-Grants Final Expenditure Report (FER). It includes a full review of ESSER I, II & III Budget Pages and other relevant documentation. To schedule Close Out please contact opi.esserschcloseout@mt.gov. An email on ESSER spending and compliances for each District was sent in July to start the Close-Out Process.

- If you did not receive an email by July 15, 2024, check spam and contact [ESSER Meet the Team](#).

OPI recognizes the hard work that everyone is doing to close out ESSER. The obligation period for ESSER III has ended. However, based on several factors, OPI has implemented an ESSER Grace Period allowing ESSER E-Grants description change only for [Amendments](#) and [Cash Requests](#) to be processed until November 30, 2024. The [Final Expenditure Reports](#) will then be due by December 10, 2024. This grace period is intended for continued work on ESSER during the closeout period.

ESSER Unspent Funds

If you have any unspent funds in ESSER I, II, or III please complete the [ESSER Unspent Funds Authorization](#) Google Form.

ESSER System of Support includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person.

- The ESSER Team continues to host [Open Office Hours](#) on Wednesday and Thursday.

For further information please contact:

Wendi Fawns, ESSER/EANS Director at wendi.fawns@mt.gov (406) 437-8595

Allison Agostino, Project Communication Specialist at allison.agostino@mt.gov (406) 202-7685

November 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



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File name: an ESSER Compass ALL AA 2024

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- An email on ESSER spending and compliances for each District was sent in July to start the Close-Out Process.
- If you did not receive an email by July 15, 2024, check spam and contact [ESSER Meet the Team](#).

ESSER III Closeout Deadlines

- [Cash Requests](#) (final request for reimbursements) due by October 25, 2024.
- [Final Expenditure Reports](#) (FERs) due by November 10, 2024.

ESSER Compliances (delays may occur in ESSER III if below are incomplete)

Thank you to all entities that have completed their ESSER Compliances.

- [Self-Assessment](#) is past due November 30th, 2023.
- [ESSER Budget pages](#) detailing salaries and large projects/purchases

ESSER System of Support includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person.

- A [Monthly District Status Report](#) with allocation and remaining balance is posted on the OPI website.

ESSER III Funding Requests (expenditures, cash requests, request for reimbursements):

- Schools can NOT submit expenditures/Cash Requests embedded in **Final Expenditure Reports (FER)**
- Cash Requests are due by the 25th of each month and paid on the following 10th
- Cross-reference E-Grants Cash Requests and FERs with onsite accounting. Excel File provided by Corvallis Business Manager may be helpful: [E-Grants Prep & Processing - Amendments & Cash Requests OPI Oct22](#) (pdf), ([video](#)), ([Excel workbook](#))

ESSER III 20% Set-Aside - Schools cannot return Lost Instructional Time (LIT) funds

- Schools are required to spend 20% of ESSER III on Lost Instructional Time (LIT).

OPI Posted Resources:

- [OPI ESSER webpage](#)
- Department of Education [ESSER FAQs](#)
- All previous Compass newsletters ([2021-22](#)) ([2023](#)) ([2024](#))
- The liquidation extension for CARES, CRRSA, has been extended to ARP ([CCSSO Summary of DOE Liquidation](#), Department of Education [FAQs for liquidation extensions](#) and [Template](#)).

For further information please contact:

Wendi Fawns, ESSER/EANS Director at wendi.fawns@mt.gov (406) 437-8595

Rebecca Brown, ESSER Program Manager at rebecca.brown@mt.gov (406) 437-4795

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October 2024 ESSER Compass Update



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ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



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- An email on ESSER spending and compliances for each District was sent in July to start the Close-Out Process.
- If you did not receive an email by July 15, 2024, check spam and contact [ESSER Meet the Team](#).

