

Summary of the U.S. Department of Education (USED) State Plan Template for the American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER)
April 23, 2021

On April 21, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) published the [state plan template](#) for State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to complete in order to receive the final tranche of funding from the [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund \(ARP ESSER\)](#). Previously, on March 24, the Department made available the first two-thirds of ARP ESSER funding (approximately \$81 billion) for SEAs based on an array of assurances, including submission of future plans as required by USED. To receive the final third of ARP ESSER funding (approximately \$41 billion), **SEAs must submit their state plans by June 7, 2021**, which provides SEAs slightly more than six weeks to complete their plans.

The ARP ESSER funding builds on prior pandemic relief funding specifically for K-12 education, including \$13.2 billion within the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ESSER fund and \$54.3 billion within the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act ESSER fund. The ARP ESSER funding may be used immediately and must be obligated by September 30, 2024. See [here](#) for a full summary of the ARP and how it compares to the other relief packages.

In addition to state plans, USED is requiring that local education agencies (LEAs) develop plans for how they will use ARP ESSER funding. This is in addition to the statutory requirement in the ARP that school districts develop a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. **LEA plans must be received by states within a reasonable timeline and (according to USED) should be within 90 days** after LEAs receive their ARP ESSER allocations.

A notable focus is the requirement that each state and local plan **must be developed in meaningful consultation with an array of stakeholders and the public** – and must be made publicly available. USED will begin approving state applications and disbursing the remaining ARP ESSER funds once plans are received and reviewed. In order to ensure transparency, USED will post each plan on its website when it is received and will indicate each plan’s approval status. The Department plans to separately issue detailed reporting requirements that each state must meet during implementation of ARP ESSER funds.

The Department has also issued an accompanying [notice of interim final requirements](#) with additional details. While states are likely to move quickly on developing their ARP ESSER plans, interested parties have **30 days to comment** on the interim final requirements on which the plan template is based.

The state plan template requires each state to address at least seven main issues. An SEA may use USED’s template or another format if every item and element is addressed in the SEA’s response. **Below is a summary of USED’s ARP ESSER state plan template in chart form**, with language taken closely from the actual application.

**Key Sections in the
USED State Plan Template**

- A. [State’s Current Status and Needs](#)
- B. [Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining Safe Operations](#)
- C. [Planning for Use and Coordination of ARP ESSER Funds](#)
- D. [Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students](#)
- E. [Supporting LEAs in Planning and Meeting Students’ Needs](#)
- F. [Supporting the Educator Workforce](#)
- G. [Monitoring and Measuring Progress](#)

Summary Table of U.S. Department of Education (USED) State Plan Requirements for ARP ESSER Funding

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
<p>A. State’s Current Status and Needs</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe the progress they have made, the priorities and student needs guiding their ARP ESSER funding decisions, and their current and projected operating status.</i></p>	<p>1. Progress and Promising Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an assessment of the top 2-3 strategies that have been most effective in supporting the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for students most impacted. Include, if applicable, the state will submit and encourage its LEAs to submit lessons learned and best practices to the Department’s <i>Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse</i>.
	<p>2. Overall Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide an assessment of the top 2-3 issues currently facing students and schools across the state as a result of or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent possible, include data illustrating why these are the most critical and/or widespread issues.
	<p>3. Identifying Needs of Underserved Students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the state’s 2-3 highest priority academic, social, emotional, and/or mental health needs for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (if applicable) and for the 2021-2022 school year related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on each of several marginalized student groups.¹ To extent possible, include data on indicators.
	<p>4. Understanding the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the SEA will support its LEAs in identifying the extent of the impact of lost instructional time on student learning and student well-being, including identifying the groups of students most impacted by the pandemic. Where possible, identify the data sources.
	<p>5. School Operating Status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe current status of data collection on (a) mode of instruction; (b) enrollment; and (c) attendance for schools and students across the state Provide these data and make them publicly available by no later than June 21, 2021. Describe the planned operational status and mode of instruction for the state and its LEAs for summer 2021 and for the 2021-2022 school year.

