

## **What is the purpose of the Small, Rural School Achievement (SRSA) program?**

The SRSA program is designed to address the unique needs of small, rural local educational agencies (LEAs) that frequently lack the personnel and resources needed to compete effectively for federal competitive grants and receive formula grant allocations under other programs in amounts too small to be effective in meeting their intended purposes. The SRSA program may help rural LEAs use Federal resources more effectively to improve the quality of instruction in order to increase student academic achievement.

## **What is a local educational agency (LEA)?**

An LEA is defined in section 8101(30) of the ESEA as a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or of or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.

## **What is the Alternative Fund Use Authority (AFUA) and who is eligible?**

An LEA eligible for the SRSA program not only benefits from SRSA grant program funds, but also may exercise a key flexibility provision in the ESEA. Section 5211(a) of the ESEA, known as the Alternative Fund Use Authority (AFUA), gives an eligible LEA broad authority to spend funds the LEA receives under selected ESEA programs on activities authorized under several additional ESEA programs. The authority is specifically designed to give small, rural LEAs greater latitude to spend their Federal funds in ways that best address an LEA's particular needs. Section 5211(a) explains in greater detail AFUA, including which funds are eligible for AFUA and the allowable uses of those funds. AFUA is best understood when sections 5211(a) and (c) are read together. Section 5211(c) lists the Federal program funds (referred to as "applicable funding" in the statute) an LEA may use in support of other allowable Federal program activities (referred to as "alternative uses" in section 5211(a)). Specifically, section 5211(c) permits an eligible LEA to use all or part of the formula funds the LEA receives from an SEA under: Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction); and Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment) to carry out local activities authorized under one or more of the following programs (see 5211(a)): Title I, Part A (Improving Basic Programs Operated by LEAs); Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction); Title III (Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students); Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment); and Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers). AFUA does not authorize the transfer of funds from one program to another. Rather, it gives an LEA more options for spending its Title II, Part A and Title IV, Part A formula funds. An LEA that meets the SRSA program eligibility requirements may exercise AFUA without the approval of either its SEA or the Department. However, an eligible LEA must notify its SEA each year of its intent to exercise AFUA by the notification date established by the SEA. AFUA is meant to provide additional flexibility. An LEA may use all or a part of its formula Title II, Part A and Title IV, Part A funds to carry out activities authorized under one or more of the five programs listed in section

5211(a). LEAs are strongly encouraged to consider how funds used under AFUA can support implementation and strengthening of their local education plans.

### **How do I find out if my LEA is eligible for the SRSA program?**

Please see the Eligibility page for an explanation of eligibility requirements and the Eligibility Spreadsheets page to find state-by-state lists of specific LEAs that are determined eligible for the Rural Education Achievement Program for the current fiscal year. LEAs should examine the list to determine if they are eligible for either SRSA or RLIS awards, eligible for both SRSA and RLIS (i.e., "dual-eligible"), or no longer eligible for SRSA or RLIS.

### **What does it mean to be dual-eligible?**

Being dual-eligible in the Rural Education Achievement Program describes a situation in which an LEA meets the eligibility requirements for both REAP grants: SRSA and RLIS. To see how SRSA differs from RLIS, view the [SRSA-RLIS Comparison Table](#).

### **If my LEA is dual-eligible (eligible for both the SRSA and RLIS programs), which program should I choose?**

An LEA should research the requirements and provisions of both the SRSA and the RLIS programs to determine which program best meets its needs. While the Department cannot tell an LEA which program to choose, we have put together a list of factors an LEA should consider when making its decision. This information is available on the eligibility page of the SRSA website.

### **If my LEA is dual-eligible, how do I notify the Department which program I would like to participate in?**

In order to receive SRSA funding, an eligible LEA must submit an application, which will also notify the Department of the district's intent to participate in SRSA. If the LEA does not apply for SRSA, the Department will automatically notify the SEA that the LEA is eligible for RLIS. That LEA should follow its SEA's application procedures for RLIS funds.

