

Montana is concerned about the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of its children. The disruption to normal school operation, the distancing of relationships between teachers and students, and the demand placed on parents during school closures have weighed heavily on state education leaders. The clear message from the education community, parents, and business leaders is that better access to online and remote learning is key to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The goals of this application are to expand the capacity of the Montana Digital Academy (MTDA) and expand professional development in online learning for K-12 teachers through the Office of Public Instruction Teacher Learning Hub (Hub). The outcomes of the project are 1) an extensive expansion of MTDA course offerings for public and non-public school students in middle school and high school, particularly for students in rural, isolated, and reservation communities, and 2) expand equitable access for all educators to improve their practice in remote and online learning environments, particularly for pre-kindergarten through elementary teachers. Through expanded access to online courses and teachers who can deliver effective remote learning, Montana's children will be better equipped to face the challenges and opportunities ahead.

State policy windows are open, demand for increased access to online courses and professional development is clear, and opportunity to innovate delivery models for K-12 education puts Montana in a unique position to be a leader in these efforts. Montana's established MTDA and Hub programs only require the funding necessary to move our students and state forward in rethinking past models for delivery of teaching and learning.