

Competitive ESSER Grant

Questions and Answers

(updated 08/14/2020)

- Question:** Is there a minimum and maximum award amount?
Answer: No.
- Question:** Will indirect costs be funded?
Answer: The funds may cover indirect costs.
- Question:** Will NDE be funding staff and personnel?
Answer: It is not one of the state priorities. Applicants are allowed to ask but understand that it is not one of the state priorities so it will not be prioritized.
- Question:** Will you be able to provide specific feedback for proposals?
Answer: Unfortunately, no we will not be able to provide specific feedback on your application. We encourage applicants to attend/review the technical assistance sessions, website and the NFO and reach out with questions.
- Question:** When we submit the application in the online grants management system, do we need to provide a budget for that?
Answer: The budget will be completed in ePAGE, NDE's grants management system. NDE will have training sessions on this that will discuss this more in detail. We will have the budget in the system for you.
- Question:** Is a county-run agency eligible to partner with a nonprofit and apply for funding in the professional development and wrap-around services?
Answer: County-run agencies are ineligible to apply directly for funding as they are not an eligible entity as stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO). However, the county-run agency may partner with an eligible entity, such as a nonprofit. The eligible entity must have submitted a notice of intent to apply and must complete the application.
- Question:** What are some ways that I can strengthen my entity's application in each funding category?
Answer: Please pay close attention to the rubrics for each funding category. There are a number of ways an applicant can strengthen their responses:

 - Evidence of effectiveness
 - Evaluation
 - Question 3 within the Rubric
 - In the field of education, the US Department of Education has Evidence-based levels as noted in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (please see page Appendix E of the NFO)

8. **Question:** Would a county-run entity be an eligible entity if we just applied for Professional Development?
Answer: County-run entities are not eligible to apply for funding. However, they can receive funding if they partner with an eligible entity. Please see Question 6 for more information.
9. **Question:** Can a nonprofit organization apply without consultation with a school district?
Answer: Nonprofits and other eligible entities who wish to partner with a school district must ensure they collaborate with that school district so that both parties have an understanding of the partnership and what it entails. Entities that wish to work in collaboration with a school district must describe how they have collaborated with school district stakeholders in their narrative (please see Component 5, Question 5 and the Stakeholder Input section of the rubric of each funding category). In short, entities need to partner with school districts and must not state in the application that they want to work with a school district without connecting with those stakeholders first.
10. **Question:** This a 2-year budget, are we to write the budget as 2 separate years?
Answer: Do not include separate budgets for multiple years. Though this funding expires in the Fall of 2022, applications must submit one single budget that clearly outlines how they want to use the funds for the entirety of the grant award period.
11. **Question:** Can we use the grant to hire or retain personnel?
Answer: Personnel will be considered but it is not a priority.
12. **Question:** What is the importance of the Strategic Plan?
Answer: All eligible entities must submit 2 documents in addition 5 questions- 1) their needs assessment and 2) their performance/improvement/strategic plan. The needs assessments describe the entity's needs and discusses the root causes for those needs. The performance/improvement/strategic plan is the entity's plan describing how the entity will respond to the needs identified in the needs assessment. The ESSER funding plan/application should align to the entity's performance/improvement/strategic plan and help the entity achieve the goals laid out in its plan.
13. **Question:** Is the beginning of the grant award period in October, although programs that an entity may charge these funds to (if awarded) could start prior to October 1, 2020?
Answer: NDE's Business and Support Services Division has determined that the beginning of the grant award period will remain October 16, 2020 as stated in the NFO. Therefore, if an entity is awarded funding, they may not charge expenses before this date.
14. **Question:** When entering data into ePAGE application, what is the maximum characters I can input?
Answer: 12,000 characters, which is approximately 3 pages, single-spaced per question.
15. **Question:** Are letters of support required?
Answer: No, letters of support are not required. However, NDE will accept them as supplemental documents that can be uploaded into the ePAGE online grants management system.

