Innovative High School Models Grant Opportunity

Application Guide

March | 2021

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Overview

The Tennessee Department of Education is providing funds to increase innovation in our public education system. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed major challenges and opportunity gaps in preparing young people for successful transitions to college and career. The Innovative High School Model Grants are intended to foster and provide a vision of high schools of the future by reimagining new routines of schooling that meet the demands of the 21st century. Successful applications will truly break the mold and will work from a vision of what will work best to engage, educate, and prepare our state's youth for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The Innovative High School Grants will support new approaches to increase student postsecondary attainment through groundbreaking partnerships that elevate equity for all students in keeping with the spirit of the department's *Best for All* strategic plan. The goal of the grants is to empower districts to reimagine the use of **time**, **space**, **partnerships**, and **modes of learning** to *accelerate* and *increase* student attainment of high-quality, in-demand postsecondary credentials. The Innovative High School Grants Opportunity reinforces the work of the [Tennessee Pathways](#) model, which supports alignment among K-12, postsecondary, and industry partners to provide students with relevant education and training to jumpstart their postsecondary degrees and credentials.

In Tennessee, high-quality career pathways support student success through:

- High-quality college and career advisement throughout K-12;
- Rigorous early postsecondary and work-based learning opportunities throughout high school; and
- Seamless vertical alignment between K-12, postsecondary programs, and career opportunities as a result of effective partnerships among school districts, higher education institutions, employers and community organizations

If we are successful, more Tennessee students will have their unique needs met so that they can earn valuable postsecondary credentials that create opportunities for upward economic mobility.

Terms & Scope of Grants

- The grant will fund 10-20 proposals with a total of **$14.3 million** awarded to districts from May 21, 2021-Sept. 30, 2023.
- The funding per proposal available is $750,000 to $2 million over the full grant period.
- Grants will be awarded to public school districts/Local Education Agencies (hereafter referred to as "LEAs").
- LEAs must serve as the fiscal agent. LEAs may also partner to apply as a consortium (i.e., two or more LEAs collaborating on a single proposal). If multiple LEAs collaborate on a single proposal, one LEA should be designated as the fiscal agent. Each LEA may only be the fiscal agent for one application.

Application Timeline

Key dates for the application timeline are listed below. In order to apply for the grant, LEAs must first submit a *Notice of Intent to Apply*. Then, full grant proposals must be submitted by **Friday, May 7, 2021** at 11:59 p.m. (Central Time). **Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered.**

- Notice of Intent opens: March 31, 2021
- Webinar Information Session: April 6, 2021, 3-4 p.m. CT
- Notice of Intent closes: April 15, 2021, 11:59 p.m. CT
- Application period: April 16-May 7, 2021, 11:59 p.m. CT
- Applicants notified of selection for award: no later than May 21, 2021
- Start date for contracts: May 21, 2021

Equitable Innovation Strategies

LEAs and partners are highly encouraged to consider the opportunity outlined in T.C.A. § 49-15-101-111 to support "Cooperative Innovative High School Programs." In brief, this legislation encourages postsecondary partners and LEAs to establish innovative practices to accelerate credential attainment and/or engage students at risk of dropping out of high school.

Through the incentive of the Innovative High School Grants and the flexibility encouraged through the "Cooperative Innovative High School Programs" legislation, we seek proposals in which LEAs and their partners:

❖ Review and reimagine their current policies and requirements, especially regarding scheduling, admission or employment requirements, academic remediation and support, and/or modes of learning (e.g. revising academic requirements for postsecondary courses or enrollment; revising educator requirements to serve as adjunct faculty; revising graduation requirements to better align with employment standards);

❖ Review and reimagine their instructional practices and improve how they share vital human capital such as teachers, counselors, and advisors through effective partnerships among secondary, postsecondary, and community organizations (e.g. sharing advisors to support students across the bridge from high school to college or employment, sharing instructional staff across institutions, collaborating to share professional development resources across partners);

❖ Review and reimagine how they use employer and community-based partners to provide students with the mentorship, training, and competencies that are vital to workplace success (e.g. providing work-based learning in virtual or hybrid formats, co-developing non-academic standards and competences for employment success, helping students build social capital through mentorship and work-based learning).

