Innovative School Models

Grant Monitoring Guidance

Tennessee Department of Education | April 2024

TN Department of **Education**

Innovative School Models

In 2022, Governor Bill Lee and the 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 four 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 schools to share with legislators and other statewide stakeholders.

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

> To ensure adequate time for Final Expenditure Report (FER) completion and annual budget revisions, monitoring instrument completion has been reduced. Monitoring instruments will now be due on the following dates:
>
> - ~~**January 30, 2024**~~
> - ~~June 30, 2024~~
> - **January 30, 2025**
> - ~~June 30, 2025~~
> - **January 30, 2026**
> - **Final Report due** ~~June~~ **October 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, one of the following asks will appear:

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

OR a set of numerical data entry boxes will appear:

- 2021-22 student counts
- 2022-23 student counts
- 2023-24 student counts
- 2024-25 student counts
- 2025-26 student counts
- Comments: (open response)

Baseline data should be data that represents where the district/school was performing in the year prior to the grant application, the 2021-22 school year. For integer (number) only entries, grantees should use student counts for the 2021-22 school year. For narrative entries, grantees may use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to describe what the outcome was like prior to the award of the ISM grant funds. It can be helpful to begin these narratives with the phrase, "Before ISM…" and to ensure that these narratives are written in past tense. The baseline narratives will be duplicated from the first monitoring entry into each subsequent monitoring tool. However, grantees will be able to edit these narratives during each monitoring window if needed.

Progress data should represent the most current data related to that goal. For integer-only entries, progress metrics will ask for student counts or course counts for full school years as they become available: 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26. For school years that have not yet occurred, grantees should enter zeros.

For narrative progress entries, grantees should include work they have completed to make progress toward the implementation of the innovative ideas associated with each outcome. It can be helpful to use a logic model format to craft these narratives. A logic model details data aligned with the implementation of a strategy or change idea. To use it to craft a progress narrative, a grantee would answer: how much did we do, how well did we do it, and what difference did we make? If some components of a strategy have yet to be completed, the grantee might answer these with anticipated results.

Strategy:		
Outputs	How much did we do?	
	How well did we do it?	
Outcomes	What difference did we make?	

The data for both baseline and progress narratives should be aggregate data for the entire application (please do not include student-level or personally identifiable student information).

Example Narratives:

- <u>Outcome</u>: Students will have increased access to career assessments and advising.
- <u>Baseline Narrative</u>: Prior to ISM, students took an interest inventory in seventh grade. We had a 54 percent completion rate for the assessment and results were not utilized in a systematic way for advising or exploration purposes.
- <u>Progress Narrative</u>: We have implemented a career interest and aptitude survey and its correlating curriculum within our new middle school career exploration course. We now have a career coach who meets at least monthly with students in each grade level with lessons surrounding their career assessments and advising them on individual career paths. Currently, 100 percent of 6th graders have taken the assessment and 303 of them have set career goals, with 249 of them including a postsecondary goal. Additionally, 100 percent of 7th and 8th graders have also taken the assessment and 59 percent of 8th graders currently have completed their high school and beyond plans. We anticipate that this increased access to career assessments and advising will result in more students attaining Ready Graduate status by graduation (this 8th-grade class will be graduates in 2027-28).

Following the outcomes entries, there are two additional questions in the outcomes section of the monitoring instrument:

- Rate the extent to which the local education agency (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, 2026, and liquidated by Sept. 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 Nov. 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. If the awardee checks any of these statements, they will be asked to provide additional information:

- ❑ 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.

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 can be found under related documents in ePlan. Grantees may upload copies of the system they are using for budget tracking; a template is not required. This can be in the format of a print-out from a budget software system, an Excel spreadsheet, or a Word document.

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 support from an outside consulting firm or organization.

Section 4: Partnerships

Effective and reimagined partnerships are critical to the successful reimagination of middle and high schools 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 one (1) strongly disagree to five (5) strongly agree:

- My LEA/Charter has meaningfully engaged the partners we identified in our grant application.
- My district/school has reimagined partnerships with postsecondary institutions, TCATs, industry partners, and/or other agencies to support our Innovative School Model work.

Awardees will then be asked to answer the following:

- Describe how your work with partners has been changing due to your ISM work.

Summary

Innovative School Models monitoring will occur once each year on the following cadence: **Jan. 30, 2025; Jan. 30, 2026; and Final Report due Oct. 30, 2026.** To be prepared for monitoring, awardees should be tracking metrics aligned with 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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