

THE ED STEPS PROJECT

What is ED STEPS?

- ED STEPS is the Education Department's System of Tiered E-Plans and Supports (ED STEPS).
- ED STEPS is a process for improving the way the Department coordinates, collaborates and communicates to support districts and schools in addressing their needs.
- ED STEPS standardizes timelines and streamlines the process for assessing needs, developing plans and applying for funds.
- The ED STEPS process will be supported by improvements to the Department's technology systems and tools, most notably the Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP), over the next several years.

What brought about ED STEPS?

- The idea for the ED STEPS Project came from over four years of educator and administrator feedback, including a comprehensive analysis of the CCIP, user interviews and input from an advisory group.
- ED STEPS supports Ohio's Strategic Plan for Education, *Each Child Our Future*, and its vision that each child is *challenged, prepared and empowered*. It aligns with the three core principles of Each Child Our Future - equity, partnerships and quality schools – as well as the 10 core strategies.

What are the objectives and benefits of ED STEPS?

- Ed STEPS will improve the user experience, reduce the time and resources the Department and districts devote to compliance activities, promote cross-office and program support, remove unnecessary barriers and duplication, and offer tools to help districts think more holistically about resource allocation.
- Creating a system to assist in breaking down programmatic silos and fostering collaboration will result in improvements in how the Department communicates on district needs, plans and funding opportunities.
- The system will maximize and leverage resources by shifting the approach to “fund the plan, not plan to fund,” standardizing timelines and adopting a three-year planning cycle with annual funding applications

KEY PARTS OF THE ED STEPS PROJECT

1. ED STEPS collaboration and communication to support customers

The Department will form cross-agency district support teams facilitated by an assigned program specialist from the Office of Federal Programs for each district. These cross-agency support teams will support each district in identifying needs, developing comprehensive plans and helping leverage resources to support those plans. Support team members will work together, communicate collaboratively and approve three-year plans and annual funding applications to support those plans.

2. ED STEPS technology systems

ED STEPS system components and tools will be designed because users *want* them, not because they *need* them for compliance purposes. The ED STEPS systems will be designed, developed and rolled out in phases by the end users.

Conceptual features for the components of the ED STEPS system

Dashboard and Guidance Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landing site for all interconnecting parts of the system. • Communication hub, including important grant-related announcements, alerts, clickable communications, district-specific award notices, letters, materials, and messaging. • One-stop location for a three-year, high-level overview of the district needs, plans and grant funding in an understandable format that is visually appealing and printable while offering public access. • A repository for training videos and resources for grant administration.
One Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>single</i> needs assessment tool for all needs, not just academic needs, including optional and required federal, state and local needs identifications. • Easy to use with clickable answers and optional narrative responses. • Will be required only once every three years with the ability to update regularly. • The core function to develop three-year plans and apply for annual competitive and formula funds.
One-Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captures all district and school planning needs over a three-year period • User-friendly and intuitive, flexible to address all its unique goals and strategies including pre-populated fields and drop-downs to minimize writing. • Require SMART goals with quantifiable outcomes for a district to select from a listing of goals and strategies or specify its own. • Offers a selection of grants showing allowable activities to help with funding the strategies and activities.
Consolidated Formula and Competitive Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from single needs assessment and three-year plan linked to entitlement and competitive funding applications • Budget only requires basic information for approval to request funds. • Competitive funding applications focused on the quality of the needs assessment and plans, not the quality of the grant writing. • Includes list of all competitive grants with details and eligibility requirements. • Pre-populated responses to answers for those applying for multiple grant opportunities and streamlined processes and standardized scoring.

ED STEPS system components and tentative timeline

The ED STEPS IT system components are all interconnected to the three-year planning and annual funding application and grant management process. The systems will be designed, developed and rolled out in phases over the next couple of years. Once a vendor is selected, the design and development will occur simultaneously starting with the One Plan. The Department wants to learn from users during the development phase of the first component and address any changes during the design phase of the second component, and so forth. Each component will be rolled out during the period when it is needed. Prior to and during the roll-out phase, the Department will provide training and technical assistance to internal and external users. The entire roll out of all the systems will close with the completion of the Formula Funding Application and Dashboard and Communications Hub in the Spring of 2022.

Tentative Timeline

Phases	One Plan	Consolidated Competitive and Formula Application	Dashboard and Communication Hub*
Design	January 2021- March 2021	March 2021- September 2021	September 2021- February 2022
Development	March 2021- September 2021	September 2021- March 2022	February 2022- April 2022
Training	September 2021- December 2021	March 2022- June 2022	April 2022- June 2022
Rollout	January 2022	May 2022	June 2022
Ongoing Feedback	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing

*The Dashboard and Communication hub design, development, roll out and training will overlap with the consolidated formula application process.

ED STEPS Pilot and timeline

The Department formed a partnership opportunity that consisted of 39 districts across all typologies to begin piloting a three-year planning cycle and using the prototype one needs assessment tool for a three-year period starting in January 2020. With the help of these districts, the Department standardized the timeline for implementing the identification of needs and developing plans over a three-year cycle. The pilot districts submitted three-year plans in April 2020 for the Department to implement a cross-agency review and approval process in April and May. Pilot districts also submitted their annual consolidated funding application aligned to the plan by June 30. Throughout the pilot, feedback was collected that enabled for further develop of ED STEPS.

Non-Pilot District Timelines

The Department assigned all remaining districts to one of three cohorts that will begin developing three-year plans for their cohort year. Starting January 2021, the cohorts will begin transitioning to the three-year planning cycle, which will occur in January 2021, 2022 and 2023. After the initial pilot year, the pilot districts will join the last three-year cohort (Cohort 3) to begin developing three-year plans starting January 2023. Every year, all districts will submit basic consolidated funding applications that support the three-year plans by June 30. A core concept is for districts to be able to access federal funds more quickly since the Department will be approving basic funding applications aligned to already approved three-year plans.

One Needs Assessment

The Department designed a one-needs assessment to begin getting educational organizations accustomed to using a single system/tool to identify all their needs in single location and timeline. This tool has captured most of the cross-agency needs requirements, applied the same format as the Decision Framework, and moved the system into the Cloud for quicker speed and data storage. In addition to the 39 pilot districts, starting in January 2021, all districts and schools (in accountability status and labeled as Academic Distress, Intensive, Moderate DF) who previously have used the Decision Framework are to begin to use the One Needs Assessment.

FEEDBACK AND RESOURCES

- [ED STEPS project website](#)

Email questions and comments to EDSTEPS@education.ohio.gov.