

**CFAC Request from the Office of the Governor**  
**“Strong Families, Strong Students” Initiative**

**Request:**

The Office of the Governor is requesting \$50 million in funding for grants to Idaho families to cover critical educational expenses due to school building closures caused by COVID-19 and to provide economic support to parents so they do not have to exit the work force to ensure their children receive a quality educational experience. The grant program would be managed by the Office of the State Board of Education.

**Goals:**

- Provide support to eligible families to facilitate distance learning in connection with school building closures including devices, connectivity, and eligible educational services.
- Provide resources to Idaho parents to help with their students be successful in school so that they can remain in the labor force.

**Background:**

Since March, when the pandemic hit Idaho, the Board has been discussing the challenges in meeting Idaho’s responsibility to provide a uniform and thorough system of public education during these unprecedented times. Families are facing many challenges as they are forced to rapidly adapt to changing circumstances in their children’s education. In addition to providing the resources to school districts and charter schools to be able to serve students, the Board has discussed providing resources directly to families and students to mitigate the achievement gap and address the digital divide.

It has been documented how school-related closures have created pressure that may push parents out of the labor force,<sup>1,2</sup> which could further strain the state’s unemployment insurance trust fund solvency and have adverse impact on the state’s economic rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing resources to these families can help mitigate potential second-order effects of the emergency.

Should CFAC grant the request, the funding would be used to provide access to resources that can be used for educational purposes that are directly controlled by the eligible families. Each eligible family would have access to **\$1,500 per eligible student**, with a maximum award of **\$3,500 per family**. The Board will contract with a fulfillment company with expertise in delivering similar programs for educators and families.

**Family Eligibility Criteria:**

Student eligibility will include, at a minimum, students who meet the state definition of school age and may include, but not limited to, public school and private school students. Eligibility criteria will conform to Treasury guidance and will include families impacted by a COVID-19-related full or partial

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<sup>1</sup><https://apnews.com/ad57cb9e16746df766215301163a4f08>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/08/06/lack-of-school-and-child-care-may-push-some-parents-out-of-workforce.html>

school closure, or a disruption to a parent's employment between March 1, 2020 and December 30, 2020. The State Board may set additional eligibility criteria that identifies families that have had the highest impact from COVID-19.

**Eligible Expenses:**

Once families are determined to be eligible, an account will be created for families to purchase eligible educational materials, devices and services.

This program's eligible expenses are limited to expenses that facilitate distance learning as a result of school building closures, including but not limited to:

- (a) computer hardware, software, and other devices, including adaptive learning technology;
- (b) internet connectivity;
- (c) instructional materials;
- (d) fees for courses;
- (e) tutoring services;
- (f) education services and therapies.

**Application Process:**

The grant program is open to all eligible families regardless of income level. Because there may be more applications than available grants, the Board will establish priority criteria. The Board will work with a fulfillment company to create a web-based application, and the fulfillment company will prioritize applications based on established criteria. Prioritization will consider income guidelines for free and reduced-price meals program, and adjusted gross income. The fulfillment company could manage income verification to mitigate fraud.

- Wave 1 - AGI less than or equal to \$50,000
- Wave 2 - AGI less than or equal to \$75,000
- Wave 3 - AGI less than or equal to \$100,000
- Wave 4 – All Idaho Families