



Navigating the District of Innovation Application

Create Your Innovation Team

Before beginning the application process to become a District of Innovation, the district should form an innovation team and carefully review the CDIP and discuss areas where innovation is clearly demonstrated. These areas will become the foundation for the innovation plan.

Take the [Survey](#)

KDE recommends that the district then complete the [Innovation Readiness Survey](#). If the survey responses indicate that the district is an “innovation pacesetter” the next step is to begin developing a plan. KDE staff is available to meet with members of the innovation team and help with the formation of the plan, answer questions, facilitate brainstorming sessions, and provide technical support.

Brainstorm

The next step is to brainstorm ideas that tie to the mission and vision of the district and participating schools. Design Thinking is a useful tool in this process and starts with defining a challenge. Identifying problems and using “How might we” statements to begin thinking about solutions is a good way to organize your issues, sketch out your end goals and define measures of success.. KDE staff will facilitate these sessions!

Identify root causes – The Why, why, why

For each of the identified problems you should examine the root causes as this will help you design your initiative to address the problem. Using a fishbone diagram is a good way to drill down into the root causes of the identified problems. KDE staff can assist in using this method.

Choose the “big rocks”

Be careful to ensure that everyone’s voice is heard yet realize that compromise will be necessary. You must identify the ““big rocks” and agree on those as your foundation. Concentrate on what you have the capacity to do well. Other elements can be added later as you implement the initial projects.

The scoring rubric for the Dol application will provide you with a good outline of the components required for a strong innovation application. Following is a list of guiding questions based on the rubric which will help you organize the application.

Some Questions to Guide You

Mission, vision and innovation goals

Does the plan clearly state the vision and mission of the district and participating schools and identify goals of the innovation plan which are directly tied to the mission and vision?

Are goals and performance targets precisely identified and tied to college and career readiness, novice reduction, closing the achievement gap and graduation rate?

Stakeholder engagement

Is there a high level of participation from all stakeholders (parents, teachers, local organizations and businesses, SBDM councils and local board) in the development and implementation of the innovation plan?

Risk-taking and Continuous Improvement

Can the district show a commitment to risk-taking and continuous improvement over the past 3-5 years? What does this look like and what have been the outcomes?

Does the timeline show evidence of significant levels of transformation and risk-taking occurring over the course of the initial 5-year innovation designation?

Improve student learning

Is there a clear description of how the plan will be applied equitably?

Are there clear measures in place to monitor the implementation of the plan and track student learning?

Does the plan clearly and specifically identify the total number of students to be served by the plan and discuss how learning will be personalized for these students?

Does the innovation plan put students first and in the center?

Waivers

Are there specific waiver requests included in the plan which are tied to the planned initiatives? What barriers does the district believe these waivers will reduce or eliminate? Have the waiver requests been carefully researched to insure that they are matched with the appropriate statute or regulation and address an area not currently permitted under existing statutes or regulations?

Professional Development Plan

Is there a clear plan for providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development for teachers and staff to assist them in adopting best practices and becoming comfortable with teaching and working in innovative schools and carrying out the initiatives of the plan?

Timeline

Does the timeline adequately reflect the benchmarks and milestones associated with the plan? Is it reasonable?

Is there evidence that the district is flexible in its approach to innovation and able to change course when necessary? Are there built in implementation checkpoints?

Other elements you might consider

Is the innovation plan tied to the adoption of a model, system, or pilot program such as Big Picture Learning, High Tech High, New Tech High, etc.? If so, the implementation of that system/model/pilot should be described and linked to the goals and objectives and mission and vision of the district and participating schools.

Are there ties to professional organizations which specialize in innovation in education and have strong track records to support their work?

Does the plan include competency-based, mastery learning? Does it include anywhere/anytime learning?

Does the plan include alternative schools or Career and Technical Education schools?

Does the plan include the use of alternative measures of assessment not required, or measured, in the accountability system? What types of quantitative and qualitative measures will be used to report student growth and learning, especially in the areas of problem solving, flexibility, communication, determination, teamwork, etc. How will students demonstrate these skills?

Is there a strategy for integrating students from non-innovation plan schools?

Some Useful Resources

Books:

Anderson, Chris *Makers: The New Industrial Revolution*, Crown Business 2012

Dintersmith, Ted & Tony Wagner *Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era* Scribner 2015

Horn, Michael & Heather Staker *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools* Jossey-Bass 2014

Robinson, Ken *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative* Capstone, 2nd Ed. 2011

Innovative Systems & Organizations

[Big Picture Learning](#)

[Competency Works](#)

[High Tech High](#)

[National Center for Innovation in Education](#)

[New Tech Network](#)

[“So You Think You Want to Innovate”](#)

[The Fund for Transforming Education in Kentucky](#)