# **RFP FOR INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL SOLUTIONS**

**Overview**

The purpose of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Education Stabilization Fund, under which the Governor’s Emergency Education Response (GEER) Fund program is authorized, is to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the novel coronavirus. The GEER Fund program aims to address the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had, and continues to have, on students and parents across the nation. The U.S. Department of Education awarded GEER Funds by formula to the nation’s Governors. Mississippi received an allocation of $34,662,872.

In early October, the Governor released $5,499,778.92 in funds for the first round of proposals providing **Essential Emergency Educational Services**. This second-round RFP will address **Innovative Educational Solutions** to the novel coronavirus.

Below are the Governor’s priorities for Innovative Educational Solutions. Applicants may respond to one or both of the Governor’s priorities. Please read the descriptions of each priority carefully.

**Priorities**

***Innovative Educational Solutions Priority 1: Social and Emotional Support***

Under this priority, the Governor invites proposals from local educational agencies (LEAs), public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), or education-related entities to address one of the following priority tasks related to social and emotional support:

**Priority Task 1.1** Provide or implement research-based programming or curriculum for students that include empirically measurable components to LEAs or education-related entities.

**Priority Task 1.2:**  Provide focused social and emotional learning support services focused on at-risk groups, such as those students diagnosed with developmental delays including autism and dyslexia.

**Priority Task 1.3**: Provide telehealth and teletherapy services to address student mental health issues at all levels of education, including providing the platform or application through which professionals may provide telehealth or teletherapy services.

***Innovative Educational Solutions Priority 2: Online Learning***

Under this priority, the Governor invites proposals from local educational agencies (LEAs), public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), or education-related entities to address one of the following priority tasks related to online learning:

**Priority Task 2.1**: Leverage K-12 student access to devices provided through “Mississippi Connects” or other K-12 funding sources to include but not necessarily be limited to one or more of the following:

* Address existing statewide teacher shortages exacerbated by the pandemic;
* Address learning loss created or exacerbated by the pandemic;
* Increase in different styles of learning; and/or
* Implement any other innovative practice made possible by 1:1 student access to technology on a local, regional, or state basis, provided that such practice prevents, prepares for, or responds to the pandemic.

**Priority Task 2.2**: Provide or implement high-quality digital instructional materials and academic resources, especially in the areas of literacy and numeracy, for schools implementing online learning at the elementary and secondary level.

**Priority Task 2.3**: Provide or implement high-quality training for students, parents, and/or educators to support effective online learning.

**Priority Task 2.4:** Support the credentialing of teachers in online learning through an approved Educator Preparation Program.

**Priority Task 2.5**: Use rapid credentialing to re-skill or re-train postsecondary workforce training programs persons who have experienced negative job impacts due to the pandemic.

**Priority Task 2.6:** Support or implement online learning in postsecondary workforce training programs and/or secondary Career and Technical Education through the utilization of innovative hardware and software, including, but not limited to, virtual reality equipment.

**Priority Task 2.7:** Expand awareness of and access to best practices and innovations in online learning in the pandemic context among local and state government decision-makers in order to increase the current and future use of such practices.

***Innovative Educational Solutions Priority 3: Return to In-Person Learning***

Under this priority, the Governor invites proposals from local educational agencies (LEAs), public and private institutions of higher education (IHEs), or education-related entities to address one of the following priority tasks related to a return to in-person learning:

**Priority Task 3.1:** Support the costs of adjusting class schedules to accommodate more in-person classes with appropriate social distancing at the postsecondary education level.

**Priority Task 3.2:** Purchase PPE and other mitigating supplies and resources to address the spread of the virus within schools or daycares as the academic year continues.

**Priority Task 3.3:** For IHEs, provide student financial aid, such as higher education grants and scholarships, to students most affected by the pandemic.

**Eligibility**

All applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements to be considered for a grant:

* Be an LEA, IHE, or education-related entity as defined by the GEER Fund statute.
* Be established in Mississippi or serving Mississippians prior to September 1, 2020.
* Be willing to comply by the assurances required for all funded providers.
* Continue to pay employees and contractors to the greatest extent practicable during the ongoing pandemic.
* Propose new, unique, or additional services not already supported by any CARES or other funding source.

For Priority 1 and Priority 2, applicants must additional meet the following requirements:

* Have a record of success in providing social and emotional services or supporting online learning.

**Funding**

Funding is not based on a formula for this RFP; however, costs should be reasonable in relation to the number of children impacted as well as the duration and type of services.

