

ESSA Consolidated State Template –FAQs

Q: Why is the new streamlined template good for students?

A: The streamlined template provides states and local leaders the freedom and flexibility needed to better serve their students. ESSA was passed with broad bipartisan support to put power back in the hands of the people best able to provide students with the education they deserve. Students have never been well-served by rules, regulations, and red tape that are not absolutely necessary and that hinder their teachers, local school districts, and state leaders.

Q: Which programs does the template include?

A.: The template covers:

- Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
- Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children
- Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
- Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction
- Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement
- Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants
- Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Title V, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income School Program
- Title VII, Subpart B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento Act)

Q: What is the purpose of the streamlined state template?

A: ESSA was passed by wide margins in Congress (Senate 85-12, House 359-64) in order to ensure greater state and local flexibility. The changes were supported by business groups, teachers' unions, civil rights groups, and supporters of school choice. When the prior Administration began rolling back some of that flexibility, a bipartisan group of Senators and representatives again stood up for the rights of local educators. The Senators [warned](#) that the proposed accountability regulations “would take away flexibility that Congress clearly gave states” and “violat[e] explicit prohibitions written into the statute.” The Administration trusts parents, teachers, and local and state leaders. Therefore, the template only asks states to provide detail on their plans in areas (a) explicitly required by law, and (b) deemed absolutely necessary (consistent with the Secretary’s letter on February 10). This template helps restore power to states, local educators, and parents, where it belongs.

Laws like ESSA are vital for protecting educationally disadvantaged groups of students. Students also depend on their states and local educators having the flexibility needed to better serve children. That is why the streamlined template asks states to report only on the aspects of their plans that are absolutely necessary to ensure they comply with the law and provide every child with the quality education he or she deserves. In other words, as compared with the prior template, states have now more latitude when it comes to how they hold schools accountable in the interest of students.

Q: How specifically does the revised template ensure greater flexibility for states?

A: Some of the ways the streamlined, revised template provides additional flexibility for states:

- Cuts prescriptive mandates on the structure of school accountability systems, many of which were removed by wide bipartisan margins in Congress, but then reinstated through regulation by the prior Administration. States will no longer be told exactly how to evaluate schools or how to hold failing schools accountable.
- Provides States much greater flexibility to use funds to help local schools improve without having to get permission from Washington.

- Creates a significant reduction in regulations regarding reporting on teacher equity. In particular, the federal government will have far less to say about how States report in the State plan on educator equity. The law, however, still requires states to evaluate the extent to which low-income and minority students have access to effective teachers. States must also work with local schools to prevent bullying and harassment.

Q: How will these changes ensure protections for low-income, minority, and disabled students?

A: The Secretary believes one thing should be made absolutely clear: civil rights protections, including those within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ESSA, and other relevant federal and state laws, remain in place, even if they are not specifically named in the template. States will provide written assurances on many of these provisions, but state and local leaders must follow all applicable laws and provide every student with the services and support he or she deserves. An added benefit of additional flexibility is that states can focus less on paperwork and compliance and more on actually delivering programs that provide genuine results for the students these laws were designed to support.

In fact, a broad coalition of business and civil rights groups recognized this fact with a [statement](#) in 2015, after ESSA passed but before regulations were issued. They expressed support for the law, saying it “includes this coalition’s key priorities.” Further, they correctly recognized that with additional flexibility comes additional responsibility on states to do the right thing for students: “Under the [ESSA], states will have more discretion than under [NCLB], but they will be responsible for working within federal guardrails to design systems that assure genuine equity and excellence for all students.”

Q: What voice have outside stakeholders had in revising the template?

A: In developing this new template, the Department of Education (ED) has consulted State educational agencies; governors; organizations representing parents, teachers, and school and district leaders; and advocates for children, including those with disabilities and other students from educationally disadvantaged groups. Even in the very short timeline necessary to provide new information to states, ED invited numerous stakeholders to share their feedback, much of which was incorporated into the final template and other documents. ED strongly encourages States to consult with these groups.

The Secretary believes states and local educators and parents deserve more than the ability to speak up, they must be empowered to make meaningful, lasting change. The streamlined template is designed to move power away from Washington, D.C. and empower states to better serve their respective students.

Each SEA must give its governor 30 days to review the plan it develops in line with the streamlined, revised template.

Q: Given all the work many states have done already, do they have to use the revised template?

A: No. And this shows just how much flexibility states truly have. States have two other options:

- They can use a new template developed by states in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers, as long as they provide a guide that demonstrates they have addressed each requirement in the new template.
- They can submit an individual application for each program instead of using a consolidated State plan. States may have to adapt their answers to the revised requirements, but if a state submits a consolidated State plan per the revised template, the overall application they submit should be far shorter.

Q: What happens next?

A: After the state template has been released:

- Approximately a week later, ED will release to the public a document that provides peer reviewers with guidance and questions to answer as they evaluate states’ applications. These questions, while essential

to the statutorily required review process, will also provide states with the knowledge necessary to address these questions.

- ED will be conducting webinars leading up to the first deadline (April 3, 2017) to provide states with technical assistance.
- Once an application is received, state applications will be reviewed for completeness by ED and then evaluated by peer reviewers.
- Before receiving funding, states will also be required to provide assurances separate from their consolidated State plan or individual program plans that they will meet other basic tenets of the law.