

This frequently asked questions document covers the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and the federal aid it has provided to states and school districts as part of the stimulus and relief packages passed by Congress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.[^] More information about the ESSER Fund is available in our July 2021 report titled [Processes for Receiving & Using ESSER Funds](#).

What is the ESSER Fund?

Created by Congress as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the ESSER Fund consists of federal dollars allotted to help state education departments and school districts throughout the country combat the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on students and K-12 education as a whole. Federal dollars were appropriated to the ESSER Fund under the three COVID-19 relief/stimulus packages passed by Congress: the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP).¹

In total, how much money has the federal government awarded through the ESSER fund?

As part of the three federal COVID-19 relief and stimulus packages, Congress has provided an estimated \$190.5 billion in aid through the ESSER Fund. under the three. Table 1 below contains a summary of the ESSER funding allocated under each federal relief/stimulus package.²

Table 1: ESSER Fund Allocations by Relief/Stimulus Package

ESSER Fund Allocation Amounts	
CARES Act (ESSER I) ³	\$13.5 billion
CRRSA Act (ESSER II) ⁴	\$54.3 billion
ARP Act (ESSER III) ⁵	\$122.7 billion
Total	\$190.5 billion

Who is eligible to receive ESSER funds?

Only SEAs and LEAs within the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia are eligible to apply for ESSER aid. The Bureau of Indian Education and the Outlying Areas of the United States have a separate fund in which aid is provided.⁶

How is the amount of ESSER funds a state receives determined?

The amount of ESSER funds a state receives depends on how much Title I funding the state receives. ESSER Fund allocations are based on the proportion of Title I, Part A funds

[^] A more detailed list of frequently asked questions about ESSER funding can be found at https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30aff953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf.

each state is awarded under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Once a state education agency (SEA) receives ESSER funds, the SEA is required to award 90 percent of the funds to the state's local education agencies (LEAs). The remaining 10 percent of the funds are reserved for use by the SEA.⁷

How much ESSER funding is Connecticut eligible to receive?

Connecticut is eligible to receive an estimated \$1.7 billion in ESSER aid. The breakdown of Connecticut's total ESSER funding is provided below in Table 2.⁸

Table 2: Connecticut's ESSER Fund Allocations by Relief/Stimulus Package

Relief/Stimulus Package	Total CT ESSER Allocations ⁹	CT ESSER LEA Allocations ¹⁰	CT State Set Aside Allocations ¹¹
CARES Act (ESSER I)	\$111.1 million	\$99.9 million	\$11.1 million
CRRSA Act (ESSER II)	\$494.4 million	\$443.2 million	\$49.2 million
ARP Act (ESSER III)	\$1.1 billion	\$995.3 million	\$110.5 million
Total	\$1.7 billion	\$1.5 billion	\$170.8 million

When did Connecticut receive ESSER funding?

Connecticut has been awarded its funds on different dates depending on the relief/stimulus package. A summary of the dates Connecticut was awarded ESSER funds can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Connecticut ESSER Fund Allocation Award Dates

	ESSER (CARES Act) ¹²	ESSER II (CRRSA Act) ¹³	ESSER III (ARP Act) ^{14,B}
Date Connecticut Awarded Funds	April 23, 2020	January 29, 2021	March 24, 2021

How is the amount of ESSER funds a school district receives determined?

Under the CARES Act, SEAs allocate funds to LEAs based on the local district's Title I, Part A subgrant amounts for fiscal year 2019.¹⁵ Under the CRRSA Act and the ARP Act, ESSER funds are allocated to school districts based on their Title I, Part A subgrant amounts for FY 2020.¹⁶

When did school districts in Connecticut receive their ESSER funds?

To date, Connecticut school districts have only been awarded the ESSER funds from the CARES Act. Applications for ESSER funds from the CRRSA Act have been requested but

^B This is the date Connecticut received the initial two-thirds of its ESSER funds from the ARP Act. Connecticut was required to complete a state plan in order to receive the final one-third of the aid. American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, 86 Fed. Reg. 21195 (April 22, 2021).

not yet awarded, and applications for ESSER funds from the ARP Act have not yet been submitted.¹⁷

What is the process to receive ESSER funding?

