

Innovation Funding Initiative

Investing in bold ideas. Creating lasting impacts.



Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) FAQs (12/1/25)

Who is eligible to apply?

Lead Applicants include: (1) Orange County school districts serving students in grades TK-12 (including elementary school districts, high school districts, or unified school districts); or (2) a Consortium of Orange County districts serving students in grades TK-12 with one district as the lead applicant.

- Districts apply with input from one or more school sites (assuming school site intervention)
- Districts may submit more than one application, but any district (as a lead) will receive no more than one award per cohort

School sites, LEAs outside of Orange County, and other non-LEA entities are not eligible to apply. While this current funding opportunity prioritizes districts, Charter schools may be eligible for future rounds of funding.

Are community college districts and/or community colleges eligible to apply?

No, community college districts and/or community colleges are not eligible to apply. Applicants must be Orange County school districts serving grades TK-12, or a consortium of Orange County school districts serving students in grades TK-12.

Can Charter Schools apply? (Are Charter Schools eligible for this funding?)

No, Charter Schools are not eligible to apply. While this current funding opportunity prioritizes Orange County school districts, Charter Schools may be eligible for future rounds of funding.

As an independent charter school and our own LEA, I wanted to know if we are eligible for any funding, given that we are not a traditional "district."

No, Charter Schools are not eligible to apply. While this current funding opportunity prioritizes Orange County school districts, Charter Schools may be eligible for future rounds of funding.

Can an ROP apply?

No, ROPs are not eligible to apply. Applicants must be Orange County school districts serving grades TK-12, or a consortium of Orange County school districts serving students in grades TK-12.

Can schools apply?

No, schools are not eligible to apply. Applicants must be Orange County school districts serving grades TK-12, or a consortium of Orange County school districts serving students in grades TK-12. If a school has an innovation project they would like to pursue, they are encouraged to discuss with their district leadership whether the district has interest in submitting an application for that project.

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Are there restrictions on which Orange County school districts can apply (e.g., only those identified in DA or Title I)?

Any Orange County school district serving grades TK-12 (including elementary school districts, high school districts, or unified school districts); or a Consortium of Orange County districts serving students in grades TK-12 with one district as the lead applicant may apply.

Does the \$525,000 need to be split evenly across the three years?

No. The funding distribution does not need to be evenly split across the three years. An applicant can propose whatever budget makes sense for their particular project across the three years, as long as they justify the breakout of costs across the years.

May we submit multiple applications?

Districts may submit more than one application. However, a district may only receive one funding award per round.

Are matching funds required?

Matching funds are not required for this funding opportunity.

How is OCDE defining innovation for this program?

Innovation is the implementation of a new strategy or novel application of strategies designed to address an unmet need in an educational context. Innovative practices improve efficiency or student outcomes. While innovative practices may not be evidence-based, innovations should be grounded in theory, responsive to the needs of the population of interest, and capable of producing sustainable, scalable, and replicable change.

Is grant funding permitted for external professional development services provided by a partner organization to implement innovative practices and improve student outcomes? Or does OCDE provide the necessary training and implementation support upon award?

Funding may be used to contract for services provided by a partner organization to implement innovative practices and improve student outcomes, as long as the applicant justifies the need for the service as part of the innovation. OCDE will provide implementation coaching to support high quality implementation of the proposed innovation.