***General Funding Requirements***

* Budgets should align to the applicant’s plan. Funds should not be budgeted for activities not discussed in the plan nor should activities discussed in the plan not be reflected in the budget.
* The Budget Summary Table and the applicant’s budget narrative must align.
* Budgets must demonstrate that GEER dollars will support the services required as part of the applicable Priority Task. A GEER budget that proposes to spend funds only on indirect expenses or other costs that primarily benefit the entity rather than program recipients will not be funded.
* GEER funds need not be matched or supplemented, provided that the funds are enough to cover expenses.
* Budgets cannot exceed the expected revenue of the program. If only GEER funds will be used for the program, the expected revenue from GEER must meet or exceed the expected expenses. If the program requires other funding or will have non-GEER-funded seats or services, this funding should be listed as “Other Funding.”
* GEER funding cannot be used to fund the same services, hours, equipment, activities, etc., as costs paid for through CARES or another funding source. GEER funding must either be used for new or additional costs, rather than costs that already have a funding source.

***Allowable Costs***

Applicants must propose an allowable use of funds under the GEER Fund statute in order to maintain eligibility. Allowable uses of funds include the following:

* Salary and fringe for employees providing services or supporting programs in response to any Priority Task;
  + If administrators or executives are funded, they must be providing direct services to program recipients or supervising those providing services. The Governor will adhere to guidance about payments to administrators and executives found in the Notice Announcing Availability of Funds, V.1.d., from the U.S. Secretary of Education.
* Hiring additional staff to provide services or support programs in response to any Priority Task;
* Conducting program activities aligned to this application;
* Purchasing equipment and supplies for program activities aligned to this application;
* Purchasing additional PPE for employees providing services or for program recipients in response to any Priority Task;
* Purchasing supplies or procuring contractors to sanitize and clean the facilities where programs operate in response to any Priority Task;
* Providing or procuring training and professional development for employees or contractors providing services to program recipients; and
* Indirect costs, up to 15% of total costs.

***Unallowable Costs***

Applicants may not spend funds on costs unallowable under the GEER Fund statute or any of the following:

* Costs associated with writing the application;
* Transportation;
* Entertainment;
* Land acquisition;
* Capital improvements/permanent renovations not required to maintain licensing requirements;
* Tuition for applicant staff to pursue degrees;
* Stationary playground equipment; or
* Travel.

**Definitions**

The GEER Fund legislation within the CARES Act defines several terms that are used throughout this section and the application. These terms and their definitions are

* *Local education agency*—A “local education agency” (LEA) is a local public school district, including a public charter school. All entities claiming to be LEAs must meet the definition of an LEA in Section 8101(30) of the ESEA.
* *Institution of higher education*—An “institution of higher education” (IHE) is an accredited post-secondary school recognized by both the State of Mississippi and the U.S. Department of Education. All entities claiming to be an IHE must meet the definition of an IHE in Sections 101 and 102 of the *Higher Education Act of 1965*, as amended.
* *Education-related entity*—An “education-related entity” is a governmental, non-profit or for-profit entity within the State that provides services that support preschool, elementary, secondary, or higher education. The U.S. Department of Education has provided further guidance listing the following entities as examples:
  + State agencies that oversee or directly provide early childhood education services;
  + Public agencies or private entities that coordinate or directly provide early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
  + State agencies that oversee or provide vocational rehabilitative services;
  + State mental health agencies;
  + State Higher Education Boards;
  + Education-related non-profit organizations;
  + Non-public elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools;
  + For-profit elementary, secondary and postsecondary schools;
  + Charter management organizations;
  + Non-profit and for-profit childcare centers;
  + Public libraries;
  + Community centers; and
  + State or local agencies coordinating food services for students and their families.

In addition to terms defined by GEER, the Governor also defines the following terms used throughout this section and application:

* *Community center*—public facilities offering programs to enhance community health, connectedness, and wellbeing; may be operated by a non-profit or a local government
* *Negative job impacts*—Negative consequences to a person’s job such as a reduction in hours, wages, promotion opportunities, or bonus opportunities, up to and including losing one’s job
* *Pending funding*—Funding that the applicant has applied for but does not know whether it will receive
* *Committed funding*—Funding that the applicant has been approved to receive, but has not yet received, in its bank account
* *Secured funding*—Funding that the applicant has received in its bank account

# **APPLICATION PROCESS**

**Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Date** |
| Proposal released | Monday, November 2, 2020 |
| Deadline for submitting RFP questions | Monday, November 9, 2020 |
| Intent to Submit form deadline | Monday, November 9, 2020 |
| Responses to questions posted | Thursday, November 12, 2020 |
| Proposals due | Friday, November 20, 2020 |
| Application review | November 23-25 & Nov 30 - Dec 2, 2020 |
| Notification of awards | Friday, December 4, 2020 |

**Questions**

Questions concerning the RFP should be sent to [GEER@govreeves.ms.gov](mailto:geer@govreeves.ms.gov).

