

Innovation Funding Initiative

Investing in bold ideas. Creating lasting impacts.



Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) FAQs (12/15/25)

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.

Added December 12, 2025

Can OCDE programs provide a letter of support to district applicants to support their application? No, OCDE may not provide letters of support for applicants under this Innovation Funding opportunity. Additionally, OCDE may not partner with or be in any way involved in the development or ideation of the innovation project that is being proposed or in the application process. These activities pose a conflict of interest and may disqualify applications from consideration for funding.

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Can one application involve multiple schools, or just one school?

While the applicant must be a school district or Consortium of districts, implementation at one or more school sites is highly encouraged. Schools that will serve as implementation sites must be involved in developing the funding application.

How might we sign up for the ListServ?

Sign up for updates using the Google Form at this [link](#). You may also access the form through the Innovation Funding Initiative website, <https://ocde.us/InnovationFunding/Pages/Email-Sign-Up.aspx>

Is there a structure in that small, mid and large districts have opportunity to be granted?

Different size will write different apps, is there a process in that all size can be awarded?

OCDE intends to fund a variety of projects across districts of different types (e.g., unified school districts, high school districts, elementary school districts). In addition, OCDE recognizes that districts of different sizes have distinct needs, contexts, and levels of available capacity. The selection process has been designed to ensure that no district is advantaged or disadvantaged based on size. While district size is not a selection criterion, OCDE aims to support a balanced portfolio of projects that reflects the diversity of Orange County's districts, including a range of district types and sizes.

Can text in tables be single-spaced?

Yes, text in tables may be single-spaced. Be sure to adhere to specified formatting provided in the RFA for other spacing, margins, and font sizes.

Added December 15, 2025

Is OCDE ACCESS eligible to apply?

No. OCDE ACCESS is not eligible to apply for or receive funding under the Innovation Funding Initiative. Moreover, no OCDE program may receive funding as part of a district or Consortium application.