



Department of
Education

FY26 ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring

Technical User Guide

Tennessee Department of Education | February 2026



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Overview of the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Process

The purpose of ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring is to:

- ensure the appropriate use of federal funds;
- document that funds are spent effectively to accomplish the intended purpose of the grant;
- ensure funds are used in accordance with the terms of the grant award;
- document the measurement of performance goals; and
- review needs to inform technical assistance better.

Requirements outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR), and the Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG) mandate that state educational agencies (SEAs) provide technical assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs), as well as oversee and monitor the implementation of federal grants. These responsibilities are part of the primary work of the Division of Federal Programs and Oversight (FPO) at the Tennessee Department of Education (department). To meet these responsibilities, FPO has developed and implemented a comprehensive framework for monitoring ESSA Discretionary Grant programs.

LEAs receiving funding through the following grant must participate in monitoring:

- Title III, Part A Immigrant Subgrant

This guide provides important information on the monitoring process, including how to access the instrument in ePlan, step-by-step instructions for completing and submitting the monitoring instrument, and a monitoring timeline.

More information regarding the Title III Immigrant Subgrant can be found in [ePlan > TDOE Resources](#) > ESSA Information, Guidance, PPTs, & Webinars > Title III: Immigrant.

ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Access

User Requirements: LEA-Level

All users must have the correct ePlan user access permission to access and complete the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring instrument. Users with existing ePlan access can check their current user access permission by visiting ePlan.tn.gov, navigating to the Address Book and LEA Role Contacts, and viewing who is listed with the correct monitoring role.

New ePlan users and existing ePlan users who need additional User Access roles must request those roles using the [ePlan User Access Form for LEAs](#). Access the form by navigating to ePlan.tn.gov > TDOE Resources > User Access Forms > [ePlan User Access Form for LEAs](#). Users do not need to log in to ePlan to access TDOE Resources in ePlan. Follow the instructions on the *User Access Form* to request additional access roles.

Users need one of the following roles to access the Discretionary Grant Monitoring instrument:

Role	What can this role do?	Who usually has this role?
ESSA Discretionary Grant Director	Add information to the instrument; change the status of the instrument to <i>Returned</i> or <i>Reviewed</i> .	Federal Programs Directors and Fiscal Directors
LEA Authorized Representative	Add information to the instrument; change the status of the instrument to <i>Returned</i> or <i>Approved</i> .	Director of Schools/Superintendents

Navigating to the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Instrument

- For best results, open ePlan.tn.gov in a Google Chrome browser window. Other browsers (e.g., Safari, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer) can interfere with the ePlan platform’s functionality.
- Once in ePlan, navigate to the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring instrument by logging in and then selecting **Monitoring > Monitoring Instruments** from the left menu options.
- On the *Monitoring Instruments* page, select the current fiscal year, then **ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring**.

2026 ▾ Active ▾

Monitoring Instrument

3. Level 3 Results-Based Monitoring

FY26 ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring

Sections Page and Starting the Draft

The ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring instrument loads to the Sections page. From this page, users can see a list of sections in the instrument and the status of the instrument.

To begin working on the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring instrument, the instrument status must be changed from **Not Started** to **Draft Started**. Users with the **ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Director** and **LEA Authorized Representative** roles can make this change by clicking **Draft Started**, then **Confirm**.

Status: Not Started

Change Status To: Draft Started

ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Timeline

Monitoring Process

The ESSA Discretionary Grant monitoring process steps include:

1. Identification & Communication:

The department identifies LEAs based on recipients of the identified discretionary grants. The department notifies the identified LEA's director of schools and the ESSA Discretionary Grant director via email in March. All LEAs identified as recipients of the discretionary grants must complete and submit this instrument.

2. Technical Assistance:

The ESSA Discretionary Grant monitoring process is an LEA-driven process. However, the department's Title III Immigrant grant manager is available to answer questions and aid via phone and/or email prior to the required submission date. Please refer to the [Technical Assistance and Support](#) section for detailed contact information.

