

Grant Support & Funding for ETLO

a guide for schools, districts, and organizations

Regardless of whether you've been writing grants for years or you're venturing into the world of RFPs for the very first time, the EdTech Leaders Online grant tutorial can offer guidance for crafting a proposal specific to the ETLO programs, and can help clarify the role and format of each proposal component. As you learn more about your colleagues' successful proposals, you may also find their tips and tricks helpful in securing your own funding, grant-based or otherwise.

So you want to write a grant proposal...

identifying local funding

Starting locally can be an effective way to raise money. A local grant-funding organization's pre-existing interest in improving education in your area can be an important source of funds for the program.

- Talk to people about the program. It will help you learn to articulate what you're doing and understand what elements of the project may be most appealing to others.
- Ask your school board, administrators, and other community members if they know anyone who might be interested in learning more about your district's involvement in the project. See if they're willing to make a call on your behalf, or ask if you can use their name. Personal connections are arguably the most effective way to get your project on the radar screen of a potential funder.
- Ask your school board and administrators about incorporating the ETLO program into grant proposals to support an overall program for technology professional development. Some districts have combined ETLO online workshops with local hands-on workshops, study groups, coaching, and other components of a complete program. ETLO fits well into many state and federal programs, including those authorized under the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, proposals to private foundations, and proposals submitted to local businesses.
- Make a list of the major businesses in your local area. Call them to inquire whether they have a grants program supporting K–12 education and can send you a copy of their application guidelines.

broadening your search

After you've exhausted your local connections, the next step is to broaden your search regionally and nationally. You may want to refer to ETLO's list of grant websites in your search for organizations that support your involvement in the EdTech Leaders Online program.

There is no magic formula to obtaining grant funding. Each foundation, corporation, government agency and individual donor has its own unique process for making decisions about how to allocate funds. It can be a lengthy process that includes extensive research, relationship building, and the development of clearly articulated goals and objectives.

Drafting your proposal

before you begin...

Read the instructions! This is the most important step in crafting a successful grant proposal. Know what the grantmakers are looking for, and present your proposal with that in mind. Often there are rubrics for evaluating a proposal submission; try to obtain these and use them as a guide. Also be sure to stay within page limits or formatting requirements.

introduction/program overview

Also known as/overlaps with: Project Summary

An introduction to a proposal may take the form of an in-depth cover letter or an introductory paragraph, depending on the context and the specific requirements of the grantmaker. For either option, keep your introduction simple and direct—and, if you can, under a page in length. (Two to three paragraphs is best.) As succinctly as possible, explain who you are, what your project is, why it is important, and why this particular grantmaking organization is the right group to fund it. More people are likely to see your opening paragraph than any other piece of your proposal; you must convince them to continue reading and, ultimately, to fund your project.

program background

- *What is your organization's mission, if you are not a school or a school district?*
- *How will this project mesh with your existing structure and philosophies?*

Describe similar programs your organization has run successfully in the past, including other EdTech Leaders Online programs in which you may have participated.

statement of problem

Also known as: Assessment of Need

- *What are the specific needs of your district? Keep in mind that you will need to identify concrete ways in which the ETLO program can meet these needs.*
- *What are the consequences of ignoring this problem?*

Be clear, concise, and compelling. Identify a specific problem that can be solved. For instance, you might write, "teachers in District X have a strong desire to integrate technology into their classrooms, but are not sure where to begin. However, the district does not provide any training in this area," or "increasing numbers of students in State Z attend schools that do not offer advanced classes in mathematics, despite the fact that many of these higher-level classes have empty seats at the schools where they are offered." Each situation has a clear solution: provide classes in technology integration, perhaps, or offer advanced classes virtually so that all eligible students may participate. Vague problems ("our teachers do not know how to use computers," or "mathematics teachers in our state are inadequately trained") are too big to tackle with a single grant, and do not have clear solutions.

This is a good place to include any statistics or data you might have that support your case. You may also want to include any current research on online learning. (The "Our Research" section of the ETLO website is a good place to start if you are looking for literature to cite.)

goals and objectives

- *How do you intend to solve the problem you've identified?*
- *What does your organization hope to accomplish by participating in ETLO?*
- *How will the ETLO program help your organization meet these goals, and how will it help solve the problems you outlined above?*

Goals and objectives: what's the difference?

