

MINUTES

Commissioner's Task Force on ESSER II and EANS Distribution of Money Friday, April 30, 2021



Call to Order

(00:00:42)

Chairman Porter called the weekly meeting of the Commissioner's Task Force to order at 3:00p.m. on Friday, April 30th.

The meeting was conducted via video conference and was live streamed for the public to observe and listen.

Approval of Agenda

(00:00:57)

Bert Lewis made a motion to approve the agenda for the April 30th meeting (with flexibility), and Adam Thomas had seconded it. Motion carried (19-0).

Attendance:

The following Task Force members attended by video conference:

Jim Porter	Frank Harwood
Janet Waugh	Tracy Callard
Pat Pettey	Jason Winbolt
Brenda Dietrich	Melissa Rooker
Adam Thomas	Brad Bergsma
Simeon Russell	Mike Argabright
Lisa Peters	Janet Eaton
Alicia Thompson	Adam Proffitt
Nick Compagnone	Roberta Lewis
Jamie Rumford	

Approval of April 23rd Meeting Minutes

(00:01:39)

Jason Winbolt made a motion to approve of the April 23rd minutes, and Adam Thomas had seconded it. Motion carried (19-0).

Status Update On EANS I Reconsideration Processes – Tate Toedman

(00:02:12)

Tate provided the Task Force members with an update on the EANS I reconsideration process which consisted of the following information -

The EANS I Reconsideration form was closed as of Tuesday, April 27th.

- In which, 37 schools participated in the reconsideration process.
- Schools submitted 196 requests with \$2.6 million in value (includes 81 requests previously not reviewed from Heritage Christian).

KSDE is reviewing the submitted reconsideration requests and will bring recommendations to the Task Force next week.

- KSDE will apply consistent principles defined during the EANS I process to determine eligibility for the reconsideration requests.

Of the 72 EANS applicants, 37 submitted 196 reconsideration requests, totaling to \$2.6 million. Some of the categories for the reconsideration requests include technology, personnel, sanitization, SEL & mental health, etc.

ESSER II Application Status Update – Doug Boline

(00:13:00)

Doug shifted the focus of today's meeting from EANS I to ESSER II, and he began this portion of the meeting by stating the total amount of ESSER II applications that have been submitted, and as of 6:00 p.m. on April 29th, there were a total of 77 applications. He then mentioned that there is a significant time investment required for each review. To help districts with the ESSER II application process, KSDE staff have provided the following resources to districts:

- Live online training session (recorded and posted)
- Office hours are being scheduled to ESSER II related questions
- Submission template with detailed explanations
- FAQ document posted online
- Allowable use examples document posted online
- ESSER email address is monitored daily; all district questions are addressed in a timely manner.
- Follow-up with districts after submission of application

Doug mentioned that the Task Force was provided with 20 ESSER II applications in this week's pre-read material; and the goal is to have a total of 49 applications reviewed, and given to the Task Force by Friday, May 7th to recommend to the Kansas State Board of Education during their May 11th and 12th Board meeting.

He then mentioned that a total of 3 percent (\$10.1 million) of ESSER II allocations have been reviewed by KSDE (as of 6:00 p.m. on April 29th). A few of the allowable categories KSDE is seeing requests in are indoor air quality, learning loss, summer learning, mental health, sanitation, etc. Doug discussed what today's meeting will look like, and it will primarily focus on \$10 million of requests from 20 school districts. The specific procedures he stated were:

- KSDE staff will present a summary of requests deemed eligible by KSDE reviewers.
- Task Force members are encouraged to ask questions and share any comments; if a Task Force member would like to propose a change to the recommendation, the change would be subject to a majority vote of the Task Force.
- Slate of reviewed requests from today (including any approved changes) will be included along with requests reviewed on May 7th in final slate for Task Force approval at the conclusion of the May 7th meeting.

All reviewed ESSER II applications will be voted on by the Task Force on next Friday, May 7th.

Summary and Discussion Of Requests Deemed Eligible By KSDE – Doug Boline

(00:18:40)

Doug mentioned to the Task Force that at this time, all planned expenditures for ESSER II is 100% recommended as eligible. As of April 29th, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., there have been \$10.1 million requested through the ESSER II application, and some of the categories the funds were requested under were air quality, learning loss, summer learning, mental health, etc. The average eligible requests per district (so far) is \$507K, and per student is \$579.

He then discussed that the majority of eligible requests are towards instruction, with a significant investment in support services. Based on district reporting, the function code categorization is displayed as:

- Instruction - \$6.0 million
- Support Services - \$3.8 million
- Facilities acquisition and construction - \$0.3 million
- Operation of non-instruction services - \$0.1 million

Next, Doug went through a breakdown the two categories of eligible requests that the majority of funds were requested in, which were instruction, and support services.

- Instruction - \$6.0 million; requests include learning loss, summer learning, education technology, remote learning needs, sanitization, etc.
- Support Services - \$3.8 million; requests include indoor air quality, mental health, facility repairs, sanitization, etc.

Doug presented a recap of the key differences between ESSER II and EANS I; which consisted of the following information:

Different requirements for timing of plan submission or Task Force response time.

