District or School of Innovation Application

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**Table of Contents**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Application Submission Guidelines | 3 |
| Application Guidelines | 4 |
| 1. Purpose of a District of Innovation or School of Innovation | 4 |
| 1. Definitions | 4 |
| 1. Waivers and Exemptions | 6 |
| 1. Application Plan – Approval, Amendment, and Revocation Process | 6 |
| District or School of Innovation Application | 9 |
| Example Assurances Form | 10 |
| Component #1: Mission and Goals | 11 |
| Component #2: Innovative Program Design and Structure | 11 |
| Component #3: Support for Innovation | 11 |
| Component #4: Staffing | 11 |
| Component #5: Professional Development | 12 |
| Component #6: Governance | 12 |
| Component #7: Innovative Teaching and Learning | 12 |
| Component #8: Stakeholder Collaboration | 12 |
| Component #9: Annual Reporting | 13 |
| Component #10: Sustainability | 13 |
| Component #11: Waivers and Exemptions | 13 |
| Component #12: Timeline of Activities | 13 |
| Component #13: Data Sharing Agreement | 13 |

**Accelerated Application Submission Guidelines**

1. 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 with an accountability rating of “F” will not be considered for a district of innovation.
2. The 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.**
3. 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.
4. An electronic copy of the application is **due by 3:00 p.m. on December 1, for the following school year**.

**Application Process**

Phase 1: Review of Application via the Application Rubric

Applications will be reviewed by a peer from a current district of innovation and MDE experts. 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 present the District/School contact person, administration, teacher representative, community partners, etc., to illustrate fully 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.

# **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 that exit high school in need of remediation; and motivating students by expanding curriculum choices and learning opportunities.

# **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.

## **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.

## **School of Innovation:**

### A School of Innovation is a school that voluntarily participates in a District 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. Both models are designed to target underserved public-school student populations that are at risk of dropping out of high school or of not continuing in postsecondary school. Underserved students are students who come from households in poverty, students who are first-generation college-goers, or students of color.

## **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, student academic performance results shall be included in the student’s high school of residence beginning in the academic year 2018-2019 (results reported in the fall of 2019). 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. ECHSPs 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). 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 shall also include a data-sharing agreement, fixed asset management, and revocation procedures.

## **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 are monitored closely to ensure that they are meeting 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.

# **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.

# **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 prior to 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 their current five-year plan. No amendments shall be considered that increase the number of years the district is considered a District of Innovation.

## **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 ECHSPs 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 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. Because of the model of the ECHSP, it is recommended that all students meet the College and Career Readiness benchmarks for entering Mississippi IHLs by graduation.

* 1. **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 not meeting 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 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.
   1. **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:

Assurances

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

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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; and
10. Provide data to the department as deemed necessary to generate school and district reports.

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

**Components**

**The following components must be included and fully addressed:**

1. **Mission and Goals**
   1. The plan for innovation articulates mission and goals that reflect high expectations for student learning, including college and career readiness. The plan explains how innovation status will meet the district’s and/or school’s measurable mission and goals. This component should include college and career readiness, student aspirations, defined and measurable student achievement, and a commitment to equity.
   2. The plan provides a clear and compelling rationale for innovation. Is the plan something different that enhances student learning outcomes or the learning environment?
   3. Explain how the innovative program is designed to impact student learning and how it will equip students with college- and career-readiness skills.
   4. Explain how the innovative program will differ from a traditional school model and what makes the proposed plan innovative.
   5. Identify the annual district/school performance targets for each year of the plan. This should include no less than five years of projections.
2. **Innovative Program Design and Structure**
   1. Justify any proposed changes to the school calendar and Master Schedule.
   2. Fully explain cross-grade articulation in the new innovative program. Describe 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.
   3. Describe the process by which students will be selected or enrolled in the innovative program including any description of target populations. The recruitment/selection process is written, open to any student, and is public. Plans for the orientation of both students and parents are included. The plan should discuss how enrollment reflects the district/school’s population. The plan should include a discussion of how students with disabilities, special pops, English Language Learners, etc. are considered for participation in the plan for innovation. The process for student removal from the program is described if applicable.
3. **Support for Innovation**
   1. Support from the Board of Education, Superintendent, Building Administrators, Counselors, and teachers should be fully discussed and verified. It is vital that staff support and understand the innovative initiative and are fully bought in. Letters of support from community stakeholders should be included here.
   2. Describe the instructional materials/resources the district/school will utilize to support the plan for innovation and its changes from the traditional model paying close attention to the Mississippi College and Career Standards as well as the innovation model. Explain fully adequate funding for facilities, equipment, curriculum, and materials necessary for success. This should include a well-thought-out five-year plan that shows the building of capacity over time.
4. **Staffing**
   1. Describe the overall staff organizational chart of the plan for innovation.
   2. This section should include explanations of how the school will use increased flexibility and autonomy to engage the staff and promote shared leadership.
5. **Professional Development**
   1. The plan fully outlines any proposed changes or additions to or subtractions from the school’s standard professional development (PD) plan. A complete list of waivers related to PD must be included in this section.
   2. Districts/Schools of innovation frequently place staff in new and innovative roles that they often have little experience with. Because of this, a rigorous professional development plan must be part of the plan. Describe the professional development plan for each group of staff members. Include as many specifics as possible.
   3. Teacher Externships with industry partners and/or professional learning are described by the plan. The plan describes how externships/professional learning train teachers to better understand the subject areas/industries their students will be entering upon completion of their education. (Career Academies Only)
6. **Governance**