ESSER III Closeout Deadlines

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September 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



ESSER Close-Out Process began in July 2024, contact Kimberly Kelly at kimberly.kelly@mt.gov or (406) 594-9295 to schedule an appointment. Note this process is different than the E-Grants Final Expenditure Report (FER). It includes a full review of ESSER I, II & III Budget Pages and other relevant documentation. Please complete a [Return Funds form](#) if you are returning awarded funds for any reason.

- An email on ESSER spending and compliances for each District was sent in July to start the Close-Out Process.
- If you did not receive an email by July 15, 2024, check spam and contact [ESSER Meet the Team](#).

ESSER III Closeout Deadlines

- [Amendments](#) due by September 30, 2024.
- [Cash Requests](#) (final request for reimbursements) due by October 25, 2024.
- [Final Expenditure Reports](#) (FERs) due by November 10, 2024.

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ESSER III 20% Set-Aside - Schools cannot return Lost Instructional Time (LIT) funds

- Schools are required to spend 20% of ESSER III on Lost Instructional Time (LIT).

[ESSER ELO \(Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity\) Grant](#) (Math/Reading Literacy).

- Please contact Allison Agostino at allison.agostino@mt.gov.
- See additional [examples here](#).

Cybersecurity Pilot Program from CCSSO announcement August 2, 2024

On June 6, the FCC [announced \[docs.fcc.gov\]](#) a three-year, \$200 million Schools and Libraries Cybersecurity Pilot Program. The pilot program will allow the FCC to obtain actionable data about which cybersecurity services and equipment would best help K-12 schools and libraries address the growing cyber threats and attacks against their broadband networks. The program will also allow the Commission to gather the data needed to better understand whether and how funds could be used to support the cybersecurity needs of schools and libraries and to share lessons learned. The pilot program will make \$200 million available to participating schools and libraries to defray the costs of eligible cybersecurity services and equipment. These funds are separate from the Commission's E-Rate program, to ensure gains in enhanced cybersecurity do not undermine E-Rate's success in connecting schools and libraries.



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Expansion of E-Rate for Wi-fi Hotspots at Home:

On July 18, the Federal Communications Commission voted to approve final rules to allow schools and libraries to utilize E-Rate resources to provide Wi-Fi hotspots for internet access for students without a reliable connection at home. FCC will require that hotspots and services are used primarily for educational purposes, are not funded through other sources, and uses are properly documented for auditing purposes.

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August 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



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- An email on ESSER spending and compliances for each District was sent in July to start the Close-Out Process.
- If you did not receive an email by July 15, 2024 check spam and contact [ESSER Meet the Team](#).

ESSER III Closeout Deadlines

- [Amendments](#) due by September 30, 2024.
- [Cash Requests](#) (final request for reimbursements) due by October 25, 2024.
 - ESSER III FERs do not permit embedded expenditures.
- [Final Expenditure Reports](#) (FERs) due by November 10, 2024.

ESSER System of Support includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person.

- ESSER Team regularly sends out reminder/status district reports. On the OPI website is posted a [Monthly District Status Report](#) on allocation and remaining balance.

ESSER III Funding Requests (expenditures, cash requests, request for reimbursements):

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- [ESSER Budget pages](#) detailing salaries and large projects/purchases
- [Annual Data Collection](#) past due April 15th, 2024. Thank you for submitting, we are currently reviewing the data.

ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant (Summer 2024, Math/Reading Literacy).

- Please contact Allison Agostino at allison.agostino@mt.gov.
- See additional [examples here](#).

