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# MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Business Managers  
FROM: Daniel M. French, Ed.D., Secretary of Education  
SUBJECT: American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund  
(ESSER) Phase II Amendment for SU/SDs  
DATE: January 4, 2022

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## Purpose

By this memo you are notified that the Phase II amendment for American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER) application for Vermont school districts and supervisory unions (SU/SDs) is now available in the Grant Management System (GMS). ARP ESSER (also known as ESSER III) funds are available as part of the ARP Act of 2021. Please note that this will be an amendment to the ARP ESSER Application completed in May 2021 and that SU/SDs will now need to complete the Phase II tabs.

## Background

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was signed into law. The ARP Act provides significant additional funding for educational entities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the ARP Elementary and [Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ESSER\) Fund](#).

Details regarding the ARP ESSER application, allowable costs and state level priorities and recommendations can be found in the [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund \(ESSER\) Phase I Application for SU/SDs](#) from May 24, 2021.

## Phase II Application Program Information

The Phase II amendment differs significantly from previous ESSER applications. To complete the Phase II amendment SU/SDs need to:

1. Update the original, Phase I budget detail tab
  2. Complete the investment information for each of the Education Recovery Areas. Investment information includes:
    - Description of the investment
    - How it prevents, prepares or responds to COVID-19
    - How it addresses vulnerable populations
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## Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact:  
Josh Souliere, Education Quality Division, at [josh.souliere@vermont.gov](mailto:josh.souliere@vermont.gov)

- Identification of the ARP ESSER allowable cost category
  - Indication of whether investment is part of the mandated ARP ESSER 20% reserve to *“address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions and ensure that those interventions respond to students’ social, emotional, and academic needs and address the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups (each major racial and ethnic group, children from low-income families, children with disabilities, English learners, gender, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care).”*
  - Indication of the [Level of Evidence](#) for investments (you can find more in-depth information regarding [Levels of Evidence in the Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments](#)). Please note, Levels of Evidence are *only* required for investments that fall within the 20% reserve but are recommended when appropriate and as a best practice.
3. Complete Interim Final Requirements tab. These include URLs for the LEAs Safe Return to In Person Instruction Plan and ARP ESSER LEA Plan.
  4. Complete the Phase II Assurances (Superintendent).

## Creating and Editing the Application in the Grant Management System

All district administrators (superintendents) and business managers have permissions in the GMS to create and edit the application. If desired, a district administrator can delegate the ability to create and edit the application to additional staff, by assigning the role "leaCARES" to any staff members with a GMS account. See the [GMS login page's](#) Training section for the four-page instructions and the User Management for District Administrators training video to learn how to assign this role. Note that, as with all other grant applications, only the district administrator can agree to assurances and do the final submission to the Agency of Education.

## Use of Funds

ARP ESSER funds are considered a federal formula grant. Due to the nature of these funds, the Agency is approving pre-award costs as of March 13, 2020, resulting in a period of performance start date of March 13, 2020, to September 30, 2024. If you have any questions regarding accounting or coding pre-award costs, please contact Cassandra Ryan at [cassandra.ryan@vermont.gov](mailto:cassandra.ryan@vermont.gov).

LEAs will be able to make amendments to their grant awards throughout the period of performance. In budgeting ARP ESSER funds, LEAs should treat the funds as non-recurring, emergency aid and avoid building in programmatic costs that may not be sustainable after the period of performance ends (September 30, 2024). LEAs might consider how a need that is likely to be long term could be better met with other federal funding to ensure strategic and sustainable use. AOE will communicate the amendment deadline closer to September 30, 2024. If you have any questions on this critical component to ARP ESSER funding, please contact [John Leu](#) ([john.leu@vermont.gov](mailto:john.leu@vermont.gov)).

LEAs should direct programmatic application questions to [Josh Souliere](mailto:Josh.Souliere@vermont.gov) ([Josh.Souliere@vermont.gov](mailto:Josh.Souliere@vermont.gov)). Any questions pertaining to budgets or other financial topics should be sent to [John Leu](mailto:John.Leu@vermont.gov) ([john.leu@vermont.gov](mailto:John.Leu@vermont.gov)). Any technical issues in GMS can be addressed to the [GMS Help Desk](mailto:AOE.GMSHelp@vermont.gov) ([AOE.GMSHelp@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.GMSHelp@vermont.gov)).