Innovative School Models

Grant Monitoring Guidance

Tennessee Department of Education | October 2023

Innovative School Models

In 2022, Governor Bill Lee and Tennessee General Assembly made an [historic investment of $500 million to bring Innovative School Models](#) to every public high school and middle school in the state. The goal of this funding was to expand Tennessee's Innovative School Models aimed at building readiness and preparing students for success after high school, ensuring more students have opportunities to participate in innovative local programs aligned to Tennessee's highest-demand skills and careers. This guide is designed to support Innovative School Models Grant awardees in completing the monitoring requirements associated with the receipt of these funds.

This guide is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Please work with your board attorney to ensure compliance with all requirements of the grant award and assurances, federal grants guidance, and district/school policies.

Overview of Monitoring Tool

The Innovative School Models (ISM) monitoring instrument is composed of five sections that grant awardees will need to complete:

- **Section 1: Outcomes**
- **Section 2: Budget**
- **Section 3: Supports**
- **Section 4: Partnerships**

The monitoring instrument can be found within ePlan under the monitoring instruments tab. The results of ISM monitoring will be used for the following purposes:

1. To ensure appropriate use of funds;
2. To identify needed areas of support and to deploy support to districts/schools;
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing supports; and
4. To gather information, stories, and data that reflect the effectiveness of the ISM grant funding on reimagining middle and high school to share with legislators and other statewide stakeholders.

Learn more about Innovative School Models and the goals of this initiative by clicking [here](#).

> Monitoring instruments are due on the following dates:
>
> • **January 30, 2024**
> • **June 30, 2024**
> • **January 30, 2025**
> • **June 30, 2025**
> • **January 30, 2026**
> • **Final Report due June 30, 2026**

Section 1: Outcomes

During the application process, grant applicants were asked to select from the following goals for their ISM projects:

Applicable Grade Span 9-12

- ❏ Skill gaps between regional industry needs and the skill level of students will be addressed.
- ❏ Early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs) will be expanded for students.
- ❏ Students will have increased access to earn a postsecondary credential while in high school.
- ❏ Students will have increased access to earn an industry credential while in high school.
- ❏ Work-based learning (WBL) opportunities will be expanded for students.
- ❏ Advisement and mentorship opportunities will be expanded and improved for students.
- ❏ Career awareness and exploration activities will be expanded and improved for students.

Applicable Grade Span 6-8

- ❏ There will be activities implemented to increase awareness among rising 8th and 9th graders of ISM opportunities.
- ❏ Students will have increased access to career assessments and advising.
- ❏ Middle school students will develop targeted plans for EPSO (Early Postsecondary Opportunities) participation.
- ❏ Middle school students will have increased access to academic advising for high school course selection.
- ❏ Early Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses will be offered to middle school students that result in a seamless pathway in secondary.
- ❏ Advanced courses will be offered to middle school students to enhance their innovative school model experience.

Within the monitoring instrument, awardees will be asked to select the goals that were previously selected within the grant application by clicking the boxes. For each of those goals selected, the following ask will appear:

Provide a baseline metric for this goal.
Provide a current metric that demonstrates your progress towards this goal.

Baseline data should be data that represents where the district/schools were performing in the year prior to the grant application, the 2021-22 school year. Progress data should represent the most current data related to that goal. Some of these goals will require integers to be entered, while others

will be open response allowing for inclusion of qualitative data components the district/schools may be tracking. This data should be aggregate data for the entire application.

Awardees will then be asked to answer the following questions:

- Rate the extent to which the LEA/Charter has made progress in these areas.
- Describe how the ISM funding supported the district/school in those improvements.

Section 2: Budget

The period of allowability for the ISM grant funds extends through June 30, 2026. All funds must be obligated by June 30, 2023, and liquidated by September 30, 2026. To ensure spend down of these funds, the budget section of the monitoring tool begins by asking awardees to answer yes or no to the following statement:

The LEA/Charter is on track to spend down the grant funds within the period of availability.

The awardee's total allocations and total remaining funds will then be visible to the grant awardee. These amounts will be bulk loaded on November 1 and April 1 each year in advance of the monitoring instrument opening in ePlan.

Total Allocation:

Total Remaining:

Awardees will then check all that apply:

- ☐ The LEA/Charter has leveraged additional funds in addition to ISM to complete the ISM theories of action.
- ☐ The LEA/Charter has experienced barriers to spend down.
- ☐ The LEA/Charter needs support for budgeting and spending of the ISM grant in order to spend down within the period of allowability.

If the awardee checks any of these statements, they will be asked to provide additional information.

Next, awardees will be asked to answer yes or no to the following statements:

- The LEA/Charter ensures that the budget and expenses align with Innovative School Models grant administrative guidelines.
- The LEA/Charter ensures that the budget and expenses are being allocated towards each individual school in alignment with their total allocation. *Note: Awardees will be asked to provide documentation to support the tracking of this alignment.*
- The LEA/Charter ensures that all expenses align with the projects and theories of action outlined in the ISM grant application.
- The LEA/Charter ensures that all funds are spent according to the approved budget in ePlan within the period of availability.
- The LEA/Charter has a written process for monitoring and documenting the effectiveness of the program.
- The LEA/Charter maintains fiscal and program records for a minimum of five (5) years after the grant period is over.
- The LEA/Charter ensures that current records are made available during monitoring visits or as requested by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Finally, awardees must upload an ISM Purchase Inventory with schools noted in the location column, as well as a budget document tracking expenditures at the school level. These uploads can be found in the related documents section. A template for this inventory and a template for budget tracking can be found under related documents in ePlan.

Section 3: Supports

ISM support is optional. This section is intended to gather information related to the extent of participation in provided supports.

Awardees will be asked to check all that apply:

- ☐ My LEA/Charter is participating in the ISM Leadership Institute.
- ☐ The ISM resources on Best for All Central have been beneficial to our LEA/Charter.
- ☐ My LEA/Charter is receiving ISM support from the CORE offices.
- ☐ My LEA/Charter is contracting for ISM supports from an outside consulting firm or organization.

Section 4: Partnerships

Effective and reimagined partnerships are critical to the successful reimagination of middle and high school within the Innovative School Models initiative. Awardees were asked to note their partnerships within their initial grant applications. To identify potential needs for supports in this area and to develop reports on the impact of the ISM work, awardees will be asked to rate the following statements on a Likert scale from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree:

My LEA/Charter has meaningfully engaged the partners we identified in our grant application.

My district/school has reimagined partnerships with post-secondary institutions, TCATs, industry partners, and/or other agencies to support our Innovative School Model work.

Awardees will then be asked to answer the following question:

Describe how your work with partners has been changing due to your innovative school models work.

Summary

Innovative School Models monitoring will occur twice each year on the following cadence: **January 30, 2024; June 30, 2024; January 30, 2025; June 30, 2025; January 30, 2026; and Final Report due June 30, 2026.** To be prepared for monitoring, awardees should be tracking metrics aligned to the goals they selected, tracking expenditures for each school, and managing an accurate inventory of purchases.

Questions related to Innovative School Models monitoring can be directed to Elizabeth.M.Norton@tn.gov.

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