

INNOVATIVE

SCHOOL MODELS

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated April 5, 2023

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. What is the application review process?

Assigned staff members at the Tennessee Department of Education will be making this work a priority. Each local education agency (LEAs) Innovative School Models application will be reviewed in a two-step review process by trained department staff from the divisions of College, Career & Technical Education (CCTE), Federal Programs and Oversight (FPO), and CORE.

Step	Reviewers	Action	LEA Support
Review ISM Applications	CCTE, CORE and FPO Division (internal)	Feedback to LEA	Technical Assistance
Norming Check	CCTE and CORE Leadership Team	Check non-passing review team scores for norming (Approve, Conditionally)	
LEA Reviews Required Edits*	None	LEA edits plan (if necessary)	In-depth Support
Second ISM Review	CCTE and CORE Leadership Team	Review and evaluate ISMs on rubric	

* Support will be offered to the LEAs if they would like feedback or technical assistance.

Date Application Received By	Initial Review Team Due Date	Final Review Team Due Date	If Needed: Revisions Sent to LEAs	If Needed: Revisions Due back from LEAs	Appeals Review Team Due Date	Final Approval Due Date	Grant Disbursement Date
Sept. 15, 2022	Oct. 7, 2022	Oct. 31, 2022	Oct. 7, 2022	Oct. 21, 2022	Oct. 31, 2022	Oct. 31, 2022	Nov. 15, 2022
Nov. 15, 2022	Dec. 9, 2022	Jan. 15, 2023	Dec. 9, 2022	Dec. 30, 2022	Jan. 15, 2023	Jan. 15, 2023	Feb. 1, 2023
Mar. 31, 2023	Apr. 14, 2023	Apr. 21, 2023	Apr. 14, 2023	Apr. 24, 2023	May 5, 2023	May 5, 2023	May 15, 2023

2. What are the reporting guidelines and timeline?

All LEA's that received grant fund disbursements on or before 12/31/22 will be required to submit the first monitoring report by June 30, 2023. The report instructions will be delivered this Spring. Reports for all LEAs are due:

- January 30, 2024
- June 30, 2024
- January 30, 2025
- June 30, 2025
- January 30, 2026
- Final Report due June 30, 2026

3. Where can the DUNS number for each district be located?

The district office that oversees federal programs should be able to provide the district's DUNS number. If the district receives Perkins Grant funding, the DUNS number is also located at the top of the most recent award letter.

BUDGET

4. Is it required that the ISM grant be for a brand-new program, or can the funds be used to strengthen or expand an existing program?

The ISM funding can be used for new or existing programs. For new programs, the department has provided a number of examples and guidance to support districts who want to create contemporary, competitive programming. For existing programs, districts should consider whether all student participants will complete an industry certification, job-embedded practice and/or significant college credit.

5. If the school/district wants to spend the full allocation in Year 1, are there any barriers to this?

No, if the expenditures are aligned with the grant budget, then those will be approved. In order to expand the life of the funds to address issues like supply chain shortage and district capacity, the department created a multi-year grant. However, districts have the flexibility to spend those funds over the life of the grant.

6. Why is the money not available immediately?

Tennessee is a reimbursement state. While the allocations (or how much money is allocated to each school) will be completed by July 31, 2022, districts must submit reimbursements for all expenditures, just as they do for every other state grant program. Districts are authorized to obligate grant funds upon receiving final approval for the grant.

7. What are the expectations on spending?

Schools should plan for and execute their programming with a sense of urgency, once the school and district feel confident about their vision, planning, implementation and sustainability. For some schools or districts, this might mean applying in the first window and implementing this school year. However, the department has heard from a majority of districts who want to take the next 6 months to strategize, learn from state/national/international best practices and innovation, and ensure the work is aligned to the overall vision and direction of the district.

8. It says there is a 10% limit on facilities. Is there any flexibility if I have a new building planned that is necessary to launch my program?

The intent of the money is to expand high-quality Innovative School Models and CTE programs, and not to supplement or supplant other facility projects (ex. HVAC and window replacement). **If the facility expenditure request is to create stronger or new programming, then it is aligned to the grant and may exceed the 10% limit. The district must demonstrate in the application that any additional funds used for capital outlay does not hinder the development and implementation of other programming and services necessary within an innovative school model.** This increases opportunities for more students and creates a more sustainable model.

9. Will LEAs be required to have an approved application before spending funds?

Districts may not **obligate or** pay expenditures without an approved funding application. Districts cannot seek reimbursement retroactively even if they align to the application.

10. Will funds need to be spent or invoiced before the school will receive grant dollars?

Yes, districts must seek reimbursement. As funds are drawn down, schools will need to submit receipts and/or invoices.