### **If my LEA is dual-eligible and applies for SRSA, can I later decide to participate in RLIS instead?**

If a LEA applies for SRSA in accordance with the application submission procedures, the LEA cannot later choose to participate in RLIS for the fiscal year for which it submitted an SRSA application. However, if the LEA is a dual-eligible LEA again in future years, the LEA may choose to participate in RLIS instead of SRSA by not submitting an application to the Department for SRSA. Additionally, if a dual-eligible LEA indicates that it would like to receive an SRSA award, but the SRSA statutory funding formula results in a \$0 award amount for the LEA, the Department automatically includes the district in the RLIS cohort. That district should follow its SEA's application procedures for RLIS funds.

## **According to the Master Eligibility Spreadsheet (MES), my LEA is eligible but did not receive an SRSA application. Why?**

Only an LEA can determine if it should submit an SRSA application; however, there are certain situations where the statutory formula will result in a final award amount of \$0 for an LEA. The SRSA statutory formula requires the Department to calculate both an initial award amount and a final award amount for an LEA. If the LEA's combined allocations for Title II, Part A and Title IV, Part A funds exceed the initial amount calculated for the LEA's SRSA award (\$60,000 is the initial amount maximum), the statutory formula will result in a \$0 final award amount for the LEA. All of the data necessary to calculate the LEA's initial award amount, as well as estimated award allocations, are available on the REAP Master Eligibility Spreadsheet (MES). If an LEA has a \$0 initial award amount on the MES, it will not receive an SRSA application invitation email.

Regardless of whether an eligible LEA applies for an SRSA grant award, the LEA may still exercise AFUA authority if it notifies its SEA of its intent to do so in accordance with established State procedures. For more information about the SRSA funding formula, see the REAP Informational Document.

## **Is an eligible LEA required to apply for an SRSA grant in order to receive funding under the program?**

Yes. An eligible LEA must submit an application in accordance with the application submission procedures in order to receive an SRSA grant award. Visit the [SRSA Applicant Information page](#) to learn more.

## **Who should my LEA contact if the data used to determine SRSA eligibility are incorrect?**

The information used to determine SRSA and RLIS eligibility comes from several sources: State educational agencies (SEAs) provide:

- Average Daily Attendance
- Program Allocations from Title II-A
- Program Allocations from Title IV-A
- State Rural Definition

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) provides:

- Locale Code
- Population Density Data (from U.S. Census Bureau)
- Poverty Data

If you believe the data used to determine your LEA's eligibility is incorrect, please notify your REAP State Coordinator. This includes errors in the following data:

- *Average Daily Attendance (ADA) Data*
- *Program Allocations from Title II-A*
- *Program Allocations from Title IV-A*
- *State Rural Designation*

For the following data points, please send your inquiries to [REAP@ed.gov](mailto:REAP@ed.gov):

- Locale Code Data
- Population Density Data
- Poverty Data

### **My LEA was SRSA eligible in prior years. Why does the eligibility spreadsheet for the current fiscal year indicate we are not eligible to receive an award?**

It is not uncommon for an LEA move in and out of SRSA eligibility from year-to-year, especially if the LEA's average daily attendance numbers are close to the 600-student limit. It is also possible that the locale code assigned to the LEA has changed. If you still have questions about your LEA's eligibility, please send your inquiries to [REAP@ed.gov](mailto:REAP@ed.gov).

### **What is a ratable adjustment? Does it apply to all SRSA grants?**

A ratable adjustment is the amount by which grant awards are increased or decreased depending on the amount of funds Congress appropriates in any fiscal year relative to the amount necessary to award LEAs their full allocations according to the funding formula. If the amount Congress appropriates is not sufficient to provide each eligible LEA that submits an SRSA application the entire amount it would otherwise receive by formula, the Department ratably reduces the allocation for each LEA. Similarly, the Department would ratably increase LEA allocations if the amount appropriated for SRSA is greater than the amount necessary to provide each LEA with its full allocation.

