

Technology Plan Writing 101

This document is meant to be a guide to help libraries write a technology plan.

I. Introduction to E-rate in North Dakota

- a. Libraries that receive their Internet service either through Stagenet, applying for Internet services through E-rate on their own, or are part of the statewide E-rate contract must have a current technology plan. Both the Stagenet connectivity and the state E-rate contract use the Universal Services Administrative Company (USAC) criteria for approving technology plans.
- b. **Your technology plan has to contain all five elements as stated by USAC:**
 - i. The plan must establish clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve library services;
 - ii. The plan must have a professional development strategy to ensure that staff know how to use these new technologies to improve library services;
 - iii. The plan must include an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and other services that will be needed to improve library services;
 - iv. The plan must provide for a sufficient budget to acquire and support the non-discounted elements of the plan; the hardware, software, professional development, and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy;
 - v. The plan must include an evaluation process that enables the library to monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new development and opportunities as they arise
- c. Because of the ever changing nature of technology, a technology plan should cover no more than three years. After three years, the plan should be re-evaluated and revised. A technology plan needs to cover the funding year (fiscal year June 30-July 1). During the revision process, the previous technology plan must be current, so don't put re-writing it off until the last minute.

- d. Your technology plan must contain a sufficient level of detail to validate the E-rate funding request or Stagenet Internet request. A technology plan is not simply a list of what pieces of technology need to be replaced or upgraded; rather it should be written as a bona fide plan for incorporating technology into your library's mission of providing services to your patrons.
- e. Your technology plan must have two dates, a **Written (Creation) Date** and **Approval Date**. You may also include a Library Board Approval date as well (most libraries need to have board approval).
 - i. A technology plan is considered written or created when the five required elements are written with sufficient detail to support the services requested. Consider it similar to a rough draft of a research paper.
 - ii. Your technology plan must be approved by a USAC-certified Technology Plan Approver (TPA). In North Dakota, that would be Al Peterson at the North Dakota State Library:
 - 1. **If applying for Internet Services on your own-** before Form 486 is filed or services start, which is July 1st of the funding year
 - 2. **If your library is part of the State E-rate Contract-** before ITD files the Form 486 is filed or services start, which is July 1st of the funding year
 - 3. **If your library gets their Internet through Stagenet-** Before the expiration date of your current technology plan or July 1st of the funding year
 - iii. After your technology plan is approved by the TPA, you will receive a letter certifying the plan and providing the approval date. Keep this letter with your technology plan (avoid stapling it together with your technology plan, use a paper clip instead).

II. What to do/consider before writing a technology plan

- a. Technology Planning Committee
 - i. Form a team of people that will help you write the plan. It can be made up of staff, board members, IT tech support, etc.
 - 1. Determine the role that each member will have in developing your technology plan.

- a. For instance, if you have a board member on your team that has taken charge of setting up the computer equipment in your library, put that person in charge of the Needs Assessment portion of the technology plan.
 - b. Plan a time table for getting tasks done and stick to it. You'll find that with a little organization at the beginning will make writing a technology plan easier.
 - c. Communicate with each other. Nothing causes more problems with a project like a lack of communication.
- ii. Review your library's mission statement and vision statement as a team. Also review your long range plan. Decide how technology plays a role in meeting your library's goals and community needs.
 - iii. Review what's new in library orientated technology. You can use the online databases like the *EBSCO Masterfile or Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* to find articles about technology. You can also read up on technology in WebJunction, by reading online blogs like TechSoup, <http://www.techsoup.org/> and talking to fellow librarians.
 1. Discuss what you learned or discovered as a team (you can make this an informal discussion over coffee or pizza or something!)

III. Writing your Library Technology Plan using TechAtlas

- a. TechAtlas- TechAtlas is free resource available through Webjunction that will walk you through the technology plan process. This is a great starting point for those librarians who never wrote a tech plan before or writing a new one from scratch. Completed TechAtlas technology plans meet all the criteria for E-rate. You can use TechAtlas to write up a technology plan if you choose. Access Webjunction at <http://www.webjunction.org/> and look under *Quick Links*. TechAtlas is located under *Tools*. You can also find a link to TechAtlas under the *Technology* section of Webjunction as well.