11. What is the maximum the LEA could seek reimbursement for each year?

The LEA is not held to a maximum reimbursement each year provided the budget and plan allows for the expenditures and the reimbursements do not exceed the total maximum amount.

12. Will the funds from year one automatically roll into year two?

The LEA must complete the current year final expenditure report (FER) before new year funds can be uploaded into ePlan. The FER is required to be completed by August 1, and the new year budget is required to be in ePlan by September 1. **(Districts can begin the FER on July 1)** Funds will be available to obligate during this time provided the budget and plan allows for the expenditures.

13. How do I keep track of these grant funds separately from the other grants I have received?

Districts are required to assign a cost center or program code in order to identify expenditures.

14. What process will districts need to follow to revise/update their budgets?

After the funding application is approved by the department, the LEA may revise the application to amend one or more budget or program items. The application process flows in the same manner as the original submission. **Detailed revision guidelines will be provided by June 30, 2023.**

15. Are LEAs encouraged to braid funds?

Districts are encouraged to braid funds maximize student outcomes. For more information on braiding funds, access the [Federal Spending Handbook](#). It is important to keep in mind that supplement not supplant provisions still apply to respected federal grants. For more information on the supplement, not supplant provisions, access the department's [Supplement, Not Supplant Guidance](#).

16. Will districts be able to budget Indirect Costs in the funding application?

No, the district will not be able to budget Indirect Costs in the funding application.

17. What is the revenue code that should be used?

The code that should be used is **46790**.

18. Will cost centers be required?

Yes, a cost center will be needed so that districts can pull reports specific to this grant.

19. If there is a school that doesn't need their full allocation amount, can those unused funds be used at another school?

No, districts should only request the amount of funds needed by each school. Unused funds cannot be transferred to another school within the district.

BUILDING/FACILITY

20. Can funding be used for new construction or facility updates?

This grant will allow funding for new construction or facility updates up to 10 percent of the school's overall grant award. See #8 for additional guidance.

21. Can purchasing a mobile unit for additional classroom space be allowable under the grant? Mobile labs can be purchased using 10 percent of the school's overall grant award. Exceptions may be granted if a district provides sufficient justification of need within the application. Additionally, the district must demonstrate in the application that any additional funds used for capital outlay does not hinder the development and implementation of other programming and services necessary within an innovative school model. A sustainability plan associated with the purchase of technology and equipment must be included.

CONSUMABLES

22. Are consumables allowed?

Yes, consumables that align with the purpose of the grant are allowable.

23. Is there a cap on consumables?

Yes, consumables are limited to 5% of the budget. Line item 71300-429c should be used.

24. Can food be provided during summer career camps and other learning experiences?

These grant funds cannot be spent on food.

EQUIPMENT

25. Can equipment be purchased for a site that is not the school, such as an industry location that is partnering with the district in submitting the grant proposal?

Yes, the ownership of the equipment and tracking (i.e., inventory) must remain with the district. At the end of the partnership, the equipment must be returned to the district, meaning purchases must be transferable. The district has the discretion to relocate any equipment or supplies at any time based on student needs.

FURNITURE

26. Is furniture allowable?

Furniture is allowable if it aligns with the program application and student needs.

INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS

27. Can funds be spent on industry credentials for students?

Yes, funds can be spent on industry credentials for students.

INVENTORY

28. What are the inventory responsibilities for equipment purchases?

There should be a master inventory list that contains all the required data points, including the source of funds used to purchase the equipment. A template will be provided in ePlan.

MARKETING

29. Are billboards an allowable expense for program awareness?

No, this is not a reasonable or necessary expense.

30. Are video production costs an allowable expense for program awareness?

Yes, provided the costs are reasonable and the need for these videos are expressed within the grant project.

31. Is postage for mailings to parents, students, newsletters about program an allowable expense?

Yes, this is an allowable expense.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

32. Could the grant funds be used to pay for conferences, related costs, professional development and travel?

Yes, professional development conferences, travel and related costs to support the grant proposal are an allowable expense up to 2 percent of the award amount annually.

33. Can these funds be used to support a teacher in earning a specialized master's degree relevant to the purposes of their proposal?

No, this is not allowed

REIMBURSEMENT

34. Is it allowable for a purchase to be made with a personal credit card and be reimbursed? For example, a vendor only accepts credit cards (no POs or debit cards), and the school does not have a credit card.

That would be acceptable if it aligns with LEA policy. The purchase cannot be tax exempt if the card is not in the name of the school. Documentation, including the receipt and a copy of the credit card statement (with personal information redacted), would be needed. Taxes are not reimbursable.

