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ABSTRACT

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) is being implemented in Alberta school jurisdictions and charter schools in the 2000-01 school year. While the "Framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement," December 1999, provides the AISI background, goals, principles, considerations, clarifications, and questions/answers, this handbook provides the AISI program and implementation details. The basic purpose of the handbook is to provide school jurisdictions and charter schools all the provincial and local requirements and processes needed for planning, funding, implementing, managing, evaluation, reporting, and sharing of school-improvement projects. The AISI Education partners recognize that planning and implementing school-improvement projects require substantial effort by all involved. The AISI requirements and processes framework were developed to assist personnel involved in such projects in understanding the "what," "how," "when," and "who" of AISI before commencing the needs and planning processes for their improvement projects. AISI school jurisdiction and charter-school proposal summary forms are supplied. (DFR)

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Alberta Initiative for School Improvement



Administrative Handbook

Prepared by

**The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement
Education Partners Working Group**

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
A. Introduction and Administrative Manual Purposes.....	1
B. AISI Requirements and Processes Framework	2
C. Requirements	3
C.1 Funding	4
C.2 Eligibility by type of school authority.....	5
C.3 Student eligibility for funding determination.....	5
C.4 Scope of school authority proposal and projects.....	6
C.5 Project budget parameters, categories and scope.....	7
C.6 Improvement targets, measurement and evidence of success	8
C.7 Audit.....	15
C.8 Post Implementation Review (PIR).....	16
D. AISI Local and Provincial Processes.....	17
D.1 Provincial and school jurisdiction roll-out, dissemination and communication.....	18
D.2 Local school authority project preparation.....	19
D.3 School jurisdiction proposal preparation and submission.....	21
D.4 Provincial review and approval of projects within the proposals	22
D.5 Review processes for problematic and/or rejected proposals and/or projects	23
D.6 Local implementation planning and execution.....	23
D.7 Funding flow	24
D.8 Ongoing, annual and summative measurement and evaluation.....	26
D.9 Local and provincial reporting	27
D.10 Clearinghouse, sharing and best/promising/professional practices.....	28
D.11 Auditing	29
E. Annual Timeline Cycle.....	30
F. Alberta Learning Contacts and Assistance	32
G. Forms	32

Note: This handbook should be used in conjunction with the companion document entitled *Framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement*, December 1999, which provides the AISI background, goal, principles, considerations, clarifications and some questions and answers. The AISI program and framework document were approved by the Alberta Cabinet on December 14, 1999. Both the *AISI Framework* document and this *AISI Administrative Handbook* are available from the School Improvement Branch (telephone: [780] 427-3160; fax: [780] 422-0576) of Alberta Learning or on the Alberta Learning website: www.learning.gov.ab.ca/sib/aisi.

Acknowledgments

The design and development of this AISI handbook has been through the collaborative effort of six education partners which include 20 individual representatives. In addition to acknowledging and thanking each partner association/group for committing time and resources to this priority initiative, we also want to thank and acknowledge the “employing” organizations:

- Alberta Home and School Councils’ Association
- Alberta Learning
- Alberta School Boards Association
- Alberta Teachers’ Association
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
- College of Alberta School Superintendents
- Grande Yellowhead Regional Division #35
- Holy Spirit RCSR #4
- Mistahia Health Region
- Northern Lights School Division #69
- Red Deer Public School District #104
- Sturgeon School Division #24

We also want to thank the education partner constituents and education stakeholders who reviewed the AISI framework and provided many suggestions and ideas that have been incorporated into this administrative handbook.

The representatives from each partner group involved in the development and preparation of this *AISI Administrative Handbook* included:

AISI Education Partners	Representatives
Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA)	Larry Booi, Charles Hyman and Gordon Thomas
Alberta Home & School Councils’ Association (AHSCA)	Christine Ayling and Marilyn Fisher
Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)	Lois Byers and Leroy Sloan
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)	Deb Beck, Alvin Johnson, Susan Lang and Karel Meulenbroek
College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)	Len Luders, Ed Wittchen and Ken Robertson
Alberta Learning	Maria David-Evans (Chair), Jim Brackenbury, Jim Dueck, Nelly McEwen, Anna Di Natale and John Myroon

A. Introduction and Administrative Handbook Purposes

The design and development of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) was undertaken through a collaborative process involving 6 partners which commenced on August 26, 1999. As well, 37 educational stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on a draft October 1, 1999 framework paper. The result is not only general province-wide acceptance of the AISI program, but also partners with a strong commitment to the entire AISI program including the goal, principles, considerations and the administrative requirements and processes. The expected final outcome of the AISI projects is meaningful and sustainable improvement in student learning and performance.

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) is being implemented in Alberta school jurisdictions and charter schools, often referred to as "school authorities" in this manual, in the 2000/2001 school year. While the *Framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement*, December 1999, provides the AISI background, goal, principles, considerations, clarifications and questions/answers, this *AISI Administrative Handbook* provides the AISI program and implementation details.

The basic purpose of this *AISI Administrative Handbook* is to provide school jurisdictions and charter schools all the provincial and local:

- requirements, and
- processes

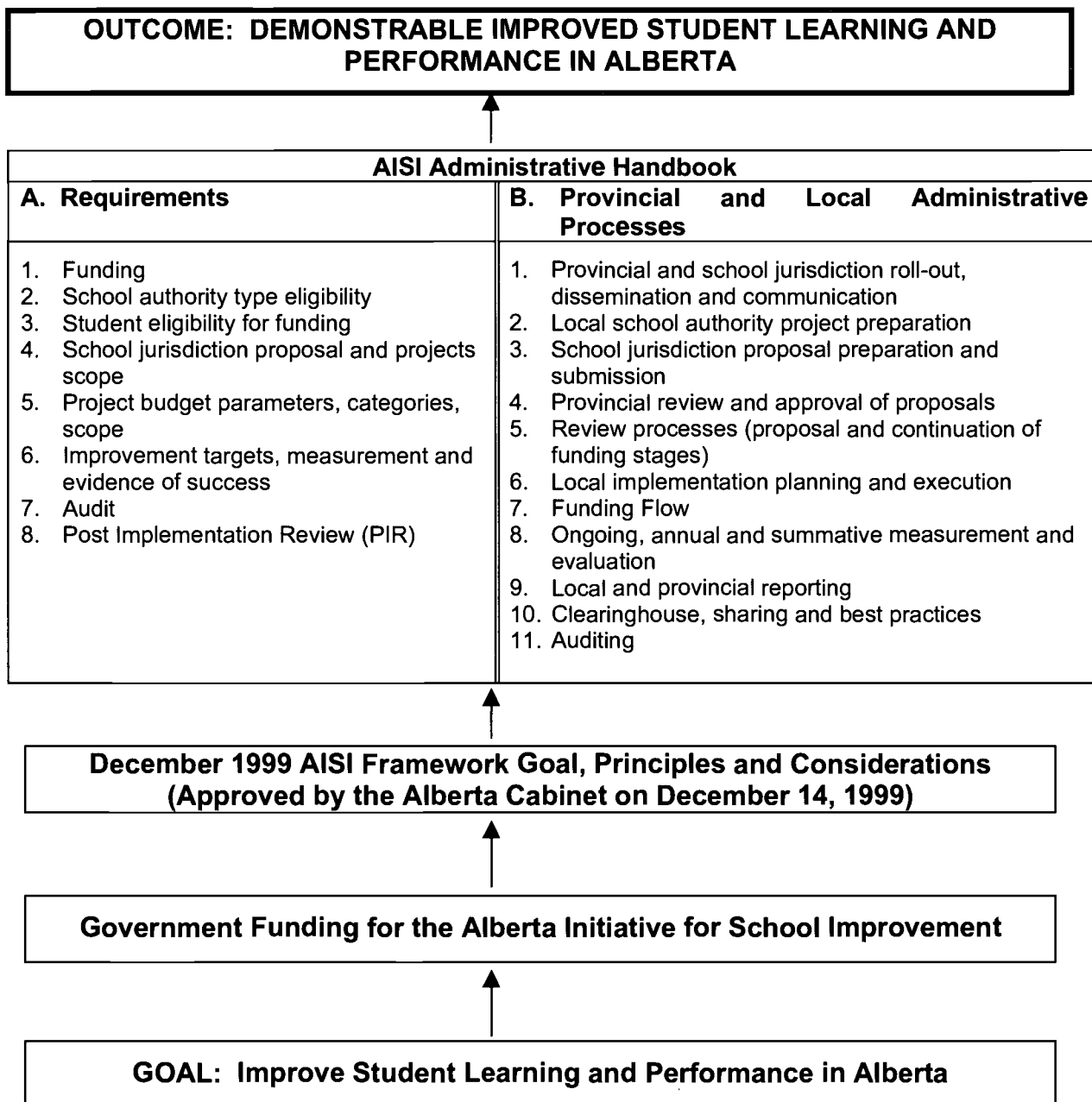
needed for planning, funding, implementing, managing, evaluating, reporting and sharing of school improvement projects.

