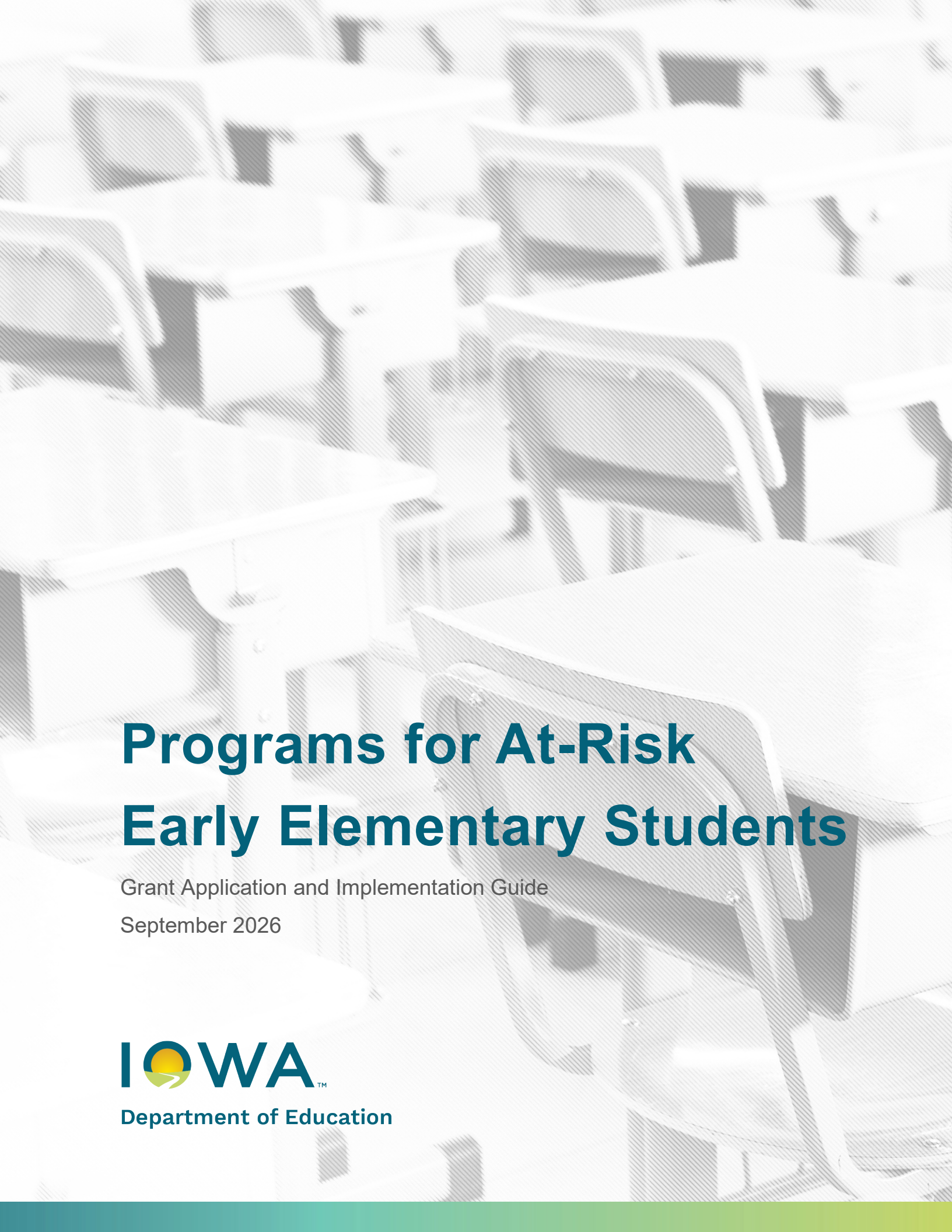


Programs for At-Risk Early Elementary Students

Grant Application and Implementation Guide

September 2026

IOWA™

Department of Education

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General Provisions

The Programs for At-Risk Early Elementary Students is a grant made available to eligible Iowa public elementary schools in a year in which funds are made available by the Iowa legislature. The grant provides funds to assist schools in addressing the needs of kindergarten through third-grade students who are at-risk of educational failure.