16. **Question:** The timeline to complete applications seems short. Will it be extended?
Answer: The process of completing and reviewing of submitted applications has been streamlined and NDE does not anticipate extending the deadline for submission at this time.
17. **Question:** What if information used to provide an answer in the application has changed?
Answer: Submit your application and budget with the most current information you have given your current context. Due to current circumstances, we understand that things may change and will consider budget revisions with the same funding category for entities that are ultimately awarded funding.
18. **Question:** If some of the faculty at an Institution for Higher Education (IHE) wanted to do a professional development proposal and others wanted to submit for wrap-around services, would that be permitted, or is it really only one proposal for any non-LEA?
Answer: IHEs may submit one application for its entire school or may submit applications per center or per College/department that will discuss different projects/initiatives. For example, IHE A has a College of Education and a Center of Social Emotional Learning. IHE A may submit one application on behalf of its entire school. Alternatively, IHE A's College of Education may submit an application and its Center of Social Emotional Learning may submit a separate application for funding (however, neither division may submit more than one application) (page 8 of the NFO).
19. **Question:** On page 13, budget section, it states in the second sentence that NDE will not prioritize funding personnel positions in the grant. Please provide clarification on how nonprofits in particular should approach this concern.
Answer: The Department has outlined its priorities for the use of the ESSER competitive grant funds on page 6 of the NFO. Personnel are not prioritized for funding. It may be the case, however, that the delivery of professional development focused on distance learning to district and school leaders requires staff members, in which case it would be appropriate to include that in the request for funds.
- In general, applicants are welcome to submit funding requests that include personnel positions, but again personnel are not prioritized for funding and the application will be scored accordingly.
20. **Question:** When will I receive the login to sign into ePage?
Answer: The Grants Management Team will be creating new users in our ePAGE system and setting new user accounts using the email address you provided in the Letter of Intent to apply. Once the new user is created, the system will generate the email and send it with the link and other information on how to access ePAGE. That will be completed by the end of the week of July 27th.
21. **Question:** You mentioned digital assurances through clicking on a box in the application. Will the Federal Assurances be available that way, or should we complete a hard copy signed version to scan and upload?
Answer: The assurances will be available through the ePAGE system and will be signed electronically. Hard copies will not be required but were part of the application to give those who are not familiar with these assurances an opportunity to review them. Those contacts

identified in the Notice of Intent to Apply that were submitted by the deadline will be registered into the ePAGE system (if they are not already in there).

22. **Question:** Will the Statement of Certification also be completed on ePAGE?

Answer: Yes, all required components of the application will be submitted and signed through ePAGE.

23. **Question:** Will I be assigned someone that will help me with the application process?

Answer: An NDE representative will be assigned to each applicant to assist you throughout the grant application process up to the due date - August 19, 2020.

24. **Question:** In our application, we plan to offer two components of professional development to support distance learning and drive student achievement. We are collaborating with various LEAs across the state who will participate. We were also hoping to reserve additional capacity for LEAs and schools we haven't yet had the chance to connect with. Are we able to request additional funding to reserve space for other LEAS and schools? Or, are we only able to request funding for the districts we specifically name in our proposal?

Answer: ANet is allowed to ask for funding to reserve for LEAs/schools that you have not had the chance to connect with yet. However, due to lack of specificity, that request is unlikely to be competitive and score well on the rubric, primarily in the stakeholder and budget narrative components.

25. **Question:** Can we enter our applications into the system now (7/31/2020)?

Answer:

26. **Question:** Are we able to submit funding requests for 2 categories? If so, do we need to submit 2 applications?

Answer: As long as your entity is eligible for multiple categories of funding, you may apply. When you get into the ePAGE system you will see that you will submit a plan for the categories you are applying for. For example, if you apply for PD and Wrap Around Services, you will build out your application under PD and then under Wrap Around Services. Once you hit the final submit option, we have access to whatever you have built out. I hope this makes sense.

