



# **The American Rescue Plan ESSER Funds: Help on the Way to Learning Recovery**

**The latest on ESSER III funding**

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# What to Know About ESSER III Funding in the American Rescue Plan

In March, President Joe Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP), a \$1.9 trillion rescue package aimed at providing COVID relief to Americans and boosting the economy. This package includes another round of funding for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER).

This act provides more than \$122 billion to school districts in states and territories to safely reopen schools and address the impact of the pandemic on America's students. It also provides \$1 billion for Head Start programs and \$3.1 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

## Who Qualifies and How Can Funds Be Spent?

ESSER III provides funding to all states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia to reopen K-12 schools safely and expand opportunities for students who need it most. Key in this funding is the requirement that **some money must be used to address learning loss**, especially among disadvantaged students. Money also must be used to support after school and summer learning programs that use evidence-based approaches to address learning loss.

### Use of Funds

State education agencies (SEAs) must distribute money to local education agencies (LEAs), including charter schools, within 60 days.

Each state may use their funds for:

- LEA funding (at least 90%)
- SEA reserves (up to 10%)
- SEA administrative costs (up to 0.5%)

LEAs must reserve at least **20%** of funds they receive to address learning loss by implementing evidence-based interventions. These interventions must respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented subgroups of students.

SEAs can use funds to address learning loss and social-emotional needs of students, put in place summer enrichment and after school programs, purchase educational technology, and address any emergency or other administrative needs.

Other allowable uses include:

- Investing in resources (personal protective equipment, ventilation, classroom space for social distancing) to carry out the Centers for Disease Control's operational strategy for keeping educators, staff, and students safe
- Avoiding layoffs
- Hiring educators to address learning loss
- Providing sufficient staffing to facilitate social distancing
- Implementing strategies to meet social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs for

students hit hardest by the pandemic

- Hiring personnel like nurses or custodial staff to keep schools safe and healthy
- Providing for social distancing and safety protocols on buses
- Funding for WiFi hotspots and devices for remote learning
- Supporting educators in the effective use of technology

## **Five Keys to Spending ESSER III Funds**

Basically, the five big questions LEAs and SEAs should ask when evaluating their ESSER III spending goals are:

1. Will the use of funds “prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus?”
2. Is it an allowable use of funds under the ARP Act?
3. Is it reasonable and necessary?
4. Does it promote equity?
5. Does it support returning students to the classroom?

## **Important Dates for ESSER III**

### **March 13, 2020**

ESSER III funds may be used for pre-awarded costs dating back to here (when the national emergency was declared).

### **March 11, 2021**

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 is signed into law. This provides more than \$122 billion for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER, or ESSER III).

### **Spring 2021**

Within 30 days of receiving funds, LEAs must publish on their websites a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. LEAs also need to seek public comment before posting the plan.

### **Spring 2021**

SEAs should allocate ESSER III funds within 60 days of receiving those funds.

### **Early 2022**

SEAs must award ESSER III funds not allocated to LEAs within a year of receiving those funds.

### **September 30, 2023**

Last date ESSER III funds can be used.

# Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About ESSER III

## What is ESSER III?

ESSER stands for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief. This is the third round of ESSER funding since the pandemic began. This round is sometimes referred to as ARP ESSER or American Rescue Plan ESSER.

## How much funding is provided by ESSER III?

This round contains more than \$122 billion for schools, compared to \$54.3 billion for ESSER II in late 2020 and \$13.2 billion for ESSER in early 2020.

## How is the funding distributed?

The money is provided to state education agencies (SEAs), who then distribute it to local education agencies (LEAs), to help schools reopen safely and address learning loss impacted by the pandemic. The distribution methods used by states or territories vary.

- 90% of funding must go to LEAs
- 10% can be used by SEAs for their purposes
- 0.5% can be used for SEA administration

## Are there specific requirements for the money?

SEAs have specific requirements:

- 5% of the total ESSER III allocation must be used for implementing evidence-based interventions specifically targeted at addressing learning loss, like summer learning programs, extended day initiatives, after school programs, and so on.
- 1% of the allocation must be for evidence-based summer enrichment programs.
- 1% of the allocation must be for comprehensive after school programs.

## What can LEAs use the funds for?

The funds should be used for addressing learning loss, summer enrichment plans, and after school programs. LEAs must reserve at least 20% of their funds to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions. LEAs also must ensure those interventions respond to students' social, emotional, and academic needs. LEAs also should address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on underrepresented student groups.