Funds are awarded to elementary schools with a high percentage of low-income families in grades K-3 as reported on the previous year's fall certified enrollment report (SRI). Elementary schools notified by the Iowa Department of Education are eligible to participate.

Funds can be used to pay for expenditures designed to improve academic achievement and to "provide activities and materials designed to encourage children's self-esteem, provide role modeling and mentoring techniques in social competence and social skills, and discourage inappropriate drug use" (Iowa Code § 279.51). Funds must be used to supplement, not supplant, funds that would otherwise be used for the activities supported by the program. Refer to Appendix A and the administrative rules for additional information on allowable expenditures.

Funds are awarded to buildings for a 3-year cycle, with annual renewal for the next two consecutive years contingent upon legislative appropriation and the grantee meeting the minimum requirements as set forth in administrative rule. Grantees will submit an initial report (including budget) and an annual progress report for each of the three years of the grant cycle.

The purpose of this guide is to assist grantees in understanding, administering, and implementing the Programs for At-Risk Early Elementary Students grant. Please review this guide in its entirety before beginning your application.

Project Design Considerations

Design

When you accept a grant award, you accept responsibilities involving the management and administration of programmatic, financial, and reporting aspects of the grant project. A well-developed project plan will help ensure the success of the grant project and represent a valid commitment by you to use public resources appropriately.

Successful project design answers the questions: Why, Who, What, When, Where, and How. A good place to start is by defining your target population and specifying the clear and concise outcomes you want to achieve. Lay out your short- and long-term project goals (specific desired results), strategies (specific methodologies), and objectives (measurable achievements).

In designing your project, keep in mind that you will receive funds to carry out the project over the course of three years (contingent upon meeting the requirements set forth in administrative rule) and that you will be expected to show positive student growth in your identified area of need each year.

Changing needs or circumstances within your school and/or project activities that are not resulting in positive student growth may necessitate a revision to your project design. Revisions must adhere to the general guidelines of the grant program. Significant revisions will be reported to the Department in either the annual progress report or in the subsequent year's initial project description report.

Evaluation

Project evaluation is an important component of your approved project. Not only does the evaluation help determine whether the project is meeting its objectives, but the data gathered in the evaluation process may be important to others who will want to study the project or replicate it.

Progress reports have the following purposes: 1) to determine if the grantee has implemented the project as agreed; 2) to determine if the grantee is making progress towards meeting its goals; 3) to determine if the activities performed by the grantee are linked to the specific outcomes of the project; 4) to allow the grantee to present information on any problems encountered in implementing the project; and 5) to allow the grantee to revise, with Department concurrence, the project design.

After the grant notification is received, it is important for the grantee to 1) review the project objectives, activities, and outcomes, 2) develop a preliminary list of baseline data, and 3) identify possible assessment instruments needed to measure various aspects of the project's progress and success.

Progress reports will be submitted to the Department annually.

Budget

This grant has an annual award life-cycle of twelve months and must be fully expended by June 30 of the respective state fiscal year of the award.

Grant expenditures must integrate with and support the school's project and have a direct impact on student learning. The school's Grant Manager, in coordination with the district business office, is responsible for monitoring all project expenditures to ensure that funds are expended in accordance with the approved budget and the grant project timeline.

The expectation is that 100% of grant funds will be used by the end of the grant period. To ensure proper spending, a good rule of thumb is to spend approximately 25% of the funds each quarter. The Grant Manager, in coordination with the district business office, should review grant activity on a monthly basis to ensure that expenses are appropriately charged to the budget and that no costs have been erroneously posted to the grant account. Avoid making unusual expenditures at the end of the project, as this can call into question the legitimate need for the purchase for achieving project activities.

Awards funded under this program must adhere to applicable accounting principles and governmental auditing standards and must be used solely for the approved project and not for any other purpose.

