



# Innovation Coaching Framework

## Part 1. Overview

The innovation coaching framework describes the support innovation coaches provide school-based implementation teams as they implement innovative programs and initiatives that support transformational change in student outcomes. Innovation coaches apply their knowledge, skills, experience, and attributes to help district teams plan their innovations, incorporate evidence-based and promising practices, engage and communicate with interested parties to support the innovation, develop measures for determining progress, analyze and reflect on programmatic data, adjust programs in response to emerging needs as measured by data, and plan for sustainability.

The Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and the Region 1 Comprehensive Center (R1CC) co-designed this framework to describe the knowledge, skills, experience, and attributes required of innovation coaches and the key steps that coaches can take to support district teams that are using innovative strategies to improve student outcomes. This framework was designed and tested within the Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) project.

## Knowledge

Innovation coaches leverage the knowledge acquired through innovation courses and related educational and programmatic resources in their work with districts and schools. Innovation coaches responsible for supporting grants and initiatives should possess knowledge of the following:

- The grant or initiative requirements, including contents of the grant application and/or template, allowable and unallowable expenditures, the grant budget template, reporting requirements, and expectations for sharing progress and participating in other grant-related community activities
- How innovation teams can use evidence-based resources (such as RREV Grant Modules and Companion Guides) to develop baseline knowledge and skills to support innovative programs and efforts
- Key components of the innovation design process
- Logic models and their use for clarifying assumptions about innovation efforts, defining inputs and outputs, establishing outcomes (short-, medium-, and long-term), and identifying measures

- Tools such as the Fishbone Diagram and the 5 Whys and how they can help district teams define a need or a problem of practice
- Use of a SWOT analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with an innovation

## Skills

Innovation coaches must be able to demonstrate the following skills and proficiencies:

- Cultivating trust and safety with project teams
- Listening actively and synthesizing information
- Communicating effectively with diverse interested parties throughout the education system (classroom, school, district, broader educational community, state education agency)
- Introducing tools and resources to assist team members in designing and piloting the innovation
- Inspiring inquiry and curiosity through thoughtful questioning that evokes awareness and facilitates growth
- Facilitating productive meetings (collaboratively setting agendas, prioritizing tasks and activities, promoting equitable participant engagement, encouraging respectful and creative thinking)

## Experience

The MDOE expects that all innovation coaches will have significant experience in the following:

- Teaching in a public or private school classroom and/or providing instructional support
- Using formative and summative data to modify and improve instruction
- Developing curriculum or instructional materials
- Coaching and mentoring others for improved performance
- Leading school-based or community-based projects and initiatives in PK-12 education
- Engaging and collaborating with diverse interested parties to support programs, projects, or initiatives
- Navigating education systems to influence and support positive change

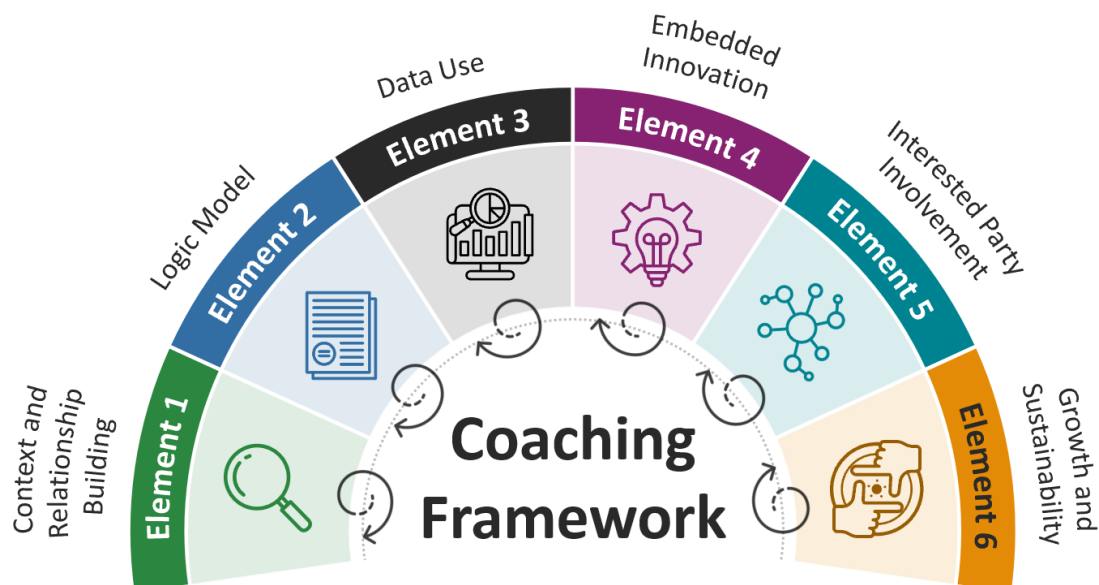
## Attributes

Innovation coaches must demonstrate the following attributes in their interaction with the MDOE and with schools:

- Passion for continual learning and growth
- Curiosity and a creative approach to problem-solving
- Openness to new ideas and perspectives
- A belief that systems can be redesigned to be more equitable
- Commitment to equitable outcomes for all students, especially those who have historically been underserved
- An assets-based perspective on people, situations, and systems

## Part 2. Coaching Framework

Below is a graphic of key elements related to interactions between innovation coaches and district and school teams that are implementing innovative programs and initiatives. Innovation coaches should always be responsive to team needs and context when determining supports to offer or provide, so these elements should be adjusted based on coaches' experience and expertise, in consultation with the MDOE, as necessary.





**Element**  
**1**

The innovation coach learns about the **context** and **builds relationships** among innovation team members.



**Element**  
**2**

The innovation coach engages innovation team members with the **logic model** to align activities, outcomes, and measures and discuss the innovation assumptions.



**Element**  
**3**

The innovation coach facilitates conversations with innovation team members **about key data, measures, and data use.**



**Element**  
**4**

The innovation coach conducts conversations with innovation team members to ensure and maintain a focus on **the innovative nature of the program** and desired change and improvement.



**Element**  
**5**

The innovation coach explores the nature and extent of **interested party involvement** with the innovation team, including engagement with traditionally underrepresented groups and community members.



**Element**  
**6**

The innovation coach supports planning by the project innovation team to improve the likelihood of **sustaining and growing** the innovation project to positively impact a greater number of students.

### *Element 1 – Context and Relationship Building*

This element guides an innovation coach to acquire baseline contextual knowledge about the program, focuses on building relationships, and identifies questions for further exploration with innovation teams.

- Carefully read and annotate the description of the proposed pilot or program.
  - » What aspects of the pilot or program do you find most interesting or exciting?
  - » What clarifying questions do you have that you want to explore?
  - » Which of your knowledge, skills, experience, and attributes will be most helpful in supporting this innovation?
- Note key data about the school, the students served, the problem of practice being addressed, and the outcomes the innovation is seeking to achieve.
  - » What clarifying questions might you have for the MDOE, the district or the school?
  - » What systems would you expect might be required to measure data and outcomes?
- Identify primary staff on the project and their roles and responsibilities.
  - » What kind of leadership structure (e.g., project lead, leadership team, etc.) is proposed for the project?
  - » With whom will you likely interact the most on this team?

## *Element 2 –Logic Model*

This element supports an innovation coach to highlight the internal consistency of activities, outcomes, and measures of a proposed program or innovation and discuss potential misalignments and assumptions with district teams.

- Review or create a problem statement that describes the problem the innovation is addressing.
  - » How effectively does the problem statement communicate the key issue(s) the innovation is planning to address?
  - » To what extent does the problem statement include data and related information that convey the essence of the innovation to others?
- Review the project logic model or develop one using the information from the innovation pilot, the approved grant application, or the detailed program description
  - » What information (resources, data, etc.) might need to be added?
  - » How well do the proposed strategies and activities align with the outputs, outcomes, and impact?
  - » What assumptions are embedded in the project or proposal?

## *Element 3 – Data Use*

This element outlines steps an innovation coach can take to facilitate conversations with innovation teams about key data, measures, and data use. (Sample questions are included.)

- Identify key data and measures required to track progress and impact
  - » What specific data are being collected to track outputs (e.g., activities-related documentation)?
  - » What data are being collected to measure progress on outcomes (e.g., changes resulting from activities)?
  - » How is the project team ensuring that these data sources are the best or are the most appropriate for the problem of practice?
- Assess data collection strategies
  - » Who will be responsible for collecting which data?
  - » What systems are needed to manage data collection and reporting?

### ***Element 4 – Embedded Innovation***

This step supports an innovation coach to conduct conversations with the innovation team members that maintain a focus on the innovative nature of the program and the desired change and improvement. (Sample questions are included.)