IV. Writing your Technology Plan: Tech Plan Tips

- a. If you are applying for E-rate on your own, try to write your goals and strategies with the services you are applying for on the Form 470.

- b. If you are a Stagenet or statewide E-rate contract library, consider what services you are providing for your patrons by offering them Internet connectivity and relate them to your goals and strategies. Don't forget about your staff computers and services you offer as a staff member such as Interlibrary Loan and reference services.
- c. Your Needs Assessment, Budget, Professional Development Strategies, and Evaluation Process should support each of your goals and strategies.
- d. The scope and complexity of your technology plan should match the scope and complexity of the technology in your library. For example, a tech plan for funding basic telephone services, a fax line, and internet connection for a couple of computers will be less complex than a tech plan for internet access for 50 public terminals, internal wiring, cellular telephone service for a bookmobile, and a Centrex phone system.
- e. There is no hard, fast rule for how long the tech plan should be. You want enough detail in your tech plans to meet the five elements. If the Goals and Strategies are being supported by your Needs Assessment, Budget, Professional Development Strategies, and Evaluation Process, then you should have enough detail in your tech plan.
- f. Once you get the five elements written with sufficient details, you need to establish a written date. Here is the easiest way of establishing a written date: copy the entire technology plan, paste it into an e-mail, and e-mail it to yourself. Print out that e-mail and save it in your technology plan file. The header of the e-mail will provide a date.
 - i. If you are using TechAtlas, you can e-mail it as well. Be sure to print out the e-mail as proof of your Written date.

V. Technology Plan Outline

- a. This Outline is a guide on formatting a technology plan. You do not have to format your technology plan exact like this outline; it's a guide of how a really sharp looking technology plan is written.
- b. Your technology plan must contain ALL FIVE ELEMENTS and sufficiently support ALL FIVE ELEMENTS. Remember that the devil is in the details. In this outline, the areas marked with an asterisk (*) are required.
- c. Think of a technology plan as a college term paper: topic paragraphs (goals and strategies), supporting paragraphs (professional development, need assessment,

budget) and conclusion (evaluation).

- d. Don't think of your technology plan as simply a requirement for E-rate. Use this document as a planning tool for technology in your library. A neat, well organized technology plan may also come in handy when applying for grants, seeking donations, at budget hearings, etc.

Cover Sheet

Cover sheets present a professional looking document, but not required.

Library name and contact Information- write out your library name and contact information

Bonetrail Public Library*
920 East Main St.*
Bonetrail ND 58836*
www.bonetrail.org/notreal*
701-555-5454*

Date of plan- write out the time span that this plan will cover.

Technology Plan
July 1 2009- June 30, 2011*

Name(s) of preparer and/or planning team. It's a good idea to list the planning team somewhere in your technology plan. That way, if you need to write a revision, you can assemble the same people id you choose to do so.

Al Peterson, Director of the Bonetrail Public Library (technology plan preparer)*

Technology Plan Committee

Michelle Myers: Assistant Librarian
Tim Meadows: ITD, Bonetrail Public School
Fred Rogers: Library Board Member
Ginger Rogers: Library Board Member

*Creation/Written Date**
*Approval Date**
Library Board Date

Introduction Paragraph

An introduction paragraph is not an E-rate requirement, but it does help to set the tone of your technology plan. In the introduction, you can describe your community population, the size of your library's collection, any special collections, the services and programs that your library offers your patrons, current and future population trends in your community, etc.

Library Mission Statement and/or Vision Statement

*State your library's mission statement or vision statement.**

Technology Vision Statement

This is not a E-rate requirement. A Technology Vision statement would reflect how the use of technology, i.e. Internet services, in your library help fulfill your Library Mission Statement. Again, it helps set the direction and tone of your technology plan.

Goals and Strategies:*

Clear Goals and a Realistic Strategy: The plan must establish clear goals and a realistic strategy for using telecommunications and information technology to improve library services

Goals and strategies are a required element of your technology plan. Each goal must have a strategy to support it. Strategies should be linked to a timeline or a time frame.

- 1. The goals and strategies should reflect any non-discounted or non-funded portions as well. For instance, one goal could be to increase the number of patron internet accessible computers, one goal may be to increase the number of DSL lines (DSL is an E-rate or Stagenet eligible service) from two to three. Another goal would be to buy another computer (non E-rate or Stagenet eligible service).*
- 2. Each goal would need a set of strategies and a timeframe to complete the tasks.*
- 3. If you applying for E-rate on your own, your goals and strategies should reflect the services you are applying for, such as Internet services or telecommunication services.*
- 4. If you are applying as part of the statewide E-rate contract or your library is part of Stagenet, your goals should reflect your current level of services and the*

means of supporting that service.

- 5. Any future improvements to your technology, whether it is a scheduled replacement of equipment or a software package update should be reflected by goals and strategies.*
- 6. Any changes/additions to staff used equipment should be reflected by a goal and strategies.*
- 7. You can build a training proponent into each goal and strategies. When you get to the next section, Professional Development, you can paraphrase what you stated in the Goals and Strategies.*

Professional Development*

Professional Development- The tech plan must have a professional development strategy to ensure that staff will know how to use these new technologies to improve education or library services.

A Professional Development strategy is a required element of your technology plan.

- 1. Describe how training supports the library's mission and goals set forth in your technology plan.*
- 2. Describe and list the professional development activities required of staff to train properly on using the technology in your library. Provide the details of your training strategies such as method of staff trainings, number of technology based workshops your staff in planning on attending, the number of online courses your staff is going to utilize, any budget that you are setting aside for staff development, etc.*
- 3. Tie your Professional Development strategy to a time frame.*
- 4. Keep all documentation of training such as sign-in sheets, computer lab logs, lists of in-service activities, etc.*

Needs Assessment*

Needs Assessment- The tech plan must include an assessment of the telecommunication services, hardware, software, and/or other services that will be needed to improve education or library services.

A Needs Assessment is a required element of your technology plan.

- 1. Provide a status of the existing technology and physical structure, such as:*

- a. Telephone system including fax line (if you have one)
 - b. Building Infrastructure (e.g., electrical capacity, cooling system)
 - c. Computer hardware and software- What are the characteristics and capabilities of the equipment? (e.g., age, model, year, memory, etc.)
 - d. Internet access
2. Based on the current technology, describe new technology needs, such as:
 - a. Adding a firewall or replacing servers
 - b. Adding upgrades to phone system
 - c. Adding network switches
 - d. Adding cable drops
 - e. Installing a new network
 - f. Classroom/lab materials
 - g. Replacing computers
3. Describe maintenance needed for new and existing equipment
 - a. How is your equipment maintained? (i.e. city IT dept, in house ID person, local computer store, etc)
 - b. How often will the technology be serviced? (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)

Budget*

Sufficient Budget- The plan must provide a sufficient budget to acquire and support the non-discounted elements of the plan: the hardware, software, professional development and other services that will be needed to implement the strategy

Having a sufficient budget is a required element in your technology plan

1. The tech plan budget must show how the library will:
 - a. Pay the non-discount share of the cost- if you applying for internet services on your own).
 - b. Acquire and support the necessary resources (computers, training, electricity, software, etc.) needed to make effective use of the discounted services.
2. Budgets should be based on reasonable expectations of receiving funding and incurring expenses.
3. Budgets need to reflect all three years of the technology plan. The budget for years two and three can be projections based on the figures for the first year.
4. A spreadsheet or table is acceptable for the budgeting portion of your tech plan. Just insert the table or spreadsheet into the budget portion of your tech plan.

Evaluation Process*

Evaluation Process- The tech plan must include an evaluation process that enables the school or library to monitor progress toward specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities as they arise.

A process for evaluating your technology plan is a required element.

1. Evaluation process should describe:
 - a. How frequently the tech plan will be evaluated
 - b. The person(s) responsible for updating the plan
 - c. How progress toward the goals and objectives will be measured or monitored
 - i. If and how goals were met
 - ii. Any unexpected outcomes
 - iii. Any new needs that emerged
 - iv. Any goals that are no longer relevant
2. Through the evaluation process, the tech plan writer may discover that the tech plan may need revisions or mid-course corrections. For example, if there are major changes, such as:
 - a. Budget Increase/shortfall
 - b. New technology introduced
 - c. New construction
 - d. Mergers and closures

Timeline

Although a timeline is not an E-rate requirement, it is a good idea to include one with your technology plan. A timeline ties all the elements together. You can include time frames in each required element in place of a timeline.