Information for managing your project

“You’ve got an OLT grant, what’s next?”

Stay in contact with the OLT
We encourage you to contact us with questions, concerns, updates, and good and bad news. If your project is not progressing as planned, we would rather know earlier than later so we can help you solve the issue. Of course, we also want to hear your good news stories, progress, achievements and news about upcoming dissemination activities.

You can email OLT staff via learningandteaching@education.gov.au or call us on (02) 6240 0625.

Stay in contact with your Institutional Contact Officer (ICO)
Please stay in touch with your ICO throughout the project. The OLT often communicates with ICOs and it’s important that they are aware of the progress of your project. Often, ICOs have a wealth of experience and they will be able to help you with initial questions and problems. The ICO list is on the OLT website http://www.olt.gov.au/ico-list

Funding agreement
The funding agreement has been signed and a copy returned to the lead institution’s Vice-Chancellor’s office. If you and the project team do not have a copy, please either obtain one from within the lead university or contact the OLT for an electronic copy.

The funding agreement outlines important clauses that you need to be aware of. We suggest you read through the agreement carefully and check with your legal office if there are any clauses you are unsure about. We ask you to take particular note of the Intellectual Property clause (discussed further below).

The funding agreement also outlines important project milestones, such as due dates for progress reports and for the final report. It also lists the project deliverables that you will need to work towards and report on in the final report.

Reporting dates and OLT portal
The reporting dates that are outlined in the funding agreement are also available once you log in to the OLT Grants Portal. Please contact us if you don’t have the login details and/or password.

Intellectual property
As per the funding agreement (including Clause 14), the Department of Education owns the project material and the intellectual property rights to all project materials and the Department grants a licence to you to reproduce, adapt and exploit the intellectual property rights for any purpose. You do, however, at all times acknowledge the OLT on all project material. Please contact the OLT for further information on this.
Project establishment issues:

A: Cross-institutional agreements
The funding agreement for your projects is an agreement between the OLT and the lead institution and as such all changes to the project will need to be cleared with the lead institution. Any arrangements with partner universities are between the lead institution and the partner and although the OLT can provide advice on how to manage issues, we cannot mandate requirements.

For collaborative projects, you will need to establish an agreement on who takes responsibility for what. You will most likely have done this at the time of application but you may need to formalise the process now that you have received funding. There are two main ways you can formalise agreements between the parties: through a formal funding agreement or via an exchange of emails.

The method you choose will depend on your own internal requirements. An exchange of emails can be simplest way to formalise an arrangement but if money changes hands, you may want a formal funding agreement. This can take the form of a full agreement or a letter signed by both parties.

The OLT does not stipulate whether you need a formal cross-institutional agreement and this is an internal matter for you to decide within the project team.

B: Project manager
The OLT does not have a requirement for projects to engage a dedicated project manager, however, we do encourage you to employ an experienced person to oversee the project to allow the project leader to focus on delivering the actual project. Project managers in some cases are employed only to manage the logistics of the project, while in other cases, they are involved in research activities as part of their workload.

The OLT runs annual project management workshops and you will be issued an invitation for this shortly. We strongly encourage all project managers to attend this workshop.

C: Ethics approval
Obtaining ethics approval in almost all cases takes much longer than originally anticipated. We suggest you apply for ethics approval as soon as possible. For some more hints and tips on ethics approval, please see Attachment A.

D: External evaluator
For projects funded to a value of $120,000 and above, an external evaluator is compulsory. The evaluator will often be an expert in the field and it would be useful if you can find someone who has been previously involved in an OLT project. The external evaluator cannot be a member of the project team.

Seed projects do not need to engage an external evaluator but if there is room in the budget for this, we do encourage you to make use of some sort of evaluation system/external evaluator to give you ongoing feedback on the progress and content of the project.

The external evaluator report needs to be included as an attachment to the final report.
**E: Reference group**

All project teams should appoint a reference group. A reference group will give you valuable feedback on the project progress and will often have a bigger picture overview while project team members need to focus more on the details. The reference group should include some external participants who have appropriate expertise to ensure there is constructive advice on the design, development and ongoing conduct of the project, and to ensure the project has maximum impact within the institution/s engaged in the project and beyond those institutions. The OLT may appoint a representative to the reference group.