### **How do I find out the amount of funds my LEA will receive from an SRSA grant?**

Congress determines the amount of funds available for the REAP program on an annual basis. Per ESEA section 5234, the REAP appropriation from Congress is divided equally between the SRSA and the RLIS programs. The maximum amount of SRSA funds an LEA may receive in any year is \$60,000. The Department calculates an SRSA for each eligible LEA according to the statutory formula described below.

Award estimates for each LEA are included in the REAP Master Eligibility Spreadsheet and provided to an eligible LEA during the SRSA application process. Award estimates for both SRSA and RLIS are included in the REAP Master Eligibility Spreadsheet and during the application process for dual-eligible LEAs. For a dual-eligible LEA, if the SRSA statutory funding formula results in a \$0 award amount for the LEA, the Department automatically includes the LEA in the RLIS cohort. For more information on dual eligibility, see the REAP Informational Document.

**Please note:**

1. This calculation provides an estimate only; there are other variables, such as the total program appropriation and number and amounts of awards to other eligible LEAs, that will affect the final award amount.
2. Not all eligible LEAs receive grant funds; the formula calculation may result in an award of \$0.
3. The LEA must submit an SRSA application to the Department in order to receive grant funds.

SRSA grant funds are allocated to an eligible LEA based on a statutory formula. You can estimate your LEA's SRSA grant amount by using the following formula:

- Start with the number of students in average daily attendance and subtract 50 from that number (if negative, stop at zero)
- Multiply the remainder by \$100
- Add \$20,000
- If the total is above \$60,000, this amount is capped at \$60,000
- From the amount above, subtract the total amount of Title II, Part A and Title IV, Part A funds the LEA received the preceding Federal fiscal year (i.e., for FY 2020)

The amount awarded to each LEA may be ratably reduced or increased depending upon the amount appropriated for the program and the number and amounts of awards to other eligible LEAs. The final SRSA award amount for each eligible LEA that has submitted an application in accordance with the application requirements is included in the LEA's Grant Award Notification.

**How does an LEA know if the Department received its SRSA application and if it will receive an SRSA grant award?**

An LEA that has successfully submitted an application will receive a confirmation email immediately after submitting the application. **NOTE:** The issuance of a confirmation email does not guarantee an application will be funded. For all LEAs that have submitted an application in accordance with application instructions, the Department will update the Master Eligibility Spreadsheet to indicate the application has been received.

**When will my LEA receive the funds from an SRSA grant?**

Each LEA that receives an SRSA grant also receives an electronic SRSA Grant Award Notification (GAN) when the award is granted. If your LEA has not received a GAN by September 1 and you believe your LEA should receive an award, please send your inquiries to [REAP@ed.gov](mailto:REAP@ed.gov).

**Is my LEA guaranteed an SRSA grant award?**

Each LEA that meets the SRSA eligibility criteria and submits an application in accordance with the application submission procedures will most likely receive an SRSA award. Nevertheless,

given that the statutory formula sometimes results in an award of \$0, the Department cannot guarantee that each LEA that applies will receive an SRSA award.

## **How may SRSA funds be used to support the programs in my LEA?**

Generally, your LEA may use its funds for any activity authorized under the following ESEA programs:

- [Title I-A](#) (Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies)
- [Title II-A](#) (Supporting Effective Instruction)
- [Title III](#) (Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students)
- [Title IV-A](#) (Student Support and Academic Enrichment)
- [Title IV-B](#) (21st Century Community Learning Centers)

For specific questions about the allowable uses of funds you should consult the ED program officer for your state. **Reminder:** SRSA funds must supplement and not supplant any other Federal, State, or local education funding. See ESEA section 5232.

## **What should an LEA consider when trying to determine whether a proposed SRSA activity is supplemental?**

In general, when considering whether a proposed SRSA activity is supplemental, an LEA should determine whether it would have funded this activity with other Federal, State, or local funds if no SRSA funds were available. If the result of this determination is that no other Federal, State, or local funds are available to fund the proposed activity, then the LEA may be able to use SRSA funds for those activities, provided they are an allowable use of SRSA funds.

