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This bill codifies the Innovation Pilot Projects provisions enacted in session laws in 2012 and 2014. Under the original legislation, the commissioner of education designated partnerships of two or more school districts to work collaboratively to improve student and school outcomes as Innovation Pilot Projects. The 2014 session law provided that the pilot projects would last until June 30, 2018, or for up to five years, whichever is less. In 2016, the commissioner of education submitted an interim evaluation report analyzing the four pilot projects:

- (1) Farmington and Spring Lake Park School Districts;
- (2) Leroy-Ostrander, Southland, Lyle, Grand Meadow, Glenville-Emmons School Districts;
- (3) SouthWest Metro Educational Cooperative and Jordan School Districts; and
- (4) Lakeville, Prior Lake-Savage and Burnsville School Districts.

The bill requires a group of school districts to collaborate with school staff and receive formal school board approval to form a partnership. The partnership must develop a plan that includes collaborative education goals and objectives, strategies to implement the goals and objectives, measure to evaluate progress, an implementation timeline, and other applicable conditions. In addition to the plan requirements from the 2014 session law, this bill requires the partnership plans to:

- (1) increase opportunities for diverse populations of students that are focused on employability skills and technical, job-specific skills related to a specific career pathway; or
- (2) demonstrate efficiencies in delivering financial and other services needed to realize plan goals and objectives.

Districts will be required to report on performance assessment, high school graduation, and career and technical certification data to show the partnership's success in preparing diverse populations of students for careers and jobs. As with the previous legislation, the commissioner will be required to convene an advisory panel to advise the commissioner on applicants' qualifications to participate in the program.