The deadline for submitting written questions by **e-mail** is Monday, November 9, 2020. **Responses will be provided only to written questions.** Copies of all questions submitted and responses will be posted to the Governor’s website and will be available to the general public on November 12. **No individual responses will be sent.**

**Intent to Submit Proposals**

TheIntent to Submit Proposal Form is due on Monday, November 9, 2020. Failure to submit the form will not prevent applicants from submitting proposals in response to the Request for Proposals. The notice aids the Governor’s Office in planning. The Intent to Submit Proposal should be sent via e-mail to the GEER email address ([GEER@govreeves.ms.gov](mailto:geer@govreeves.ms.gov)).

**Procedures and Due Dates for Delivery of Proposal**

An electronic copy of the full proposal must be received by 5:00 p.m. Central Time (CT) on *Friday, November 20, 2020*, to the GEER email address ([GEER@govreeves.ms.gov](mailto:geer@govreeves.ms.gov)).

*Proposals received in the inbox after 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 20, 2020, will be considered ineligible for review. You will receive an email response as confirmation that your submission was received. If you do not receive this response prior to the deadline, you should contact* [GEER@govreeves.ms.gov](mailto:geer@govreeves.ms.gov)*. However, if you wait until the last minute, there will not be enough time to resolve your problem, and you will not receive an extension. Please submit enough in advance of the deadline to ensure you receive confirmation and have time for trouble-shooting. No paper or faxed proposals will be accepted.*

**Responsibility of the Applicant**

Applicants must ensure the competitive proposals are submitted to the GEER email address by the deadline and assume all risks of submission. Incomplete proposals will not be evaluated and will not be returned for revisions. Proposals that do not include the required signatures will not be evaluated. The Proposal Transmittal Form must be signed by an authorized official to bind the applicant to the proposal provisions.

**Format and Procedure for Delivery of Proposals**

The proposal will consist of four parts: Part 1—Proposal Transmittal Form, Part 2—Checklist, Part 3—Proposal, and Part 4—Appendices.

* **Part 1** is the Proposal Transmittal Form, which shall serve as the cover page of the proposal. The Proposal Transmittal Form is located within this document (see FORMS, below). The applicant shall complete and sign the form.
* **Part 2** is the Checklist, which enables the applicant and the Governor’s Office to ensure that all sections have been completed properly. The Checklist is located within this document (see FORMS, below). The applicant shall complete only the “applicant use” column of the Checklist.
* **Part 3** is the Proposal, which includes four sections: I. Eligibility, II. Overview, III. Response to Priority Task, and IV. Budget & Narrative. ***If the applicant intends to respond to more than one Priority Task, a separate application (including separate Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4) for each Priority Task should be filed.***

The applicant shall complete the relevant Part 3. Each application document is formatted as a fillable form. Applicants should only complete the sections where information can be entered. Text boxes will expand as information is entered, but applicants should obey page limits (see below) for the entire proposal. Suggested page limits per section are provided within each application document to assist applicants. Text boxes use 11-point Arial font with single-spaced text; tables use 10-point Arial Narrow font with single-spaced text. Margins are one-inch (1”) side, top, and bottom. Pagination for Part 3 will automatically update as the document is edited. This document shall not exceed 31 pages for all priority tasks.

* **Part 4** includes the Appendices, which are required forms and other documents. Not all forms provided in this document are required of every type of proposal. Please refer to the Checklist to determine which forms and documents are required. **Only the appendices indicated in this RFP can be included in the proposal.** Any other information included as an attachment will not be considered in the proposal evaluation.Required forms, resumes, and reference letters that are to be included are not subject to page limitations.

***The applicant should create a single PDF of the entire proposal*** (Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4) and ***email that PDF to the GEER email address*** ([GEER@govreeves.ms.gov](mailto:geer@govreeves.ms.gov)). Please do not submit multiple documents/emails unless the applicant is submitting entire applications in response to different Priority Tasks. Each PDF should be labeled “Applicant Name\_Proposal for Priority Task [fill in].” For example, if Magnolia Nonprofit is responding to Priority Task 1.1 and Priority Task 1.2, the PDF files should be named as follows:

* Magnolia Nonprofit\_Proposal for Priority Task 1.1
* Magnolia Nonprofit\_Proposal for Priority Task 1.2

**Acceptance of Proposals**

The Governor’s Office reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to waive minor irregularities in proposals. A minor irregularity is a variation from the RFP that does not affect the proposal, give one applicant an advantage or benefit not enjoyed by other applicants, or adversely impact the interest of the Governor’s Office. Waivers, when granted, shall in no way modify the RFP requirements or excuse the party from full compliance with the RFP specifications and other grant requirements if the party is awarded the grant.

