

Novatia Note 015:

School & Trust Guide: Planning for ICT

Key Points

1. **Determine what you need your ICT to deliver**
2. **Set a clear ICT Vision & Strategy**
3. **Carry out ICT Audit and Current State Review (CSR)**
4. **Assess if you can rationalise any IT services**
5. **Develop a 3-5 year budget to reflect capital and revenue costs**
6. **Create your ICT plan & keep revisiting it**

Planning the ICT spend for the next academic year can be particularly challenging. Technological advancements to support teaching & learning are developing at a fast pace; as are innovative products designed to assist whole school /trust operations.

So how can you make the right choices? How can you ensure that any new technology bought today will still be fit-for-purpose for your school/trust tomorrow?

Thinking *strategically* about your digital framework and ICT investments is vital if you want to support your school's improvement process and provide the best possible student learning. It could also save your school/trust a significant amount of money in the long-term.

Here are the SIX STEPS we recommend that you take when planning for ICT at your school/trust:

1. **Determine what you need your ICT to deliver**

Start by looking at your education and business goals and decide how your ICT should be helping you to achieve these. This will allow you to create a clear picture of what it is you need your ICT to facilitate.

Remember—*ICT for ICT's sake* is not the end goal. The end goal is ICT to help your school or trust achieve *its goals*.

All too often we find schools/trusts have made a series of decisions about ICT, that have led to a series of purchases going way back. They have been so busy 'doing' and 'implementing' ICT that they haven't been able to step back to see the bigger picture.

2. **Set a clear ICT Vision & Strategy**

Developing an ICT Strategy that complements your organisation's overall Vision and objectives is key. You need to know what your strategic priorities are so you can focus wisely when setting any future ICT budget.

Your checklist should include:

- **ICT: An effective tool for teaching.**
Ensure there is a clear understanding of what you want to achieve in the classroom and how you want it to impact on teaching and learning.
- **ICT: An accessible opportunity for learning.**
Make sure the correct kit/software is available wherever, whenever it is needed.
- **ICT: Making effective use of resources.**
Use whatever technology is available to its fullest potential.
- **ICT: Planned and led strategically**
An ICT Vision needs the right people in place to drive the ICT strategic plan forward.
- **ICT: Managed and supported professionally**
Put the right support team in place, with the right structure and clearly defined responsibilities and appropriate technical skills to support the entire school/trust.
- **ICT: Connecting the whole school community**
Ensure that technology is enabling effective communications, from the sharing of information between staff in school, to sharing information with parents and stakeholders.

An effective Strategic ICT Group will keep you focussed on what your trust, schools, teachers and students actually need.

3. Carry out an ICT Audit and Current State Review (CSR)

A CSR will provide you with a clear insight into the present health of your ICT systems and operations. It will assess your network infrastructure, as well as analyse how well your ICT is supporting your teaching, learning and administration.

As a result, you will be able to determine 'where you are' against 'what you need to do next'; allowing you to optimise your ICT budget and ensure your school/trust's ICT is working most effectively to realise your short as well as long-term goals.

Many schools/trusts prefer to use an external advisor to provide an independent evaluation of their current ICT to senior leadership teams and governors, thereby ensuring correct governance and close scrutiny of school practices.

4. Assess if you can rationalise any of your IT Services

ICT is an area that can often be made more efficient, saving money and resource, while still delivering what you need. This is especially so in multi-academy trusts (MATs) where there might be a number of schools, each with their own systems and providers. Growing trusts can often find cost-effective ways to stream line essential IT services, without compromising on quality or security.

Here ICT strategic procurement should also be considered to leverage the buying power of a trust using centralised purchasing. Well-negotiated contracts mean that considerable savings can be made as well as improvements to service.

Sometimes, schools and trusts have what is needed but it's being used in the wrong way. Other times, the school's needs have moved on but their ICT hasn't. Check that you aren't falling into these traps. Again, if you don't have either the in-house expertise or capacity, an external advisor can help.

5. Develop a 3-5 year budget to reflect capital and revenue costs

Setting the 3–5 year budget for ICT provides visibility for the management team and trust leaders to take informed decisions on the investments they make, balancing the requirements of ICT with other financial demands.

This financial plan operates hand-in-hand with the delivery plan (see point 6) to provide a clear view on both the capital investment and revenue costs required to deliver the ICT Vision.

6. Create your ICT Plan & keep revisiting it

Once you have determined your direction, you can then draw up your ICT Plan, pinpointing both your strategic and tactical goals. These should contain clear timelines for each task with accompanying responsibilities.

It is imperative that you then keep referring back to your plan, in order to keep on track. This way you will not be tempted to buy any expensive new ICT which might, in a short time, just end up abandoned in cupboards.

If you would like to find out how Novatia can help your School or Trust with its ICT Planning, please visit our website www.novatia.com or contact us on 01962 832632 or info@novatia.com.

We have more than 16 years of experience in this sector and can also advise you on ICT Strategy & Vision as well as any step of a procurement process. Get in touch now for an initial FREE 30 minute consultation.