

DISTRICT DESIGNED AND LED STRATEGIES



EASI Route: District Designed and Led

Introduction

The District Designed and Led (DDL) route of the Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI) application encourages to initiate and expand supports 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.

Prerequisites

To be awarded funds under this application, proposals must demonstrate that the LEA and school(s) are building from established processes for the cross-cutting elements, 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.

Who Can I Contact for More Information?

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Tier 1 – Strong Evidence	Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies.
Tier 2 – Moderate Evidence	Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies.
Tier 3 – Promising Evidence	Supported by one or more well-designed and well implemented correlational studies (with statistical controls for selection bias).
Tier 4 – Demonstrates a Rationale	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 Ross¹: 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.

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 activities. The chart below delineates the “initial” DDL process and for the “expansion” DDL process.

	INITIAL for LEAs new to DDL activities	EXPANSION for LEAs that expand previously awarded DDL
ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	Any new LEAs applying for District Designed and Led initiatives. See details on eligibility below.	Any LEA previously awarded an EASI District-Designed and Led grant may request additional funds to expand.
AVAILABLE FUNDS	CS Schools: Up to \$75,000 per school per year; TS and A-TS Schools: Up to \$25,000 per school per year; and Schools on the accountability clock: Up to \$75,000 per school per year. When developing budgets, keep in mind Year 1 is only 6 months (January – June). Year 2 and 3 are full school years.	CS Schools: Up to \$75,000 per school per year; TS and A-TS Schools: Up to \$25,000 per school per year; and Schools on the accountability clock: Up to \$75,000 per school per year. When developing budgets, keep in mind Year 1 is only 6 months (January – June). Year 2 and 3 are full school years.
LENGTH OF AWARD	Up to 2 ½ years pending evidence that implementation is occurring as approved in the application. Subsequent year funding is dependent upon meeting reporting requirements and availability of funds.	For the addition of new schools, the award may be for up to 2 ½ years. Otherwise, the timeline is attached to the original request to not exceed a total of 2 ½ years. Continued funding is dependent upon meeting requirements and availability of funds.
ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS	Funding for this opportunity may be used for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A district-wide initiative that addresses the reasons schools were identified for improvement – Implementation of evidence-based interventions at each identified school that 	Funding for this opportunity may be used to expand activities previously awarded by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adding additional schools identified for Improvement – Expanding the reach of activities approved in the previous year’s application

¹ 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.

	specifically addresses the reason for the school's identification	– Adding new activities to supplement the initiative approved in the previous year's application
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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. The prioritization process follows the typical process shared in the application on pp 6-7.

Important Program Dates

January	Award notifications
January and beyond	Implementation and consultative support, as needed

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.

Program Assurances

There are no additional assurances for this route beyond the general assurances covered on page 52 of the EASI application.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

CDE EASI Website

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/easiapplication>

District Designed and Led Improvement Strategies

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/districtdesignedstrategies>