A grantee must maintain effective control and accountability for all funds, property, and other assets and must adequately safeguard all assets and ensure they are used only for grant-authorized purposes. The local board of education is responsible for the proper disbursement and accounting of project funds. Written district policy concerning wages, mileage and travel allowances, overtime compensation, or fringe benefits, as well as State rules pertaining to competitive bidding, safety regulations, inventory control, and out-of-state travel must be followed. Supporting or source documents are required for all grant-related transactions entered into the district's recordkeeping system. Source documents that authorize the disbursement of grant funds consist of purchase orders, contracts, time and effort records, delivery receipts, vendor invoices, travel documentation, and payment documents, including check stubs.

To be considered allowable for reimbursement, costs must meet the following general criteria: 1) be necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient operation of the project; 2) be permissible under applicable state and/or federal laws and regulations; 3) conform to any limitations or exclusions set forth in these guidelines, laws or regulations, or other governing limitations as to types or amounts of cost items; 4) be net after applying all applicable credits, such as purchase discounts, project-generated income, and adjustments of overpayments; 5) must not be included as a cost in any other project or grant; and 6) be supported by appropriate documentation.

Records Retention: Supporting documentation for this grant must be kept for at least six years after the last payment was made unless otherwise specified by program requirements. Additionally, audit or litigation will "freeze the clock" for records retention purposes until the issue is resolved. All records and documentation must be available for inspection by Department officials or their representatives.

Grant Award Agreement

The approved Grant Application in CASA serves as the Grant Award Agreement (GAA) between the Department and the grantee. By accepting the grant award, the grantee agrees to comply with the program objectives and fiscal requirements in accordance with the executed GAA.

Non-Compliance/Termination

The Department will impose sanctions in the event of noncompliance or violation of any grant provision by the grantee. Appropriate sanctions may include, but are not limited to, withholding payments, suspension, or termination of a portion or the entire grant. The Department will provide 10 days' notice to the grantee if the grant is terminated for "convenience," as outlined in the "Statement of Assurances." Grants terminated for "cause" will take effect immediately, per 281 IAC 65. If the grant is terminated, the grantee will be paid only for activities/services allowable under the grant contract that were completed prior to the effective termination date.

Project Monitoring

Project monitoring is designed to be instructive, not disruptive, and to foster information exchange and partnership. The Department monitors each project to ensure the grantee is operating the project as agreed upon, is working towards its objectives, and is following appropriate fiscal procedures. During the grant award period, monitoring may include review of project and fiscal records and communication with project stakeholders, project participants, and/or any staff directly or indirectly involved in the performance of the project. Project monitoring is intended to verify compliance with grant and fiscal requirements, provide technical assistance, offer program development and design information, and observe program activities. Statewide leadership teams will review the end-of-year report and provide appropriate feedback to the grantee.

Department Contact Information

Contact April Gosselink-Lemke at april.gosselink-lemke@iowa.gov or 515-971-0469 regarding the initial project, end-of-year progress reports, fiscal claims, and other questions about CASA.

Managing Your Project through CASA

Application and reporting forms can be found by logging into your EdPortal account. Locate the folder entitled "K-3 At-Risk Grant", and then access the appropriate subfolder, "K-3 At-Risk Building Grant Application" or K-3 At-Risk LEA Grant Application". As a general rule, you will click on the words or phrases formatted in "blue" to access an area, a sub-area, or to perform a task (i.e., to sort, print, add, delete, edit, or save). Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required fields.

K-3 At-Risk Grant Application

Initiate Your Project Application

Sign in to your EdPortal account. Access the folder entitled "K-3 At-Risk Grants" and completed all fields. Please note that if you choose not to accept the allocation, you will be declining access to grant funding for all three years of the grant lifecycle.

Project Description

The **Project Description** provides an opportunity to explain how you plan to use the awarded funds. In this section, you will answer a series of questions about your planned activities and identify the goals you hope to achieve through the project.

