District and School of Innovation Application

Submit Application

by December 1

A blue arrow with red and blue text

Description automatically generated

**Table of Contents**

[**Application Submission Guidelines** 3](#_Toc160615070)

[**Application Guidelines** 5](#_Toc160615071)

[**A.** **Plan Details** 7](#_Toc160615072)

[**B.** **Amendments to the Plan** 8](#_Toc160615073)

[**C.** **Renewals** 8](#_Toc160615074)

[**D.** **Reporting Requirements** 8](#_Toc160615075)

[**E.** **Revocation of Plan** 9](#_Toc160615076)

[**District/School of Innovation Application** 11](#_Toc160615077)

[**ASSURANCES** 12](#_Toc160615078)

[**Application Components** 13](#_Toc160615079)

[**1.** **Mission and Goals** 13](#_Toc160615080)

[**2.** **Innovative Program Design and Structure** 13](#_Toc160615081)

[**3.** **Support for Innovation** 14](#_Toc160615082)

[**4.** **Staffing** 14](#_Toc160615083)

[**5.** **Professional Development** 14](#_Toc160615084)

[**6.** **Governance** 14](#_Toc160615085)

[**7.** **Innovative Teaching and Learning** 15](#_Toc160615086)

[**8.** **Stakeholder Collaboration** 15](#_Toc160615087)

[**9.** **Annual Reporting of Performance Measures** 15](#_Toc160615088)

[**10.** **Sustainability** 16](#_Toc160615089)

[**11.** **Waivers and Exemptions** – Please create a table, like below, for all requested waivers. 16](#_Toc160615090)

[**12.** **Timeline of Activities** 16](#_Toc160615091)

[**13.** **Data Sharing Agreement** 16](#_Toc160615092)

# **Application Submission Guidelines**

1. **Submission**
2. Read Mississippi Code Ann. [§ 37-179-1](https://law.justia.com/codes/mississippi/2017/title-37/chapter-179/section-37-179-1/) and [§ 37-179-3](https://law.justia.com/codes/mississippi/2017/title-37/chapter-179/section-37-179-3/), the [State Board Policy Chapter Part 3, Chapter 28, Rule 28.7,](https://mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/MBE/State%2520Board%2520Policy/Chapter%252028/apa_part_3_chapter_28_rule_28.7_district_of_innovation_july_2019.pdf) and the application guidelines thoroughly. Districts or schools with an accountability rating of “F” will not be considered for a district or school of innovation.
3. The complete application and the requested items within the application are the ***only*** items that need to be submitted. Do not submit pages 1-8 of this packet – start with page 9 the district information page.
4. Please include a signed copy of the statement of assurances. The MDE has provided a standard statement of assurances for applicants on page 10 of the application.
5. An electronic copy of the application is due by 3:00 pm on December 1, 2024.
6. **Amendment Process for Current Approved Innovative Plans: See Section IV Part B.**
7. **Application Process for the 5-Year Distinction as District or School of Innovation**

Phase 1: Review of Application via the Application Rubric

Applications will be reviewed by MDE experts and their representatives. If the application meets the minimum score it is sent to phase 2.

Phase 2: Interview

Interviews will be conducted in person or virtually. Each district should plan to have the District/School contact person, administrator(s), teacher representative(s), and community partners present to fully illustrate the planning and execution of the innovative plan. Questions will be asked by the members of the review team and other MDE experts as needed.

Phase 3: Executive Leadership Review

Once the applicant has passed phases 1 and 2, the application is presented to the Executive Leadership Team at MDE for their review. The application can be approved or denied. Approved applications may have some or all waiver requests approved or denied during this process. Approved applications are scheduled for presentation at a state board meeting (phase 4) and districts will be notified so they may have delegates attend the board meeting if desired.

Phase 4: State Board of Education Approval

Approved applications, with their list of approved waivers, are sent to the State Board of Education for final approval. Districts will be notified if their application is approved.

**Application Guidelines**

**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**DISTRICTS and SCHOOLS OF INNOVATION**

**(Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3)**

**State Board Policy Part 3, Chapter 28, Rule 28.7**

In accordance with Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3 passed in the 2015 legislative session and signed by the governor, the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) approved rules and procedures for Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation.

1. **Purpose of a District of Innovation or School of Innovation**

Innovative programs are intended to better prepare students for success in life and work. Innovative programs shall focus on reducing achievement gaps by expanding learning experiences for students; increasing participation of subgroups of students through innovative instructional methods to enhance student achievement; increasing the number of students who are college- and career-ready; reducing the number of students who exit high school in need of remediation; and motivating students by expanding curriculum choices and learning opportunities.

