

ELC Reopening Schools FAQs

As of April 21, 2021

All questions are hyperlinked to their respective answers below; click on a question to be brought to its answer.

Allowable costs

1. Can funds be used to cover associated costs that were incurred prior to the award?
2. Will additional funds be awarded to support the ongoing testing in the 2021-2022 school year?
3. Can funds be used to test during outbreaks or for symptomatic individuals?
4. Can *ELC Reopening Schools* funds cover the cost of testing for individuals covered under the state employee health plan or other health insurance?
5. Can funds be used to follow-up on positive cases?

Incentives

6. Can incentives be given to schools or does it have to be individuals?

Issues with getting Activity 1 underway

7. Do we have to start in April or can we hold the funds and use for next school year?
8. We may not receive the necessary authority to spend these funds before the end of the school year. What are the implications of not completing this activity in the timeline set?
9. Most of our schools have remained open and do not see a need to start testing now. Are we required to test a certain proportion of schools, students, teachers or staff? How can we meet the requirements for Activity 1?
10. If we can't meet the requirements or can't get school districts to participate, how would that impact ELC funding?
11. Are we required to use any specific models (e.g., ICATT, etc.) to implement school testing?

Resources

12. Is the 'School Test Vendor Checklist' simply a resource, or are we required to return/submit with responses?
13. Can funds be used to cover school testing programs that are already established?

Support to school districts

14. If a state wanted to expand NAAT testing capacity by equipping public health labs in a new state network, could these ELC funds be used to hire laboratory directors for these labs, provided the labs performed testing on samples from schools?
15. If a lab is contracted by the state for the testing program (specimen collection, processing, lab testing, reporting), could a sliding scale based on school size (small, medium, large) be established to directly reimburse/compensate schools for their costs associated with screening testing?
16. How structured or detailed does the initial narrative, budget estimate, and testing frequency that we report in REDCap have to be?
17. If we contract with a university to conduct the testing of samples collected at schools, would that be covered under the 85% to school districts or the 15% that health departments can retain for administrative costs?
18. Is funding expected to go out individually to school districts? Or can they go out through state-wide contracts, labs, etc.?
19. Can this funding be used to support positions?

Weekly reporting

20. The 'School District Weekly Reporting Templates' only have public schools listed. How do we account for testing in other schools?
21. What is the difference between the reporting due 10 days after receiving the award versus 15 days after receiving the award?
22. What are the due dates for the weekly reporting?
23. In addition to the 10-day report and the 15-day report, there is mention of another weekly report regarding financial support to school districts. How are recipients supposed to submit these reports?
24. How are pooled testing results reported?
25. How do we include home-based screening testing results, along with any resulting positives?
26. Can we use the FEMA test kits we have received and including in our data collected and reported weekly for *ELC Reopening Schools*?
27. We will be unable to have all the budget estimates and the narrative done by April 23rd. Is an extension possible?

Appendix A: Allowable Testing Populations

Appendix B: Due Dates and REDCap locations



Answers

Allowable costs

1. Can funds be used to cover associated costs that were incurred prior to the award?
 - a. No, the *ELC Reopening Schools* award cannot be used for retroactive reimbursement. Previously awarded funds in *Enhancing Detection* and *ED Expansion* are available for costs incurred since those awards were issued.
2. Will additional funds be awarded to support the ongoing testing in the 2021-2022 school year?
 - a. The *ELC Reopening Schools* award is intended to facilitate the rapid ramp up of screening testing this Spring. Any unused funds could be applied to supporting testing at summer programs that focus on providing equitable access to educational and/or recreational activities. Additionally, unused funds could be used to support screening testing for the next school year. We know of no additional funding that will be coming at a later date; therefore, recipients should plan with that in mind.
3. Can funds be used to test during outbreaks or for symptomatic individuals?
 - a. Previously awarded resources have been provided to bolster diagnostic testing and response for COVID-19 (e.g., *ELC Enhancing Detection*, *ELC Enhancing Detection Expansion*). The additional funds provided under *ELC Reopening Schools* are intended to be directed toward screening testing, but CDC understands that there may be some individuals tested using these funds who are symptomatic.
4. Can *ELC Reopening Schools* funds cover the cost of testing for individuals covered under the state employee health plan or other health insurance?
 - a. Regarding insurance billing, *ELC Reopening Schools* funding can be used in the following ways:
 - i. Uninsured: Funds can cover costs associated with screening testing for the uninsured.
 - ii. Billing serves as a real or perceived barrier to timely test delivery: Funds can cover costs associated with screening testing when establishing billing services (directly or through a contractual agreement) would delay testing and/or reduce the jurisdiction's ability to rapidly increase testing capacity to meet needs.
 - iii. Payor of last resort when billing insurance: In situations where screening testing is billed to insurance and is either not covered or partially covered by a third-party payor (e.g., private insurance, CMS, etc.), after the claim is rejected or partial reimbursement occurs, the outstanding balance can be covered using *ELC Reopening Schools* funds.
5. Can funds be used to follow-up on positive cases?
 - a. *ELC Reopening School* funds can be used to support costs associated with initiating appropriate follow-up on positive tests (e.g., confirming case status, identification of contacts, collaboration with public health on case investigations) and conducting mitigation efforts to prevent spread within the school population. There is an expectation that the recipient health department will have case investigation/contact tracing efforts (and associated surveillance systems) already in place that can support school testing efforts. Prior ELC awards provide support for these activities and systems.

