



ESSER Funds Roadmap

The federal government has made a historic investment in K-12 education. Arizona will oversee four billion dollars in relief and recovery funds for use through September 2024. This funding comes from three separate pieces of pandemic relief and recovery legislation under a single program called the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, or “ESSER.”

As the State Education Agency (SEA), the Arizona Department of Education is designated by the federal government to distribute the funds under rules and regulations embedded in the law under which the appropriations are made.

The majority of ESSER funds (90%) are required to be allocated directly to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that are already recipients of federal education funds (Title I-A) based on the proportionate share of Title I-A funds, which are largely based on poverty data.

ADE is also granted discretionary authority over subsets of the funds to make critical investments that address emergency needs for education across the state.

Overall, the goal of these dollars is to support communities recovering from COVID-19, position our state’s educational system to support student success, and ensure Arizona has a 21st-century ready workforce.

The following is a road map for ESSER fund distribution:

- Available Funding and Timelines
- Strategic Priority Areas and Indicators of Progress
- Funding Announcements To-Date
- Rubric to Guide Funding Decision
- Assurances and Obligations for Receipt of Funds
- Key Dates and Timeframes
- Stakeholder Engagement and Opportunities for Input

Available Funding and Timelines

Definitions

Title I-A LEA: A local education agency designated as a recipient of Title I-A funds. Title I, Part A (Title I) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. ESSER funding allocations are based on the federal Title I-A funding formulas.



Set-aside or Discretionary Funding: A percentage of Arizona’s total ESSER award is allocated to the state education agency, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), for state-level relief and recovery initiatives and activities.

Administrative Funding: A percentage of Arizona’s total ESSER award is allocated to ADE for the purposes of managing these multi-year grants. These funds are used to track and monitor compliance at the state and local level, fulfill all requirements set by the federal government, and to provide technical assistance to local education agencies over the course of the grant cycles.

Obligation Date: Date by which funds must be allocated or obligated.

Liquidation Date: Date by which funds must be spent or liquidated.

	ESSER I (May 2020)	ESSER II (Dec 2020)	ESSER III (March 2021)	Total
Total ESSER Allocation to AZ	\$277,422,944	\$1,149,715,947	\$2,582,098,697	\$4,009,237,588
Amount for Title I LEAs (90%)	\$249,680,650	\$1,034,744,352	\$2,323,888,827	\$3,608,313,829
Set-Aside Total (9.5%)	\$26,355,179	\$109,223,015	\$258,209,870	\$393,788,064
SEA Administrative Total (0.5%)	\$1,387,115	\$5,748,580	\$12,910,494	\$20,046,189
Initial Obligation Deadline	Sept 30, 2021	Sept 30, 2022	Sept 30, 2023	
Usage or Liquidation Date	Sept 30, 2022	Sept 30, 2023	Sept 30, 2024	

ESSER III differs from the first two ESSER awards. Under ESSER III, the 9.5% for discretionary SEA activities is broken into specific categories for use, such as **addressing learning loss, summer enrichment, and comprehensive afterschool programs.**

Funds in these categories must address the impact of COVID-19 on the State’s most vulnerable and underserved subgroups of students through evidence-based interventions and programs. Use of discretionary funds must also be guided by meaningful consultation with stakeholders.

The State must still subgrant 90% of its total allocation to LEAs based on respective shares of funds received under Title I-A. These qualifying LEAs are required to reserve 20% of their allocation to address learning loss.



Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER III) Fund	
Total ESSER III Award	\$2,582,098,697.00
SEA Set-Aside	
Total Amount for Administrative Costs (.5%)	\$12,910,493.49
Total Amount for Discretionary SEA Activities (2.5%)	\$64,552,467.43
Required SEA Reservation to Address Learning Loss (5%)	\$129,104,934.85
Required SEA Reservation for Summer Enrichment Programs (1%)	\$25,820,986.97
Required SEA Reservation for Comprehensive Afterschool Programs (1%)	\$25,820,986.97
Subtotal ALL Required SEA Reservations	\$180,746,908.79
Total ALL SEA Set-Aside	\$258,209,869.70
LEA Assistance	
Total Amount LEA Assistance (90% of Total Award)	\$2,323,888,827.30
Required LEA Reservation to Address Learning Loss (20%)	\$464,777,765.46
Total Amount Remaining for LEA Discretionary Activities (80%)	\$1,859,111,061.84
Total SEA ESSER Awards	
ESSER I	\$277,422,944.00
ESSER II	\$1,149,715,947.00
ESSER III	\$2,582,098,697.00
	\$4,009,237,588.00

Strategic Priority Areas and Indicators of Progress

In 2020, ADE adopted the vision statement "Equity for All Students to Achieve Their Full Potential." To achieve this vision, every student in Arizona must have access to high-quality education, essential support services, and opportunities that allow them to succeed. ADE is committed to leveraging available resources, programs, and avenues for policymaking to ensure Arizona's education system aligns with this vision.