The examples of innovative practices below show models of practice that have reimagined time, space, partnerships, or modes of learning. Although the example models focus on one element of change, notice that some models incorporate more than one way to reimagine practices to accelerate and increase student attainment of high-quality, in-demand postsecondary credentials.

Innovative practice	Examples
Reimagining time	In this example model, district, postsecondary and industry partners utilize equipment, staff, and other resources to **extend learning opportunities outside the traditional school day** in order to accelerate completion of valuable industry or postsecondary credentials. Extended opportunities can be in-person, virtual, or hybrid.
Reimagining space	In this example model, **learning takes place onsite with an employer or on a postsecondary campus**. Students complete their high school requirements alongside opportunities for work-based learning, dual enrollment, or other early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs). This model reduces the burdens of transportation and costs to students and creates efficiency for schools and partners. Students have the ability to earn an associate's degree or postsecondary credential alongside their high school diploma.
Reimagining partnerships	In this example model, STEM-focused **courses are co-designed and co-taught by high school teachers and employers**. Course content will be taught both in classroom settings (remote and in-person) and through applied learning that uses the workplace as a laboratory, enabling students to simultaneously earn early postsecondary credit and gain workplace skills that prepare them to enter and succeed in STEM careers.
Reimagining modes of learning	In this example model, programs of study maximize the number and variety of college-credit courses by **leveraging remote course delivery models** and other innovative practices, especially for rural students. Teachers receive ongoing professional development focused on instructional strategies and student engagement in virtual settings.

Important Application, Eligibility, and Award Information

Please see below for additional application, eligibility, and award information.

Application Requirements	**Notice of Intent to Apply** **Application Submission** **Budget** **Letters of Support** **Memorandum of Understanding from any identified partners**
Application Submission	ePlan
Type of Award	Discretionary
Disbursement of Funds	Reimbursement, Fiscal Agent
Total Funds Available	$14,325,418.83
Maximum Funds Awarded per eligible recipient	$2,000,000
Estimated Awards	10-20
Matching Requirement	None
Period of Availability	May 21, 2021 – September 30, 2023
Reporting and Accountability	Quarterly Progress Report, Final Impact and Expenditure Report

Note: The department reserves the right to consult with recipients to make amendments to planned uses of funds to ensure allowability and/or refuse any reimbursement request from an awarded applicant for unapproved or unallowable expenditures.

Selection Process

All applications must meet the eligibility criteria stated above and be submitted in ePlan by 11:59 p.m. CT on May 7, 2021. The selection process is as follows:

1. Each application will be scored using a rubric aligned to the criteria for the five sections of the application.
2. Each application will be scored independently by three reviewers.
3. A selection committee will review all scored applications to determine final selections and total award amounts.
4. The selection committee may request additional information from applicants in order to make final selections and final award decisions.
5. All applicants will be notified of their application status by May 21, 2021.

Contact Information

For additional information regarding the Innovative High School Models grant, please contact:

Tennessee Department of Education
Division of College, Career & Technical Education
Deborah Knoll, Director of K-12 Programs & STEM
Initiatives
Deborah.Knoll@tn.gov

Appendix A: Innovative High Schools Grant Application

Budget

Provide a final budget for the proposed project for the full grant period of May 21, 2021-September 30, 2023. The funding per proposal available is $750,000 to $2 million over the full grant period.

