It's Time to Spend Your American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth Funds

Webinar Chat Box Questions
September 28, 2023

1. Can we use these monies for attendance incentives and for salaries of liaisons?
    - Yes, American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds can be used to assist homeless students with their attendance. Yes, these funds can also be used to supplement the liaison's salary. Please ensure that the time that the liaison works with on their homeless education duties equals the pay.
2. Can it be used to purchase vehicles?
    - Large purchases, such as a vehicle, need to be approved by me, first, through the capital outlay process. Please email me regarding this at lwheeler@cde.ca.gov.
3. What would you consider short-term housing?
    - At first, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) indicated 3-4 days; however, ED has extended that time on a case-by-case situation.
4. It shows that our balance is zero so there is no additional allocation. This is if we have not spent our previous funding.
    - If a balance is zero, it either means that the local educational agency spent all of their funds, or they were not eligible to receive them.
5. Please clarify: ARP-ESSER funds deadline was extended, but not ARP-HCY?
    - ARP-HCY funds are to be spent by September 30, 2024. For other funding deadlines, please visit the ARP Act Funding website at ARP Act Funding - Federal Stimulus Funding (CA Dept of Education) or https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/cr/arpact.asp.
6. I came on late...did you say if we can pre-purchase cards listed on the site with the latter and give them out as needed.
    - Yes, ARP funds can be used for pre-paid store/debit/gas cards and be given out as needed.
7. Will there be reallocation of leftover funds?
    - No, unfortunately there will be no reallocation of leftover funds.
8. Are we able to purchase gift cards from sites such as Hotels.com and what are some ways LEA's have been able to make the purchases given the restrictions on purchasing gift cards with funds outside of ARP II funds?
    - Yes, ARP funds can be used for short-term, temporary housing. It is the LEA's determination on how this process occurs. The Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center's (HETAC) website has sample forms and procedures. You can access it at https://www.hetac.org/resources/cards.
9. Is the deadline to spend both for ARP HCY I and HCY II?
    - Deadline to expend these funds is September 30, 2024.
10. For the consortium grants, can you clarify whether the expenditures must all be processed through the COE?
    - The consortium lead is also the fiscal agent, and all expenditures must be processed through the consortium lead.
11. How do you see how much you have left?
    - You can access Funding Results for ARP II at https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/ca/arphcyii.asp.

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12. Immigrants/Refugees: Is it acceptable to use ARP funds to pay for staff to identify, engage and support these families (and students), even if all families/students plan to stay and enroll in our district, so long as we can identify those who will remain as experiencing homelessness? * DO NOT plan to stay & enroll in our district.
    - I am not sure I understand your question. APR funds can be used to identify homeless students, including immigrant/refugee homeless students, even if they do not continue their education in your district.
13. What is the deadline to spend the funds?
    - September 30, 2024.
14. Are homeless families only McKinney-Vento families?
    - Homeless students and their families can be referred to as McKinney-Vento, families in transition, etc.
15. Can you give us a list of backpack items you normally include?
    - Please contact the LEA and their presenters to answer this question. Their names and contact information are in the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation. The PPT can be accessed at https://www.hetac.org/statutes/federal/arp.
16. Can the funds be used to support McKinney-Vento students with food during the transition period? (A student approached me asking if I could help with a gift card forth to buy food for the night.)
    - Yes, ARP funds can be used to purchase food that is consumed outside the school day; however, the LEA should exhaust all other resources.
17. Do families need to provide receipts for a gift card, gas card etc. to the LEAs?
    - This is a local decision, and a very good practice.
18. Are there photos of the backpacks you can share?
    - Please contact the LEA and their presenters to answer this question. Their names and contact information are in the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation. The PPT can be accessed at https://www.hetac.org/statutes/federal/arp.
19. Can we buy gift cards?
    - Yes, LEAs can and the HETAC website has sample forms and procedures. You can access it at https://www.hetac.org/resources/cards.
20. Can we purchase gas cards? I was told we cannot issue gas gift cards.
    - Yes, LEAs can and the HETAC website has sample forms and procedures. You can access it at https://www.hetac.org/resources/cards.
21. Can we partially fund staff who serve as Homeless Liaisons or those who support homeless youth through mental health services?
    - Yes, this is an allowable use of funds.
22. Does CDE have an approved backpack vendor? What I mean by approved vendor is that based on the urgency of these fund spending, this vendor wouldn't have to go through competitive bidding.
    - No, we do not have an approved backpack vendor.
23. The beginning of the presentation mentioned that ARP-II funds can be used to supplement other programs. I have a district that wants to know if they can purchase

