

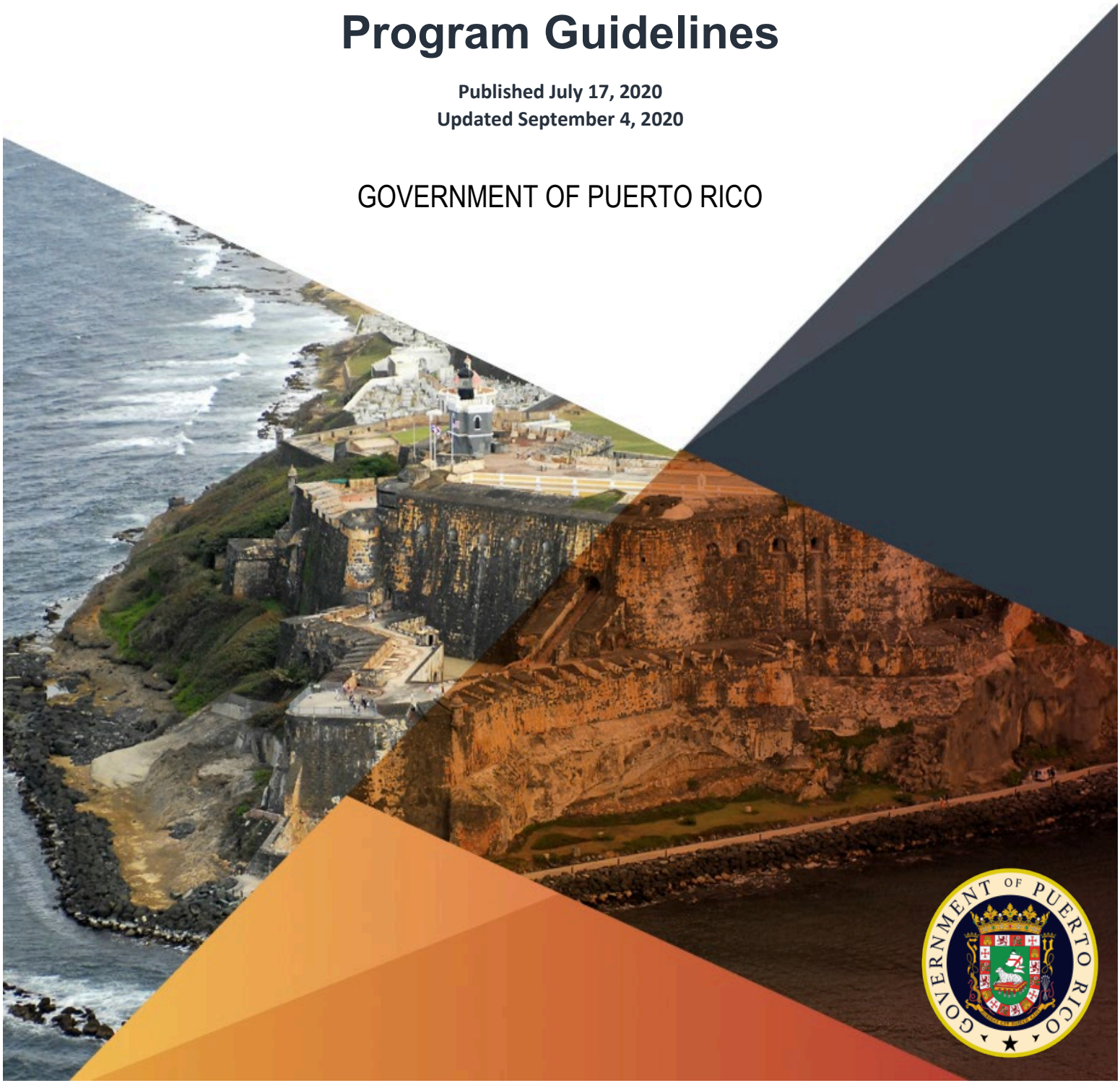
# Remote Learning Solutions for Students

## ***CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND***

### Program Guidelines

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GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO



## Table of Contents

Program Overview .....	3
Background .....	3
Program Description .....	3
Points of Contact.....	4
Program Component One: Technology Solutions for College-Bound Students .....	4
Eligibility Criteria .....	4
Allowable Expenditures .....	4
Ineligible Expenditures.....	5
Process Overview.....	5
Program Component Two: Educational Programming.....	7
Eligibility Criteria .....	7
Allowable Expenditures .....	8
Ineligible Expenditures.....	8
Process Overview.....	8

## PROGRAM GUIDELINES

### Program Overview

#### Background

In response to the sudden decline in economic output following the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, Congress signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act into law on March 27, 2020. The CARES Act established the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), which provides \$150 billion in direct assistance for domestic governments, territories, and tribal areas to disburse in accordance with its provisions.

