

Project SERV: Restoring the Learning Environment

Funds for Districts that Experienced a Disruption to the Learning Environment Due to the September Floods

October 11, 2013

Disclaimer

- **With the government shutdown, CDE has been unable to vet information being shared with the Office of Safe and Healthy Students at the US Department of Education. Given the timeline for releasing funds for district reimbursements, we are moving ahead with the release of a Q and A, as well as the application.**
- **Once the shutdown ends, CDE will be able to vet these documents with USDE, to ensure that what we've developed meets their understanding of the Project SERV grant.**
- **The application has the following on each page: Pending final approval from the USDE. CDE will notify districts when feedback is received.**

What is the Project SERV Grant?

This program funds short-term and long-term education-related services for local educational agencies (LEAs) to help them recover from a violent or traumatic event in which the learning environment has been disrupted. The short-term grant is called Immediate Services grant and is the grant awarded to Colorado. A longer-term grant, Extended Services grant, provides for the longer-term needs of an LEA.

Funds may not be used for activities like clean up, lost revenue, or reconstruction.

What is the scope of the Project SERV (Immediate Services) Grant?

Project SERV can provide immediate assistance to an LEA to enable it to reopen or keep open a school disrupted by a traumatic event, and to begin the recovery process necessary for teaching and learning to continue. These funds are intended to serve the short-term needs of a LEA. Immediate Service grants are typically awarded shortly after an incident occurs, and are designed to cover acute needs related to restoring the learning environment. Immediate Services grants under Project SERV are available for a period of 6 months.

Why is Colorado eligible for funds?

Colorado is eligible for the Project SERV grant because we met the following criteria established by USDE:

- **-Local education agencies (LEAs) that have experienced a traumatic event of such magnitude as to severely disrupt the teaching and learning environment.**

Which districts are eligible to apply for funds under Project SERV?

Any district that had the learning environment disrupted by the September, 2013 floods is eligible to apply for reimbursement of expenses that are allowable under Project SERV.

To whom may services be provided? Who can benefit from these funds?

Services may be provided to students, teachers, and school staff, and to immediate family members of students, teachers, and staff. Services may be provided to individuals directly affected by the September, 2013 flood. Services may also be provided to those who are not directly injured or victimized but who are indirectly affected, for example, by attending or working in a school where a natural disaster has occurred.

NOTE: Counseling services for school staff may only be requested if those services are not covered by the insurance policy provided by the school district or offered by a community-based, public provided service.

Guiding Questions to Assist Local Planning

- **To what degree has learning and the learning environment been disrupted? (What is the nature of the impairment to learning?)**
- **In what locations?**
- **How long will this disruption last?**
- **What needs to happen to restore the learning environment? (i.e. more tutors to help keep students on track academically; more counseling to reduce the mental and emotional stress for students, teachers, parents; family liaison for inter-agency case management, etc.)**
- **Are there associated costs with restoring the learning environment? What is the amount?**

For what type of activities can these funds be used?

Project SERV will fund costs that are reasonable, necessary, and essential for services and activities that are intended to restore a sense of safety and security, help the victims/students stabilize their lives, and assist LEAs in managing the practical problems created by the traumatic event. Project SERV funds are available to supplement, not replace, resources provided for these purposes by other Federal, State, local and private agencies and organizations. After a district has determined what its insurance will cover, and after it has been determined what FEMA will cover, the following activities apply to Project SERV funds:

Fundable Activities (cont.)

- **Technical assistance to develop an appropriate recovery plan for addressing student needs and assessing the federal, state and local resources available to the LEA, IHE, and community to carry out this response.**
- **Mental health assessments, referrals and services related to the traumatic event (with the goal of restoring victims/survivors to their pre-incident levels of functioning).**
- **Overtime for teachers, counselors, law enforcement and security officers, and other staff.**
- **Substitute teachers and other staff as necessary.**

Fundable Activities (cont.)

- **Emergency transportation, such as expenses incurred during school evacuation. (This may be covered by FEMA.)**
- **Transportation and other costs to operate school at an alternative site.**
- **Temporary security measures such as non-permanent metal detectors and additional security guards and security cameras.**

What activities are not allowable?

- Any activity for which other resources are available, e.g. insurance; construction, or renovation funding;
- Claims recoverable under insurance coverage, including Medicaid reimbursements for related services to school staff;
- Payments of fines assessed upon the school district or charter school, employees and/or members of employees' or students' families;
- Payment of settlements assessed against the school district or charter school, employees and/or members of employees' or students' families;
- Emergency management planning;

Unallowable Activities (cont.)