Incentives

6. Can incentives be given to schools or does it have to be individuals?
 - a. Incentives are only allowable to encourage individuals that are otherwise resistant to participate in screening testing (gift cards that have a face value of no more than \$25/person).

Issues with getting Activity 1 underway

7. Do we have to start in April or can we hold the funds and use for next school year?
 - a. Yes, Activity 1 should be started in April to the best of your jurisdictions' ability. The goal is to get the funding to school districts expeditiously to support screening testing for the remaining weeks/months of the current school year. For recipients already engaged in school screening testing using previous ELC awards, these funds can expand the activities or replace the funding source entirely so that those other funds may be available for other activities under those awards.
8. We may not receive the necessary authority to spend these funds before the end of the school year. What are the implications of not completing this activity in the timeline set?
 - a. CDC appreciates the unusual timing of this award and the rapidly approaching end of the school year. However, recipients are required to provide funds to school districts for ramping up screening testing this school year.
9. Most of our schools have remained open and do not see a need to start testing now. Are we required to test a certain proportion of schools, students, teachers or staff? How can we meet the requirements for Activity 1?

- a. While the goal is to have comprehensive testing, it is not the requirement. There is intentional flexibility in the guidance to allow recipients to use funds to meet their unique circumstances in terms of school screening testing. One strategy would be to focus on achievable targets for those schools willing and currently able to do testing now and use the summer break to develop a plan (Activity 2) for reaching more school districts in the next school year (Activity 3).
10. If we can't meet the requirements or can't get school districts to participate, how would that impact ELC funding?
 - a. While comprehensive school screening testing is ideal, any movement in the direction of the goal is encouraged. Using the *ELC Reopening Schools* funds to support school screening testing can free up resources allocated elsewhere (e.g., *ED Expansion*, DOE funds, etc.), which can then be used for other priorities. Keep in mind that the funds not used for Activity 1 will remain available to support the work in Activities 2 and 3.
 11. Are we required to use any specific models (e.g., ICATT, etc.) to implement school testing?
 - a. No. The ELC shares tools and models as resources; no individual tool or model is mandatory. Many recipients have already set up successful models within their own jurisdictions that are different from other HHS initiatives. If you would like to learn about these models, or share your own successful model, please begin by contacting your ELC Project Officer. The ELC will continue to share optional models and other resources (including ICATT, as it is evaluated) that recipients are welcome to employ, if they so choose.

Resources

12. Is the 'School Test Vendor Checklist' simply a resource, or are we required to return/submit with responses?
 - a. The 'School Test Vendor Checklist' is a resource. There is no need to complete it for submission back to CDC.
13. Can funds be used to cover school testing programs that are already established?
 - a. Yes, funds can be used to support both new and existing school testing programs.