Each relief/stimulus package requires a process in order for SEAs and LEAs to receive ESSER funds. However, some steps are the same in all three of the relief/stimulus packages. The general process for receiving ESSER aid is for the SEA and LEA to fulfill the requirements under each relief/stimulus package in order to apply for the eligible funds.¹⁸ For more information about the processes for SEAs and LEAs to receive ESSER funding, please consult our July 2021 report titled [Processes for Receiving & Using ESSER Funds](#).

How long are ESSER funds available?

ESSER funds are available for different periods of time based on each relief/stimulus package. Table 4 below shows a summary of when ESSER funds must be awarded and spent according to each relief/stimulus package. For a detailed timeline of the receiving and spending processes for ESSER funds under each relief/stimulus package, please consult our July 2021 report titled [Processes for Receiving & Using ESSER Funds](#).

Table 4: ESSER Fund Award & Use of Funds Deadlines

	ESSER (CARES Act) ¹⁹	ESSER II (CRRSA Act) ²⁰	ESSER III (ARP Act) ²¹
Deadline to Award Funds to LEAs	April-June 2021, depending on a SEA's award date ^c	January 2022	SEAs must allocate ARP ESSER funds to LEAs no later than 60 days after the SEA receives those funds
Deadline to Use ESSER Funds^d	September 30, 2022	September 30, 2023	September 30, 2024

^c SEAs must award funds within one year of receiving them, which in this case would be April 2021 through June 2021.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary & Secondary Education. (2021). *Fact Sheet: Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund II, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/01/Final_ESSERII_Factsheet_1.5.21.pdf.

^d These dates include the 12-month Tydings Amendment period, which extends the timeline for the uses of federal grants issued by the U.S. Department of Education.

Guerrant, K.L. (2021, March 12). *Memorandum to Elementary and Secondary Schools RE: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund Grant Award Availability Clarification*. Lansing, MI: State of Michigan, Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ESSER_Grant_Clarification_719339_7.pdf.

What can ESSER funds be used for?

There is a wide variety of uses for all three rounds of ESSER funds. Some examples of how ESSER funds may be used, include:

- Preventing, preparing, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Purchasing technology;
- Addressing learning loss; and
- Planning and implementing summer and after-school programming.²²

For a more detailed look at how ESSER funds may be used, please consult our July 2021 report titled [Processes for Receiving & Using ESSER Funds](#).

Are SEAs able to restrict or limit how LEAs use their ESSER funds?

No, states are not able to restrict or limit how LEAs use ESSER funds. LEAs are able to use ESSER funds for any allowable use under the three relief/stimulus packages.²³

What are state set-aside funds?

State set-aside funds, also known as an SEA reserve, are the 10 percent — or less — of awarded ESSER funds that SEAs may reserve to help address any emergency needs the SEA has identified as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁴

How is the Connecticut State Department of Education using its state set-aside funds?

Connecticut's state set-aside funds are being used by the State Department of Education (CSDE) differently under each relief/stimulus package. Table 5 below shows a summary of how Connecticut's state set-aside funds are being used.

Table 5: Connecticut's Use of State Set-Aside Funds by Relief/Stimulus Package

Relief/Stimulus Package	Use of State Set-Aside Funds ²⁵
CARES Act	The Connecticut State Board of Education has established four priority areas for the use of state set-aside funds provided under the CARES Act. The four priority areas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable access to technology; • Equitable access to high-quality online curriculum with necessary supports; • Education recovery and reopening schools; and • Social and emotional Well-being.^E
CRRSA Act	Connecticut has used a portion of its set-aside funds under ESSER II to provide funding for the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs that did not receive any funding through the formula grant;

^E For a more detailed look at Connecticut's four priority areas for the use of state set-aside funds provided under the CARES Act, visit <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2019-20/CSDE-K-12-Funding-Priorities.pdf>.

Relief/Stimulus Package	Use of State Set-Aside Funds ²⁵
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs that have received a decrease in the formula grant allocation; and • Endowed academies, Goodwin University magnet schools, and EdAdvance.^F
ARP Act	<p>The CSDE has established five priority areas for the use of state set-aside funds provided under the ARP Act. These five priority areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide model curriculum addressing learning loss; • Extending contracts to deliver statewide online curriculum and courses to districts to address leaning loss; • Expanding grant programs for summer enrichment; • Awarding grants through the Innovation Grant Program for summer enrichment; and • Providing funds to districts and endowed academies not eligible for ESSER aid under the ARP Act.^G

Are there requirements for reporting how ESSER funds are used by SEAs and LEAs?