Goals are long-term aspirations: "District X will begin to transition from a face-to-face model for professional development to an online model as teachers become more proactive in their own development." Objectives are very specific steps towards the broader goals that can be accomplished in the short term: "During the first twelve weeks of the grant period, six teachers from each school will complete training as Online Professional Development Specialists." You will probably want to limit the number of general goals, but list as many objectives as necessary.

Choosing objectives

Choose objectives that are concrete and measurable; at the close of the grant period, you should be able to evaluate whether or not they have been met. Objectives should also be very specific: convince the grantmakers that your objectives are tangible and timely, and that they can realistically be accomplished if your proposal is funded right now. You don't need to explain how each objective will be accomplished; you'll include that information in the next section. For instance, in the example above, it would not be appropriate to write, "Over the next twelve weeks, six teachers from each school will be participating in an online training course as part of the EdTech Leaders Online program." This describes an activity (or a means to an end), not an objective (an end result).

methodology

- *How will you implement this program in your school or organization?*
- *What, specifically, will your organization be doing as part of the EdTech Leaders Online program?*

Describe in a narrative format all of the project's specific activities. Remember to include information on all relevant components of the ETLO program: the online training for facilitators or designers, the facilitation of courses and workshops on the local level, local face-to-face meetings you will hold, etc. This is also an appropriate place to outline your plans for collecting any materials for evaluation. (For instance, in some districts, the program coordinator collects all surveys and final products from the Online Professional Development Specialists after they have facilitated their workshops; in others, high school students take a final exam based on the material in their online course.)

dissemination strategies

- *How will you share your experiences in the ETLO program with others?*

It is always helpful to include a plan for disseminating results, as many funders want to know that their support will contribute to (and be appropriately evident to) the public. How will others in your state or district be made aware of the project and its impact? How will you share this information with colleagues on a national level? As a starting point, you can describe ways your project participants will share information learned in the project with other colleagues in the district, state, or organization. You can also plan ways to share lessons and projects in journals, websites, and other print or online publications, and in presentations at local, state, and national conferences.

evaluation

- How do you plan to evaluate the success and impact of this program?
- Will participants be assessed? If so, how?

The *No Child Left Behind* legislation emphasizes the importance of ongoing and systematic evaluation of educational initiatives. In this context, it is critically important that you define a clear evaluation plan for your project.

Evaluation and assessment: what's the difference?

Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, they have two separate and distinct meanings. Assessment is qualitative or quantitative measurement of specific learning; for instance, you might devise a way of testing whether or not participants have met stated objectives and outcomes. Evaluation is a much broader appraisal that uses assessment data to determine whether a project has reached its long-term goals. Most grantmaking organizations will require you to evaluate your project thoroughly upon its completion.

Types of Evaluation

Formative Evaluation: Formative evaluation takes place during the grant period to help assess what is happening and whether it is working. Examples of this type of evaluation might be the surveys in the ETLO training courses and workshops; examining the results can help to improve the program before the grant period ends.

Summative Evaluation: Summative evaluation measures whether or not the completed project as a whole met its stated objectives. Look closely at your objectives as you determine how you will make this assessment. This data can sometimes influence whether a project receives additional funding.

Impact Evaluation: Impact evaluation examines the overall worth and impact of the project. In retrospect, were the goals and objectives worthy of the funding? For instance, some ETLO districts have plans to track teachers as they return to their classrooms to help determine whether or not the trained teachers are implementing their new technology integration skills.

How do I evaluate ETLO programs?