food or snacks for after school programs? or would the food have to be directed just toward the McKinney-Vento students?
    - This is an allowable use of funds, as long as it is not the sole funding source for the food/snacks being purchased.
24. We are keeping track of all ARP expenses (housing questionnaires, assessments/requests, justifications, receipts, gift card logs, etc.); however, shall we expect a fiscal audit in 2025? And if so, what other items should we consider?
    - At this time, the only fiscal monitoring that the Homeless Education program conducts is through the Federal Programs Monitoring reviews.
25. How do you identify students?
    - Please visit our Homeless Education Resource website at Resources for Homeless Children and Youth - Homeless Education (CA Dept of Education) to gain a better understanding of identification of homeless children and youth.
26. What is the name again of the provider for the gift cards?
    - https://blackhawknetwork.com/
27. My District won't pay prior to receiving the cards. Is there another way to get cards? Especially for gas cards?
    - A suggestion would be to go through a community-based organization to purchase the cards.
28. Can you share your policies and procedures around accountability?
    - LEAs can and the HETAC website has sample forms and procedures. You can access it at https://www.hetac.org/resources/cards.
29. Gas card? Paying for a bill or a phone line?
    - Paying a phone bill, electricity bill, etc. can be allowable under authorized activity #16, and if all other sources are exhausted.
30. What was the name of the gift card vendor?
    - Blackhawk Network
31. How do you enforce "gift cards are intended for students"? Even food?
    - Please see the HETAC website. LEAs can and the HETAC website has sample forms and procedures. You can access it at https://www.hetac.org/resources/cards.
32. Do you provide visa gift cards for motels or hotels?
    - That is a local decision, and it is allowable to use ARP funds for short term, temporary housing.
33. Is it ok that we meet parents at stores we have gift cards for and shop with them? We collect the receipts at the end.
    - Yes, this is a great accountability practice.
34. Where do I get gas cards to be used only for gas?
    - I am not sure. I would search your community to see if there is a way to just purchase gas cards only for gas.
35. Can a purchase be made to put a washer and dryer on the school campus with funds?

- Yes, this is an allowable use of funds.

36. Is there a requirement that families submit a receipt after they use a gift card?
    - No, it is a local decision.
37. How do we purchase laundry cards to use at laundry mats?
    - You would need to research that for your specific area.
38. How do low-income families get tied into the McKinney-Vento program if they are not homeless?
    - Low-income families are only eligible for homeless education provisions if they are identified as homeless.
39. Can we purchase food for student workshops?
    - It is always a best practice to multi-fund a purchase like this and it is also important to ensure that all other options have been exhausted.
40. Could funds be used to offer childcare?
    - This would be on a case-by-case basis.
41. Can cellphones or monthly cellular phone service be purchased with these funds?
    - Paying a phone bill, electricity bill, etc. can be allowable under authorized activity #16, and if all other sources are exhausted. ARP funds can be used to purchase cell phones or other technological devices for unaccompanied youth to enable the youth to attend and fully participate in school activities.
42. How do we know if your District receives ARP-HCY funding? Any help or guidance would be greatly appreciated.
    - To find out if your LEA receives APR-HCY II funds, ARP-HCY II Funding Results at https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/ca/arphcyii.asp.
43. How about P.O. Boxes? Many of our families do not have a physical address to receive their mail at which can create a barrier in receiving communication regarding school related information of housing info or any type of mail.
    - Number 16 of the Authorized Activity states that ARP-HCY funds can be used to provide other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school and participate fully in school activities.
44. Are we allowed to pay apartment security deposits (not exceeding 2K) for our homeless families if they have exhausted other resources and that is the only barrier to securing housing?
    - Number 16 of the Authorized Activity states that ARP-HCY funds can be used to provide other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school and participate fully in school activities.
45. It appears that several of these events and resources to students and their families are not exclusive to just homeless students. Since ARP-HCY funds are only to be used for homeless students, how do you verify that the expenditures are only being used for homeless when other students are attending, participating, and receiving the benefits?

- LEAs should have some sort of mechanism that identifies and tracks these students, including the comparable services that they are being provided.

46. How do you pay for Uber services, Cathi? We use Ever Driven, but sometimes Uber is easier for immediate needs.
    - Please contact the LEA and their presenters to answer this question. Their names and contact information are in the PowerPoint (PPT) presentation. The PPT can be accessed at https://www.hetac.org/statutes/federal/arp.
47. I know that a letter was sent to Secretary Cardona asking for up to 2 weeks of motel assistance- are we aware of any updates on that request?
48. Could that apply to rent fees for families doubled up who are at risk of eviction?
    - ARP funds can be used for short-term, temporary housing. As well as number 16 of the Authorized Activity states that ARP-HCY funds can be used to provide other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school and participate fully in school activities. It needs to be on a case-by-case basis.
49. What does ARP-2 stand for?
    - American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth and the website is at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/arphcyassurances.asp.