¹ These include students from low-income families, students of color, disparities based on gender, English learners, children with disabilities (including infants and toddlers), students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, and “other groups disproportionately impacted.” For the latter group, USED includes examples of justice-involved youth, students who have missed significant days of instruction in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, and LGBTQ+ students.

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
<p>B. Safely Reopening Schools and Sustaining their Safe Operations</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe how they will support LEAs in safely reopening schools and maximizing in-person instruction.</i></p>	<p>1. Support for LEAs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the state will support its LEAs in safely returning to in-person instruction and sustaining safe operation of schools. Include how the state will support LEAs to implement prevention and mitigation strategies (e.g. universal mask wearing, physical distancing, handwashing, cleaning facilities and improving ventilation, contact tracing, diagnostic and screening testing, vaccinating educators and staff, and providing appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities) aligned with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Describe any statewide plans, policies, estimated timelines, and specific milestones related to reopening and operation. Describe the extent the state and its LEAs are consulting with federal, state, and local health officials. Describe any guidance, professional learning, and technical assistance made available to LEAs.
	<p>2. Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the state will ensure that LEAs publish within 30 days of receiving ARP ESSER funds their plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services (or ensure that previous plans meet ARP requirements). States should detail how they will ensure that LEA plans adopt prevention and mitigation strategies recommended by the CDC. Describe how the state will ensure that LEAs describe how they will ensure continuity of services to address students’ academic needs, and also the social, emotional, mental health, and other needs of students and staff. Describe how the state will ensure that each LEA periodically reviews (at least every 6 months)² and revises as appropriate its reopening plan. Describe how the state, if applicable, collects data on LEA implementation of prevention and mitigation strategies recommended by the CDC.

² The Department notes that LEA reopening plans should be periodically reviewed throughout the obligation period of the ARP ESSER fund, which is through September 30, 2023. LEAs may use funds through September 30, 2024 due to the Tydings Amendment but the periodic review does not need to last through that date.

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
<p>C. Planning for the Use and Coordination of ARP ESSER Funds</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe how they will consult stakeholders when developing their plans, and how they will coordinate ARP ESSER funds with other pandemic relief funding.</i></p>	<p>1. SEA Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the state will engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders. Stakeholders must include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students Families Tribes (if applicable) Civil rights organizations School and district administrators Superintendents Charter school leaders Teachers, principals, other educators, school staff, and their unions Stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, justice-involved youth, and other underserved students. The state must also describe how it provided the public the opportunity to provide input in development of the plan, a summary of the input, and how the state incorporated the input.
	<p>2. Coordinating Funds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the state and LEAs are using, have used, and plan to use prior relief funds provided under CARES and the CRRSA Act to support a safe return to in-person instruction, sustain operations, and address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized student groups, including students from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, students of color, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students. Describe the extent that ESSER funding from the CARES and CRRSA Acts have been awarded to LEAs, or when the funds will be made available to them. The state should also include information on the dollar amounts of funds that have been obligated but not yet spent, including whether the SEA is able to track LEA obligations. Describe how the state is using other federal funding sources (e.g., ESEA, IDEA, WIOA, funding for child nutrition services, and McKinney-Vento funds) to support LEAs in returning to in-person instruction, and in meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
<p>D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe which evidence-based strategies it will employ when using the ARP set-asides to address the academic impact of lost instructional time, provide summer learning and enrichment programs, and provide comprehensive afterschool programs.³</i></p>	<p>1. Academic Impact of Lost Instructional Time⁴</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the SEA will use not less than 5% of ARP ESSER funds that must be reserved to address the impact of lost instructional time. Describe what evidence-based interventions (e.g. providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the state has selected and how the state will evaluate the impact of those interventions on an ongoing basis. Describe how the selected interventions will address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized student groups⁵. The state should, when possible, indicate what data sources it will use to determine the impact of lost instructional time. How the state will use funds to identify and engage students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school year, and students who did not consistently engage in remote instruction.
	<p>2. Evidence-Based Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the SEA will use not less than 1% of ARP ESSER funds reserved for evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs. Describe what evidence-based interventions (e.g., providing intensive or high-dosage tutoring, accelerating learning) the state has selected to address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, and how the state will evaluate their impact. Describe how the selected interventions will address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized student groups⁶. The state should indicate, when possible, what data sources it will use to identify students most in need of summer learning and enrichment programs. How the state will use funds to identify and engage students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school year, and students who did not consistently engage in remote instruction.