Eligibility

The following information must be included in the application to be eligible for the grant funding:

1. Fiscal Agent, Secondary School(s), and Partnerships
   - The LEA that will serve as the fiscal agent
   - If applicable, identify additional LEAs that will participate in the proposal.
   - Identify at least one (1) secondary school and one (1) partnering postsecondary institution, and/or local workforce or economic development entity, employer, community partner, and/or consortium.
   - Identify the anticipated total number of students who will be served by the proposal.
2. Project Coordinator Contact Information (Full Name, Title, Email, Phone)
3. Acknowledgement of Assurances and Conditions

Section 1: Project Narrative

Provide a thorough description of the proposed project. This should include the following essential components:

1. Provide a vision statement for the proposed project: What is the purpose of the project? What is the significance of the project in the current national, state, or regional context? Define and describe how the secondary school(s) and identified partners will collaborate to reimagine the use of time, space, partnerships, and/or modes of learning (e.g. virtual, hybrid, work-based learning, after-school time, summer, etc.) in order to meet the needs of students, partners, and employers.

2. Describe the needs that informed this project proposal from the perspective of the LEA(s) and partner organizations (e.g., labor market needs, student performance data, postsecondary enrollment trends, etc.).

3. How will the project address skill gaps (if any) between regional industry needs and the skill level of the students? What postsecondary credential(s) will the proposed project lead to?

4. Through the lens of a student, how will the high school experience of the proposed project differ from the current high school experience? Include information about how students will be advised, mentored, and supported in career awareness, exploration, and work-based learning.

Section 2: Theory of Change & Budget

1. Describe what the results of successful implementation will look like for students and partners using the template below. We encourage you to use "If, then" statements to define what will be true for students if your implementation is successful: e.g., "If we support two teachers in meeting the qualifications to serve as adjunct faculty for TCAT, then we will be able to offer four more EPSOs, increasing access for 100 students" or "If we restructure the school day to provide time for large presentations from visiting business and industry leaders followed by small student-led seminars and job shadows, then students will develop agency in attaining their own work-based learning placements."

Theory of Change template:

Theory of Change	Resources	Activities	Outcomes
"If, then" statement	*Resources may be financial (new or existing); intellectual (knowledge, skills, and expertise of partners); or structural (new or existing)*	*Activities may include project components and implementation strategies*	*Outcomes should include long-term outcomes for students, school/district, and project partners*

2. Provide a budget narrative that outlines key priorities for spending. The narrative should include how the proposed costs are necessary to ensure student success and how they align to the resources identified in the Theory of Change. Please identify both direct and indirect costs, as well as any in-kind or matching funding.

3. Using the provided table in ePlan, outline action steps, timelines, expenditures, the metrics or student outcomes for the evaluation strategy, and priority ranking of the funding needed to complete the overall project.

Section 3: Equity & Access

Provide an overview of the primary student groups that will be served, along with how you plan to track progress. This should include the following essential components:

1. How does the proposal define equity? Describe the target student population and how the project will promote equitable outcomes for students.
2. Provide an estimate of how many students by student group (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status) in the school or district will be served. Please indicate if this will serve primarily rural/economically disadvantaged or other underrepresented student groups.
3. What barriers to equitable access and outcomes is this project addressing? How will identified barriers to equitable access and postsecondary outcomes be reduced or eliminated? How is the proposed project or approach different from past approaches or built on lessons learned/previous successes?

Section 4: Community, Postsecondary, and Employer Partnerships

Provide an overview of key partnerships in this project and any commitments or plans for sustaining the proposal's activities beyond the period of availability. This should include the following essential components:

1. Describe each of the partnerships that will be vital for this proposal. For both existing and new partnerships, what makes the partnership strong? For each of the partners, what is the value of the proposed project?
2. Please include details on how these partners will support the proposed project and include specific commitments for each partner (e.g., dedicated time, staffing, funding, equipment, etc.).
3. Please include letter(s) of support and/or Memorandum(s) of Understanding outlining key partnership(s) and specific roles and tasks of the partnership (including financial or in-kind contributions).

