

GUIDE



ESSER III INVESTMENT DECISION GUIDE

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REGION 5
Kentucky
Tennessee
Virginia
West Virginia



ESSER III Investment Decision Guide

Region 5 Comprehensive Center

The Region 5 Comprehensive Center (R5CC) is one of 20 technical assistance centers supported under the U.S. Department of Education's Comprehensive Centers program from 2019 to 2024. The R5CC serves the needs of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia by building capacity to improve policies and programs to improve student performance.

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Questions to Consider Regarding Proposed Investment

Guiding Question(s)

Example(s)

<p>Q1. In what program/strategy, good, or service is your organization considering investing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What good or service is your organization considering investing in? » What is your rationale for making this investment? How did you decide this is something worth investing in? » How would this investment address a need or make your organization more successful? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A program/intervention may include general education base curricula, or off the shelf remedial or classroom management programs (such as Accelerated Math or Caring School Community). » A strategy may include broader approaches such as an extended school day or year, class size reduction or professional learning communities. » Goods may include instructional or administrative technology or equipment, library content and reference materials, or furnishings. » Services may consist of consultants, or external trainers or technicians.
<p>Q2. Which ESSER priority or priorities will this investment address?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safely returning to in-person instruction 2. Addressing learning loss 3. Addressing the needs of students with special needs 4. Preparing for closures and remote learning 5. Providing mental health services and addressing the social-emotional learning needs of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Can your school or district clearly articulate how this acquisition will address one or more of the ESSER priorities? » How will this investment address one or more of the five primary ESSER priorities? » Did your school or district consider other alternatives? » What are the primary considerations for choosing this alternative—instructional coherence, evidence of effectiveness, cost, other considerations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Upgrading the HVAC system in an older school to provide greater air flow and filtration, improving the safety of returning to in-person instruction. » Investing in staff time, materials, and space to expand out-of-school time to address learning loss. » Purchasing remote learning platforms, devices, and providing professional development for teachers to improve the quality of remote learning.

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Q3. Does or could this investment address other school or district priorities? ESSER funds must be used to address the priorities outlined in the legislation. However, these funds may also be leveraged to address school or district priorities related to or nested within the ESSER priorities.

- » Are there investments for addressing ESSER priorities that may also be used to address other school or district priorities that support long-term improvement? This could include the costs of planning and implementing improvement initiatives, including the costs of time for planning, purchasing goods or services, or providing staff training.
- » Can these changes be integrated as permanent and sustainable features of your instructional program for all students?

- » Planning and purchase of new instructional technology that will be an integral part of your instructional program, along with staff development for instructional staff to effectively integrate and use this technology.
- » Creating flexible additional learning time and remediation approaches for students who are falling behind grade level work.

Q4. How will this investment address your school's or district's priorities?

- » How, specifically, will this investment help your school or district meet this priority?
- » What is your theory of action? (See User Guide.)
- » How will you measure progress and effectiveness?
- » What is your plan for modifying this initiative, or adopting a different approach if it does not appear to be working as planned? (See the continuous improvement section in the User Guide.)

- » A district uses its ESSER III funds to invest in expanded instructional technology and associated professional development to improve the quality of its virtual instruction in the event COVID-19 forces its schools to go remote once again.
- » It uses this opportunity to reassess and expand the use of technology in its regular in-person instructional program and to better serve credit recovery and non-traditional students. The district establishes metrics for measuring the initiative's impact on students and faculty, identifies the data to be collected and analyzed, and steps for fine tuning the initiative if results fail to meet expectations, followed by ongoing data collection, analysis, and further adjustments.

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Q5. What evidence was used to support the selection of this alternative?

- » Were research studies used to confirm the producer/vendor’s claims?
- » Did independent studies assess its effectiveness, or are performance claims based only on the producer/vendor’s own studies?
- » What was the quality of the research approach and methods used? Do the studies meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards—for example, using a randomized, controlled trial? Examples include:
 - › <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Resources/Evidence>;
 - › https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_WE_Accessing_Assessing_Research_and_Evidence.pdf
- » Have multiple studies found the same or similar results? Does the evidence supporting the study’s conclusions appear to be moderate or strong?

- » ITSS, a web-based literacy intervention for elementary students shows positive outcomes based on two randomized trial studies meeting WWC standards. While both studies were conducted by the same study team and one or more members were involved in its development, the study designs were strong and results published in peer reviewed journals.
- » Two of 10 studies of Leveled Literacy Intervention for grades K-2 meet WWC standards. These studies found it effective in two of the three literacy domains, but not the other. The same researchers led both studies but neither were associated with the development or marketing of the intervention.
- » Nine of 39 studies examining the effectiveness of Read 180 meet WWC standards. Six of these studies found consistently positive effects, in some cases these effects were medium to large.

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<p>Q6. Is the alternative the most cost-effective or among the most cost-effective alternatives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Is the alternative both effective for achieving desired outcomes and of reasonable cost? » Have you conducted a cost-effectiveness analysis to calculate and compare the cost per unit of change for this and other alternatives considered? » Are there lower-cost options for achieving the same results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Several high-quality studies, notably the Tennessee STAR study, found a significant positive effect of small class size in grades K-3 on achievement—especially for low-income students. But class size reduction is an expensive intervention, with increased costs for paying additional teachers and potentially the capital costs of increasing the number of classrooms. Is there another alternative, or combination of alternatives that may result in similar benefits for less cost? Alternatively, can greater targeting of the use of smaller class size reduce costs while still achieving district goals?

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Guiding Question(s)

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<p>Q7. What is the cost of this alternative and what are the sources of funding to pay for it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What is the cost of the alternative? Consider ALL costs, not only the initial purchase price. Do additional staff need to be hired? Are there associated professional development costs to ensure educators are able to make effective use of the initiative? Are there ongoing licensing and/or maintenance fees or annual purchases of instructional materials? Are capital improvements required? » Are your ESSER III funds sufficient to pay for up-front costs? If not, what other school or district resources are available, including reallocating funds from other, less-effective uses? How much will be required from one or more other funding sources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Associated costs could include a full or part-time coordinator or tech support staff, annual licensing fees, regular upgrade costs, specific professional development needs, space needs (for example, space for small group tutoring or a computer lab). » Other sources of funding may include state or local funding allocations, federal funding, foundation or other private sources, or reallocation of school/district resources from other uses.
<p>Q8. Is the alternative financially sustainable after your ESSER III funding expires?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Are there costs associated with this initiative that will continue after ESSER III funding expires? » Have you estimated what these costs will be on an annual basis? » Have you identified where the needed funding will come from to cover these annual costs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » A district implemented a high-quality after school program using ESSER III funds to address learning loss. The district would like to continue offering the program in the future to serve students who have fallen behind grade level in one or more subjects. » Ongoing costs include hourly pay for teachers and aides working in the program, custodians for late cleanup and locking the school, materials and activities, and late transportation. » The district is exploring using Title I funds or cost savings in other areas to sustain the program long-term.