



August 10, 2021

District Superintendents and Special Education Directors,

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) was signed into law on March 12, 2021. The \$1.9 trillion package is the **largest stimulus package** that's passed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and **includes** \$130 billion for elementary and secondary schools, \$40 billion for higher education, and \$40 billion for early childhood education. It is also the **first stimulus package to include funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, an additional 3 billion dollars.

Nebraska has been awarded approximately 17 million dollars in American Rescue Plan (ARP) - IDEA, Part B (611) and (619) funds. **These additional funds will be added to the district IDEA Consolidated Grant for the 2021-22 school year and available for districts to budget expenditure on August 10th. The districts will have 45 days to complete the applications for the additional IDEA - ARP allocations.**

Within the Grants Management System (GMS) - IDEA consolidated application, districts will find additional tabs indicating the addition of the IDEA - ARP funds. Districts are asked to create an amendment to their current, approved application describing how they intend to use the additional IDEA-ARP funding. If the district's original application has not been approved the district will see the addition of the ARP dollars and will have to address the new allocations in the ARP tabs of the application.

The IDEA - ARP funding is **additional** IDEA dollars being allocated to districts thus when budgeting these funds, districts must apply all the same requirements that are required when budgeting traditional IDEA funds. IDEA - ARP budgets will only be approved once the IDEA application and budget are approved and only if these supplemental funds are budgeted for IDEA allowable activities.

Districts will operate separate but parallel budgets that have the same reporting and accountability requirements for both the traditional and IDEA - ARP allocations. The Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education (OSE) is encouraging districts to budget these supplemental funds for non-recurring activities as IDEA - ARP is a one-time funding opportunity that will not be available to sustain ongoing activities such as permanent employees. The OSE is also reminding districts to maintain and not supplant their state and local expenditures for special education with these funds as the MOE requirements have not been waived. Further, the OSE is reminding districts that the additional IDEA - ARP dollars have also been applied to the nonpublic school proportionate amount requirements. **Districts will need to hold an additional consultation meeting to discuss how the IDEA ARP dollars for proportionate share will be allocated.** If the district submitted a CCEIS project or a voluntary CEIS project on the original grant, additional dollars have been added to the CCEIS/CEIS grant ARP section, IDEA CEIS, and ARP CEIS will be 15% of the total of all traditional IDEA and IDEA - ARP funds

for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CCEIS) or voluntary coordinated early intervening services (CEIS). As with the regular IDEA dollars, the IDEA -ARP balances not used for 2021-22 would carry over to 2022-23, so districts will not have to use all of the funding in 2021-22 but will have to budget the total in that year.

If the district did not apply for a CCEIS or CEIS project the 15% of the ARP dollars was not placed under the CEIS ARP allocation. If the district would like to have access to the 15% CEIS dollars please contact Kris Elmshaeuser at [kris.elmshaeuser@nebraska.gov](mailto:kris.elmshaeuser@nebraska.gov) or Greg Prochazka at [greg.prochazka@nebraska.gov](mailto:greg.prochazka@nebraska.gov).

Districts will have additional budget codes for the IDEA -ARP dollars and will need to set up the codes within their budget to be able to track the IDEA - ARP dollars separately. The new codes are listed on the grant. The district business manager must have the new codes in the budget and expenditures are coded to the correct budget code for IDEA - ARP expenditures.

Finally, because these **additional** IDEA - ARP funds can result in potential MOE adjustments, we are reminding Districts that intend to take advantage of these IDEA - ARP dollars, that perhaps significant adjustments will now need to be documented to show how each District is spending the amount of state and local funds saved as a result of the adjustment on activities allowable under the ESEA.

The 2021-22 IDEA Consolidated Grant also had additional dollars added to the original grant as the dollar amount allocated to each state has been adjusted by OSEP. The budgets will reflect the additional dollars added. Amendments will also need to be made to the original grants to account for the added dollars. Again, if the district had the grant returned for changes these additional dollars have been added and each tab will need to make adjustments to the budget page for the additional dollars.

Districts can see the amounts for their IDEA - ARP and the adjusted amount in the Original IDEA Grant on spreadsheets listed at: <https://www.education.ne.gov/sped/finance/>.

Funds may be used for all allowable purposes under Part B of IDEA and are subject to all requirements and provisions that apply to IDEA funds, including requirements and provisions under IDEA, EDGAR, and the OMB Uniform Guidance. The funds can be used for all expenses allowed under IDEA, including, and emphasizing:

- Providing compensatory services based on IEP team decisions
- Providing support and direct services for Students with Disabilities (SWDs),
- Implementing child find policies and procedures
- Alleviating evaluation backlogs
- Providing Extend School Year (ESY) services as determined on an individual basis by a child's IEP Team to be necessary to provide FAPE
- Providing NeMTSS/PBIS supports and mental health services for SWDs

- Improving the use of technology in the classroom and/or in a remote setting for SWDs to enhance learning
- Supporting the use of technology, including technology with universal design principles and assistive technology devices, to maximize accessibility to the general education curriculum
- Implementing transition programs, including coordination of services with agencies involved in supporting the transition of SWDs to postsecondary activities
- Assisting LEAs in meeting personnel shortages including by hiring additional personnel to provide special education and related services and reducing caseloads in key areas (keeping in mind sustainability)
- Supporting capacity-building activities and improving the delivery of services by Districts to improve results for SWDs
- Developing programming for SWDs who have been expelled from school, in correctional facilities, or enrolled in State-operated or State-supported schools

As you are planning through your IDEA - ARP funding:

- Consider Sustainability
- Consider a focus on challenges from the Pandemic
  - –School re-entry
  - –Disruption in the education of children with disabilities
  - –Mental Health Services
- Consider a focus on the issue of equity in special education and early intervention services.
- Issues that districts experienced when expending or having ARRA funds audited: busses, playgrounds, and technology.

As you think through the ARP funds specific to IDEA, districts should start thinking now about how students with disabilities can benefit from planning for school renewal and acceleration. We encourage you to dust off your Learning Guidance for Students with Disabilities for Summer Programming and Beyond found on the [Launchne.com](http://Launchne.com) website or on the front page of our [education.ne.gov/sped](http://education.ne.gov/sped) website, to think through how your current ESSERS funding planning is incorporating your students with disabilities and the shift in mindset to develop inclusive programming and supports for all students. Additional resources on The Department's ESSER [webpage](#) such as [Nebraska's Framework for School Renewal and Acceleration](#), [The Nebraska Renewal and Acceleration Strategy and Budget Roadmap](#), and The U.S. Department of Education (USED) released *ED COVID-19 Handbook: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs – Volumes 1 and 2* will also be helpful in your planning.

As you are thinking about your plans for ESSERS funding, we would like to encourage you to think about that \$492 million that is being distributed to districts and how this can work to support students with

disabilities beyond the 17 million that is earmarked specifically for IDEA. Again, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, our students with disabilities deserve access to the opportunities these funds can provide during this time of renewal and acceleration.

Should you have any additional questions, please reach out to our office as we would be happy to support you through this Opportunity of a Lifetime.

Sincerely,



Amy R. Rhone, Administrator/Director

NDE Office of Special Education

P.O. Box 94987

Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

531-207-9978

[amy.rhone@nebraska.gov](mailto:amy.rhone@nebraska.gov)

Cc: Dr. Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner  
Dr. Deb Frison, Deputy Commissioner  
Kris Elmshaeuser, Assistant Director, Office of Special Education  
Greg Prochazka, Fiscal Director, Office of Special Education