

# Evidence-Based Funds for English Learners

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



This FAQ document is intended to help district leaders and community members understand Evidence-Based Funding for English learners (EL EBF). The three sections below cover how EBF is calculated for ELs, the statutory and regulatory requirements tied to EL EBF, and the allowable uses of these funds.

ISBE Multilingual and Finance staff collaborated to select the questions and produce concise, accurate information. Any additional questions should be directed to ISBE's Multilingual team at [multilingual@isbe.net](mailto:multilingual@isbe.net) or to the Resource Allocation Team at [EBFspendingplan@isbe.net](mailto:EBFspendingplan@isbe.net). This guide will continue to be updated as needed to support districts with Evidence-Based Funding for English learners.

## Calculating EBF for English Learners

### 1. What portion of a district's Evidence-Based Funding is provided for English learners?

The funding provided to English learners (ELs) through the EBF formula includes money provided through the Base Funding Minimum and annual Tier Funding mechanism.

#### Base Funding Minimum

EBF statute includes a hold harmless provision that ensures districts in Illinois receive at minimum the state contribution from the prior year, a dollar amount termed the Base Funding Minimum (BFM). When EBF was first implemented in fiscal year 2018, it consolidated and replaced five grants, including the Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) and Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) grant. The BFM is comprised of the money received for these grants in fiscal year 2017. The BFM also includes money received through the tier funding mechanism, explained below.

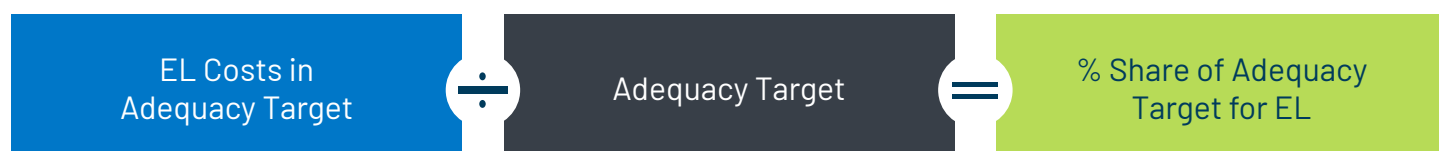
#### Tier Funding

In addition to the Base Funding Minimum, districts also receive annual Tier Funding, which is new money distributed based on a district's tier assignment and final percentage of adequacy. Tier Funding includes calculations based on the enrollment numbers of English learners and the estimated costs of supporting those students. Per the hold harmless provision, Tier Funding is incorporated into the following fiscal year's Base Funding Minimum. Annually, Tier Funding is contingent on sufficient appropriations from the General Assembly.

## 2. How is the amount of EL EBF calculated each year?

The Base Funding Minimum and Tier Funding both include dollar amounts for English learners. The Base Funding Minimum is equivalent to the prior year's state contribution, and Tier Funding represents new funding for the district. The portion of EBF funding for English learners is based on the enrollment of ELs in the district and the estimated costs associated with adequately serving these students.

To determine Tier Funding for English learners, ISBE considers the specific positions that serve EL students (intervention teachers, pupil support, etc.) and the count of such staff necessary to support the district's EL population. Multiplying the number of staff in each position by the cost of the state's average teacher salaries and benefits generates the EL cost in terms of the district's adequacy target<sup>1</sup> seen below in blue). This amount is divided by the overall adequacy target (pictured in gray), which gives us the **Percent Share of the Adequacy Target** attributable to English learners (in green).



That percentage is then multiplied by the total amount of Tier Funding (in blue below), to arrive at the dollar amount of **Tier Funding for English Learners** (in yellow).



## 3. What enrollment data is used for EL EBF?

EL Enrollment is the average of the count of preK-12 students participating in a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) or Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) recorded on Oct. 1 and March 1 of each year. ISBE uses the Average Student Enrollment, which is the greater of the current year EL enrollment or the average enrollment of the last three years.<sup>1</sup>

## 4. How does EL enrollment work for Regional Offices of Education?

EBF Enrollment for Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) is based only on the March 1 count. Therefore, English learners who attend a serving school that is part of an ROE with a percentage of day attended of 100% in SIS on March 1 will be counted for the ROE rather than the public school district.<sup>2</sup> Similar to districts, ISBE then uses the Average Student Enrollment, which is the greater of the current year EL enrollment or the average enrollment of the last three years.

<sup>1</sup>More information on the calculation of a district's adequacy target can be found on the [EBF Distribution webpage](#).

<sup>2</sup>For more information on EL EBF enrollment, see the [EBF Enrollment webinar](#) and corresponding [presentation deck](#).

<sup>3</sup>See page 3 of the [EBF User Guide](#).

## 5. Where can I find the dollar amount my district received for EL EBF this year?

There are several resources available to districts interested in the amount of funding for English learners they receive through EBF.

- [Evidence-Based Funding webpage](#): Users can access webinars, technical guides, and other resources explaining how the EBF formula distributes funding.
- [EBF Distribution webpage](#): The distribution site hosts current and historical files with district-level EBF allocations. Users can reference the full calculation file to view all components of EBF funding, as well as EL-specific allocation files.
- [EBF Spending Plan webpage](#): Offers users information specific to the EBF Spending Plan, including the EL Comparative Analysis Tool, which allows districts to observe changes in EL Enrollment and EL EBF funding over time.

