



Resultant



Indiana Builds a Public Spending Dashboard To Continue Conversations about Once-in-a-Generation Federal Aid

Reaching decisions about funding allocation can be a challenging proposition under the best circumstances. For state departments of education juggling pandemic response in addition to ample everyday education challenges, forging a path for communicating with all stakeholders to maximize unprecedented federal funding is essential.



SETTING THE STAGE

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law in the early days of the pandemic earmarked more than \$2 trillion of federal aid, \$13.2 billion of which was allocated to K-12 education through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. Two additional rounds of federal ESSER funding followed, providing schools with even greater financial resources to combat pandemic-related challenges.

What that money meant for various schools across the 50 states has varied; some states found it a relief for covering gaps education cuts had left, and others worked to navigate regulations and uncertainty brought about by unending changes in Coronavirus realities—and the measures intended to address them. Education leaders, teachers, families, industry leaders, and community partners grew anxious to see results from what most considered a crucial investment in education.

THE PROBLEM

Within Indiana, families and other stakeholders had questions about how schools were planning to utilize the \$2.8 billion from three rounds of ESSER funding. With more than 440 school corporations in the state, managing those conversations created a unique challenge. Utilizing these new funds—while addressing a global pandemic—meant overcoming a cascade of novel challenges.

While the state and its school corporations met challenges at every turn as businesses shut down, schools went virtual, and illness tore through the population, pressure to utilize the funds increased. Indiana needed a better way to transparently display schools' locally developed spending plans, and this would mean deploying new technology.

OUR APPROACH

Resultant has been a partner to the State of Indiana since our earliest days, and because of that relationship and ongoing work on other projects, our team was on hand as IDOE developed processes first for communicating ESSER funding allocations to school corporations. An Excel spreadsheet was doing the job, but barely. Our team suggested a simple software solution to more easily track and share this vital funding information, and IDOE embraced the idea.

Our business intelligence developer built an internal Power BI dashboard backed by Azure Blob storage. Enhancing this tool to publicly show schools' locally driven spending became the next order of business.



"With this unprecedented level of federal funding becoming available to Indiana schools, we know stakeholders at all levels are interested in knowing as much as possible about the amount of funding, the rate of spending, and the use of these dollars at the local level," said John Keller, chief technology officer at IDOE.

Members of our UX/UI and BI teams worked alongside IDOE stakeholders to launch a new public dashboard on IDOE's website. This dashboard had to use branding consistent with the agency's identity and—most important—securely share data to create a seamless user experience for all site visitors.

One of the challenges in bringing together data from hundreds of school corporations was addressing inconsistent data—naming conventions, for instance, varied across the state—which made the first order of business compiling and deduplicating the data. From there, we worked with IDOE to design a mechanism that would automate the system to enable real-time updates while maintaining state privacy firewalls.

Working collaboratively created an atmosphere where problem solving flourished, and the Resultant and IDOE teams put their heads together for testing and talking through questions as they moved the dashboard forward.

