



#014-22

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #014-22**

DATE: January 14, 2022
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Rosa S. Atkins, Ed.D., Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **School Division School Bus Driver Incentive Grant Awards Program Funded from GEER II and ESSER II State Activities Funds**

Governor Northam approved the use of state activities funds from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (CRRSA Act GEER II) and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (CRRSA Act ESSER II) for a **school bus driver recruitment and retention incentive grant program**. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), through a priority-based application process, awarded \$2.0 million in grants to school divisions for school bus driver recruitment and retention strategies to help address the critical shortage of school bus drivers in Virginia school divisions.

These incentive grant awards to school divisions are for use in state fiscal years 2022 and 2023. The grant awards are based on various criteria such as the severity of school bus driver shortages, student poverty, school division ability to pay, and division fleet size. Grant awards were capped based on school division student enrollment, \$50,000 for divisions with enrollment less than 10,000 students and \$100,000 for divisions with enrollment of 10,000 students or more. Awarded funds will be paid on a reimbursement basis using the Online Management of Education Grant Awards (OMEGA) system and awarded funds must be spent by June 30, 2023. Reimbursement requests must be submitted to VDOE via OMEGA by August 15, 2023.

Awarded funds are required to supplement and not supplant current division funding resources for bus driver positions and related costs. The award date is January 14, 2022. The grant amounts will be uploaded in OMEGA and school divisions will then be able to request budget transfer approval for reimbursement.

Allowable uses of the grants funds may include recruitment and retention incentive strategies such as:

- One-time recruitment and retention bonuses contingent on commitments by bus drivers to maintain employment with the division for a certain period of time. **Note: such bonuses may not exceed \$5,000 per driver.**
- Increasing hourly rate of pay for bus drivers.
- Fringe benefits - instituting and/or increasing fringe benefits for bus driver positions.
- Increasing contracted hours for bus drivers - increase daily contract hours by assigning additional bus routes including activity bus runs and/or drivers assisting at school buildings with COVID-19 mitigation efforts for the portion of the contract day they are not driving buses.
- Obtaining commercial driver's license for prospective drivers - funds to support training/study time towards getting future drivers CDL-licensed; increase the number of driver trainers/3rd party testers to expedite the licensing process; and compensate individuals while they are being trained as drivers and preparing for the CDL.
- Other related and approved recruitment and retention strategies approved by VDOE through the application process.

The final grant awards are listed in **Attachment A**. Additional required special terms and conditions for this grant award are in **Attachment B**. The terms of this grant award are in **Attachment C**.

For more information

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Vijay Ramnarain, Director of Support Services, at Vijay.Ramnarain@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2774;

or Kerry Miller, Associate Director for Pupil Transportation, at Kerry.Miller@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2772.

RSA/KM/aam

- A. Attachment: [Grant Awards](#) (XLSX)
- B. Attachment: [Additional Required Special Terms and Conditions for Grant Awards or Cooperative Agreements](#) (DOCX)
- C. Attachment: [Terms of Grant Award](#) (DOCX)