

# DISTRICT DESIGNED AND LED STRATEGIES



COLORADO  
Department of Education

## EASI Route: District Designed and Led

### Introduction

The District Designed and Led (DDL) route of the Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) application encourages districts to initiate and expand support for schools in need of improvement. This route is a good fit for districts and their schools that have invested in a comprehensive needs assessment, solid planning, and are ready for implementation – or that have seen positive results and would like to expand programming. Districts are encouraged to engage in activities that build long-term capacity to implement and sustain improvements including: partnering with external providers from CDE’s vetted improvement partner list, building or improving systems to drive school improvement aligned to the Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement, and building staff capacity to implement improvement strategies.

### Prerequisites

To be awarded funds under this application, proposals must demonstrate that the LEA and school(s) are building from established needs and processes, including stakeholder engagement, improvement planning, use of evidence-based interventions (EBI), evaluation, and reporting.

**Stakeholder Involvement.** State and federal expectations highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement (e.g., building leadership, teachers, parents, local board) throughout the school improvement process. Schools identified under ESSA (i.e., Comprehensive, Targeted) and under the state accountability system (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround) have specific requirements that serve as a common foundation to build from, such as the state expectation that school accountability committees provide feedback on school plans. For this route, applications should address how stakeholders will be involved in the proposed activities in meaningful and relevant ways.

**Improvement Planning.** Improvement plans are one of the tangible ways that districts and schools document their intention for improving outcomes for students. LEAs applying for this route will need to show evidence of strong plans already in place and be explicit about how planning requirements will be documented for the overall district and participating schools (e.g., timelines, LEA review process). If awarded, the plans will serve as an important part of the grant accountability process. The Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) provides a convenient mechanism for capturing progress for EASI, as well as specific state and ESSA requirements.

**Evidence-Based Interventions.** Evidence-based interventions are practices or programs that have proven to be effective in leading to a particular outcome as supported through formal studies and research. Within EASI, proposed strategies or programs must meet the criteria tiers one, two or three.

### For More Information, Contact:

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<b>Tier 1 Strong Evidence</b>	Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies.
<b>Tier 2 Moderate Evidence</b>	Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies.
<b>Tier 3 Promising Evidence</b>	Supported by one or more well-designed and well implemented correlational studies (with statistical controls for selection bias).
<b>Tier 4 – Demonstrates a Rationale</b>	Practices that have a well-defined logic model or theory of action, are supported by research, and have some effort underway by an SEA, LEA, or outside research organization to determine their effectiveness.



To ensure the best fit, applicants must address the elements of the contextual fit framework proposed by Horner, Blitz and Ross<sup>1</sup>: Need (Strategy is linked to needs assessment), precision (clear definition of the proposed intervention), efficiency (reasonable adoption period and a likelihood of sustainability), skill (staff have the skills or will be trained adequately), cultural relevance (intervention and outcomes are valued by stakeholders), resources (time, materials, staff), and organizational support (district and school staff are supportive and involved). If the application includes reading interventions in early elementary grades, they will need to meet the more rigorous standards of the READ Act. For more information, see the [READ Act website](#) for additional information.

For more information around selecting EBIs, CDE resources can be found at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/essaplanningrequirements>. CDE has created a number of strategy guides to help schools and districts better understand what research says about common EBI strategies. These guides can be found at <https://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/strategyguides>. Districts are strongly encouraged to align with one or more of the CDE strategy guides to meet EBI guidelines and implement practices for effective implementation.

### Types of District Designed and Led Opportunities

For LEAs that previously applied for a District Designed and Led initiative, it is possible to expand those strategies. The chart below delineates the “initial” DDL process and for the “continuation” DDL process.

	INITIAL for LEAs new to DDL strategies	CONTINUATION for LEAs that want to expand Initial DDL strategies to new schools or continue to implement in previously awarded schools
ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	<p>LEAs that have eligible schools and completed an external diagnostic review may apply for District Designed and Led initiatives; <b>and</b></p> <p>Schools identified for improvement under ESSA (i.e., Comprehensive, Targeted, Additional Targeted) and/or schools with a State identification of Priority Improvement, Turnaround, On Watch</p>	<p>LEAs previously awarded an EASI District-Designed and Led Initial grant may request additional funds to expand that initiative to new school if it is showing success or continue to implement in the previously awarded schools; and</p> <p>Schools identified for improvement under ESSA (i.e., Comprehensive, Targeted, Additional Targeted) and/or schools with a State identification of Priority Improvement, Turnaround, On Watch</p>
AVAILABLE FUNDS	<p>Year 1- Up to \$20,000*</p> <p>Year 2- Up to \$80,000</p> <p>Year 3- Up to \$80,000</p> <p>*When developing budgets, keep in mind Year 1 is only 5 months (February – June). Year 2 and 3 are full school years.</p>	<p>Year 1- Up to \$20,000*</p> <p>Year 2- Up to \$80,000</p> <p>Year 3- Up to \$80,000</p> <p>*When developing budgets, keep in mind Year 1 is only 5 months (February – June). Year 2 and 3 are full school years.</p>
LENGTH OF AWARD	<p>Up to 2 ½ years pending evidence that implementation is occurring as approved in the application. Subsequent year funding is</p>	<p>For the addition of new schools or continuation in already awarded schools, the award may be up to 2 ½ years pending evidence that implementation is</p>