This section will include how teachers and program coordinators work in collaboration with community stakeholders and industry partners to design the most effective education model possible that leads to college and career readiness.

1. **Innovative Teaching and Learning**
   1. Describe extracurricular, exploratory, co-curricular, experiential, and PBL activities that are planned. The plan articulates changes being proposed to expand beyond the normal school experience and gives detailed descriptions of the expanded experiences.
   2. The plan articulates any proposed changes to curriculum and instruction.
   3. The plan discusses how the new program will exceed the learning outcomes of the current/standard model of the district/school.
   4. The plan specifically describes the external standards and how the standards are covered through innovative means.
   5. The plan details how the new program’s guiding principle is to achieve college readiness for all students without any remediation OR career readiness upon the day of high school graduation.
   6. Individual Success Plans (ISPs) are standard for every student within the innovative program. This plan, beginning at the latest in 8th grade, provides each step for students to fulfill their career aspirations. The ISP will be updated each semester at a minimum. The ISP will include each and every step, requirement, certification, license, etc. necessary to achieve the students’ goals.
   7. The plan for innovation must detail all accelerated course options for the students. The plan outlines articulation agreements with both two and four-year institutions of higher learning. The plan should also discuss how the innovative program prepares for or replaces college-level courses. The plan should describe which college programs are available at the district/school locale. (Not Applicable to Elementary & Middle)
2. **Stakeholder Collaboration**
   1. Stakeholder collaboration is essential for an innovative district/school to operate effectively. The plan discusses alignment with community stakeholders, industry partners, post-secondary institutions, and civic leadership.
   2. The plan should include a discussion about aligning the innovative district/school’s instructional practices with the community’s industry, employer base, and employment projections.
   3. The plan articulates the Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities available through the innovative program. (Not Applicable to Elementary & Middle) (May only apply to Career Academies)
3. **Annual Reporting of Performance Measures**
   1. The plan thoroughly describes the data to be collected and the proposed schedule of reporting to MDE that backs up the goals and specific gains in academic achievement and career preparedness the school will commit to as a result of securing innovative status. Articulates clear measures for monitoring learning outcomes.
   2. The plan explains innovations around student assessments and data systems, which could include changes to progress monitoring, data-driven practices, and differentiated instruction.
   3. The plan includes an explanation of how staff will use evidence and data to inform and differentiate instruction.
4. **Sustainability**
   1. Explains how the district/school will regularly evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of its plan to ensure continuous improvement.
   2. Fully discuss the financial projections up to and including year five of the plan for innovation. Discuss how the district/school intends to sustain the program over the entire five-year timeline.
   3. Fully describe the recruitment plan for student participation in the innovation program. Explain how this plan lends itself to program sustainability.
5. **Waivers and Exemptions** – Please create a table like below for all requested waivers.

Identify all requests for waivers and/or exemptions for state or local policies, requirements, or restrictions including the 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** |
|  |  |

1. **Timeline of Activities**
   1. Includes full Timeline of the development, implementation, and sustainability plan.
   2. The timeline details benchmarks for district/schools to achieve in an organized and deliberate manner and expresses a sense of urgency at the district/school.
   3. The timeline should be broken down into individual components, to provide for an organized and methodical approach to innovation implementation.
2. **Data Sharing Agreement** A data sharing agreement is included in the plan.