



# FEDERAL FUNDING FOR K-12 HOME CONNECTIVITY

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## ● TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 01	<b>Summary of federal funding available for K-12 home connectivity</b>   Page 2
SECTION 02	<b>Funding specific to K-12 home connectivity</b>   Page 3
SECTION 03	<b>Funding for K-12 that can be used for home connectivity</b>   Page 4
SECTION 04	<b>Funding to make broadband more affordable</b>   Page 11
SECTION 05	<b>Funding to expand broadband Infrastructure</b>   Page 12

### *Sources:*

- Research conducted by Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), The Benton Institute, and The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition
- K-12 Funding Webinar on Feb 25, 2021, hosted by Kajeet, with presentations made by U.S. Department of Education, the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology, and Consortium for School Networking
- Public notices and releases from the Federal Communications Commission, Universal Service Administrative Company, U.S. Department of Education

## SUMMARY OF FEDERAL FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR K-12 HOME CONNECTIVITY

We are in an exciting moment where there is no shortage of options for immediate and long term funding for K-12 home connectivity solutions.

### FOR LONG TERM K-12 FUNDING:

- The American Rescue Plan was signed into law on Mar 11, 2021. Within the \$1.9 trillion package is \$7.2 billion to be added to the E-rate program that will reimburse school districts 100% for home connectivity purchases for K-12 households through one year after the formal end to the pandemic.
- There is also the US DOE's Title IV, Part A, which is funding that can be used for connectivity purchases and is \$1.2 billion in annual funding

### FOR EMERGENCY K-12 FEDERAL FUNDING THERE ARE MULTIPLE OPTIONS:

- In addition to the unused funds from CARES Act's ESSER I and GEER I, the CRRSA Act, signed into law in Dec 2020, provides school districts and states \$54 billion in ESSER II and \$4 billion in GEER II for flexible funding that can be used for K-12 home connectivity purchases.
- The American Rescue Plan will also add an additional \$130 billion in flexible K-12 funding.

### OUTSIDE OF K-12 SPECIFIC FUNDING:

- There is funding to address the affordability divide: \$3.2 billion for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.
- To ensure infrastructure is built out to all Americans: \$20.4 billion in Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and NTIA grant programs for Tribal Broadband (\$1 billion) and Minority communities (\$285 million).
- American Rescue Plan includes \$350 billion in state and local funding that can be used for broadband
  - \$10 billion Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund
  - \$340 billion in general state and local funding: one of the uses can be for "water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure"

### THERE ARE STILL QUESTION MARKS AROUND THE SPECIFIC RULES OF SOME OF THESE PROGRAMS; HOWEVER, TWO THINGS ARE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR:

1. There is ample funding available to address the K-12 homework gap
2. The states and school districts that have the best understanding of which students are and aren't connected are best positioned to leverage these different funding streams. The [K-12 Bridge to Broadband data exchange program](#) is the model facilitated by EducationSuperHighway, in coordination with states, school districts, and Internet Service Providers, to collect the most accurate, actionable home connectivity data.

## FUNDING SPECIFIC TO K-12 HOME CONNECTIVITY

### \$7.17B TO BE ADDED TO E-RATE FOR REMOTE LEARNING VIA AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

- \$7.17 billion in funding to reimburse 100% of home connectivity purchases.
- Funding to be made available through one fiscal year after the formal end of the pandemic. If that occurs in 2021-2022, that would put an end to reimbursements in 2023.
- [Public Notice](#) issued by FCC on March 16th. Comments due April 5th and Reply Comments due April 23rd.
- FCC has 60 days after the bill is signed into law to determine the rules and regulations for this funding.

#### *Potential:*

### UNUSED E-RATE FUNDS FOR REMOTE LEARNING (APPROX \$1B PER YEAR)

- [Public Notice of the FCC](#) released on Feb 1st due to pressure from Colorado, Nevada, and SHLB coalition.
- ESH's policy position: [ESH reply comments](#)
- TBD on when the FCC will make a decision. Big unknowns from this public notice:
  - Will the funding be for this year (FY20) and next year (FY21)?
  - Can the funding be used retroactively for purchases made last year?