27. **Question:** Does the ESSER Statement of Certification need to be submitted with the application(s)? Our next board meeting is not scheduled until September and we were not aware of this grant opportunity for our last board meeting.

Answer: Yes, the Certification is electronic and mandatory. You are able to state a future date for Board approval on it.

Question: Needing some advice on best funding bucket for a Digital Learning Coach position - the coach would support student/families with access and learning online along with school staff tech needs and instructional delivery.

Answer: This request is allowable in all three categories. Please note that, as stated in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, personnel are not prioritized. What is important would be ensuring that this request aligns with the needs identified by the schools and LEA in response to COVID-19 and clearly stating how this position is critical for the implementation plan.

28. **Question:** Are the above allowable within this HQDIM bucket?

- video conferencing systems (Zoom, Adobe Connect)
- internet and voice connections/services
- hotspot services
- broadcasting equipment (for synchronous learning) - cameras, audio enhancement system etc.

Answer: All of the aforementioned items are allowable.

29. **Question:** We were planning to apply in collaboration with the dept of early learning to continue leader and teacher professional development around content and SEL. I know that the language was just changed to classify elementary as up to 8th grade, and on the last call it was mentioned that pre-k could now be included. From what we have heard from the leaders and centers we work with, they have different plans and timelines in place for re-opening, so while some of the development will involve training around distance/blended, that looks quite a bit different for our youngest learners. While some of the language was updated, it doesn't seem like the rubric and/or criteria was updated to really address the unique needs of pre-k.

Answer: Yes, applicants can make requests for pre-K and early learning. The application should clearly describe the needs of schools and/or students (and how this was determined), all of which should align with what is being requested for funding and the plan for implementation and progress monitoring. While the rubric was not changed to specifically integrate pre-K and early learning, it focuses on the core components reflecting the State's priorities. That is also the intent of the narrative questions, which provide flexibility so your organization may address the unique needs of pre-K.

30. **Question:** In order to plan for our application, we do have some questions regarding allowable costs. Would the expenses listed be allowable in the wrap-around services category, if serving our highest need students?

- Tuition Assistance
- Textbooks
- Program Supplies
- Childcare
- Laptops
- Gas Cards

Answer: The costs you listed are allowable and your entity can request those. However, keep in mind that the asks should align to the overall plan your entity has for the funds (which is aligned to your entity's needs and your strategic plan). Per the rubric, you should also ensure your asks

can demonstrate effectiveness as well; asks that can demonstrate effectiveness are more likely to be funded.

31. **Question:** Our organization does not require or have a Needs Assessment as a formal organizational document. Would a publicly available assessment, for example the Kenny Guinn Center's Digital Divide report, serve as an acceptable Needs Assessment for the ESSER, or do we need to develop a DRAFT Needs Assessment specific to our organization that directly addresses the current circumstances?

Answer: In order for your entity's application to be competitive, per the rubric, your entity should submit a needs assessment that is specific to your entity. While you are able to submit a general needs assessment like the one you mention from the Guinn Center, what your entity is applying for must align to its needs identified in the need's assessment and a general needs assessment will likely not score well. Also keep in mind that there is no specific template for the needs assessment so this could be in any format, such as surveys your entity has conducted, etc.

32. **Question:** In terms of the Strategic Plan, our three-year strategic plan (2019-2022) speaks to the whole organization. It is not specific to the program that we are proposing since the program is an adaptation of existing services that are only a portion of our overall work, but the organizational values and strategies are consistent. Will this be adequate for the purposes of the application?

Answer: In terms of the strategic plan, the general strategic plan that speaks to the whole organization is fine, although it is not specific to the program that your entity is proposing. The entity's ESSER funding plan/application should align to the entity's performance/improvement/strategic plan and help the entity achieve the goals laid out in its plan.

33. **Question:** Can the narrative responses to each question have any formatting such as tables, bullet lists, etc.?