STAFF

35. Can grant funds be used to hire personnel?

Yes, funds may be used for personnel, provided these positions directly impact and supports the grant proposal/project. All positions should be clearly noted in the sustainability plan.

Positions the districts may consider are work-based learning coordinators, career counselors, or bus drivers.

36. Can we pay for positions that are already in place but will be shifting to this new work using ISM funds once our application has been approved?

Yes. However, please be mindful of the funding sources when shifting positions. There is no *supplement not supplant* with ESSER relief funds. However, the times where you must be careful is moving between Perkins and state (back and forth) or Title.

37. How is the appropriate budget line item determined for personnel?

The job description and role will determine where the position should be budgeted. For example, substitute teachers would need to be budgeted in the correct account numbers (i.e., Regular Instructional Programs-71100, Special Education Programs – 71200, and Vocation Education Program – 71200) and the line items (195 – certified subs and 198 – uncertified subs).

38. If grant funds are used to pay salaries *or stipends*, do districts need to follow the percentage model indicated in Perkins Basic?

Yes, for example, the salary/*stipend* could be paid for the life of the grant the following scale:

- 100 percent for year 1, (If an employee is hired after July 1, 2023 this would be year one.)
- 75 percent for year 2,
- 50 percent for year 3; and
- 25 percent in year 4.

If you add a new position in year 2 and beyond, the expectation is that you scale down the amount paid for the remaining years.

Grant administrative type stipends (bookkeeper, construction manager, etc.) for staff that will not be needed programmatically after the grant cycle is closed are not required to be stepped down each year.

SUSTAINABILITY

39. What is the responsibility of the school LEA after the grant period ends?

This one-time investment is intended to redesign and transform the middle school and high school experience. Districts will be required to develop a sustainability plan that aligns to the funding application. During subsequent years, districts will be required to revisit and revise their sustainability plan to ensure they are meeting long-term expectations.

TUITION

40. Is dual enrollment tuition allowable?

Yes. ISM funds allocated for tuition should be used to cover any tuition gaps remaining once Tennessee Dual Enrollment Grant funding is applied. Tuition must be capped at \$500 per student annually in years 1 and 2. In years 3 and 4, tuition must be capped at \$1,000 per student annually. School districts will be required to demonstrate partnerships with industry and higher education institutions to provide sustainable matching dollars. Student outcomes should inform discussions with partners to promote support of tuition gaps beyond the funding period. Tuition gap assistance for students should be provided in a manner that promotes access for all students, ensuring that the additional support enables students with barriers to participate. Awards may not exceed the cost of tuition and fees established for Tennessee community colleges or the cost of tuition and fees associated with the average attempted clock hours weighted by program participation for Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) institutions. Districts will be responsible for developing and submitting a written criteria for initial student eligibility and continued student eligibility for ISM tuition gap assistance if identified in the submitted budget. **Funds allocated for tuition must not exceed 20 percent of the annual award for each year.**

41. Can student scholarships be paid for with grant funds?

Yes, LEAs are encouraged to create a competitive scholarship program or equipment purchase with student buy-back option that considers student needs (i.e.: textbooks or safety equipment). These grant funds cannot be used as gifts to as incentives for students.

TRANSPORTATION

42. Would transportation costs or new transportation vehicles to or from work-based learning sites be an allowable cost under this grant?

Transportation costs or new transportation vehicles could be an allowable use of the grant funds if used to support grant activities and further the grant's intent. Examples may include driving between postsecondary, employer sites, and high school.

43. What line-item is appropriate for vehicle/trailer insurance?

Use account number/line item 72710-511 for this expense.

44. What line-item is appropriate for food trucks, STEM bus, etc.?

Use account number/line item 71300-730 for this expense.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

45. Can districts pay students a stipend for participating in work-based learning (WBL) or pay wages for hours worked at the internship?

No. A district cannot use grant funds to pay students a stipend for participating in work-based learning (WBL) or wages for hours worked at an internship, including a district paying for student wages in place of an employer.

46. Can the grant funds be used to pay employers a stipend for serving as mentors to students, or offering WBL?

No, this is not allowable. If a district wanted to offer some sort of incentive to an employer to offer WBL, they should find a way to include something tangible in the proposal budget. For example, schools would be able to purchase training equipment, supplies, consumables that the business would otherwise purchase to train students in WBL. **As noted in #25, the ownership of the equipment and tracking (i.e., inventory) must remain with the district, but such expenditures may support the employers' ability to partner in this work.**

47. Can the high school provide students with a gas card, a gas stipend, or reimbursement for mileage to and from WBL experiences?

No, the high school cannot pay gas reimbursement to students.