What does it take to make a successful application for an OLT grant? Now that OLT Grants are Category One the competition is intense. The AskCharlie project which was funded in 2013 has just been successfully completed. As the project team reports:

"Our team was led by Martin Tomitsch (Architecture, Design and Planning), and included Jen Scott Curwood (Education and Social Work), Kate Thomson (Health Sciences) and Graham Hendry (ITL). The project began with Martin and Graham reflecting on the OLT grant priorities. The OLT was seeking applications for projects that could (among other things) build the capacity of academics, and/or use mobile solutions to support learning and teaching.

We knew that in most Australian universities one process traditionally associated with building academics' capacity was providing student evaluation of teaching (SET) results to help academics improve their teaching. But, surprisingly, other than anecdotes there was little evidence that academics use their SET results for this purpose. We knew of at least one exception: a study in the 1980s in Australia found that when academics were required to take time to consider their SET results with the help of a colleague, they were much more likely to improve their teaching. This gave us an idea: could a less labour-intensive 'mobile solution', that is, a personalised app be used to help academics in considering their SET results in the same way as if they were considering them with a colleague?

Martin and Graham invited colleagues Kate Thomson, who had just completed her doctorate on how university teachers use everyday conversations to improve their teaching, and Jen Scott Curwood, an expert in technology design-based research to join the project team. With our combined expertise we put together our application, which included visual mockups of the proposed app, won the grant, and AskCharlie was born.”

This account highlights a number of the features which are needed for a successful application. These are also evident in other successful University of Sydney successful proposals for OTL grants.

Start by:

1. Identifying a project that fits one of the OLT priorities
2. Identifying a project that will contribute to learning and teaching, not just at this university.
3. Research the topic thoroughly, especially previous OLT projects.
4. Build a team which incorporates the range of expertise you need. If you are applying for a full project, you will need team members from other universities.
Once you’ve done those steps, there’s more, especially establishing a time frame, and a credible budget. For a successful OLT project evidence of dissemination has become increasingly important so this has to be considered from the beginning. Making an application and completing the grant is not an easy process but as the AskCharlie team and other successful applicants will tell you, it’s an involving and rewarding professional activity.