Statement of Assurances

The **Statement of Assurance** is the agreement between the Department and the grantee that binds the grantee to comply with all applicable State and Federal regulations governing the financial assistance award granted to them.

- Click yes on each statement of assurances.

Program Budget

The **Program Budget** serves as your spending plan and should cover all anticipated project costs. Describe in detail what you intend to purchase (e.g., type and purpose of instructional materials and services, position descriptions and # FTE for building staff, etc.) and how each respective purchase relates to your proposed project goals.

Refer to Appendix A for further information on expenditure categories.

Uploads and Attachments

Supporting data charts and/or graphs, research documents, and any other pertinent information supporting your project design or budget may be attached in the **Uploads and Attachments** section. This is option and is not required to submit your application.

- Upload any additional attachment needed to support your application.

Submit Your Application

Due Date: Sept. 30, 2026

Project Evaluation

Grantees will submit **one project evaluation** at the end of the school or grant year. Statewide leadership teams will review the end-of-year report and provide appropriate feedback to the grantee.

End-of-Year Assessment and Evaluation Report

The end-of-year assessment and evaluation report informs the Department about the effectiveness of your project design in achieving the objectives outlined in your initial application, and it provides us with specific student and staff demographic data.

Due Date: July 10, 2027

Reimbursement Claims and Budget Amendment Requests

This grant operates on the accrual basis of accounting, i.e., any expense you incur on or before June 30, irrespective of the date of payment, can be submitted for reimbursement for the grant year.

The Department reimburses actual and allowable expenditures for goods and services incurred during the grant period. To receive reimbursement of authorized expenditures, a grantee must submit a Claim for Reimbursement via CASA. Grantees must maintain records identifying the source and application of funds for each budget line item. Only items listed in the approved grant are eligible for reimbursement.

Claims must be submitted at least annually, by June 30, unless an alternative schedule is mutually agreed upon. Grantees are required to submit a claim for each reporting period, even if no costs were incurred (a zero-dollar claim) or no grant-related activities took place during that period.

Refer to Appendix A for additional information.

Annual Claim

Submit Your Claim Form

- All claims are submitted in CASA, including ledgers to support the expenses.

Due Date: Claims shall be submitted by July 10 for the period ending June 30.

Budget Amendment Request

Budget revisions may be necessary to meet the changing needs or circumstances of your project. If you anticipate that expenditures (by General Category) will exceed your current budget amount by more than 10% you **must** file a **Contract Amendment** request. All proposed budget revisions must be approved by the Department **prior** to implementing the change or making a commitment to expend funds. The date of receipt of an amendment request is the earliest possible funding date for encumbrances based on that amendment. Amendments may not be submitted after the grant's end date. Once approved, an amendment replaces that portion of the approved grant agreement and becomes the agreement between the school and the Department.

- Contact April Gosselink-Lemke at april.gosselink-lemke@iowa.gov for any budget amendment requests.

Justification: Describe in detail the reason for the request. Include a detailed description of what you plan to purchase and explain how each purchase relates to your project goals.

Appendix A: Budget and Accounting Guidelines

General Guidelines

The Programs for Early Elementary At-Risk Students grant is considered a categorical grant as defined by 281 IAC 98. Project budgets are subject to approval by the Department and are based on the availability of funding.

Grant funds are allocated based on the state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Annual allocations must be fully expended by June 30 of the respective fiscal year of the award. Funds not fully expended by June 30 of the grant year do not carry over to the next fiscal year.

Expenditures must integrate with and support the school's project and have a direct impact on student learning. All anticipated expenditures should be accounted for on the grant application budget page.

Line item budget revisions that exceed 10% must be approved by the Department (281 IAC 65).

Moneys received for this grant are subject to the General Provisions (Division I) of 281 IAC 98, Financial Management of Categorical Funding, and shall only be used to pay the direct costs of providing the school's project. Grant award moneys may not be used to pay for costs that are allocated costs or that are considered indirect costs or overhead.