LE Name	ELO History	ELO Funding	Student Participation	Average Weekly Participation	Program Topic
Panther Math and Reading Program	Afterschool 21' - 23' Summer 24'	\$97,423	26	7 hours	Math
Afterschool Club House	Afterschool & Summer 21' - 24'	\$173,382	767	10 hours	Reading
Real World Book Club	Afterschool & Summer 21' - 24'	\$177,999	288	28 hours	Math/Reading
Hamilton Players	Summer 23' - 24'	\$50,000	50	25 hours	Reading
Get Your Game On	Afterschool 21' - 23' Summer 23' - 24'	\$136,256	3115	3 hours	Math
Mango Math	Afterschool & Summer 21' - 24'	\$157,269	363	28 hours	Math
Code Girls United	Afterschool & Summer 21' - 24'	\$152,784	336	4 hours	Math
Educatio Learning Studio	Afterschool '21 Afterschool & Summer 22' - 24'	\$146,293	230	5 hours	Math

OPI Posted Resources:

- Broadband: [OPI Broadband Information](#) or [Digital Opportunity Plan](#) or Connectmt@mt.gov
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July 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)

ESSER Close-Out Process begins July 2024, contact Kimberly Kelly at kimberly.kelly@mt.gov or (406) 594-9295 to schedule an appointment. Note this process is different than the E-Grants Final Expenditure Report (FER). It includes a full review of ESSER I, II & III Budget Pages and other relevant documentation. Please complete a [Return Funds form](#) if you are returning awarded funds for any reason.

- A report of ESSER spending and compliances for each District will be sent in July to start the Close-Out Process.



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- If you do not receive one by July 15, 2024 check spam and contact [ESSER Meet the Team](#).

ESSER **System of Support** includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person.

- ESSER Team regularly sends out reminder/status district reports. On the OPI website is posted a Monthly District Status report on allocation and remaining balance. Districts were sent a Remaining Allocation reminder on April 26, 2024.

ESSER III Funding Requests (expenditures, cash requests, request for reimbursements):

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- No Cash Requests can be processed in July due to Fiscal Year-end
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- Cross-reference E-Grants Cash Requests and FERs with their onsite accounting. Excel File provided by Corvallis Business Manager may be helpful: [E-Grants Prep & Processing - Amendments & Cash Requests OPI Oct22](#) (pdf), [\(video\)](#), [\(Excel workbook\)](#)

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OPI Posted Resources:

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June 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



ESSER Close-Out Process will begin in June, contact Kimberly Kelly at kimberly.kelly@mt.gov or (406) 594-9295 to schedule an appointment. Note this process is different than the E-Grants Final Expenditure Report (FER). It includes a full review of ESSER I, II & III Budget Pages and other relevant documentation. Please complete a *Return Funds form* if you are returning awarded funds for any reason.

ESSER **System of Support** includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person.

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ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant (Summer 2024, Math/Reading Literacy).

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- See additional [examples here](#).

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May 2024 ESSER Compass Update

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- [Self-Assessment](#) is past due November 30th, 2023
- [ESSER Budget pages](#) detailing salaries and large projects/purchases
- [Annual Data Collection](#) past due April 15th, 2024. Similar to last year, excel spreadsheet **blue** cells

ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant (Summer 2024, Math/Reading Literacy).

- Please contact Allison Agostino at allison.agostino@mt.gov . See [examples here](#).

Broadband Project Across Montana:

- OPI Broadband Resources: <https://opi.mt.gov/COVID-19-Information/ESSER/Broadband>
- The States [Digital Opportunity Plan](#) is open for public comment by sending to Connectmt@mt.gov

Many **resources** are available on the [OPI ESSER webpage](#) including but not limited to:

- Department of Education [ESSER FAQs](#)
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The liquidation extension for CARES, CRRSA, has been extended to ARP (Department's [explanatory letter to states](#), [updated FAQs](#), and ARP ESSER and EANS [liquidation extension request template](#)).

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April 2024 ESSER Compass Update



File name: an ESSER Compass ALL AA 2024

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- **School Planning in a Post-ESSER Era workshop April 25-27.**

The liquidation extension for CARES, CRRSA, has been extended to ARP (Department's [explanatory letter to states](#), [updated FAQs](#), and ARP ESSER and EANS [liquidation extension request template](#)).

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- Self-Assessment past due November 30th, 2023 and ARP Plan and Safe Return Plan past due June 2023
- ESSER Budget pages detailing salaries and large projects/purchases
- Annual Data Collection will be April 1 – 15th, 2024 and will be similar to last year, excel spreadsheet **blue** cells.

ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant (Summer 2024 focuses Math/Reading Literacy).

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March 2024 ESSER Compass Update

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If your district has additional funding needs, please let the ESSER Team know so we can work toward a solution.

ESSER III Funding Requests (expenditures, cash requests, request for reimbursements):

- Schools will NOT be able to submit expenditures embedded in **Final Expenditure Reports (FER)**. All expenditures must be requested via Cash Requests before FERs get submitted.



File name: an ESSER Compass ALL AA 2024

- The OPI ESSER Team recommends cash requests be submitted at least bi-monthly.
- Schools can cross-reference E-Grants FERs with their onsite Accounting (Black Mountain, Foxey Lady, etc.)

ESSER III 20% Set-Aside - No Schools can return Lost Instructional Time (LIT) funds

- Schools are required to spend 20% of ESSER III on Lost Instructional Time (LIT).
- Please spend the **Lost Instructional Time** first. FERs will NOT be approved with remaining LIT funds.

ESSER Compliances:

Please expect delays in processing ESSER III amendments and cash requests if the below compliances are not completed.

- ESSER II FER past due November 10th, 2023
- Self-Assessment past due November 30th, 2023
- ARP Plan and Safe Return Plan past due June 2023
- ESSER II and III budget pages detailing salaries (FTE and grade level) and large projects/purchases approved through scope process (contact wendi.fawns@mt.gov (406) 437-8595 or rebecca.brown@mt.gov (406) 437-4795)
- Annual Data Collection will be April 1 – 15th, 2024. Process will be similar to last year, involve entering data into excel spreadsheet bright **blue** cells, and OPI will have a two-week period of walkthrough sessions to assist.
- The liquidation extension for CARES, CRRSA, has been extended to ARP (Department's [explanatory letter to states](#), [updated FAQs](#), and ARP ESSER and EANS [liquidation extension request template](#)).

ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant:

- [ESSER ELO](#) (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant funding available for the 2023-24 School Year (Afterschool) and Summer 2024 focuses on **Math and/or Reading Literacy**.
- Please contact Allison Agostino at allison.agostino@mt.gov or visit the [ELO Website page](#).

Broadband Project Across Montana:

- OPI Broadband Resources: <https://opi.mt.gov/COVID-19-Information/ESSER/Broadband>
- The States [Digital Opportunity Plan](#) is open for public comment by sending to Connectmt@mt.gov
- For more information on the Broadband project contact Allison Agostino (406-202-7685) for details.

Many **resources** are available on the [OPI ESSER webpage](#) including but not limited to:

- Department of Education [ESSER FAQs](#)
- All previous Compass newsletters ([2021-22](#)) ([2023](#)) ([2024](#))

For further information please contact:

Wendi Fawns, ESSER/EANS Director at wendi.fawns@mt.gov (406) 437-8595

Rebecca Brown, ESSER Program Manager at rebecca.brown@mt.gov (406) 437-4795

Allison Agostino, Project Communication Specialist and Broadband at allison.agostino@mt.gov (406) 202-7685

February 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)

ESSER III Funding Requests (expenditures, cash requests, request for reimbursements):

In an effort to ensure compliant close out of ESSER III, schools will NOT be able to submit expenditures embedded in their Final Expenditure Reports (FER). The OPI ESSER Team is also recommending that cash requests be submitted at least bi-monthly to ensure funds are fully obligated and expended by the ESSER III deadline of September 30, 2024. Funds must be requested via Cash Requests before FERs get submitted.