1. **Definitions**

Definitions used in this policy are those as defined by Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3 and outlined in State Board Policy Part 3, Chapter 28, Rule 28.7.

* 1. **District of Innovation**

A District of Innovation is a district that has developed a plan of innovation in compliance with this policy and has been approved by the State Board of Education to be exempted from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions to improve the educational performance of students within the district.

* 1. **School of Innovation**

A School of Innovation is a school that voluntarily participates in a School of Innovation plan to improve instruction, including waivers and exemptions from local school board policies, selected provisions of rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education, and selected sections of Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3.

A School of Innovation, independent of a designated District of Innovation, is also defined as a school that voluntarily participates in a School of Innovation plan to improve instruction, including waivers and exemptions from local school board policies, selected provisions of rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education, and selected sections of Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3 for only one school in the district. Current models are high schools participating in an Early College High School program (ECHSP) or high schools with a Middle College Program (MCP) approved by the district superintendent and the State Board of Education.

* 1. **Early College High School Program**

An ECHSP is a small high school program located on a partnering college campus or a location other than a traditional high school campus with a dedicated principal, counselor, and four (4) to six (6) certified teaching staff in core subjects only. The students must complete an application process to enter as freshmen and continue through the ECHSP as a cohort. All eligible students are selected by random lottery if the application pool is larger than the defined cohort. The goal of an ECHSP is for students to graduate with both a high school diploma and an associate degree from a partnering postsecondary institution. At a minimum, all members of the cohort should graduate from high school meeting the ACT or SAT Mississippi benchmarks for admission to college without remediation and earn college credits while in high school.

Beginning in July 2019, new students participating in an ECHS program will not be considered transfer students and are not prohibited by the MDE from participating in after-school activities at their high school of residence. Students must meet full academic day requirements at the ECHS program to be eligible to participate in activities.

For accountability purposes, students’ academic performance results shall be included in reports for the students’ high school of residence. Additionally, unofficial accountability results for the ECHSPs shall be reported on the MDE District and School Report Card webpage, and other annual performance measures shall be publicly reported each year in the Superintendent’s report. ECHS programs must adhere to all applicable *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards*.

For regional, multi-district ECHS models, one district or the partnering postsecondary institution shall serve as the fiscal agent and other districts shall participate through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or contract. The lead district shall represent the secondary agency considerations to the partnering postsecondary institution. All MOUs must include the lead secondary, the postsecondary, and the participating secondary agencies. The MOU shall include financial considerations such as transportation, child nutrition, and the mutually agreed upon cost for students enrolling from another district to attend the program. The MOU also shall include a data-sharing agreement, fixed asset management, and revocation procedures.

* 1. **Middle College Program**

An MCP is a dual credit/dual enrollment (DCDE) program run by a school district (or an individual high school) and a partnering postsecondary institution that offers high school students a wide range of dual credit and dual enrollment classes. The 11th and 12th-grade students in the cohort spend a portion of the academic day at the high school and a portion at the partnering postsecondary institution where the classes are taught. Participating students are encouraged to take as many DCDE classes at the postsecondary partner institution as possible, specifically in courses articulated in the Mississippi Articulation Transfer Tool (MATT) or a career-oriented program of study. These students should be supported by a high school/transitional counselor and monitored closely to ensure that they meet college academic expectations. The goal of an MCP is for students to earn an associate degree or advanced national certification, as well as a diploma from their traditional high school. These programs are set up in a cohort model with student entry at the end of the 10th-grade year. No waivers are granted for MCPs; however, high schools with MCPs must apply through the School of Innovation application to ensure they meet the approved definition.

1. **Waivers and Exemptions**

Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 provides for exemptions from certain administrative regulations and statutory provisions as approved by the MDE to allow flexibility for Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation. Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-3(4) includes areas of innovation that the State Board of Education may consider for exemptions. Districts or schools may request additional waivers if the waiver is needed to support innovative practices. Districts or schools are not allowed to request a waiver from state assessment requirements required by state or federal regulation. Absent any waivers, districts shall meet the requirements of the current Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards.

1. **Application Plan—Approval, Amendment, and Revocation Process**

An Innovation Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) shall review all approval, amendment, and revocation processes involving Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation. The Committee shall be comprised of four (4) MDE employees across offices within the MDE and one (1) postsecondary representative. The application plan is a collaborative process between the district, school, and/or partners, and the MDE before approval. If waivers from Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, State Board policies, or state regulations are needed to implement innovative programs, districts or schools may seek innovative status under Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3. Through collaboration with the MDE, a determination may be made as to whether application for District of Innovation or School of Innovation under Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3 is required. Innovative schools, such as ECHS and MCP models, shall apply through the School of Innovation application process and timeline.

