

MEMORANDUM

To: Directors and Business Managers of Education Cooperatives

From: Cody Stoeser, Director of Finance and Management

Date: March 16, 2021

RE: GEER I spending for long-term impact

This memorandum is to provide information and guidance regarding the Governor's Emergency Relief Fund, or GEER I. As education cooperatives consider how to spend GEER I funds, the Department of Education (DOE) encourages you to think strategically about long-term needs and to consider funding high-impact activities. The GEER I funds being granted to education cooperatives must be spent on allowable activities targeting children ages birth to 5.

Costs must be reasonable and necessary to meet the overall purpose of the federal program, which is "to prevent, prepare for, and respond to" COVID-19.

Education cooperatives can apply for their GEER I funds via an application posted on DOE's [Federal COVID Funding webpage](#). Completed applications should be returned to [Cody Stoeser](#) by April 16, 2021.

Background

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law on March 27, 2020. Through this act, the GEER fund was established, and GEER I funds were awarded to governors who have discretion over how to distribute them. Gov. Noem has chosen to provide some of the GEER I funds to the education cooperatives in South Dakota.

Governors may use these funds to:

- Provide emergency support grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) most significantly impacted by coronavirus (as determined by the state), so they can continue to provide educational services and support ongoing functionality
- Provide emergency support grants to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) serving students who have been most significantly impacted by coronavirus (as determined by the governor), so they can continue to provide educational services and support ongoing functionality
- Provide support to any other LEA, IHE, or other educational entity the governor deems essential for carrying out emergency educational services to students for the following activities:
 - Allowable ESEA activities
 - Activities under the Higher Education Act
 - Provision of childcare and early childhood education

- Social and emotional support
- Protection of education-related jobs

It is important to note GEER I funds under the CARES Act will come to education cooperatives as one-time awards that must be tracked separately.

GEER Overview

Period of Availability

The grant period for GEER I funds is March 13, 2020, through Sept. 30, 2022. Each education cooperative in the state will be awarded a grant prior to May 28, 2021.

Allowable Uses of Funds

GEER I funds can be spent on the following:

Allowable Activities:

- Any activity authorized by ESEA, IDEA, AEFLA, Perkins, or McKinney Vento
- Coordination of preparedness and response efforts to COVID-19
- Providing principals and other school leaders with resources to address individual school needs
- Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth, including outreach and service delivery
- Procedures and systems to improve LEA preparedness and response efforts
- Supplies to sanitize, disinfect, and clean school facilities
- Training and professional development for LEA staff on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious disease
- Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean LEA facilities
- Planning for and coordinating during long-term closures, including how to provide meals, technology for online learning, guidance for carrying out IDEA requirements, and providing educational services consistent with applicable requirements
- Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for the LEA's students
- Providing mental health services and supports
- Planning and implementing summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs
- Other activities necessary to maintain LEA operations and services and employ existing LEA staff
- The provision of childcare and early childhood education
- Social and emotional support
- Protection of education-related jobs

GEER I funds cannot be used to reimburse for:

- Bonuses, merit pay, or similar expenditures, unless related to disruptions or closures related to COVID-19

- Subsidizing or offsetting executive salaries and benefits of individuals who are not LEA employees
- Expenditures related to state or local teacher unions or associations
- Expenses reimbursed through the CARES Act Relief Fund Grant and PPP Loan Program

For a full description of allowable activities, please see Section 18003(d) of the CARES Act at <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr748/BILLS-116hr748enr.pdf>.

Additional Spending Rules and Considerations for GEER I

GEER I funds are subject to the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) and the federal government's Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG), **including the requirement that spending be necessary and reasonable.**

GEER I provides education cooperatives with short-term relief funds to address the effects of COVID-19. Funds should be considered one-time in nature and invested as such.

Reporting

Education cooperatives will be required to submit annual reports on the use of GEER I funds to enable DOE to perform its reporting responsibilities.