## FUNDING FOR K-12 THAT CAN BE USED FOR HOME CONNECTIVITY

CARES & CRRSA funding overview by US DOE in webinar hosted by Kajeet ([full slide deck here](#), [webinar recording](#)):

### CARES Act & CRRSA: Programs and Funding

Programs	CARES Act	CRRSA
Total Allocation	\$30.75B	\$81.88B
Bureau of Indian Education (ESF-BIE; ESF-BIE II)	\$153M	\$409.4M
Outlying Areas	\$153M	\$409.4M
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER;EESER II)	\$13.2B	\$54.38B
Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER; GEERII)	\$3B	\$4.1B \$1.3B (LEAs, IHEs, other educational entities) \$2.75B (Emergency Assistance for Non-Public Schools, EANS)
Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)	\$14.25B	\$21.2B
Discretionary Grant Programs	\$180M	N/A

### CRRSA Overview

Authorized additional funding for ESSER & GEER in December of 2020 (ESSER II and GEER II)

\$58 billion in additional funds to ESSER and GEER grantees

ESSER II awards made January 5, 2021; GEER II awards made January 8, 2021

Authorized new program as a part of GEER: Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS)

## ESSER II

[USDOE fact sheet](#) comparing ESSER I (from CARES) to ESSER II (from CRRSA)

### WHO PROCURES:

- \$54.3B awarded to the State Education Agencies who then subgrant the funds to the LEA's: For the 90% of funds for LEAs, funds are generally considered "awarded" when the SEA subgrants the funds to an LEA.

### ELIGIBILITY:

- Very broad: allowable uses of funds related to preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19. Home connectivity solutions are included (hardware, software, and internet access costs).
- May be used for pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020, when the national emergency was declared.

### TIMELINE:

- Available for obligation by SEAs and subrecipients through September 30, 2023.
- SEA must award the funds within one year of receiving them, which will be January 2022.

### Summary from Kajeet hosted webinar co-presented by U.S. DOE

Additional \$54.3B to prepare, prevent & respond to COVID-19

Emphasizes use of funds to:

- Address learning loss,
- Prepare schools for reopening, and
- Testing, repairing, and upgrading projects to improve air quality in school buildings.

1 year to make subawards

Subgrantees must obligate funds by September 30, 2023

No requirement to provide Equitable Services

## GEER II

### [USDOE fact sheet](#) comparing GEER I to GEER II

- **WHO PROCURES:**
  - \$4B to Governors
- **ELIGIBILITY:**
  - Portion has to go to nonpublic schools
  - Very broad: allowable uses of funds related to preventing, preparing for, and responding to COVID-19. Home connectivity solutions are included.
- **TIMELINE:**
  - Governor must award the funds within one year of receiving them, which will be January 2022.
  - Available for obligation by Governors and subrecipients through September 30, 2023.

#### Summary from Kajeet hosted webinar co-presented by U.S. DOE

GEER II	EANS Program
Additional \$4 billion to prepare for, prevent & respond to COVID-19	\$2.75 billion allocated for awards to Governors, administered by SEAs to provide services or assistance to Non-Public Schools
\$1.3 for additional GEER funds (GEER II) and \$2.75 for new program: Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS)	Governor submits Certification and Agreement (C&A) by February 22, 2021
GEER II awards made January 8, 2021	Non-Public Schools apply to SEA for services and assistance
1 year to make subawards	SEA maintains control of funds for services and assistance
Subgrantees must obligate funds by September 30, 2023	Funds must be obligated not later than six months after receiving the award
No requirement to provide Equitable Services	

## ESSER II + GEER II OVERVIEW FROM CCSO'S WINTER WEBINAR

In 2020, Congress approved the CARES Act and the CRRSA Act, which contain programs that support states and school districts in responding to the national pandemic.

Act	Item	Use
CARES Act (Education Stabilization Fund)	ESSER I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very broad, to address diverse conditions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• Express authority for use of funds for digital learning and connectivity.</li> </ul>
	GEER I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very broad, to support recipients' activities to ensure "ongoing functionality."</li> </ul>
CRRSA Act (Education Stabilization Fund II)	ESSER II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very broad, consistent with ESSER I.</li> <li>• New express authority to address "learning loss" caused by the pandemic.</li> </ul>
	GEER II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very broad, consistent with GEER I.</li> <li>• Includes EANS reservation: Addresses diverse conditions affecting students in nonpublic schools; public agencies required to maintain control of funds and title to equipment.</li> </ul>



