



What are Innovation Zones?

The Innovation Zones Initiative brings together cutting-edge program initiatives and funding that are often siloed or disconnected. It supports the integration of graduate profiles, capstones, Career Technical Education (CTE), work-based learning, and personalized supports.

Districts and charter schools apply to be a part of the Innovation Zone Initiative through the NM Public Education Department. Once approved, districts and charters are provided with funding and support to implement these innovative practices in their schools.

1 Meaningful and Relevant Curriculum and Instruction Grounded in Community

- Work-based learning opportunities like internships put high school students in real-world work environments in partnership with communities. This solidifies pathways toward high school graduation and career-connected work opportunities.
- Encouraging high-quality, culturally-responsive instruction, and core academics integrated with challenging Career Technical Education boosts student engagement. The Innovation Zone funding helps districts provide purposeful dual credit opportunities that are equitably accessible.

2 Graduate Profiles and Capstone Projects

Innovation Zone funding and training allows districts to build customized graduate profiles and capstone curriculum tailored to their community needs.

- Graduate profiles outline the knowledge and skills local community identifies as important outcomes for graduates. This includes social-emotional skills that honor students' cultural and linguistic identities.
- Capstone projects both engage student passions and measure competency in the "transferable skills" and knowledge that the graduate profile demands, such as identity, teamwork, effective communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and local wisdom.

3 Personalized Supports and Leadership

Students need a system of robust, personalized support with an attention to student agency in college and career advising. Centering youth leadership and voice helps encourage students to be able to advocate for themselves and feel confident in their skills. Innovation Zone funding supports culturally- and linguistically-responsive programs and services that help prepare students to be college and career-ready.

4 Community Schools Model

- Lastly, the Innovation Zone is complimentary to implementing the Community Schools Model in high schools. This model allows schools to partner with families and the community (including Tribal partners, nonprofit community-based organizations, and local businesses) to provide well-rounded educational opportunities in and out of the classroom to support student success.



Why now?

When students feel inspired to serve and better their communities, we create a reciprocal education system. Students are nurtured by the wisdom of their local community, and aspire to become problem solvers and innovators at home.

Our youth are deeply talented and ambitious, but are underserved by an outdated, inequitable education system and New Mexico students deserve more authentic opportunities.

We urgently need culturally-responsive, student-centered innovative ways of engaging students inside and outside the classroom, and the Innovation Zone Initiative is where that work happens.

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How is Innovation Zone funding used?

Increased Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Innovation Zone funds will help build a statewide work-based learning support system that connects graduate profiles, capstones, and career and technical education to local employers with high school students for community-embedded work opportunities.

Expanded CTE

This funding enables schools to implement new Career and Technical Education programs, and allows currently-funded programs to do more.

Professional Development

This funding will provide high school counselors, WBL coordinators, and other college and career support professionals with cross-training, exposure, and support to guide students to college and career success.



How Future Focused can help!

Future Focused provides partnership and consulting to help your district effectively implement Innovation Zone funding and curriculum. Attend an online technical assistance workshop or contact us directly for an individual consultation.

Scan to get in touch:

