CARES Act FAQs

August 7, 2020

Responses to these questions from LEAs are based on what we currently know. We will continue to communicate as we gain new information.

The SDE currently is managing CARES Act funds from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds and from the Coronavirus Relief Fund, Idaho Rebounds. Expenditures for the Coronavirus Relief Fund, Idaho Rebounds must initially meet three criteria:

*1. are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID–19);*

*2. were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the State or government; and*

*3. were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.*

Q1. Schools are finding that instruction to both the students in the classroom and the students following the class virtually get a much better experience with a camera that can follow the teacher or at the least provide a wider angle, higher quality image that allows the teacher to move from desk to board to SmartBoard etc.  May we use Idaho Rebounds Distance/Blended Learning funds for this purpose?

A. Yes. This would also be an allowable expense under the ESSER flow-through funds.

Q2. We need to upgrade our IT "backbone" so that it can fully support streaming video with 1000+ users. Can these funds be used for internet service plan upgrades, access points, switches, servers, etc.?

A. Yes. This would also be an allowable expense under the ESSER flow-through funds.

Q3. Our LEA has professional development needs related to delivering online training. Most out of district/out of school trainers are already booked or otherwise unavailable.  Is it possible to use this money to purchase online training that supports teachers' capacity to deliver online or blended education and/or to hire experts from inside the district?

A. Yes as long as the expenditures are not included in the LEA’s approved budget as of March 27, 2020 and stipends/salaries for staff are outside of contract time.

Q4. Concerning the LMS system, through the state reserve funds, the dollar amount does not require an application, so perhaps I missed it in the PowerPoint but how do I share with you what LMS we would like to use and how do I ensure that it qualifies? I saw the assurance form, but is there another document or process that I missed?

1. You are correct that the LMS allocation does not require an application.  These funds may be used for an LMS or any of the approved activities for the Distance/Blended Learning grant.  In the NOTES section of the GRA, please identify the LEA’s LMS. The GRA reviewer will reach out if additional information is needed. The District LMS Assurance Checklist, available at  [on the Federal Programs CARES Act webpage](https://www.sde.idaho.gov/federal-programs/cares-act/files/District-LMS-Assurance-Checklist.pdf) is required to be attached in the GRA if the LEA is asking for reimbursement for an LMS that is not on the State Approved LMS list.

Q5. Also, these funds also need to be shared with the private schools, correct? Is that another letter we have to send to the private schools or can I leverage the work I have already done with private schools concerning the ESSERF funds, use the same enrollment numbers, and provide them the number they will receive (not the dollars, just the number).

A. ESSER Funds are subject to equitable services requirements. Coronavirus Relief Funds are not subject to equitable services requirements. The LEA has a responsibility to consult with the non-public schools in the LEA’s boundary to determine LMS/blended learning needs and provide these services if requested. The LEA will want to send out an additional letter specific to this funding source.

Q6. I already know how we can use these dollars.  Approximately 1/3 will go to pay for hot spots for students.  These amounts were not budgeted for in 19-20 or 20-21 - I was just going to figure out how to pay for these, so thank you for these dollars 🙂.  The other 2/3rds, I was hoping to reimburse the district for devices already purchased.  They were budgeted out of our capital funding for the 20-21 fiscal year but essentially, I would shift costs to this funding stream.  From what I read and my small amount of understanding, this device purchase would qualify - is that correct?

A. The purchase of all the devices would be allowable only if none of the devices were part of the approved budget in place on March 27. Coronavirus Relief Funds may not be used for any expenditures covered in the approved budget as of March 27, 2020.

Q7. The original ESSERF funds could use if we went on-line and teachers had to teach on-line to students, so we were planning to use those dollars for our virtual school house on-line program.  What if however, the district is in a yellow, or red situation where we are in a blended learning model, or if all the buildings are closed.  Could the ESSERF funds be used to pay for those teachers as well.  They are not part of an on-line school, but essentially are providing on-line / remote instruction?

A. If the district is providing blended learning because of COVID-19, then Yes, ESSER flow-through funds could be used to pay for teachers’ salaries who are providing the online instruction because of COVID-19.

Q8. I am concerned about the funds for the LMS not being available in future years. Can you tell me if this is funding that will be continuing so that we do not set all of this structure and work up and then not have the funds to support it in the coming years? This is why we are thinking of using google classroom because it is free and with the google suite.

1. I’m not aware of funding to continue to support an LMS at this time.

Q9. Can a portion of these funds be used for a one-time stipend to pay teachers that will need to participate in additional professional development for training in using our new LMS system and the pedagogy changes that go with that?

1. Yes, as long as the stipend expenditures are outside of contract time.

Q10. Can the Distance/Blended Learning funds be used to purchase online curriculum? Headphones (noise isolation) and document cameras? How about materials for students who are home to engage them in science experiments (these are normally purchased for groups in face-to-face learning, but now we need them individually)?

A. It is reasonable to assume that Distance/Blended Learning funds may be used for curriculum, headphones, and document cameras. Materials for science experiments do not fit within the scope of these funds. Consider using ESSER flow through funds for this purpose.

Q11. I want to hire a paraprofessional to help support students who will be learning remotely during COVID-19. The para’s primary function will be related to technology support. This is the best way to support students for our Charter. Is this an allowable use of the Distance/Blended Learning funds?

A. I talked to the State Controller’s Office and they said it was allowable.

Q12. We would like to use Idaho Rebounds funds to purchase Educational Assistants to work in the classrooms to specifically help with the distance learning aspect of technology set up such as Google Meets, Edmodo, answering distance learner questions, and managing the large amount of extra work for the teacher that having students in person daily, teaching those that are only out for a short period due to COVID-related issues via Google Meets/Edmodo, and teaching those who are out the entire semester through Google Meets/Edmodo. Is this allowable?

1. In both cases, it sounds like these would be extra positions outside of the LEA’s budget approved as of March 27, 2020, and these positions are needed in response to COVID-19. For these reasons, this should be an allowable expense through December 30,2020.

Q12. This is something my elective teachers brought up.  They are asking me how to flip their classroom from 100% hands-on work to 100% online.  The shop teacher in particular last semester showed videos and gave them worksheets.  The students do not have any tools at home so he thought that if he gave them a model kit of a house to build they could build it step by step on a small scale from home as he walked them through the process online.  The way his funding works is they generally build dollhouses, storage sheds, and other things like saunas for the public who then pays for the cost of the materials and donate some to the program to replace items like sandpaper and tool replacement.  I know this is not technology but it seems like the CTE programs are going to fall through the cracks in all of this COVID chaos.  Maybe CTE is coming up with some funds to remedy this issue?  Other hands-on type classes will have the same issues.

1. Purchasing materials for model kits would be allowable use of ESSER flow-through funds, but not the Coronavirus Relief Funds, Idaho Rebounds.

Q13. We will need to hire a teacher to facilitate online and blended learning for grades K-8. We do have an online school, but it is only for grades 9-12. The addition of grades K-8 is new and we don’t currently have anyone for this position. Could we use the Distance/Blended Learning grant to pay for this teacher’s salary and benefits?

1. It’s possible the Distance/Blended Learning funds may be used to hire an additional teacher, as a result of COVID-19, as long as the position was not part of the approved budget as of March 27, 2020. Just a reminder, the performance period for these funds ends December 30, 2020.

For Questions Contact

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