NASEF
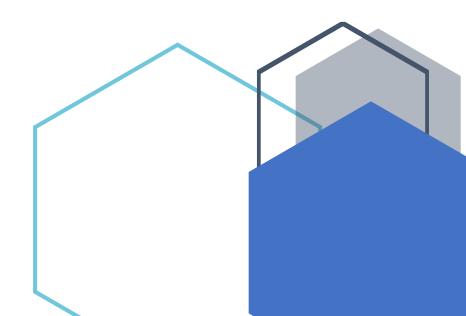### NORTH AMERICA SCHOLASTIC ESPORTS FEDERATION ™

Finding Federal Funding to Support Your Scholastic Esports Programs

A Technical Assistance Guide for NASEF Affiliates

ESSER III Funds:
Fiscal Year 2021

Finding federal funding for your esports programs is possible! This technical assistance guide was created for you to understand what is ESSER III funds, identify available resources within your state, and support your program development proposals to leverage this special funding.

What are ESSER Funds?

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act provide resources to school districts to address the impact the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools. This supplemental funding opportunity, the Elementary and Secondary Education Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, is intended to help school districts. There have been 3 allocations of ESSER Funds:

ESSER I: $13.5 billion (passed on March 27, 2020)

ESSER II: $54.3 billion (passed on December 27, 2020)

ESSER III: $122.7 billion (passed on March 11, 2021)

What is Title I? And how does it relate to ESSER?

Federal funding allocations support supplemental programming efforts in K-12 public education. Majority of education decisions are made by the individual states, the Every Student Success Act (ESSA) requires that states, at a minimum, address and provide support to the most underserved students and lowest achieving schools. As part of the local education agency's (LEA) responsibility- they must create a plan to support federal programs, which includes Title I.

This is important information as **funds are allocated to each state in the same proportion as their Title I, Part A** grants. Districts have the flexibility to use the ESSER funds on any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA).

How much money does my state have?

You can find a fiscal breakdown by state here.

NOTE: This will reflect the overall amount a state is receiving. However, it is important to understand there are some special parameters around the ESSER III funds:

- State education agencies are required to reserve their allocations to carry out activities: 5% to address learning loss, 1% for afterschool activities, and 1% for summer learning programs.

- Local education agencies must reserve at least 20% of the funding they receive to address learning loss.

LEARNING LOSS
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ESSER III funds from the American Rescue Plan included funding set-asides at both the state and district level to mitigate learning loss. So what exactly is "learning loss"?

The term **learning loss** refers to any specific or general loss of knowledge and skills or to reversals in academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student's education. Needless to say, with school closures and remote learning due to COVID-19, there was definitely a learning loss for certain students across the nation. The "loss" is the difference in the learning that occurred during disruption and the learning that would have occurred in a COVID-free Spring 2020.

Q: What are "allowable expenses" for this funding?

A: As per the legislature, "any activity authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act" is considered an allowable expense. ESSA state plans cover all of the "Title" monies. Here is a broad overview of Title programs (that would be applicable to scholastic esports):

Title I Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies	Title II Supporting Effective Instruction	Title III English Language Acquisition and Language Enhancement
Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants	**Title IV, Part B** 21st Century Community Learning Centers	**Perkins** Career & Technical Education

Allowable expenses within these programs may include (but not necessarily limited to):

- Instructional Materials
- Family Engagement Activities
- Extended Learning Time
- Professional Development
- Technology (with limitations)*
- Consumable Supplies
- Non-Consumable Supplies
- Mental Health Services
- Summer School Activities/Programming
- Teacher/Staff Stipends
- Software
- Licenses
- Digital Learning Tools
- Field Trips (with educational purpose)
- Career Exploration Activities
- College and Career Planning

Q: How does NASEF fit into this conversation?

A: It aligns perfectly! Let's consider what has actually happened… School closures and social distancing have intensified preexisting struggles like food insecurity, depression, and even abuse. For some students, the threat of illness looms somewhere "out there" and others are even grieving lost family members or friends. Many students may have encountered parental job loss, financial strain, family issues, and personal turmoil—all within the four walls of their homes. Teachers can't simply launch into academics as if things are unchanged. No one is the same and our students need "school" (whatever that may look like presently) to be a safe and fun place again.