An external participant is a person who is not a member of the project team. They do not need to be external to the participating universities.

In some cases, the OLT will determine that a steering committee be appointed to either one or a number of projects designed to contribute to the same or similar outcomes. In this case, the OLT reserves the right to appoint the steering committee.

All project reference groups should meet, whether by phone or in person, at least twice during the project. Terms of reference should be provided to the reference group that take into account the purpose specified above or, at the very least, the first meeting should discuss the role of the reference group and come to an agreement on that role and minute the meeting. All meetings should have agenda and minutes which are kept as part of the records of the project.

Some reference groups are involved from very early on in the project while others come on board later on. Some reference groups are very involved in day-to-day planning while others have a more evaluative role. Some reference group members dedicate much time to the projects while others have less time to spare. Talk all of this through with potential reference group members from the start.

**F: Dissemination**

Dissemination should be considered throughout the life of your project and not just at the end.

A large part of an OLT project is the dissemination of the project projected outcomes, progress and actual outcomes. We want the sector and your colleagues to make full use of your project results and dissemination is therefore essential.

We encourage a wide dissemination from very early on in the project. Often projects disseminate via: project websites; presentations, workshops and conferences; journal articles; media, including social media; final report; flyers and newsletters; and a range of other means.

All project proposals already included a section on dissemination and it is likely that you have already thought about it. At this point we encourage you to start drafting a practical dissemination plan that includes dates and activities.
G: Communication (internal and external)

Ongoing communication within your project team as well as with any outside stakeholders is of vital importance when leading or managing a project. Plan regular meetings (face to face or distance), plan regular update emails or newsletters, and develop a communication strategy and timeline. This will help to avoid miscommunication and especially when team members are spread around the country or even overseas, will keep everyone on the same page.

As already discussed under dissemination, communication with external stakeholders is important to get your project progress and findings out to a broad audience. Start the communication early and stay in touch with a wide range of external stakeholders.

Communication with your own senior staff is important. As all OLT progress/year one reports require endorsement by the DVC(A), rather than just email or leave the report for signing in an in-tray, we suggest that you use this is an opportunity to make a short appointment with your DVC(A) to discuss your project. It will give you a chance to put your work on your DVC(A)’s radar.

Communication with the OLT is also encouraged, not just as reporting milestones are met, but to keep up to date on how you are going.

Project team turnover

We understand that life is not static and that things change, particularly if you have a large project team. It is not unlikely that a team member or even project leader will change through the life of a project. Often this is not a major issue but we do ask that you let the OLT know if there are changes in personnel.

If a team member needs to be replaced, an email to the OLT outlining who the replacement will be will suffice. If the team leader changes, there are a number of possible scenarios. Sometimes the project stays with the lead institution and a replacement project leader is identified. Sometimes the lead institution changes, in which case both the previous lead institution and the new lead institution need to agree with this change. In any case, please get in touch with the OLT to discuss your individual situation.

If a new university becomes involved in a project, you need to provide a letter of support from the DVC(A) or equivalent, indicating that the new institution supports the relevant team member/s as part of the project. Conversely, if a person leaves a project team, it is the project leader’s responsibility to ensure the departing team member’s university nominates a new representative or, if the university decides to withdraw from the project, provide evidence of this to the OLT.

Managing workloads

You have submitted a project timeline as part of your application, including your (and the team members’) workload. However, often projects are much busier than expected and the workload increases. Make sure that you divide the workload between you, a project manager or assistant, and the team members. If teaching relief was agreed to in the project proposal, you should ensure that you can make use of this.
Managing timelines
The timeline and reporting due dates for the project are set out in the funding agreement. However, we understand that sometimes, due to unforeseen circumstances, you might need some more time for a report. We can be flexible with this but we like to know as early as possible. If something happens and you think this will cause issues with the timeframe, please be in touch with the OLT early and let us know. Progress reports also are a good time to reflect on the actual project progress, and to discuss an extension if needed.

Managing finances
You have submitted a project budget as part of the project application and funding was granted based on your submitted budget. Part of the funds were paid on signing the funding agreement, and the rest of the funds will be released after submitting the year 1 (and for some projects also year 2) progress report. If you run out of funds before the due date for the reports, please get in touch with us so we can look at your specific situation.