Section 5: Equitable Innovation Strategies

Describe the key innovations that the proposal and partners will collaborate to achieve. This should include the following essential components:

1. Define and describe how the secondary school(s) and identified partners will collaborate to define the essential learning goals, experiences, assessments, and credentials that are needed to succeed after high school (e.g., in the workplace or in specific careers or programs).
2. Define and describe how the secondary school(s)—in collaboration with identified partners—will identify specific requirements, traditions, policies, assessments, or practices that create barriers for student success and how the project, by eliminating or reducing them, will create more postsecondary success for students. **Note: T.C.A.** § 49-15-106(g) states: "the state board of education or the postsecondary governing board may waive any law or rule that inhibits or hinders the participating institutions' and schools' abilities to meet the goals of this chapter" .If the proposal will require requesting a waiver for any law(s) "*that inhibits or hinders the participating institutions' and schools' ability to meet the goals [of cooperative, innovative partnerships]*" as stated in T.C.A. § 49-15-101-111 then those requests should be included here and should specify f the waiver pertains to a local or state rule or law. Additionally, applicants should include a contingency plan if the requested waiver is not granted.
3. Define and describe how identified partners (i.e. employers and/or postsecondary institutions) will investigate and/or amend their own procedures, policies, environments, or on-boarding/admission processes to welcome students and support their success, especially students who are under-represented on their campuses or in their workplaces.

Appendix B: Innovative High Schools Grant Rubric

Eligibility Check

Requirement	Criteria
Budget	Proposed budget included in application Y/N
Identification of Partnerships	Identifies at least one (1) LEA that will serve as fiscal agent (and any additional LEAs that will participate in the proposal, if applicable) Identifies at least one (1) secondary school and one (1) partnering postsecondary institution, local workforce or economic development entity, employer, community partner, and/or consortium Identify the anticipated total number of students served by proposal
Project coordinator contact information	Y/N
Acknowledgement of Assurances and Conditions	Y/N

Section 1: Project Narrative

Application Question	Points Possible	Criteria For Success
1	2	The description of the proposal directly addresses how partners will do two or more of the following: reimagine the use of time, space, partnerships, and modes of learning (2 points) The description of the proposal directly addresses how partners will do one of the following: reimagine the use of time, space, partnerships, and modes of learning (1 point) The description does not clearly state how partners will reimagine the use of time, space, partnerships, and modes of learning (0 points)
2	2	Describes the needs that informed this project from the LEA's perspective (e.g., student achievement gaps, access/participation gaps, student outcomes)
2	2	Describes the needs that informed the project proposal from the perspective of employer/postsecondary partners (e.g., high-demand credentials, unfilled skilled jobs, shortage of licensed teachers)
3	2	Identifies how project will address skill gaps for workplace success and/or identifies postsecondary credentials the proposal will offer students
4	2	Describes how the student experience will differ from current practices if the proposal were implemented.
4	2	Describes how students will be advised, mentored and supported in career awareness, exploration, and work-based learning.
Total Points Possible	12	

Section 2: Theory of Change & Budget

Application Question	Points Possible	Criteria For Success
1	2	All of the Theory of Change statements include measurable outcomes for students and partners (2 points) Some of the Theory of Change statements include measurable outcomes for students and partners (1 point) None of the Theory of Change statements include measurable outcomes for students and partners (0 points)
2	2	All key priorities for spending (including direct and/or indirect costs) in the budget narrative align with the Theory of Change (2 points) Some of the key priorities for spending (including direct and/or indirect costs) in the budget narrative align with the Theory of Change (1 point) None of the key priorities for spending (including direct and/or indirect costs) in the budget narrative align with the Theory of Change (0 points)
2	2	All of the proposed costs or resources show alignment to resources identified in the Theory of Change (2 points) Some of the proposed costs or resources show alignment to the resources identified in the Theory of Change (1 point) None of the proposed costs or resources show alignment to the resources identified in the Theory of Change (0 points)
3	4	All of the action steps have a designated timeline, expenditures, metrics and/or student outcomes to support an evaluation strategy that is aligned to the proposal (4 points) Some of the action steps have a designated timeline, expenditures, metrics and/or student outcomes to support an evaluation strategy that is aligned to the proposal (2 points) None of the action steps have a designated timeline, expenditures, metrics and/or student outcomes to support an evaluation strategy that is aligned to the proposal (0 points)
Total Points Possible	10	

