

Summary of the ED STEPS Project and Three-Year Planning Cycle Pilot

The Ohio Department of Education is dedicated to implementing the vision in *Each Child, Our Future* to ensure in that in Ohio, each child is challenged, prepared and empowered. To support this vision, the Department is incorporating four years of feedback from schools and districts to develop a process of increased support and collaboration. The Education Department's System of Tiered E-Plans and Supports (ED STEPS) process will increase coordination and streamline the timelines and processes for assessing needs, planning and applying for funds.

ED STEPS will better serve students and communities by shifting resource management to a “funding the plan, rather than planning to fund” mindset. The Department will provide cross-office support to districts to develop a three-year comprehensive plan and leverage all resources to fund that plan rather than creating programs based on available funding. This process will be supported by aligned technology system enhancements. The ED STEPS system will replace functionality currently found in Ohio's Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP). Ohio was a pioneer in the development of CCIP and it is currently used throughout the nation. The Department expects to once again pioneer a process and system that can become a nationwide model.

The Department believes the ED STEPS process, as well as the technology system to support the process, should be designed and developed with our end users. The Department expects to design, develop and roll out the technology system components in phases over the next two years. At each phase, and throughout the process, the Department will engage stakeholders and ask for input. As a first step, the Department is announcing a partnership opportunity for 30 to 40 districts to begin piloting a three-year planning cycle.

Key Questions and Answers (Q and A) on the Three-Year Planning Cycle Pilot

- Q. What type of educational organizations can participate in this pilot?**
A. *Any local educational agency, including traditional public districts and community schools, can apply for the pilot.*
- Q. How many school districts will be part of the pilot?**
A. *The Department is seeking 30 to 40 school districts that represent all the different typologies and regions to test the three-year planning cycle.*
- Q. What do districts need to do to apply, and when is the application due?**
A. *Districts wishing to be considered for the ED STEPS pilot should complete a short partnership agreement survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CLNHD8Y>. The survey must be signed by the superintendent and treasurer (or authorized representative and fiscal representative) and submitted by Dec. 6, 2019.*
- Q. When does the pilot start?**
A. *The pilot officially will start in early January 2020 with the opening and use of the prototype One Needs Assessment. Pilot districts will submit a three-year plan by early April. Pilot districts will need to submit an annual funding application aligned to the three-year plan by end of June.*
- Q. What are the expectations for a pilot district?**
A. *The Department will be a partner with the pilot districts to design, build and prepare everyone for the ED STEPS process. The Department will ask pilot districts to commit to supporting the ED STEPS work starting in January 2020. The main work of the pilot districts will be from January to July 2020, however*

we will ask for ongoing feedback as the technology system components are designed, developed and rolled out through June 2022. Below are the key expectations:

- 1. Participate in training to use the One Needs Assessment.*
- 2. Participate in training to write three-year plans with SMART goals and evidence-based strategies.*
- 3. Agree to use the One Needs Assessment system for identifying the district and school needs over a three-year period.*
- 4. Agree to write a three-year plan in the CCIP Planning Tool that is of high quality.*
- 5. Provide feedback and respond to Department surveys regarding the One Needs Assessment, the process for writing a quality three-year plan, and the overall plan review and approval process.*
- 6. Agree to be a member of the ED STEPS Advisory Group that provides feedback on the ED STEPS systems.*
- 7. Adhere to Department plan submission timelines.*

Q. How long will the pilot project last?

A. The pilot will have three different phases. The first phase of the pilot is to complete the One Needs Assessment and develop a three-year plan by early April 2020 with support from the Department. The second phase of the pilot is to provide feedback to the Department on the review and approval process of the three-year plan during April and May, then the annual funding application approval process in July. The third phase is to provide feedback and input on the design and development of the technology systems through June 2022.

Q. How will the pilot districts be selected and notified if they are selected?

A. The Department will select 30-40 districts based on several criteria including, but not limited to, ensuring all district typologies and regions are represented, and accountability status. The goal is to have a diverse representation of districts to inform our process. The Department plans to notify selected districts by December 20. Districts superintendents, treasurers and federal programs staff members should expect an email from Jeremy Marks, director of Federal Programs and business owner of ED STEPS, as well as receive a hard copy letter in the mail. The letter will include additional information regarding the pilot and an invitation to attend a kick-off meeting in early to mid-January.

Q. Will there be some type of communication and kick off meeting for the pilot districts?

A. Yes. The main source of information on the ED STEPS Project will be on the ED STEPS website. The Department will notify pilot districts of their selection before Dec. 20, including a request to attend a kick-off meeting in early to mid-January.

Q. Will there be training materials and trainings offered for the pilot districts?

A. Yes, the Department is in the process of developing guidance and training materials and, once developed, will post these documents and other ED STEPS on the website. Similarly, the Department will provide trainings and support to pilot districts throughout the project.