To ensure the expeditious processing of apportioned funds from the CARES Act, the Government of Puerto Rico established the Disbursement Oversight Committee, consisting of a representative of the Secretary of the Department of the Treasury, a representative of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OGP), and a representative of the Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority (AAFAF).

#### Program Description

On May 15, 2020, Governor Wanda Vázquez Garced issued Executive Order OE-2020-040 establishing Puerto Rico's Strategic Disbursement Plan for the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) under the CARES Act. The plan lays out 16 distinct programs that address both government needs (mainly associated with attending to the public health emergency and continuing government operations) and those of the private sector, which has been severely affected by interruption of operations.

On June 18, 2020, Governor Wanda Vázquez Garced announced a new program, Remote Learning Solutions for Students (Program), to be funded from the CRF Reserve that was initially identified in the Strategic Disbursement Plan. This Program makes up to \$50 million in immediate CRF funds available to ensure that students will have access to the resources and technology they need to continue their education.

One component of the program will ensure 2020 high school graduates who are enrolled to begin a postsecondary program during 2020 will have access to the technology and connectivity needed to participate in distance learning programs. It will be conducted in partnership with local technology and connectivity vendors from whom eligible students may purchase devices and services needed to engage in distance learning resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency. Each eligible student will be permitted up to a maximum expenditure of \$1,000.

A second component of the program will produce education programming for students who are unable to attend classes in person. It will be conducted in partnership with television production and distribution vendors with the capabilities and skills required to produce quality programming.

This Program will be implemented in accordance with applicable federal regulations. Disbursement of Program funds will be subject to the strictest standards to ensure compliance with federal regulations and best practices. Therefore, each request for disbursement will be duly documented and subject to control and audit.

## Points of Contact

The Program will be supervised by the Disbursement Oversight Committee and administered by the Department of the Treasury of Puerto Rico and the Department of Education of Puerto Rico (PRDE).

## Other CRF Programs

In addition to the Program detailed above, the Governor allocated funds for additional programs to address both government needs (mainly associated with attending to the public health emergency and continuing government operations) and those of the private sector, which has been severely affected by interruption of operations. Please visit <http://www.aafaf.pr.gov/covid-19-resource-center/> for additional information about these programs.

## Program Component One: Technology Solutions for College-Bound Students

This component will ensure 2020 high school graduates who are enrolled to begin a postsecondary degree program during 2020 will have access to the technology and connectivity needed to participate in distance learning programs. It will be conducted in partnership with local technology and connectivity vendors from whom eligible students may purchase devices and services needed to engage in distance learning resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency. Each eligible student will be permitted up to a maximum expenditure of \$1,000.

## Eligibility Criteria

To participate in this Program, a student must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be a resident of Puerto Rico who, in 2020:
  - graduated from a public, private, charter, or alternative high school in Puerto Rico, or
  - satisfied all high school completion requirements in an approved equivalency program or home school;
- Provide documentation of 2020 high school completion (e.g., diploma or equivalent certification);
- Be enrolled at an accredited post-secondary institution for a term that begins in 2020, pursuing a two-year, four-year, or qualifying degree;
- Provide documentation of college or university enrollment (e.g., orientation letter, registration confirmation, class schedule, etc.), confirming their status as a 2020 first year undergraduate student pursuing a two-year, four-year, or qualifying degree;
- Provide proof of identity with a photo ID, such as a student ID, driver's license, or passport;
- Attest that the funds are necessary due to a partial or complete transition to distance learning by the post-secondary institution as a result of COVID-19;
- and
- Attest that the student does not otherwise have the necessary equipment or internet access available to participate in required distance learning.

## Allowable Expenditures

Allowable transactions under this Program must meet the following requirements:

- Purchase of eligible computing devices and/or connectivity plans that will be used for distance learning:
  - eligible devices include laptop computers, desktop computers, tablet computers, and devices needed for connectivity, such as a mobile wireless hotspot device (MiFi) or satellite antenna;
  - eligible connectivity plans include service that enables student connectivity for the purpose of distance learning for a period of time reasonably anticipated to be impacted by the continuing effect of the COVID-19 public health emergency and no greater than 12 months in duration;
- No more than one item from each of the following categories:
  - Laptop and desktop computers
  - Tablets
  - Networking devices (mobile and satellite hotspots, routers, modems, etc.)
  - Connectivity plans (broadband, satellite, wireless, etc.)
- Purchase made from participating Program vendors between July 27, 2020 and November 30, 2020;
- Purchases up to a limit of \$1,000 per student; any balance due above \$1,000 must be paid by student at time of purchase.

For further guidance please refer to the Guidance published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/state-and-local-governments> and the Frequently Asked Questions published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Coronavirus-Relief-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

### Ineligible Expenditures

Ineligible transactions under this Program include, but are not limited to:

- Purchases of devices or services not intended for use in distance learning resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Purchase amounts that exceed \$1,000 per student;  
and
- Transactions that occur based on fraudulent representations made by purchaser.

For further guidance please refer to the Guidance published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/state-and-local-governments> and the Frequently Asked Questions published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Coronavirus-Relief-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

### Process Overview

The following table outlines the timeline and process by which participating vendors will conduct the Program and by which purchases under the Program will be made available to eligible students.

July 9, 2020	Participating vendors submit an overview of their proposed offering to the Program administrator and begin preparations to launch Program
Estimated week of August 3, 2020	Application Period Opens

August 3 – November 30, 2020	Fulfillment period: purchases delivered to student and connectivity activated
Beginning September 15, 2020 and monthly thereafter	Vendor submits required monthly report and reimbursement request to Program for purchases completed during prior calendar month; subsequent monthly reports are due on October 15, November 16, and December 15, 2020
November 15, 2020	Application Period Closes
November 30, 2020	Purchasing period ends for students
December 30, 2020	Vendor submits final report to Program administrator
January 4 – April 30, 2021	The Program Audits Use of Funds Compliance and Recovery
May 1, 2021	Program Close

*Application*

Applications will be accepted from students who are 21 years of age or older, and from parents and guardians on behalf of students who are under the age of 21.

Applicants will complete an electronic form using the SURI Program administered by the Puerto Rico Department of the Treasury. All Applicants must submit documentation of high school completion and enrollment in an accredited institution of higher learning, in accordance with the Eligibility Criteria outlined above.

Upon submission, Applicants will receive a voucher via an alert in SURI. More information on forms, documents, and eligibility can be found on the web at <http://www.aafaf.pr.gov/covid-19-resource-center/>.

It is estimated that the Program will open for online applications around the week of August 3, 2020 and will remain open until November 15, 2020. All submissions will be accepted on a first come first served basis and evaluated on a rolling basis in accordance with criteria set forth by the Program.

*Eligibility Determination and Student Purchases*

Applicant will certify eligibility with terms and conditions of the Program at the moment of submitting an application. Upon verification of the Applicant’s eligibility, the Applicant will receive a voucher with additional instructions for completing eligible purchases under the Program.

A list of Program-approved vendors will be made available by August 6, 2020. Students may make eligible purchases directly from their chosen Program vendor(s), following the application and validation process described above, through November 30, 2020.

Before completing a sale transaction under this Program, vendor must verify the student’s identity and eligibility to participate in this Program, according to the Eligibility Criteria stated above. For students who are under 21 years of age, vendor may require a parent or guardian to sign any customer agreements. Approved Program vendors will have access to an online portal to check the balance available on the student’s voucher and record the eligible purchases made by the student through the Program.

*Vendor Funding*

Participating vendors who complete voucher transactions with eligible students through the Program will be required to certify and submit monthly financial reports via the SURI portal in order to receive reimbursement for the students’ purchases.

Vendors must also provide bank account information via the SURI portal in order to receive payment by electronic funds transfer.

### *Compliance*

Participating Program vendors will be required to submit a comprehensive financial reconciliation report by December 30, 2020, detailing the use of Program funds throughout the duration of the Program. Program vendors may additionally be required, upon request, to show proof of transactions and submit other required documentation.

The Disbursement Oversight Committee will receive a final report of vendor activity and disbursement of funds.