File name: an ESSER Compass ALL AA 2024



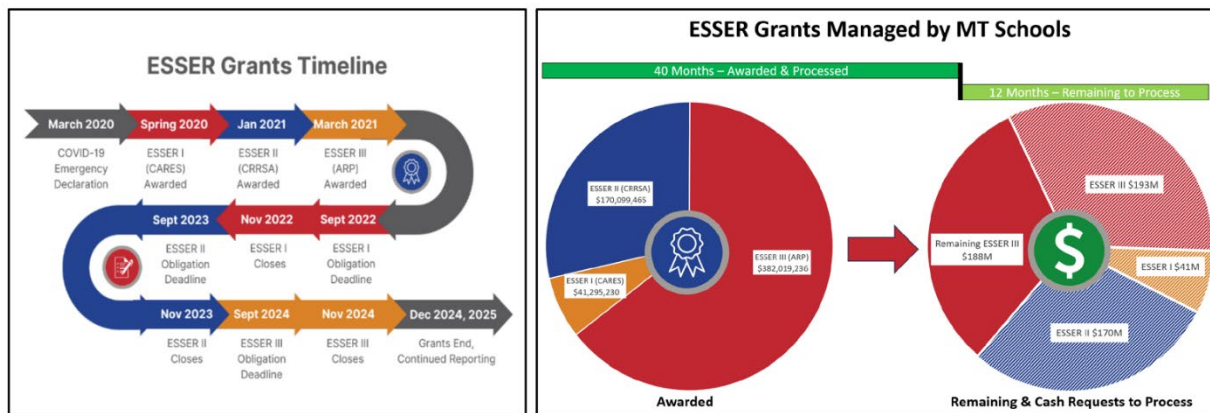
ESSER System of Support includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person. If your district has additional funding needs, please let the ESSER Team know so we can work toward a solution.

ESSER Compliances:

Please expect delays in processing ESSER III amendments and cash requests if the below compliances are not completed.

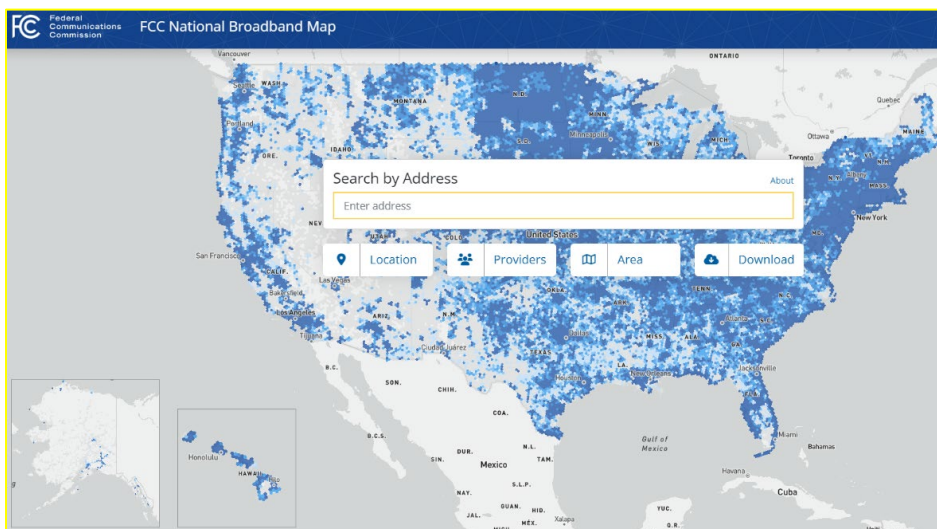
- [Final Expenditure Reports](#) for all ESSER II past due November 10th, 2023
- [Self-Assessment](#) past due November 30th, 2023
- [ARP Plan and Safe Return Plan](#) past due June 2023
- [ESSER II and III budget pages](#) updating/detailing salaries (FTE and grade level) and large projects/scopes/pre-approval through [Amendment](#) process
- [Capital Expenditure AND/OR Large Project/Item purchase](#) Scopes
- [Annual program/data reporting](#) (data collection) April 2024. Process will be similar to Year 3 (FY2022) involving an Excel data collection file largely populated through OPI data pulls. Districts will need to retrieve the file and update missing data by inputting into bright blue cells. OPI will have a two-week period of walkthrough sessions.

