

Updated March 9, 2026

Frequently Asked Questions

Iowa's Unified Allocation Plan

A. Introduction

A-1. What are the benefits of Iowa's Unified Allocation Plan (UAP)?

Iowa's Unified Allocation Plan was approved by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education on January 7, 2026. The Iowa Unified Allocation Plan will allow Iowa to: (1) Align ESEA programs to Iowa's state and local education priorities; (2) Redirect federal resources from administrative compliance to direct support for students and classrooms; (3) Bolster school improvement efforts informed by accountability and assessment; (4) Support school districts' focus on best serving students most in need of support.

A-2. What are the components of Iowa's UAP?

Iowa's UAP consists of three key components. First, it operates a block grant for federal state-level ESEA funds, including Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction); Title III, Part A (English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement); Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment); and Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers), allowing the state to manage these funds more efficiently. Second, it provides targeted local flexibilities for school districts, giving them greater control in addressing their specific needs. Third, it advances modernized reporting and administrative alignment, helping streamline processes and improve overall effectiveness in education funding and oversight.

A-3. How will the Iowa Department of Education (Department) operate a block grant with ESEA state-level funds?

The Department will operate a block grant for 100% of ESEA federal state-level funds. This approach consolidates state activity funds from four ESEA programs: Title II, Part A (Supporting Effective Instruction and Professional Development); Title III, Part A (English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement); Title IV, Part A (Student Support and Academic Enrichment); and Title IV, Part B (21st Century Community Learning Centers). By combining these funds, the Department can manage resources more efficiently and strategically to support statewide educational priorities.

A-4. Does the block grant affect local education agency (LEA) allocations?

The block grant only applies to state-level funds and does not affect local education agency (LEA) allocations for any applicable ESEA program.

A-5. How will the Department evaluate the success of the Unified Allocation?

The Department will take a data-driven approach to evaluating the success of the Unified Allocation Plan, with a focus on improving student achievement and growth. To ensure accountability, the Department has established a robust monitoring system that tracks key performance indicators across ESEA programs, uses multiple statewide data systems (CASA, SRI, BEDS, and EdInsight)

and conducts regular reviews to guide adjustments. Ongoing feedback from districts will also inform continuous improvement.

A-6. How will the Department provide technical assistance to LEAs with implementation of the UAP?

The Department will provide technical assistance for the UAP through guidance documents, webinars, and one-on-one consultations. These supports will help districts understand requirements, access resources and effectively implement programs to meet student needs.

A-7. Does the UAP apply to charter schools?

Charter schools are eligible to apply for the approved Ed-Flex waiver.

A-8. Whom do I contact with questions about the UAP?

For questions, please contact Bureau Chief Jillian Dotson at jillian.dotson@iowa.gov.

B. Ed-Flex Waiver

B-1. What is the Ed-Flex Program?

Ed-Flex is a program that allows the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education to delegate to State educational agencies (SEAs) the authority to waive statutory or regulatory education requirements that may, in particular instances, impede local efforts to reform and improve education. It is designed to help LEAs, educational service agencies (ESAs) and schools carry out educational reforms and raise the achievement levels of all children by providing increased flexibility in the implementation of Federal education programs

B-2. What programs are included in Iowa’s Ed-Flex Waiver?

In January 2026, the United States Department of Education approved the Iowa Department of Education’s request for targeted local flexibilities, allowing the Department to consider and approve subgrantees’ requests for the following programs:

Title I, Part A

- Waives the 15% carryover limitation (once every three years)
- Allows 0–100% carryover annually for SEA-approved, evidence-based supports

Title I, Part D

- Allows subgrantees to reserve more than 30% for transition services
- Permits up to 100% of funds for transition services for justice-connected youth (with approval)

Title IV, Part A

- Waives spending limitation requirements under ESEA section 4106(e)(2)(C)–(E)

B-3. How does an LEA apply for an Ed Flex waiver?

Any LEA that would like to request an Ed-Flex waiver will need to complete the Ed-Flex Waiver Request Form that is available in the Consolidated Application 2025–26 Dashboard. The deadline for requesting a waiver is April 15, 2026.

B-4. What information must an LEA or school provide its SEA when requesting a waiver?

An LEA, ESA, or school requesting a waiver must provide its SEA with an application that:

- Indicates each Federal program that would be affected and each statutory or regulatory requirement that would be waived;
- Describes the purposes and overall expected results of waiving each requirement;
- Describes, for each school year, specific, measurable educational goals for each LEA, ESA or school affected by the proposed waiver and for the students served by the LEA, ESA or school who are affected by the waiver;
- Explains why the waiver will assist the LEA, ESA or school in reaching these goals;
- In the case of an application from an LEA or ESA, describes how the notice and comment requirements in 20 U.S.C. § 5891b(a)(7) have been met.

Please note, the application may also contain additional information that the SEA reasonably requires (20 U.S.C. § 5891b(a)(4)(A)). In addition, all subgrantees applying for an Ed-Flex waiver must follow the requirements outlined in 20 U.S.C. § 5891b(a)(7).

B-5. What are the public comment requirements for LEAs seeking an Ed-Flex Waiver?

In accordance with federal requirements (20 U.S.C. § 5891b(a)(7)), subgrantees seeking an Ed-Flex waiver must:

- Provide the public with adequate notice of the proposed waiver, including a description of any improved student performance that is expected to result from the waiver, in a widely read or distributed medium;
- Provide the opportunity for parents, educators and all other interested members of the community to comment on the proposed waiver;
- Provide the opportunity for the comments to be reviewed by any member of the public; and
- Submit the comments received with the agency’s application to the Department, if requested.

B-6. How will LEAs receive notification of the waiver’s approval?

LEAs will receive notification regarding the approval status of requested waiver(s) through the CASA system.

C. Equitable Services

C-1. How do nonpublic schools benefit from the UAP?

The Iowa Unified Allocation Plan (UAP) benefits nonpublic schools by improving access to services; supports high-quality, evidence-based professional learning for staff; provides flexibility to better meet student needs and requires meaningful consultation between school districts and nonpublic schools to ensure effective, equitable and efficient use of funds.

C-2. What is the equitable services third-party provider voluntary opt-in model?

In this model:

- The Department issues and manages a master services 's master services agreement
- LEAs may voluntarily opt in by signing a participation agreement
- Vendor provides a menu of services with established rates
- LEAs select services and work directly with the vendor
- LEAs pay the vendor and submit reimbursement through regular ESEA claims

C-3. When will the equitable services third-party provider opt-in be available?

The RFP process will be complete and the vendor will be selected by July 1, 2026.

C-4. Can an LEA that has already completed the nonpublic consultation agreement for the 2026-2027 school year still choose to opt-in to the equitable services third-party provider?

Yes, in meaningful consultation with the nonpublic school(s), LEAs can modify the nonpublic consultation agreements until October 15, 2026.

C-5. Can a nonpublic school apply for the Ed-Flex waiver?

No, a nonpublic school is not eligible to request an Ed-Flex waiver because it does not directly receive ESEA funds and only benefits from equitable services.