

What You Need to Know: Understanding and Leveraging Federal Title IV Funds for Fine Arts Education in Iowa



The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) creates a new funding stream that is designed to ensure a “well-rounded” education for all students. Under ESSA, fine arts are designated as part of a well-rounded education. These new federal funds, known as Title IV, Part A or Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAEG), will flow through the Iowa Department of Education to school districts.

Through conversations with the Angela Matsuoka, Fine Arts Consultant at the Iowa Department of Education (IDOE), we have compiled this reference document to access Title IV, Part A funds for your district that can potentially be used for arts education. When Congress passed ESSA, they recommended funding Title IV, Part A at \$1.65 billion. Though SSAEG funding levels have not yet been fully funded, they have been increasing each fiscal year since a mere \$400 million was allocated in FY 2017. Currently, Title IV, Part A is funded at 1.17 billion in FY 2019. While there is ongoing advocacy work happening at the federal level to bring funding each year closer to the recommended \$1.65 billion, it’s important to take advantage of the Title IV, Part A funds that are available to help fine arts programs but also to show the value of using these funds in the hopes of continuing to increase the future funding allotment from the federal government.

HOW TO RECEIVE TITLE IV, PART A FUNDS IN IOWA

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or districts receive what is known as a Consolidated Application in the spring of each year. This application is due back to IDOE before the beginning of the school year. As your LEA begins to discuss their budget for the next school year (usually in the winter of the preceding school year), it’s a good idea to begin discussing your LEA’s use of Title IV, Part A funds. LEAs are required to complete a Needs Assessment to determine where Title IV, Part A funds can be used. Beginning in the winter/spring, you should ask your administration how you can be involved in the process to determine the use of these funds. It’s likely you won’t know what the funding allocation from the federal government will be at this point. You should still participate in the process to bring attention to any deficiencies in your program.

AREAS TO EXPLORE IN YOUR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Classroom Supplies/Textbooks
Performance Space Upgrades
Musical Instruments
Fine arts equipment (e.g. kilns, vocal risers, theater set equipment)
Technology (Computers, tablets, video equipment, software)
Curriculum Materials

Content Area Specific Professional Development
Additional Fine Arts Courses
Fine Arts-Related Field Trips

A fantastic resource to review before making your case for additional resources for your fine arts program is the Arts Education Opportunity to Learn Standards:

<http://www.aep-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/Opportunity-to-Learn-Standards.pdf>

These OTL standards - available for Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Art - will help you benchmark your program and put you in a position to set it up for success. This will help you make the case for Title IV, Part A funds but also for funds out of your LEA's regular budget that can impact your program.

Your LEA will be required to complete the IDOE *Consolidated Application* that describes the applicable use of funds.

- Remember, you won't be the only subject area asking to use these funds, so it's important to do your research and provide a compelling argument.
- These federal funds are meant to be supplemental in nature – not to supplant what is already provided locally. You need to show need through a *Needs Assessment* and you need to show that federal funds aren't supplanting local funds to pay for it. As an example, if you would like to add a new tuba to your music program, you would show the value of using these federal dollars by explaining that there are no local dollars to cover the purchase. Perhaps your school only budgets for a certain number of instruments a year and a tuba purchase would exceed that amount and would be considered supplemental.
- These funds are not a lot in the grand scheme of a LEA's budget. Therefore, make sure to keep your ask reasonable. (You can see how much your LEA received in 2017-18 funding here:
<https://educateiowa.gov/documents/essa-guidance/2018/08/2017-2018-and-2018-2019-title-iv-part-allocations>
- LEAs do have options under the federal law to combine their Title IV, Part A funds with other funding streams in the law, like Title I. If you provide a compelling enough argument for the use of funds for your fine arts program, you may be able to convince your LEA to only use the funds under Title IV, Part A for a fine arts-related project.
- These funds are not recurring year-to-year. So, making a case to use these funds for any program that would require a yearly investment is not the best route. Each year, your LEA has to submit a new application for the use of these funds.

A school district or consortium must complete the consolidated needs assessment prior to receiving its SSAE allocation. A school district or consortium that receives at least \$30,000 in SSAE program funds must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment prior to receiving its allocation, and subsequent needs assessments at least once every three years, to examine its needs for improvement in the three content areas.

Based on the assessment results, the district or consortium must use:

- At least 20% of funds for activities to support well-rounded educational opportunities;
- At least 20% of funds for activities to support safe and healthy students; and
- A portion of funds for activities to support effective use of technology.

Requirements by Funding Level

Requirement	\$30,000 or more	Less than \$30,000
Comprehensive Needs Assessment	Required prior to receiving allocation and at least once every three years.	Recommended to identify local needs to improve student outcomes.
Funding Requirements	Based on the results of the needs assessment, use all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 20% of funds for activities related to well-rounded educational opportunities; • At least 20% of funds for activities related to safe and healthy students; and • A portion of funds for activities related to effective use of technology. 	Based on the results of the assessment, use one (or more) of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 20% of funds for activities related to well-rounded educational opportunities; • At least 20% of funds for activities related to safe and healthy students; and/or • A portion of funds for activities related to effective use of technology.

The *Consolidated Application* will ask the applicant to address specifically how the LEA will use funds in the areas of well-rounded education, safe and healthy students and/or the effective use of technology. The good news is that IDOE lists “fine arts instruction” as a suggested area for use of funds. An LEA has to provide a narrative response describing the proposed use of funds. This is where the research you have done will come in handy. By presenting your case for the needs of your program, you’ve already done some of the work for your administrators. Once you convince them of your need for these funds, they’ll be able to use your argument as part of their application being sent to IDOE.

Once an LEA submits their application to IDOE, the Title IV requests, along with other parts of the application, are reviewed by IDOE and monitored throughout the school year to ensure the funds are being spent as outlined in the plan.

The process will continue each year as long as ESSA remains the federal law. Even if you don't receive funds for your program this year, it is wise to stay part of the process. Your administrators will notice your tenacity and may find other areas of the budget to fill your program needs.