³ The ARP requires that SEAs reserve at least 5 percent of funding to implement evidence-based interventions (such as summer learning or enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended year programs) to address learning loss, at least 1 percent of funding to implement evidence-based summer learning and enrichment programs to address students’ academic, social, and emotional needs, and at least 1 percent of funding to implement evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs to address students’ academic, social, and emotional needs – all targeted to address the disproportionate impact on marginalized student groups .

⁴ Within the state plan template, the Department uses the term “academic impact of lost instructional time” instead of the statutory language of “learning loss.”

⁵ Students from low-income families, students of color, disparities based on gender, English learners, children with disabilities (including infants and toddlers), students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, and “other groups disproportionately impacted.”

⁶ *Ibid.*

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
D. Maximizing State-Level Funds to Support Students (cont'd)	3. Evidence-Based Comprehensive Afterschool Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the SEA will use not less than 1% of ARP ESSER funds reserved for evidence-based comprehensive afterschool programs. Describe the evidence-based programs (e.g., including partnerships with community-based organizations) and the extent to which the state will evaluate the impact of these programs. Describe how the selected interventions will address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized student groups⁷. The state should indicate, when possible, what data sources it will use to identify students most in need of comprehensive after school programming. How the state will use funds to identify and engage students who have missed the most in-person instruction during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school year, and students who did not consistently engage in remote instruction.
	4. Emergency Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the state will reserve funds⁸ for emergency needs to address the pandemic, and how the funds will build state and LEA capacity to ensure students' and staff's health and safety; to meet students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs; and to use ARP ESSER funds to implement evidence-based interventions.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Beyond the previously described set-asides, states may reserve no more than 0.5 percent of funding for administrative costs and the remainder of the funds for “emergency needs” as determined by the SEA. These funds can be used to address issues responding to the pandemic, including through the use of grants or contracts.

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
<p>E. Supporting LEAs in Planning for and Meeting Students' Needs</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe how they will support LEAs in developing high-quality plans for LEAs' use of ARP ESSER funds.</i></p>	<p>1. LEA Plans for the Use of ARP ESSER Funds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what the state will require for LEAs to include in their plans, how the state will require that plans be publicly available⁹, and the deadline¹⁰ by which an LEA must submit its ARP ESSER plan. • LEA plans must include, at a minimum a description of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How the funds will be used to implement prevention and mitigation strategies aligned with CDC guidance; ○ How the LEA will use its 20 percent set-aside to address the academic impact of lost instructional time through evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs; ○ How the LEA will spend its remaining ARP ESSER funds; and, ○ How the LEA will ensure that interventions employed will respond to the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students and particularly those disproportionately impacted, including students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, and migratory students.
	<p>2. LEA Consultation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the state will ensure that LEAs engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders in planning for use of ARP ESSER funds. • Stakeholders must include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students ○ Families ○ School and district administrators ○ Teachers, principals, other educators, school staff, and their unions ○ Tribes (if applicable) ○ Civil rights organizations (if applicable) ○ Stakeholders representing the interests of children with disabilities, English learners, children experiencing homelessness, children and youth in foster care, migratory students, justice-involved youth, and other underserved students (if applicable) • Describe how the state will ensure that the LEAs provide the public the opportunity to provide input in the development of the plan and incorporated the input in their plans.

⁹ The Department also notes that SEAs must provide the Department the websites of where the public can find data on school operating status and the websites for where the public can find the LEA plans to reopen and the plans to use ARP ESSER funds.

¹⁰ The Department directs SEAs to have a “reasonable timeline” for LEAs to submit plans, but says that LEAs should submit no later than 90 days after receiving their ARP ESSER allocations.

