



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ESSER 2.0: School-level Allocations

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to frequently asked questions about school-level ESSER 2.0 allocations. Please note that it will be updated regularly.

**PLANNING YOUR ESSER FUNDS:** Use the ESSER2 Budget Addendum found in the “Access & Resources” tab in Allovue to plan your ESSER funds. At this time, your ESSER allocations in Allovue are locked since we are still in the process of confirming account codes. Once the account codes are confirmed, the ESSER allocation will be unlocked so that you may program your funds in Allovue as well. If account codes are confirmed after your budget builder access expires on March 26, your Title I Facilitator will work with you to create these expenses in Allovue.

#### **1. When can we begin spending the ESSER 2.0 funds?**

MNPS submitted its application to TDOE on February 26, and we are awaiting approval. Once TDOE approves our application, we can begin spending on items that are allowable and that are in our approved application. Your Title I facilitator will email principals to inform them when they can move forward with inputting requisitions in R12 to be funded with ESSER 2.0.

#### **2. When do the funds expire?**

The funds must be spent by **September 30, 2022**; all expenses must be paid by that date, including payroll.

#### **3. To whom should I reach out if I have questions about how I can spend our school’s ESSER 2.0 allocation?**

Principals are encouraged to attend scheduled office hours and to email their assigned Executive Directors and Title I facilitators with questions.

#### **4. Can we use ESSER 2.0 to pay for services with a vendor of our choice for allowable expenses?**

As with all purchases, we must follow MNPS’ procurement policies. This is especially crucial for these funds, as MNPS will be monitored and audited on the use of these high-profile emergency federal funds. As a reminder, the vendor must be registered with MNPS and a contract must be in place (if required by MNPS procurement policies) in order for us to do business with companies for approved and allowable services. Please click the link at the bottom of this document to view a list of approved vendors with whom we have active contracts. We are continuing to work with our procurement team on possible ways to expand these offerings in order to meet schools’ needs while ensuring we meet compliance and procurement requirements as well.

#### **5. How does this federal grant differ from other federal funds, like Title I?**



ESSER 2.0 is one-time grant funds to be used in allowable ways to address specific challenges brought on by COVID-19. The same guidelines apply as with other federal grants. MNPS is required to follow all related federal requirements as well as our district policies for purchasing, inventory, and more.

#### **6. What documentation do schools have to maintain?**

Since the use of these funds will be highly scrutinized, documentation requirements will be as rigorous as documentation requirements for other federal grants. The type of documentation needed will vary according to the type of expense. For example, documentation for exception pay for tutoring will include time sheets and supplemental pay forms, as well as documentation of student name, date(s) served and subject. Documentation for exception pay for professional development or planning will include event outcome summary sheets, timesheets, and supplemental pay forms. For services that are provided (such as mental health services), schools should maintain documentation of those services showing: the provider, date and time of services, and type of service, etc. Schools should plan to upload all documentation to their SharePoint. Packing slips and delivery tickets should be signed and dated before uploading them into SharePoint. Any original hard copies (i.e. packing slips, MNPS Delivery Tickets for IT Hardware, etc.) must also be maintained at the school level.

#### **7. Can these funds be used for recruiting teachers?**

More information is needed to determine how this is related to COVID-19.

#### **8. Can we use these funds to pay for teachers to get an EL endorsement?**

Yes, this is allowable if justification is data-driven and rooted in supporting EL students impacted by the pandemic.

MNPS has a contract with Lipscomb University to provide EL endorsement programs to MNPS educators. After successful completion of research-based, high-quality EL certification courses, participants will be equipped with the knowledge needed to pass the EL praxis and also be able to utilize enhanced instructional practices in the K-12 classroom that lead to increased learning in multilingual learners. The total cost per candidate is \$8,400 (with coaching) or \$7,800 (without coaching) and includes costs for coursework, the EL praxis, and instructional materials (textbooks). In order to keep costs as low as possible, MNPS will work with Lipscomb University to pool MNPS educators into larger cohorts.