- **Services of existing County/public/private nonprofit mental health agency staff whose role is to respond to emergency mental health needs of children; services normally provided by the school district or charter school;**
- **Mental health services for persons other than teachers, students, faculty or members of the immediate families of students, faculty, and teachers;**
- **Costs for hospitalization, treatment of physical injuries, rehabilitation or prescription costs;**
- **Costs associated with public relations consultants or activities;**

Unallowable Activities (cont.)

- Permanent security measures such as stationary metal detectors, permanent security cameras; construction;
- Violence and drug prevention activities or programs, except those specifically addressing hate crime issues.
- Lost revenue

Will the district be a subgrantee for Project SERV funds?

No. The guidelines for Project SERV prohibit the SEA from subgranting these funds. Instead, CDE will release funds to districts, based on approval of activities in the Project SERV application. Like most federal funds, funds are to be drawn down on a reimbursement basis.

How will a district reimburse a nonpublic school for allowable costs?

Reimbursing nonpublic schools by a district is prohibited for ESEA programs under ESEA Section 9501(a)(4). It is also prohibited under EDGAR. The state is investigating a resolution.

EDGAR prohibits payments to any entity that does not have a 'fund accounting system'. That's why payments to charter or even 'regular' district schools directly is prohibited.

Can SERV funds be used to meet the needs of students displaced by the floods and eligible under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act?*

Yes. Students who lack a fixed, regular and adequate primary nighttime residence due to a disaster are considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. It will be important to document the increase in the number of McKinney-Vento students due to the floods and the use of SERV funds to meet the unanticipated needs of these students.

Project SERV funds can supplement, not replace, resources provided for these purposes by other federal, state, local and private agencies and organizations under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Examples of Allowable Uses

- Expanding the capacity of current McKinney-Vento staff to meet the increased needs of MV students and ensure students receive services in an expedited manner.
- The provision of school supplies, including those supplies to be distributed at shelters or temporary housing facilities, or other appropriate locations.
- If necessary, the payment of fees and other costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records necessary to enroll MV children and youths in school, including birth certificates, immunization or medical records, academic records, guardianship records, and evaluations for special programs or services.

Examples, cont.

- **The provision of pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and referrals for such services.**
- **The provision for MV children and youths to participate in before- and after-school or mentoring programs, in which a teacher or other individual provides tutoring, homework assistance, and supervision of educational activities.**

What is the last date for requesting funds?

The last date for districts to request funds is April 30, 2014.

Can a district request funds for approved Project SERV activities prior to completion of the activity?

No. The request for funds is based on reimbursement of costs. If the district needs to request a partial amount to cover a portion of the activity that's already occurred, then this is allowable. For example, if the district anticipates greater transportation costs for the next 4 months, it could request funds on a monthly basis, as the costs are incurred.

How will CDE decide how much each impacted district and nonpublic school receives?

CDE will develop a system that provides districts' with their equitable share of the \$750,000.

In New Jersey, for example, (the only SEA to be awarded SERV funds), the requests for reimbursements exceeded the amount of funds available. Therefore, the state awarded \$.45 on the dollar.

Will there be any other funds available to help with the additional costs associated with the Floods?

The Department is investigating the potential of additional funding for FY2013-14 in order to address one-time funding needs related to pupil count changes between districts and additional transportation costs resulting from the recent floods. Such a funding request would require legislative approval. The more specific information that CDE can compile related to the additional expenses incurred in these areas, the stronger the funding request will be. Therefore, please provide any available data or estimates you are able to at this time.

Contact person: Jennifer Okes (okes_j@cde.state.co.us)

Transportation Cost Collection

CDE's Public School Finance Office is requesting cost estimates from impacted districts concerning:

- **Projected increase in daily bus route mileage**
- **Projected number of days for increased bus route mileage**
- **Projected mileage associated with flood relief efforts**
- **Projected other costs associated with flood relief efforts such as overtime for drivers and dispatch personnel and/or rental of additional vehicles**
- **Projected costs associated with transportation for McKinney-Vento eligible students such as mileage reimbursement to parents, purchase of bus passes, and/or rental of additional vehicles**

Additional Support Materials

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ov/tiv> to download the application.

The excel budget file that needs to be completed is not yet ready to be released. It should be ready for posting by Friday, October 18th.