There are three situations when it will be presumed that supplanting has occurred:

- if the activity is one that would ordinarily be covered with other Federal, State, or local (for example, in most cases, standard textbook purchases would ordinarily be covered with State or local funds);
- if the LEA previously funded the activity with other Federal, State, or local funds; or
- if the activity is State-mandated or required by Federal law (e.g., provision of certain services to English learners required by Federal civil rights laws).

If a proposed activity falls into one of these categories, it does not mean that the proposed activity is, in fact, supplanting; rather, in these situations, it would be the LEA's obligation to demonstrate that the proposed activity is supplemental. For example, if an LEA can demonstrate that no other Federal, State, or local funds are available to support an activity that normally would be supported with other Federal, State, or local funds, the LEA may be able to demonstrate that using SRSA funds for the activity is supplemental.

Similarly, the LEA may be able to demonstrate that, because its needs have changed, it no longer can support an activity with other Federal, State, or local funds that it supported in the prior year. Again, using SRSA funds for this activity might then be supplemental. The LEA must be able to

demonstrate through written, contemporaneous documentation (for example, State or local legislative action, budget information, school board minutes, or other materials) that it would not be able to fund a particular activity in the absence of SRSA funds.

## **Do Supplement, Not Supplant requirements apply if an LEA is exercising AFUA?**

Yes. All activities under the programs listed in section 5211(a) are allowable only to the extent that they are supplemental in nature.

## **What does "obligation" of funds mean? When does it occur?**

An obligation is an order placed for property and services, contracts and sub-awards made, and similar transactions during a given period that require the grantee to pay a specified amount during the same or a future period. The timing of an obligation depends on the nature of the specific activity. The chart below, which is adapted from 34 C.F.R. § 75.707 details when an obligation occurs for various uses:

<b>If the Obligation is for --</b>	<b>The Obligation is made --</b>
(a) Acquisition of real or personal property	On the date the SRSA grantee makes a binding written commitment to acquire the property
(b) Personal services performed by an employee of an SRSA LEA	When the services are performed
(c) Personal services by a contractor who is not an employee of an SRSA LEA	On the date on which the SRSA grantee makes a binding written commitment to obtain the services
(d) Performance of work other than personal services	On the date on which the SRSA grantee makes a binding written commitment to obtain the work
(e) Public utility services	When the SRSA grantee receives the services
(f) Travel	When the travel is taken
(g) Rental of real or personal property	When the SRSA grantee uses the property

## **How do I access my LEA's SRSA funds?**

G6 (formerly G5) is the U.S. Department of Education's (Department) online platform for grant management. Creating an account, logging in, and obtaining Payee Access allows SRSA grantees to view and draw down awarded grant funds across multiple fiscal years.

In order to access SRSA grant funds in G6, an authorized user at the LEA must have Payee Access. When SRSA funds are awarded, a Grant Award Notification (GAN) is emailed to the primary and secondary contacts listed on the SRSA application. The GAN is the Department's official notice that details the award amount, the recipient contacts, and the conditions under which the grant is awarded. The contacts listed on the GAN will not automatically have access to the grant funds in G6—every grantee LEA must separately establish Payee Access in G6 in order to access their SRSA grant funds. For questions or support with G6, please contact the

Department's Office of Business Support Services helpdesk by calling 1-888-336-8930 or sending an email to [obsed@servicenowservices.com](mailto:obsed@servicenowservices.com).