Accountability



District Monthly Status Reports (allocated and expended) can be viewed on the [OPI ESSER webpage](#).

Broadband Project Across Montana: Click on the map for details on Montana Broadband availability in your area



- OPI Broadband Resources: <https://opi.mt.gov/COVID-19-Information/ESSER/Broadband>
- The States [Digital Opportunity Plan](#) is open for public comment by sending to Connectmt@mt.gov
- For more information on the Broadband project contact Allison Agostino (406-202-7685) for details.



OPI ESSER Review/Monitoring Process: As part of [federal ESSER compliance](#) OPI is performing several monitoring activities. OPI has been assisting LEAs in mitigating risks to avoid audit findings by **reviewing requests for funding** and providing **assistance with compliance**.

The process to request a liquidation extension for CARES, CRRSA, has been extended to ARP. You can access the Department's [explanatory letter to states](#), [updated FAQs](#), and ARP ESSER and EANS [liquidation extension request template](#).

ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant:

- [ESSER ELO](#) (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant funding available for the 2023-24 School Year (Afterschool) and Summer 2024 focuses on **Math and/or Reading Literacy**.
- Please contact Allison Agostino at allison.agostino@mt.gov or visit the [ELO Website page](#).

E-Grants Budget and Cash Request Descriptions must be reviewed to ensure there is adequate detail provided. For more information and specific guidance, please [click here](#) and see [Amendment](#) and [Cash Request](#) guidance.

Many **resources** are available on the [OPI ESSER webpage](#) including but not limited to:

- Department of Education [ESSER FAQs](#)
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For further information please contact:

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Allison Agostino, Project Communication Specialist and Broadband at allison.agostino@mt.gov (406) 202-7685

January 2024 ESSER Compass Update

ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief)



ESSER III Funding Requests (expenditures, cash requests, request for reimbursements):

In an effort to ensure compliant close out of ESSER III, schools will NOT be able to submit expenditures embedded in their Final Expenditure Reports (FER). The OPI ESSER Team is also recommending that cash requests be submitted at least bi-monthly to ensure funds are fully obligated and expended by the ESSER III deadline of September 30, 2024. Funds must be requested via Cash Requests before FERs get submitted.

ESSER **System of Support** includes 6 days/week via Zoom, phone, email, text, and in person.

ESSER Compliances:

Please expect delays in processing ESSER III amendments and cash requests if the below compliances are not completed.

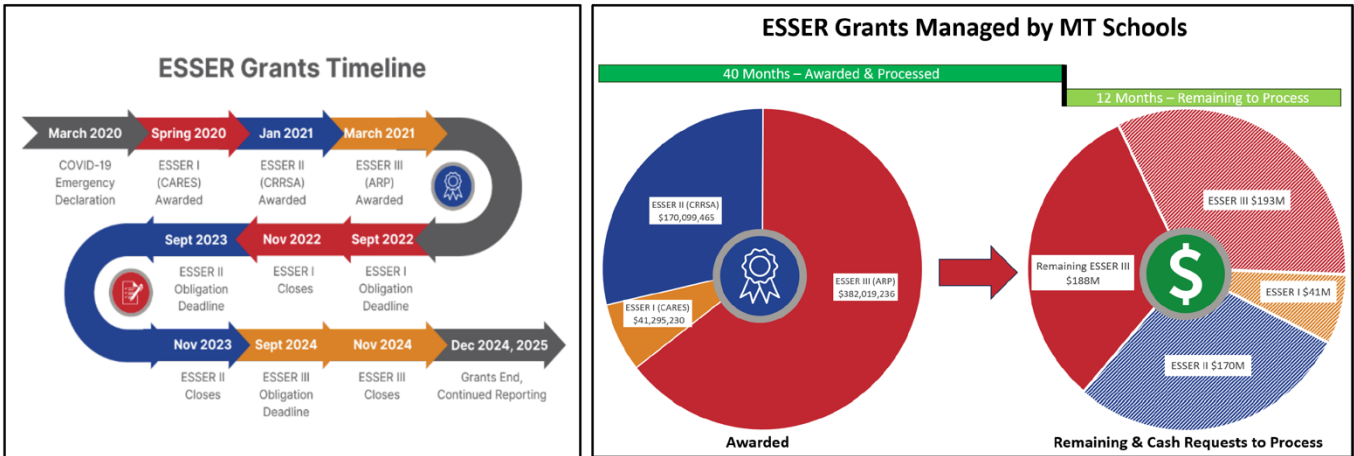
- [Final Expenditure Reports](#) for all budgets in ESSER II
- [Self-Assessment](#) due by November 30th, 2023 (different than annual data collection).
- [ARP Plan and Safe Return Plan](#) revised/updated June 2023 (last revision needed)
- [ESSER budget pages](#) updated in an [Amendment](#) with details on salaries and Scope
- [Capital Expenditure AND/OR Large Project/Item purchase](#) Scopes



