

**ARP ESSER Innovation
After School Grants
for Grades Pre-K to 12
2022-24**

Program Managers
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Purpose and Eligibility

A total of \$11 million of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP ESSER) has been set aside at the state level to support after school programming and services.

Over \$8.7 million has been awarded through Expansion and Enhancement grants to fund 45 after-school programs across Connecticut. Expansion grants have opened new free or affordable after-school program locations. Enhancement grants have allowed existing programs to better meet the increased needs of students and to improve program quality.

\$2.2 million of the state set-aside ARP ESSER funds will support this Innovation Grant opportunity that will allow underserved communities to address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, especially for those who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Successful applicants will receive funding to provide programming outside of school hours during school years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Purpose and Eligibility Continued

The CSDE has a long history of implementing evidence-based after school programming through the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant (21st CCLC) program and the State-Funded After School Grant program.

These programs partner with community-based organizations (CBO) to provide students with academic enrichment opportunities and additional activities designed to complement their regular academic program.

ARP ESSER provides us the opportunity to expand the depth of this great work while simultaneously increasing the breadth of offerings to include new and innovative after school programs.

Purpose and Eligibility Continued

This is the third competitive grant opportunity supported through ARP ESSER. The purpose of this funding is to support innovative after school programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

This grant will provide successful applicants with the necessary funding to design and implement new, high-quality after school programs that address the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students across the state, especially for those who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Innovation Grant Project Design

Two of the most important questions in designing innovative after school programs are:

- 1) How can learning be fun?
- 2) How can we best create environments and activities that support learning outside the traditional school day?

Student agency is achieved through activities that are meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests and self-initiated with appropriate guidance from adults. As a result, motivation, or the willingness to start, put in mental effort, and persist, is vital if learners are to engage in challenging cognitive tasks.

Innovation Grant Project Design

Research, including that by Carol Dweck and Edward Deci, has found that various factors influence a learner's motivation and, when present, can support learning and development.

When designing program plans, please keep in mind these five factors that influence motivation:

- (1) Students finding value in the learning, relationships, and the process
- (2) Students' self-efficacy or a belief in his or her ability to complete the learning tasks
- (3) Students' sense of control over the process and outcomes of learning
- (4) Maintaining a productive emotional state for students while learning
- (5) Students sharing in decision-making by having a voice in why, what, and how learning experiences take shape.

Innovation Grant Project Design

Program objectives must include introducing fun and exciting activities that will engage students and make learning enjoyable.

Applicants are encouraged to propose programs and activities that prioritize the following:

1. Learning Recovery and Acceleration
2. Regular and Consistent Attendance in School
3. Student Agency
4. Innovative Student-Centered Learning

Learning Recovery and Acceleration

The transition to remote learning in the 2019-20 academic year, combined with annual summer learning loss for students across all grade levels, may have resulted in major setbacks in student learning and academic achievement.

The following are examples of activities that contribute to improving learning and academic achievement:

- Provide in-person and online tutoring;
- Provide extra support for multilingual learners and students with disabilities;
- Create innovative extended learning opportunities; and
- Provide education to help families support student learning.

Regular and Consistent Attendance in School

Chronic absenteeism, a primary cause of poor academic achievement, is defined as missing at least 10 percent of days in a school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences.

Programs that address chronic absenteeism may:

- create a culture in which all teachers and staff purposefully develop relationships with students;
- monitor attendance and follow up with students struggling with regular attendance;
- use data to identify and minimize obstacles to attendance;
- create opportunities for meaningful involvement;
- treat students with dignity and respect; and
- implement innovative alternatives to exclusionary discipline.

Student Agency

Student agency refers to learning through activities that are meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests, and often self-initiated with appropriate guidance from teachers.

The following are some examples of activities that promote student agency:

- A. Plan consistent opportunities for Student voice
- B. Ask students about their lives beyond the classroom
- C. Ask for student feedback - and use it

Innovative Student-Centered Learning

The term refers to a wide variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students.

Student-centered learning gives students the opportunity to decide two things: what material they learn and how they learn it.

