

Your Question:

A staff member at a state department of education requested information on the federal relief for K-12 education that could support datacasting and distance learning.

Our Response:

Several federal relief packages have been enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the first responses was the \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ([CARES](#)) Act that was signed in March 2020. This legislation was later followed by the \$900 billion Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) in the [Consolidated Appropriations Act](#) in December 2020. Most recently, the \$1.9 trillion [American Rescue Plan](#) on March 11, 2021.

There are several pots of funding included in the American Rescue Plan and previous federal relief that could be used to support datacasting and distance learning. Below is a summary of how these pots compare across all three relief packages and how they may be used.

	CARES	CRRSA	American Rescue Plan
Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund	\$3 billion	\$4 billion	\$0
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund	\$13 billion	\$54 billion	\$123 billion*
Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEER) Fund	\$14 billion	\$23 billion	\$40 billion
State, Local, Tribal Aid**	\$150 billion for Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF)	\$0 Extends use of CRF funds to Dec. 31, 2021	\$350 billion for Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund \$7 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund

Source: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security ([CARES](#)) Act, the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#), Learning Policy Institute [summary](#) of Consolidated Appropriations Act, the [American Rescue Plan](#).

* \$800 million is dedicated to services for children and youths experiencing homelessness. This amount is not distributed directly to SEAs and is excluded in some summaries that round to \$122 billion.

** State, local and tribal aid is not dedicated to education.

Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund

CARES and CRRSA include GEER funds that are eligible to be used for distance learning. Governors and state education agencies (SEAs) have discretion in the allocation of these resources. The American Rescue Plan does not include GEER funds.

CARES (\$3 billion): funds must be awarded within one year and are available through Sept. 30, 2022. They can be spent on elementary and secondary education or higher education. Governors have announced the distribution of these funds as reported by [NCSL](#) and the [Hunt Institute](#). Many states have used these funds for distance learning.

For example:

- [Connecticut](#) combined GEER and ESSER funds to launch the Everybody Learns Initiative. Funds will be used to purchase laptops, internet access and create public hotspots.
- [Georgia](#) allocated \$29 million for supporting student connectivity by ensuring every Georgia school has a broadband signal extender.
- [Oklahoma](#) created incentive grant programs with GEER and ESSER funds. One of the priority areas for the grant is expanding student connectivity through distance learning.
- [Pennsylvania](#) allocated \$15 million to connect students to high-speed internet and remote learning. This total includes funds for a statewide datacasting initiative in partnership with Pennsylvania PBS.

CRRSA (\$4.05 billion): funds must be awarded within one year and are available through Sept. 30, 2023. More than half of the total funds (\$2.75 billion) are reserved for Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools. The remaining \$1.3 billion can be used for public elementary and secondary education or higher education.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund

CARES, CRRSA and the American Rescue Plan include ESSER funds. SEAs are required to subgrant at least 90% of the funds to local education agencies (LEAs). ESSER funds from CARES are available through Sept. 30, 2022, CRRSA through Sept. 20, 2023 and ARP funds are available through Sept. 30, 2024.

Supports for distance learning is a permitted use for ESSER funds in all three relief bills

- LEAs that receive ESSER can use them for a variety of purposes, including “purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students who are served by the local educational agency that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors.”

The American Rescue Plan places some restrictions in how SEAs and LEAs allocate the final pot of ESSER funds by dedicating portions for specific services. SEAs must reserve at least five percent of ARP ESSER funding to address interrupted learning, one percent for evidence-based summer programs and one percent for after-school programs. LEAs must use at least 20% of their ARP ESSER funds for addressing interrupted learning through the implementation of evidence-based interventions. Examples listed in the bill include summer learning, comprehensive afterschool programs and extended school years.

Some states have blended GEER and ESSER funds in creation of distance learning initiatives or grant programs — see above examples from Connecticut and Oklahoma.

State, Local and Tribal Aid

CARES and the American Rescue Plan include aid for state, local and tribal governments and United States territories that can be used to support education, including distance learning.

CARES - Coronavirus Relief Fund (\$150 billion): The [Coronavirus Relief Fund](#) (CRF) provides aid to governments for “necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency.” The [United States Treasury's interim report](#) shows that multiple states and localities have used these resources for distance learning. The largest CRF investments in distance learning are in California, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina and Tennessee.

The deadline for using these funds was extended in CRRSA from Dec. 30, 2020 to Dec. 31, 2021.

American Rescue Plan - Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund (\$350 billion): The Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Fund provides aid to governments for a wider range of services than CRF.

Permitted uses include:

- Responding to the public health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses and nonprofits or aid to impacted industries.
- Providing premium pay to workers performing essential work during the public health emergency.
- Addressing decreased revenues because of COVID-19 to provide government services.
- Making infrastructure investments in water, sewer or broadband.

The deadline for using funds is Dec. 31, 2024.

American Rescue Plan - Emergency Connectivity Fund (\$7.2 billion): The Emergency Connectivity Fund reimburses schools and libraries for internet access and connected devices. Services for students and staff do not need to be offered at the school or library. Includes wi-fi hotspots, modems, routers, devices that combine a modem and router and connected devices.

Available through Sept. 30, 2030

Additional Resources

- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education [ESSER resources](#)
- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education [GEER resources](#)
- United States Treasury [Coronavirus Relief Fund guidance](#)