

**GOVERNOR’S EMERGENCY EDUCATION RELIEF FUND**  
**PART C: USES OF GOVERNOR’S EMERGENCY EDUCATION FUNDS**

Section 18002 of Division B of the CARES Act provides in relevant part that grants awarded under the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund be used to support the ability of local educational agencies (LEAs) and institutions of higher education (IHEs) to continue to provide educational services to their students. The Department is interested in learning how and to what extent each State intends to use the award, or a portion of the award, to establish, develop, improve, or expand the availability, accessibility, capacity, and use of remote learning techniques and technologies which includes both distance education as defined in section 103(7) of the HEA and distance learning as defined in ESEA section 8101(14). The Department requests the following information:

1. Does the State intend to use any of the awarded funds to support remote learning for all students?

a. Please describe whether the State considered conducting an assessment of the barriers to implementing effective remote learning for all students, or utilizing an existing assessment, to help target resources toward greatest needs.

b. With respect to LEAs, please describe how the State intends to use the funds to help students and teachers adopt or improve remote learning that serves all students, including students with disabilities, students from low-income families, charter school students, and non-public school students.

c. With respect to IHEs, please describe how the State intends to focus expenditures to ensure that all institutions – public and private – have the needed supports to continue executing their missions and educating their students.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky intends to use awarded funds to support remote learning efforts by supporting the expanse of infrastructure, access, and quality of digital learning and virtual instruction for public and non-public schools and institutes of higher education (IHEs), as well as continued food service efforts to meet targeted needs identified by local education agencies (LEAs).

a. Please describe whether the State considered conducting an assessment to the barriers to implementing effective remote learning for all students, or utilizing an existing assessment, to help target resources toward greatest needs.

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) maintains a robust and efficient system of needs assessments and community engagement activities. The cornerstones of this process are the Comprehensive District and School Improvement Plans (CDIP/CSIP). Schools and LEAs annually complete a rigorous needs assessment process that includes a review of data and stakeholder input to determine needs and areas for growth. LEAs also complete a technology needs assessment as part of the annual Education Technology Plan (ETP) and Digital Readiness Survey (DRS). Information collected by the

department from the CDIP/CSIP, ETP, and DRS are used to inform needs assessment processes at the SEA level. The Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) Master Plan includes information about the current needs and barriers to digital learning and instructional technology within the state. The Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) conduct annual assessments of LEA capacity to determine needs for special education programs and gifted and talented programs across the state. Additionally, School and Community Nutrition staff conduct an annual needs assessment to identify barriers to implementation.

In addition to the formal needs assessment processes discussed above, the KDE maintains systems for continuous stakeholder engagement. These efforts have been dramatically increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commissioner of Education (COE) and his designees regularly meet with formal and informal stakeholder groups including the Counselor Advisory Council (CAC), Local School Board Members' Advisory Council (LSBMAC), Parents' Advisory Council (PAC), Commissioner's Student Advisory Council (CSAC), Principals' Advisory Council (PrAC), Superintendents' Advisory Council (SAC), Teachers' Advisory Council (TAC), the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), and the Guiding Coalition (GC). The COVID-19 pandemic has been the primary agenda item for each of these meetings to allow the COE and KDE to maintain up-to-date information about conditions in the field.

Additionally, the COE implemented a new advisory council to facilitate the two-way flow of information during the COVID-19 pandemic. This group, called the Education Continuation Task Force (ECTF), includes representation from forty stakeholder groups including the Kentucky Center for School Safety, Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Kentucky Education Association, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, and each of Kentucky's education cooperatives. The ECTF meets biweekly with the explicit goal of working together on issues that arise during the COVID-19 pandemic and support the educational needs of Kentucky's students and teachers as they endeavor to learn and teach in non-traditional ways.

To further inform its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the KDE holds weekly town hall meetings with superintendents to share new guidance and solicit feedback. The Governor's office also holds conference calls with superintendents to ensure that they have access to relevant information regarding public health efforts and school closure timelines.

b. With respect to LEAs, please describe how the State intends to use the funds to help students and teachers adopt or improve remote learning that serves all students, including students with disabilities, students from low-income families, charter school students, and non-public school students.

Collaboration and equity are two core values of the KDE. As an agency, the KDE places high value on its collaborative efforts with LEAs to ensure that every student is empowered and equipped to pursue a successful future. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these collaborative efforts have centered on

supporting LEAs as they develop new strategies to deliver remote learning experiences to all students. Funds secured through section 18002 of the CARES Act will be used bolster these efforts.

