

Preparing to Write a Technology Plan

Writing a technology plan, for E-Rate or otherwise, can be a big task for many libraries. This document will outline some of the basic steps to prepare information before writing a technology plan.

Create a Technology Plan Team

A Technology Plan Team is a group of stakeholders that will assist in gathering technology related information and resources, and assist with writing the technology plan.

Often one person is tasked with creating a technology plan which can be overwhelming. Distributing the work over a Technology Plan Team can help keep one person from being overburdened, as well as bringing in different perspectives on the library's technology.

The Technology Plan Team will help evaluate the library's current technology environment, research solutions, and develop the technology plan, and can help with the evaluation process after the technology plan is implemented. Another important item that a Technology Plan Team will help with is communication with library stakeholders. This helps create acceptance and buy-in for planned projects and programs by staff members, the board, and library patrons.

The team should be approximately 3-7 people. Teams that are too small can feel overburdened, but teams that are too large can become logistically challenging and reaching a consensus can be difficult.

Members should include a variety of people who benefit from or work with the library. Consider including:

- Technology specialists/IT decision makers
- Board Members
- Fiscal Advisor/Officers
- Director or Assistant Director
- Front-line library staff
- Involved community volunteers
- Technology experts
- Technology Novices

Including a variety of people will help the library evaluate its services from different perspectives. Front-line library staff often know how the public use technology better than someone behind the scenes, technology novices can help explain their lack of knowledge or confusion with new technologies, and including persons from outside the library workforce can sometimes bring ideas the library had not previously considered.

Technology Assessment

A technology assessment will provide your library with a snapshot of its technology environment to help you determine where your library is at technology wise, and determine what areas of technology your library is strong in, and weaker areas that need improvement. The assessment is not just an inventory of your library's physical technology, computers and other hardware, but a look at everything technology related within your library including but not limited to programming, staff technology skill level, training programs, and an inventory of hardware and software. Performing a technology assessment can be overwhelming so be sure to involve all members of the Technology Planning Team.

If your library has an existing technology plan, whether it is current or expired, review the plan and the outlined goals and objectives. If there were any goals your library did not meet, why? Is there something that could have been done differently in retrospect? Was there anything your library accomplished with flying colors?

Review the current state of your library's technology. Some questions to ask and elements to review are:

- What type of training is offered to patrons and staff?
- What skills do staff currently possess? Are they lacking any essential skills?
- Does your library have any policies or procedures in place regarding technology?
 - Are there any critical policies or procedures missing?
- Are there any technology related projects?
- Who does your library work with to provide technology?
 - Vendors
 - Internet Providers
 - Technology Support
- What is the current state of your library's:
 - ILS
 - Website
 - Local network
 - Internet connection
 - Programming
- Review your library's strategic or long-term plan to see how technology fits into your library's goals
- How does technology fit into the library's budget?
- Perform a technology inventory of the library's hardware and software
 - When was it purchased?
 - Where was it purchased?
 - Is there a warranty?
 - How often is the item used?