

American Rescue Plan (ARP) ESSER III Funding Guidance



BACKGROUND:

The federal government has issued three rounds of relief funding to states in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The most recent allocation, created by the American Rescue Plan and referred to as ARP ESSER III, is the largest to date with \$1.5 billion available to Oklahoma school districts.

The focus of the ARP ESSER III funding is to assist school districts in safely reopening schools and keeping them open for in-person instruction while addressing disruptions to teaching and learning resulting from the pandemic.

This aim includes using funds to enact appropriate measures to help schools invest in mitigation strategies consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) *Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools* to the greatest extent practicable; address the many impacts of COVID-19 on students, including strategies to address interrupted instruction; meet students’ social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs; offer crucial summer, afterschool, and other extended learning and enrichment programs; support early childhood education; invest in staff capacity; and avoid devastating layoffs at this critical moment, ensuring that all students have access to teachers, counselors, and other school personnel to support their needs.

USES OF FUNDS:

ARP ESSER III funds, as well all COVID relief funding, must be used to “**Prevent, Prepare for, and Respond to COVID-19.**” Expenditures must follow Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), including meeting the federal requirement of “**necessary and reasonable.**” ARP ESSER III funding also requires that districts engage in meaningful consultation with a wide range of stakeholders to determine their ARP ESSER III *Uses of Funds Plan* and post the *Plan* on the district website with opportunity for public comment.

ELIGIBLE PURPOSES:

The following table lists commonly requested expenditures and the determination for eligibility for purchase. Before a district can purchase items from the list, a *Uses of Funds Plan* must be approved by the Office of Federal Programs and the items must appear in the approved budget. Federal Law does not allow reimbursement for expenditures without an approved ARP ESSER III *Uses of Funds Plan* and Application.

Reminder: If an individual piece of eligible equipment outlined below costs over \$5,000 and does not appear on the pre-approval list, please email ARPAapproval@sde.ok.gov for pre-approval prior to obligation of funds.

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ARP ESSER III FUNDING GUIDELINES

Expenditure	Allowable	Comments
Academic Enrichment and Student Well-Being Activities	Yes	Programs and services that support student engagement, achievement and overall well-being, including but not limited to community partnerships to co-host tutoring, after-school programing, or wellness activities.
Accelerated Learning	Yes	Creation and expansion of services opportunity for accelerated content, including but not limited to IB, AP, PLTW, SREB, and other programs. Post-secondary transition and training experiences are also allowable.
Personnel	Yes	ARP ESSER III funds can be used to hire additional personnel to “Prevent, Prepare for, and Respond to COVID-19,” including but not limited to: Social Workers, School Counselors, Licensed Practical Counselors, Family Support Specialists, Intervention Specialists, Community Schools Coordinators, etc. Certified and support positions used to address learning loss or prevent and/or mitigate the spread of COVID-19 are allowable. Funds may also be used to continue to employ existing staff. When deciding to move salaries into ESSER, be conscious that Maintenance of Effort (MoE) is still required at 100% for IDEA and 90% for ESSA.
Extra-Curricular Activities, including Athletics	No	Federal guidelines in Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG) CFR 2000.469 states that “Costs incurred for intramural activities, student publications, student clubs, and other student activities are unallowable, unless specifically provided for in the Federal award.” If you believe an expenditure is “specifically provided for in the Federal award,” please contact the OSDE Office of Federal Programs for prior approval before obligating funds.
Musical Instruments	Yes	Funds can be used to implement or expand fine arts classes, such as music programs, to maximize participation for a wide range of students.
Outdoor Learning and Activity Spaces	Yes	Additional playground and outdoor learning spaces are eligible for ESSER expenditures. We encourage spaces to be designed with needs of diverse learners, including those with physical challenges. Outdoor space should be planned to maximize learning and allow for social distancing. Consideration should be given to ensure developmentally-appropriate equipment and activities are integrated to maximize use by a wide range of ages and abilities.

