



# Event Agenda

# Table of Contents

Professional Learning Credits..... 2

2025 Federal Programs Institute Schedule ..... 3

    Tuesday, Aug. 26 ..... 3

    Wednesday, Aug. 27 ..... 4

    Thursday, Aug. 28..... 4

2025 Federal Programs Institute Session Descriptions ..... 5

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## Professional Learning Credits

The 2025 Federal Programs Institute received approval to offer TASL credit. Attendees not in TASL-mandated positions may obtain PDPs according to their LEA or agency guidelines, CEO Credit for Directors of Schools, or CCFO (CPE) credit for finance-related certification. To earn professional learning credit, evidence of attendance must be demonstrated by completing the session presentation survey after each session you attend.

Below is a breakdown of the credit hour opportunities for the 2025 Federal Programs Institute:

- **Tuesday-Wednesday:** 6 hours
- **Thursday:** 3 hours

Certificates will be emailed to each participant by **Sept. 30**. Participants are responsible for using the certificate as evidence to request credit hours via their certification’s requirements.

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# 2025 Federal Programs Institute Schedule

Tuesday, Aug. 26

## General Session

9:15–10:00 a.m. ET 8:15–9:00 a.m. CT	<a href="#">Welcome &amp; Announcements</a> <b>Debby Thompson</b>
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## Breakout Sessions

TIME	SESSION OPTION
10:20–11:30 a.m. ET 9:20–10:30 a.m. CT	<a href="#">Allocations 101</a> <b>Kate Smitheal</b>
	<a href="#">Education for Homeless Children &amp; Youth (EHCY) (McKinney-Vento 101)</a> <b>Vanessa Waters</b>
	<a href="#">Common ESSA Findings &amp; How to Avoid Them</a> <b>Brinn Obermiller</b>
11:40–12:50 p.m. ET 10:40–11:50 a.m. CT	<a href="#">Flex with Federal Muscle: Consolidating Federal Funds</a> <b>Lynn Dotson</b>
	<a href="#">ELD Standards Crosswalks: From Standards to Student Success</a> <b>Raven Cleveland</b>
	<a href="#">Licensure Update</a> <b>Jessie Gold</b>
2:00–3:10 p.m. ET 1:00–2:10 p.m. CT	<a href="#">A Guide to Internal Controls</a> <b>Holly Kellar, Jill Lewis, Joshua Dehnz</b>
	<a href="#">Title II, Strategic Planning with Funds</a> <b>Michelle Harless</b>
	<a href="#">Crossroads of ESSA Implementation: Flexibilities and Waivers</a> <b>Debby Thompson</b>
3:20–4:30 p.m. ET 2:20–3:30 p.m. CT	<a href="#">Beyond Compliance: Best Instructional Practices that Boost ESL Programming</a> <b>Raven Cleveland</b>
	<a href="#">Driving Neglected and Delinquent Program Success</a> <b>Erin Christian &amp; Leslie Watson</b>
	<a href="#">From Involvement to Engagement: Transforming Family Engagement Practices</a> <b>Charise McDaniel</b>

Wednesday, Aug. 27

## Breakout Sessions

TIME	SESSION OPTION
9:00–10:10 a.m. ET 8:00–9:10 a.m. CT	<a href="#">A Road Map to Supplement, Not Supplant</a> <b>Cindy Smith</b> <b>Taffe Bishop</b>
	<a href="#">Crossroads of ESSA Implementation: Flexibilities and Waivers</a> <b>Debby Thompson</b>
	<a href="#">Common ESSA Findings &amp; How to Avoid Them</a> <b>Brinn Obermiller</b>
10:20–11:30 a.m. ET 9:20–10:30 a.m. CT	<a href="#">Soulful Connections: Title I, Part A, Parent &amp; Family Engagement</a> <b>Alisha Gilmore</b>
	<a href="#">Equitable Services: Overview &amp; Panel Discussion</a> <b>Michelle Harless</b>
	<a href="#">Federal and State Education Policy Overview</a> <b>Lexi Harless &amp; Anna Hall</b>
11:40–12:50 p.m. ET 10:40–11:50 a.m. CT	<a href="#">EL Family Engagement</a> <b>Hannah Gribble</b>
	<a href="#">Carryover, Waivers, &amp; Expiring Funds</a> <b>Kate Smitheal &amp; Alfred Garrett</b>
	<a href="#">How to Evaluate the ESL Program</a> <b>Hannah Gribble</b>
2:00–3:10 p.m. ET 1:00–2:10 p.m. CT	<a href="#">Homeless Programming &amp; Building Collaborations with Federal Partners &amp; CBOs</a> <b>Vanessa Waters, Theresa McCormick &amp; Karen Ball-Johnson</b>
	<a href="#">Title I, Part A: Overview with Deeper Dive into Ranking &amp; Serving</a> <b>Heather Farley &amp; Randa Meade</b>
3:20–4:30 p.m. ET 2:20–3:30 p.m. CT	<a href="#">Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care</a> <b>Jackie Jacobson</b>
	<a href="#">Section 504 Responsibilities &amp; Requirements</a> <b>Shaundraya Hersey &amp; Courtney Boykin</b>