The AISI Education Partners recognize that planning and implementing school improvement projects require substantial effort by all involved. Therefore, this *AISI Administrative Handbook* has been designed as a reference to assist school jurisdictions and charter schools in creating, planning and implementing valuable, meaningful and sustainable AISI school improvement projects.

The *Framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement*, December 1999, should be used as a companion document and is available either through the School Improvement Branch (SIB) of Alberta Learning (telephone [780] 427-3160 or fax [780] 422-0576) or the Alberta Learning website, www.learning.gov.ab.ca/sib/aisi.

B. AISI Requirements and Processes Framework

The AISI requirements and processes framework was developed to assist personnel involved in school improvement projects in understanding the “what”, “how”, “when” and “who” of AISI before commencing the needs and planning processes for their improvement projects. That framework, which is the basis of the handbook, follows.



C. Requirements

This section specifies the requirements related to 8 areas:

1. Funding
2. School authority type eligibility
3. Student eligibility
4. Scope of school authority proposal and projects
5. Project budget parameters, categories, scope
6. Improvement targets, measurement and evidence of success
7. Audit
8. Post Implementation Review (PIR)

Refer to the following sections in this handbook for information related to:

1. Associated local and provincial processes Section D
2. Related timelines for each requirement.....Section E
3. Two sets of related submission forms Section G

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C.1 Funding

1. Funding is presently committed for 2 government fiscal (April 1 to March 31) years:
 - Fiscal Year One: \$38M for 2000/2001
 - Fiscal Year Two: \$66M for 2001/2002
 - Fiscal Year Three: \$66M has been included in the 2002/2003 fiscal year budget but has yet to go through the budget approval process including legislative authorization in the spring of 2000.
2. Funding “flows” to eligible school authorities for the following school years (September 1 to August 31):
 - School Year One: \$66M for 2000/2001 school year
 - School Year Two: \$66M for 2001/2002 school year
 - School Year Three: \$XM (expected to be \$66M) for 2002/2003 school year; in budget process
3. Annual AISI funding includes Alberta Learning AISI administrative costs.
4. The funding entitlement to each eligible school authority for any given school year will be based upon the previous September 30th registered (served) student count (ECS student counted as 0.5 FTE) times the per pupil rate. The annual per pupil rate will be determined by dividing the total available funding for the year by the total “eligible” provincial enrolment count.
5. For planning purposes only, eligible school authorities may want to use \$120.00 per student as an estimate of what the funding entitlement could be for the 2000/2001 school year. The estimated \$120.00 per student is based upon the September 30th, 1998 eligible registered student count for AISI purposes; any increase in the September 30th, 1999 student count could decrease the per student funding.
6. Funding for year 1 of projects is based upon approval by Alberta Learning.
7. Funding for subsequent school years for multi-year projects is dependent upon providing evidence of success to Alberta Learning at the completion of a school year.
8. Funding will flow to school authorities on a monthly basis commencing in September 2000 through the usual Alberta Learning grants payment process.
9. School authorities may decide to invest more funding into AISI improvement projects than the amount of provincial funding. In such cases, school authorities do so solely at their discretion and provincial funding is limited to the total dollar entitlement of the school authority for each given school year.
10. Funding for AISI projects at this time is only for the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 school years. School authorities, in planning their improvement projects, should not extend funding beyond the 2002/2003 school year.

C.2 Eligibility by Type of School Authority

1. AISI funding for the 2000/2001 school year is available to all Alberta school jurisdictions and charter schools and includes the two Lloydminster school divisions (Alberta Regulation 51/97).

C.3 Student Eligibility For Funding Determination

1. Funding availability to each school jurisdiction and charter school will be determined upon an equal amount per registered student (i.e., served student) based upon the previous September 30th count submitted to and accepted by Alberta Learning. The official student count and the eligible amount per student will be provided by Alberta Learning when available in the spring of each year.
2. ECS students will be counted as 0.5 FTE.

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C.4 Scope of School Authority Proposal and Projects

1. School jurisdictions and charter schools can utilize AISI funding for school improvement projects for both preschool children and all ECS-12 students.
2. The number of jurisdiction-sponsored projects is a decision for each school jurisdiction.
3. While the method of allocating AISI funds within a school jurisdiction and deciding upon projects to submit for provincial funding approval is a local decision, a guideline is that decisions should be made on the basis of specific projects to meet “local unique needs and circumstances” rather than on an equal per student per school basis. These could be:
 - district-wide priorities and/or needs (e.g., early literacy, class size)
 - grade/subject specific needs (e.g., elementary reading, junior high math, high school completion)
 - school-specific needs (e.g., high needs students)
 - local community needs (e.g., pre-ECS readiness for high needs children)
 - a combination of the above
4. Boards can partner with other school authorities to “pool” some of their AISI funding in order to have teachers from more than one school authority engage in the same or similar improvement project(s). While this arrangement could complicate local funding allocation and accounting systems, details can be worked out by the “partners.” For example:
 - Jurisdictions A and B could share a reading specialist whose salary is paid by A and travel and materials by B (or A and B could share costs 50-50).
 - School X in School Jurisdiction A could arrange for School Y in Jurisdiction B to use its science facilities in exchange for use of Y’s fine arts facilities.
 - All schools in adjacent boards could provide joint professional development for its math teachers. The cost could be borne pro rata on the basis of number of staff.
5. Boards can combine their AISI funds with funds from other sources (internal or external) in order to initiate larger/more comprehensive projects; it would be necessary to ensure accounting integrity from both sources. However, provincial funding for all projects to a school authority is limited to the funding entitlement based upon registered students times the per student rate.
6. There is no minimal percentage of students at the school jurisdiction level that must be included in the improvement projects.
7. The school jurisdiction determines the blend of school jurisdiction, school and school community needs, circumstances and priorities for projects.
8. Projects can have single or multi-year timeframes. A three-year timeframe is preferable for most initiatives in order to develop meaningful and sustainable improvement for student learning.

