

# Missouri Student Connectivity - Access Grant Supplemental Guidance

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Contents

Introduction..... 3

Missouri Student Connectivity (MSC) Grant ..... 4

    Timelines ..... 4

    Allowable Expenses ..... 4

    Fiscal..... 5

    Existing Projects..... 5

    Matching Funds..... 5

## **Introduction**

On August 6, 2020, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) announced the Missouri Student Connectivity (MSC) Grants, funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act. The MSC grants are intended to address the digital divide, bringing the internet and digital learning resources to students across Missouri.

The MSC grants include two projects, Access and Connections. The Access project has the express purpose of extending schools' Wi-Fi networks so that they are more available to students.

This guidance is intended to provide supplementary information to local education agencies (LEAs) based on recent updates from the Missouri Office of Administration (OA). DESE wishes to express thanks to Governor Mike Parson and his staff for recognizing the importance of ensuring that students have access to digital learning resources and putting this recognition into action by allocating state Coronavirus Relief Funding to address this need. DESE also wishes to thank the Missouri Office of Broadband Development, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and MORENet for their valuable assistance in developing the grant.

## Missouri Student Connectivity (MSC) Grant

The MSC grant program's purpose is to increase access to the internet and digital learning resources through expanding Wi-Fi access and providing Wi-Fi enabled devices for students. The MSC grant has two components: the Missouri Student Connectivity Access Project (MSC-A) and the Missouri Student Connectivity Connections Project (MSC-C). The funding source for MSC-A grants is the Coronavirus Relief Fund, administered by OA. Because of new information provided by OA, DESE is updating its guidance around MSC-A.

New guidance has been *italicized* for clarity.

### Timelines

The Coronavirus Relief Fund has a federal deadline of December 30, 2020 for expenditures. *Because OA has determined that it must have all submissions in order by mid-November, DESE finds it necessary to set the following deadlines:*

- *Applications and ePeGS budgets for MSC-A grants must be completed by October 7, 2020.*
- *Final Expenditure Reports (payment requests) must be submitted by November 4, 2020.*

### Allowable Expenses

As noted in the original guidance for the MSC Grants, the MSC-A project's purpose is to extend the district's network primarily through the expansion of perimeter (externally broadcasted) Wi-Fi. Allowable expenses for this grant include the following:

- DESE has allocated \$4,000 per instructional building
- LEAs may pool the allocation and redistribute to best address the project goal based on local need
- Exterior Wi-Fi access points
- Necessary and reasonable expenses to enable Wi-Fi access point functionality
  - Power supply
  - Fiber, copper or other connection
  - Weatherproofing
  - Installation
  - *Infrastructure and software to support access points*
    - *Switches*
    - *Device management software*
    - *Web filtering software*
- *Access points may be located on non-instructional buildings*
- LEA projects can be new installations or expansions of existing networks
- Bus-based Wi-Fi hotspots

- *Devices that provide internet access for one or more students through cellular connections*
  - *LTE iPads*
  - *Other tablets or devices that are capable of cellular connection*
- Alternative proposals must include specific proposed expenses.
  - Approved alternative proposals may include approval for specific expenses not otherwise allowable.
  - Ongoing expenses must be minimized for alternative proposals to be approvable.
- *Any ongoing fees associated with devices may be paid through December 30, 2020 if there is a fixed-price contractual obligation.*

## **Fiscal**

- LEAs' projects must include a minimum of 50% of the project costs in matching funds.
  - LEAs are encouraged to collaborate with counties to acquire the matching funds.
  - Any other allowable funding source is acceptable.
  - More information on matching funds can be found in the ***Matching Funds*** section.
- LEAs may claim reimbursement when invoices are paid.
- *Fixed price contracts through the period of December 30, 2020 may be reimbursed.*
- Funds are available from March 13, 2020 – December 30, 2020.
- *Reimbursements must be requested by November 4, 2020.*
- LEAs must report the number of new access points installed and other data for approved alternative proposals.
- Funding source: Coronavirus Relief Fund
  - Equitable Services does not apply to this Access Project.

## ***Existing Projects***

If an LEA has initiated or completed a project that aligns to the purpose of the MSC-A grant after March 12, 2020 and prior to the date the grant opened, August 6, 2020, the LEA may submit that project for approval. If approved, the MSC-A grant can fund up to 50% of the project, not to exceed the LEA's allocation.

## **Matching Funds**

DESE encourages LEAs to seek matching funds from their county or counties. Missouri counties have received Coronavirus Relief Funds that can be used for matching purposes. The following paragraph may be helpful when discussing county matching funds with county leaders.

[Guidance from the United States Treasury Department](#) indicates that Coronavirus Relief Funds can be used for online and distance learning resources, increased broadband connectivity and telework. Counties are encouraged to work with local schools to consider how these funds can benefit students and the public. Schools must not be paid twice for the same expense but may combine other CARES funding sources to ensure that the maximum benefit is reached. Counties

and schools must ensure that expenses meet the [requirements of the Coronavirus Relief Fund](#) by: a) being necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019; b) not being accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020; and c) were incurred during the period that begins on March 13, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.

LEAs may use any of the following sources of revenue for matching:

- Local tax revenue
- Gifts
- State revenue sources that allow expenditures for allowable project costs
- Federal revenue sources that allow expenditures for allowable project costs
- ESSER funds not associated with this grant program

LEAs may not be reimbursed for the same cost more than once.