

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.

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

Q. How many local educational agencies participated in the pilot?

A. A total of 39 school districts were selected that represented all the different typologies and regions to test the three-year planning cycle.

Q. When did the pilot start?

A. The pilot started in early January 2020 with the opening and use of the prototype One Needs Assessment. Pilot districts then submitted a three-year plan in May 2020 followed by a funding application by June 30.

Q. What were the expectations for a pilot district?

A. The Department was a partner with the pilot districts to design, build and prepare everyone for the ED STEPS process. The Department asked pilot districts to commit to supporting the ED STEPS work starting in January 2020. The main work of the pilot districts was 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. Will there be training materials and trainings offered for districts?

- A. Yes, the Department will offer trainings on the One Needs Assessment, One Plan and funding applications. Information on trainings will be communicated through EdConnect along with CCIP notes.

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

- A. The Department will provide cross-agency support to districts working on a three-year planning cycle. Members of the Department and State Support Teams will help districts to identify needs in the One Needs Assessment, complete a three-year plan and submit it by the end of March. The Office of Federal Programs will work with the districts to submit a funding application aligned to the three-year plan by the end of June.

Q. Do districts have to work with the State Support Team during our Cohort?

- 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 their cohort.

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. When does the One Needs Assessment open?

- A. The goal is for the One Needs Assessment to open by January of every year.

Q. When are the three-year plans due?

- A. Under normal circumstances, the deadline for both the One Needs Assessment and One Plan would be March 31st. However, due to COVID-19, the deadline for those in Cohort 1 has been extended to April 30, 2021.

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. What is the timeline and important deliverable dates for the three-year cycle?

A. Below is the anticipated three-year planning cycle:

Process Step	Deadline	Frequency	Cohort 2 Example
Identify three-years of needs in the One Needs Assessment and submit the three-year plan in the One Plan System	March 30	First year of three-year cycle	March 30, 2022
Department Plan Review and Support	April-June	First year of three-year cycle	April-June 2022
Funding Application	June 30	Annually	June 30, 2022 June 30, 2023 June 30, 2024

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 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. During the 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.