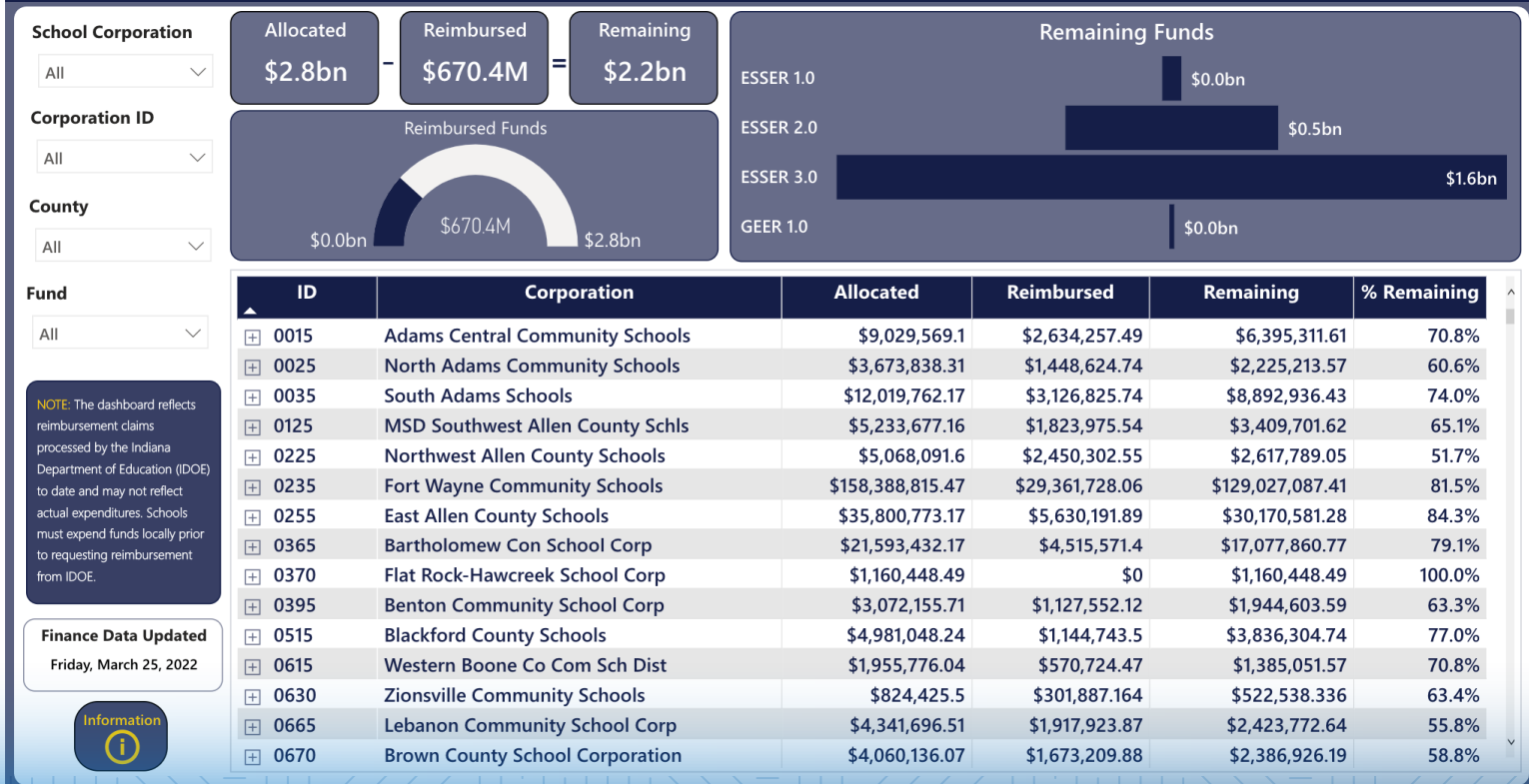
All over the country, state departments of education are overwhelmed, as are local schools and educators. Beyond providing technical expertise, our team offered a neutral perspective that kept the project moving forward.



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JOHN KELLER
CHIEF TECHNICAL OFFICER,
INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Indiana Department of Education: School Corporation COVID-19 Reimbursement



THE OUTCOME

IDOE's Statewide COVID-19 Relief School Spending Dashboard launched on January 31, 2022. Resultant is actively helping IDOE transparently communicate district-level spending of COVID-19 relief funds empowering all stakeholders—including educators, families, communities, and beyond—with information on how schools are using this financial resource.

Any interested party can now search for any school corporation in the state to see what funds have been allocated and how much has been reimbursed at any point in time. The dashboard tracks ESSER funds, as well as funds awarded from the federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) grants. Putting the numbers in front of stakeholders will enable conversations that help inform school corporations' decisions about those funds. As it meets this once-in-a-generation opportunity, IDOE hopes to encourage idea-sharing that will create even greater opportunities for all students.

"IDOE was pleased to deliver this first version of the COVID-19 Relief School Spending Dashboard with support from Resultant," Keller said, "and we look forward to enhancing these visualizations in the months ahead as we respond to the public interest in how the money is being spent to improve student learning and address local needs."