## **Plan Details**

An application may be from a single district or a consortium of districts collaborating on an innovative school and/or program. In the case of a consortium, one of the districts shall be the lead agency and act as the district responsible for meeting all the guidelines outlined in this policy.

The MDE shall collaborate with districts and schools to review plans to approve innovative status to eligible districts.

Plans are approved for five (5) years. All districts and schools approved shall be monitored by MDE for progress and continued support during the five-year term.

## **Amendments to the Plan**

A District of Innovation or School of Innovation seeking an amendment to an approved five-year plan shall submit written justification for the amendment to the designated MDE office. Requests may be submitted as needed. Requests shall be reviewed and approved by the MDE and a recommendation shall be submitted to the State Board of Education for approval. If the amendment is approved, the innovative district may implement the changes to its current five-year plan. No amendments shall be considered that increase the number of years the district is considered a District of Innovation.

Requests for amendments are limited to two pages for sections A-C. To submit an amendment to a currently approved DOI/SOI plan please include the following:

Section A: Briefly state the original plan.

Section B: State requested changes and justification for each.

Section C: State additional waiver(s) needed, if any.

Section D: Assurances - submit an updated assurances page from the original DOI/SOI application (page 10 of the current application).

## **Renewals**

Requests for renewals shall be submitted no later than November 1 in the fifth year of the initial term. Any renewal shall be for no more than an additional five (5) years.

Renewals shall be based on the ability of the District of Innovation or School of Innovation to meet the goals and objectives of Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3 and the performance measures set forth by the MDE.

## **Reporting Requirements**

For Districts of Innovation and Schools of Innovation, an end-of-school-year report shall be submitted to the MDE no later than August 31st, which includes all items listed in Component 9. The MDE shall review the data for sustained increase in performance and shall consider the data of the district or school for comparative analysis.

Additionally, an end-of-school-year report for ECHS programs and MCPs shall be submitted to the MDE that includes, at a minimum, the percentage of senior cohort earning academic, distinguished academic, or CTE endorsement; the percentage of senior cohort meeting ACT/SAT benchmarks for college and career-readiness; ACT WorkKeys’ results; the graduation rate; retention of the cohort; the number of college credits earned per cohort; and percentage of cohort earning an Associate Degree.

The committee shall review the data for sustained increase in performance and shall consider the data of the school of residence for comparison. The model of the ECHS program, recommends that all students meet the College and Career Readiness benchmarks for entering Mississippi’s institutes of higher learning by graduation.

## **Revocation of Plan**

When an innovative model does not meet the required performance measurements listed in section D. reporting requirements; contrary to changes in state or federal laws; or does not meet the purpose of Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and § 37-179-3, the MDE’s Office of Secondary Education shall notify the school and/or district of deficiencies and share concerns related to the success and sustainability of the model and its intent to recommend to the State Board of Education that the plan be revoked.

1. The district or school shall have 30 calendar days to provide a written response to support its position.
2. Following review of the written response from the district or school and the Office of Secondary Education’s recommendation for revocation of the plan, the Committee shall, if requested, schedule a date and time for oral presentation by the district or school, and the Office of Secondary Education. Oral presentations shall be limited to 15 minutes per side.
3. Following oral presentations, the Committee shall issue a written decision either affirming the Office of Secondary Education’s recommendation to revoke the innovative status, or permitting the innovative status to remain, or ordering the district or school to modify their program to comply with specified corrective actions and timelines for compliance.
4. If the district or school disagrees with the Committee’s decision, the district and/or school may appeal in writing to the State Board of Education within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the Committee’s written decision, otherwise, the Committee’s decision is final.
5. If the district or school appeals the Committee’s decision, the appeal shall be considered for action by the State Board of Education at a regularly scheduled board meeting. The appeal shall be on the record before the Committee.
6. The district or school shall be entitled to appear in person at the board meeting for oral presentation. The Office of Secondary Education shall also appear at the board meeting. The oral presentation shall be limited to ten (10) minutes per side.
7. Following the presentation, the State Board of Education may ask questions to either the district or school or the Office of Secondary Education. The State Board of Education shall not consider any new factual evidence. The State Board of Education makes the final determination of the appeal’s disposition.
8. If a district or school is provided the opportunity to comply with specified corrective actions and fails to comply with the corrective actions within the timelines specified, the district or school’s innovative status shall be automatically revoked, and the school or district shall transition to “regular” status for implementation in the following school year to minimize academic disruptions.
9. Should a district or school that has been awarded innovative status decide to voluntarily terminate their approved innovations, they shall submit a plan to the MDE outlining the reasons for the decision and actions necessary to return to “regular” status. Districts or schools may submit termination plans at any time during the school year, but changes shall go into effect the following school year and shall be designed to minimize all academic disruptions.
10. **District of Innovation or School of Innovation Plan Components**