Innovative Student-Centered Learning

The following are some examples of student-centered learning activities and programs:

- A. students utilizing cooperative learning as they seek to put the “puzzle” together. Each student takes responsibility for an individual component of knowledge, then takes knowledge learned and gained and applies it to the larger body of work (puzzle);
- B. service learning, internships, project-based learning, and problem-based learning;
- C. programs focusing on science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), and other hands-on and skill-building activities;
- D. programs that engage students in their own learning process and integrates their interests and skills into it by modeling “how to think;” and
- E. programs focusing on technology and enhanced student-centered environments.

Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to apply:

- Local educational agencies (LEAs);
- Charter school districts;
- Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) applying on behalf of LEAs
- College affiliated school districts;
- Community-based organizations (CBOs), including faith-based organizations (FBOs) and other public or private non-profit organizations, in partnership with a local school or school district; and
- Consortia of two or more of the above-mentioned agencies, organizations, or entities.

Target Population/Underserved Areas

While entities located in any district across the State of Connecticut will be eligible to apply for this funding, the CSDE recognizes that some districts have not been successful in receiving 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant (21st CCLC) grant funding or the State-funded After School Grant program. Therefore, to build the capacity of underserved areas, CSDE encourages submissions from and will award priority points to applicants proposing to serve students:

1. Who live in districts which, over the past five years, have NOT received 21st CCLC or State-funded After School grant funding* to provide after school programs; or
2. Who live in districts that have received 21st CCLC or State-funded After School funding in the past but attend a program site that has not been funded over the past five years.

*This excludes any/all Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (e.g., ESSER I, ESSER II, and ARP ESSER) received by districts since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020.

Collaboration and Capacity Building Requirements

While some school officials may have already generated innovative ideas and only require additional funding to execute their vision, CSDE recognizes that many more districts lack the necessary time, capacity, and/or backing from their communities to fully design, implement, and sustain new after school programs, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, as a condition of funding, applications submitted by LEAs must provide a detailed explanation of partnership with at least one CBO or municipal agency, with either entity acting as the lead partner. CSDE is open to receiving applications with varied configurations between CBOs, LEAs and partners. Applications submitted by RESCs on behalf of LEAs or magnet schools, or by CBOs, must explicitly mention their intended or existing partnership with a local school or school district in their proposal.

Collaboration and Capacity Building Requirements

Applications must include a Memorandum of Agreement for each partner upon submission. Applicants are strongly encouraged to create collaborative programming that has the potential to last beyond the funding cycle.

Any district that needs help finding a community-based partner should contact their local RESC. For more information, please contact Dave Erwin at Erwin@edadvance.org.

Required Signatures and Adequacy of Resources

All proposals require signatures from the applicant local education agency's (LEA) superintendent, or other authorized personnel, and principal(s) of the participating school(s) to be uploaded in the application.

These signatures serve as attestation to the accuracy of the information provided in the proposal and certify compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, including the sharing of State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) numbers for the CSDE data collection and reporting.

Adequacy of Resources - School Districts & Municipalities

For school districts and municipalities applying as lead applicants, fiscal health and financial policies can be documented in a letter of commitment from the superintendent (for school districts) or chief elected official (for municipalities) that states that the programs have the capacity to invest time and resources to support program start-up and implementation, as specified in the grant proposal, in case of a delay in funding

Adequacy of Resources - CBOs

For CBO(s) applying as lead applicant, fiscal health and financial policies must be documented by providing all the following information as attachments:

- copy of IRS determination letter
- organization chart
- list of board of directors with names and affiliations
- organization's most recent financial statements (audited, if available) and management letter (if available)
- organization's annual operating budget and actual income and expenses for the current fiscal ending June 30, 2022.

Mandatory Staff Training

Grantees must provide training and support for all staff members, including administrators and families, on understanding and appreciating diversity and developing skills to work with people from different backgrounds.

Time Period, Grant Amount and Allowable Expenses

Number of Applications

Eligible applicants may apply for a maximum of up to two grants so long as they are for different sites.