C.5 Project Budget Parameters, Categories, Scope

1. A school authority's proposal to Alberta Learning in any school year can contain multiple individual projects. However, the total funding by the province cannot exceed the total funding amount available to the jurisdiction for the given school year based upon the number of registered students times the AISI per student rate.
2. A portion of the AISI funds can be used for the administration of school improvement projects. AISI funds can be used for all appropriate costs associated with the school improvement project, subject to provincial approval of the projects within a proposal.
3. Boards will be responsible to account for cost estimates and expenditures and have management systems, processes and procedures in place that meet generally acceptable accounting principles and practices.
4. Subject to the following considerations, boards will have a high degree of autonomy and flexibility in designing improvement projects and in allocating resources in order to foster school improvement:
 - (a) funding shall not be paid as bonuses,
 - (b) per-capita allocations to schools are discouraged,
 - (c) administrative costs are legitimate, and
 - (d) professional development costs are appropriate.
5. Approved provincial funding for a given project must be used for the approved project. If the estimated and approved budget for any project is not expended in any given school year, then the "unexpended AISI funds" can be carried forward to the next year in a multi-year project to be used for that project. This amount should be presented in the Balance Sheet as "deferred revenue."

However, any unexpended AISI funds at the end of the approved project timeframe must be reimbursed to Alberta Learning. School jurisdiction and charter school AISI projects are not "controlled" by budget categories and hence the calculation for any "unexpended revenue" reimbursement would be based upon the total approved budget for any given project and the final acceptable total disbursements for the project over the lifetime of the project.
6. While eligible school authorities may decide to invest more financial resources in their AISI improvement projects than the allotment under provincial funding, provincial funding is limited to the maximum allowable approved as based upon the September 30th registered student count of the previous year times the per student rate.
7. Since provincial funding, at this time, is limited to the 2000/2001 to 2002/2003 school years, project and budget submissions are limited to those 3 years. Any plans by school authorities to commit funding for AISI improvement projects beyond the 3 years would be done solely at the discretion of the school authority.

C.6 Improvement Targets, Measurement and Evidence of Success

- The types of measures used should be determined by the nature of each improvement project, its expected performance or achievement, and the need to provide evidence of improvement. In other words, the measures must be appropriate to the nature of the improvement sought and should not “drive” the project design. Examples may include:

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Program participation • Local jurisdiction tests • Tests from testing services • <i>Others to be identified/developed during AISI project development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Portfolios • Case studies • Interviews • Work-based program assessment by “job” supervisor • <i>Others to be identified/developed during AISI project development</i>
Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial achievement tests (3, 6, 9) • Participation rates including work-based programs • Continuation rates • Provincial diploma exams (12) • Alberta Learning may accept “local” measures as provincially determined measures if there are no provincial measures • <i>Others may be identified/developed during AISI project development</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction surveys (students, parents, public) • Independent observation • Alberta Learning may accept “local” measures as provincially determined measures if there are no provincial measures. • <i>Others may be identified/developed during AISI project development</i>

- While the focus of AISI measurement is on “end results” and “outcomes”, interim targets may deal with input and process measures.

3. Some key parameters are:

- The fundamental purpose of measurement is to demonstrate or provide evidence of success for any project.
- Measures for any given project should be appropriate to the focus of each improvement project.
- While interim measures could be process and/or input-based, the final evaluation measure(s) need to be outcomes or result-based.
- The “60/40” local/provincial determination of measures applies to the school jurisdiction proposal and not on a project basis unless a school jurisdiction or charter school has only one project.

4. Measures need to be viewed discretely for each project before summarizing them in the school authority proposal form. The following outlines the relation of local and provincial measures for projects and how these are “rolled-up” into a proposal:

- (a) When school jurisdictions submit their proposal for approval, they will be requested to identify appropriate measures for each project and to provide summary information regarding the total number of measures proposed for all projects. The overriding principle is that the appropriate balance of local and provincial measures is determined at the proposal level (sum total of all school authority projects) and not at the individual project level. The appropriate balance at the proposal level is:
- 60% locally determined measures
 - 40% provincially determined measures
- (b) School authorities developing AISI projects should first ensure that the locally determined measures are appropriate to the nature and circumstances of the project including size of the project in terms of number of students and budget. The number of local measures is to be determined by the school authority. School authorities are also encouraged to recommend what they feel would be appropriate provincial measures, as outlined in the project and proposal submission forms displayed in Section G of this manual. There are 3 potential combinations for the use of local and provincial measures in any given project.
- The measures for a project could be 100% local (for example, a grade 7 cultural communications improvement project could use 3 local measures such as a local test, a standardized test from a testing service and a qualitative measure of student cultural perceptions).
 - The measures for another project could be 100% provincial (for example, a grade 6 math improvement project could use only the grade 6 provincial mathematics achievement test).

- The third possibility is a combination of local and provincial measures (for example, an Art 10, 11, 20, 21, 30 and 31 improvement project could use grade continuation and course participation rates as 2 provincial measures and 2 local measures such as a local “quantitative” measure and a qualitative “appreciations” test).

Every attempt should be made to use provincial achievement tests, diploma exams, participation rates and continuation rates where appropriate and reasonable.

All measures proposed by a school authority will be reviewed for acceptability during the provincial review and approval process.

- (c) Once a school authority has determined its local measures and recommended appropriate provincial measures for each project (to be completed in AISI Form 2 shown in Section G of this handbook), the school authority then needs to identify the number of local qualitative and/or quantitative measures and the number of recommended provincial qualitative and quantitative measures across all projects (see Form 1 in Section G of this handbook).

The 60/40 balance of locally determined and recommended provincially determined measures applies at the proposal summary stage and conceptually can be described in the following way: the number of locally determined measures in a proposal will represent 60% of the total measures while the number of provincially recommended measures will represent 40% of the total measures in a proposal.

One way to explain the 60/40 balance at the proposal level is through the use of the following “illustrative” formula:

$$(l^L)60 + (p^P)40 = 100\% \text{ of all measures in proposal}$$

where:

l = number of locally determined measures
and

p = number of provincially determined measures

When a school authority is completing a proposal application form, the above “illustrative” formula is already applied in the AISI Proposal Summary Form shown in Section G. The following three examples, which use the above “illustrative” formula, demonstrate the 60/40 balance principle.