*Due to technical difficulties, this session was canceled.  
A recording will be made available ASAP.*

Thursday, Aug. 28

TIME	SESSION
9:45–12:30 p.m. ET 8:45–11:30 a.m. CT	<a href="#">Current Trends &amp; Litigation</a> <b>Julia Martin, Esq.</b>

# 2025 Federal Programs Institute Session Descriptions

## Session Presentation Survey

**Note:** Please use this [survey](#) to provide feedback for each session. The survey allows you to indicate the title of each session and can be submitted multiple times throughout the day to accommodate each session you attend.

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### A Guide to Internal Controls

Every successful road trip needs a solid GPS to stay on course—and when it comes to managing federal programs, strong internal controls serve as your navigation system. This session will guide LEA leaders through the key components of internal controls, including risk assessment, segregation of duties, documentation, and monitoring. Learn how these essential checkpoints help ensure compliance, promote transparency, and prevent detours like audit findings or misused funds. Whether you're just setting out or recalibrating your route, this session will equip you with practical tools and examples to strengthen your internal control systems and steer your federal programs toward success. Buckle up and get ready to travel the road of accountability with confidence.

**Holly Kellar** | Director of Local Finance

**Jill Lewis** | Director of Local Finance

**Joshua Dehnz** | Director of Local Finance

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### Allocations 101

Buckle up for a behind-the-scenes tour of the ESEA funding highway! This session will navigate how subrecipient allocations are calculated in Tennessee and explore the twists and turns that can cause changes from year to year. Whether you're new to the route or a seasoned traveler, you'll leave with a clearer roadmap of how funds reach your district and why the path isn't always the same.

**Kate Smitheal** | Director of Federal Grant Oversight

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### A Road Map to Supplement Not Supplant (SNS)

Just like a well-planned road trip keeps you on the right route, understanding the Supplement Not Supplant requirement helps your federal funds stay on course. This session will walk you through the rules, common pitfalls, and practical examples so you can steer clear of compliance detours. You will leave with a clearer path for using your funds effectively and confidently to support your district's priorities.

**Cindy Smith** | Regional Finance Consultant

**Taffe Bishop** | Regional Finance Consultant

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### Beyond Compliance: Best Instructional Practices that Boost ESL Programming

Ready to leave the rest stop of minimum compliance behind? This session invites LEAs to hit the highway toward stronger, more impactful ESL programming. With Title III priorities as your roadmap, we'll explore high-impact, research-based strategies that accelerate English Learners' language development and academic success across content areas. You'll get guidance on using these practices to fuel meaningful program evaluation and long-term improvements that keep your ESL initiatives moving forward.

**Raven Cleveland** | Statewide Manager of English Learners

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## Carryover, Waivers, and Expiring Funds

Every great road trip requires smart planning to make the most of your time and resources and the same goes for managing grant funds. This session will help LEAs map out the journey by reviewing key grant timelines and carryover policies, ensuring you don't leave valuable funds stranded at the rest stop. We'll also introduce you to the new Carryover and Expiring Funds Review Tool in ePlan, your dashboard for tracking available resources and upcoming deadlines. Join us to learn how to stay ahead of the curve, avoid last-minute scrambles, and make every mile and dollar count.

**Alfred Garrett** | Grants Analyst

**Kate Smitheal** | Director of Federal Grant Oversight

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## Common ESSA Findings and How to Avoid Them

No one wants to take a wrong turn on the compliance road. This session will highlight the most common ESEA monitoring findings, including cross-cutting issues and those related to Title I Parent and Family Engagement, Homeless, and ESL programs, and offer practical guidance on how to avoid them. Think of it as your compliance road map, which will help you anticipate detours, stay on track, and ensure federal funds are used effectively and responsibly along the way.