Time Period

All applications must be submitted by September 6, 2022 at 5 pm, to be considered. Grants will be awarded in September 2022, and the grant period will end on June 30, 2024. The grant award is intended for the 2022-23 school year and the 2023-24 school year. Continuation of funding within the grant cycle is contingent upon compliance with state and federal guidelines.

Time Period, Grant Amount and Allowable Expenses

Size of Grants

Grant funding requests can range from a minimum of \$50,000 per year to a maximum of \$150,000 per year. The maximum two-year award per application is \$300,000. Applicants should only apply for the amount that they are certain they will be able to spend efficiently and effectively during the grant period.

Time Period, Grant Amount and Allowable Expenses

Allowable Expenses

Grant funds cannot be used to purchase office or computer equipment that does not directly support after school activities, nor can funds be used to purchase motor vehicles, facilities, or to support new construction.

For a comprehensive list of authorized uses of ARP ESSER funds, please refer to page 12 of the CSDE's Guidance online: [Connecticut's American Rescue Plan Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund Guidance](#)

Grant Application

The grant application must be completed in the Department's online electronic grants management system (eGMS) accessed here: <https://connecticut.egrantsmanagement.com>.

No paper or email applications will be accepted.

The online application includes the following sections:

- A. Need for Project
- B. Partnership and Collaboration
- C. Program Elements
- D. Adequacy of Resources and Management Plan
- E. Budget

Data Collection, Evaluation, Quality Improvement and Professional Learning

Data Collection

Each year, grantees are required to complete end of year report. The two purposes of the report are to:

- (1) demonstrate that the grantee has made substantial progress toward meeting the objectives of the project, as outlined in the grant application; and
- (2) collect data that addresses summative information on the following: student enrollment and attendance; financial expenditures; self-assessments of program activities; successes and challenges; and student/parent satisfaction.

The report must be completed by July 31 of Year 1 of funding to receive the second year's funding.

Data Collection, Evaluation, Quality Improvement and Professional Learning

Quality Improvement

Programs must participate in a designated quality improvement process with the CSDE contracted technical assistance providers. This process may include trainings, meetings, conference calls, scheduled site visits for program observation, and feedback and interviews with administrators, staff, families, and students.

Data Collection, Evaluation, Quality Improvement and Professional Learning Continuation

Evaluation: Programs must complete an End-of-Year Survey by June 30th of each year of funding. The End-of-Year Survey is used to demonstrate progress in meeting program objectives and to collect data that addresses the performance indicators of a quality after-school program.

Quality Improvement: Programs must participate in a designated quality improvement process with the CSDE contracted technical assistance providers. This process may include trainings, meetings, conference calls, scheduled site visits for program observation, and feedback and interviews with administrators, staff, families, and students.

Regulatory Requirements for Serving Students with Disabilities

Applicants are reminded of their obligation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the proposed program is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Connecticut Child Day Care Licensing Requirements

Please note that programs that plan to serve school-age students through this funding opportunity are obligated to meet child day care licensing requirements, as defined under Connecticut General Statutes, Section 19a-77.

Programs that are operated by public schools may be exempt from this requirement. All applicants must provide the requested assurances, or a copy of their current license.

For licensing information, please see:

<http://www.ct.gov/oec/cwp/view.asp?a=4542&q=544636> or contact the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood at (860) 500-4450 for more information.

Review Process and Criteria

The CSDE will convene a panel to review and score all completed applications received by the due date and time.

Grant awards will be negotiated and accepted, with modifications at the discretion of the CSDE, in time for final award. Each application will be rated according to the criteria provided in the scoring rubric.

Application Deadline

Grant application opened **August 1, 2022** in the eGMS System.

The online application must be in the LEA Superintendent Approved status in the eGMS system by **September 6, 2022 by 5 PM.**

For non-LEA organizations, LEA Superintendent Approved refers to the person with authority to approve and submit an application to the CSDE.

For questions regarding how to access the eGMS system, please contact the Help Desk on the eGMS system's homepage:

<https://connecticut.egrantsmanagement.com>

No extensions shall be granted.

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