3. Completion and Submission of the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Instrument:

The ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring Instrument opens on **Monday, March 9**. Each section of the monitoring instrument contains a general summary and specific instructions. The department recommends that the LEA ESSA Discretionary Grant directors lead the monitoring process to ensure the accuracy of the content within the instrument. LEA leaders must provide agree or disagree responses to the questions for each section. All LEAs identified for monitoring must complete the instrument and fully submit it by **Monday, April 6**.

4. Department Review:

Upon receipt of each LEA's completed instrument, the Title III Immigrant grant manager reviews the submitted information. If necessary, the grant manager contacts the appropriate LEA-level program director to request clarity or additional information; however, it is expected that monitoring instruments are complete with sufficient information prior to submission.

Note: The ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring process contains monitoring results shared with the LEA at the conclusion of the review and may result in findings of non-compliance if areas of non-compliance are discovered, and the department may include required action steps or recommendations to ensure compliance with federal or state laws, state policy, or state board rule.

5. Follow-up and Technical Assistance:

By **April 20**, the grant manager reviews all compiled data and short answer responses to determine areas of needed technical assistance and informs departmental program directors and other department offices of reported needs. After the review of the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring, the department's grant manager will follow up with the LEAs on any technical assistance needs or monitoring results with required action steps. For areas of concern, such as findings of non-compliance or corrections needed, LEAs may be required to upload updated documentation.

Instructions and Reference Notes

Instructions

Each LEA-level page of the instrument is divided into sections. Please read each section's instructions (below) thoroughly prior to responding to questions. After responding to all areas, use the *Validations* column of the *Sections* page to confirm all items were completed. Take the time to confirm each uploaded document is accurate and complete. Once all users have completed their entries, the LEA ESSA Discretionary Grant director and Authorized Representative (i.e., the Director of Schools) (in this order) must return to the *Sections* page to change the status to submit the ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring work to the department. At each level, the instrument may be approved or returned. Returning the instrument allows the instrument to be edited. The ESSA, Fiscal, and Authorized Representative must then approve it again.

Evidence to be Uploaded

There are no uploads required. LEAs may upload documents to provide additional information. Only the ***Related Documents*** page within this instrument allows LEAs to upload evidence.

Uploads are optional.

Documents must be clearly labeled (e.g., "Procedures for tracking services").

Redact Personally Identifiable Information (PII)* from all uploads.

****Do not upload Personally Identifiable Information (PII).***

The term "PII," as defined in OMB Memorandum M-07-1616, refers to information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual. **Redacting PII means removing any information that could potentially identify a specific individual before submitting the documentation in ePlan.** Before uploading redacted information, confirm that the personally identifiable information cannot be discerned. Please be very careful with the use of black/dark pens or markers to redact information, as information is typically viewable through the marks. Redacted information **must not be visible** underneath pen marks or visible in an electronic document by highlighting the text.

Agree/Disagree Questions

All pages within this instrument require responses to agree/disagree questions. Next to each item, use the drop-down box or check box to select the most appropriate answer.

- If a user chooses "Agree," there is no need to justify the response.
- If a user chooses "Disagree," a short justification must be provided in the small text box under the question.

* The LEA ensures that the budget and expenses align with Federal grant and State budget administrative guidelines.

Select... ▾

If Disagree selected, please explain:

Open Response

A few pages within this instrument require responses to questions or statements in an open response text box. Please read each question or statement thoroughly and respond with enough information to address all elements of the question or statement.

* Describe how the LEA identified the needs/priorities for the grant.

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Assurances

By contributing to and/or submitting this monitoring instrument and any associated required evidence or documentation, the LEA acknowledges that the representations made in the monitoring accurately reflect the programs, personnel, data, and procedures of the LEA (and school[s] where applicable). All records necessary to confirm the correctness of the information provided by the LEA must be kept five (5) years beyond the final reporting date, and access to such records must be provided to the Tennessee Department of Education upon request.

