

# State Uses of Federal Relief Funds for CTE

This memo is designed to compile trends from the [Advance CTE stimulus funding tracker](#) on how states have made commitments to use federal coronavirus pandemic relief funding for purposes related to Career Technical Education (CTE). Relief funding commitments were collected through state plans, executive orders, press releases, news articles, and trackers from the [Hunt Institute](#), the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) and the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. Commitments were included in the tracker if states listed a specific allocation amount or used substantive, binding language in describing planned projects and expenditures. Although several states detailed ongoing work related to CTE in their plans, commitments were only included in the tracker if they represented a new allocation or planned investment in CTE using federal relief funds. The stimulus funding sources reviewed include:

- The Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), which provides emergency funding for state, local and tribal governments under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act
- The Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, which provide emergency funding for state, local and tribal governments under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act
- The Education Stabilization Fund, including:
  - The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, which provides funding for K-12 schools and state education agencies under the CARES Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the ARP Act
  - The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), which provides funding directly to institutions of higher education under the CARES Act, the CRRSAA, and the ARP Act
  - The Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, which provides discretionary funding for state governors to use for purposes related to education under the CARES Act and the CRRSAA

## Top Three Key Policy Trends

1. Equity & Access
2. Industry-Recognized Credentials
3. Industry Partnerships/Work-Based Learning

<b>Spending Category</b>	<b># of Commitments</b>	<b>States that Made Commitments in this Category</b>
<p>Equity &amp; Access</p> <p>Spending addresses access to CTE as well as strategies that support success within CTE for specific populations.</p>	36	AR, AZ, CO, CT, DE, IN, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MO, MS, MT, NC, NE, NH, NM, OH, OR, PA, PR, RI, SD, TX, WA (26)
<p>Industry-Recognized Credentials</p> <p>Spending addresses attainment of credentials recognized by industry, including micro-credentials and educational degrees.</p>	30	AR, CO, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IN, LA, ME, MO, MA, MD, MT, NC, OH, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT (23)
<p>Industry Partnerships/Work-based Learning</p> <p>Spending addresses engaging industry to drive student learning through work-based learning or other means.</p>	27	AR, CO, CT, DE, GA, IA, IN, LA, MA, MD, ME, MO, MT, NH, NM, OH, OR, RI, TN (19)
<p>Virtual Learning</p> <p>Spending addresses digitization of CTE programs, including expenditures on software and virtual curriculum materials.</p>	19	AR, AZ, CO, DE, LA, MA, MD, MS, MT, PA, PR, RI, SD, TN, WA (15)
<p>Career/Academic Counseling</p> <p>Spending addresses the number or availability of school counselors or career advisers providing academic and/or career guidance.</p>	17	AZ, CT, HI, IN, ME, NC, NE, OH, OR, SC, TN, TX (12)

## Equity & Access

Twenty-five states and Puerto Rico made 36 relief funding commitments related to equity and access in CTE and workforce development. The majority of these commitments primarily impacted postsecondary and adult learners. At the secondary level, commitments tended to focus on career pathways and summer and after-school CTE opportunities. At the postsecondary and adult level, commitments typically emphasized financial aid, learner

re-engagement, expanded program delivery models such as virtual learning, and expanding access to CTE for displaced workers.

**Michigan** committed \$24 million in [GEER dollars](#) to create the Future for Frontliners program, which offers tuition-free community college for 625,000 frontline workers in essential industries who worked during coronavirus social distancing orders between April and June of 2020.

**Washington** made a \$5 million [ESSER allocation](#) to establish Regional Equity Labs, which will appoint CTE/Nontraditional Education Equity Ambassadors in K-12 schools to address perceptions of CTE and other nontraditional education programs. These labs will also facilitate an Equity in CTE and Nontraditional Education Grant Program to address gaps in CTE enrollment and performance for “students furthest from educational justice.”

Three states made ESSER investments to expand virtual CTE program delivery models and other remote learning opportunities (also covered under the Virtual Learning category).

**Arkansas** committed almost [\\$4 million](#) on digital CTE courses and work-based learning simulation, remote engagement with industry professionals, access to digital curriculum for Career Clusters<sup>®</sup> and resources for industry certification assessments. **Rhode Island** allocated [\\$3 million](#) to expand summer learning courses through the state’s [All-Course Network](#) free online platform. **Delaware** committed [\\$500,000](#) to transition existing credential and apprenticeship programs to an online format.

## Industry-Recognized Credentials

Twenty-three states made 30 relief funding commitments promoting the attainment of industry-recognized credentials, primarily at the postsecondary level. Only six of these commitments were exclusively geared toward secondary learners. Commitments generally emphasized creating new credential programs, expanding the capacity of existing programs, aligning credential programs to industry needs and expanding learner access to programs through financial aid or additional resources for certification assessment.

**Florida** made a \$35 million [GEER allocation](#) to expand and improve short-term programs leading to in-demand technical certificates, career certificates and industry-recognized certifications through a partnership between the Florida Department of Education and state and technical colleges.

