



U.S. Department of Education releases \$3 billion for COVID-19 relief

April 17, 2020

On April 14, 2020, the Department of Education (Ed.) [released approximately \\$3 billion dollars](#) for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, part of the \$30.75 billion dollar CARES Act education funding outlay.

The Relief Fund is available to both local educational agencies and institutions of higher education. There is no required distribution mix, meaning governors will have to make a choice between funding local educational agencies or institutions of higher education. Institutions of higher education qualify for the grant if the governor:

- determines that the institution has been most significantly impacted by COVID-19, to support the ability of institutions to continue to provide educational services and support the ongoing functionality;
- deems the institution essential for carrying out emergency educational services for specified social assistance programs, the provision of child care and early childhood education, social and emotional support, or for the protection of education related jobs.

In its release, the Ed. provided information on the amounts available to each state, instructions for grant application and use, and a certification agreement that each state must sign in order to access the funds. Governors may apply immediately and the Ed. is making efforts to give states access to funds within three days of application. Governors will receive a lump sum that is to be distributed at their discretion based upon criterion provided by the department.

In order to receive Relief Funds, governors are required to execute a certification and agreement in which they must stipulate to certain conditions, including but not limited to:

- that the state will maintain levels of support for elementary and secondary education and for higher education for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 that are at least the average of the state's support in the three preceding fiscal years;
- that the state and each institution that receives the relief funds will "to the greatest extent practicable" continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to COVID-19, and;
- that the funds generally will not be used for payment to administrators, executives, unions or associations.

States will be required to return any funds that are not awarded within one year of receipt.

The Ed. stresses that governors are to ensure that grants are made quickly, are targeted to address the exigent needs of students, and are directed to resolve challenges to ongoing functionality of institutions based on the COVID-19 pandemic. The department also places a particular emphasis on governors to use relief funds to support remote learning.

States will be required to submit to ongoing reporting regarding use of the funds to the Ed. An initial report is due within 45 days of receiving the relief funds, which requires the state to identify:

- the state's process for awarding funds to institutions;
- criteria for determining which entities were most impacted by the coronavirus, essential for carrying out emergency educational services and/or education related, and;
- a description of the process and deliberations involved in formulating the above criteria.

States will also be required to submit quarterly reports to the Ed. on steps the states and institutions have taken to comply with provisions of the CARES Act. The certification agreement also requires governors to ensure compliance with a laundry list of federal laws, executive orders and regulations.

The relief fund award for the states of Ohio and Pennsylvania are about \$105 million each, with Michigan at about \$90 million.

Institutions interested in receiving relief funds from their governor should start petitioning now. If awarded funds, they should be prepared to provide extensive and frequent documentation.

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