## CCSSO'S OVERVIEW OF ESSER II AND GEER II

	ESSER II	GEER II
Amount Appropriated	\$54.3 billion by formula to State Educational Agencies (SEAs), in proportion to relative share of ESEA Title I, Part A formula (based primarily on census poverty data and cost of education in each state). <i>State allocations <a href="#">here</a>.</i>	\$4 billion to Governors: \$1.3 billion by GEER I formula (60% population and 40% poverty); \$2.75 billion for EANS (see below) on the basis of relative number of children in the state aged 5 through 17 at or below 185% of poverty. <i>State allocations <a href="#">here</a>.</i>
Structure	Same as ESSER I: SEAs reserve 10% for statewide activities, including .5% of total state allocation for administration, then allocate remaining 90% to school districts (LEAs) on the basis of relative share of Title I formula.	\$1.3 billion consistent with GEER I: Subgrants to institutions of higher education, school districts, and/or “education related entities.”  \$2.75 billion reserved for new “Emergency Assistance to Nonpublic Schools Program” (EANS). Governors submit applications to USED to receive funds, must designate SEA to administer program. Nonpublic schools apply directly to SEAs to receive services.
Uses of Funds	Very broad, consistent with ESSER I, to address diverse conditions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, including any activity authorized by major K-12 education authorizations (ESEA, IDEA, AEFLA, Perkins, McKinney-Vento) and other enumerated uses of funds. Express authority for use of funds for digital learning and connecti. New express authority to address “learning loss” caused by the pandemic.	GEER II, general: Very broad, consistent with GEER I, to support recipients’ activities to ensure “on-going functionality.” EANS reservation: Also very broad to address diverse conditions affecting students in nonpublic schools. Public agencies required to maintain control of funds and title to equipment.
Period of Availability	May be used for pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020. Available for obligation through September 30, 2023.	GEER II: May be used for pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020. Available for obligation through September 30, 2023.  EANS: SEAs must obligate all funds for benefit of nonpublic schools within 6 months of receipt; any funds unspent in this program revert to GEER II.
Status	Nearly all SEAs have received their allocations and are in the process of allocating funds to LEAs.	All governors have received regular GEER II allocations. A limited number of states have applied for and received EANS funds. ED recently extended the deadline for governors to apply for EANS, allowing two extra weeks until February 22, 2021.

In Addition to Emergency Funding, existing US DOE funding can be used to support with student and teacher connectivity:

**TITLE II, PART A:**

- Could be used to hire coaches that would tailor professional learning to individual educators and work with teachers to help educate how to use digital education software.
- Can also support ongoing support to teachers on how to implement blended learning and remote learning environments

**TITLE III, PART A:**

- Provide supplemental professional development to help provide more effective teaching to english learners via digital learning tools

**TITLE IV, PART A:**

- Funds can be used to support device and connectivity purchases
- Prior to pandemic, there was a 15% cap on expenditures on devices and software and connectivity purchases
- Now, US DOE passed a waiver of the 15% spending limit on technology purchases for FY20 Title IV, Part A funds
  - [The December 2020 letter](#) to Chief State School Officers waiving cap

**FY21 ESEA BUDGET ALLOCATIONS**

Programs	FY20	FY21
Title I, Part A	\$16,309,802,000	\$16,536,802,000 +1.39%
Title II, Part A Supporting Effective Instruction	\$2,131,830,000	\$2,143,080,000 +0.53%
Title III, Part A Supporting English Learners	\$787,400,000	\$797,400,000 +1.27%
Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment	\$1,210,000,000	\$1,220,000,000 +0.83%

## OVERVIEW OF ALL FEDERAL FUNDING (NEW EMERGENCY + EXISTING) AVAILABLE VIA U.S. DOE:

### What federal funding is available and how can it be used?

<b>CARES/CRRSA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● ESSER, GEER, HEER, BIE, EANS</li></ul>	<b>ESEA Budget Changes for 2021</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Title I, Title IIA, Title IVA</li></ul>	<b>Other forthcoming opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● \$3.2B FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program</li><li>● \$1B NTIA Tribal Broadband Grant Program</li><li>● \$285M Minority Broadband Grant Program</li><li>● Potential E-rate Program Flexibilities</li></ul>
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### HOW CARES FUNDING WAS USED TO SUPPORT K-12 HOME CONNECTIVITY:

- SHLB put together [this analysis](#) of CARES funding use

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

- American Rescue Plan includes \$130 billion in flexible K-12 funding. Funding intended to help schools reopen.

## FUNDING TO MAKE BROADBAND MORE AFFORDABLE

### EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM

- [FCC Report and Order](#) (released Feb 26)
- [FCC's Fact Sheet](#) of the Order (what is the benefit, who is eligible, how to sign up)
- [FCC's EBB page](#) (helpful to share to providers + consumers with questions)
- [USAC's program overview of the EBB](#)
- [Benton Institute's summary of the EBB Order](#)
- Pre-Order being released:
  - Link to full Public Notice [here](#)
  - ESH's policy position: ESH [initial comments](#) and [reply comments](#) to the public notice; [presentation](#) ESH presented to FCC Commissioners Rosenworcel, Starks, Carr's office

### EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

- [US Department of Treasury summary page](#)
- Funding could cover 100% of internet cost in states where internet is considered a utility
- An "eligible household" is defined as a renter household in which at least one or more individuals meets the following criteria:
  - Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19;
  - Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and
  - Has a household income at or below 80 percent of the area median.
- Eligible households may receive up to 12 months of assistance, plus an additional 3 months if the grantee determines the extra months are needed to ensure housing stability and grantee funds are available.
- Application process: An application for rental assistance may be submitted by either an eligible household or by a landlord on behalf of that eligible household. Households and landlords must apply through programs established by grantees. In general, funds will be paid directly to landlords and utility service providers.