A key use of the funds is for safe reopening of schools by following CDC protocols. This includes uses like:

- Training on minimizing the spread of disease and supplies to sanitize and clean facilities
- Improvement of indoor air quality
- Coordinating preparedness and response efforts with state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments to respond to COVID-19
- Providing mental health services and supports, including implementing community schools and hiring counselors



## **Is there a deadline for using the funds?**

The funds can be spent by SEAs, LEAs, and subrecipients through September 30, 2023.

## **Can funds be used retroactively?**

Funds can be used for costs dating back to March 13, 2020.

## **Are non-public schools accounted for?**

Charter schools that are LEAs are eligible for funding. Unlike previous ESSER packages, the needs for other non-public schools fall under the Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools (EANS), a separate program within the American Rescue Plan Act.

## **What about tracking and reporting?**

ESSER III funds must be tracked separately from other funds, including ESSER and ESSER II.

## **How Can I Find Out More?**

To find out how Waterford can address ESSER III requirements, contact our early literacy and funding specialists at 877-499-7997.

## American Rescue Plan ESSER III Funding by State

State	Total ARP ESSER Fund Allocation	Minimum Local Educational Agency Distribution
Alabama	\$2,020,070,466	\$1,818,063,419
Alaska	\$358,707,134	\$322,836,421
Arizona	\$2,582,098,697	\$2,323,888,827
Arkansas	\$1,253,227,833	\$1,127,905,050
California	\$15,068,884,546	\$13,561,996,091
Colorado	\$1,166,328,632	\$1,049,695,769
Connecticut	\$1,105,919,874	\$995,327,887
Delaware	\$410,733,965	\$369,660,568
D.C.	\$386,317,154	\$347,685,439
Florida	\$7,038,246,438	\$6,334,421,794
Georgia	\$4,249,371,244	\$3,824,434,120
Hawaii	\$412,328,764	\$371,095,888
Idaho	\$439,942,041	\$395,947,837
Illinois	\$5,054,988,054	\$4,549,489,249
Indiana	\$1,994,734,056	\$1,795,260,650
Iowa	\$774,516,216	\$697,064,594
Kansas	\$830,585,182	\$747,526,664
Kentucky	\$2,084,773,157	\$1,876,295,841
Louisiana	\$2,605,463,325	\$2,344,916,992
Maine	\$411,303,282	\$370,172,954
Maryland	\$1,951,136,802	\$1,756,023,122
Massachusetts	\$1,830,128,073	\$1,647,115,266
Michigan	\$3,719,833,128	\$3,347,849,815
Minnesota	\$1,320,645,901	\$1,188,581,311
Mississippi	\$1,627,197,854	\$1,464,478,069
Missouri	\$1,956,529,215	\$1,760,876,294

State	Total ARP ESSER Fund Allocation	Minimum Local Educational Agency Distribution
Montana	\$382,019,236	\$343,817,312
Nebraska	\$545,908,619	\$491,317,757
Nevada	\$1,071,998,392	\$964,798,553
New Hampshire	\$350,501,633	\$315,451,470
New Jersey	\$2,764,587,703	\$2,488,128,933
New Mexico	\$979,056,256	\$881,150,630
New York	\$8,988,780,836	\$8,089,902,752
North Carolina	\$3,599,191,706	\$3,239,272,535
North Dakota	\$305,266,879	\$274,740,191
Ohio	\$4,472,067,097	\$4,024,860,387
Oklahoma	\$1,493,582,570	\$1,344,224,313
Oregon	\$1,121,028,734	\$1,008,925,861
Pennsylvania	\$4,996,953,151	\$4,497,257,836
Puerto Rico	\$2,965,938,760	\$2,669,344,884
Rhode Island	\$415,015,610	\$373,514,049
South Carolina	\$2,112,051,487	\$1,900,846,338
South Dakota	\$382,019,236	\$343,817,312
Tennessee	\$2,487,638,081	\$2,238,874,273
Texas	\$12,418,588,778	\$11,176,729,900
Utah	\$615,526,070	\$553,973,463
Vermont	\$285,164,138	\$256,647,724
Virginia	\$2,109,490,751	\$1,898,541,676
Washington	\$1,852,501,071	\$1,667,250,964
West Virginia	\$761,417,928	\$685,276,135
Wisconsin	\$1,540,784,854	\$1,386,706,369
Wyoming	\$303,709,391	\$273,338,452
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$121,974,800,000</b>	<b>\$109,777,320,000</b>