# Cycle of Innovation and Sustainability

This information sheet explores ways to use Title IV, Part A funds to support new and innovative programming and services. State and local education agencies can engage in the cycle of innovation and sustainability to generate, implement, and sustain effective programs and activities, as supported by statute.

## Introduction

Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A) allows State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) flexibility in how they approach improving students' academic achievement. Title IV-A grants aim to increase the capacity of SEAs, LEAs, schools, and local community partners in three priority content areas — Well-Rounded Education, Safe and Healthy Students, and the Effective Use of Technology. This flexibility can allow SEAs and LEAs to implement new, innovative strategies to achieve their goals in each priority area.

Examples of flexibilities can be found within each of the priority content areas.

- Within the Well-Rounded Education priority content area, the statute suggests creating and enhancing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics-focused specialty schools (Section 4107(c)(iv)) or paying for secondary costs associated with innovative approaches to offering dual or concurrent enrollment programs (Section 1114(e)(2)(B)).

- Within the Safe and Healthy Students priority content area, the statute highlights programs or activities that support a healthy, active lifestyle (Section 4107(c)(ii)) and locally tailored plans to reduce exclusionary discipline practices (Section 4107(F)).

- Within the Effective Use of Technology priority content area, the statute suggests developing or using innovative strategies to deliver specialized or rigorous academic courses and curricula using various technologies, including expanding access to courses and programs to those available outside an individual school or LEA (Sections 4104(b)(3)(C)(iii), 4109(a)(3)).

Compared to other funds, Title IV-A funds offer unique flexibility and are thus ideal to use for innovation. State coordinators (SCs) encouraging innovative uses of funds should consider supporting LEAs to think through the cycle of innovation and sustainability (see Figure 1 on next page) so that Title IV-A monies can continue to improve student achievement and enhance programming beyond a single calendar year.

The statute encourages the use of evidence-based programs and strategies.[1] The statutory definition of "evidence-based" includes the option to engage in activities, strategies, or interventions likely to improve student or other relevant outcomes and ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention (Section 8101(21)(A)(ii)). Additionally, developing new instructional models and leveraging external partnerships are also noted in the statute (Sections 4019(a)(4)(A), 4019(5)).

## LEA Activity Innovation and Sustainability Cycle

Using a cyclical approach, SCs may help LEAs leverage Title IV-A funds for testing new ideas and find sustainable funding sources outside of Title IV-A funds to scale up or implement successful ideas for the long term. Then they can use Title IV-A funds for additional novel programming and strategies in subsequent years. By promoting an environment that rewards creativity and innovation, SEAs and their LEA subgrantees can effectively use a finite amount of resources to explore a range of strategies that — if successful — will positively impact student achievement. Figure 1 depicts how the Title IV-A process can work for SEAs that focus on promoting innovation.

### Figure 1: Cycle of Innovation and Sustainability
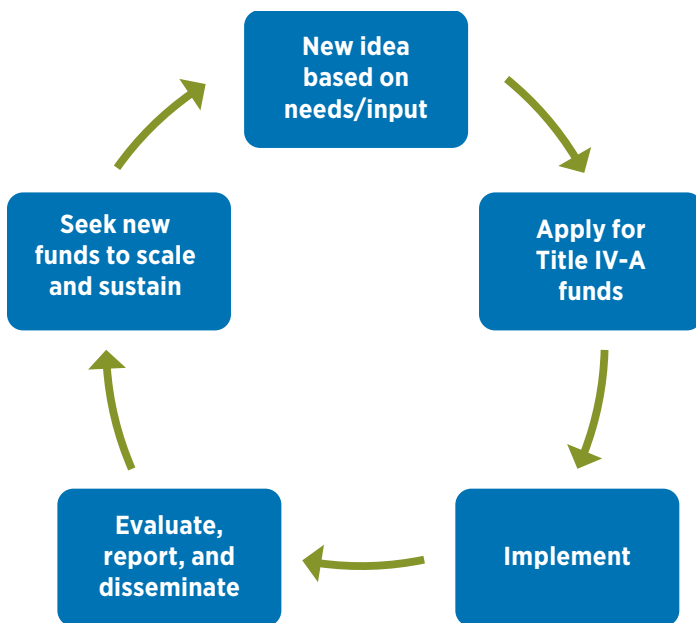


- First, LEAs generate ideas supported by stakeholder feedback (Section 4106(c)), a comprehensive needs assessment (Section 4106(d)), and plans to prioritize schools with the greatest needs (Section 4106(e)(2)).