Answer: The narrative will not support tables; other than that, there will be the same formatting features as other applications in ePAGE.

- There is an "other relative documents" section in the e-PAGE you can upload tables by referencing in your narrative.

New - August 14, 2020

34. **Question:** Do entities need a NV Vendor Identification Number to receive the Competitive ESSER Grant funding?

Answer: Yes, any entity that will be receiving these funds needs to be registered vendor with the State. Through that process they will set up Automated Clearing House (ACH) payment so NDE can reimburse them; please be reminded that funds are awarded on a reimbursement basis. An entity that does not have this yet can still apply for funding; however, if awarded, the entity will need to have all fiscal requirements, including the Nevada Vendor Identification Number, in order to receive funds.

35. **Question:** We have been working closely with a County School District to bring an [nonprofit]/Reading Program to fruition for a few schools in K-3 grades. We have secured the AmeriCorps funding which covers a large portion of the program, but not all, and of course there is a match requirement. We were considering applying for ESSER funding to help with offset some of the match and other expenses of the program. However, a portion of that which is not covered by the AmeriCorps funding is for the Program Director's Salary. It seemed on page 13, of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (first paragraph under the budget section) that this might not align to NDE's desires for the grant spending?
- Answer:** Funding for personnel will not be prioritized, but that does not mean it will not be funded. The intention is to have funding go more toward programming and materials in preparation for remote learning opportunities. As a reminder, applicants' plan for funding should be aligned to the applicant's needs assessment and strategic plan.
36. **Question:** On page 8 of the Notice of Funding Opportunity under "Non-Profit Community Based Organizations," it states that to be eligible the organization must be already working within schools (and other areas ask for school identification). We have been working with a school district over the past year during the "planning grant phase," but this will be our implementation year. We are wondering if we are eligible under this requirement?
- Answer:** Because your entity has been working with the school district over the past year (i.e. prior to the submission of your application), your entity has already been working in Nevada and is eligible to apply for the funding.
37. **Question:** Can you apply on behalf of your own nonprofit organization and not a school?
- Answer:** Eligible entities are allowed to apply for funding for high-quality professional development related to pre-k/early childhood. The ESSER funds cover elementary education and Nevada does not have a minimum threshold/grade for what constitutes "elementary" thus, the funds can support early childhood.
38. **Question:** To access the section pages under the section/funding category, if an entity doesn't have a subrecipient or is applying on their own behalf, should they just enter themselves?
- Answer:** Please enter the name of your organization.
39. **Question:** If we are applying on behalf of our own organization, do we need to enter a school location? Or do we just add the name of our nonprofit?
- Answer:** The name of your non-profit would be entered, if you are not acting as a fiscal agent for a school or schools.
40. **Question:** Will the Statement of Certification also be completed on ePAGE?
- Answer:** All required components of the application will be submitted through ePAGE.

41. **Question:** We are well on our way to writing the proposal. Should I put “N/A” into the space which references the date of the minutes?

Answer: The certification can be accepted with the signature of an authorized agent from CSN, so the President’s signature or your signature are appropriate for this required document.

42. **Question:** Do LEA's need a waiver for MOE under the CARES funding?

Answer: There is not any information about LEA MOE waivers under the CARES Act at this time. US ED has only put out information regarding state MOE waivers under the CARES Act. They will not be reviewing states' MOE waivers until after September 2021. I am thinking that, similar to other CARES Act waivers, a state can apply for this MOE waiver on behalf of its LEAs as well. NDE will need to follow-up on that with US ED. However, again, state MOE waivers will not be reviewed by US ED until after September 2021 and it is our understanding that NDE is in the process of reviewing the requirements so that we submit an MOE waiver. We will follow-up once we have more information and share what, if anything, LEAs requesting an MOE waiver under the CARES Act will need to do.