- ESSER II plans will be reviewed on an ongoing basis over the duration of the ESSER II program.

Information on requests will be at a higher level than EANS (account-level vs. product/service-level)

- Eligibility determinations will need to be made with less granular information.

Districts have set dollar allocations, with considerable flexibility to use funds across 15 different allowable uses; in contrast, EANS I was a competitive grant process with no predetermined amount per school.

- Eligibility recommendations should focus on ensuring plans are allowable within the 15 ESSER II allowable uses and address incremental COVID needs.

According to the slide deck provided, please note that ESSER II does have timing requirements for awarding funds to districts (January 2022), and district obligation of funds (September 2023), but not the 30-day application launch or response time deadlines that the private schools experienced with the EANS I application process.

Frank Harwood then asked how indoor air quality being placed under the “instruction” and “support services” is seen as eligible. He mentioned that he is not questioning whether air quality is an approved expenditure under the allowable uses for ESSER II funds, but it may be misleading that they are underneath those specific categories. Doug responded that the categories the expenditures are under depend on how the districts system reports the requests. Craig Neuenswander also commented that it will depend on what specific item the district is requesting reimbursement for, as this is where the category will be determined. For example, if the district is requesting reimbursement for a new or upgrading a roof-top air unit, it will not be considered for the category “instruction”, but if the district is requesting reimbursement for portable air purifiers used in classrooms, that may be placed under the category instruction.

(00:27:35)

Brenda Dietrich asked Doug Boline if the public accountants that audit each school district in the State of Kansas are aware of the processes to properly audit the additional federal funds that have been awarded to school districts throughout the pandemic. Craig Neuenswander commented that during this year's budget workshop, KSDE plans to have quite a few public accountants attend (as they have in the past) and at the workshop, the process in which the federal funds should be audited will be described in detail. Craig added that KSDE has visited with several CPA firms as they are currently auditing the use of ESSER I funds.

(00:32:24)

Doug then briefly covered the key differences with the EANS I and ESSER II program structure and also inform approaches to describing and evaluating requests –

EANS I:

- State is accountable for use of federal funds
- Competitive grant for an unspecified amount per school
- Awards of products, services, and assistance

ESSER II:

- District/State are accountable for use of federal funds
- Set allocation of funds per district
- Awards of funds

Examples Of Requests Requiring KSDE Follow-Up With Districts– DougBoline

(00:36:56)

Doug Boline mentioned that there are requests requiring KSDE to follow-up for more information before they are deemed eligible. Two examples of these requests are shown below.

Example A:

Request from District: NWEA – MAP Assessment Tool. We had planned to drop this, but want to continue if covered by ESSER II.

Rationale for Follow-Up: The request does not adequately articulate an incremental COVID need, particularly in light of additional assessment software recommended as eligible within their ESSER II plan.

Example B:

Request from District: Additional measures for preventing COVID spread by improving air quality – asbestos removal of outdated ceiling tiles.

Rationale for Follow-Up: Asbestos removal is not among CDC guidelines for improving air quality in relation to COVID-19.

Status Update On ESSER I Reporting – Doug Boline

(00:39:04)

Doug stated that there have been 285 ESSER I reports turned into KSDE (out of 291; 286 school districts and 5 interlocals). The remaining reports are expected to be turned into KSDE sometime this week. If districts and interlocals do not have their reports submitted by Friday, April 30th, then they will have federal funds withheld until the reports are submitted.

Preliminary numbers from the first 274 reports with expenditures shows that districts and interlocals have spent at least \$59 million out of the \$84 million ESSER I allocation through March 31st.

- \$59 million represents 70% of ESSER I direct district and SPED allocations
- Most frequent allowable uses were educational technology and supplies to minimize COVID spread
- reports capture expenditures from March 2020 to March 2021; districts and interlocals have through September 2022 to spend remaining ESSER I funding

According to the slide deck provided, please note that the numbers are preliminary estimates and are expected to change as reports are received and scanned by KSDE.

Once reports are screened for completion, additional details will be shared with the Task Force.

- KSDE will review all 291 reports to ensure they were completed correctly
- KSDE expects to be able to share summary findings with the Task Force in mid/late May

Next Steps and Plan For May 7TH Task Force Meeting – Doug Boline

(00:40:56)

Lastly, Doug covered the next steps for the Task Force members to anticipate for the May 7th meeting, and the details included:

- KSDE to incorporate any approved Task Force changes to eligibility determinations

- KSDE to incorporate review of next batch applications, following up with districts as appropriate
- Pre-read of reviewed application for Task Force will be provided on Wednesday, May 5th. KSDE to prepare materials for next week's Task Force meeting on Friday, May 7th.
- Next Task Force meeting will be focused on reviewing and voting on the first batch of ESSER II applications as well as 200 EANS reconsideration requests in advance of the Kansas State Board of Education meeting.

ADJOURNMENT - Chairman Porter adjourned the meeting at 3:44 p.m. The next meeting will occur on Friday, May 7th at 3:00 p.m.

(00:45:20)