<sup>1</sup> Horner, R., Blitz, C., Ross, S. (June 2014) *Investing in what works issue brief: The role of contextual fit when implementing evidence-based interventions*. Washington, D.C.: American Institutes of Research.



	dependent upon meeting reporting requirements and availability of funds.	occurring as approved in the application. Continued funding is dependent upon meeting reporting requirements and availability of funds.
ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS	<p>Funding for this opportunity may be used for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improvement services from external providers from CDE’s vetted provider list</li> <li>● A district-wide or targeted initiative that addresses the reasons schools were identified for improvement</li> <li>● Implementation of evidence-based interventions at each identified school that specifically addresses the reason for the school’s identification</li> </ul>	<p>Funding for this opportunity may be used to expand strategies previously awarded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Improvement services from external providers from CDE’s vetted provider list</li> <li>● Continuing the implementation of DDL strategies in the already awarded schools</li> <li>● Adding additional schools identified for Improvement, using the same strategies</li> <li>● Expanding or replicating DDL strategies approved in the previous year’s application</li> </ul> <p>Please note that any change that involves adding new activities or strategies should be applied for using the Initial DDL route. The Continuation route is only for continuing the same strategies in already awarded schools, adding new schools, or replicating previously approved strategies.</p>
	<p>Funds from this opportunity must be used to <b>supplement and not supplant</b> any federal, state, and local funds currently being used to provide activities. Each year, funds should be obligated by June 30 and schools are able to request reimbursement on federal funds through September 30. A district/school may carry funds forward within the grant duration years. However, this amount should be reasonable and based on the school’s grant and/or improvement plan and approval must be obtained. Note: At the end of participation in the grant period, any non-requested federal funds will be rescinded by CDE and any unspent state funds should be returned to CDE.</p>	

### Eligible Applicants and Prioritization

**Eligibility.** This route within the EASI is standards-based, so all scored elements must meet expectations. Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria and rubrics within the application on a competitive basis.

**Prioritization.** In the event that not all EASI proposals can be funded, proposals that meet grant expectations will be funded in the order of the EASI school-level prioritization list. Schools with the highest number of prioritization points will be funded first. In addition CDE will take into consideration the district’s plan to successfully implement as defined by: selection of high leverage EBI strategies and aligned implementation plan (e.g. CDE strategy guide alignment), clear implementation plan and progress monitoring benchmarks, and use of external providers to build capacity to implement.

### Important Program Dates

November	Applicants interested in DDL are invited to attend optional office hours to learn about crafting a strong DDL application
January	Award notifications
May Year 1	Implementation and impact target setting
January and June annually	Implementation support and progress monitoring check-ins



## Evaluation and Reporting

Each LEA that receives an EASI grant is required to report, at a minimum, are expected to:

- Update the UIP during the standard window to reflect the exploration work (i.e., external review, parent and community engagement, improvement planning). CDE will review the plan during the school's standard window (e.g., January for schools on the accountability; April for remaining schools).
- Schools identified for support and improvement through ESSA (i.e., CS, TS, and additional TS schools) must use the exploration results to meet the comprehensive needs assessment requirements. CS schools should document these expectations in the UIP; TS and Additional TS schools may use the UIP. The LEA must approve the plans.
- Submit the Annual Financial Report (AFR) to CDE.

DDL specific reporting:

- Districts receiving a DDL award are expected to meet with CDE staff upon receipt of the award to set annual implementation benchmarks and student outcome benchmarks.
- Districts receiving a DDL award will provide updates on implementation progress and student impacts based on the established benchmarks.

## Program Assurances

There are no additional assurances for this route beyond the general assurances referenced in the EASI application.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Colorado Department of Education's EASI Website  
[www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/easiapplication](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/easiapplication)

District Designed and Led Improvement Strategies  
[www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/districtdesignedstrategies](http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/districtdesignedstrategies)