Illustrative Example One:

	Number of Quantitative Measures	Number of Qualitative Measures	Total Measures	60/40 "Balance"
Local	11	8	$l = 19$	60%
Provincial	3	4	$p = 7$	40%
Total Measures (6 projects)	14	12	$l + p = 26$	100%

Note: This example of 26 measures in the proposal includes all identified local measures and recommended provincial measures for 6 projects.

Illustrative Example Two:

	Number of Quantitative Measures	Number of Qualitative Measures	Total Measures	60/40 "Balance"
Local	4	4	$l = 8$	60%
Provincial	5	2	$p = 7$	40%
Total Measures (3 projects)	9	6	$l + p = 15$	100%

Note: This example of 15 measures in the proposal includes all identified local measures and recommended provincial measures for 3 projects.

Illustrative Example Three:

	Number of Quantitative Measures	Number of Qualitative Measures	Total Measures	60/40 "Balance"
Local	25	20	$l = 45$	60%
Provincial	6	5	$p = 11$	40%
Total Measures (10 projects)	31	25	$l + p = 56$	100%

Note: This example of 56 measures in the proposal includes all identified local measures and recommended provincial measures for 10 projects.

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- (d) Alberta Learning will need to review the proposed local measures and recommended provincially determined measures when the proposal and individual projects are submitted by a school authority. As a result there could be an adjustment in the number of local and provincial measures or even an adjustment within a given measure. However, any adjustments would be done in collaboration with the school authority.
- (e) The accepted local and provincial measures will be used to determine the "evidence of success" at the end of a project as well as to ascertain interim "evidence of success" in order to determine if funding is to continue into year two and/or year three of multi-year projects.
- (f) While the method of using the 60/40 local/provincial balance principle in the proposal is defined, the method of using an appropriate local/provincial balance principle for all the individual projects within a school authority's proposal has not yet been finalized by the AISI Education Partners Working Group (EPWG) and Education Partners Steering Committee (EPSC). Therefore, the AISI partners will continue to collaborate and identify a set of guidelines or criteria (could include criteria such as number of students involved, dollar value of projects), if necessary, for a framework to see how an appropriate "balance" principle could be applied to the projects on an overall basis. In addition, the partners will develop an accountability and reporting format, including certification by the Chief Executive Officer, for the submission of:
 - interim evaluation reports relating to evidence of success for funding continuity to years 2 and 3 of multi-year projects (due April 30),
 - annual evaluation reports including budget expenditures (due October 15), and
 - evaluation report and budget expenditures at the end of a project (due October 15).

The evaluation reporting format will be provided to school authorities when the AISI partners complete the final product.

5. A provincially determined measure is one which is acceptable to the province because it:
- (a) helps to indicate and demonstrate improvement, and
 - (b) relates to or can be applied to other jurisdictions and has future potential for broader application.

Additionally, a provincially determined measure:

- (a) is a measure that is acceptable to the province,
- (b) could be related to departmental strategies and/or priorities, and
- (c) because the province may think it is "significant".

Alberta Learning could establish a new provincially determined measure if it was deemed necessary and desirable.

6. Since each AISI proposal reflects the unique needs and circumstances within the school jurisdiction, there is no "minimum or maximum number of measures." The number of measures should be sufficient to demonstrate "evidence of success" in terms of interim (progress) and final outcomes.
7. The school boards should exercise professional judgement to determine the following for each project:
 - number of targets
 - degree of improvement
 - improvement baseline
8. The types of measures used by school authorities should be determined by the nature of the performance, achievement, or indicators necessary to provide evidence of improvement. In other words, the measures must be appropriate to the nature of the improvement sought.
 - (a) The school jurisdiction proposes appropriate provincial and local measures as indicators of evidence of success for the project as part of the proposal.
 - (b) Alberta Learning must approve both "provincially determined" and "locally determined" measures.
 - (c) "Provincially determined" measures may be quantitative or qualitative, depending on the nature of the improvement sought.
 - (d) Alberta Learning may choose to adopt local measures as provincially determined measures and jurisdictions may use provincial measures as locally determined measures.
 - (e) Jurisdictions are encouraged to develop measures that reflect the unique nature of both their local circumstances and improvement projects.
 - (f) Jurisdictions are encouraged to recommend/suggest what they feel would be appropriate provincial measures for projects where provincial measures and data are readily available.
9. "Evidence of success" is the net sum professional judgement of provincial and local staff, of the amount of movement toward the set improvement target(s) based upon an analysis of all evaluative information about the progress of the project. Multiple data sources and methods are encouraged. Generally speaking, evidence of success should indicate a positive trend. A major consideration is that more than one year may be required to achieve success. An apparent decline in a single year may not be a reflection of lack of success but would need to be investigated further.

Indications of success may involve comparisons with previous performance or comparisons on selected measures with similar groups who have not been involved with the program. In addition to, or in the absence of comparisons, professional judgements, particularly those made by independent observers, may be useful.

10. A jurisdiction may withdraw a project at any time if it discerns that a project may be failing and submit a new proposal with the approval of Alberta Learning.
11. Alberta Learning encourages the use of readily available provincial measures.

Quantitative measures include the grades 3, 6, 9 achievement tests, the grade 12 diploma examinations, and others such as participation rates, which can be generated from provincial administrative data.

While Alberta Learning has no **qualitative** measures at the school jurisdiction or school level, some sources where qualitative measures could be available follow.

- (a) Alberta Learning has the set of survey instruments developed in 1995 for the Annual Education Results Report. These questionnaires are available from the Planning Branch.
- (b) The Educational Quality Indicators (EQI) initiative developed measures that are available both from the originating school jurisdictions and the department.
- (c) Other qualitative measures can be found in the education literature and from various researchers and districts currently using qualitative measures.
- (d) More qualitative measures will likely be developed by jurisdictions for their own AISI projects. These will then be shared across the province.
- (e) Alberta Learning could "adopt" or accept local qualitative measures as provincial measures.
- (f) Alberta Learning could develop provincial qualitative measures.

C.7 Audit

1. Each school jurisdiction and charter school must report AISI funding in the revenue section of the annual Budget Report Form and in the revenue and expenditure section of the Audited Financial Statement.
2. Each school jurisdiction and charter school shall report on progress in April in terms of level of achievement on interim measures for multi-year projects; this evaluation report per project will be used to determine funding continuation for the following year of a project. The evaluation report of the last year of a project will not have an April interim report but a final report will be due by October 15.
3. An annual school authority evaluation for each project report shall be submitted by October 15 of each year.
4. A summary of the AISI projects is to be included in the Annual Education Results Report, due November 30 of each year.
5. The project coordinator(s) or leader(s) is/are to attest in AISI Project Form 2 that the project meets all AISI requirements, that the proposal is accurate and reasonable and that the project, as designed, has a reasonable chance of success. If a project has only one leader or coordinator, then only one attestation signature would be required.
6. The Chief Executive Officer (Superintendent of Schools in a school jurisdiction and "Superintendent" in a charter school) is to attest in AISI Proposal Form 1 to the accuracy of the proposal, that all AISI requirements are met and that the school jurisdiction or charter school has management systems and processes in place that meet general accounting and audit principles and that approved AISI funding will be utilized only for the intended and specified purposes.
7. The audit requirements for the interim (for continuity of funding purposes) and annual submission of AISI evaluation and financial reports will use certification of the type used in AISI Proposal Form 1, for reporting and accountability purposes. This requirement will be undertaken and finalized by the AISI partners through the collaboration process in January 2000. The final evaluation and financial report "products" requirements and process will be provided to school authorities upon completion of the task.

