



ESSER & ACADEMIC RECOVERY PLANS

MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION IN
DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS



Equity, Opportunity & Excellence in Education

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

South Carolina has received over \$3 billion of federal aid to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on schools and students. Most of this money has been allocated among the state's 80 school districts, with a small portion retained by the SC Department of Education to address statewide needs. Decisions on how best to use these funds at the local level are made by individual districts within the broad guidelines set by federal law.

This Guide is intended to enable education stakeholders -- especially parents, communities, and local School Improvement Councils (SICs) -- to easily access basic information about the amounts of funds districts and the state have received, how those funds can be used, and how districts and the state plan to spend them. This is public information and much of it is available on the SC Department of Education's website, ed.sc.gov.

As of November 2021, most plans for academic recovery and spending federal COVID-19 aid are at or near completion. It is vitally important, however, that stakeholders monitor implementation of these plans over the next several years to ensure that they are achieving the intended results for students. Parents in particular are uniquely positioned to observe whether the programs or activities called for in these plans are effectively meeting their children's needs. If they believe not, they can communicate their concerns through their SICs or directly to school and district leaders and work collaboratively to improve results. Moreover, there is a process that districts can use to amend their plans. As the pandemic continues to trigger abrupt changes and foster uncertainty, it stands to reason that needs may change over time. Families and community members can provide the kind of input that will help districts track these shifts in priorities and adjust spending plans as needed.

The SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) and the Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC) were founded in the belief that education is the shared responsibility of families, schools, and community members. We hope that this Guide will inspire all stakeholders to be active and informed participants in the continued conversation on how best to use this unprecedented level of federal aid to renew and transform K-12 education for our students, our communities, and our state.

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FEDERAL COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS



With the passage of federal COVID-19 relief packages by Congress in 2020 and 2021, over \$3 billion has been allocated to South Carolina (SC) to address the impacts of the pandemic on K-12 education through Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds. Of this total, at least 90% of SC's ESSER funds were regranting to local school districts; the SC Department of Education (SCDE) retained up to 10% to address impacts at the state level. There are three (3) types of ESSER funds: ESSER I, provided through the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted in March 2020; ESSER II, provided through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) enacted in December 2020; and ESSER III, provided through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act enacted in March 2021.

TOPIC	ESSER I	ESSER II	ESSER III
Enacting Legislation	CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security)	CRRSA Act (Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations)	ARP Act (American Rescue Plan)
Date Enacted	March 27, 2020	Dec 27, 2020	March 11, 2021
Available Until	Sept 30, 2022	Sept 30, 2023	Sept 30, 2024
Total Amount to SC	\$216,811,158	\$940,420,782	\$2,112,051,000
Amount to SCDE	The SCDE may reserve up to 10% for emergency needs	Same as ESSER I	SEAs must reserve at least the following amounts from the total state allocation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% for interventions to address learning loss • 1% for summer enrichment programs • 1% for comprehensive after school programs. The SCDE may reserve up to 2.5% for emergency needs and 0.5% for administration costs.
Amount to Districts	Remaining 90% to school district (LEAs). Funds were allocated among districts in proportion to the amount of funds districts received under Title I, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (Title I) For FY2019. See amounts of individual district awards here .	Remaining 90% to school districts (LEAs). Funds were allocated among districts in proportion to the amount of funds districts received under Title I for FY2020. See amounts of individual district awards here .	Remaining 90% to school districts (LEAs). Funds were allocated among districts in proportion to the amounts they received under Title I for FY2020. See amount of individual district awards here .
Allowable Uses	12 categories of allowable uses. See list of categories here .	15 categories of allowable uses. See list of categories here .	15 categories of allowable uses; districts must use at least 20% of ESSER III funds to address learning loss. See list of categories here .

ALLOWABLE USES OF ESSER FUNDS

ESSER funds can be used for a range of activities that support reopening schools safely, sustaining their safe operation, and addressing student social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs resulting from the pandemic. These funds are critical for schools and districts to address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups, including each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care.

SCHOOL & DISTRICT-LEVEL USES FOR ESSER II & III FUNDS

See the full list of 15 ways to use ESSER II funds [here](#) and ESSER III funds [here](#).

Addressing learning loss through tracking student attendance & engaging students in distance education

Providing mental health services & support

Activities related to summer learning & afterschool programs (in-person & online)

Addressing learning loss through assessments to monitor progress & assist in meeting academic needs

Addressing learning loss by using evidence-based activities to meet comprehensive needs of students

Addressing learning loss through information sharing & assistance to families on supporting students in distance learning

1965 ESEA activities: IDEA, Perkins Act, McKinney-Vento, & Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Educational technology purchases (hardware, software, connectivity) for students

School facility repairs & improvements to reduce risk of transmission & exposure and to support student health needs

Outreach & services for students with disabilities, students from families with low incomes, English learners, racial & ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness or in foster care.

Developing & implementing procedures and systems to improve districts' preparedness & response efforts

Training for staff on sanitation & minimizing spread of infectious diseases

FINDING ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ESSER SPENDING PLANS IN SC

DISTRICT ACADEMIC RECOVERY PLANS

SC school districts were required to complete and submit Academic Recovery Plans to SCDE by May 28, 2021. These plans provide an overview of the goals and strategies that each school district has identified to support growth in English language arts (ELA) and math as well as "catch-up growth" for students especially impacted by the pandemic. They also specify the sources of funding that districts plan to use to implement these plans.

