

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

Education Stabilization Fund Program

Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

Initial 45-day Report

July 2, 2020



Introduction

The Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF) was established in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The U.S. Department of Education (US ED) awarded grants to Governors for the purpose of providing education related entities with emergency assistance as a result of the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The State of Alaska received \$6,503,527 in GEERF to address the unique challenges faced by Alaska's students during the COVID-19 pandemic, school building closures, and the adjustment to remote learning.

State of Alaska's Awarding Process

1. Please describe the State's process for awarding GEERF to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and/or other education-related entities, including:
 - a. Timeline(s) for awarding GEERF to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities;

The FY2020 application for GEERF was made available to LEAs on June 1, 2020. The application was provided through the department's Grants Management System (GMS) and required LEAs to complete an Assurance & Certification Packet, budget and budget narrative detailing which activities would be funded through these funds. It was at this time that LEAs determined whether or not they wanted to apply for GEERF in FY2020 or wait until FY2021. LEAs applying in FY2020 were eligible to submit a request for reimbursement immediately upon receiving approval of their application. The FY2021 applications for GEERF were made available to LEAs on June 15, 2020. These LEAs are eligible to submit a request for reimbursement after eligible expenditures are incurred starting July 1, 2020. Program staff within the department are actively reviewing all LEA applications, so that LEAs can receive reimbursement requests timely.

Based on consultation with the IHEs, they will be awarded funding in both FY2020 and FY2021. The IHE, University of Alaska, opted to receive funding in FY2020 and the Assurance and Certification Packet and budget document was provided to them on June 22, 2020. They are eligible to submit a request for reimbursement immediately upon receiving their signed documents. The institution of secondary and higher education, Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, opted to receive their portion in FY2021. The Assurance and Certification Packet and budget document was provided to them on June 22, 2020, and they will be eligible to receive their funding as soon as possible after receiving their signed documents, but not before July 1, 2020.

Applications for GEERF were made available to other education-related entities on June 4, 2020; this was through a competitive request for application process. Intent to Apply letters were due to the department by June 15, 2020, with the final application being due no later than June 30, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. Alaska Daylight Savings Time. Due to the number of applications received, awards to other education-related entities will be made by August 1, 2020.

- b. The criteria, process and deliberations you use to determine which LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related agencies are:
 - i. “Most significantly impacted by coronavirus;” and/or
 - ii. “Essential” for carrying out emergency educational service;

Through consultation with the Office of the Governor, it was recommended that the \$6.5 million in federal GEERF would be dispersed to eligible education and education-related entities in Alaska in the following manner:

- \$3.7 million for grants to 35 school districts in order to ensure all LEAs received funding equal to or greater than the allocation of \$30 million one-time funds through the state’s foundation formula versus the allocation based on the Title I-A formula for the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF);
 - \$1.5 million for IHEs (University of Alaska);
 - \$200,000 for institutions of secondary and higher education (Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program); and
 - \$1.0 million for grants to education and education-related entities that may include daycare facilities providing educational instruction, private schools, and/or private colleges.
- c. The funding mechanisms (e.g., grants, contracts) the State will use to provide GEERF to LEAs, IHEs, and/or other education-related entities; and

GEERF will be provided to LEAs, 1 IHE, and other education-related entities through grants administered in the department’s Grants Management System (GMS). Funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis only for these grantees. The 1 institution of secondary and higher education will receive their funding as a lump sum payment after receipt of their signed Assurance and Certification Packet and budget document.

- d. Any specific funding conditions or requirements the State will place on awards to ensure the funds are spent for specific purposes or activities.

As noted above, the majority of the grants will be distributed on a reimbursement basis to help ensure the funds are spent for allowable activities. See the System of Internal Controls section below for additional detail.

System of Internal Controls

2. Describe the system of internal controls the State will use to ensure that GEERF are expended for allowable purposes and in accordance with cash management principles and the Uniform Guidance. See 2 CFR §200.303.

Grantees will be required to submit a budget that will be reviewed and approved by program staff familiar with GEERF allowability requirements. As budgets are being reviewed, any questions that arise are posed to the entire Department of Education & Early Development’s (DEED) CARES Act team (which consists of ten leadership, fiscal, and program staff). The department is also recommending to grantees

that they document the justification for any expenditures that without context could appear questionable to future auditors/reviewers.

Once grantee budgets are approved within the approved application, the grantee is able to submit reimbursement requests. The department's Grant Administrators review reimbursement requests to ensure they match the approved budget.

For LEAs receiving GEERF, the department will rely on risk assessments performed for Title I-A to determine the risk level of the LEA. For other grantees, the department will perform a new risk assessment using the Title I-A risk assessment. Completion of any new risk assessments will be coordinated by the department's Internal Auditor and completed as soon as possible after the applications are received and vetted.

Any grantees that are considered high risk will be considered for additional technical assistance and monitoring. Monitoring will be a virtual review of expenditures over a yet to be determined dollar threshold that may vary based on the size of the award.

Award or Use of Funds

3. If GEERF are being awarded or used for payments to SEA or IHE administrators, executives, and/or state or local teachers' unions or associations, please describe your process for reporting the amount of funds used for this purpose, and how the funds are consistent with allowable uses of funds under section 18002(c) of the CARES Act.

The department does not anticipate GEERF being used to pay for this type of expenditures.

Equitable Services

4. If you intend to provide GEERF to LEAs, please describe the process you will use to ensure that LEAs receiving GEERF provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA.

The department is requiring LEAs with known private schools to consult specifically for CARES Act funding even if the private school has previously declined Title I-A funding for Equitable Services. Notification of CARES Act equitable services requirements have been included in the department's ESEA Weekly Newsletter to all LEAs, direct emails to LEAs with known private schools, and was covered during multiple statewide webinars open to all LEAs.

LEAs were provided with an affirmation of consultation template, sample letter from the district to the private school, as well as the US ED CARES Act Equitable Services guidance document. The department developed an online application in the State's Grants Management System (GMS), which automatically calculates the equitable share based on enrollment numbers. The department created and provided LEAs with a handbook that includes instructions for completing the private school allocations as well as general application instructions. Districts are required to upload all affirmations of consultation or documentation of attempted consultation to GMS. Application approval is not granted until all documentation is received, the private school allocations are completed, and applications detail equitable services in accordance with Section 1117 of ESEA.

Every Friday the Private School Ombudsman reviews the GEERF applications to ensure all private schools are consulted and private school allocations are tracked. The GEERF application review committee has a complete listing of private schools organized by district to assist in ensuring the consultations included represent a complete list of private schools. Once all FY2020 CARES Act applications are approved, the allocations to private schools will be posted to the department's website similar to what is done for Section 1117 of ESEA.