



Call for Proposals: Strengthening Institutional Capacities in Open Distance and eLearning in Commonwealth Countries

Background

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many educational institutions faced challenges due to lack of infrastructure and capacity to implement online learning. In order to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning through the use of technology, COL will support educational institutions in the [small states](#) and least developed countries ([LDCs](#)) of the Commonwealth to adopt open distance and eLearning (ODEL) systematically through augmenting available technologies and capacities. This support, in project mode, will be available for a limited period only. In instances of successful completion of expected outcomes, it could extend up to three years. Positive evaluation could result in the partner institution being designated ‘COL Centre of ODeL.’

In the Strategic Plan 2021-2027, COL has identified three pathways of change: (i) building national resilience, (ii) strengthening institutions, and (iii) improving lives and livelihoods – all within the framework of ‘learning for sustainable development’ supporting economic growth, inclusion, and environmental conservation.

Key Outputs and Outcomes

The activities under this project will result in

- improved capacity of teaching and technical staff
- development of institutional policies, systems, and strategies to offer quality open and distance learning (ODL) and OER.
- ‘greening’ the infrastructure and curriculum for sustainable development
- create an enabling environment for improving the lives and livelihoods especially of marginalised people, women, girls, and persons with disabilities

It is expected that the COL support would lead to some of the following specific outputs:

- Availability of an Open Educational Resources (OER) Repository
- Effective utilization of a Learning Management System
- More availability of Online/blended courses and resources
- Digitisation of institutional records
- Increased number of students who can access online/blended courses
- Adoption of a green technology support model

Intended Target Institutions

During 2023, the COL intends to support educational institutions in the least developed countries (LDCs) and small states of the Commonwealth through this special project. The project is currently being implemented in Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Eswatini, Lesotho, Maldives, Mozambique, and Seychelles. In this call for proposals, preference will be given to existing COL partner institutions from small states and LDCs of the Commonwealth.



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Technologies to be supported

The technologies to be supported shall be based on needs identified and agreed upon in the context of planned activities, outputs, and outcomes to be achieved. However, the support may include the following, but not limited to:

- Strengthening the local area network
- Augmenting the Internet bandwidth
- Digital tools such as PCs, laptops, heavy duty scanners, professional video cameras, digital mixers, audio recorder, etc.
- Software for digital content creation
- Setting up an off-grid solar power station to support ODeL.

The technologies to be supported may be augmented in an existing lab, or the partner institution may create a new facility for the COL support received. The COL supplied hardware and software shall be clearly identified with a signage system with COL logo. All hardware will also include stickers to indicate COL support.

Responsibilities of the Partner Institution

The partner institution supported for the project agrees to the following:

- Sign a contribution agreement with COL to implement the agreed activities with COL support and provide adequate visibility to the outcome of the activities conducted within the scope of the agreement.
- Agree to the terms and conditions as per COL policy and procedures.
- Provide report on the usage and status of the equipment supplied during the project period using templates, if any, provided by COL.
- Provide the required space as well as any renovation required to the physical space for accommodating the technologies/ equipment supplied by COL under the agreement.
- Include the equipment and technologies provided in the stock record of the institution.
- Maintain the equipment in working condition and use the equipment regularly to achieve the outcomes. Maintain record of the usage of the equipment and technologies provided.
- Undertake back-up of the data and content developed regularly.
- Manage the network and technologies for its security and safety of users from any fraudulent use or abuse of the facilities provided.
- Make provision for budget to accommodate the cost of subscription of online services for hosting facilities and Internet bandwidth beyond the first year of the project.

The partner institution takes full responsibility of the project and mainstream ODeL in the institution.

Implementation Process

1. Identification of partner institutions, where the support may be provided.
2. Finalizing the draft proposal for support in collaboration with the identified partners with detailed theory of change, logic model, activities to be conducted, and the identified technology tools.
3. Signature of the Contribution Agreement by the partner institution and COL.



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4. Procurement of technologies as per agreed timeline and procedure by the partner institution.
5. Training of the staff at partner institution to develop capacities to effectively use technology-enabled learning.
6. Programme interventions as per the plan.
7. Monitoring and evaluation will be a continuous process to measure the achievement of the targets at each stage of the project. The successful implementation at each stage will result in the continuation of the project.

