

ESSER Funds: Top 10 FAQs



How do I return my facility's HVAC system to its pre-pandemic settings?

- A.** Identify and list what changes were made to the HVAC system to address the conditions imposed by the pandemic. For instance, in most cases damper positioning on HVAC units was recalibrated to bring in additional outside air (which would result in an increase in energy usage). This can be addressed via re-programming the automation system that is controlling the HVAC units to return to original settings.
- B.** Decisions must be made regarding occupant protection measures (i.e., plastic partitions/guards) and whether they will continue to be kept in use, as they have an impact on air distribution within a space. These are internal decisions that should be made as some building owners may opt to keep them in place. If this is the preference, then some level of air balancing of HVAC units may be necessary, as well as possible relocation of temperature sensors.
- C.** The best way to develop and implement a return strategy is to consult with your HVAC vendors/consultants who can guide the return to pre-pandemic operations. This will ensure the safety and health of the occupants while still containing energy costs.

How do I address teacher and parent concerns about air quality?

The best and most effective measure to placate parent/teacher concerns is effective and continuous communication. Share what steps have been taken, as well as those that are under consideration. These steps include, but are not limited to, the installation of equipment that is specific to air purification within occupied spaces (i.e., bi-polar ionizers, air purification units). VOX sensors that are tied back to automation systems measure and trend the contaminants within the space, giving real time data that can be presented to parent / teacher groups and demonstrating the quality of the indoor air.

Some districts have taken measures encouraging building occupants to take personal steps by not having scented plug-in devices at their desks and limiting perfumes/colognes.

The best measure is to have an air quality diagnostician conduct a walk-through of your facility to identify potential hazards that may impact the quality of the indoor air.

How do I manage energy usage given new COVID protocols?

Based on the new protocols, a thorough review of building operations and HVAC schedules and setpoints should be conducted to return to original "pre-pandemic" settings, keeping the new protocols in mind to identify potential conflicts between efficiency and safety.

Can I use ESSER funds for the GESA Process?

Yes. PASBO received a legal opinion on utilizing ESSER funds through the GESA process. It is appropriate, as long as federal requirements are met.

These requirements require an RFP Process specific to the GESA legislation and utilize a scoring mechanism for proposal evaluation. The RFP must require adherence to Davis-Bacon Act wage and reporting requirements.

What are other schools doing with their ESSER funds?

Many districts are allocating a percentage to increase educational resources to make up for lost academic time with students (i.e., summer sessions, more IT technology for remote learning.). In addition, districts are utilizing a portion of funds to install more HVAC and disinfection technologies, such as room air purifiers and bi-polar ionizers for terminal HVAC equipment, as well as outright replacement of large air handling units that bring in more outside air ventilation while still maintaining energy efficiency.

What are the deadlines for spending ESSER funds?

Each of the three rounds of ESSER funds have different deadlines on when the funds need to be encumbered which are as follows.

- » **ESSER I Funds (CARES Act):**
through September 30, 2021
- » **ESSER II Funds (CRRSA Act):**
through September 30, 2022
- » **ESSER III Funds (ARP Act):**
through September 30, 2023

What air purification solutions are widely accepted/used by other schools?

In addition to traditional facility improvements, we have already seen these monies being spent/ requested for measures such as:

- » Bi-Polar Ionization
- » MERV-13 Filtration
- » UV Lighting & Disinfection
- » Room Air Purifiers

What Capital Improvements qualify for ESSER Funds?

Facility measures that improve the health and safety of the students, faculty, administration and visitors are eligible for funding. Below are the stipulations for each of the three rounds of ESSER Funds:

- » **ESSER I (CARES Section 180 d):**
Measures to provide a healthy environment with existing equipment.
- » **ESSER II (CRRSA Section 313):**
Improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs. Replacement and upgrade projects to improve indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and window and door replacement.
- » **ESSER III (ARP Section 2001):**
Those uses outlined in both ESSER I & II.

When should I begin developing a project to use the ESSER funds?

Begin ASAP! Projects can take 1-6 months to develop and another 3-12 months to install. With large amounts of stimulus funds all needing to be spent, there is a concern on securing the labor to execute this work. Material costs are already beginning to have escalation due to demand. Those who act the fastest are likely to receive the best pricing and have their projects completed in a smooth fashion.

How do I begin exploring what may be a fit for my facility / district/ or township?

Contact your CM3 Sales Representative

at 215.322.8400 or Sales@cm3inc.com.