File name: an ESSER Compass ALL AA 2024

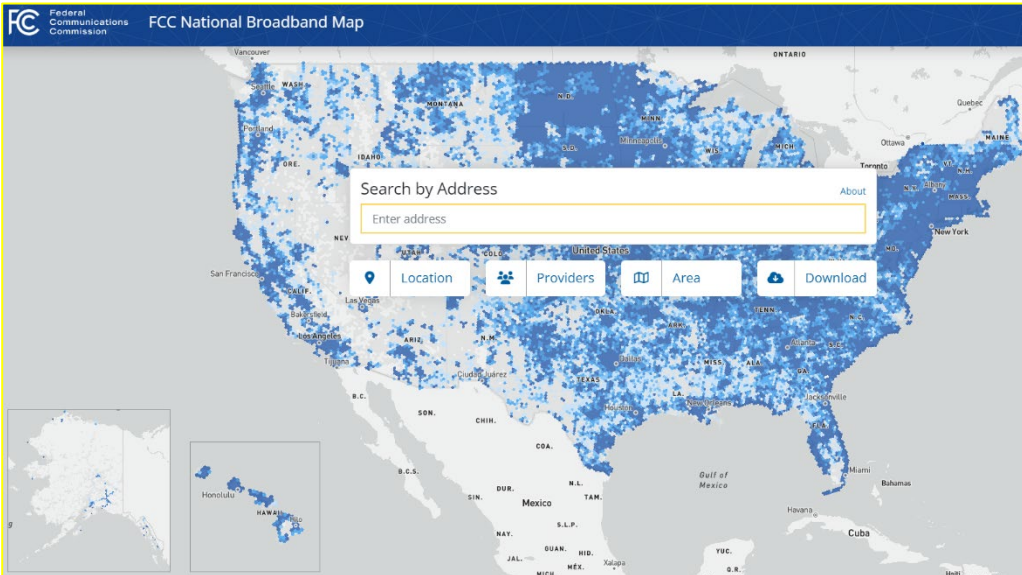
- [Annual program/data reporting](#) - data collection (TBA expected in spring)

Accountability



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Broadband Project Across Montana: Click on the map for details on Montana Broadband availability in your area



- OPI Broadband Resources: <https://opi.mt.gov/COVID-19-Information/ESSER/Broadband>
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OPI ESSER Review/Monitoring Process: As part of [federal ESSER compliance](#) OPI is performing several monitoring activities. OPI has been assisting LEAs in mitigating risks to avoid audit findings by **reviewing requests for funding** and providing **assistance with compliance**.

Notices: [updated technical FAQs for liquidation extensions](#) and CRRSA [liquidation extension request template](#).

ESSER ELO (Extended/Expanded Learning Opportunity) Grant:

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- Department of Education [ESSER FAQ](#)
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