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C.8 Post Implementation Review (PIR)

1. The School Improvement Branch (SIB) will undertake ongoing evaluation of AISI projects commencing early in the implementation of projects using methods such as feedback, surveys and meetings, as needed, to gather information.
2. The AISI EPSC will convene at least annually, and as needed, to assess AISI progress based upon SIB gathered information and other factors, and recommend AISI adjustments as necessary.
3. The AISI EPSC will decide on the summative external PIR scope and methodology at a later date. The *Program Evaluation Standards* (2nd edition, 1994) could be used to design the PIR methodology.

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D. AISI Local and Provincial Processes

There are 11 local and provincial processes in the full AISI cycle that school jurisdictions and charter schools need to consider and apply in each AISI project:

1. School authority and provincial roll-out, dissemination and communication
2. Local school jurisdiction project preparation
3. School jurisdiction proposal preparation and submission
4. Provincial review and approval of proposals
5. Appeal processes (proposal and continuation of funding stages)
6. Local implementation planning and execution
7. Funding flow
8. Ongoing, annual and summative measurement and evaluation
9. Local and provincial reporting
10. Clearinghouse, sharing and best professional and promising practices
11. Auditing

Refer to the following sections in this handbook for information related to:

1. Associated specific requirements.....Section C
2. Timelines related to each process.....Section E
3. Forms related to proposal and projects preparation and submission for provincial review and approvalSection G

Alberta Learning will undertake its provincial role and responsibilities within the AISI philosophy of openness, collaboration, trust, involvement, simplicity, minimal rules and the framework established by the EPSC. Specifically, the provincial role relates to:

- provincial “roll-out” seminars and information,
- proposal and project review and approval,
- funding flow continuity processes using evaluation results and review/appeal processes,
- Clearinghouse, and
- coordination and direct assistance.

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D.1 Provincial and School Jurisdiction Roll-out, Dissemination and Communication

The basic plan includes the following.

WHAT	WHO	HOW	WHEN
1. Joint announcement by all 6 partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared by EPSC • Communications Branches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News release by wire and mail out • TV, radio and newspaper interviews by Minister and EPSC members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 15 after Cabinet approval
2. Media Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPSC and Minister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With news release
3. MLA Packages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Branch of AL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Week of December 20, 1999
4. Full Information Package to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School jurisdictions and charter schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPSC through SIB and AL Communications Branch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail with e-mail supplement • Place on Internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 23
5. Provincial "roll-out" by regional seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered to 10 regional localities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 10-21, 2000
6. School jurisdiction "roll-out"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each school authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide on own method • Each school jurisdiction will need to include its own philosophy, directions for project preparation and internal approval, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately after or simultaneously with the provincial roll-out of January 10-21, 2000
7. Detailed hands-on seminars for school jurisdictions and charter schools requesting a hands-on workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each school authority on request to SIB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site hands-on and "roll up the sleeves workshop" by SIB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 24 to February 29, 2000

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D.2 Local School Authority Project Preparation

1. School authorities should develop school improvement projects from identified needs.
2. Proposals should reflect insights from research and literature on improvement.
3. Alberta Learning will establish an annotated bibliography on school improvement on EDNET to assist schools in identifying improvement research and literature. School jurisdictions and the university Faculties of Education, as part of the AISI collaborative philosophy, will all contribute to the information base.
4. To facilitate the process of identifying and sharing school improvement research and literature, a partnership is being established with the four provincial Faculties of Education where school improvement knowledge and expertise is resident. AISI partners may convene a symposium in early February 2000 as a "kickoff" for school authorities to share their early ideas for projects and to provide an information base on school improvement research and literature to school authorities that may involve the 4 faculties of education as part of a broadened AISI partnership.
5. Every school authority should develop its own policies, criteria, priorities, and selection process for AISI projects within its own philosophy and preferences. (Note: some of the considerations are identified in Section C.4 and D.2[12] of this *AISI Administrative Handbook*).
6. Given that collaboration is an essential element for school improvement, proposals should reflect support of those who will implement the projects and include meaningful involvement of the school community. In addition to students, staff and families, school community includes school councils and agencies providing school services that affect the ability of children to be successful learners.
7. Each project proposal must include a budget. While school authorities may decide to fund projects beyond available provincial funding, the sum of the school jurisdiction's request submitted to Alberta Learning for funding approval cannot exceed the total school jurisdiction funding entitlement. A school authority could also decide to fund any given project(s) beyond the level of provincial funding. However, any local funding provided to projects beyond the amount of AISI grant entitlement is undertaken with the understanding that the school authority has other sources of revenue for that purpose.

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8. It is recognized that school improvement is not a “quick fix” activity, but rather an ongoing process that requires collaboration, commitment, and sustained support. AISI’s requirements of budgeting, reporting and accountability are an attempt to promote long-term efficiency and effectiveness, not short-term changes.
9. School jurisdictions should recognize the importance of professional development in the school improvement process.
10. The requirement to reflect school improvement research insights is not meant to discourage innovation but rather to ensure that there is a strong possibility for success.
11. There is an apparent tension between the need for “bottom-up” and “top-down” processes including consultation and commitment, and the need for overall jurisdiction planning and decisions on priorities. But these are not necessarily contradictory. In order to be successful, projects must be based on support at the school and community level. At the same time, the school jurisdiction must make the final decision about the overall direction and allocation of resources, in light of the situation and needs which prevail in its school system.
12. While the method of identifying and deciding upon improvement projects is a local choice, initiatives should be identified, planned and designed to meet “local unique needs and circumstances.” These could be:
 - district-wide priorities and/or needs (e.g., early literacy, class size),
 - grade/subject specific needs (e.g., elementary reading, junior high math, music in multiple grades, high school completion),
 - school-specific needs (e.g., high needs students, low attendance),
 - a combination of the above.

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D.3 School Jurisdiction Proposal Preparation and Submission

1. Submissions should be provided to the School Improvement Branch of Alberta Learning no later than April 30 of each year; years 2 and 3 of multi-year projects do not need to be resubmitted for approval (however, interim evaluation reports need to be submitted in April of years 2 and 3 to ascertain the continuity of funding).
2. The proposal and projects are to be linked to the school authority's three-year planning and reporting processes. See the *1999 Guide for School Board Planning and Reporting*.
3. The proposal elements (summarized roll-up of all projects) submitted by each school jurisdiction and charter school are shown in AISI Form 1, Section G of this manual.
4. A summary of each project must accompany each jurisdiction proposal; the project summary is shown in AISI Form 2 in Section G of the manual. The elements of each project summary should include:
 - needs identification
 - research and literature basis
 - strategy(strategies)
 - goal(s)
 - budget
 - timeframe
 - improvement targets (interim and final)
 - measures (local and provincial; types)
 - evaluation methods
 - evidence of meaningful community involvement
 - evidence of commitment by those involved in the implementation
 - team expertise
 - evidence of an implementation plan including ongoing evaluation
5. As part of the "accountability" process, the Chief Executive Officer will need to certify that the proposal meets requirements. Each Project Leader(s)/Coordinator(s) will need to certify that each project meets requirements; see sections C.7 and AISI Forms 1 and 2 of this handbook for details.