There are a number of tools that have been designed and are provided by ETLO to help you evaluate the program listed below, along with a number of additional suggestions that can be developed and implemented by your local organizations:

- pre- and post-workshop surveys*
- pre- and post-program surveys*
- collection and evaluation of workshop products using a locally-designed rubric
- followup observations of classroom implementation of workshop curriculum products
- collection and evaluation of student products
- data collection on workshop and program participation*
- ongoing analysis by an evaluation team to refined program implementation
- surveys of impact on student and teacher technical skills

*These tools are designed and provided by ETLO

ETLO-developed workshops also include guidelines to assist OPD Specialists as they facilitate workshops in their communities, and participants in the course design program are encouraged to include similar guides or rubrics in the courses they create. However, many organizations choose to supplement these aids with more formal rubrics of their own. As you and your colleagues prepare your proposal, you should begin to think about some of the ways in which you want to assess and evaluate online learning and the EdTech Leaders Online program.

partnerships

This is a place to describe your choice of partners for the EdTech Leaders Online project and your reasons for this choice. You should include a description of how this partnership provides services not available within your district or organization, and an overview of the ways in which extending funding to partners will benefit the program overall.

capability statements & staff bios

Funders require background information on the organizational capabilities of the major partners you have selected, and the staff from both your organization and partner organizations who will be involved in the project. One or two paragraphs about each of your partners, often taken from the organization's website and brief narrative descriptions of the qualifications of the staff should be included. Often, full résumés or curricula vitae are also required in the appendix. For organizational capabilities of EDC, EdTech Leaders Online, and relevant staff, see the "About Us" section of the ETLO website, or refer to the sample grant proposal texts provided in the "Grants and Funding" section.

sustainability

- *How will you continue to fund the program after the grant period ends?*

Another important component of your proposal is your plan for the post-grant period. Many funders are very interested in providing "seed money" of sorts: funds that will allow your district or organization to start a program that you will then be able to continue on your own (or that will become self-sustaining). Because the EdTech Leaders Online programs are capacity-building in nature, there are a number of options open to schools and organizations once they complete the initial training. Trained facilitators or designers may run additional courses or ETLO-developed workshops for a small fee. (See the relevant sections of the ETLO website for current pricing.) Some districts use grant funding to train groups of teachers as online professional development specialists or course designers and then purchase additional workshops or course runnings for these trained teachers out of the district's annual professional development budget. Others choose to direct funds for curriculum development towards the design of additional online courses for high school or university students.

timeline

The majority of grantmakers will need you to provide a timeline of your work during the grant period. (If the project will extend beyond the period you are requesting funds for, you may want to include a full project timeline and explain how you will be funding any additional components.) If you have specific dates in mind for each piece of the project, then by all means include these. However, a timeline that simply specifies months (or even seasons) is sufficient for most proposals. If you are funded, you will need to craft a more detailed calendar for the project.

As you design your timeline, be sure to consult your district or organization's calendar. (This is particularly important if your organization is not directly affiliated with a school or district, but plans to work with teachers who are.) One of the reasons cited most often for high dropout rates or low participation is scheduling. Will your participants be accessing training courses or workshops from school? If so, be sure that you don't schedule courses during vacations!

A few districts have had great success with running summer courses and trainings, but in many districts, teachers are reluctant or unable to participate during the summer months, particularly if they are not being compensated for their time. Workshops and courses that begin in November or

December will run into holiday breaks; you may also have this problem in the last spring if your district or organization has a long spring break. Many districts have recommended starting a few weeks into the semester, when enthusiasm is high and teachers have had an opportunity to get settled in their classrooms. When possible, allow a few weeks between the end of an online workshop or course and the end of the semester to allow teachers to complete their end-of-term classroom responsibilities.

budget

Include a detailed description of your budget for the grant period (and beyond, if your project will continue past the end of the grant). For each item, be sure to include:

- Item name
- Description and purpose
- Time frame
- Cost, including any monies coming from external sources

budget narrative

The budget narrative contains information about the budget that cannot be deduced from the numbers themselves. You may want to use it to annotate your expenses, or to explain why specific components of the budget are included.

conclusion

Depending on the format of your proposal, a formal conclusion may not be necessary. However, this is a good place to summarize the major points in your argument, and to emphasize the importance of your work one final time.

appendix

Use the appendix to include any additional information to support your application that did not fit into the main body of the text. This could include letters of support from stakeholder, partners or other key educators who are familiar with your work and relevant to the funders, materials developed in your district or organization that illustrate the basis or structure of your program, staff bios, additional organizational capabilities information, etc.