NOTE: When completing your ESSER 2 Addendum, please choose Guiding Principle 2. The Expense Type should be "Contractual," and the Focus Area should be "Unique Needs."

#### **9. Can we use these funds for teacher professional development (i.e. Quantum Learning)?**

Yes, this is allowable as long as the PD relates to at least one of the COVID categories (such as learning loss) and with an approved vendor. You may program the funds towards the cost of the presenter and/or training itself. You may also program these funds towards teacher professional development stipends (cost of \$101/day) if the training occurs outside of the teachers' regular work schedule.



**10. Can we use these funds to purchase instructional software programs not provided by the district?**

Yes, this is allowable, but they must be approved by the instructional technology department.

**11. Can we use these funds to pay for a 120-day retiree for intervention or tutoring, or to serve as a teacher mentor, etc.?**

Yes, this is allowable.

**12. Our projected enrollment is down due to COVID, and we feel that our enrollment will increase significantly between now and the 2022-2023 school year. Can we use the funds for FTEs which will help us maintain the continuity of our instructional program for the 2021-2022 school year and minimize instructional impacts caused by budgetary constraints due to the decrease in our projected enrollment in the hopes that our enrollment will significantly increase during the 2021-2022 school year?**

This MAY be allowable. Please consult with your ED. This expense will require Chief approval as these funds are emergency one-time funds that must be spent by September 2022.

**13. We would like to offer an extra specials class. Can we use these funds to add a new position to our school?**

No, this is not allowable.

**14. Can we pay teachers exception pay to tutor students outside of their regular work schedule?**

Yes, this is allowable. Except for Promising Scholars summer programs\*, teachers will be compensated at a rate of \$25/hour (cost of \$29.49/hours).

\*NOTE: \$40 summer hourly rate for certificated teachers is only for the district-funded Promising Scholars summer programs. It does not apply to other fund sources or school-level ESSER 2 funds. In addition, support personnel working in the Promising Scholars summer program will be paid their regular hourly rate. This rate increase does not apply to other fund sources or work outside of Promising Scholars summer programming.

**15. Can we use the funds to compensate teachers for planning and professional development that occurs during July 2021?**

Yes, this is allowable as long as the planning and PD relate to at least one of the COVID categories (such as learning loss). Appropriate documentation is necessary to justify this expenditure.



**16. Can we use the funds to bring in community organizations and groups to work with our students in order for teachers to have extra planning time?**

Yes, this is allowable as long as it meets the 5 question test:

- Will the proposed use of funds “prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus”?
- Is it an allowable use of funds under the CARES Act?
- Is it reasonable and necessary?
- Does it promote equity?
- Does it support returning students to the classroom?

**17. Can we use these funds to compensate teachers who would like to plan together on Saturdays?**

Yes, this is allowable. Funds must be in alignment with allowable categories, such as learning loss, and documentation is required (such as time logs, names of teachers participating, topics worked on, and principal approval).

**18. Can we use these funds for transportation for students who attend after-school tutoring?**

Yes, this is allowable. The current cost for afterschool tutoring transportation is \$175 per bus per day. We are working to determine the capacity of the MNPS transportation department to provide these services.

**19. Can we use these funds for educational supplies?**

Yes, this is allowable as long as it is linked to social distancing and pandemic response. An example is purchasing art supplies for individual students to avoid sharing (due to social distancing protocols).

**20. Can we use these funds for instructional books?**

Yes, this is allowable.

**21. What intervention programs will be provided by the district?**

We are currently working on the RFP process. This will be updated as soon possible. Interventions will be provided K-12 so schools do not need to budget for these.

**22. I would like to use my funds for to provide high-dosage tutoring, but I would like to use a retiree instead of going through a vendor or using volunteers. Are any program supports (i.e., tutor training, scheduling assistance) developed for the implementation of high-dosage tutoring available even though I am not utilizing their services?**

Yes, you may utilize existing supports developed for implementation of MNPS’s district initiatives. These



include the scheduling system, Teams infrastructure and directions, as well as support for background checks for tutors.

**23. What are the planned dates for summer school?**

Summer school will take place from June 7 through July 2.