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D.4 Provincial Review and Approval of Projects Within the Proposals

1. Alberta Learning is responsible for reviewing and approving proposals and projects submitted (AISI Forms 1 and 2 as described in Section G) by school authorities.
2. Alberta Learning will undertake its provincial role and responsibilities within a philosophy of openness, collaboration, trust, involvement, simplicity, minimal rules, etc. and the framework established by the AISI EPSC.
3. Alberta Learning will seek AISI partners' and school jurisdictions' advice as it reviews proposals and requires project and/or process clarification and assistance. All pertinent documentation must be available to Alberta Learning.
4. Alberta Learning should consult and involve the partners when needed while the partners will advise and make suggestions when they feel there is a need.
5. Alberta Learning will use a checklist approach for proposal and project review and approval.
6. Alberta Learning will make a final decision and notify the school authority no later than 6 weeks after proposal receipt.

D.5 Review Processes for Problematic and/or Rejected Proposals and/or Projects

1. If there are any problem areas in the proposal or any project, Alberta Learning will try to resolve the outstanding issue(s) through the consultation process with the school jurisdiction and partners, and if necessary, include third-party "experts."
2. If a proposal or project(s) is/are rejected by Alberta Learning, the school authority may request Alberta Learning to convene a panel of the AISI Education Partners to provide a further review of the proposal and make a final decision.

D.6 Local Implementation Planning and Execution

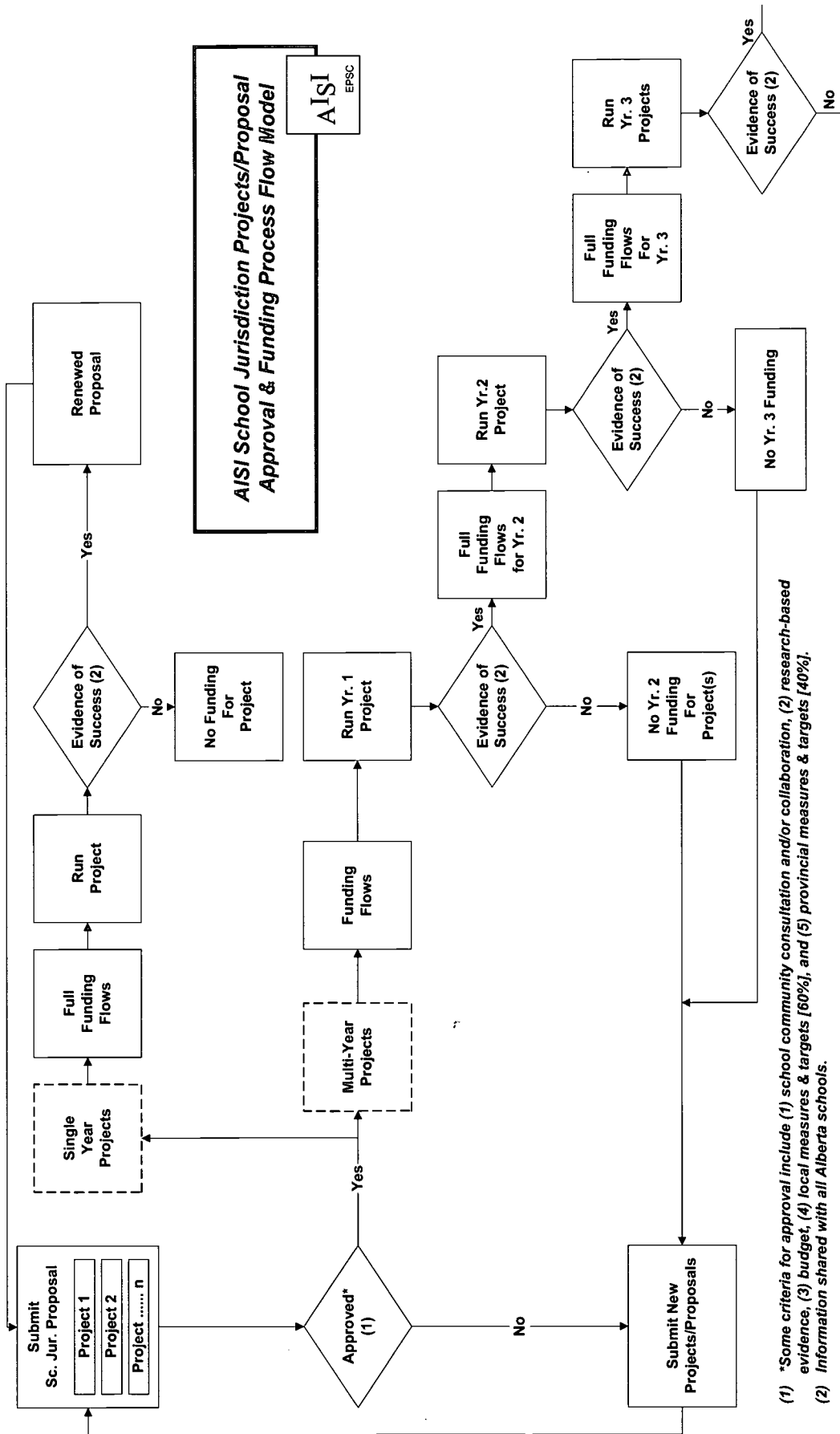
1. Local planning, implementation, and ongoing support and assessment are critical to the success of each and every school improvement project. Many sound initiatives fail at this stage since implementation planning and execution are often taken for granted. The success of a school improvement project depends on appropriate and ongoing support.
2. Each project should have an implementation strategy with sufficient resources allocated and dedicated to adequately support each project.

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D.7 Funding Flow

1. Funding will flow to school jurisdictions and charter schools based upon approved proposals and projects for improving student learning and performance.
2. Funding for approved proposals and projects will commence in September of the school year and will be advanced monthly on the same basis as other school grants.
3. Provincial funding will be available only for the approved timeline of each project.
4. Alberta Learning will approve funding for multi-year projects to flow in the second and third years based upon demonstrated evidence of success. Funding will not continue in subsequent years for multi-year projects if the professional judgement of Alberta Learning and the school authority indicates the project was unsuccessful.
5. Funding for proposals submitted and/or approved after September 1 will commence on the month following approval (on condition that the grants payment process so allows) and may include "retroactive" funding if that was included in the school jurisdiction/charter school project budget and Alberta Learning decision process.
6. The following flowchart demonstrates how funding flows based upon:
 - project approval for the first school year,
 - continued funding approval for subsequent years of a multi-year project based upon "evidence of success",
 - discontinuation of funding in subsequent years of a multi-year project if there is no evidence of success, and
 - submission of a new project for approval if funding is discontinued for a multi-year project.