Q. What type of benefits and support can the Department offer pilot districts?

A. The Department will provide cross-agency support to pilot districts working on a three-year planning cycle. Members of the Department and State Support Teams will help pilot districts to identify needs in the One Needs Assessment, complete a three-year plan and submit it by early April. The Office of Federal Programs will work with the pilot districts to submit a funding application aligned to the three-year plan by the end of June. Pilot districts will have a year of hands-on experience when the One Needs Assessment component is operational in school year 2020-2021. In addition, the Department will work closely with each pilot member to ensure they receive the high level of support needed during the pilot year. Below includes, but is not limited to, some additional benefits and flexibilities that will be provided to the pilot districts:

1. *Once the pilot district completes a three-year needs assessment or three-year plan by end of March 2020, the district will not be required to complete either of these again until March 2023. However they will have the ability and are encouraged to amend these items as they see fit. The district will only have to complete basic funding applications each year by end of June.*
2. *Opportunity to receive significant Department support from multiple offices in approving a quality three-year plan during the pilot year.*
3. *The Department will give consideration of waiver requests pertaining to procedures and/or deadlines that are not required by law or rule or are a required component of the ED STEPS Project.*
4. *Receive incentive points on the Office of Federal Programs' risk-based compliance decision schedule.*
5. *The Department will recognize the district as an ED STEPS pilot and receive appropriate acknowledgement for its partnership with the Department on the ED STEPS Project*

Q. Do we have to work with the State Support Team on this pilot?

A. The Department encourages all pilot districts to work with the regional state support teams but only districts in accountability status (ADC, Intensive, Moderate DF) will be required to work with the SSTs during the pilot

Q. What type of feedback are you expecting from the pilot districts and how will feedback be provided?

A. The Department will request feedback on both the process and the technology systems designed and developed to support the process. The Department will create a method for providing feedback including, but not limited to, an ED STEPS pilot email portal.

Q. Will a pilot district need to use the One Needs Assessment Prototype in the 2019-2020 school year?

A. Yes, the Department expects pilot districts to identify their needs over a three-year period using the prototype One Needs Assessment tool during the 2019-2020 school year beginning in January 2020. Pilot districts should provide feedback and input on the tool to inform the design and development of the One Needs Assessment component.

Q. Will a pilot district have to develop a three-year plan in the 2019-2020 school year?

A. Yes, the Department expects pilot districts to develop a three-year comprehensive plan to address their three-year needs during the 2019-2020 school year to serve 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. Districts will submit these plans in the existing CCIP Planning tool by April 1, 2020. Pilot districts will provide feedback and input to inform the design and development of the One Plan component.

Q. When are the three-year plans due?

A. By April 1, 2020

Q. What is the timeline and important deliverable dates for the pilot program?

A. The chart below represents key milestones for the pilot

Timeline	Action
<i>Beginning of January 2020</i>	<i>The One Needs Assessment and CCIP Planning Tool are available for local educational organizations to use</i>
<i>By April 1, 2020</i>	<i>Local educational organization submits the three-year One Needs Assessment and three-year plan with the CCIP Planning Tool</i>

<i>April-May 2020</i>	<i>Department reviews and approves the three-year plans</i>
<i>Mid-June 2020</i>	<i>The annual consolidated funding application opens</i>
<i>By June 30, 2020</i>	<i>Districts submit one-year funding applications aligned to three-year plans</i>
<i>July-August 2020</i>	<i>Department approves annual funding applications</i>
<i>July 2020-June 2022</i>	<i>Pilot district provide feedback, input and support to the design, development and rollout of the ED STEPS system components</i>

- Q. I keep hearing ED STEPS is replacing the CCIP. Is there something else to ED STEPS?**
- A. The ED STEPS Project is much more than the technology tools we use. ED STEPS is a process and a different way of doing business. ED STEPS is about working in a collaborative manner, communicating together, improving the supports, finding efficiencies, leveraging resources and upgrading the technology we use to make it all work. The ED STEPS technology system components will be designed and developed by our end users over the next two plus years, including phasing out sections of the CCIP.
- Q. Does the approval of a three-year plan mean districts will not be required to submit an annual funding application each year?**
- A. *No. Districts will still need to submit annual funding applications by the end of June showing how the costs are allowable and aligned to the three-year plan. The intent of ED STEPS is to develop a streamlined annual funding application that only requires the basic information necessary to receive your funds. The concept is to “fund the plan, not plan to fund” and those funding applications should be approved earlier in the start of the fiscal year so districts can start using federal resources.*
- Q. When do the pilot districts have to develop another three-year plan? How does that process work?**
- A. *During the pilot year, the Department will assign all remaining districts to one of three cohorts that will begin developing a three-year plan for their cohort year. The cohorts will transition to the three-year cycle respectively in January 2021, 2022, or 2023. After this year, the pilot districts will join the last three-year cohort (Cohort 3) to develop a three-year plan starting in January 2023.*
- Q. If we are not selected as a pilot, what should we expect for this year and the years to come?**
- A. *If you are not a pilot district, there are many ways you can be part of the ED STEPS process. We want feedback from all districts and encourage you to use the One Needs Assessment and give feedback. However, if you are **not** a pilot district there is no requirement to use the system and can operate pretty much the same as usual for the 2019-2020 school year. During this pilot year, the Department will assign all districts to one of three cohorts to phase districts into a three-year planning cycle beginning the 2020-2021 school year.*

November 18, 2019