**Texas** also used [GEER](#) to fund \$25 million in [Texas Reskilling and Upskilling for Education \(TRUE\)](#) Institutional Capacity Grants, dedicated to community, state and technical colleges to support efforts to create, expand or redesign high-value postsecondary workforce credential programs.

**North Carolina** allocated \$15 million in [GEER funds](#) for the NC Community College System to provide tuition assistance to students enrolled in short-term workforce training programs leading to a state or industry-recognized credential in a high-demand field.

## Industry Partnerships & Work-Based Learning

Finally, 19 states made 27 commitments for industry partnership and work-based learning initiatives. Unlike the other spending categories, the majority of commitments made in this category impacted secondary learners in some way, whereas only about a quarter of commitments were explicitly geared toward postsecondary and adult learners. At the secondary level, areas of emphasis included career pathways, connecting learners to employers and summer and after-school applied learning opportunities. At the postsecondary and adult level, commitments focused on expanding employer-run job training programs and apprenticeships.

**Indiana** committed nearly \$20 million in [CRF dollars](#) to expand the state's Employer Training Grant, which provides employers with funding to train new employees and up-skill or re-skill workers. The investment temporarily doubles the maximum amount of available funding per employer and allocates \$5 million for "minority-, women-, and veteran-owned businesses."

**Iowa** made a \$10 million [CRF allocation](#) to create two employer-driven, "earn and learn" Registered Apprenticeship grant opportunities for high schools, postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, small businesses and healthcare employers.

**Delaware** invested \$8.3 million in [ARP state fiscal recovery funds](#) to expand the Delaware Pathways program, which provides rigorous, industry-aligned career pathway opportunities for high school learners. Support is targeted for workforce development and "earn and learn" apprenticeship programs in high-growth, high-wage target industries.

## Spotlight on Delivery Systems

While substantial relief has been provided to community colleges and four-year colleges and universities, area technical centers (ATCs) have been less of a focus in state relief fund spending. When funding goes directly to local education agencies to allocate, ATCs may be left out. Eleven states, however, have made funding for ATCs a priority in relief funding allocations: Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont and Washington. These states have used relief funding to expand ATC programming or support technical centers in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic.

**North Dakota** committed \$70 million in [ESSER funds](#) for an area career initiative grant program supporting the construction or expansion of "career and technology education centers" in the state. The program requires dollar-for-dollar matching from grant recipients and prioritizes school districts collaborating with other districts for a regional facility, as well as districts that will leverage funds to enhance the impact of an existing facility in its region.

**Pennsylvania** allocated \$43.5 million in [ESSER dollars](#), as well as \$20 million in [GEER funding](#), for state Career and Technical Centers (CTCs). The state also provided \$10.5 million in GEER Fund ["equity grants"](#) to promote continuity of education and industry credentialing services for CTC learners impacted by the pandemic.

Another institution left out of many relief funding initiatives are middle schools – only nine states explicitly targeted middle grades in CTE-related commitments: Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Ohio, Oregon, New Mexico and Rhode Island. These initiatives focused on upgrading CTE labs, strengthening career exploration and advising opportunities and expanding CTE-related summer learning opportunities for middle school learners. For secondary learners as a whole, commitments typically fell in the categories of industry partnerships/work-based learning and career/academic counseling. Ultimately, states disproportionately prioritized CTE opportunities for postsecondary and adult learners in all other categories.

## Challenges and Missed Opportunities

Despite all the good work being done, there were various challenges and missed opportunities in stimulus spending for CTE. States disproportionately prioritized short-term postsecondary education and workforce development initiatives over secondary opportunities and long-term talent pipeline management. ESSER funds in particular could have been used for middle grades CTE and career exploration and advising; however, many states did not even mention CTE in their ESSER plans.

Additionally, there has been a lack of investment in addressing the significant educator shortages that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. While several states mentioned these shortages in their state plans, most funding allocated for instructors focused on building institutional capacity to hire new staff and offer professional development, instead of addressing the shortage of qualified educators. Only a few states took a longer-term approach to strengthening teacher pipelines and creating pathways for future teachers using relief dollars. For example, **Indiana** will be using [ESSER funds](#) to create grow-your-own “teacher cadet” programs targeted at attracting underrepresented candidates into the teaching profession while still in high school. More initiatives like this would have been particularly impactful.

From what we have learned in Stimulus to Systems scoping interviews with State CTE Directors, it seems that many of these challenges come from the short deadline for submitting stimulus plans to the federal government. Many states don’t feel that they have enough time to collaborate across state agencies and engage stakeholders. If states did not already have the infrastructure and partnerships in place to facilitate rapid cooperation, they found it much more difficult to gather input from various stakeholders in time to meet deadlines. This ultimately obstructed long-term strategizing and innovation.

Also in these interviews, State Directors highlighted challenges that persist in rural areas. Learners in remote and underserved regions often lack CTE opportunities, and there is a continuing need for more intentional programming and support for these populations. Finally, several State Directors identified work-based learning and career advising as two key priorities in mitigating the long-term impacts of the pandemic on learner preparation and engagement. These will be especially important to ensure that all learners have the experience and supports they need to succeed.