**Rejection of Proposals**

The Governor’s Office may reject proposals that do not conform to the requirements of this RFP. Proposals may be rejected for reasons that include, but are not limited to, the following:

* The proposal does not contain the required components;
* The proposal contains unauthorized amendments to requirements of the RFP;
* The proposal is conditional;
* The proposal is incomplete or contains irregularities that make the proposal indefinite or ambiguous;
* The proposal contains false or misleading statements or references;
* The proposal does not meet all requirements of the RFP;
* The proposal is not submitted by the designated deadline;
* The proposal is not signed by authorized representative of the applicant; or
* The applicant has previously been cited with major and/or significant deficiencies by the Governor’s Office or the State Auditor in one or more programs.

**Disposition of Proposals**

All proposals become the property of the State of Mississippi.

**Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals**

Proposals submitted by the specified time in the specified format and containing the parts described in the Format and Procedure for Delivery of Proposals section shall be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee selected by the Governor’s Office. Evaluation will be according to the GEER RFP Rubric which will be released at the same time as this application.

Application review will take place in three stages.

* **Stage 1**: Parts 1, 2, and Section I of Part 3 of each application will be reviewed for eligibility according to the rubric and RFP requirements. If applicants are deemed ineligible, the application ***will not be reviewed*** by the Evaluation Committee and will be disqualified.
* **Stage 2**: Reviewers will score Sections II, III, and IV of Part 3 of each eligible application using the rubric. Rubric scores for Section II will determine which applicants will have Sections III and IV scored.
* **Stage 3**: Rubric scores from all sections will be summed to determine a final ranking for each Priority Task. If applications do not earn the minimum score, they will not be funded. The Governor’s Office will fund applications exceeding the minimum score in the order of their rank until funds for each Priority Task are exhausted.

Application review is expected to be completed November 23-25 & November 30-December 2, 2020. Award announcements will be made on December 4, 2020.

# **INTENT TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL FORM**

**The Governor’s Office**

**GEER**

The non-binding Intent to Submit Proposal Form may be submitted and received no later than 5:00 p.m., Central Time (CT), November 9, 2020.

This form may be e-mailed to [GEER@govreeves.ms.gov](mailto:geer@govreeves.ms.gov).

Applicant Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact Person: Click or tap here to enter text.

Mailing Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Phone Number: Click or tap here to enter text. E-mail Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

**It is the applicant’s intent to submit a proposal that meets the criteria set forth in this RFP.**

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Signature of Contact Person Date**

# **PROPOSAL TRANSMITTAL FORM**

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| --- | --- |
| ***Applicant Name:***  Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| Physical Address: Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| Contact: Click or tap here to enter text. | Phone: Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Email: Click or tap here to enter text. | Fax: Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Federal EIN: Click or tap here to enter text. | DUNS #: Click or tap here to enter text. |
| ***Total Request: Click or tap here to enter text.*** | |
| For Governor’s Office use only Date Received:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| Governor’s Office Approval  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Education Advisor | |

By my signature below, I hereby represent that I am authorized to and do bind the applicant to the provisions of the attached proposal. The undersigned offers and agrees to perform the specified personal and professional services in accordance with provisions set forth in the Request for Proposal (RFP). Furthermore, the undersigned fully understands and assures compliance with the Assurances contained in the RFP. The undersigned is fully aware of the evaluation criteria to be utilized in awarding the contract.

Applicant Representative Authorized Signature Date

# **GEER RFP CHECKLIST**

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the checklist. Failure to include items marked with “\*” will cause the application to be rejected. Failure to include items marked with “†” will negatively affect the application’s score.