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(1) *Some criteria for approval include (1) school community consultation and/or collaboration, (2) research-based evidence, (3) budget, (4) local measures & targets [60%], and (5) provincial measures & targets [40%].
(2) Information shared with all Alberta schools.

D.8 Ongoing, Annual and Summative Measurement and Evaluation

1. School authorities should decide upon their ongoing, annual and summative measurement and evaluation policies and processes as part of their planning and subsequent management and audit practices.
2. School authorities should make provision for ongoing evaluation preferably on a "natural cycle" basis (could be quarterly or other "regular" basis decided by school jurisdiction) comparing the baseline and targets (both interim and final outcome) to actual progress.
3. School boards must compare programs (both interim and final outcomes) with an approved appropriate baseline.
4. Continued funding in subsequent years of multi-year projects depends on the school authority providing Alberta Learning with "evidence of success" determined through appropriate methods and practices. An interim progress evaluation report of interim measures for multi-year projects should be submitted by April 30 so that the decision for continuation of funding into year 2 or 3 can be made and provided to the school authority.
5. Annual project evaluation reports, including budget expenditures, are due by October 15.
6. Proposal/project summary evaluation data should be included in the AERR due by November 30.
7. Evaluation practices should meet professional standards and be done in accordance with the targets, measures and evidence of success described in Section C of this handbook.
8. Annual evaluation reports (interim, annual and final) including financial statements of AISI grants and expenses will need to be certified by the Chief Executive Officer and submitted by October 15. While the process requirement will include certification by the CEO of the type used in the AISI Proposal Form 1, the specific accountability mechanisms and process are not finalized at the time of printing this handbook. The AISI Education Partners Working Group will continue to work collaboratively and provide the final product to school jurisdictions and charter schools in February 2000. The first AISI evaluation report on interim measures is not due until April 2001.

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D.9 Local and Provincial Reporting

1. Budget and Financial Statement Provisions and Reporting
 - Alberta Learning will make provisions for AISI financial reporting as an extra line item in the:
 - Annual Budget Report Form, and
 - Audited Financial Statements

2. Interim Evaluation Reporting of Multi-Year Projects
 - School authorities need to submit interim evaluation results of each multi-year AISI project by April 30 of each year for consideration of “continued funding” for the duration of each approved project.

3. Evidence of Success Judgement and Continued Funding
 - Each school jurisdiction and charter school must submit an interim annual evaluation report to Alberta Learning addressing the results of the evaluation of each project and report on the evaluation of progress attained for the interim and/or final improvement targets. This should occur in April of each year for interim reporting and after the school year is finished for the last year of a project (October 15).
 - The specific format and requirements for the annual interim evaluation report and final report will be collaboratively determined by the AISI partners and provided to school jurisdictions and charter schools at a later time.
 - Alberta Learning will review the interim report and notify the school jurisdiction of the continued funding status for each project within six weeks of receipt of the report.
 - Alberta Learning will consult and collaborate with its partners and school jurisdictions in the evaluation of annual project reports to review “evidence of success” for continued funding.
 - The principles of “directional” results, i.e., trends rather than single events, and professional judgement will be used in making decisions.
 - In the event of disagreement, a school authority could appeal the decision as per section D.5 of this handbook.

4. Submission of New Project Proposal if Funding not Continued
 - If funding is not to continue for a multi-year project, then the school authority can submit a different project proposal to Alberta Learning as quickly as possible, for the same or lesser funding.

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5. Annual Reporting

- In addition to the AISI summary report, each school jurisdiction and charter school will submit a detailed annual evaluation report on AISI projects by October 15. The specific format and requirements for the annual interim evaluation report and final report will be collaboratively designed by the AISI partners and provided to school jurisdictions and charter schools at a later time.
- Each participating school authority will include the AISI project summaries in the AERR that is to be submitted by November 30 of each year.

6. Reporting to AISI Clearinghouse

- School jurisdictions must provide annual findings to the AISI Clearinghouse. The format will be provided after the Clearinghouse has been designed in collaboration with the AISI partners.

D.10 Clearinghouse, Sharing and Best/Promising/Professional Practices

1. Alberta Learning will establish, with its partners, the process and mechanism for a provincial electronic AISI Clearinghouse that will include information such as project descriptions, findings, results, conclusions and promising professional practices.
2. Each school jurisdiction will annually provide information on its AISI projects such as findings, results, conclusions and promising professional practices to the provincial AISI Clearinghouse so that successes and non-successes can be shared.
3. The AISI EPSC will coordinate and/or organize various sharing "venues" and mechanisms such as partners' annual general meetings and conferences/conventions including:
 - Teachers' Conventions
 - ASBA Annual General Meetings, etc.
 - AHSCA Annual Meetings
4. The partners will organize and host a Canadian and/or North American conference on school improvement at an appropriate time.

D.11 Auditing

1. Audit and attestation requirements for the submission of proposals and projects are defined in Sections C.7 and G of this handbook.
2. The Chief Executive Officer will attest to the accuracy of information, that all AISI requirements and processes have been met, and that appropriate management and accounting systems and processes are in place through a certification provision of the type used in AISI Proposal Form 1, when each school jurisdiction and charter school is submitting its interim (April 30 for multi-year projects only) and annual (October 15) AISI evaluation results and expenditures by project.

NOTE: The specific audit process reporting parameters and format will be finalized by the AISI partners in January 2000 and will be provided in February 2000.

3. Since AISI is an integral part of the existing provincial and local accountability processes, an internal audit will be conducted after the end of each school year. The audit could include sampling such as in the following 2-step process:
 - (a) x% mini review
 - (b) y% comprehensive review for the purposes of meeting elements such as:
 - accuracy
 - reasonableness
 - appropriateness
 - adequacy
4. Alberta Learning's monitoring function, if required, could be handled by SIB in conjunction with other appropriate Alberta Learning units.
5. Alberta Learning's System Improvement and Reporting (SIR) Division will conduct AISI audits within Alberta Learning and in school authorities as deemed appropriate. The Office of the Auditor General may also conduct AISI audits.