Validations

When the monitoring instrument is complete, click the **Messages** link on the [Sections](#) page in the column labeled "Validation." This link provides an overview of the validations that ePlan is running behind the scenes.

Items marked "**Warning**" are validations that users are not required to address prior to submitting the instrument. An example of a warning validation is that an optional related document was not uploaded. Items marked "**Error**" are incorrect, and users must address each one before submitting the instrument.

Click on the link to the left of the word "**Error**" to go to the identified page to make corrections. If the LEA does not address all "**Error**" validations, ePlan does not allow users to submit the instrument. Examples of errors are not uploading a required related document or not responding to a required question.

Once all errors have been resolved, the instrument is ready to submit.

Workflow and How to Submit the Instrument

Draft Started

When the instrument opens, any LEA-level staff member assigned the **Authorized Representative** or **ESSA Discretionary Grant Director** roles may visit the [Sections](#) page of the instrument to change the status to **Draft Started**. Once a user chooses the **Status**, they must press **Confirm** before the status updates.

Draft Completed

When no validation errors remain on any of the pages, users assigned the **Authorized Representative** or **ESSA Discretionary Grant Director** roles may return to the [Sections](#) page of the instrument to change the status to **Draft Completed**. Once a user chooses the **Status**, they must press **Confirm** before the status updates.

ESSA Discretionary Grant Director Reviewed

Users who have requested and received the ESSA Discretionary Grant Director role via an ePlan User Access Form may change the status from **Draft Completed** to **ESSA Discretionary Grant Director Reviewed**. By changing the status, the ESSA Discretionary Grant Director agrees that all information submitted is accurate.

Once a user chooses the **Status**, they must press **Confirm** before the status updates. In addition, the director can return the instrument to its previous status if additional changes are needed prior to submission.

Authorized Representative Approved

Users who have requested and received the *role* of Authorized Representative (i.e., Director of Schools) via an ePlan User Access Form may change the status to **Authorized Representative Approved**. By changing the status, the Director of Schools agrees that all information submitted is accurate. Once a user chooses the **Status**, they must press **Confirm** before the status updates. In addition, the director can return the instrument to its previous status if additional changes are needed prior to submission.

After this status has been set, department staff receive a notice that the instrument has been submitted for review.

TDOE Title III Immigrant Grant Manager

The Title III Immigrant grant manager, acting as the lead monitor for the LEA review, marks the instrument **Ready for Monitoring Results Review** after the grant manager reviews all content provided by the LEA. In addition, the grant manager can return the instrument to its previous status if additional changes are needed prior to submission.

TDOE FPO Director Reviewed

A department's senior director marks the monitoring instrument **Director Reviewed** once all monitoring results are reviewed and final. In addition, the senior director can return the instrument to its previous status if additional changes are needed prior to submission.

Monitoring Closed

Once all items are marked as “Yes”/Approved, the divisional coordinator requests that the LEA monitoring status be changed to **Monitoring Closed**. LEAs with all items marked as “Yes”/Approved will be notified via email that the status of the Results-Based Monitoring instrument in ePlan has been changed to Monitoring Closed. LEAs receive an automated notification that the monitoring has been closed.

Printing

Users may print or download a PDF from the [Sections](#) page.