Existing programs may have been tested with a narrow range of students and are often insufficiently[2,3,4,5] designed to specifically impact students of color or other subpopulations (e.g., dual language learners, students with different learning styles).

- Then LEAs apply for and receive Title IV-A funds. At this stage, SCs may offer technical assistance to LEAs to help them anticipate the remaining phases of the cycle.

- During the next stage, LEAs implement the new program or strategy.

- Next, they evaluate whether it worked and disseminate information about successes and lessons learned.

- Finally, LEAs (potentially with support from SEAs) seek permanent funding to sustain promising efforts.

The cycle begins again with the generation, funding, implementation, and evaluation of new ideas.

SCs can take advantage of the flexibility within the statute to encourage LEA subgrantees to use Title IV-A funds to pilot new and creative initiatives and processes. Through an evaluation activity, LEAs can develop or supplement evidence of effectiveness with their specific populations. Through information sharing and technical assistance, SCs can also help LEAs consider opportunities for creative programming, data collection, and options for sustaining their work.

**Pilot programs and activities** have the potential to contribute to the evidence-base of innovative approaches to using Title IV-A funds. Pilot activities are tested on a smaller scale to gather evidence of effectiveness prior to broader implmentation. Pilot testing could be considered an allowable activity, assuming that all standard allowability criteria are met.

## Promoting Innovation

In the United States, schools can serve as learning laboratories.[6,7] With local discretion, LEAs have the option to promote innovation, test new ideas, and inspire useful change.[8] Through innovation, new, successful, cost-effective strategies might be discovered. As Title IV-A funds are necessarily limited, LEAs can use them for early-stage planning and perhaps smaller scale implementation (i.e., as "seed money"). Data and lessons learned from this early work can be used to justify the need for such innovation at scale and inspire efforts to seek additional funding sources to sustain successful activities.

SCs can encourage innovation by inviting LEAs to propose new ideas as part of their applications. This process can inspire creativity and a climate of inquiry when LEAs generate, justify, and propose new ideas. To confirm that LEA-proposed ideas are worthwhile, SCs can look for evidence that LEAs have local leadership and school community buy-in. Justification that LEAs might share can include information from sources such as data from needs assessment activities related to their idea, school system reports discussing the need or calls to action, or local media coverage featuring student or community voices about the need or issue.

During grant administration activities and other interactions with LEAs, SCs can make note of and share success stories of innovative proposals that were approved, funded, and implemented.

> Technical assistance opportunities such as communities of practice (CoPs) are also useful venues for idea sharing. SCs can invite LEA representatives to discuss new ideas either formally, with a presentation, or informally, as an update to the group. Further, SCs can leverage CoPs to offer time for LEAs to brainstorm new ideas together, either as a whole or in small groups.

Showcasing creative uses of funds among LEAs may inspire others to try new things, as well. Stories and examples from the field can be shared with a range of audiences through reports, emails, newsletters, social media, and other mediums. SCs may also use SEA-level trainings or Webinars offered to LEAs to summarize innovative programming that is being funded or invite LEAs to tell their own story.

