

**2009 Innovations Awards Program  
APPLICATION**

ID # (assigned by CSG): 09-W-10NM

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

**State:** New Mexico

**Assign Program Category (applicant):** Education

1. **Program Name:** Innovative Digital Education and Learning New Mexico (IDEAL-NM)
2. **Administering Agencies:** New Mexico Public Education Department & New Mexico Higher Education Department
3. **Contact Person:** Dr. Veronica C. García, Secretary of Education, New Mexico Public Education Department
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8. **Web site Address:** [www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us) & [www.ideal-nm.org](http://www.ideal-nm.org)
9. **Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.** IDEAL-NM provides eLearning services to schools, colleges, universities, and state agencies via the nation's only statewide eLearning Management System—the technology platform by which online courses are developed and delivered.
10. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)?** Since September, 2007.
11. **Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?**
  - To provide a unified system of eLearning services that can be accessed by all New Mexico youth and adult learners via a statewide eLearning Management System (eLMS).
  - To expand and equalize educational opportunity, especially for students from small, rural schools.
  - To provide another venue for students to acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills needed to compete in our growing global economy.

- To create an eLearning clearinghouse for students seeking higher education coursework.
- To facilitate state agency training courses in online formats to save travel expense and time for employees who routinely travel long distances to the seat of government for brief annual trainings, or who travel long distances to train employees residing in the far reaches of the state.
- To reduce the cost of technology access for New Mexico schools, colleges, universities and agencies.

**12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

- October, 2006: Governor announces IDEAL-NM initiative.
- February, 2007: Legislature authorizes operational and capital funding.
- FY 08: eLMS procured, staff employed, operational procedures documented, distance learning rule revised, pilot project implemented, eTeachers trained, beginning cadre of courses developed, plus extensive outreach activities.
- FY 09: Officially opened virtual doors (Aug 08 press conference), high school programming offered, more eTeachers trained, more courses developed, eLMS went “live” for IDEAL-NM programming, eLMS cohort training for institution and school representatives, four institutions went live in January 09, development begun for agency training and professional development courses, plus extensive outreach activities.

**13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

- We know of no other state with a centralized system of eLearning that provides a P-20+ continuum of opportunity for all state youth and adult learners, and that provides the eLMS by which it can occur. For this reason and others, New Mexico was recently ranked #6 in the nation for online learning policy and practice—a significant recognition considering the nascent nature of the IDEAL-NM initiative.

**14. What were the program’s start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)**

- \$6.4 million was authorized for the 3-year purchase of the eLMS. An RFP was crafted and Blackboard, Inc. was selected to provide a vendor-hosted solution.
- \$1.0 million (divided evenly between the Public Education and Higher Education departments) was authorized in FY 08 for operational costs.
- \$2.0 million (again divided evenly) was authorized in FY 09 for operational costs.
- About \$1.0 million of FY 09 funding is utilized for personnel, with the remainder used for course development, facilities leasing, technology equipment, web conferencing contracting, and software to support eLMS buildout.
- Approximately \$300,000 per year (FY 08 and 09) was provided by state appropriation to the New Mexico Learning Network, through New Mexico State University, to provide strategic planning, distribution of information, and program support services such as web portal design and maintenance, server support, outreach activities, and researching eLearning needs and trends.

- Participating schools pay a \$200 per student/semester/course fee. This money is used to pay eTeachers and allows the program to scale upward without increased funding.
- Through strategic partnerships with state industry, the Innovate Educate New Mexico non-profit was formed to provide school scholarships for IDEAL-NM courses. About \$12,000 in scholarships were awarded for the fall 2008 semester.

**15. What are the program's annual operational costs?**

- It is expected that annual operational costs will be in the \$2.25 million range, excluding annual hosting fees for the eLMS vendor—currently at \$853,000 per year. Planning is underway to determine the feasibility of creating in-state hosting centers.

**16. How is the program funded?**

- Legislative appropriation.
- School-paid course fees.
- Private scholarship support.

**17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations?**

- 22-30-1 et seq. NMSA 1978 (Statewide Cyber Academy Act)
- 6.30.8 NMAC (Distance Learning Rule)

**18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

- Schools utilize standard broadband access and computer stations with common configurations.
- IDEAL-NM delivers coursework via the eLMS which requires low to medium bandwidth to access.

**19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.**

- The vision and groundwork for statewide eLearning was laid by a core group of eLearning enthusiasts dating back to the 2000-2001 virtual college and high school that disappeared within a year due to a lack of funding.
- The vision was jump-started by Governor Richardson in October 2006, and actualized by legislative leaders, Senator Cynthia Nava and Representative Rick Miera via their Statewide Cyber Academy Act.

**20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?**

- Many states have virtual programming for high schools, and all have higher education involvement in eLearning. However, none tie together in a systemic way the vision and implementation of eLearning services to P-12, higher education, and agency training environments, and none provide the statewide eLMS technology highway needed to support the services.

- A value-add is that P-12 school districts can access, and personalize, the eLMS for their intra-district eLearning needs—at no cost to them for the access/use. We know of no other state that offers that opportunity to their public schools.

**21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?**

The program won't be fully implemented until:

- There have been enough courses developed to provide a complete continuum of core and elective courses for grades 6-12. Depending on funding, this should be accomplished within two years.
- All higher education institutions have migrated to the eLMS, whether to vendor-hosted or state-hosted environments, depending on feasibility planning.
- There are complete complements of state agency training and teacher professional development courses.

**22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.** Program progress has exceeded expectations as per the following citations:

- Since fall 2008 there have been 1300+ registrations from 53 districts, 13 charter schools and 3 nonpublic schools representing 94 high schools.
- The eLearning Management System (eLMS) went "live" August 2008. It now has 1571 course sections and 17,531 users. The eLMS provides course development, course delivery, and resource sharing at no cost to individual institutions.
- Web conferencing went live fall 2008. It now has 90 "rooms" and 950 users.
- 2200+ online courses in IDEAL-NM higher education clearinghouse.
- Agency training and P-12 teacher training course development has begun.
- There have also been unanticipated benefits. For example, the Cuba High School chemistry teacher was called to overseas duty in October and wouldn't return until January. IDEAL-NM was called upon to provide online chemistry instruction to their 37 students until the teacher's return. Mesa Vista High School has a similar story as their sole high school English teacher resigned the day before school was to start. IDEAL-NM taught 98 students in grades 8-12 until the school could hire a new teacher. Dexter High School used IDEAL-NM to provide self-paced online courses to students in its alternative program.
- On the higher education side, Northern New Mexico College's aging technology infrastructure couldn't support another year of online programming without the IDEAL-NM eLMS; hence their rapid migration to the new platform.

**23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?** The program continues to grow as stakeholders discover new reasons to deploy this 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning tool. For example, various groups are working to develop online components of manufacturing skills and other career and technical education programming, and are integrating IDEAL-NM into college access and other planning.

**24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?** There can be obstacles in developing comprehensive P-20 initiatives that require intergovernmental collaboration. Working through issues of turf and coordination require adroit and compelling leadership.