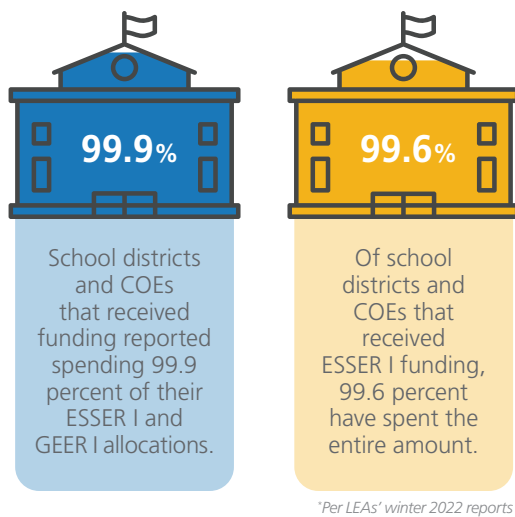


Progress in statewide spending

School districts and COEs have now spent nearly all of their earliest federal COVID emergency aid allocations.



Statewide, district and COE spending progress with ESSER II and ESSER III across the last two reporting periods is similar. Notably, ESSER III is separated into two reporting codes because at least 20 percent of an LEA's ESSER III allocation must be spent on addressing the academic impact of lost instructional time.



Reported uses of federal emergency funding

As the pandemic progressed and circumstances changed, so did the spending needs of LEAs. Thus, there have been changes in spending patterns over time in all the funding packages, though most spending categories remained relatively constant over the past spending periods.

One of the more noteworthy jumps in spending came with the ESSER III fund that must be used for addressing the academic impacts of lost instructional time. Tutoring and mental health expenses significantly increased over the past two spending periods. Below are other notable changes in that package:

	Sept. 2022	Dec. 2022
Summer learning	35%	13%
Extended days	9%	2%
Tutoring	3%	28%
Mental Health	11%	16%
Other evidenced-based interventions	34%	45%

LEAs are given a limited number of allowable categories to report their spending. The ESSER fund has 16 categories and the GEER fund has 10. Some categories are specific, while others are broader to give LEAs flexibility in addressing changing conditions.

- ▶ In the ESSER II and ESSER III winter 2022 reports, school districts and COEs coded 18-26 percent of their spending in the broader "other activities necessary to maintain the operation and continuity of services in LEAs" or "resources for schools" categories.





What does this mean for local governance teams?

While statewide data is essential in considering broader state trends, spending progress and the quality of investments within a district and COE is the most important consideration for its board members. Board members should continually monitor the progress of federal COVID aid and its effectiveness in addressing local needs. This continuous evaluation should be done using active communication with local communities to enhance opportunities for input, trust and transparency.

Key questions board members should consider when evaluating local federal relief spending:

- 1) What are the various COVID relief aid deadlines, and is my LEA on track to reserve or spend down funding in time?
- 2) What has my LEA identified as its greatest needs for COVID relief dollars, and are those priorities reflected in my LEA's spending?
- 3) Are my LEA's programs that are funded by federal COVID relief dollars making the intended impact, or should they be reconsidered? How is my LEA evaluating the impact of related programs?
- 4) In what ways have COVID relief dollars been used to assist students that were most disadvantaged by the pandemic? Are there additional supports for these students that we can provide with the remaining COVID relief funding?

For a deeper dive into the winter 2022 federal COVID funding report, see the March 2023 blog at blog.csba.org/covid-relief-update2/. For additional research and information on California COVID relief spending, go to csba.org/COVID_Relief_Spending.

Jeremy Anderson, Ph.D., is an education policy analyst for the California School Boards Association.