The following are strategic priority areas aligned to ADE's vision and mission to advance equity and excellence for all students by serving school leaders, educators, and staff, collaborating with communities, and leading with data-driven best practices.

- **Student Equity and Achievement** – increase proficiency for all students and close opportunity and achievement gaps.
- **Educator Recruitment and Retention** – every student has access to qualified educators and leaders.



- **Safe and Healthy Schools** – all students will learn and grow in safe, healthy, and welcoming environments.
- **Strategic Funding** – maximize effective use of funds in school districts and charter schools.
- **Strategic Data Use** – increase access to timely, accurate, and helpful information to drive decision-making.

Funding Announcements To-Date

ADE's funding decisions have been aligned to these strategic areas and have been made in response to critical resource needs due to the pandemic.

ADE used a significant amount of ESSER I and II discretionary funds to provide recovery dollars for non-Title I LEA's and Career and Technical Education Districts (CTEDs) that were not eligible for a direct allocation from the federal government. These discretionary allocations provided a set of funds immediately available to all schools for COVID-19 related needs. This funding decision also ensured that every non-profit, charter organization; public school district; and CTED received a baseline amount in federal relief dollars.

ADE will continue to update this regularly to ensure access to the most current and accurate information.

Full list available here: <https://www.azed.gov/esser-setaside>

Rubric to Guide Set-Aside Funding Decisions

These one-time dollars are intended to support critical recovery needs over the next 2-3 years and lay the foundation for sustainable strategies through other sources and partnerships.

Our goal is to allocate federal recovery dollars strategically and equitably to reach students and communities in each of Arizona's fifteen counties. Where possible, we have taken advantage of the opportunity to leverage these funds alongside existing investments.

Each of ADE's allocations follows a rubric to ensure we:

- 1) Support students and communities most impacted by COVID-19.
- 2) Expand schools' access to evidence-based programs and trainings.
- 3) Address multiple factors that impact students' academics, including:



- a. Social-emotional wellbeing
 - b. Educator workforce shortages
 - c. Family internet connectivity and the digital divide
- 4) Measure success and impact of investments.

Assurances and Obligations for Receipt of Funds

Each piece of federal legislation for COVID recovery has unique parameters and guidelines. To receive and use federal funding, the state education agency (i.e. ADE) and local education agencies (i.e., public school districts and charters) must provide assurances around the eligible use of funds and promise to uphold federal requirements for data collection.

As with all federally funded education programs, the state education agency (SEA) plays a critical role in distributing and monitoring funds and providing technical assistance to local education agencies.

Here are a few highlights, but a broader breakdown across the three different sets recovery legislation can be found in this [FACT SHEET](#).

ESSER I (CARES Act)

SEAs	LEAs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate 90% of funds to LEAs based on the proportionate share of Title I-A funds received in FY20 • Reserve no more than .05% for the administration of the grant • Follow reporting requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) • Track ESSER funds separately from other funds. • Ensure school districts provide equitable services for non-profit private schools in the same manner as under Title I-A. • Ensure ESSER funds are expended per the requirements of the program. • Monitor LEAs to ensure they meet all grant programmatic and fiscal requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts must provide equitable services for non-profit private schools in the same manner as under Title I-A. • Shall, to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to coronavirus • Comply with Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) and the federal government's Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), including the requirement that spending be necessary and reasonable.

ESSER II (CRRSA Act)



SEA	LEAs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate 90% of funds to LEAs based on the proportionate share of Title I-A funds received in FY21. • Reserve no more than .05% for the administration of the grant. • Meet the same CARES Act reporting requirements that apply to ESSER funds and submit a report to the Secretary within six months of award that contains a detailed accounting of the use of ESSER II funds. • Report how the State is using funds to measure and address learning loss among students disproportionately affected by the coronavirus and school closures. • Track ESSER funds separately from other funds. • Ensure ESSER funds are expended per the requirements of the program. • Monitor LEAs to ensure they meet all grant programmatic and fiscal requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs shall, to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to coronavirus. • Comply with Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) and the federal government's Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), including the requirement that spending be necessary and reasonable.