- To print the entire monitoring instrument, click the **Print** link across from the word “All” at the top of the [Sections](#) page. Note that a print request does not include any uploaded related documents.
- To print a single page, click on the **Print** link across from the name of the page.
- To print an entire section, click on the **Print** link to the far right of the section name.
- To choose multiple pages, check the **Print Select Items** box at the top of the print column to select more than one page. The **Print** links appear as checkboxes. Select all text boxes for the desired print request.
- Select the checkboxes and click **Print** at the top of the column.
- The **Print Request** screen pops up. If necessary, Users may rename their print job here.
- Click **Print**.
- The **Generating Document** screen appears. The system takes 20–30 seconds to generate the print job. For larger files, expect an email from the ePlan system when the file is ready to download.
- After ePlan generates the print file, click **Return to Planning** to return to the [Sections](#) page of the Discretionary Grant Monitoring instrument.
- A PDF generates and appears at the top of the page from the **TDOE Resources** menu item in ePlan. The PDF link remains in **TDOE Resources** for five days. Users may use the **Delete** links to remove any print jobs if desired.

Monitoring Results

As described in previous sections of this document, upon receipt of each LEA's completed instrument, the monitoring team reviews the submitted information. It is expected that monitoring instruments will be completed with sufficient information prior to submission. The ESSA Discretionary Grant Monitoring process contains monitoring results, shared with the LEA at the conclusion of the review, and may result in findings of non-compliance if areas of non-compliance are discovered, and the department may include required action steps or recommendations to ensure compliance with federal or state laws, state policy, or state board rule.

By **April 20**, the team and the Immigrant grant manager will review all compiled data and short answer responses to determine final results. Once all information is reviewed, the Immigrant grant manager will follow up with the LEAs on any technical assistance needs or monitoring results with required action steps. For areas of concern, such as findings of non-compliance or corrections needed, LEAs may be required to upload updated documentation.

Monitoring Results—LEA Response

Once the LEA receives an automated notification from ePlan that the status has changed to **TDOE Director Reviewed**, monitoring results are ready to view. The LEA must first change the status to **LEA Results Review Started** and **Confirm**. Hovering the mouse over the status allows users to see who can change the status on behalf of the LEA.

Once the status has been changed, scroll to the bottom of the **Sections** menu, then choose **Monitoring Results-LEA Response** to view results. There are six possible results for each item:

	Finding(s) of Non-Compliance: Significant compliance and quality concerns of federally-required components
	Corrections Required: Compliance and quality concerns of state-required components
	Improvement Recommended: Marginally satisfactory compliance with quality concerns
	Met Requirements: Satisfactory program implementation and compliance with reviewed components
	Exceeded Requirements: High-quality program implementation and compliance with state and federal program requirements
	Not Applicable: LEA does not participate in the program

Findings of Non-Compliance and Corrections Needed include descriptions, action steps, and required documentation that the LEA must respond to by uploading items. Use the **pencil icon** to upload a document where required. Once the upload has been saved, the department automatically receives a notification on Wednesday and Sunday after the upload until it has been reviewed and marked as approved or not.

If a monitoring team member marks an item as approved, no additional action is required by the LEA for the purposes of this monitoring process. If a monitoring team member marks an item as not approved, a comment will be included on the right side of the monitoring result to provide technical support until all items have been marked approved.

Upon marking the last item as approved, a monitoring team member requests that the senior director of compliance conduct a final review and change the status to **Monitoring Closed**.

Technical Assistance and Support

ESEA and Title III Immigrant Funding Support

Please contact the FPO program Immigrant grant manager for support, including support about how to answer questions that do not seem clear or to address specific uploads.

- Contact the McKinney-Vento & Immigrant Grant Manager, **Vanessa Waters**, at Vanessa.Waters@tn.gov or (615) 917-3750; or

Fiscal Support

Please contact the fiscal compliance manager or the LEA's assigned [fiscal consultant](#).

General Monitoring Support

Contact the Senior Director of Compliance, **Geneva Taylor**, at Geneva.Taylor@tn.gov or (615) 580-2039.

Extensions to Deadlines

If an LEA must request an extension to the submission deadline or a Monitoring Result deadline, please reach out before the date listed within the instrument via email to Vanessa.Waters@tn.gov to request an extension and include a new requested deadline that is reasonable and ambitious, and the reason for the request. The compliance review team considers all written requests within two business days, and the user who made the request will receive a reply via email.