

# Innovation Modernization Program (IM Program) FAQs

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## What is the Innovation Modernization Program?

The Innovation Modernization Program (IM Program) is responsible for the daily operations of the Innovation and Modernization Fund. The IM Program, led by State Chief Technology Officer Nick Stowe, ensures appropriate processes are in place to receive, review and approve agency project proposals.

The program also provides oversight for approved projects in partnership with WaTech IT Project Oversight and reports progress to the legislature.

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## What is the IT Investment Board (ITIB)?

The ITIB is the governing body responsible for evaluating agency requests for funding. The objective of the ITIB is to ensure proposed project investments align with state and agency business and IT strategic goals, employ sound IT investments that maximize value, have a sustained impact beyond the initial dollars, and deliver agency business and customer outcomes.

The ITIB reviews agency project proposals and makes recommendations to the Technology Services Board (TSB) on which projects to fund and for what funding level. The TSB is the governing body that decides which projects are funded and the amount of funding an agency should receive.

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## How much money is available with the fund?

The Innovation and Modernization Fund was funded at \$3 million for the 2023-2025 biennium. The money is general state funds with \$1.5 million funded for each fiscal year.

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## How do agencies apply for funds?

Here's how to apply:

Agencies applying for grants need to submit a [Business Case](#) and a [Project Pitch Deck](#).

Submit your completed Business Case and Pitch Deck to: [IMProgram@watech.wa.gov](mailto:IMProgram@watech.wa.gov)

This **first submission window closes June 20, 2023**. We will continue to evaluate project ideas throughout the duration of the program. Proposals that do not receive funding in the first round will remain in consideration for future rounds.

The ITIB will review and score the initial round of agency proposals from June 26 to June 30 (using the [ITIB Scoring Criteria](#)). During that week, agencies should be prepared to present their pitches in short, 10-minute windows.

Agencies selected to pitch their project proposals will receive an invitation to the pitch meeting from WaTech.

**The agency pitch meeting is scheduled for June 29 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

The Technology Services Board (TSB) is the approving authority for all proposed projects recommended by the ITIB. The IM Program will present recommendations for funding at the July 13 TSB Portfolio/Policy Subcommittee meeting.

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**How often can an agency apply for funds?**

At the June 8, 2023, TSB full board meeting, the IM Program requested TSB approval to delegate project approval to the TSB Portfolio/Policy Subcommittee. This gives the IM Program and IT Investment Board (ITIB) the flexibility to recommend agency projects for TSB approval up to eight times per calendar year.

A more detailed calendar will be made available to agencies as soon as the program has finalized future dates.

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**Are higher education institutions eligible for the Innovation and Modernization Funds?**

Yes, higher education institutions are eligible and encouraged to submit their project proposals to request funding from the Innovation and Modernization Fund.  
You will find information on how to apply on the Innovation and Modernization Fund website (<https://watech.wa.gov/Innovation-and-Modernization-Fund>).

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**What is an appropriate funding level for Innovation Modernization Fund requests?**

Agencies are encouraged to submit funding requests based on their need; however, agencies should be aware the legislature only provided \$1.5 million for each fiscal year in the 2023-2025 biennium. The IM Program will need to manage the fund level accordingly.

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**What size funding packages are you looking for?**

A key objective of the IM Program is to demonstrate the demand for funds, and we encourage agencies to submit project proposals that demonstrate innovative or modernization solutions which improve their technology portfolio. The IM Program will keep a list of all proposals submitted and will use the list to show the demand.

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**Are there constraints that agencies should keep in mind when considering funding candidates?**

We don't currently plan to place any artificial constraints on the amount of funding an agency would be eligible for when requesting funds. However, one objective of the program is to fund as many projects as possible within the set dollar limits. This means agencies may be approved for partial funding rather than the full amount requested.

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<b>Is it acceptable to use funding for a pilot, proof of concept (POC) or a feasibility study?</b>	<p>The proviso is for innovation or modernization projects and a pilot, proof of concept or feasibility study may not fully meet the proviso definition.</p> <p>However, if you feel you have a strong project proposal that meets the proviso definition and you would like to submit a proposal, please do. All proposals will be reviewed.</p> <p>The proviso language can be found in <a href="#">ESSB 5187, Section 155 (18)</a>. An excerpt of the proviso language has been provided at the end of this document.</p>
<b>Is the IT Investment Board (ITIB) expecting a fully fleshed out implementation?</b>	<p>The ITIB is looking for well thought out project proposals that address the implementation and ongoing support costs. Additionally, the ITIB is looking for a project schedule that includes the major milestones for the planned work. Agencies should strive to provide a complete project proposal and include risks or assumptions the agency identified for the project.</p>
<b>When will funds be available to agencies whose project has been approved by TSB?</b>	<p>The IM Program will make recommendations at the July 2023 TSB meeting on which agency projects should be funded. Once approved by TSB, WaTech will execute an Interagency Agreement (IAA) with the specific details of the project and funding.</p> <p>Agencies with approved projects and a fully executed IAA can submit requests for reimbursement of expenditures for July 2023 forward.</p>
<b>How do agencies submit for reimbursement of expenditures?</b>	<p>Agencies with approved projects will submit an A-19 to WaTech Finance requesting reimbursement for project expenditures. Additional details will be provided in the IAA document to be signed by WaTech and the agency.</p>
<b>How do agencies know what to include in their project proposals?</b>	<p>The ITIB has identified <a href="#">specific criteria</a> they will use to score agency proposals. The criteria cover the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic technical alignment.</li><li>• Business alignment.</li><li>• Agency readiness.</li></ul> <p>Agency proposals will be scored based on how well the proposal meets each of the criteria.</p>
<b>If our agency is selected to “pitch” their project, how much time will we have to present?</b>	<p>The agency pitch meeting will include all agencies whose projects have been selected by the ITIB to come and “pitch” their proposal.</p> <p>Each agency will have 10 minutes to present with no more than five minutes for questions from the board members.</p> <p>Other agencies may attend the pitch meeting as an observer for other agency pitches.</p>

**PROVISO LANGUAGE FROM ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5187, Section 155,**

(18) \$1,500,000 of the general fund–state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$1,500,000 of the general fund–state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for innovative technology solutions and modernization of legacy systems within state government.

This funding is to be used for projects at other state agencies to improve the health of the state's overall information technology portfolio.

Submitted projects are subject to review and approval by the technology services board as established in RCW 43.105.285.

The agency must report to the office of financial management and the fiscal committees of the legislature within 90 days of the close of fiscal year 2024 with the following information to measure the quantity of projects considered for this purpose and use of this funding:

- (a) The agency name, project name, estimated time duration, estimated cost, and technology service board recommendation result of each project submitted for funding;
- (b) The actual length of time and cost of the projects approved by the technology services board, from start to completion; and
- (c) Any other information or metric the agency determines is appropriate to measure the quantity and use of the funding in this subsection.