Key Sections	Required Elements	Detailed Requirements
E. Supporting LEAs in Planning for and Meeting Students' Needs (cont'd)	3. Supporting and monitoring of LEAs' use of funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the SEA will support and monitor its LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds. Describe how the state will support and monitor LEAs' implementation of evidence-based interventions, including the extent to which the state will collect evidence of the effectiveness of the interventions employed. Describe how the state will support and monitor LEAs in addressing the disproportionate impact on underserved students (as defined in part A3 above). Describe how the state will support and monitor LEAs in using ARP ESSER funds to identify, reengage, and support students most likely to have experienced the impact of lost instructional time, such as students who missed the most in-person instruction in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years; students who did not consistently engage in remote instruction; and students most at-risk of dropping out.
	4. Supporting LEAs in implementing additional strategies for educational equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the extent to which the state will support LEAs in taking educational equity into account in spending ARP ESSER funds. Including, but not limited to, allocating funding to both schools and for districtwide activities based on student need and implementing an equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocating funding to schools and for districtwide activities based on student need, and Implementing and equitable and inclusive return to in-person instruction, including by establishing policies and practices that avoid the over-use of exclusionary discipline and creating positive and supportive learning environments for all students.

<p>F. Supporting the Educator Workforce</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe their strategies for supporting and stabilizing the educator workforce and for making staffing decisions that support students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.</i></p>	<p>1. Supporting and Stabilizing the Educator Workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the extent to which the state is facing shortages of educators, education administration personnel, and other personnel involved in safely reopening schools, and the extent to which they vary by region/type of school district and groups of educators. The state should cite specific data on shortages and needs, where available. Specific personnel mentioned, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special educators and related services personnel Paraprofessionals Bilingual or English as a second language educators STEM educators Career and technical education (CTE) educators Early childhood educators Describe how the state will support LEAs in identifying the most urgent areas of shortages or potential shortages, with particular plans for LEAs facing most significant shortages, and describe how other federal pandemic relief funding has been used to avoid layoffs during the pandemic. Describe how the state will fill anticipated gaps in certified teachers for the start of the 2021-22 school year, and to what extent the SEA will support LEAs in expanding the educator pipeline and educator diversity (e.g., recruiting teaching candidates to provide high-dosage tutoring or implementing residencies for teacher candidates).
	<p>2. Staffing to Support Student Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the extent to which the state has developed or will develop strategies, and will support LEAs, in increasing student access to key support staff within school buildings, including school counselors, special education personnel, nurses, social workers, and psychologists (e.g., hiring additional personnel or freeing up staff to focus on providing services to students).

<p>G. Monitoring and Measuring Progress</p> <p><i>SEAs must describe how they will build capacity at the SEA and LEA levels to ensure high-quality data collection and reporting, and to safeguard funds for their intended purposes.</i></p>	<p>1. Capacity for Data Collection and Reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the importance for SEAs to continuously monitor progress and make adjustments to its strategies based on impact, and to support LEAs in doing so, describe how the state will ensure its capacity and the capacity of LEAs to collect data on reporting requirements, including the state’s capacity and strategy to collect disaggregated student group data from LEAs, and any steps the SEA will take to build this capacity. Reporting requirements may include: student learning; opportunity to learn measures¹¹; fiscal data that is comparable across the state (e.g., per-pupil spending at LEA and school levels); jobs created and retained (by position type); participation in programs funded by ARP ESSER funds (e.g., summer and afterschool programs); and other requirements required by the Secretary – with final requirements to be issued shortly.
	<p>2. Monitoring and Internal Controls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the state will implement appropriate fiscal monitoring, and describe the SEA’s current capacity to monitor ARP ESSER funds, including any needs to increase capacity and any foreseeable gaps in capacity, including how the SEA will provide LEAs with technical assistance.

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¹¹ Chronic absenteeism; student engagement; use of exclusionary discipline; access to and participation in advanced coursework; access to technology; access to high-quality educators; access to school counselors, social workers, nurses, and school psychologists; and results from student, parent, or educator surveys.