The OLT has a Year 1 financial statement document and a FAQ document that includes more information about the financial reporting for your project http://www.olt.gov.au/grants-and-projects/project-management.

Reporting
All project reporting dates are outlined in the funding agreement and on the OLT Grants Portal. You will also receive a reminder a few weeks before a certain report is due. Most projects have a 6-month progress report, a Year 1 progress report (that needs to include a financial statement), further 6-month progress reports at 6 month intervals, a final report and a financial acquittal. The OLT has templates for all these reports on the website http://www.olt.gov.au/grants-and-projects/project-management.

We also advise you to have a look at completed reports on the OLT website. This will give you an idea of what a final report looks like once it’s published.

Project management workshops
Each year the OLT organises project management workshops that can be attended by either the project manager or the project leader (or another team member if more suitable). The workshop will be a two-day workshop in Sydney, most likely at the beginning of April, and we will be in touch with further information shortly.

All Innovation and Development and Commissioned Work projects (and some Seed projects) have budgeted to attend this workshop (in your budget this is included as $3000 to attend OLT events).

OLT logo and acknowledgement
The OLT needs to be acknowledged on all project materials. This includes reports, articles, presentation slides, websites, flyers and other.

The standard acknowledgement can be found in our project management information document http://www.olt.gov.au/grants-and-projects/project-management. We also have an OLT logo you can use, but as the logo contains a Commonwealth Crest, the OLT needs to clear all use of the logo. If
you would like to use the logo, please email learningandteaching@education.gov.au and we can send you the logo. The OLT will need to approve the use of the logo first before you can publically use it.

Websites, DVDs and other multimedia resources also need to have the Creative Commons information added – further information can be found in our project management information document http://www.olt.gov.au/grants-and-projects/project-management.

Other useful links:


**Attachment A**: helpful hints and tips for project teams for ethics approval
Helpful hints and tips for project teams for ethics approvals

Ethics approval is frequently cited as a reason for the delay in project commencement. Below are some hints and tips for applicants where ethics approval is concerned.

**Consider ethics early**
The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NS) states that “a judgement that a human research proposal meets the requirements of (the) National Statement and is ethically acceptable must be made before research can begin and before full funding for the proposal is released.” (NS p8)

It is the project leader’s responsibility to ensure that ethics approval is in place before commencing the project. Most academics consider ethics just before work is scheduled to commence. This often leads to unwanted delay in the project. Hence, it is vital to get the ethics application underway early in the process. The process to secure ethics approval can be constructive and relatively easy if ethical issues are considered in the planning phase of the project.

**Consult the research ethics office**
Each institution has its own research ethics office and website which provides advice on ethics issues, processes, forms and checklists, due dates, and the relevant contact person. Early consultation ensures that the project leader anticipates the questions and concerns of the ethics committee and addresses them prior to submitting the ethics application.

**Discuss with relevant contact person**
Consider discussing with the relevant contact person at the time of formulating proposals. Many schools and/or faculties have appointed staff to provide research ethics advice. One of the roles of these staff is to provide advice to students and staff on making an application for ethics approval, and how to respond to questions/instructions from the ethics committee. When applicants are not sure who is the relevant contact person to consult, their institutions’ ethics administration office or website is the best place to start.

**Apply for the right level of review**
Most institutions have established different levels of review, depending on the risk level associated with the project and its research activities. The different levels require different levels of documentation, review and processing time. Please refer to the Human Research Ethics Committee website of your institution to ensure that the ethics application is submitted for the right level of review. Over- or under-applying can result in unnecessary delays.

**Multi-institution projects**
All institutions follow the position advocated in section 5.3 of the National Statement to minimise duplication of ethical review.

Where the institution’s staff is identified as the project leader, the institution will expect a full application for ethics approval. Where the institution’s staff is a member of a project team, the institution will generally still expect an application for ethics approval through the expedited ethics review channel, after ethics approval has been obtained from the lead institution.

**Make your own ethical reflections transparent**
Most researchers consider and address the ethical issues of proposed research automatically. However, it is important to make the ethical reflections clear to the ethics committee to assure them that you are aware of the issues and have responded to them appropriately.

**Address all the application criteria**
Make sure you complete the application form provided even if you need to indicate not applicable (N.A.) for some of the fields. Ensure that all supporting documents are provided with your application.