By July 1 of each year, the MDE shall release guidance on the application process, the application requirements, selection procedures, and criteria. At a minimum, the plan application shall be organized with the following sections:

1. Assurances
2. Mission and Goals
3. Innovative Program Design and Structure
4. Support of Innovation
5. Staffing
6. Professional Development
7. Governance
8. Innovative Teaching and Learning
9. Stakeholder Collaboration
10. Annual Reporting of Performance Measures
11. Sustainability
12. Waivers and Exemptions
13. Timeline of Activities
14. Data Sharing Agreement

An up-to-date copy of the rules, procedures, guidelines, and current application shall be kept on file at the Mississippi Department of Education.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. § 37-179-1 and* § *37-179-3 (Adopted July 1, 2015)*

A blue arrow with red and blue text

Description automatically generated

# **District/School of Innovation Application**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **District/School Name** |  |
| **Date of Application** |  |
| **District/School Address** |  |
| **District/School Contact** |  |
| **Phone Number** |  |

## **ASSURANCES**

The Assurances form is signed by both the Superintendent and School Board Chair.

Applications missing this form **will not be considered** for designation as Innovative Districts/Schools

**DISTRICT ASSURANCES**

Applicant assures that its application does not contain any request to waive the following Mississippi Revised Statutes or Mississippi Administrative Regulations:

1. Ensure the same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to all public schools.
2. Ensure students meet compulsory attendance requirements under § 37-13-91 and § 37-13-92.
3. Ensure that high school course offerings meet or exceed the minimum required under § 37-16-7 and 37-3-49 for high school graduation or meet earlier graduation requirements that may be enacted by the Mississippi Legislature.
4. Ensure the student performance standards meet or exceed those adopted by the State Board of Education as required by § 37-3-49, 37-16-3, and § 37-17-6, including compliance with the statewide assessment system specified in Chapter 16, Title 37, Mississippi Code of 1972.
5. Adhere to the same financial audits, audit procedures, and audit requirements as are applied under § 7-7-211(e).
6. Require state and criminal background checks for staff and volunteers as required of all public- school employees and volunteers and specified in § 37-9-17.
7. Comply with open records and open meeting requirements under § 25-41-1 et seq. and § 25-61-1 et seq;
8. Comply with purchasing requirements and limitations under Chapter 39, Title 37, Mississippi Code of 1972.
9. Provide overall instructional time that is equivalent to or greater than that required under § 37-1-11 and § 37-13-67, but which may include on-site instruction, distance learning, online courses, and work-based learning on nontraditional school days or hours.
10. Provide data to the department as deemed necessary to generate school and district reports.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Superintendent                                             Date | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Chair, Board of Education                            Date |

# **Application** **Components**

The following components must be included in the District or School of Innovation application and completely addressed. Please note, components need to include what the implementation of this proposed plan will look like over a 5-year period.

## **Mission and Goals**

1. The district/school’s mission and goals within the innovative plan are well-defined and articulated, setting high expectations for student learning. To achieve the mission of the innovative plan, goals include a focus on college and career readiness, student aspirations, measurable student achievement, and a strong dedication to promoting equity.
2. Explain the challenges and/or barriers that the plan will address. Provide a clear and compelling rationale for innovation and how the plan will address those challenges and/or barriers.

## **Innovative Program Design and Structure**

* + 1. Explain in detail how the innovative plan will differ from a traditional school model and what makes the proposed plan innovative. Describe how the plan will enhance student learning outcomes and the learning environment.
    2. Will the innovative plan include changes to the district/school calendar and/or master schedule? Justify any proposed changes to the school calendar and master schedule. (If not applicable, specify why those changes are not needed).
    3. Explain in detail how the innovative plan will be promoted and communicated to students, parents, and community stakeholders. Include orientation plans and publicity efforts.
    4. Discuss specific student supports that will be implemented throughout the innovative plan to promote student achievement.
    5. If applicable, describe the process by which students will be selected or enrolled in the innovative program. Explain how the recruitment/selection process will be promoted and how program enrollment promotes student equity (i.e., including students with disabilities, special populations, English Learners, and other subgroups). If applicable, explain the process for student removal from the program.
    6. (Career Academy only) Fully explain the following: cross-grade articulation in the new innovative program; the overall five-year structure and plan regarding teacher teams, curriculum, and instruction across grade levels. How does the cross-grade articulation affect students’ college and/or career aspirations? Explain how the innovative program creates a clear, consecutive, and logical program of study with a definitive course sequence that leads to college and/or career readiness without the need for remediation or additional certifications.