- All approved district Academic Recovery Plans are available on the SCDE website at: <https://www.ed.sc.gov/newsroom/academic-recovery-plans/>.
- If your district is not listed, SCDE may not yet have approved its plan.

SOUTH CAROLINA'S ESSER III (ARP) PLAN

- The state's approved ESSER III (ARP) Plan is available online at: <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/08/South-Carolina-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Final.pdf>
- Highlights from the state's approved ESSER III Plan are available online at: <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/08/South-Carolina-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan-Highlights-v2-081121.pdf>
- The U.S. Department of Education's press release on the approval of South Carolina's ESSER III Plan is available online at: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-approves-south-carolinas-plan-use-american-rescue-plan-funds-support-k-12-schools-and-students-distributes-remaining-705-million-state>

DISTRICT ESSER I (CARES ACT) & ESSER II (CRRSA ACT) PLANS AND QUARTERLY REPORTS

- A summary of each district's ESSER I spending plan and quarterly reports can be accessed from the SCDE website at:
<https://www.ed.sc.gov/policy/federal-education-programs/esser-funding-information/>
- A summary of each district's ESSER II spending plan and quarterly reports can be accessed from the SCDE website at
<https://www.ed.sc.gov/policy/federal-education-programs/esser-funding-information/esser-2-funding-information/>.
 - Look for the "ESSER Funding Information" or "ESSER 2 Funding Information" heading on the right side of the page.
 - Click on the link under that heading titled "District Spending Plan and Quarterly Report Tracker."
 - Plan summaries include information on how the district plans to allocate ESSER funds among the allowable categories of expenditures under the CARES Act or CRRSA.
 - Quarterly reports showing what each district has spent to date can be viewed by clicking on the tabs at the bottom of the spreadsheet.
- Districts are not required to publicly post their full ESSER I and ESSER II plans. The information in these plans is public information, however, and should be available upon request to the district office.

DISTRICT ESSER III (ARP) PLANS AND QUARTERLY REPORTS

- Districts' complete, approved ESSER III plans are currently being posted on the SCDE website at:
<https://www.ed.sc.gov/newsroom/american-rescue-plan-esser-fund-approved-applications/>.
- SCDE is continuing to process these plans, which were due on August 24, 2021, and will continue to post them as they are approved. It is expected that SCDE will also post districts' quarterly spending reports as they become available.

WHAT CAN I DO AS AN SIC MEMBER OR EDUCATION STAKEHOLDER?

Schools and districts need the help of their SICs and other stakeholders as they monitor whether Academic Recovery Plans and other measures called for in ESSER plans are producing the desired results and meeting the priority needs of students and schools. Parents, teachers, community members, students, administrators, and other school and district leaders each have a part to play in this process. Your School Improvement Council (SIC) is just one space where constructive discussions among these education stakeholders can occur to ensure the most effective and impactful use of ESSER funds -- meeting the

needs of all students and families in our school communities. The following section of the Guide will help you get started by providing sample questions that your SIC can use to begin the conversation. We find ourselves in unprecedented times, facing together perhaps the most serious public health crisis of our lives. *Our children depend on each of us.* Only by working together in a truly collaborative and forthright manner can we ensure that every child has a safe and supportive school environment in which to recover lost opportunities for learning and development and emerge stronger than before.

Here are some sample questions that SICs, families, and community leaders can use to generate constructive discussion about existing ESSER Spending Plans.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS SICs & STAKEHOLDERS CAN ASK THEIR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

- How can we initiate a conversation with our school community about our district's plans for academic recovery using ESSER funds?
- Does the school or district need to consider requesting any amendments to the district's ESSER spending plans considering the new challenges our school is facing this year?
- What is the best way that we can communicate parent questions, concerns, or suggestions about the district's ESSER spending plans to school and district leaders?
- How can we be involved in the ongoing monitoring of the implementation of our district's academic recovery and ESSER spending plans?
- How can we ensure that historically marginalized populations in our school are fully represented and invited to participate in these discussions?

If you need additional assistance in finding academic recovery or ESSER spending plans or initiating meaningful conversations with your SIC, please contact:

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1-800-868-2232

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The South Carolina School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) was established nearly 45 years ago to provide SIC members with the training, technical assistance, statutory accountability, and other operational support necessary for the success of the state's local SICs. A part of the Center for Educational Partnerships within the University of South Carolina College of Education, SC-SIC receives its funding through the South Carolina General Assembly. Visit us at <https://sic.sc.gov/>.

Carolina Family Engagement Center (CFEC) is one of 12 Statewide Family Engagement Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Every Student Succeeds Act. It is focused on identifying and disseminating effective family engagement practices that improve student achievement and reduce inequities in educational opportunity across South Carolina. It does this through its work providing training and technical assistance to families, educators, and community partners. Visit us at <https://cfec.sc.gov/>.

CFEC is housed in the SC-SIC at the University of South Carolina's College of Education and is funded through grant U310A180058 from the U.S. Department of Education.