

When is a Cost Allowable?

Use of Title I, Part A Funds for Parent and Family Engagement

Overview: The Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95, makes parent and family engagement a condition of all districts receiving Title I, Part A funds. For districts receiving more than \$500,000, at least 1 percent must be spent on family engagement activities. Districts receiving \$500,000 or less must engage families too but don't have to reserve a specific amount of funding. Elementary and Secondary Education Act Section 1116(a)(3)(A). From the 1 percent, at least 90 percent must be distributed to Title I schools while as much as 10 percent can be used for districtwide activities. The 1 percent minimum is a floor, not a ceiling, as some LEAs will allocate more funding on top of the 1 percent for districtwide initiatives in family engagement.

ESSA recommends districts do at least one of the following initiatives (ESEA Section 1116(a)(3)(D)):

- Supporting schools or nonprofit organizations that provide professional development for family engagement.
- Supporting programs that reach parents at home, in the community, or at school.
- Disseminating best practices on family engagement.
- Collaborating between schools and community organizations to increase family engagement.
- Activities or strategies that are consistent with the local educational agency's family engagement policy.

Guiding Questions?

Are the costs allocable? Will they benefit the Title I Program?

Were families consulted on how Title I funds will be spent on family engagement?

Are costs adequately documented?

Does the Title I spending align with the local and state regulations or policies?

Does the LEA and/or school policy on family engagement support the expense?

SPENDING TIPS FOR PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FUNDS

SPENDING TIPS....
Go for it (allowable expenses)
Childcare for family activities
Transportation to a family engagement activity, such as a Title I annual meeting
Community outreach, such as a family engagement app for a smartphone
Family literacy programs
Training staff in family engagement
Parent liaison
Parent advisory council

Cover your bases (maintain these items)
Receipts, itemized invoices, cancelled checks, and billing statement
Dated and signed attendance sheets from family engagement activities
Parent surveys and other family feedback that support an expense
Title I policy papers, such as a family engagement policy, schoolwide plan or school improvement plan, that explain and support expenditures on family engagement

Proceed with caution....
Food is not mentioned in ESSA, so make sure food expenses meet the conditions of federal regulations, such as being reasonable and necessary, allocable, and well documented. Schools might limit food to “light refreshments,” such as cupcakes and coffee, or they might justify an inexpensive meal, such as pizza, as necessary because the catered activity takes place over the dinner hour.
Watch out for accumulating food expenses. If food accounts for much of the family engagement annual budget, auditors might not think it’s a reasonable or necessary expense.
Make sure parents and families are the focus of the activity. Catered food cannot feed school staff.
Make sure family engagement activities support the Title I goal of increasing academic achievement for the disadvantaged. Title I funds cannot support social activities or entertainment.

Just say no: Whatever you do, never bill for ...
Don’t pay parents to participate in activities. Title I should only offset costs to participate, such as providing transportation or childcare.
Entertainment. Title I funds cannot be used for amusement or diversions, such as end-of-the-year trips to a theme park.
Alcohol. Never allowed
Charitable donations. Not allowed with federal funds no matter how worthy the cause
Promotional items, gifts, T-shirts, or souvenirs