Support to school districts

14. If a state wanted to expand NAAT testing capacity by equipping public health labs in a new state network, could these ELC funds be used to hire laboratory directors for these labs, provided the labs performed testing on samples from schools?
 - a. Yes, this falls into the allowable costs category. Recipients would need to make it clear in the budget justification whether the associated costs are part of the 15% of the award that is reserved for administration, oversight, and support; or indirect support that is attributable to the 85% that is mandated to go to school districts.
15. If a lab is contracted by the state for the testing program (specimen collection, processing, lab testing, reporting), could a sliding scale based on school size (small, medium, large) be established to directly reimburse/compensate schools for their costs associated with screening testing?
 - a. Yes, it is allowable.
16. How structured or detailed does the initial narrative, budget estimate, and testing frequency that we report in REDCap have to be?
 - a. Reports can be streamlined to answer the question: *How does the recipient plan to get these funds available to school districts to support the starting or ramping up of screening testing in schools? And, what will be the expectation of schools in terms of how often testing occurs?* More granular budget details should be included in the revised budget workbook that is due in June. Examples include:
 - i. X school districts and will be providing Y amount of financial support to each to account for 85% of the total award. Using these funds, participating schools will conduct weekly testing on all (or a sub-sample) of the registered students attending in-person classes.
 - ii. (1) \$XX/25% of the award will go to establishing centralized lab support to provide testing results within 24 hours. (2) \$XX/15% of the award will remain with the health department for administrative/management activities. (3) \$XX/60% of the award will go to the Z school districts in the following manner (or using the following formula). Using these funds, participating schools will conduct weekly testing on all (or a sub-sample) of the registered students attending in-person classes.
17. If we contract with a university to conduct the testing of samples collected at schools, would that be covered under the 85% to school districts or the 15% that health departments can retain for administrative costs?
 - a. The 85% that must go to the school districts can be met through direct support and indirect support (not to be confused with 'indirect costs'). Contracting with the university to support the processing of tests coming from schools would be a form of 'indirect support'; therefore, allowable and also would count against the 85%, not the 15%.
18. Is funding expected to go out individually to school districts? Or can they go out through state-wide contracts, labs, etc.?

- a. There is flexibility to do what works best for your jurisdiction and a variety of ways to support school districts. Contracts or other indirect support are allowable.
19. Can this funding be used to support positions?
- a. 15% of the award is reserved for administration, oversight, and support. In addition, staff working in schools to administer testing or collecting/reporting testing data may be supported through the 85% of resources allocated to schools. If you have any questions about including costs in the budget, please reach out to your ELC Project Officer.

Weekly reporting

20. The 'School District Weekly Reporting Templates' only have public schools listed. How do we account for testing in other schools?
- a. Using data provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the ELC pre-populated the recipients' templates to help reduce burden. NCES does not have a comprehensive list of charter, independent, or private schools; therefore, we were unable to include those. There are a few options for reporting: (1) Some recipients might only need to use the funds to support public schools; therefore, the inclusion of other schools would not be necessary. (2) For those recipients with a small number of non-public schools that they intend to provide financial support to, the template allows the addition of these schools. (3) Other recipients with larger jurisdictions that may have dozens or hundreds of non-public schools might opt to enter a single 'Other: Non-public' line entry and use that to report the weekly testing.
21. What is the difference between the reporting due 10 days after receiving the award versus 15 days after receiving the award?
- a. The two reports in question are:
 - i. The 'School District Weekly Reporting Template' and REDCap narrative for school district support, which is due within 10 business days after the NOA is issued; and
 - ii. The weekly reporting of screening testing which uses the 'School District Weekly Reporting Template'. This reporting starts 15 business days after the NOA is issued and continues through the end of June 2021.
22. What are the due dates for the Weekly Testing Reporting?
- a. By each Wednesday of the week, the report for the previous week would be uploaded into REDCap. Therefore:
 - i. 1st Report: Due on April 30, which is 15 days after the NOA, and covers the weeks of April 12 (Monday) through April 16 (Friday) and April 19 (Monday) through April 23 (Friday). This first report would cover the 2 weeks prior to April 30.
 - ii. 2nd Report: Due on May 5 and covers the week of April 26 (Monday) through April 30 (Friday). This is the week prior to May 5th reporting.
 - iii. 3rd Report: Due on May 12 and covers the week of May 3 (Monday) through May 7 (Friday). This is the week prior to May 12th reporting.
 - iv. The weekly reporting will continue in the same manner (i.e. due on Wednesday and will cover the prior week) through July 7.
23. In addition to the 10-day initial report and the 15-day weekly report, there is mention of another weekly report regarding financial support to school districts. How are recipients supposed to submit these reports?
- a. As part of the report due 10 days after the award is issued, there is a narrative and estimates that are entered into REDCap, under the 'ELC Reopening Schools Financial Reporting' page. To meet the weekly reporting requirement regarding methods to support school districts and estimates of support that is required by HHS and the White House Task Force (as outlined in the guidance), the data entered in REDCap will remain unlocked and available for editing should the need arise.
 - i. This narrative should be brief and may be very high-level (i.e., 1 paragraph may be sufficient to broadly describe how districts will be engaged/resourced).
 - ii. The narrative should highlight any real or perceived barriers you anticipate as you roll out screening testing for K-12. Some challenges may be experienced state/jurisdiction-wide, or they may be isolated to particular districts. This information is important for the ELC to collate and provide to leadership.
 - iii. The weekly reporting requirement is intended to acknowledge that recipients may not have all the details of their implementation plan in the first 10 day after award issuance. Therefore, the weekly reporting permits recipients the opportunity to add details and/or modify their approach until such time as the