**Brinn Obermiller** | Senior Director of ESEA Oversight

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## Crossroad of ESSA Implementation: Flexibilities and Waivers

Local educational agencies (LEAs) have the flexibility to design a map to the destination that best supports their students' achievement by using ESSA flexibilities. This session puts LEA decision-makers in the driver's seat as we explore built-in ESSA flexibilities and potential waivers to respond to local needs while maintaining alignment with federal requirements. Leave with a roadmap of available flexibilities and real strategies to help your district travel the road of ESSA implementation with confidence, as well as some "potential new road stops" along the way.

**Debby Thompson** | Assistant Commissioner of Federal Programs and Oversight

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## Current Trends and Litigation

Join us for a drive through the current legal landscape impacting school districts. We will point out the major cases and trends on the road right now, share where bumps or detours might appear, and help you spot signs of what is coming next. Federal program directors will leave with a better sense of how to steer through potential challenges and keep their district on course.

**Julia Martin, Esq.** | Director of Policy and Government Affairs, The Bruman Group, PLLC

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## Driving Neglected and Delinquent Program Success

Don't let your Neglected and Delinquent (N&D) program take an unexpected detour. This session is your roadmap to keeping programs running smoothly and reaching key milestones. We'll walk through the full route of the continuous improvement cycle, with stops along the way at Planning, Funding, Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluating. You'll also receive helpful tools and timelines to keep this year's journey organized and on schedule. Plus, gain real-world tips and strategies from a former facility administrator who knows the terrain. Buckle up for a session packed with practical guidance to keep your N&D programming on course for success.

**Leslie Watson** | Alternative Education NEP Program Manager

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## **Educational Stability for Youth in Foster Care**

With more than 10,000 students in foster care across Tennessee, it's essential that we understand who they are, the unique challenges they face, and why educational stability is a critical part of their journey. This session will serve as your GPS for navigating the road to support, featuring key research, statutory requirements for LEAs and the child welfare system, and best practices for maintaining stability. We'll also explore how strong collaboration with the Department of Children's Services helps ensure these students don't face detours alone. Join us to plan a course that keeps foster youth on track toward academic success.

**Jackie Jacobson** | NEP Program Manager

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## **Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) (McKinney-Vento 101)**

Every student deserves a smooth path to academic success, no matter where their journey begins. This session offers an overview of the McKinney-Vento Act and the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of federal requirements, the vital role of homeless liaisons, and strategies for identifying and supporting students in unstable housing situations. Join us as we navigate the responsibilities and resources needed to keep these students on the road to success.

**Vanessa Waters** | McKinney-Vento and Immigrant Grant Manager

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## **EL Family Engagement**

Hop in as we take a scenic drive through best practices in engaging ESL families. Along the way, we'll make pit stops to highlight real events from LEAs that are fueling stronger school-family connections. Leave with a roadmap of ideas to bring families along for the ride in student success.

**Hannah Gribble** | Title III and Migrant Education Program Grant Manager

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## **ELD Standards Crosswalks: From Standards to Student Success**

Buckle up for a hands-on session where participants will explore the ELD Standards Crosswalk as their roadmap to student success. Together, we'll chart the course for aligned planning, instruction, and support—ensuring multilingual learners aren't just passengers, but co-pilots on the road to academic achievement.

**Raven Cleveland** | Statewide Manager of English Learners

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## **Equitable Services: Overview and Panel Discussion**

Embark on a journey through the key elements of equitable services, including allowable use of funds and effective planning with private schools. In this session, panelists from Kingsport City Schools and Hamilton County Schools will share the routes they've taken to build strong, collaborative relationships with private school partners. Gain practical insights and real-world strategies to help you stay on course while ensuring federal funds are used equitably and effectively throughout your district.

**Michelle Harless** | Federal Program Ombudsman with guests,

**Dr. Rhonda Stringham**, Kingsport City Schools and **Dr. Matthew Brent-Webb**, Hamilton County Schools

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## Family Engagement Framework

Buckle up for a guided tour through the landscape of federal and state education policy. This session will map out key updates, highlight where state and federal priorities intersect, and point out changes on the horizon. You'll leave with a clearer view of the road ahead and the confidence to navigate policy twists and turns with fewer detours.

**Charise McDaniel** | Family Support & Engagement Manager

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## Federal and State Education Policy Overview

Buckle up for a guided tour through the landscape of federal and state education policy. This session will map out key updates, highlight where state and federal priorities intersect, and point out changes on the horizon. You'll leave with a clearer view of the road ahead and the confidence to navigate policy twists and turns with fewer detours.