## Tips for SEAs and LEAs to Sustain Innovative Activities

Once LEAs are used to thinking about Title IV-A funds in an innovative way, it is likely they will want to continue that trend — innovation begets innovation. Therefore, it is important to consider ways to sustain innovative programs while leaving Title IV-A funds available to continue the cycle. A variety of strategies can be employed to sustain new and creative programming. Once a program or activity is established, costs associated with sustainability can vary. Some may require significant, continued investment. Others may have low or no costs to continue. The following list outlines tips for SEAs and LEAs trying to sustain work that was initially funded under Title IV-A.

1. **Embed newly piloted activities in regular programming.** Making any activity a part of "standard operating procedures" can help ensure sustainability. This option would add new, successful activities to the regular LEA budget instead of being funded via Title IV-A subgrants. Some examples of this option are the following:

   o New, supportive responses to disciplinary concerns could be embedded in core school staff functions and job descriptions.

   o Experimental approaches to using data transparently and effectively to inform adjustments to instructional approaches could be integrated into LEA or school Websites or data dashboards.

o   LEAs might commit resources to support ongoing professional development and training of new hires on new interventions that were piloted, if the training and intervention are seen as worthwhile investments. While this option may not be feasible for all activities or LEAs, it's worth exploring.

2. **Spread the word.** Promote and sustain innovation by establishing relationships beyond day-to-day internal networks. Let stakeholders (e.g., state-level decision makers, boards of education, philanthropists, community members, and other influencers) know about the successful strategies being implemented. Facilitate the sharing of student, staff, and community testimonials about their experiences with new programming via newsletters, Websites, portals, etc. Dissemination activities, such as presentations, public reporting (including quotes from research activities such as surveys or focus groups), and media releases, are critical to getting the word out and generating interest and support for these efforts. Student and family audiences may be particularly responsive to information shared through social media (e.g., posts, photos, videos), school newsletters, and local newspapers.

3. **Seek alternate funding to sustain efforts.** There are numerous Federal funding opportunities that may be a good match for activities initially piloted under the Title IV-A program (see Appendix for a list of selected opportunities). In addition to Federal grants, funding sources may include state and local foundations or public funding streams that support educational programming and services. Specifically, SEAs and LEAs can look into partnerships or funding opportunities offered by city and county departments, community-based organizations, school-based health initiatives, and educational service agencies. Local businesses, chambers of commerce, partnerships with local universities, or philanthropists may also be tapped to provide funding to sustain programming. LEAs may also wish to seek out training on grant writing if this is not in their skill set.

4. **Explore different ways to use other identified funds.** Depending on the amount needed to sustain the activity, a single funding source may be sufficient to support 100 percent of the program, strategy, or activity cost. In other cases, it may be a useful strategy to blend and braid funds from multiple sources.[9] Be sure to review the terms outlined by a funder/funding source to check what is allowable in terms of both activities and co-funding arrangements.

## Conclusion

SCs and their LEAs are encouraged to think of the flexible Title IV-A funds as start-up funds or seed money. This shift in mindset can free up Title IV-A money for a variety of other programs and activities. Successful pilot activities may be more readily sustained if marketed to broad audiences that can build the political and fiscal will that leads to different and permanent funding. To garner support, SEAs and LEAs can share evidence of success with decision makers. Ideally, SCs and LEAs can work together to build their capacity to identify and seek out sustainable funding for innovative programs and activities. SCs can support LEAs by encouraging innovative "learning laboratory" activities, offering technical assistance to both flesh out promising ideas and identify sustainable funding sources, and encouraging the dissemination of success stories from the field using a variety of tools and voices. Keeping this cycle of innovation and sustainability in mind promotes creativity, reduces the likelihood that successful efforts will cease if Title IV-A funds become limited or unavailable, and fully realizes the power of these funds.