implementation plan is finalized. If what is originally entered ends up being the final implementation plan and there are no subsequent changes, then what was entered to meet the 10-day reporting deadline will be re-purposed to meet the weekly reporting requirement to reduce burden on recipients.

24. How are pooled testing results reported?
 - a. Both individual and pooled tests should be reported in the 'Tests Conducted: PCR' and/or 'Tests Conducted: Antigen' as appropriate. The reporting of testing is not intended to be for surveillance purposes, instead we are only monitoring existing and increased testing activities.
25. How do we include home-based screening testing results, along with any resulting positives?
 - a. As the number of tests sent home might not reflect positive test results *received* if a district is employing home-based testing (e.g., BinaxNOW), include the total number of kits sent out by the school district in the 'Other' column; include a comment in the 'Notes' column that indicates this is from home-based tests. Any positive test results associated with home-based tests should be entered into the 'Positive Tests' column.
26. Can we use the FEMA test kits we have received and include in our data collected and reported weekly for *ELC Reopening Schools*?
 - a. Reporting should include all testing done on a population, regardless of the source.
27. We will be unable to have all the budget estimates and the narrative done by April 23rd. Is an extension possible?
 - a. Recipients should provide as much detail as they can by the 10-day reporting period. Recipients will be able to make updates in subsequent weeks to reflect additional information pertaining to the financial support going to school districts.

Appendix A: Allowable Testing Populations, ELC Reopening Schools

Teacher and/or student population in question	Allowable?
City-sponsored programs (e.g. summer YMCA-programs)	Yes, if they are providing educational and/or recreational activities to K–12 youth
Colleges & Universities	Currently not allowable
Daycare centers	Currently not allowable
Non-public schools (e.g. charter, independent, private)	Yes
Pre-K	Currently not allowable
School-affiliated summer programs (e.g. camps, summer instruction)	Yes
Schools that are already open for in-person instruction	Yes
Schools that are open using a hybrid option	Yes
School-sponsored events (e.g. book fairs, graduations, sporting events)	Yes
Tribal schools	Yes

Appendix B: Due Dates and REDCap locations

April 23	Brief school support narrative: how you will provide financial support to school districts and the frequency of testing. School District Weekly Reporting Template: review, add to, or edit pre-populated school district spreadsheet, initially created with NCES data. (e.g., add charter/private schools, edit district names, etc.)
April 30	First 'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers April 12 – 16 and April 19 – 23)
May 5	Monthly financial reporting begins 'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers April 26 – April 30)
May 12	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers May 3 – May 7)
May 19	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers May 10 – May 14)
May 26	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers May 17 – May 21)
June 2	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers May 24 – May 28)
June 5	Monthly financial reporting
June 8	Revised budget: in GrantSolutions via budget revision amendment Revised budget: in REDCap, along with 3 PDF reports (select 'Generate/Refresh Reports' button on the Menu page)
June 9	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers May 31 – June 4)
June 16	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers June 7 – June 11)
June 23	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers June 14 – June 18)
June 30	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due (covers June 21 – June 25)
July 5	Monthly financial reporting
July 7	'School District Weekly Reporting Template' submission due. (covers June 28– July 2) Testing reporting schedules subject to change after this date.

Reporting locations in REDCap

- **'ELC Reopening Schools Reporting' > 'Upload Current Reporting Spreadsheet Here'** for each of your weekly testing reports. Remember to indicate the date submitted using the section in the **'Reporting Tracking Table'**
- **'ELC Reopening Schools Financial Reporting'**
 - **'School District Support'** spaces for brief initial narrative and frequency of testing report due 4/23
 - **'Upload Revised Budget Here'** for revised budget Excel workbook and 3 PDF reports (Personnel, Non-Personnel, & Contractual Elements) due 6/8
 - **'ELC Reopening Schools: COVID Award'** for monthly financial reporting due 5th business day