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Ask SSC . . . Can Staff at the District Office be Paid from Federal Jobs Funding?

Q. Can federal jobs funding be used to pay for staff that are supported centrally, but providing services at school sites. For instance, our district would like to retain and possibly increase academic coaching and educational technology support, would this be possible with federal jobs funding?

A. The federal jobs fund legislation states that the funding "may be used only for compensation and benefits and other expenses, such as support services, necessary to retain existing employees, to recall or rehire former employees, and to hire new employees, in order to provide early childhood, elementary, and secondary educational and related services." From this we know that the funding may only be used for compensation (salary and benefits) and that it is limited to those within a district involved with educational and related services. The legislation has identified a few prohibited expenses including directly paying debt service and "general administrative expense and "other LEA-level support services expenditures as defined by the Common Core of Data."

The glossary for the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Common Core Data defines general administrative expenses as-"expenditures for the board of education, superintendent's office for the administration for the LEA." That's the part that's fairly clear. The next prohibited area is a bit more convoluted, but here's the short version. No Jobs Funds may be used for LEA-level (i.e., central office) support service expenditures, which include:

- Student support services-including attendance and social work, guidance, health, psychological services, speech, audiology, etc.
- Instructional staff support-activities that include instructional staff training, educational media, or other instructional staff services
- General administration-see above
- Operations and maintenance
- Other support services-business services, central support services (activities, other than general administration, which support each of the other instructional and support services programs, including planning, research, development, evaluation, information, and data processing services), and other support services expenditures not reported elsewhere

Based on the above, academic coaches, education technology staff, and even school psychologist and other staff working to help at the site would be allowed because it is not LEA-level administrative, but site support providing direct service to students. It is important to keep in mind that the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education generically applies to all states so there are no particular object, function, or goal codes that would apply statewide as allowed or prohibited. With that said, the burden of proof lies with individual local education agencies to demonstrate that funding has not been used to support LEA-level support services.

-Jannelle Kubinec