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Expenditure	Allowable	Comments
Online Subscriptions	Yes	Subscriptions to various educational software (Financial Accounting, Student Management or other Educational Resources) are an allowable expenditure. Subscriptions paid with federal funds must have a service period within the fiscal year, July 1 – June 30. Subscriptions that extend beyond this period should be prorated for the portion within one fiscal year.
COVID recruitment and/or retention stipends, hazard pay, vaccination stipends	See Comment	When the U.S. Department of Education (ED) awarded ESSER I and II funds to States, it noted the funds “generally will not be used for bonuses, merit pay, or similar expenditures, unless related to disruptions or closures resulting from COVID-19.” This does not mean all bonuses, merit pay, or similar expenditures are unallowable; only those connected to COVID-related disruptions or closures are eligible for payment from ESSER funds.
PPE	Yes	Masks, gloves, shields, screens, etc. are allowable uses of ESSER III Funds. PPE can be ordered free of charge with the Project 723 Grant by Oklahoma State Department of Health/CDC. The Project 723 application is available in GMS and will be funded on “a first come, first served basis.”
Water bottle filler	Yes	This is an allowable use of ESSER III funds.
Air Purification Systems	Yes	Devices designed to improve air quality by purifying or sanitizing the air are allowable and pre-approved.
Floor cleaning machines	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
HVAC unit replacement for better air quality	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
Sanitization equipment for cleaning	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.

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Window replacement for better air quality	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
Replacing carpet with tile for efficient cleaning	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
Student Transportation	Yes	A Yellow Route Bus for social distancing is an allowable and pre-approved expenditure for ARP ESSER III. Be cognizant of the “necessary and reasonable” standard in determining quantity and quality. Transportation costs including fuel and personnel are allowable as long as they are to “Prevent, Prepare for, and Respond to COVID-19” and meet the “necessary and reasonable” standard for your district size and situation.
Vehicles	Yes	A Yellow Route Bus for social distancing is an allowable and pre-approved expenditure for ARP ESSER III. Be cognizant of the “necessary and reasonable” standard in determining quantity and quality. Transportation costs including fuel and personnel are allowable as long as they are to “Prevent, Prepare for, and Respond to COVID-19” and meet the “necessary and reasonable” standard for your district size and situation.
Utilities	See comment	While it is unlikely that 100% of utility fees represent an increase amount due to COVID, we encourage districts to set a percentage of the total utilities that is reasonable for their specific circumstances. IF a district has a unique circumstance where 100% of their utility fees are COVID-related, we recommend they provide a narrative and supporting data to make that case. As with every expenditure in ARP ESSER III, the law requires all expenditures to meet the standard of “necessary and reasonable.”
County Assessor Fees	No	Not related to “preventing, preparing for, or responding to Covid-19.”
Cameras for contact tracing	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
Server upgrade due to distance learning expansion	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.

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Copier due to distance learning packets	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
School building sound and communication systems	Yes	This is an allowable and pre-approved expense.
Accounting, Auditing Services, and/or Legal Services	Yes	This is an allowable use of ESSER III funds.
Construction	Yes	<p>Must meet the eligible ESSER III criteria; must appear in approved Uses of Funds Plan and have an approved construction application prior to obligation of any funds.</p> <p>Construction project that may be allowable include roof repair, modification or creation of learning space, outdoor learning spaces, etc... Projects must continue to be to “Prevent, Prepare for, or Respond to COVID-19” and well as meet the Federal guidance of necessary and reasonable.</p>

OFFICE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS WEBSITE:
(links to all forms, webinar recordings, and slide decks)
<https://sde.ok.gov/federal-programs>

OFFICE OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS CONTACTS:

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PRE-APPROVAL EMAIL IN-BOX:
ARPAApproval@sde.ok.gov
ESSERIIApproval@sde.ok.gov

COVID CONSTRUCTION APPLICATION LINK:
Complete application: [COVID Relief Construction Application](#)
and send to COVIDConstruction@sde.ok.gov

MAINTENANCE OF EQUITY INFORMATION:
Webinar: [ARP ESSER III MOEquity Webinar](#)
Webinar Slides: [ARP ESSER III MOEquity Webinar Slides](#)
Maintenance of Equity Worksheet: [MOEquity Toolkit](#)
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