43. **Question:** I have the non-profit certificate from the State of Nevada and our charitable tax EIN (TIN) number, but we are currently awaiting final approval from the IRS. This process should hopefully take 3-4 weeks, but with COVID, it may take longer. I put in an interest form to apply for the grant, but I wanted to check if we could actually still be eligible for the grant while the IRS is finalizing the non-profit organization?

Answer: Your entity may apply, but if the organization is selected for funding, it could only receive the grant if it meets all requirements, including all fiscal documentation to demonstrate eligibility (e.g., permits, documentation for non-profit status, business license, etc.).

44. **Question:** General Statement of Federal Assurances require that the authorization for the IHE to file this application is noted in the minutes of our Local Board/Organization’s meetings. The close date of the ESSER NOFA falls between the July and August meetings of NSHE (CSN’s Board of Regents) so we missed getting the item on the July meeting and we will have to submit the application before the August meeting. May we get approval from NSHE’s Board via email and have the notation occur in the August 21st minutes?

Answer: Whatever governing body for your organization needs to approve that your entity can apply for the ESSER competitive grant. The date is referencing when your entity’s governing body approved this decision to apply. To be clear, the assurances and certification must be reviewed, signed, and approved by your entity and all of the references within those documents pertain to your entity, not the Nevada Department of Education.

45. **Question:** I saw that each active applicant will have a contact to support any questions. Can you tell me where I can locate that information to contact him/her directly?

Answer: You can contact Gabby Lamarre, Seng-Dao Keo, Maria Sauter of Karl Wilson with questions regarding the application process, for now. If your entity is awarded then the contact may change, but we will send that information once all awardees are finalized.

46. **Question:** Is there a list of eligible program costs? My specific question is regarding the preference to include or exclude administrative costs connected to the project (Accounting and Grant Management). Some federal applications that I've worked on want those to be included to ensure the workload is accounted for, and others prefer they are excluded so that the budget only includes program-specific costs?

Answer: There is not a list of eligible program costs. Administrative costs are allowable and there is no preference for including or excluding these types of costs.

47. **Question:** Are vehicles to deliver educational programming are considered a capital expense (expected life of 8 years) and excluded as an eligible grant cost?

Answer: Your entity can ask for this as these funds are very flexible. However, keep in mind that the asks should align to the overall plan your entity has for the funds (which is aligned to your entity's needs and your strategic plan). Per the rubric, you should also ensure your asks can demonstrate effectiveness as well; asks that can demonstrate effectiveness are more likely to be funded. Historically, this is not something that NDE has funded and we encourage entities to use other sources funds, such as state or local, to fund this type of expense.

48. **Question:** I need some assistance navigating your chart of accounts. We are putting in a proposal for tutoring services for the students we serve and I want to make sure I have the function and object codes correct. I used the object code 300 and function code 2100. Are those the correct codes to use for providing tutoring?

Question: Do we have to put tutoring in for indirect costs?

Answer: No, you do not have to include Indirect Costs, that is an optional expense. The object code depends on how you are paying the tutors. If it is an hourly rate it would be under 200 (salaries), if it is a one-time contracted agreement, it would be under 300 (purchased services). Either of these would be under Function Code 1000 for Instructional Support.

49. **Question:** Should I be entering budget line items for the full two years of the request. I don't see an opportunity to create a year one and a year two budget and I just want to make sure that I am entering things correctly. I assume that I enter the full amount for each line item and then ensure that the narrative clearly states how the money will be used in year one or two.

Answer: Yes, entities will enter all line items that will cover the duration of the grant award period, which ends in September 2022. Entities will not create a year one and a year two budget.

50. **Question:** We noticed that it is possible to upload multiple documents under the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan sections. If our statement of need is supported by data from more than one needs assessment, may we upload more than one document or is it preferable to combine documents into a single PDF file? The same question applies to the Strategic Plan. Is it acceptable to upload both as separate documents or is one single document preferred?

Answer: Please upload the needs assessment as one document and the strategic plan as one document.

