

98C – Learning Loss Frequently Asked Questions

Background

To be eligible for [these funds](#), the LEA plan must specifically address learning loss, be presented to the LEA board in a public meeting, and be visible on the LEA website. The application must provide links to the plan and to the board agenda for the meeting where the plan was presented and must clearly identify how the impact will be measured. A report is due to the legislature in August 2023, “detailing the amounts spent, the services provided with the funding, students reached with the funding, and any outcomes that measure how the funds that were used to address learning loss impacted student achievement.”

Districts have lots of flexibility in their approaches to learning loss. Resources that might help develop a plan include:

[US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#)

[US ED COVID-19 Handbook](#)

[MDE Accelerated Learning](#)

Is there a template for the learning loss plan?

We do not have an actual template to use. We understand that districts might already have a plan for learning loss in their MiCIP plan or elsewhere, to which they might choose to allocate these funds to support fully or partially. That being said, LEAs will be asked to report out on the services provided and funded with the grant dollars, the students reached, and the impact on student achievement, and so we would expect the plan to include the information on students and services. The application asks for a link to the learning loss plan, an agenda for the board meeting where the plan was presented, and a description of the metrics proposed to measure impact.

Can the 98c funds be used to address the learning loss for all students lagging in academic progress or only those students meeting the demographic profiles listed?

Yes, 98c funds can be used to address the learning loss for all students lagging in academic progress. According to the [US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#) addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time experienced by students as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is an acceptable use of funds. LEAs are encouraged to develop systems that think differently about time, grade levels, and collaboration to ensure students have the targeted supports they need to stay on grade level. More information can be found on the [MDE Accelerated Learning](#) page.

Could this plan include funds for a summer school program in June 2023?

Summer school is an acceptable use of funds to address learning loss – see C-2, page 29 of the [US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#). Summer school charges to this source of funding, however, must be encumbered by June 30th so that the district can accurately complete the legislatively required report by July 14.

Could this be something that could fund students to come to school for instruction during breaks from school, like winter break and spring break?

Yes; see [US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#)— specifically A-22 (pg. 21) and C-2. See also the [US ED COVID-19 Handbook](#) (pg. 21)

Can the plan be targeted to a particular grade band, K-2, for instance, or is it K-12?

The district needs to make the decision as to where their support is needed the most. LEAs are encouraged to develop systems that think differently about time, grade levels, and collaboration to ensure students have the targeted supports they need to stay on grade level. More information can be found on the [MDE Accelerated Learning](#) page.

The memo suggests an acceptable use of funds is "Tracking student performance and engagement in distance learning." Is this referring to if we were providing support to students through distance learning? Can you clarify that point?

Yes – if you are providing distance learning options, then the funds may be used to track student performance and engagement. This is just one option you may use to address learning loss.

Our district currently has a plan that uses assessments and evidence-based activities, which we currently have in place. Can this 98c funding support our current programming costs that we already have in place, or would we have to use this funding to expand our current programming or create new initiatives?

This funding can be used to support plans already in place. Applicants must still provide evidence that the plan was presented in a public meeting to the LEA board, provide a link to the plan on the LEA website and describe the metrics to be used to determine the impact of the plan. Funds currently supporting these plans could be reallocated elsewhere. See A-18 on page 20 of the [US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#) for more information on “supplement not supplant” requirements related to the use of these federal funds.

Can this funding be used to support professional learning for staff if this professional learning is targeted toward teachers learning new evidence-based intervention strategies, practices, or tools, e.g., Lexia?

Yes. According to the [US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#), these funds may be used to support the educator workforce (pg. 46). The plan should specify how this professional learning is associated with accelerating the learning of students impacted by lost instructional time during the pandemic.

We would love to use the funds right away to hire teachers and lower class sizes in some critical areas and grades, and we feel strongly that this will assist with addressing Learning Loss. My questions are whether, generally speaking, that would be an allowable expense.

Yes, as long as the hiring of additional staff is associated with accelerating the learning of students impacted by lost instructional time during the pandemic. The [US ED ESSER GEER Updated FAQ](#) states, “ESSER and GEER funds may also be used to provide a variety of activities and supports to help improve

the achievement of students to address the impact of lost instructional time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, funds may be used for costs associated with evidence-based approaches to accelerating learning, high-dose tutoring, leveraging technology to provide embedded assessment and differentiated instruction, diagnostic and curriculum-embedded assessments, and extending the school day or year to provide additional time for student learning, enrichment, and support. These costs may include supplementing the salaries of educators and other qualified personnel to perform additional services. ESSER and GEER funds may also be used to support the costs associated with hiring additional teachers and teacher aides to provide intensive support to students.” (pg.29).

What is the grant period? Are we allowed to begin spending prior to the approval of the grant since that will not take place until the end of November, and it sounds like the funds will need to be spent this year?

The start of funding begins with the new fiscal year or when the district board approves the plan if the approval occurs after September 30, 2022. All funds must be encumbered by June 30, 2023, to allow the district time to submit the legislatively required report to MDE by July 14. Remember, though, that the amount of money each district will receive cannot be determined until after the application closes since the allocations will be based on the number of students represented by the eligible applicants.

What information needs to be in the final report?

We plan to provide a template for the report once we get through the application and allocation process. The legislation requires that the report “detail... the amounts spent, the services provided with the funding, students reached with the funding, and any outcomes that measure how the funds that were used to address learning loss impacted student achievement.”

What metrics should we be considering?

The law requires that you report out on impact, so we want applicants to be thinking about how they would determine impact right up front. Also, the law allows for adjustment to the plan throughout the year so that the metrics could change as well.

The metric(s) used will depend on what you are going to do to address lost academic time. We are not looking at a rigorous evaluation. It could be growth on interim or benchmark assessments you already give, such as NWEA, I-Ready, etc. It could be the MSTEP/PSAT growth. It could be a district-created assessment to measure the impact of the tool. Maybe attendance or student surveys would be an appropriate measure if you are looking at student engagement. The course completion and on-track for graduation measures could also be used as district measures of impact on secondary students.