

State education agencies [may now apply for grant funding](#) through the US Department of Education (DOE) to reimagine elementary and secondary education and create flexible K-12 models in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

State education agencies have until May 19, 2020 to submit their notice of intent to apply for the Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant (Rethink K-12 Grant), and until June 29, 2020 to apply.

The Rethink K-12 Grant is the first of two DOE grant competitions that are meant to help states most affected by COVID-19. Applications for the second competition – the Reimagining Workforce Preparation Grant, which is meant to expand short-term postsecondary programs and work-based learning programs – are not yet available.

The two grant competitions, which total \$307.5 million, are funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act's (CARES Act) Education Stabilization Fund. About \$180 million is available under the Rethink K-12 Grant. DOE estimates that individual awards will range from \$5 million to \$20 million, with an average award of \$15 million.

The Rethink K-12 Grant establishes three absolute priorities "aimed at opening new, innovative ways for students to access K-12 education with an emphasis on meeting students' needs during the coronavirus national emergency," Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos [announced](#) on April 27, 2020. Each grant application must clearly address one of these absolute priorities, which are: (1) microgrants for families to help them access technology and educational services; (2) development or expansion of statewide virtual learning and course access programs; and (3) new models for providing remote education.

Microgrants for Families

This priority is intended to address students' individual needs and promote continuity of learning. It will accomplish this by providing families with resources to access remote-learning options. State applicants must provide parents and students with a list of service providers from which they may select, include more than one education service for remote learning from which parents and students may choose, provide online and offline methods for parents and students to select services and monitor their microgrant funds, and include a process for parent involvement and feedback.

Virtual Learning and Course Access Programs

This priority encourages states to develop or expand statewide virtual learning or course access programs, and to implement a statewide course access program or virtual school, widely disseminate information about the program or school, and include a process for gathering parent involvement and feedback. Course access programs enable students to select from different courses offered by any public school in the state or by third-party providers, regardless of a student's assigned school.

New Models for Remote Education

This priority allows states to propose their own educational strategies to address their specific remote learning needs. States must propose projects to create, develop, implement, replicate or take to scale field-initiated educational models for remote learning.

Conclusion

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) would be the applicant for these funds on behalf of Ohio schools, but districts should be prepared for audits of money they receive through ODE for these programs. Additional information regarding restrictions on funding use are anticipated as DOE publishes formal regulations to accompany the grants. Contact legal counsel for guidance on preparing your district to benefit from these funds and meet all requirements of the grants for spending.

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