Definitions

Administrative Costs

Administrative costs are those additional direct costs that the school may incur as a result of this project. In order for the cost of administration be considered an additional direct cost, “the costs must be necessary because of something that is unique to the project that is causing the need for the service, not otherwise needed or not otherwise provided to similar programs; the cost must be in addition to costs which are normally otherwise incurred; and the costs must be measurable directly without allocating” (281 IAC 98.2(5)).

Capital Outlay (Equipment)

Capital Outlay means the purchase of transportable, non-consumable items that meet the Iowa Uniform Financial Accounting definition of “Equipment” and that cost $500 or more per unit.

Equipment purchased with grant funds must integrate with and support the project, have a direct impact on student learning, and be used for the children and staff served at this grant school.

Fiscal Year

Grant funds are awarded based on the state fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). Annual grant awards must be fully expended by June 30 of the respective fiscal year of the award.

The state fiscal year for this grant is July 1 through June 30.

Instructional Materials and Supplies

Instructional materials and supplies are items used by students in the instructional process and may include such items as consumable supplies, software, textbooks, workbooks, library books and periodicals, or other similar instructional materials.

Parent Involvement Activities

List all costs related to activities designed to increase parent engagement (training, communications, school volunteers, home instruction, and parent nights) in this category.

Grant funds may be used to provide food or non-alcoholic beverages for students, staff, or parents, provided there is no local policy prohibiting these costs. Food and beverage costs must be for critical activities or functions related to the actions and goals of the project.

Salaries, Wages, and Benefits

List the salaries and wages for all personnel providing direct services for the grant project. For each position, provide the FTE of the position, the BOEE licensing status of the position (if applicable), and the anticipated percent of time the individual(s) will be assigned directly to the project. Costs must be prorated for employees who are assigned to the grant project on a part-time basis.

List the proportionate share of employee benefits for all personnel providing direct services to the grant project. Employee benefits include: employer share of FICA, retirement, health, dental, vision, life, and long-term disability insurance.

Staff Development and Training

Staff development training must be specifically identified. Staff training or development costs shall be used to support the research and staff development related to this grant. Include the cost of substitute personnel, travel, and any materials, books, or periodicals related to the training in this section.

Student Activities

List all costs related to student non-classroom activities here. Grant funds may be used to provide food or non-alcoholic beverages for students, staff, or parents, provided there is no local policy prohibiting these costs. Food and beverage costs must be for critical activities or functions related to the actions and goals of the project.

Supplement Not Supplant

“Supplement, not supplant” means that the categorical funding shall be in addition to general purpose revenues; that categorical funding shall not be used to provide services required by federal or state law, administrative rule, or local policy; and that general purpose revenues shall not be diverted for other purposes because of the availability of categorical funding. Supplanting is presumed to have occurred if the school district or area education agency uses categorical funding to provide services that it was required to make available under other categorical funding or law, or uses categorical funding to provide services that it provided in prior years from general purpose revenues, or uses categorical funding to provide services to a particular group of children or programs for which it uses general purpose revenues to provide the same or similar services to other groups of children or programs.

These presumptions are rebuttable if the school district or area education agency can demonstrate that it would not have provided the services in question with general purpose revenues if the categorical funding had not been available” (281 IAC 98.1).

Uniform Financial Accounting

Grant expenditures shall be classified in accordance with the Iowa Uniform Financial Accounting. The Source and Project code for this Award is “3234.”

Unallowed Costs

Grant funds may not be used for facility construction, remodeling, or renovation; upgrades to or maintenance of buildings; incidental or non-instructional supplies or materials; computer hardware or software for staff; technology infrastructure; technology set-up fees; gifts or monetary awards of any kind; stipends to students or parents/guardians for attendance at grant related activities; the cost of office furniture; salaries and employee benefits for any staff that do not directly support grant activities as described in the school’s approved plan; professional dues, memberships, or contributions; legal or audit expenses; instructional or other services the district is otherwise required to provide; indirect costs; or any other costs not directly related to project activities, functions, or anticipated outcome.