

ESSA Quick Reference Brief: General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)

Statement

What the Law Says

Section 427 of the United States Department of Education's General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) asks organizations applying for federal education funds to describe the proactive steps they will take to ensure all participants—especially students, educators, and community members with diverse strengths, backgrounds, and needs—can meaningfully access, engage in, and benefit from federally supported programs. This requirement is referred to as a GEPA statement, and it must be included each time an organization applies for federal funding.

What it Means

Districts applying for Federal funds under any program must complete a GEPA statement. The statement should describe potential barriers that may impact equitable participation in those programs, and the strategies the district will implement to address the identified barriers.

Developing a Response

GEPA allows applicants discretion in developing and describing the activities that will occur to meet this requirement. The statute highlights six types of barriers that may impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, local education agencies (LEAs) should determine whether these or other barriers may prevent students, teachers, etc. from accessing or participation in the Federally funded project or activity.

The LEA may use information they have obtained through their comprehensive needs assessment process to develop their GEPA statement. The root causes identified, combined with the associated use of federal funds, may be appropriate, based on the LEA's local context, to satisfy the GEPA requirement.



Guiding Questions

When creating the GEPA statement for the Unified Application, an LEA may consider the following questions while reflecting on a particular activity or program funded with ESEA funds:

1. What students, staff, and other beneficiaries might participate in or benefit from this activity?
2. What needs might the participants have?
3. What is a potential barrier that could arise, or what systemic conditions may prohibit or limit participation in programs?
4. What are the strategies and action steps necessary to address, prevent, or mitigate this barrier before the barrier prevents participation or restricts access?
5. Who will be responsible for implementing the necessary strategies and steps?
6. What is the timeline of when the strategies will be implemented?

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What are the possible barriers to participation?** The possible barriers that may impede equitable access to federally funded programs include gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, or others identified by the district.
- 2. Do I have to submit a GEPA statement for every barrier listed?** No. LEAs may address multiple barriers, if applicable and appropriate; however, the requirement is that at least one statement is submitted.
- 3. By identifying a barrier to participation, am I admitting in writing that the district is discriminating against students or staff?** Generally, no. Barriers are not the same as overt discriminatory practices. Civil rights laws prohibit the use of discriminatory practices in federally funded programs; an LEA's creation and implementation of a non-discrimination policy often address such requirements. While the LEA's statement of non-discrimination is supportive of the intent of the GEPA statement, it does not satisfy the GEPA requirement.
- 4. How long does the GEPA statement need to be?** There is no right or wrong GEPA statement or length requirement. A GEPA statement is a brief description of how the funds you are applying for will be used to remove barriers for impacted students to participate and succeed.
- 5. Can I use one GEPA statement for all ESEA programs?** Yes. In the case that the beneficiaries of the funds for which an applicant is applying experience different barriers to participation, the applicant should submit a GEPA statement that is responsive to the applicable barriers.
- 6. Where can I find more information to support writing the GEPA statement?** ODE developed a [sample GEPA statement](#) as a resource for districts as they develop their own.