Support for LEAs in implementing remote learning efforts stem from the KDE's Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) program. Launched in 2011, the NTI program was originally designed to support LEAs burdened by frequent, short-term weather-related closures. Since 2011, the NTI program has helped Kentucky LEAs recover more than 1,500 instructional days through remote learning efforts. The COE used emergency authority granted by the state legislature to expand access to the NTI program to all one hundred seventy-two LEAs (including area technology centers and state-run institutions) during the COVID-19 pandemic. This provides a framework within which LEAs can work to maintain instructional integrity during extended school closures.

Access to digital learning opportunities through the NTI program remain a challenge for Kentucky's low-income students. Technological solutions to this barrier are discussed in question two of this application. LEAs are meeting this challenge by determining which students have access to digital materials at home and providing necessary hard copy assignments and access to school supplies at designated pick up spots within each LEA. This has created an additional financial burden on LEAs who have re-directed resources to consumable learning materials. Section 18002 funds will be used to expand KDE capacity to provide guidance, technical assistance, and resource support to schools operating under the NTI program.

LEAs in Kentucky are also supporting low-income students through revamped and expanded food service offerings under the emergency waivers offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Kentucky is committed to providing support for school nutrition programs to continue to provide food assistance for all students in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kentucky views nutrition programs as vital to remote learning. Whether located remotely or in the classroom, students that are experiencing hunger cannot learn. LEAs have had to shift very quickly from typical operations to meal distribution methods necessary to meet student needs during this crisis.

Section 18002 funds will be used to support LEAs that face new financial challenges, including decreased revenue and increased expenses. Federal Child Nutrition Programs, funded through the USDA, are funded using a meals times rate formula (i.e., districts are reimbursed an amount per meal that is set by the USDA annually for each meal served). Prior to the start of the school year, and in order to budget for their food service program, school districts project revenue based upon normal operations and typical participation throughout the year. In large part, the revenue is used for salaries and benefits. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many districts have experienced a decrease in revenue, while staffing levels remain unchanged. LEAs have also experienced increased costs. During typical operations, per meal costs are relatively low and consistent due to bulk ordering and bulk product use. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAs have had to shift to more shelf-stable, individually packaged items that cost more. Many LEAs have also had to purchase equipment and supplies that allows them to transport meals, while maintaining food safety. In some instances, LEAs are paying food service staff a higher salary with extra duty pay

while others are paying substitute staff where regular food service staff are unable to perform their regular job duties. Transportation and delivery costs are also required to facilitate the emergency food distribution model, which is an expense the LEA would not have otherwise incurred.

The KDE continues to support LEAs in providing high quality learning experiences to students with disabilities through the NTI program. Kentucky's special education cooperatives, as an extension of the KDE, house assistive technology lending libraries that may be used during the COVID-19 pandemic. The KDE provides weekly webcasts and direct technical assistance to LEAs, schools and families and has provided training to Directors of Special Education about the legal and practical requirements of supporting learners during this time. Section 18002 funds will be used to expand these opportunities.

Kentucky maintains a system of checks and balances to ensure that equitable services are provided to Kentucky's non-public schools. The existing equitable services parameters will be applied to Section 18002 funds. Following the successful completion of the consultation process, the LEA is required to submit the Equitable Services Agreement Form to the Non-Public Schools Ombudsman. The forms are reviewed and approved by SEA staff. The Non-Public Schools Ombudsman also maintains conflict resolution procedures to support the consultation process. Following the disbursement of funds, the KDE monitors the agreement to ensure that the LEA has policies in place to facilitate the agreement, that the LEA contacted all eligible non-public schools to participate in the agreement, and that the LEA followed the agreement.

c. With respect to IHEs, please describe how the State intends to focus expenditures to ensure that all institutions – public and private -have the needed supports to continue executing their missions and educating their students.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky intends to distribute approximately one third of its Section 18002 funds (\$13.8 million) to IHEs to promote continued services to students. The funds will be used to expand the quality of instruction, ensure equitable access to programs and services, promote operational continuity (including planning for recovery and reopening), and increase non-academic support systems for current and prospective students.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on postsecondary education in Kentucky has been severe. The abrupt transition to remote learning has enlarged existing barriers to the equitable access to academic programs and services. These barriers include geography, socio-economic status, and a lack of prerequisite skills for digital learning. Home broadband access is a persistent challenge for many regions of the state. Additionally, a lack of faculty experience and exposure to remote learning tools and strategies has led to an unevenness in program and course quality.

While faculty have been trained to use digital learning management systems and video conferencing software, these are only the first steps in building engaging and high-quality remote learning experiences. Section 18002 funding will be used to help faculty redesign lectures, assignments, and assessments to better suit a remote learning environment. As we seek to expand instructional expertise, professional learning experiences will emphasize effective classroom interaction through the implementation of high impact practices, such as collaborative assignments and projects, virtual internships, and other work-based experiences.