# RESOURCES

## T4PA CENTER RESOURCES

[Selecting Evidence-Based Programs and Practices for Title IV, Part A Activities](#)

[Spotlight on: Arizona Title IV-A Implementation: Leveraging State Set-Aside Funds to Provide Innovative Training and Technical Assistance](#)

[Developing Stakeholder Relationships to Support School Programming](#)

[Effective Use of Technology Resource Guide for Local Education Agencies](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Sustainability Plan Template for Cohort IX](#)

[Federal Funding Streams and Strategies to Improve Conditions for Learning: A Resource Guide for States](#)

[About ESSA Funding and Funding Integration](#)

[Unlocking Your Federal Funds: Making the Funds Received Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as Amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Work More Effectively for Students and Educators](#)

## Endnotes

[1] See Title IV-A Sections 4102(5)(A); 4104(b)(3) subsections (B)(ii)(I) and (C)(iii); 4108(5)(A), 5(B)(ii)(II)(aa), and (5)(F)(ii). Retrieved from https://t4pacenter.ed.gov/T4PAStatutes.aspx

[2] Smith, K. (2019). Balancing equity and innovation: An educational moral imperative. EducationNC. Retrieved from https://www.ednc.org/balancing-equity-and-innovation-an-educational-moral-imperative/

[3] Joyce, K. E. (2019). The key role of representativeness in evidence-based education. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 25*(1-2), 43-62. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2019.1617989

[4] Joyce, K. E., & Cartwright, N. (2020). Bridging the gap between research and practice: Predicting what will work locally. *American Educational Research Journal, 57*(3), 1045-1082. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219866687

[5] Kim, J. S. (2019). Making every study count: Learning from replication failure to improve intervention research. *Educational Researcher, 48*(9), 599-607. Retrieved from https://doi org/10.3102%2F0013189X19891428

[6] Vegas, E., & Winthrop, R. (2020). Beyond reopening schools: How education can emerge stronger than before COVID-19. The Brookings Institution. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/research/beyond-reopening-schools-how-education-can-emerge-stronger-than-before-covid-19/

[7] Serdyukov, P. (2017). Innovation in education: What works, what doesn't, and what to do about it?. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning.* Retrieved from https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JRIT-10-2016-0007/full/html

[8] U.S. Department of Education. (2021). The Federal Role in Education. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html

[9] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2017). *Collaboration for Safe and Healthy Schools: Study of Coordination Between School Climate*

# Appendix: Examples of Federal Funding Opportunities to Potentially Sustain Title IV-A Pilot Programming

This table provides some examples of federally funded opportunities that could be leveraged for promising efforts initially funded by Title IV-A but require more in-depth study or significant resources to implement. See also *Mapping the Federal School Health Landscape* for a comprehensive list of funding opportunities.

| Description | Link |
| --- | --- |
| Cross-cutting list of program funding | For SEAs: https://www.ed.gov/programs-search/state-education-agencies |
| | For LEAs: https://www.ed.gov/programs-search/local-education-agencies |
| | Regional Education Laboratories: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/partnerships/ |
| Funds specific to Safe and Healthy Students | Project Prevent grant program: https://www2.ed.gov/programs/projectprevent/index.html |
| | Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) SEA grants: https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/sm-20-016 |
| | STOP School Violence program: https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/bja-2020-17312 |
| Funds specific to Effective Use of Technology (funds for digital learning) | https://tech.ed.gov/funding/ |
| Funds for schools serving high percentages of children from low-income families | https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html |
| Title I-D (funds for serving children and youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at risk) | https://neglected-delinquent.ed.gov/what-title-i-part-d |
| Title II-A (funds for preparing and supporting qualified educators) | https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiipartaguidance.pdf |
| Individuals with Disabilities Education Act grants (funds for early intervention and special education) | https://sites.ed.gov/idea/state-formula-grants/ |
| Education Innovation and Research grants (funds for scaling up and rigorous study of promising educational innovations) | https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/innovation-early-learning/education-innovation-and-research-eir/ |

| Description | Link |
|---|---|
| Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention funding | https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/about/legislation, <br><br> https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/funding/current#filter-funding-opportunities-current |
| Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration funding | https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements-2021 |
| Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block grant program | https://mchb.hrsa.gov/maternal-child-health-initiatives/title-v-maternal-and-child-health-services-block-grant-program |



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