ESSER III (ARP Act)

SEA	LEAs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate 90% of funds to LEAs based on the proportionate share of Title I-A funds received in FY21. • Reserve no more than .05% for the administration of the grant. • Comply with new required SEA set asides for addressing learning loss and supporting summer enrichment and comprehensive afterschool programs. • Meaningfully consult available data and stakeholders and submit a plan and under a designated template. • Comply with all reporting requirements as required by FFATA and as the Secretary may reasonably require. • ESSER III funds must be tracked separately from other funds. • Ensure ESSER funds are expended per the requirements of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs shall, to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to coronavirus • Submit Safe to Return to In-Person and Continuity of Services Plan (within 30 days of receiving ARP allocation), and update this plan every six months through 10/30/23 • Comply with new ESSER III 20% set aside requirement to address learning loss • Comply with ESSER III LEA plan requirements, to include engaging in meaningful consultation with stakeholders in the development of the plan



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor LEAs to ensure they meet all grant programmatic and fiscal requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with LEA Maintenance of Equity requirements that restrict the extent to which LEAs can reduce per-pupil funds and FTE staff in FY23 and FY24 in their highest poverty schools • Comply with Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) and the federal government's Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), including the requirement that spending be necessary and reasonable
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Key Dates and Timelines for ESSER

Date	Activity
March 13, 2020	National Emergency declaration for COVID-19 Pandemic. All ESSER funds grants (ESSER I, II, III) have pre-award cost approval for allowable activities included in an approved application to this date
March 27, 2020	CARES Act (ESSER I) signed into law
May 29, 2020	ESSER I Applications and Allocations Released to LEAs
December 27, 2020	CRRSA Act (ESSER II) signed into law
February 19, 2021	ESSER II Applications and Allocations Released to LEAs
March 11, 2021	American Rescue Plan (ESSER III) signed into law
May 24, 2021	ESSER III Applications and Allocations Released to LEAs
June 21, 2021	ADE must make info available on its website about the number of schools in the state providing each mode of instruction.
June 30, 2021	Expiration of Arizona Governor's Executive Orders for SY2020-2021
July 2, 2021	LEAs make publicly available <i>Safe to Return to In-Person and Continuity of Services Plan</i> (within 30 business days of receiving ARP allocation) *This only applies if LEAs did NOT previously have a plan publicly available. Otherwise, LEAs need to revise their plans to address the new requirements by their first day of the school year.



July 23, 2021 (*Extended deadline from 6/7)	ADE must submit a State Plan to USED on its process for stakeholder engagement and data collection on use of funds and supporting the safe return to school for SY2021-2022.
August 24, 2021	LEAs are encouraged to submit ARP ESSER Plans to ADE by this date (90 days from release of ESSER funds) in line with USED guidance.
Sept 30, 2022	ESSER I fund period of availability ends (ESSER I funds must be liquidated within 90 days of this date)
Sept 30, 2023	ESSER II fund period of availability ends (ESSER II funds must be liquidated within 90 days of this date)
Sept 30, 2024	ESSER III fund period of availability ends (ESSER III funds must be liquidated within 90 days of this date)

Stakeholder Engagement and Opportunities for Input

ESSER I and ESSER II

ADE has already allocated much of its ESSER I and ESSER II discretionary set-aside dollars across strategic areas using the rubric referenced above. This was guided by available data, regular stakeholder meetings, letters of request by stakeholders, and input from agency staff.

Information on expenditures to date can be found at: <https://www.azed.gov/essser-setaside>.

ESSER III

Under the American Rescue Plan, ESSER III requires a much more rigorous process for stakeholder engagement and planning. On April 22, 2021, US ED released a [state plan template](#) and [interim final requirements](#) to guide this process for states.

The following are key components and sections ADE will be required to describe and share data for Arizona to receive the full amount of ESSER III dollars.

- A. Describing the State's Current Status and Needs
- B. Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining their Safe Operations
- C. Planning for the Use and Coordination of ARP ESSER Funds
- D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students



- E. Supporting LEAs in Planning for and Meeting Students' Needs
- F. Supporting the Educator Workforce
- G. Monitoring and Measuring Progress

ADE and LEAs are also required to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders and the public to develop their ARP ESSER plans.

In addition to its regular schedule of stakeholder meetings, ADE will convene an Equitable and Effective Schools Taskforce throughout June. The task force will advise ADE on ways to use discretionary funds to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved students and provide summer learning and enrichment activities and comprehensive after-school programs.

The law requires that discretionary dollars use [evidence-based practices](#) as defined by federal law. The final recommendations of this task force will be developed by July.

For more information or to submit concept papers and ideas for COVID recovery solutions, please email: esser@azed.gov using the subject line: ESSER III.