

COLORADO SCHOOL FINANCE PROJECT

Support Children - Support The Future

So What Happened to All That ESSER Money? Telling Your District's Story

December 8, 2023



Who is CSFP

- Non-profit, non-partisan
- Supported by school district contributions
- School finance analysis for local and state policy makers since 1995
- Governed by a board comprised of national and state experts on school finance

Our Mission: To compile, collect and distribute research-based, non-partisan information and data on topics related to school finance for state and local policymakers.

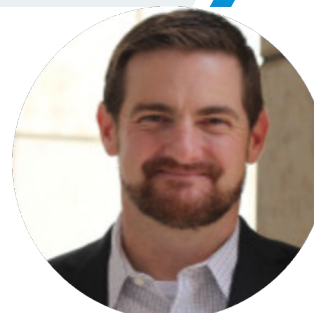
Meet Our Team



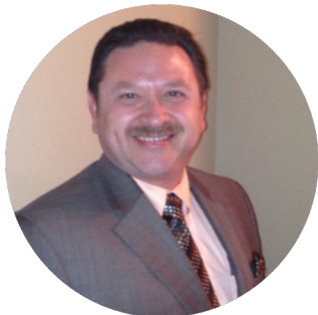
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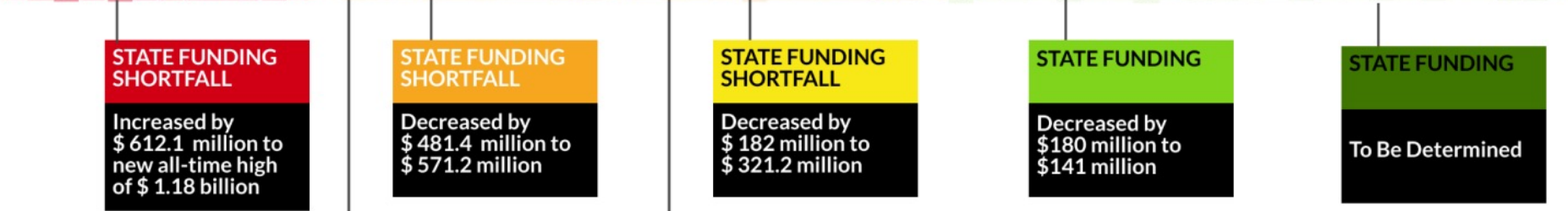
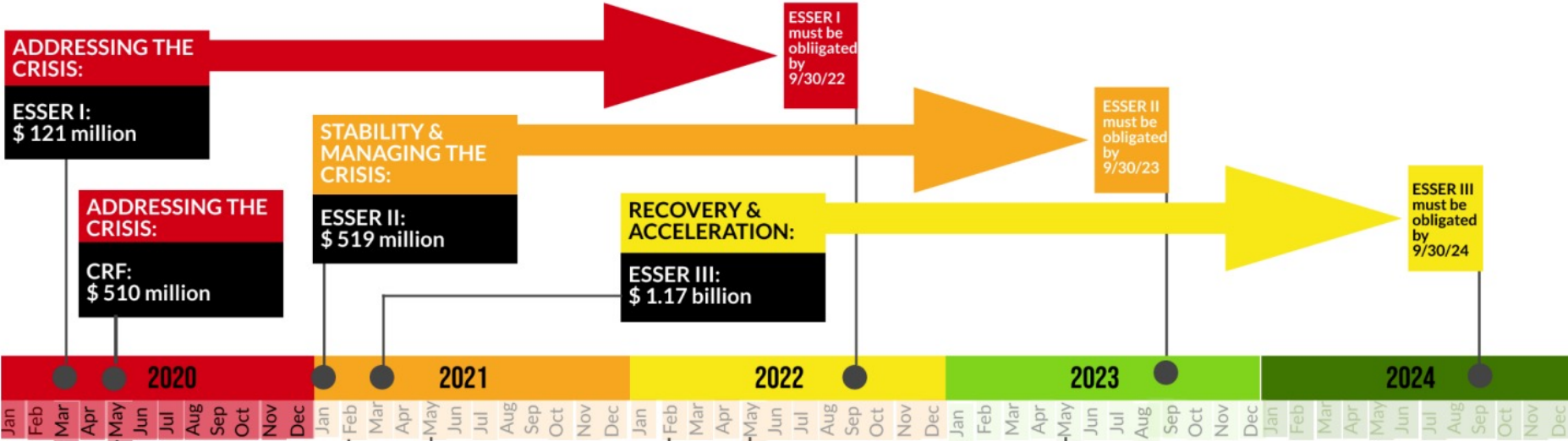
Frank Reeves
Field Manager