The Call for Proposal

Eligibility: This call is only for recognised educational institutions in the target countries as indicated above. The proposal must be aligned with COL's theory of change as in the Strategic Plan (2021-2027). Institutions already implementing ODeL with COL support or in advanced stages of ODeL implementation need not respond to this call for proposal.

Number of institutions: Six. COL intends to support six institutions during 2023.

Last date to submit a proposal: **November 30, 2022.**

Duration: 2-3 years. While the project will be implemented in three phases, the overall implementation period will depend on the speed of activities.

Selection Process: All submissions will be reviewed by COL using the following criteria:

1. Alignment of the institutions policies and commitment to COL's strategic plan (2021-2027) and policies.
2. Committed resources for implementation of ODeL. A budget in CAD indicating the estimated year-wise implementation cost. The proposed budget may broadly be under three headings over a three-year period: (i) Equipment (ii) capacity building (ii) Course development. A clear indication of institutional commitment in terms of costs/ budgetary provision would strengthen the proposal.
3. A realistic timeline and plan for implementation of ODeL.
4. Expected and potential impact for learners.

COL may increase/decrease the number of institutions to support during the year 2023.

COL reserves the right not to collaborate with any institution without assigning any reason. If your proposal is not accepted, you will be informed about it. However, no further queries related to non-acceptance of the proposal will be entertained.

Proposal: Your proposal must include the following:

- 1) A letter of commitment to ODeL implementation from the head of the institution/ Ministry of Education, indicating the name and designation of the project lead and other departments/positions proposed to be involved in the project.



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- 2) A brief about the educational institution indicating the status of recognition in the country and sources of funding.
- 3) Information Technology infrastructure assessment checklist for the institution (using Format at Annex-1).
- 4) Proposal including how the ODeL implementation process is aligned to the institution's mission and vision, proposed activities aligned with COL's Strategic Plan (2021-2027), a timeline for 2-3 years indicating the specific expected outputs and outcomes, and the proposed budget for three years (including expected contribution from the institutions, COL, and other sources).

Submission of Proposal

Interested educational institutions in small states and LDCs of the Commonwealth may submit proposal by November 30, 2022 (5pm, PST) via email at info@col.org indicating **ODeL Project** in the subject line.

Timelines

- Announcement: October 26, 2022
- Proposal Due: November 30, 2022
- Shortlisting of partners: December 15, 2022
- Project begins: January/February 2023.



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Annex-1

IT Infrastructure Assessment Checklist at

	Question	Response description
1	<p>IT Infrastructure</p> <p>Briefly describe your organisation IT Infrastructure</p> <p>Do you host any of your systems in the clouds and/or on premise?</p> <p>What are the current issues with your IT infrastructure (if any)?</p>	
2	<p>Online teaching and learning</p> <p>How online teaching and learning is currently offered at your institution?</p> <p>Does your institution have a Learning Management System (LMS)?</p> <p>What are the current issues with your online teaching and learning (if any)?</p>	
3	<p>Backup</p> <p>Do you have a Backup System especially for both systems and end-users' data? Please describe how they are presently performed.</p> <p>What are the current issues with your backups (if any)?</p>	

4	<p>Disaster Recovery</p> <p>Do you have a Disaster Recovery system in place? If yes, please briefly describe.</p> <p>What are the current issues with your disaster recovery (if any)?</p>	
5	<p>Internet Access</p> <p>Current Internet connection status.</p> <p>How are the Internet connections configured? Is it a dedicated line or using other configurations?</p> <p>What is the maximum speed of your Internet connection?</p> <p>What are your current issues with Internet access (if any)?</p>	
6	<p>Content Digitization</p> <p>Do you have a dedicated center/unit that manages and produces e-contents for teaching & learning?</p> <p>Please describe how the instructional contents are digitized.</p> <p>What are the current constraints on content digitization (if any)?</p>	
7	<p>Green Technology</p> <p>Does your institution have any green technology in place? If yes, please elaborate.</p>	