## **What is monitoring?**

The Department engages in monitoring activities to ensure SRSA grantees are implementing activities authorized in the SRSA statute, achieving the program's performance objectives, and complying with other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. In addition, the Department utilizes monitoring as a mechanism for determining the types of technical assistance needed, understanding the general context in which a grant operates, identifying exemplary practices amongst grantees, and resolving prior findings from audits or Department monitoring. In determining which grantees to monitor, the REAP program office relies on an entity risk review process based on risk factors associated with program compliance, financial requirements, and administrative requirements. The Department conducts both onsite and desk monitoring. Onsite monitoring is usually a comprehensive examination of the program to assist in improving performance. At the conclusion of onsite or desk monitoring, Department staff will issue a report identifying findings and any areas for corrective action. If corrective actions are identified, the Department will describe what actions are expected and the timeframe by which the corrective action must be resolved. An LEA typically has 30 business days to respond to the Department's monitoring report. Depending on factors such as the severity of the finding, an LEA's resources, and the level of difficulty associated with correcting the finding, an LEA may be asked to resolve the finding within 60 business days or to propose a plan and timeline for resolving the corrective action within another specified time frame. The Department will stay in close contact until all corrective actions are resolved.

## **How do I contact the U.S. Department of Education about the Rural Education Achievement Program Grants?**

You may contact the REAP team directly by emailing us at [REAP@ed.gov](mailto:REAP@ed.gov) or calling 202-401-0039.

## **What is a General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) statement?**

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act requires U.S. Department of Education (Department) grantees, such as SRSA grantees, to describe the steps the grantee will take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, the Federally-assisted program by addressing the special needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries. This provision allows applicants discretion in developing the required description. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. For more information about GEPA statements, please visit the **GEPA tab**.

## **May a charter school participate in the REAP program?**

A charter school's eligibility for the SRSA or RLIS program depends upon whether the charter school is an LEA. If a charter school is reported as an LEA by the State and meets the definition of LEA in ESEA section 8101(30), it is eligible to receive an SRSA or RLIS grant award so long



as it meets the eligibility criteria for these programs. A charter school that is a public school but not an LEA is not eligible for RLIS or SRSA award. However, it may participate in the program through its LEA, provided the LEA receives either an RLIS or SRSA award.

### **May an LEA that serves one or more “full virtual” schools, in addition to one or more nonvirtual schools, participate in either of the REAP programs?**

Yes. However, such an LEA may not serve those "full virtual" schools with its REAP funds. A full virtual school is defined by NCES as a school with no physical building where students meet with each other or with teachers and all instruction is virtual. These schools are not included when determining an LEA's REAP eligibility and award amount. The SRSA and RLIS grant programs were created to address the unique capacity and resource access challenges faced by schools and LEAs serving students who reside in rural and remote communities. Because "full virtual" schools serve students regardless of the residence of their students, they are excluded from the ADA count.

### **What are school locale codes, and how are locale codes 32, 33, 41, 42, and 43 defined?**

The locale code is a geographic indicator of the type of community where a school is located. There are 12 categories, ranging from "City, Large" to "Rural, Remote." All territory in the United States is classified by locale. The Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) assigns locale codes to schools based on the physical location of the school. The Department uses school locale codes to determine if an LEA can be considered rural for purposes of the REAP program. The school locale codes required for SRSA program eligibility are 41, 42, and 43. The school locale codes required for RLIS program eligibility are 32, 33, 41, 42, and 43.

The relevant locale codes for the SRSA and RLIS programs are defined by NCES as:

- Locale Code 32 - Town, Distant: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area.
- Locale Code 33 - Town, Remote: Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.
- Locale Code 41 - Rural, Fringe: Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.
- Locale Code 42 - Rural, Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.
- Locale Code 43 - Rural, Remote: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.

For more information about locale codes, please visit:

<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/Geographic/LocaleBoundaries>.

**What data does the Department use to determine if an LEA meets the RLIS 20 percent poverty threshold?**

The Department uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program to determine, by LEA, the percentage of related children ages 5 through 17 who are from families with incomes below the poverty level. The Department uses the most recent poverty data available at the time it begins the annual process of determining REAP eligibility. To learn more about the U.S. Census Bureau's SAIPE program, visit <https://www.census.gov/programssurveys/saipe.html>.