George Welsh
Field Manager

Funding Timeline

FEDERAL



State funding information is addressing the Budget Stabilization Factor, the mechanism used by the legislature to achieve budget savings for the state by reducing each district's total funding.
[\(2022 School Funding Handbook\)](#)

STATE

CSFP ESSER Technical and Communication Resources



The federal stimulus dollars represent an unprecedented influx of funding that have **transparency and accountability requirements.**



School districts and BOCES are doing the hard work of deploying federal pandemic recovery funds to improve the lives of students they serve. Under resourced schools need **help in telling their story.**



We are **stronger together** and by sharing **stories, lessons learned,** and **best practices,** we emerge better equipped to help students.

ESSER I Key Takeaways

Colorado School Finance Project's

ESSER I Key Takeaways

Education received 4.6% of all the federal pandemic funds received by Colorado. Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund I (ESSER I) was the first round of federal funding to support schools. The ESSER I funding obligation deadline has passed and ESSER I funds are no longer available to support schools. ESSER II and ESSER III are still underway and will be addressed in future documents. The following are key takeaways for ESSER I:

- 1 The primary focus of ESSER I spending was to address the immediate health, operational, and economic crises in an uncertain and evolving environment during the global pandemic.



HEALTH CRISIS

Communities were fearful for their families and livelihoods. School personnel became front-line essential workers. The priority of addressing the mental health and social-emotional wellbeing of students and school personnel was heightened.



OPERATIONAL CRISIS

School leaders were faced with many new operational challenges:

- how to operate schools remotely
- how to offer on-line learning options
- how to fulfill health department requirements for in-person learning
- how to accomplish these items with ever changing timelines and deadlines.



ECONOMIC CRISIS

School leaders navigated economic insecurity as state-level budget cuts forced the Budget Stabilization Factor — a mechanism used to cut state funding to schools — to double at the same time the crisis hit.

- 2 According to preliminary data, statewide, the three largest ESSER I expenditures by districts went to:



Supporting equitable access and effective use of technology



Stabilizing a diverse and qualified workforce



Providing all students with access to a safe and inclusive learning environment

- These priorities aligned with the CEI/CDE Colorado Needs Inventory survey conducted at the beginning of the pandemic.
- Even when considering school district size and student demographics, these priorities remained consistent.

CEI/CDE Colorado Needs Inventory is available on the CDE website at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/safeschools/communityneeds-spring2020>.

[Link to resource](#)



ESSER Mid-point Survey

Jan 17 – Feb 6, 2023

Top 3 needs:

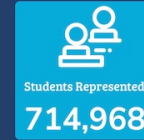
- Student emotional support
- Unfilled staffing
- Staff social/emotional support

[Link to resource](#)

ESSER District Mid-point Survey Results

Survey Conducted: Jan 17 - Feb 6, 2023

Respondents



Top 3 ongoing educational needs

- Student emotional support / student behaviors
- Unfilled staffing positions
- Staff social/emotional support



Student subgroups facing the highest ongoing challenges

- Economically disadvantaged students
- Students experiencing trauma
- Students with special needs

Ongoing community needs

- Affordable housing
- Mental health / counseling services
- Child and / or adult care
- Family financial assistance
- Workforce development / adult education services



A closer look at survey results

- Districts with large numbers of English Language Learners (ELL) and students qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunches (FRL) demonstrated a higher intensity of needs and challenges.
- Non-rural districts have a higher intensity of concern than rural districts in regards to challenges serving students requiring ELL, gifted, and homeless services.
- Districts serving larger populations of students qualifying for FRL need more support for communications, learning management systems, and remote learning.