## FUNDING TO EXPAND BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

### RURAL DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND

- A total of \$20.4 billion to be awarded over 10 years, starting in 2010.
  - Up to \$16 billion will be made available for Phase I of the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund auction, and the remaining Phase I budget, along with \$4.4 billion, will be awarded for Phase II of the auction.
- [FCC's summary of RDOF](#)
- [Comprehensive overview of RDOF by Benton Institute](#) (Feb 2020)
- [FCC's map of winning bidders](#) (Data as of Dec 7, 2020)
  - In the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Phase I auction (Auction 904), 180 bidders won \$9.2 billion over 10 years to provide broadband to 5.2M locations in 49 states

### CONNECT AMERICA FUND PHASE I AND II

- [FCC's Connect America Fund Phase II FAQs](#)

### \$285M NTIA MINORITY BROADBAND GRANT PROGRAM (PART OF CRRSA)

- Grants will go to HBCU's, other minority institutions to support expanding broadband access and adoption.
- [NTIA description](#): "A \$285 million grant program to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) for the purchase of broadband internet access service and eligible equipment or to hire and train information technology personnel."
- [Senate Commerce description](#): The Dec 2020 Covid relief "package adopts S. 4422, the Connecting Minority Communities Act, which establishes an Office of Minority Broadband Initiatives at the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and appropriates \$285 million to support historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities, and minority-serving education institutions, including when they partner with minority-owned businesses, to expand broadband capacity and use at the school and in the surrounding community, including by assisting students afford broadband service. Wicker is the sponsor of the Connecting Minority Communities Act."

### \$350B IN AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

- \$350 Billion in state and local funding that can be used
  - **\$10 billion for Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund** in state and local funding. Although broadband isn't specifically reference in writing, it will be eligible for broadband costs. The funding will be distributed as a formula, with a minimum of \$100M going to each state.
  - **\$340 billion in general state and local funding**: one of the uses is "water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure"

## \$1B NTIA TRIBAL BROADBAND GRANT PROGRAM (PART OF CRRSA)

- To be used for infrastructure and adoption costs. Not just for deployment but also for telehealth, distance learning, and digital inclusion efforts.
- [NTIA description](#): “A \$1 billion program directed to tribal governments to be used for broadband deployment on tribal lands, as well as for telehealth, distance learning, broadband affordability, and digital inclusion..”
- Summary of the new program [here](#).
- ESH’s stance: ESH submitted cover letter and ESH’s 2018 Tribal broadband report to NTIA

### *Potential:*

#### **BROADBAND BILLS THAT HAVE BEEN PROPOSED:**

- James Clyburn (D-SC) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) reintroduced the “Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act” on March 11th. Benton’s summary at the bottom of [this page](#). *Benton’s summary copied here*: The \$94 billion proposal would bring broadband service to areas where it doesn’t exist, improve speeds in places where connectivity is sluggish, and help families who are struggling to pay their monthly bills. Specifically, the bill calls for:
  - \$80 billion to deploy secure and resilient broadband infrastructure for communities nationwide.
  - \$5 billion over five years for low-interest financing of broadband deployment.
  - \$6 billion in additional funds for the FCC’s recently established Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which provides a \$50 monthly discount on internet plans for low-income Americans anywhere in the country (\$75 for consumers on Tribal lands).
  - \$1 billion to establish two new grant programs which will help Americans build digital skills.
  - \$2 billion more for the Emergency Connectivity Fund created by the American Rescue Plan
- **Back in June 2020, Representative Clyburn led the creation of The Accessible, Affordable Internet for All Act ([Fact Sheet here](#))**
  - \$100B total, \$80B for broadband infrastructure
  - Paul de Sa former Chief of FCC Office of Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis, published a paper in 2017 ([here](#)) that deduced this \$80B estimate
- **In Feb 2021, Senators Collins (R-ME), Rosen (D-NV) Introduce Legislation to Increase Access to Broadband Services to Rural Americans**
  - [Overview here](#)
  - Bill provides up to \$15B in matching grants to help bring high-speed Internet directly to homes and businesses