**Lexi Harless** | Policy and Research Analyst

**Anna Hall** | Legislative Liaison

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## Flex with Federal Muscle: Consolidating Federal Funds

Ready to take your federal funding strategy on a more efficient route? In this session, we'll map out how ESSA's allowed flexibility, especially through the consolidation of federal grants, can serve as a powerful engine to drive success in Title I-A schools. Think of grant consolidation as your all-in-one travel pass: fewer stops, more streamlined planning, and better alignment with your school improvement goals. We'll help school leaders navigate the options, detour around common roadblocks, and understand how this comprehensive strategy can provide a smoother ride toward student achievement. We're charting a course toward smarter, more strategic use of federal funds.

**Lynn Dotson** | West TN ESEA Oversight Coordinator, with guests

**Theresa McCormick**, Hardin County, **Ladona Herrin**, McKenzie SSD, **Allison Smith**, Crockett Co., **Greg Scott**, Milan SSD, **Dr. Stacey Alexander**, Haywood County, **Megan Mysinger**, TDOE Federal Programs & Oversight

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## Homeless Programming & Building Collaborations with Federal Partners & Community-Based Organizations

Successful journeys are rarely taken alone, and the same goes for supporting students experiencing homelessness. This session will focus on the tools and resources needed to build and sustain meaningful partnerships with community-based organizations. Attendees will also learn about the federally required partnerships with community-based organizations. Attendees will also learn about the federally required collaborations that homeless liaisons must establish through federal programs. Join us as we explore how strong partnerships can fuel your efforts and keep you moving in the right direction on the road to student success.

**Vanessa Waters** | McKinney-Vento and Immigrant Grant Manager, with guests

**Theresa McCormick**, Hardin County and **Dr. Karen Ball-Johnson**, Shelby County

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## How to Evaluate the ESL Program

Just like planning a successful road trip, evaluating your ESL program requires a clear map, key checkpoints, and an understanding of where you've been and where you're headed. In this session, we'll guide you through the process of evaluating ESL programs, helping you identify strengths, spot roadblocks, and determine the next best turn. Whether you're cruising smoothly or hitting a few bumps, you'll leave with tools to navigate your program's journey towards continuous improvement.

**Hannah Gribble** | Title III and Migrant Education Program Grant Manager

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## Licensure Update

Get ready to check the map and adjust your route as we explore the latest twists and turns in educator licensure. This session will walk school district leaders and federal programs directors through recent updates, upcoming changes, and how they may impact staffing plans. You will leave with a clearer path forward and the tools to keep your district's talent pipeline running smoothly without hitting roadblocks.

**Jessie Gold** | Director of Licensure Operations

**Cordrea Nance** | West Regional Licensure Consultant

**Corey Cummings** | Middle Regional Licensure Consultant

**Brooke Ruoff** | East Regional Licensure Consultant

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## Section 504 Responsibilities & Requirements

This session will explore the basics of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). Think of it like getting ready for a road trip. Before you head out, you want to know the rules of the road and make sure your car is in good shape. In the same way, we will look at district obligations such as policy implementation, discrimination, grievance processes, and accessibility. By the end, participants will have a solid map of Section 504 requirements to help keep compliance efforts moving forward without unnecessary detours.

**Shaundraya Hersey** | Senior Associate Counsel, Civil Rights & Academic Supports

**Courtney Boykin** | Assistant Counsel

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## Soulful Connections: Title I, Part A, Parent & Family Engagement

Strong family-school connections fuel student success. In this session, we'll take a quick road trip through the key Title I, Part A requirements for Parent and Family Engagement, like the policy, compact, annual meetings, and stakeholder collaboration. We'll also flag common monitoring roadblocks and share ways to make engagement efforts more meaningful. Buckle up for practical tips to keep families in the driver's seat of student achievement.

**Alisha Gilmore** | Middle TN ESEA Oversight Coordinator

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## **Title I, Part A, Overview with Deeper Dive into Ranking and Serving**

Every successful road trip starts with a solid plan and the right data to guide the way. This session offers an overview of Title I, Part A, with a deep dive into the ranking and serving process. Learn how collaboration with your school nutrition department can provide essential data sources that help determine which schools are prioritized for support. Buckle up for a session that will help you navigate the path to equitable funding with confidence and clarity.

**Heather Farley** | Director of ESEA Oversight

**Randa Meade** | Senior Compliance and Data Manager

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## **Title II, Strategic Planning with Funds**

Effective strategic planning begins with intentional communication. In this session, participants explore practical ways to engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue and apply SWOT analysis to inform planning and decision-making. Just like mapping out a successful road trip, strategic planning requires a clear destination, input from fellow travelers, and an honest look at the road ahead. Learn how clear communication and data-driven insight can help identify opportunities, mitigate challenges, and drive change, ensuring that federal funds are used to create lasting impact in your district.

**Michelle Harless** | Director of ESEA Oversight