- Examine and highlight innovative strategies that address the identified problems and challenges.
  - » What aspects of the project are truly innovative or have the potential for innovation?
  - » What is the district or school innovating upon? (Innovation is a relative term and dependent on the context and needs to tie directly to the problem to be solved)
  - » How does the project support a culture of innovation?
- Develop and/or refine indicators of success for innovation outcomes.
  - » What supports are necessary to facilitate innovation and substantial change?
  - » How well do success criteria align with the proposed outcomes, especially for historically underserved students?

### ***Element 5 – Interested Party Involvement***

This element positions an innovation coach to explore with innovation team members the nature and extent of interested party involvement in the program, including engagement of traditionally underrepresented groups.

- Identify the full range of interested parties who should be aware of and involved in the innovation, and explore opportunities to include diverse voices during planning and implementation.
  - » To what extent have key parties been consulted?
  - » What additional interested parties might need to be consulted?
  - » On what aspects of the innovation have interested parties been invited to provide input?
- Determine mechanisms and processes for communicating with interested parties.
  - » How frequently will the project communicate with interested parties?

- » How might communications be tailored to meet the needs of diverse interested parties?

### *Element 6 – Growth and Sustainability*

This element supports an innovation coach facilitating planning by project teams, which improves the likelihood of sustaining and growing the program or project to impact greater numbers of students.

- Help team members define strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the innovation.
  - » What are the potential strengths and weaknesses of the project?
  - » What opportunities exist to build a shared commitment to the project? Which stakeholder groups would be vital to this commitment?
  - » What could potentially threaten the success of the project? How might the team mitigate these threats?
- Explore plans for sustaining the innovative project beyond the life of the grant or award.
  - » What level of funding would be required to sustain the project?
  - » What additional sources of funds could support ongoing project implementation?
  - » How might the project team involve key influencers, decision-makers, and constituencies in the district and in the broader community in planning for sustainability?

## Part 3. RREV Grant Modules and Companion Guides

The following six modules and companion guides can be used by innovation coaches looking to deepen their understanding and application of the steps in the innovation coaching framework. The MDOE and R1CC originally developed these resources to enable more district teams to submit RREV innovation templates and be considered for RREV awards, but they can be used more broadly to design and support school and district learning innovations.

- **Module 1: Introduction to the Module Series and the Rethinking Remote Education Ventures (RREV) Grant**

- Understand the **information needed by innovation team members to design and implement** innovative solutions to systemic issues.
- Support district innovation leaders **to review and assess their Innovation Pilot Template.**
- Support innovation team members in **understanding key components** of the innovation design and implementation process.
- **Module 2: Using Data to Define the Need in the Rethinking Remote Education Ventures (RREV) Grant**
  - Support innovation team members to identify data and evidence related to the innovation
  - Support a process for innovation team members to deepen understanding of the problem of practice.
  - Support a data inquiry process.
  - Understand the connections between the proposed innovation and related evidence base.
  - Learn about resources to support problem clarification and data inquiry.
- **Module 3: Identifying and Planning for an Innovation**
  - Learn about the process for planning and implementing an innovation.
  - Support the identification of the goals of the innovation.
  - Support the development and use of a logic model to identify key activities for the innovation.
- **Module 4: Defining Outcomes and Identifying Measures to Assess Outcomes in the proposed innovation**
  - Support innovation team members to identify the outcomes and measures in the innovation logic model.
  - Review examples of outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
  - Support innovation team members to review or develop indicators of success for innovation outcomes.
  - Learn about resources to support innovation assessment.
  - Facilitate a culture of innovation. (See features of a culture of innovation handout.)



- **Module 5: Preparing for Innovation Expenditures**
  - Consider how the innovation expenditures will benefit the students with the identified needs
  - Ensure that expenditures for teacher professional development support direct impacts on innovation and student outcomes.
  - Involve key interested parties in planning for and implementing the innovation expenditures
  - Identify other considerations to help support planning expenditures
- **Module 6: Communicating with Key Interested Parties Associated with the Innovation.**  
Learn about and support the identification and inclusion of key interested parties
  - Help innovation team members develop strategies for engaging interested parties
  - Help innovation team members define strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis related to the innovation. Help innovation team members identify potential supports for sustaining their innovation beyond the award period.