

A Guide to Operation Connectivity: How Municipalities and Counties Can Help

1.8 million students lack technology to learn from home

With the rise of COVID-19 in Texas, remote learning has become an essential part of schools' academic offering. Yet, it is estimated that over 1.8 million students in Texas lack the connectivity technology to learn from their homes. This connectivity gap is a significant barrier to academic success and economic empowerment for these students.

In response to this critical need, Governor Abbott and Texas legislative leaders have allocated \$200M in CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) funding to match \$200M in local district funding. This combined \$400M in bulk buying power will be used to cover the purchases of internet solutions such as hotspots and e-learning devices for Texas' School districts, with the goal of providing connectivity technology for all students who would not otherwise have them.



\$200M in CARES Act CRF funding + **\$200M** in local district funding = **\$400M** bulk buying power for connectivity technology

1 million e-learning devices

The Operation Connectivity bulk order program may leverage the majority of these funds to put over 1 million e-learning devices and nearly 500,000 hotspots in students' homes to enable learning, significantly reducing the connectivity gap.

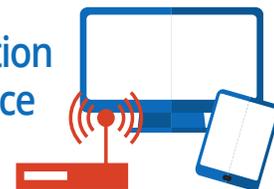
Even with this historic investment, we may still have hundreds of thousands of Texas students who lack reliable internet access.

500,000 hotspots

Texas received \$11.24 billion in federal CARES Act CRF funding, of which over \$5 billion has been given to counties and cities to determine how they should be spent.



\$11.24B in CARES Act CRF funding → **\$5B** to City and County CRF grants → Allocate some portion to "facilitate distance learning"



LEAs are encouraged to work with their cities and counties to allocate some portion of their local CRF funds to reduce their cost.¹
Details of the local CRF match reimbursement process are described on the next page.

By assisting school systems with their local match funding right now, CRF contributions can enable purchases of devices and hotspots at steeply discounted rates that vendors have made available specifically for orders placed through Operation Connectivity.

Local governments will see a dramatic return on this investment, including smart procurement, increased access to online learning for students, and access to urgent family telehealth care.



1. U.S. Department of the Treasury's guidance on use of CARES funding lists examples of eligible use of funds, including "Expenses to facilitate distance learning, including technological improvements, in connection with school closings to enable compliance with COVID-19 precautions." Source: Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance for State, Territorial, Local, and Tribal Governments, Updated June 30, 2020

Details of Approach to CRF Matching Reimbursement

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are eligible for additional state Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) fund matching if they receive funding from their local city or county CRF for TEA's bulk order program. TEA will increase its fund matching by \$1 for every \$1 of local CRF that LEAs receive, up to a maximum of 25% of the expenditure approved and allocated by TEA (based on number of economically disadvantaged students). This matching reimbursement will be executed per the details below.

Examples of CRF matching reimbursement allocations (Figures illustrative)

District A receives no match from local CRF	District B receives 10% match from local CRF	District C receives 25% match from local CRF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA total bulk order: \$100,000 Local CRF contributes: \$0 TEA state CRF fund contributes: \$50,000 (LEA base match) + \$0 (local CRF match) = \$50,000 total LEA contributes: \$50,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA total bulk order: \$100,000 Local CRF contributes: \$10,000 TEA state CRF fund contributes: \$50,000 (LEA base match) + \$10,000 (local CRF match) = \$60,000 total LEA contributes: \$30,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA total bulk order: \$100,000 Local CRF contributes: \$25,000 TEA state CRF fund contributes: \$50,000 (LEA base match) + \$25,000 (local CRF match) = \$75,000 total LEA contributes: \$0

Key information about local CRF matching reimbursement process

October 1st

Deadline to submit requests for CRF matching reimbursement

LEAs must submit required documentation (see below) by October 1st to be considered for local CRF matching reimbursement and will be reimbursed on a rolling basis.¹

Process for LEA submission for Local CRF Matching Reimbursement



To submit documentation of any local CRF that has been received, an LEA will provide TEA a completed CRF Reimbursement Application (to be provided) and accompanying documentation that states:

- ▷ Date of allocation from city or county
- ▷ Amount of allocation
- ▷ Purpose of grant (should say TEA bulk order)

The standard application and details of accompanying documentation requirements will be communicated the week of 8/17/2020. Please email customerservice@teabulkorder.com if you have any questions regarding this process.

Note on CARES ESSER Funds

The state has implemented a local matching requirement to this program in that the LEA must pay for an applicable percentage of the total costs of the program. This requires other fund sources available to the LEA to be used to pay for the remaining percentage of the program. This is not an in-kind match.

The LEA may use its CARES Act ESSER Grant allocation, TIMA, and other local sources to be approved later by TEA, in addition to other state and local funding to pay the LEA portion of this program and therefore split the total cost of the connectivity equipment between this program and its ESSER Grant.

LEA local documentation must be maintained to document 1) the percentage paid from the ESSER Grant, 2) inventory records and other appropriate safeguards to protect the equipment are in place, and 3) appropriate internal controls are being implemented.

¹ In the event all \$200M of state funds is expended the local CRF match will be awarded on a first come first serve basis.