Postsecondary education will continue to be a key pathway to economic sustainability for many Kentuckians - even more so as we work to emerge from the current situation. Quality online programs must be accessible and effective for students, regardless of their income, their hometown, or their physical limitations. Section 18002 funds will be critical in helping IHEs meet the needs of their students by providing targeted financial aid for high need students and creating new resources for students who have physical limitations, hearing or visual impairments, or other disabilities.

Another area of focus includes expanding student advising services. The transition to a completely online learning environment has led to necessary changes to existing systems for providing academic and non-academic supports. Advisors no longer have face-to-face contact with students and must adapt their practices to the new remote learning environment. They must find new ways to identify academically at-risk students and to address those risks. Social, emotional, and mental health counselling are needed now more than ever, and IHEs are struggling to provide those services. Section 18002 funds will be used to help IHEs develop and implement effective practices in this area.

The funds will also be used to help develop remote mentoring and advising programs for entering freshman and students returning to a college environment after a break in their programs. This may be in the form of campus-specific programs or statewide strategies including the implementation of student success coaches, state-level information portals, and new online tools to help students prepare for the transition to postsecondary education.

Finally, Section 18002 funds will be used to help our IHEs plan for the unknown as they prepare to re-open their doors in the fall. Funds will be used to facilitate strategic planning efforts and help direct resources to meet anticipated needs. IHEs will need to prepare for multiple possible outcomes, including an unknown fall enrollment count, unknown program delivery requirements, and unknown student engagement levels. Additional planning will also need to occur as IHEs work to prepare faculty to teach under multiple possible scenarios. Across the state, IHEs anticipate the need to create new evaluation protocols to ensure students continue to make progress during periods of remote learning as well as a possibility that instruction may be disrupted in the future. IHEs will need to be prepared to transition students between remote learning and in-person instruction. From an organizational standpoint, IHEs will also need support in the planning for an unknown fiscal reality as enrollment changes, unanticipated costs are realized, and endowments decline due to market fluctuations. Strong planning will be key to

ensure that Kentucky's IHEs will be able to respond to the many unknown scenarios that may confront them in the months ahead.

2. Does the State intend to use any of the awarded funds to support technological capacity and access – including hardware and software, connectivity, and instructional expertise – to support remote learning for all students? If so, please describe how the State will achieve its goals for both LEAs and IHEs.

a. Please describe the strategies used to serve disadvantaged populations listed in Sec. 18003(d)(4) of the CARES Act.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky intends to use awarded funds to support added technological capacity and access to support remote learning needs identified by the LEAs and IHEs.

Kentucky was an early adopter of digital learning initiatives with significant early momentum to increase the number of devices available to students. While this early adoption has led to a greater level of comfort with digital learning, it has also led to the existence of a legacy system where many devices are stationary devices housed within classrooms, computer labs, libraries, and area technology centers. Statewide purchasing contracts are in place with Apple, ByteSpeed, Dell, Hewlett Packard, Lenovo, Microsoft and other statewide partners to support the eighty-four percent of LEAs working to provide a portable device to every student. Along with the KETS Master Plan, these contracts support equity in the schools by establishing minimally required technical specifications, internet security and filtering provisions, and controlled costs. Section 18002 funds will be used to support LEAs working to increase their allotment of portable devices.

Similarly, Section 18002 funds will be used to support LEAs in the acquisition, monitoring, and deployment of appropriate software to support digital learning. The KDE maintains an ever-growing statewide pool of shared services that allow LEAs to opt into software opportunities that enhance student learning. These shared services contracts include programs such as Kentucky's student information system, computer and user account management services, statewide collaboration and communications systems, financial management system, data security and student privacy services, and standard internet and networking services. Additionally, the KDE supports LEAs in the monitoring of deployment and student use of technology. The KDE is dedicated to ensuring that software and digital curriculum purchases are intentional and regularly monitored with the understanding that LEAs must be able to gauge adoption and impact of new technologies while also ensuring high levels of safety, security, and privacy for students and staff.

Connectivity continues to be a barrier to remote learning for low-income, migrant, and homeless student populations. The KDE supports LEAs local decision-making authority in establishing protocols for facilitating in-home internet access by providing technical guidance and objective feedback on unique plans and innovations. Staff support for in-home connectivity continues to be a barrier for most LEAs. The KDE regularly highlights partnership opportunities with localities who have pioneered free public Wi-Fi access points, as well as businesses and public institutions who have made Wi-Fi access available to the public.

