

INNOVATIVE

SCHOOL MODELS

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated July 11, 2022

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. What is the application review process?

Assigned staff members at the department will be making this work a priority. Each 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 Approve or Deny) | |
| 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 |
| Feb. 1, 2023 | Feb. 22, 2023 | Mar. 24, 2023 | Feb. 22, 2023 | Mar. 10, 2022 | Mar. 24, 2023 | Mar.24, 2023 | Apr. 3, 2023 |

2. What is the grant timeline?

| Monitoring and Disbursement | | |
|---|--|--|
| Early Adopters | Recommended Window | Highly Recommended Window |
| Application received by Sept. 15, 2022 | Application received by Nov. 15, 2022 | Application received by Feb. 1, 2023 |
| Application approved by Oct. 31, 2022 | Application approved by Jan. 15, 2023 | Application approved by Mar. 24, 2023 |
| Grant Disbursement #1 Nov. 15, 2022 | Grant Disbursement #1 Feb. 1, 2023 | Grant Disbursement #1 Apr. 3, 2023 |
| 2023 | 2023 | 2023 |
| May 15 – Monitoring Report #1 | May 15 – Monitoring Report #1 | May 15 – Monitoring Report #1 |
| July 31 – Grant Disbursement #2 | July 31 – Grant Disbursement #2 | July 31 – Grant Disbursement #2 |
| Sept. 15 – Monitoring Report #2 | Sept. 15 – Monitoring Report #2 | Sept. 15 – Monitoring Report #2 |
| 2024 | 2024 | 2024 |
| Jan. 30- Annual Report #1 | Jan. 30- Annual Report #1 | Jan. 30- Annual Report #1 |
| Feb. 15 – Monitoring Report #3 | Feb. 15 – Monitoring Report #3 | Feb. 15 – Monitoring Report #3 |
| June 14 – Monitoring Report #4 | June 14 – Monitoring Report #4 | June 14 – Monitoring Report #4 |
| July 31 – Grant Disbursement #3 | July 31 – Grant Disbursement #3 | July 31 – Grant Disbursement #3 |
| 2025 | 2025 | 2025 |
| Jan. 30 – Annual Report #2 | Jan. 30 – Annual Report #2 | Jan. 30 – Annual Report #2 |
| Feb. 14 – Monitoring Report #5 | Feb. 14 – Monitoring Report #5 | Feb. 14 – Monitoring Report #5 |
| June 13 – Monitoring Report #6 | June 13 – Monitoring Report #6 | June 13 – Monitoring Report #6 |
| July 31 – Grant Disbursement #4 | July 31 – Grant Disbursement #4 | July 31 – Grant Disbursement #4 |
| 2026 | 2026 | 2026 |
| Jan. 30 – Annual Report #3 | Jan. 30 – Annual Report #3 | Jan. 30 – Annual Report #3 |
| Feb. 16 – Monitoring Report #7 | Feb. 16 – Monitoring Report #7 | Feb. 16 – Monitoring Report #7 |
| May 15 – Monitoring Report #8 | May 15 – Monitoring Report #8 | May 15 – Monitoring Report #8 |
| June 13- Final report Due | June 15- Final report Due | June 15- Final report Due |

BUDGET

3. *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 with an industry certification, job-embedded practice and/or significant college credit.

4. *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 three-year grant. However, districts have the flexibility to spend those funds over a 3-year period.

5. *Why is the money not available immediately?*

Tennessee is a reimbursement state. While the allocations (or how much money is obligated to each school) will be completed by July 31, 2022, districts must continue to submit reimbursements for all expenditures, just as they do for every other state grant program.

6. *What are the expectations on spending?*

Schools should plan for an 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. The three application windows allow for flexibility to meet the needs of wherever schools are at this time.

7. *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?*

Facilities expenses that exceed 10% of the allocation may be approved by the department upon request. 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 grant and may exceed the 10% mark. For example, three schools may want to collaborate to renovate a shared structure that can be used by the entire district, rather than replicate the same program on each campus. This increases opportunity for more students, creates a more sustainable model, and allows for more efficiency in areas like staffing.

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

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

9. 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.

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

Funds will span 4 years of programming. For example, a high school that receives one million dollars will be able to seek \$250,000 in reimbursement annually. A middle school will be able to seek \$125,000 in reimbursement annually. If LEAs need to increase their annual reimbursement, formal justification must be provided and approved.

11. 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.

12. 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. Until full approval, budget changes do not move into the reimbursement screens.

13. Are LEAs encouraged to braid funds?

Districts are encouraged to braid funds to 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](#).

14. 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.

BUILDING/FACILITY

15. 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.

16. Can purchasing a mobile unit for additional classroom space be allowable under the grant? Mobile labs can be purchased up to 10 percent of the school's overall grant award. However, there must be a sustainability plan associated with the purchase of technology and equipment.

CONSUMABLES

17. Are consumables allowed?

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

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

These grant funds cannot be spent on food.

EQUIPMENT

19. 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

20. Is furniture allowable?

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

INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS

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

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

INVENTORY

22. 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

23. Are billboards an allowable expense for program awareness?

No, this is not a reasonable or necessary expense.

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

No, this is not a reasonable or necessary expense.

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

Yes, this is an allowable expense.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

26. 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.

27. 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

28. 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

29. Can grant funds be used to hire personnel?

Yes, funds may be used to hire personnel. Personnel may be paid for as long as these positions directly impact 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.

30. 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).

31. If grant funds are used to pay salaries, do districts need to follow the percentage model indicated in Perkins Reserve?

No, the salary could be paid for the life of the grant the following scale:

- 100 percent for year 1,
- 75 percent for year 2,
- 50 percent for year 3; and
- 25 percent in year 4.

SUSTAINABILITY

32. 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

33. 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.**

34. 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

35. 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 if used to conduct the grant's intent. Examples may include driving between postsecondary, employer sites, and high school.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

36. 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. Can an academic teacher become WBL certified?

Anyone can register for WBL training and complete it, even if they don't have a TN Educator License. If a teacher has not been issued a TN Educator License number, please enter 999999999 (nine 9s) in the TN Educator License Number field in the registration. Teachers will still need to provide proof of non-teaching work experience (file upload) when you register.