Section 3: Equity & Access

Application Question	Points Possible	Criteria For Success
1	2	Proposal includes a definition of equity within the context of the proposal (i.e. not a dictionary definition of equity)
1	2	Proposal identifies target population and how project will promote equitable outcomes for students
2	2	Provides estimate of number of students impacted by the proposal
3	4	Identifies three or more barriers to equitable access and how proposal will reduce or eliminate them (4 points) Identifies one or two barriers to equitable access and how proposal will reduce or eliminate them (2 points) Does not identify a specific barrier and/or does not describe how the proposal will reduce or eliminate them (0 points)
3	2	Describes how the proposal is different from past approaches or built on lessons learned (2 points) Does not describe how the proposal is different from past approaches or built on lessons learned (0 points)
Total Points Possible	12	

Section 4: Community, Postsecondary, and Employer Partnerships

Application Question	Points Possible	Criteria For Success
1	2	Identifies and describes the partnerships for the proposal including how it brings value to each of the parties involved (2 points) Identifies partners but does not describe how partnerships bring value to each of the parties involved (1 point) Not all partners are described and/or the value of the partners to the project is unclear (0 points)
2	2	Indicates how all partners will support proposal through outlining specific commitments for each partner (i.e. dedicated time, staffing, funding, equipment, etc.) that align to improve student success (2 points) Describes how some partners—but not all—will support the project with specific commitments from each partner (1 point) Application identifies partners but does not indicate how partners will support the proposal or how partners will invest and engage in the project plan (0 points)
3	4	Includes a letter of support from **all** partners that include specific roles and tasks for the proposal (4 points) Includes letters of support from all partners but lacks specific roles and tasks for partners (2 points) Does not include letters of support from **all** partners OR the letters of support are not specific to the proposal (0 points)
Total Points Possible	8	

Section 5: Equitable Innovation Strategies

Application Question	Points Possible	Criteria For Success
1	4	Proposal defines three or more essential learning goals (e.g. credentials, course credits, academic achievement) and/or experiences (e.g. career exploration, work-based learning, mentorship) that promote postsecondary success (4 points) Proposal defines two essential learning goals (e.g. credentials, course credits, academic achievement) and/or experiences (e.g. career exploration, work-based learning, mentorship) that promote postsecondary success (2 points) Proposal does not clearly define essential learning goals and/or it is not clear that the learning goals promote postsecondary success (0 points)
2	4	Proposal identifies three or more specific requirements, policies, or practices that create barriers for students and how the project will eliminate or mitigate those barriers to support student postsecondary success (4 points) Proposal identifies two specific requirements, policies, or practices that create barriers for students and how the project will eliminate or mitigate those barriers to support student postsecondary success (2 points) Proposal does not identify specific requirements, policies, or practices that create barriers for students and/or does not clearly state how the partners will eliminate or mitigate those barriers (0 points)
3	4	Describes at least two commitments partners will make to ensure a supportive environment for students, particularly those who are underrepresented on their campuses or workplaces (e.g. professional development on inclusive teaching practices, revising policies that create unnecessary barriers to entry) (4 points) Describes one commitment partners will make to ensure a supportive environment for students, particularly those who are underrepresented on their campuses or workplaces (e.g. professional development on inclusive teaching practices, revising policies that create unnecessary barriers to entry) (2 points) Does not include specific commitments from partners and/or the commitments are not specific to supporting students who are under-represented on their campuses or in their workplaces (0 points)
Total Points Possible	12	

Bonus Points

Point Value	Criteria for Success
2	LEA is within an "at-risk" county.
4	LEA is within a "distressed" county.
Total Points Possible	4 (These points are not cumulative)

Scoring Summary

Sections	Points Possible
Project Narrative	12
Theory of Change & Budget	10
Equity & Access	12
Partnerships	8
Equitable Innovation Strategies	12
Bonus Points	4
Total Points Possible	**50**