News Release

November 25, 2020

CARES ACT INVESTMENTS IN NEBRASKA

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by congress and signed into law on March 27, 2020. The relief package includes two separate funds for education – the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund.

The majority of available ESSER funds (90 percent) go directly to local school districts to address the impact that COVID-19 continues to have on elementary and secondary schools across the nation. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) monitors how districts are making investments locally. Districts have until September 30, 2022 to expend their allocated funds.

The ESSER Fund also provides resources for statewide investments. In response to the impact of school closures in the spring due to COVID-19, the NDE administered a public feedback survey on how state resources should be allocated in a way that most benefits Nebraska students and schools. A total of 4,981 survey responses were received and the allocation of statewide funds reflects the results.

To address equitable access challenges, GEER Funds, directed by Governor Ricketts, are being used to improve student access to education by expanding the availability of devices and systems to deliver education services remotely.

The information below outlines how money has been allocated statewide thus far, through both ESSER and GEER Funds.

Nebraska ESSER Allocation:

- $58.6 million directly to local education agencies
- $6.4 million for statewide activities (details below)
    - $3,809,500 – Technology infrastructure
    - $251,250 – School reentry planning support
    - $0, no additional funds – Nutritional Support (funded through the USDA school lunch program)
    - $253,597 – Professional learning
    - $200,000 – Mental, behavioral, and emotional support

- *$4,514,347 – Total funds used to date*

Nebraska ESSER Statewide Allocation Details ($6.4 million):

CARES Act Funding Priority	Investment and Project Detail	Total Investment
Enhance technology infrastructure (e.g. broadband, devices, platforms, data privacy) for students and families	● $2,500,000 – Statewide Learning Management System Consortium (ESSER) ● $515,000 – Technology Services and Pandemic Response Contracts: Application Development, GIS Mapping Support, and Web Page communication (ESSER) ● $300,000 – Academic Advancement Plan – Facility-based school data system update (ESSER) ● $284,500 – Enhanced online Career Information and Planning Nebraska Career Connections (ESSER) ● $145,000 – Digital Content and Ed Ready Supports through National Repository of Online Curriculum (NROC)/Hippocampus (ESSER) ● $65,000 – Expanding Internet Access Points (Internet 2) EduRoam Project (ESSER) Request for Information: Nebraska Internet Service Providers Education rates	$3,809,500

Build supports for planning for possible interruptions upon returning to school and student and staff reentry	● $40,000 – Education and public health advice and planning for a safe return to fall. ● $40,000 – Consultation with public health experts for a safe return to fall. ● $51,900 – Provide direct support to three targeted school districts/ESUs, to observe teaching and learning, make a practical plan for improvement, develop teacher and leader capacity to carry out the plan, and support follow-through for the 2020-2021 school year ● $19,350 – Device support for PreK-2 reading and mathematics utilizing onetab (from Open Up Resources), a device to support PK-2 reading and mathematics, for up to 150 students in targeted schools. ● $100,000 – Family and community supports; elevate key public health messages, and create a unified theme, repository for materials, and tools to localize the messaging	$251,250
Ensure student nutritional needs are met	USDA extends waiver allowing all schools to provide free meals through December 31, 2020.	

Provide professional learning to support inclusive remote learning environment and engagement, along with best practices for different student groups	● $80,000 – Development of equity scorecard and surrounding professional learning ● $156,797 – Design an academic diagnostic for literacy and mathematics that answers questions about student access to high-quality academic experiences (e.g. grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers with high expectations.) in literacy and mathematics ● $16,800 – Professional learning series focused on remote learning for literacy, mathematics, and science	$253,597
Create or expand mental, behavioral, and social emotional supports	● $200,000 – Pilot an evidenced-based comprehensive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum and assessment tools for staff and students in five districts representative of demography, rurality, and student need across the state	$200,000

Nebraska GEER Allocation:

- $16.4 million
  - $12,300,000 – Device Procurement
  - $3,280,000 – Internet Connectivity
  - $820,000 – Exempt School Support-Other
  - *$16,400,000 – Total funds obligated to date*

Additional information about the CARES Act Funding in Nebraska can be found at: https://www.education.ne.gov/cares-act/.

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