Participating Program vendors will also be required to retain evidence of eligible transactions for a period of five (5) years. Furthermore, by accepting CRF funds the recipient is required to certify proper and legal use of the funds and agrees to cooperate in any audit proceedings requested by The Government of Puerto Rico or other governing entity responsible for the compliant use of funds.

Students who make purchases under the Program that are later found to be ineligible may be required to repay the Program in full for the ineligible purchase amount.

## Program Component Two: Educational Programming

This component will seek to produce education programming for students who are unable to attend classes in person. It will be conducted in partnership with television production and distribution vendors (Vendors) with the capabilities and skill required to produce quality programming.

### *Eligibility Criteria*

Participating Vendors must:

- Be capable of providing the technical resources, talent, and academic resources required to design the content of the programming;
- Be responsible for ensuring that any academic or other personnel hired to aid in the production of content have the necessary qualifications and certifications;
- Be in good standing with all agencies and regulatory bodies of the Government of Puerto Rico;
- Commit to abide to the terms and conditions of the Program, including requests for documentation and auditing;
- Agree to return the funds, if it is determined that the Vendor did not comply with any of the Program eligibility requirements or if the funds were not spent on eligible expenses by December 30, 2020;  
and
- Agree that while receipt of other funds for COVID-19 related assistance does not preclude a Vendor from receiving funds under the Program, expenses are only eligible that 1) have not been covered or reimbursed and 2) will not be covered in the future, by other state, federal, or private programs.

## Allowable Expenditures

Allowable expenses under this component must meet the following requirements:

- Expenses required to design, develop, or deliver education programming to students for the purposes of continuing their education in a remote environment necessary as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Expenses that were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the State or government;  
and
- Expenses that were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.

For further guidance please refer to the Guidance published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/state-and-local-governments> and the Frequently Asked Questions published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Coronavirus-Relief-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

## Ineligible Expenditures

Ineligible expenses will be determined by the Committee, PRDE, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and other regulatory bodies, and under this award include, but are not limited to:

- Expenses incurred that are not substantially related to or necessary as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Employee or executive bonuses;
- Necessary expenses that have been covered or reimbursed, or that will be covered in the future, by other state, federal, or programs that the Applicant may have, including funds received through the CARES Act's Public Health and Social Services Emergency Fund;
- Expenses arising from an improper procurement process, as well as those that are deemed unreasonable or fraudulent;  
and
- Other expenses that are determined to be unnecessary for continued operations in the COVID-19 environment.

For further guidance please refer to the Guidance published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/state-and-local-governments> and the Frequently Asked Questions published by the U.S. Treasury at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Coronavirus-Relief-Fund-Frequently-Asked-Questions.pdf>.

## Process Overview

The following table outlines the anticipated timeline and process by which the Program component will be conducted.

July and August 2020	Selection of participating Vendors
July and August 2020	Design and pre-production of programming



August 2020	Monitoring and adjusting activities by the Vendor and the academic staff of PRDE
July 2020 – April 2021	Post-production by the Vendor
Beginning September 15, 2020	Vendor submits required monthly report for expenses incurred during the prior calendar month; subsequent monthly reports are due on the 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month for the prior month's expenses
December 30, 2020	All expenses incurred for the Program
January 31, 2021	Vendor submits Funds Report and Expenses Evidence
February 1 – April 30, 2021	Program audits Use of Funds for compliance to the Federal Program and AAFAF guidelines, and pursues recovery of funds if applicable
May 1, 2021	Program closes

*Application*

Applications will be accepted and evaluated by PRDE. More information on forms, documents, and eligibility can be found on the web at <http://www.aafaf.pr.gov/covid-19-resource-center/>.

*Compliance*

Participating Program Vendors will be required to submit a comprehensive financial reconciliation report on January 31, 2021, detailing the use of Program funds throughout the duration of the Program. Program Vendors may additionally be required, upon request, to show proof of transactions and submit other required documentation.

The Disbursement Oversight Committee will receive a final report of Vendor activity and disbursement of funds.

Participating Program Vendors will also be required to retain evidence of eligible transactions for a period of five (5) years. Furthermore, by accepting CRF funds the recipient is required to certify proper and legal use of the funds and agrees to cooperate in any audit proceedings requested by The Government of Puerto Rico or other governing entity responsible for the compliant use of funds.