Applicant Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Application Part** | **For Applicant Use** | **For Governor’s Office Use** |
| Proposal Transmittal Form\* | Signed, completed, and attached. | Signed, completed, and attached.  Not completed.  Not signed.  Not attached. |
| Checklist\* | Completed and attached. | Completed and attached.  Not completed or not attached. |
| Proposal\*  *Complete and attach the application.* | Complete proposal, including  Section I  Section II  Section III  Section IV | Proposal missing the following:  Section I  Section II  Section III  Section IV |
| Appendices  *Complete and attach the appendices in the order appearing on this checklist.* | **ALL APPLICATIONS**  Appendix A—Signed GEER Assurances\*  Appendix B—Proof of Eligibility\*  Appendix C—Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs† | All required appendices attached.  Some or all appendices are missing. |
| Appendix D—Resumes of Key Personnel†  Appendix E—Budget Summary Table\*  Appendix F—Revenue Table\* | All required appendices attached.  Some or all appendices are missing. |

**GEER FUND ASSURANCES**

The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the “CARES Act”), Section 18002, includes funds distributed to state governments from the U.S. Department of Education through the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (“GEER Fund,” CFDA 84.425C) to provide support for costs incurred in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. The purpose of the GEER Fund appropriation is for the funds to be used to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus. No other purpose is authorized. Funds may not be utilized to replace or supplant any other funding nor to fill any revenue shortfall. Eligible uses of the GEER Fund may overlap with allowable uses of other federal grants and reimbursements. We understand that these GEER reimbursements are not allowed to be made in addition to any other federal funding for the same expenditure.

By accepting the award, the grantee agrees to the following:

1. Use funding to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus;
2. Perform the activities promised in the proposal submitted to the Mississippi Office of the Governor;
3. Exercise proper stewardship of all federal funds;
4. Comply with regulatory and programmatic requirements, as more fully discussed below;
5. Report all required information to the Mississippi Office of the Governor. Program reports, cash reports, expenditure reports and performance reports will be required and will be specified in grant documents; and
6. Provide documentation substantiating appropriate expenditure of all advances received.

Eligibility to receive payment from the State’s portion of funds from the GEER Fund is contingent upon the recipient certifying, in writing that the recipient will: (1) use the funds in a lawful manner consistent with Section18002 of the CARES Act and (2) will comply with any and all policies and directives issued by the Mississippi Office of the Governor related to the GEER Funds. The grantee understands that it will not receive funding unless the following are received to the satisfaction of the Mississippi Office of the Governor:

1. GEER Fund Grant Agreement and Terms and Conditions;
2. Geer Fund Letter and Acknowledgement;
3. Sub-recipient Monitoring Questionnaire.

Regulations applicable to this program are 2 CFR part 200, 2 CFR 3474, 2 CFR 3485, 34 CFR 299, and the Education Department General Administrative Regulations in 34 CFR parts 75, 76, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98, and 99.

The following 2CFR Uniform Guidance policy requirements apply to this assistance listing:

Subpart B, General provisions

Subpart C, Pre-Federal Award Requirements and Contents of Federal Awards

Subpart D, Post Federal; Award Requirements

Subpart E, Cost Principles

Subpart F, Audit Requirements

In accordance with the provisions of 2 CFR 200, Subpart F - Audit Requirements, nonfederal entities that expend financial assistance of $750,000 or more in Federal awards will have a single or a program-specific audit conducted for that year. Non-Federal entities that expend less than $750,000 a year in Federal awards are exempt from Federal audit requirements for that year, except as noted in 2 CFR 200.503 In accordance with the provisions of 2 CFR part 200, Subpart F - Audit Requirements, nonfederal entities that expend financial assistance of $750,000 or more in Federal awards will have a single or a program-specific audit conducted for that year. Non-Federal entities that expend less than $750,000 a year in Federal awards are exempt from Federal audit requirements for that year, except as noted in 2 CFR 200.503.

GEER Fund expenditures are subject to audit by Federal regulators, the Office of the State Auditor for Mississippi, and the Mississippi Office of the Governor. Documenting that expenditures are eligible uses of CRF funds is essential to managing compliance risk and to minimizing the possibility that the expenditures are ultimately deemed ineligible, which could require the organization and the State to return funds to the federal government. The Federal Government is required to conduct monitoring and oversight of the receipt, disbursement, and use of funds made available under this Section. If it is determined that the grantee has failed to comply with Section 18002 of the CARES Act, funds used in violation of that section shall be considered, by the State of Mississippi, as a debt of the recipient owed directly to the Federal Government.

In accordance with Section 443 of the General Education Provisions Act, as well as 34 CFR 75.730-732, 34 CFR 76.730-731, and 2 CFR 200.333, grantees agree to maintain records for 3 years.

We understand that the CARES Act (Section 18006) requires GEER funding recipients to continue to pay its employees and contractors to the greatest extent possible, during the period of any disruption or closures related to coronavirus.

We understand that GEER Fund recipients that are Local Education Agencies are required to provide equitable services to students and teachers in non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided to other students and teachers, as determined through timely and meaningful consultation with representatives of non-public schools.

Applicant Representative Authorized Signature Date