



#307-21

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #307-21**

DATE: November 12, 2021
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **School Division Application Process for the School Bus Driver Incentive Grant 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, will award \$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.

The VDOE will award these incentive grants to school divisions for use in state fiscal years 2022 and 2023. Priority for funding requests will be based on the severity of school bus driver shortages, student poverty, school division ability to pay, and division fleet size (small fleet priority). Grant awards will be 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 beginning date of the award period will be communicated by VDOE after approval of the applications and requested funding amounts. The specific funding source of the award (GEER II or ESSER II) will be communicated upon VDOE approval of the applications and requested funding amounts.

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 attached funding application will also be emailed directly to school division transportation directors on November 12, 2021, to expedite the application process. The deadline for application submission to VDOE is **December 3, 2021**. The application file is **Attachment A**. Additional required special terms and conditions for this grant is in **Attachment B**. The terms of this grant award are in **Attachment C**.

Please email the completed application for funding to supportservices@doe.virginia.gov by the close of business on December 3, 2021. Late application submissions may not be considered for funding.

In expending awarded funds for recurring costs, school divisions should be mindful of on-going costs they wish to continue after the availability of these grant funds has ended and should be prepared to fund such costs locally from other sources or discontinue them.

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.

JFL/KM/aam

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