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**AISI Administrative Handbook
December 20, 1999**

E. Annual Timeline Cycle

Provincial	Local	Date
1999 Calendar Year		
P.1 Distribution of AISI Framework and Administrative Handbook	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December 23, 1999
2000 Calendar Year		
P.2 Scheduled regional inservice seminars (10)	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 12–21, 2000
	L.1 Development of local project guidelines, priorities, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 12–28
P.3 School authority presentations by SIB on a request basis	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan. 25 – Feb. 29
P.4 Roll-out of improvement annotated bibliography on EDNET	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 28
P.5 Provincial symposium; school authorities and faculties of education partnership sharing of ideas on projects and improvement literature and research	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan. 31 – March 10
--	L.2 Needs assessment, literature reviews, project planning and preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb. 1 – March 17
--	L.3 Project planning (could involve assistance by 4 faculties of education as part of a broad AISI partnership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb. 7 – March 31
--	L.4 Local selection of projects and proposal preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb. 28 – April 14
--	L.5 Submission of proposal to Alberta Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 13 – April 28
P.6 Review, discussion and approval of proposals and projects	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 13 – May 31 (maximum of 6 week turnaround time)
--	L.6 Project implementation planning and preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 28 – June 30
--	L.7 Project implementation begins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aug. 21 – Sept. 15
P.7 Funding flows based upon approved projects	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept. 2000 – June 30, 2001
	L.8 Project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept. 2000 – June 30, 2001

**AISI Administrative Handbook
December 20, 1999**

Provincial	Local	Date
2001 Calendar Year		
P.8 Hands-on assistance from the School Improvement Branch	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aug. 21 – June 30, 2001
P.9 Collection of progress information by projects and entry into Clearinghouse	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January – February
--	L.9 Conduct evaluation of multi-year projects using interim measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February – March
--	L.10 Design and develop new projects to replace single year projects (if any)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February – March
--	L.11 Submission of interim project evaluation reports to AL for multi-year projects for the purpose of determining continuation of funding for the next year of a multi-year project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 30
--	L.12 Submit new single year projects – only if initial projects were not all multi-year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March – April
P.10 Review interim progress and decide on year 2 funding for multi-year projects	--	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May
--	L.13 If a year one project is judged unsuccessful and funding discontinued for year 2, submit replacement project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May
--	L.14 Review and approve new single-year projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April – May
--	L.15 Adjust multi-year projects based on evaluation and approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May – September
--	L.16 Continue year 2 of multi-year projects and commence year 1 of new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August – September
--	L.17 Submit detailed project evaluation results and budget expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 15
--	L.18 Submission of AERR which includes AISI summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November 30
CYCLE REPEATS		

F. Alberta Learning Contacts and Assistance

1. For assistance contact the School Improvement Branch of Alberta Learning.

Contact	Phone	Fax	E-mail
John L. Myroon Director	427-7882	422-0576	jmyroon@edc.gov.ab.ca
Nelly McEwen Deputy Director	422-3210	422-0576	nmcewen@edc.gov.ab.ca
Anna Di Natale Office Manager	427-3160	422-0576	adinatale@edc.gov.ab.ca
Address:	5 th Floor East, Devonian Building 11160 Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2		

2. School improvement annotated bibliography available on EDNET after January 28, 2000.

G. Forms

1. AISI PROPOSAL Submission Form (AISI Form 1).
2. AISI PROJECT Summary Submission Form (AISI Form 2).
3. The interim, annual and final evaluation and expenditure report format will be provided when the AISI Education Partners complete the task in January 2000.

The following two forms simply illustrate the kinds of information that is to be submitted on the Proposal and Project forms. AISI project and proposal data will be collected through a database with a web-based front end. The web-based reporting will be developed in the new year and provided to all school authorities.

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AISI Form 1: School Jurisdiction and Charter School PROPOSAL Summary Form

Note: Each school jurisdiction and charter school submitting projects for AISI funding must complete applicable sections of this proposal form which summarizes all the individual projects.

Full Name of School Jurisdiction or Charter School: _____ Code #: _____

1. Scope of projects in district or charter school proposal.

Proposal Details (summary of all projects)	Year one or Single Year, 2000/2001	Two Year, 2001/2002	Three Year, 2002/2003
Number of Projects			
Number of Involved Students Attending School			
*Number of Preschool Children Involved			
Number of Schools Involved			
Grades Involved			
Student Age Range			

*only if one or more projects include preschool children

2. Complete the following two schedules. The total requested funding cannot exceed the authority's AISI funding entitlement.

(a) Budget Object Categories

Budget Categories	2000/2001 (\$)	2001/2002 (\$)	2002/2003 (\$)	Total (\$)
Staffing & Benefits				
Supply and Services				
Equipment				
Other Capital				
Other Expenditures				
**Total Budget				

(b) Supplementary Budget Schedule Indicate the % of the total amount budgeted for AISI in terms of:

Expense Area	2000/2001 (%)	2001/2002 (%)	2002/2003 (%)
Professional Development			
Administration			
Remaining AISI Budget			
** Total Budget	\$ (100%)	\$ (100%)	\$ (100%)

**The "Total Budget" is the same in 2(a) and 2(b)

3. Summarize all measures over all projects:

	Number of Quantitative	Number of Qualitative	Total Measures	% Balance
Local				60
Provincial				40
Total Measures				100

See Section C.6(4) of the *AISI Administrative Handbook* for explanation and details.

4. Please answer **Yes** or **No** for each of the following.

Does each project:	Yes	No
(a) Have the support of those who will implement it?		
(b) Have meaningful involvement of the community, including school councils?		
(c) Include an identification of needs?		
(d) Have a research/literature base?		
(e) Have interim targets for multi-year projects?		
(f) Have final "end-result" improvement targets that are achievable?		
(g) Identify provincial and local measures (including qualitative and quantitative) that appear reasonable?		
(h) Identify appropriate evaluation methods?		
(i) Identify strategies that have a reasonable chance of achieving the improvement goal and target(s)?		

5. Please provide any other relevant information.

6. Certification

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the information provided is accurate and all AISI requirements have been met. Further, the school jurisdiction/charter school has/will have the management systems and processes in place to properly account for AISI funds. Approved AISI funding will be used only for approved purposes.

 Superintendent of Schools (Print Name)

 Superintendent of Schools (Signature)

 Date

9. Briefly describe the evaluation method(s), data sources, etc.

10. Briefly describe implementation elements including ongoing monitoring and hands-on assistance and support to the project.

11. Please complete the following two budget projections for each project:

(a) Budget Object Categories

Budget Category	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	Total
Staffing & Benefits				
Supplies and Services				
Equipment				
Other Capital				
Other Expenditures				
**Total				

(b) Supplementary Budget Schedule Indicate the % of the total annual budget for AISI in terms of:

Expense Area	2000/2001 (%)	2001/2002 (%)	2002/2003 (%)
Professional Development			
Administration			
Remaining AISI Budget			
** Total Budget	\$ (100%)	\$ (100%)	\$ (100%)

***The "Total Budget" is the same in 2(a) and 2(b)*

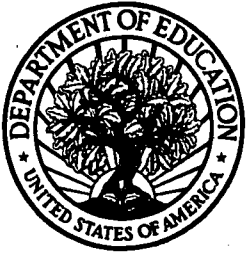
12. Other information that could be helpful in reviewing the project.

13. Certification by Project Coordinator(s)/Leaders/Supervisor(s)

We the undersigned, state that the information provided, to the best of our knowledge and belief, is accurate. The project, as designed, has a reasonable expectation of achieving the improvement goal(s) and target(s) that will ultimately have a meaningful and sustainable effect on learning and performance by involved students.

Data	1	2	3
Name (please type)			
Position			
Location (address)			
Phone Number			
Fax Number			
E-Mail Address			
Signature:			

**AISI-SIB-AL
2000-01-06**



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