Table Discussion

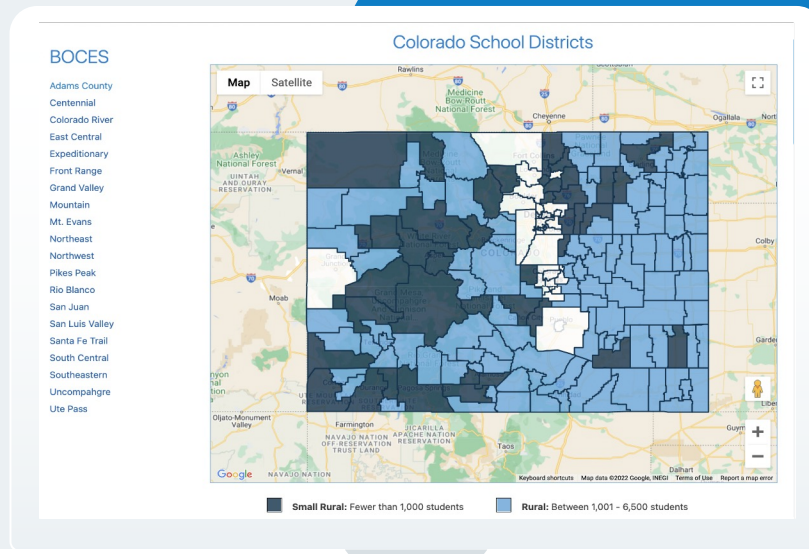
“Where did your school district invest its ESSER I, ESSER II, and ESSER III resources?”

[Link to find your district's information](#)

Individual District and BOCES

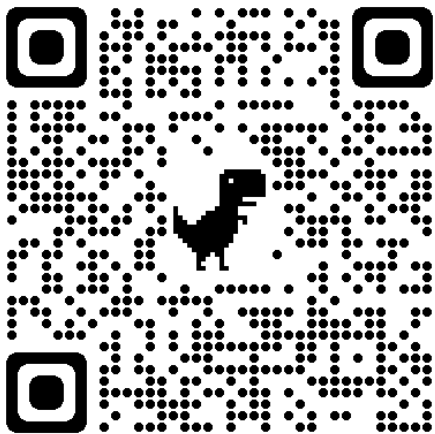
Interactive Website

Provides fact sheets for every district and BOCES



Communication Tools

For every investment area



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ESSER Communication Strategies

The federal pandemic recovery resources known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds provide Colorado school districts with a historic opportunity to invest in strategies that will support students, families, and educators in responding to the pandemic, accelerating recovery efforts, and promoting student success. ESSER funds were provided to states – and from states to school districts primarily based on the Title I funding process – in three allocations:

- **ESSER I:** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) – frequently used to **address the immediate crisis**
- **ESSER II:** The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act) – frequently used to **provide stability and manage the health crisis**
- **ARP ESSER III:** The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act – frequently used to **assist in recovery and acceleration of learning**

School districts across Colorado are working hard to deploy these resources with fidelity to the specific needs of their communities. The decision on how to spend federal pandemic recovery resources is inherently and intentionally local as school communities are best equipped to identify and address their most urgent local needs. The Colorado School Finance Project is supporting these vital efforts by helping school districts communicate with students, families, and their communities about the opportunities available because of ESSER funding.

This ESSER Communications strategies document is designed to provide ready-made tools to help school districts effectively communicate with their key audiences – from parents to staff to the general public and media. These resources include:

Table Discussion

- *What does it mean to your district when these resources are no longer available?*
- *Ways to engage your community in these conversations and/or upcoming budget decisions.*



Questions or Take Aways?

Questions?

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