Based on NASEF's mission to provide opportunities for all students to use esports as a platform to develop STEAM-based skills and social emotional attributes needed to thrive in work and in life, there is a clear narrative to be told.

NASEF can provide and support student learning through an immersive summer esports program to help reinforce literacy and math skills, support social and emotional learning, and provide a fun and engaging experience to make memories with their peers through gaming. Our summer program has the ability to offer structure and routine for a safe space, provide engaging and fun learning experiences addressing important academic concepts, and support the emotional wellbeing of all students.

Q: How do I take action so I can help support scholastic esports in my area?

A: Talk to your local school district(s). The local educational agencies (LEAs) are being given control over their monies for summer programming. Discuss the benefits of esports and also provide them with the informational flyer about NASEF's summer program. Take the information into any and all digital spaces! Leverage Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Community websites, email lists, etc. to share the information. Share the flyer with any of your stakeholders who may be interested and/or have the ability to support the initiative of summer programming.

If you are already working with a specific high school or a consortium of schools, contact the principal or your point of contact to discuss summer programming.

TIP: Don't underestimate the power of the student voice. Have your high school students be your advocate! Have them take the flyer to their principal, club sponsor, activities coordinator, or teacher. Students can be very persuasive 😊

Q: What are keywords/phrases I should include in my conversations?

8 Week Summer Program to Help Mitigate Learning Loss	Comprehensive esports curriculum with literacy and math concepts taught through gaming	Intentional collaborative structures to support social and emotional learning	Fun and engaging experiences for students to learn academic concepts and develop STEM skills

Here is some sample language/central messaging you can use in your correspondence:

As the education landscape shifts once again, the summer offers the perfect opportunity to implement programs that could help to mitigate the impact COVID-19 has had on student learning since March 2020.

We are working with school districts to fund scholastic esports programs. For example:

Customer Story #1	Customer Story #2
A NASEF affiliate is working with multiple school districts to provide a two-day professional development session to their esports general managers leveraging ESSER funds to support their scholastic esports program development.	Another NASEF supported school district is building out a scholastic esports + STEM summer camp leveraging these ESSER funds to support student learning opportunities and culminating with a districtwide tournament.

You can work with your school districts to effectively use ESSER funds in meaningful ways to address learning loss through strong learning opportunities, ensure effective teaching practices, and increase student engagement through scholastic esports. It has never been more important to actively seek opportunities to integrate hands-on project-based learning, which can be the foundation of your summer programs and ongoing initiatives. Moreover, scholastic esports combines hands-on experiences with cross-curricular content to intentionally address academic standards in the disciplines of English Language Arts, mathematics, and science.

Q: Is there research to back the effectiveness of esports?

Often, school districts will ask the timeless question of "does it work?"—school districts want to make sure they are investing in the best curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, etc. to guarantee their return on investment.

Check out and use the research around NASEF programs.

Q: How much will a scholastic esports summer program cost?

ESSER funding has provided school districts with funding opportunities for new and exciting learning opportunities. With the variations of school programming around the nation last year, the U.S. Department of Education is recognizing the need for additional learning supports and opportunities for students.

There is a clear need for viable and innovative programming options that goes beyond the need of traditional summer programs. School districts are in search of (and need!) well-constructed summer proposals with clear student outcomes and associated budgets.

In order to allocate funds, school districts will need total cost and a breakdown of specific program costs. They are required to attach budget strings to any costs associated with the program.

- How much is needed for the program?

- How many students can be included? What's the teacher/student ratio?

- What materials are needed? What materials are consumable/non-consumable?

- What technology/equipment is needed?

- How much needs to be allocated for salaries (i.e., who is leading the summer program and how much are they being paid)?

- Will the summer instructors need professional development/training before leading the summer program?

- Are there licensing fees and/or software costs?

Depending on the school district, there may be budget restrictions in certain budget categories. There may need to be some flexibility and responsiveness to support certain summer programming efforts in certain places.