## Requirements for EL EBF

### 6. What reporting and documentation requirements are affiliated with EL EBF?

- **Annual Expenditure Report**: Any Organizational Unit that receives \$5,000 or more in EL EBF funds **must** submit an expenditure report detailing how the EL EBF funds were spent per [105 ILCS 5/14C-12](#). The report is due annually in July and can be found in IWAS under English Learner Education Funding Allocation Calculation Details. Instructions for completing expenditure reporting and further resources can be found on ISBE's [Multilingual webpage](#).
- **Program Delivery Report**: Any Organizational Unit that receives \$5,000 or more in EL EBF funds **must** submit a Program Delivery Report on EL Programming and/or Title III use. The report is due annually in July and can be found in IWAS. The [Program Delivery Report User Guide](#) and other resources can be found on ISBE's [Multilingual webpage](#).
- **Bilingual Service Plan (BSP)**: Any district that enrolls English learners and receives federal funds must complete the BSP, which is a part of the Consolidated District Plan (CDP). The BSP contains information on attendance centers, EL services, professional development, and the Bilingual Parent Advisory Council (BPAC). The BSP is due annually along with the CDP in April. If a district has a Transitional Bilingual Education Program, the BPAC must review the Bilingual Service Plan according to [Title 23 Part 228\(c\)\(4\)](#) of the Illinois Administrative Code. Presentations and informative documents can be found on ISBE's [Multilingual webpage](#).
- **EBF Spending Plan**: All Organizational Units must submit a Spending Plan annually to ISBE ([105 ILCS 5/18-18.5](#)). The Spending Plan details how each Organizational Unit will utilize funds attributable to English learners within EBF. The BPAC must review the EBF Spending Plan according to [Title 23 Part 228\(c\)\(4\)](#) of the Illinois Administrative Code. While school districts submit the EBF Spending Plan as a part of the annual budget, ROEs, ISCs, and other Organizational Units submit a standalone EBF Spending Plan to ISBE. More information can be found on ISBE's [EBF Spending Plan webpage](#).

- **Separate Account of EL EBF Expenditures:** Each school district with at least one English learner must maintain an accurate detailed and separate account for all EL EBF expenditures ([105 ILCS 5/14C-12](#)). The revised [State Chart of Accounts](#) has also “rebranded” revenue code 3305 as EL EBF Funding, formerly known as TBE/TPI State Funding. The code does not generate revenue but is useful for tracking EL EBF expenditures.

## **7. Where can I review my district’s expenditure report for EL EBF?**

Community members interested in the annual expenditure reports districts submit through IWAS for EL EBF Funds can find them through the [Financial Reimbursement Information System](#). After selecting the year and organization unit, users can choose **3305 English Learner Evidence-Based Funding** under Program for details regarding a district’s EL EBF expenditures.

## **Allowability for EL EBF**

### **8. What can my district use EL EBF for?**

All funding attributable to English learners through EBF must be used for programs and services authorized in Article 14C of the School Code. Further, according to Article 14C of the Illinois School Code, 60% of EL EBF must be used for the costs of instructional programs and services (e.g., expenditures found under function 1000) in the State Chart of Accounts.

### **9. Are expenditures from EL EBF required to be supplemental?**

No. EL EBF funds do not need to be supplemental. For example, new EL EBF funds received through the annual Tier Funding mechanism (see Question 1) can be used to fund existing ESL or Bilingual endorsed staff salaries or bilingual/ESL instructional materials. New funds do not need to be dedicated to new staff or services, so long as they support EL students.

### **10. Can I use EL EBF funds for tutoring?**

Yes. Outside of the requirements highlighted in Question 8, there are no other limitations specifically related to the use of EL EBF. Therefore, EL EBF funds can be used to finance tutoring or other supplemental instruction so long as those services specifically support EL students. Moreover, tutoring services for English learners would count toward the instructional requirement outlined in Question 8, as it falls under function 1000 in the State Chart of Accounts.

### **11. Can I carry over EL EBF if I don’t use the full funding amount each year?**

In general, the amount of EL EBF expended each year should match the allotment for the fiscal year. The carryover of significant amounts of EL EBF dollars while spending Title III dollars can place a district in danger of supplanting and is thus discouraged. However, there may be instances in which carryover is unavoidable — for example: when a district is unable to fill a needed position. In such instances, district leadership should work with program consultants to develop a plan for the funds.

## 12. What are some examples of how I can braid multiple funding sources to support English learners?

- A district could braid Title I and Title III funds to cover an EL summer school that supports English learners. The district could expend the funds for Title I and use Title III to cover the additional expenses related to serving ELs, such as purchasing bilingual materials, for that summer school.
- As another example, a district could use EL EBF to cover a portion of FTE for a paraprofessional to support English learners (.5 out of 1 FTE, for example). Other funds can be used in this situation to cover the additional FTE that is needed. Districts could use EL EBF to cover the cost of an EL teacher position to provide school-day EL services, use Title I funds to cover school day reading or math interventions, and use Title III funds to pay for an after-school English club for EL students.

ISBE welcomes additional examples from the field for inclusion in this guidance document. Districts that have successfully braided funding sources to support ELs in their communities and would like to be included in this guidance should reach out to Isabel Monaghan at [imonagha@isbe.net](mailto:imonagha@isbe.net).