As a learning organization, the KDE is committed to expanding the instructional expertise of educators across the Commonwealth. As society adapts to new methods of virtual work, the KDE is also adapting existing systems to support virtual meeting and growth opportunities for teachers. The KDE offers

coaching to support educators as they transition to the virtual environment. Due to limited human capital, the KDE deploys a train-the-trainer model to support digital learning and is leading a statewide network of digital learning coaches that has expanded rapidly. The KDE also maintains a Professional Learning Bulletin Board. This virtual space houses all the training opportunities available to educators and allows them to filter for virtual options. The KDE has led the charge in offering virtual options with more than seventy digital learning opportunities currently available. Section 18002 funds will be used to expand these opportunities and create a more robust system for digital professional learning.

Issues related to access, connectivity, and instructional expertise also impact Kentucky learners with specialized needs. As was discussed in question one, Kentucky's education cooperatives support continued access to hardware and software through the deployment of assistive technology lending libraries. The KDE also provides regular virtual training opportunities to Special Education Directors and teachers seeking to build their skill and capacity in the area of digital learning. As new needs are identified, Section 18002 funds will be used to expand these targeted support opportunities.

The CPE will work with IHEs to create an inventory of infrastructure needs, both in terms of hardware and software, and pursue statewide contracts when feasible. Just as some K-12 students have struggled with technological issues, access to computers and internet connectivity have been barriers to the smooth transition to remote learning for some postsecondary learners as well. Individual institutions have addressed the barriers by loaning laptops and WiFi hotspots, but there is a growing need for more equipment. Section 18002 funds will be used to purchase the equipment and internet access necessary for students to succeed in remote learning.

Postsecondary courses that include hands-on training, such as fine and performing arts classes, natural science labs, and career and technical courses, have been particularly difficult to offer remotely. Section 18002 funds will be used to facilitate planning and training as faculty and remote learning experts come together to create innovative solutions. Possible opportunities include securing a statewide contract for lab simulation software and professional development in teaching lab sciences and career and technical courses in an online environment.

3. Does the State intend to use any of the awarded funds to support remote learning by developing new informational and academic resources and expanding awareness of, and access to, best practices and innovations in remote learning and support for students, families, and educators? If so, please identify, generally, the resources, best practices, and innovations that the State intends to develop and expand.

As new information about the COVID-19 pandemic becomes available, the Commonwealth of Kentucky anticipates the need to re-tool existing programs and create new innovations to meet the changing needs of students, families, and educators. The state anticipates that Section 18002 funds will be used to support growth and information in the following areas.

As it was originally designed to support short term, weather-related school closures, existing structures that support the NTI program will need to be reframed to support long term school closures. These structures will aid the KDE in the monitoring and data collection processes. Additionally, the KDE looks to expand support of for NTI through rapid growth and expansion of the Kentucky Innovative Learning Network (KILN). The KILN is a network of leaders who regularly meet to discuss and disseminate best practices for remote learning through the NTI program. The KDE anticipates a need for more frequent

virtual meetings of this team to provide professional learning and facilitate the creation and dissemination of new best practices.

The KDE also anticipates a need to expand existing shared services contracts to provide LEAs with a more robust pool of resources. New systems and structures will need to be built to allow leaders to efficiently evaluate the impact of potential programs and measure the adoption and effect of recently deployed solutions. As more LEAs move to the virtual space, the KDE must ensure that access to shared services contracts do not become an additional barrier. In the same vein, the KDE also anticipates a need to expand access to virtual course offerings for students. By working with statewide collaborative partners, the KDE can ensure that students at higher grade levels have access to rigorous, often college level course work that aligns with their individual learning plans and personal ambitions.

Furthermore, the KDE anticipates a need to develop new methods for food service distribution. In collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Public Health (KDPH), the KDE will continue to support LEAs in the development of new delivery methods including food delivery, no-contact pickup, and drive through pick up. The KDE also anticipates a need to assist LEAs in the development of new menus that include shelf-stable, individually packed meals.

The CPE also anticipates the need to innovate to support IHEs in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of statewide virtual discussions with remote learning coordinators, instructional designers, and teaching and learning center directors. Much more emphasis will be placed on best practices and long-term planning for the conversion of face-to-face classes to online formats. The rise of faculty blogs and online affinity groups during the pandemic points to the importance of providing outlets for faculty collaboration and support both within and across institutions. There is not only a need for online learning experts to meet virtually, there is a need for virtual meetings of faculty to learn from experts as well as one another. These virtual faculty groups can also focus on potential collaborations among faculty. Section 18002 funds will be used to provide discipline-specific online pedagogy training as well as to facilitate virtual learning communities of faculty and online learning experts that focus on high impact practices, accessibility issues, and other elements of a quality remote learning experience.