Yes, each stimulus package has a requirement for how SEAs and LEAs must report funds. For a detailed explanation for how funds must be reported, please consult our July 2021 report titled [Processes for Receiving & Using ESSER Funds](#).

What is Connecticut required to report how it uses ESSER funds?

Connecticut must report the following:

- Any recipients who receive \$150,000 or more in ESSER funds;
- Total amount of funds received from the U.S. Department of Education;
- Amount spent or obligated for allowable uses;
- List of all projects supported by ESSER funds; and
- Information on any subcontracts or subgrants.²⁶

Are ESSER funds subject to a supplanting prohibition?

No, there is no supplanting prohibition for ESSER funds. This means ESSER funds may be used in place of a district's state or local funds for allowable uses. However, the ESSER Fund does contain a Maintenance of Effort requirement, which significantly limits a state's ability to reduce its support for K-12 education using funding provided by the three relief/stimulus packages.²⁷

^F For more information about how the CSDE has used the state set-aside from ESSER funding provided under the CRRSA Act, visit <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2020-21/ESSER-II-Application-Update.pdf>.

^G For a more detailed look at Connecticut's five priority areas for the use of state set-aside funds provided under the ARP Act, visit https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/ARP-ESSER/Executive-Summary_CT_State_Plan.pdf.

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Frequently Asked Questions: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs Governor's Emergency Education Relief Programs*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30aff953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf.

² National Conference of State Legislatures. (2021, June 23). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Tracker*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsl.org/ncsl-in-dc/standing-committees/education/cares-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund-tracker.aspx>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund: Frequently Asked Questions about the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund)*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/05/ESSER-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/04/ESSER-Fund-State-Allocations-Table.pdf>.

⁸ National Conference of State Legislatures. (2021, June 23). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Tracker*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsl.org/ncsl-in-dc/standing-committees/education/cares-act-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-fund-tracker.aspx>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² United States of America, Department of Education. (2020, April 23). *Secretary DeVos Makes Available Over \$13 Billion in Emergency Coronavirus Relief to Support Continued Education of K-12 Students* [Press Release]. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-devos-makes-available-over-13-billion-emergency-coronavirus-relief-support-continued-education-k-12-students/>.

¹³ Russell-Tucker, C.M. (2021, January 29). *Letter to Connecticut Superintendents RE: CRRSA Act Funding for Education*. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2020-21/Superintendents---ESSER-II-012921.pdf>.

¹⁴ Cardona, M. (2021, March 24). *Letter to State Commissioners of Education RE: ARP Act Funding for Education*. Retrieved from https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/ARP_Letter_Sec_to_Chiefs_Final_03.24.2021-1.pdf.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Frequently Asked Questions: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Programs Governor's Emergency Education Relief Programs*. Washington, D.C.: Author. Retrieved from https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/05/ESSER.GEER_FAQs_5.26.21_745AM_FINALb0cd6833f6f46e03ba2d97d30aff953260028045f9ef3b18ea602db4b32b1d99.pdf.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). eGrants Management Systems Home. Available from <https://connecticut.egrantsmanagement.com>.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund: Frequently Asked Questions about the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund)*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/05/ESSER-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Fact Sheet: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund II, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/01/Final_ESSERII_Factsheet_1.5.21.pdf.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *U.S. Department of Education Fact Sheet: American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER)*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/03/FINAL_ARP-ESSER-FACT-SHEET.pdf.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund: Frequently Asked Questions about the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund)*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/05/ESSER-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Connecticut General Assembly, Appropriations Committee. (2020). *CARES Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund: Frequently Asked Questions FAQs*. Hartford, CT: Author. Retrieved from https://www.cga.ct.gov/app/related/20201231_Informational%20Hearings%20re%20Fiscal%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20State%20Agency%20Budgets/20200619_Informational%20Hearing%20re%20Fiscal%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20on%20the%20State%20Dept.%20of%20Education/SDE%20Cares%20Act%20FAQ.pdf.

²⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2021). *Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund: Frequently Asked Questions about the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund)*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/05/ESSER-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.