Building a Trusted Learning Environment Application Cohort Program in Your State

Working your way through the Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) Program can be a complex undertaking, but you don't have to go it alone. Across the country, districts are partnering in cohorts across their state to share their expertise and work with each other through the TLE application process.

Benefits of Working with a Cohort:
TLE Seal application cohorts of five or more districts will receive the following benefits:

Access to a TLE Seal Mentor:
Upon request, we will connect you with a TLE Seal recipient who will provide you with peer support and guidance on developing policies, implementing procedures and gathering materials to support your application.

Access to the TLE Seal Policy Library:
We will provide you with access to a library of policies and processes that TLE Seal recipients have agreed to share with applicants. These can inspire the development of your own policies and practices to improve your data governance program and support the TLE practice items.

If you're interested in building a TLE Application Cohort in your state, here are some tools for getting started.

Find a Supporting Organization:
Most TLE Application Cohorts work best when organized in partnership with a supporting organization, such as your state CoSN Chapter or state technology commission. While not mandatory, a supporting organization can help you connect with and generate interest from other districts, keep the cohort organized and stay up-to-date on the latest resources from CoSN.

Engage with Districts Across the State:

Whether or not you work with a supporting organization, you will want to promote your plans to bring together interested districts to your TLE Application cohort program. You can do this by:

- Connecting with colleagues in other school systems;
- Asking your CoSN chapter head to help you spread the word;
- Networking about it at the CoSN Annual Conference; or
- Promoting via the CoSN Network Privacy Community to gather interested stakeholders.

> *Tip: Events focused on student data privacy are often a great way to gauge interest and build momentum for launching a TLE Application Cohort.

Lay the Groundwork:

Before you launch your cohort, confirm how many districts from your state will be participating, and establish the lead contact for each district. Once that's determined, you'll need to establish a framework for the project and your joint effort.

Here is a **sample framework** based on current TLE Application Cohorts:

Time Commitment: 4 hours per month

Program Length: 8 months

Month 1:

- ❏ Survey participants to gauge their level of confidence and competence in each of the five TLE Practice Areas (Leadership, Business, Data Security, Classroom and Professional Development). Leverage the results of the survey to identify potential leaders in each practice area or to determine where you will really need to work together, when there is no natural leader.

- ❏ Decide which practice items you will work on each month. For example, since there is a good deal of professional development delivered in September, you may choose to wait until January to work on the professional development practice item, when the district teams that coordinate PD have time to reflect on creating new training.

Month 2:

❑ Set up working groups for each of the 5 practice items. Each group should be tasked with coming up with a variety of policies, processes and examples of evidence for each item within their assigned practice area. Determine a deadline for materials.

❑ Find a dedicated web space or file-sharing application to share materials and updates with participants throughout the course of the program.

❑ Identify additional resources, in the form of policies, guest speakers and other guidance applicable to each practice area and distribute to participants.

❑ Set up a regular day and time for a monthly cohort check-in call or meeting to stay on track.

Months 3-7:

❑ Hold a monthly call or meeting to check in and share committee work from one practice area. The call or meeting could be led by district representatives who are identified as leaders in this practice. Invite your TLE peer mentor to participate in the discussion.

Month 8:

Now that your cohort has worked together for the past seven months, this is the month to see if you are prepared to apply for the Seal. You should hold your regular monthly call or meeting to share and discuss each participant's readiness to apply or their roadmap to have the final application completed. Invite your TLE peer mentor to participate in the discussion.

Review and Repeat:

Some of your cohort members will have applied for the Seal. Now's the time to celebrate those who have earned their TLE Seal! In addition, these members will be in a terrific position to return to the cohort and serve as subject matter leaders for others. ,

Still others will be and also support those who may have applied but haven't made it yet. They'll have received CoSN feedback and a benchmarking report, and will be working with the cohort to make adjustments in some specific areas so that they may successfully reapply.
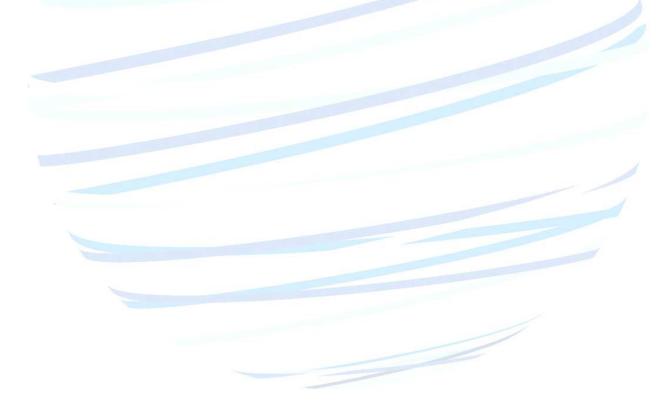
We encourage all participants to come back each year to continue working on your TLE practices or to serve as subject matter leaders for the cohort in the following year.

Pro Tips:
As you establish the framework for your cohort, also determine who will be tasked with keeping the group organized, on track and on schedule. This may be the individual who spearheaded putting the group together, or another leader may emerge or volunteer during the planning. Either way, be sure that someone is in charge of managing the administration of the group, which may include tasks such as scheduling the meetings, setting the agendas and ensuring that districts remain engaged and are making progress against assigned tasks.

Stay in Touch!
Stay connected with your TLE cohort peers and with CoSN. The more we know about your work, the better we can support you. Together, we can celebrate your efforts and be sure you have the resources you need to be successful.