**24. Can we use these funds to pay for enhanced option (extended day) costs?**

No, this is not an option. Please communicate with your ED or facilitator if you have additional questions.

**25. Can we use these funds to fund an Urban Teacher position?**

Since this is a one-year role that does not obligate the district to future spending, this MAY be allowable, though more information is needed as to how this is connected to COVID-19. Please consult with your ED. This expense will require Chief approval.

NOTE: Most university contracts require the payment of a stipend to the mentor teacher. This is typically not allowable with federal funds, but these one-time emergency federal funds have some added flexibility not present in other grants. In this instance, the stipend expense is allowable, but schools must have a strong link to justify how this position is related to COVID.

**26. Can we use these funds for costs associated with National Board Certification for our teachers?**

This is an allowable expense as it could help support teachers in expanding professional expertise and deepening pedagogical knowledge, tying to ESSER allowable categories of addressing both learning loss and acceleration. It should be noted that ESSER funds can only be used to reimburse teachers who pursue and complete certification. For more information, please contact HR.

**27. Can we use ESSER funds to pay for substitutes (Code-16 days) so that our teachers may plan together to better address the challenges presented by learning loss?**

Yes, this is allowable as long as the planning relates to at least one of the COVID categories (such as learning loss). Appropriate documentation is necessary to justify this expenditure. Code-16 days are budgeted at a cost of \$150.71/day.

**28. Can we use ESSER funds to pay for Leader in Me certification? We believe this certification will allow our staff to provide our students with more effective mental health supports which will allow for enhanced learning acceleration.**

Yes, this is allowable since the expense relates to at least one of the COVID categories (mental health supports, learning acceleration, etc.).

**29. Can 120-day retirees receive supplemental pay in the form of stipends, exception pay, etc.?**

No, this is not allowable.

**30. Can we use ESSER funds to pay for educators at my school to earn advanced degrees?**

The intent of this legislation is to address learning loss and focus on special populations. Given the time frame of the allowability of funds, an endorsement such as EL or National Board Certification is allowable. However, costs related to programs that lead to advanced degrees (Ed.S., master's degrees, etc.) are not allowable.

**31. Can I use ESSER funds to pay my assistant principal or dean exception pay?**

First, to be allowable, the pay must relate to one of the COVID expense categories (i.e., addressing learning loss, addressing the unique needs of special populations, etc.). Then, it depends according to the following guidelines:

- 12-month APs are not eligible for exception pay.
- 11-month APs are eligible if the work is performed outside of their contracted schedule.  
NOTE: For the 2020-2021 school year, the last day for 11-month APs is June 3, and their first day back for the 2021-2022 school year is July 12. 11-month APs would therefore be eligible for exception pay for work performed June 4th through July 11th.
- 11-month Deans are eligible if the work is performed outside of their contracted schedule (following the same schedule as APs).
- 10-month Deans are eligible if the work is performed after the last day teachers report for the 2020-2021 school year (May 26th) and before the first day teachers report for the 2021-2022 school year (August 3rd). 10-month Deans would therefore be eligible for exception pay for work performed May 27th through August 2nd.
- During the school year, APs (11- or 12- month) are not eligible for exception pay for work performed outside the school day (i.e., after-school tutoring).
- During the school year, Deans are eligible for exception pay for work performed outside the school day.

\*As is true with all grant expenses, the exception pay should be planned in the school's budget before the work is performed. The principal should also pre-approve the specific work to be performed by the AP or Dean. While these positions are eligible for exception pay, all required documentation of dates and hours worked and duties performed **must** be verified by the principal and maintained according to grant guidelines. The documentation must clearly show that the work performed is outside the employee's contracted schedule according to the guidelines above. In addition, all work must be tied to COVID-19 in order to be allowable. Detailed instructions for submitting exception pay will be provided soon.



## RESOURCES

[Click here to access a non-exhaustive list of vendors with MNPS contracts which you may wish to consider as you plan your ESSER funds. Refer to question #4 for additional information.](#)

[Click here to access the PowerPoint shared at the March 11, 2021 PLN Meeting.](#)