## **Support for Innovation**

* + 1. Include letters of support from the board of education, superintendent, and building administrators. Additional letters should be included from counselors and teachers who will be instrumental in the implementation of the innovative plan. Letters should state their understanding of roles, duties, and responsibilities as needed for the implementation of the innovative plan.
    2. Describe the new and/or additional instructional materials/resources needed to support the plan for innovation and how they will be different from traditional materials/ resources.
    3. Provide a five-year financial plan detailing any funding needed for facilities, equipment, curriculum, and/or materials necessary for the successful implementation of the innovative plan.

## **Staffing**

* + 1. Include a staff organizational chart for the innovation plan identifying key school administrators, counselors, and any other existing or new instructional leadership positions. Descriptions should be provided explaining the roles and responsibilities of each employed or new staff member.
    2. Include explanations of how the innovative plan will allow for increased flexibility and autonomy as well as promote shared leadership throughout the district/school.

## **Professional Development**

* 1. The innovative plan fully outlines any proposed changes from the school’s standard professional development (PD) plan for the 5 years of implementation. A complete list of waivers related to PD must be included in this section.
  2. The innovative plan addresses what specific professional development will be provided to support faculty and staff throughout implementation. The plan also provides a description of how specific and/or specialized PD will be used.
  3. The plan includes a description of teacher externships with industry partners and/or professional learning that will occur throughout implementation. An explanation is provided on how teacher externships will support student achievement. (Career Academies Only)

## **Governance**

1. This section includes how key staff and leadership will work in collaboration with community stakeholders and industry partners to design the most effective education model possible that leads to college-and career-readiness.

## **Innovative Teaching and Learning**

1. The plan articulates in detail activities that will expand beyond the normal school experience and gives detailed descriptions of these expanded experiences. These experiences should include but are not limited to, extracurricular, exploratory, co-curricular, experiential, and/or PBL activities.
2. Identify and describe any external standards that will be used within the implementation. Detail how these external standards, in conjunction with state standards, will support the mission and goals of the innovative plan, college and career readiness, aspirations of students, and promote equity. (Must be included if proposing implementation of Career Academies. However, if needed, this could apply to any proposed innovative plan.)
3. Explain how the Individual Success Plans (ISPs) will be used and updated to support students throughout the implementation of the innovative plan.
4. Provide a detailed plan for accelerated courses/programs that will be offered to students. Information is also provided on how accelerated course options/programs will support the mission and goals of the innovative plan, college and career readiness, student aspirations, and equity. (Not Applicable to Elementary & Middle)
5. The plan should describe which college programs are available at the district/school locale and all articulation agreements with institutions of higher learning are included. (Not Applicable to Elementary & Middle)

## **Stakeholder Collaboration**

1. Identify community stakeholders, industry partners, post-secondary institutions, and civic leadership that will be part of the collaboration with the district/school throughout the innovative plan. Explain how this collaboration will support and promote the mission and goals, college and career readiness, student aspirations, and equity for student success. For example, collaboration could include but is not limited to, volunteerism, apprenticeships, internships, work-based learning opportunities, simulated work environments, and additional professional activities.
2. Thoroughly explain and outline the work-based learning opportunities that will be available throughout the innovative program. (Career Academies only)

## **Annual Reporting of Performance Measures**

1. Identify the annual district/school performance targets for each year of the plan and how these will be measured, what data will be used to determine whether targets are in progress of being met or have been met for each year of the innovation plan. This should include no less than five years of projections.
2. The plan includes an explanation of how district/school staff will use collective performance target evidence and data to inform and differentiate instruction.

## **Sustainability**

1. Explain how the district/school will regularly evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of its plan to ensure continuous improvement.

## **Waivers and Exemptions**

1. Please create a table, like below, for all requested waivers.
2. Identify all requests for waivers and/or exemptions from state or local policies, requirements, or restrictions including rationale for the waiver that is connected to the proposed innovation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Requested Waiver(s) from State or Local Policies, Requirements, or Restrictions** | **District Rationale for Waiver Request** |
|  |  |

## **Timeline of Activities**

1. Include a full timeline of activities during the development, implementation, and sustainability stages of the innovative program. The timeline should be broken down by individual components providing details/benchmarks for the district/school to achieve in an organized and deliberate manner. Includes a full timeline of activities during the development, implementation, and sustainability stages of the innovative program.

## **Data Sharing Agreement**

1. A data sharing agreement is included in the plan.