

THE SMART APPLICANT'S WORKBOOK

for the 2014
ASTD BEST Award

Application Workbook with Question-By-Question Guidance from
the Writer of the #1- and #2-Ranked ASTD BEST Submissions

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This document is not the official application. Do NOT submit it.

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About this Document

The **Smart Applicant's Workbook for the ASTD BEST Award** is designed to save you time and headaches, and help you present your learning initiatives in the best possible light. The workbook features:

- All 2014 questions ([background information form](#) and [application](#)).
- **Section-by-section insights** and recommendations on bringing out your learning organization's strengths.
- **Response examples**—from top 5 winning submissions.

Please note:

- This document intentionally does not *look* identical to the official 2014 application. This is to help ensure no one accidentally submits the wrong document. The *questions* are identical.
- Because this is not the official 2014 ASTD BEST application, **DO NOT submit it.**

What to look for:

- *My comments are in orange and italics.*
- **Does your enterprise operate in more than one country?** is an example of a new question or new section of an existing question; all such new content is highlighted in yellow.
- ~~Describe how learning strategy is determined.~~ is an example of a question or wording within a question deleted on this year's application. (Note: Not all deleted questions appear in this document.)
- I will occasionally draw your attention to ASTD instructions by underlining them in orange.

What to do:

1. Read through this Workbook and the **Smart Applicant's Guide to the ASTD BEST Award** (and note the tips and instructions there).
2. Register at the [online application](#) site and familiarize yourself with the site.
3. Compose and compile your responses here, including the three allowed graphics.
4. Enter the relevant data from the [background information form](#) into the [online application](#).
5. Copy remaining responses and graphics into the official Word doc [application](#).
6. Convert the Word doc into a PDF.
7. Name the PDF "BEST2014_ENTRYNumber" (you'll receive an entry number when you register).
8. Upload the PDF.
9. Complete the application, pay the fee, and breathe a sigh of relief.

*Deb Arnold, Ink. is not affiliated in any way
with the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD)
or the ASTD BEST Award.*

Financial Data – Learning *(Worksheet)*

All data must be for the entire enterprise. Estimates are acceptable. See notes below.

Please enter all financial information in USD \$.

1. Enterprise's total direct expenditure on learning and development	\$
2. Enterprise's indirect expenditure on learning and development	\$
3. Percentage of total direct expenditure for outsourced activities	%
4. Percentage of total direct expenditure for tuition reimbursement/educational assistance	%
5. Direct expenditure / Full time employee (Divide question 1 by the # of FTEs reported above). <i>This question is new on the application, but the information it provides is not. ASTD calculated it in the past; now they're asking you to do the math.</i>	\$

ASTD uses these five data points to weigh the extent to which the enterprise has used its training and development investment to the best advantage. These do not impact ranking.

Total direct expenditure

Includes

- Learning and development staff salaries (gross wages without benefits or employer-paid taxes)
- Travel costs for learning and development staff
- Administrative costs
- Non-salary development costs
- Non-salary delivery costs (classroom facilities, online infrastructure, social and/or mobile technology tools, etc.)
- Outsourced activities
- Tuition reimbursements

Does not include

- Learners' travel expenses
- Costs of participants' conference attendance, fees, and travel
- Cost of lost work time while engaged in learning activities

Indirect expenditure *See explanation on next page.*

Includes

- Learner travel expenses
- Conference attendance, fees, travel, lodging, meals, and ground transportation
- Lost work time while engaged in learning formal activities
- ~~Internal subject matter expert time for content analysis, coaching, and knowledge sharing (not on this year's application)~~

Does not include

- Learning and development staff salaries (gross wages without benefits or employer-paid taxes)
- Travel costs for learning and development staff
- Administrative costs
- Non-salary development costs
- Non-salary delivery costs (classroom facilities, online infrastructure, social and/or mobile technology tools, etc.)
- Outsourced activities
- Tuition reimbursements

Outsourced activities

Includes

- Consultants and services
- Content development and licenses
- Workshops and training programs delivered by external providers

Does not include

- Tuition reimbursement for educational programs at educational institutions

Tuition reimbursement

Includes

- Community college courses and programs
- Universities courses and programs
- Continuing professional education or certification

Does not include

- Training courses provided by vendors and consultants

Section A: Scope and Role of the Learning Function

A quick review from the Guide before you dive in to the essays:

The folks at ASTD basically want to know two things: does the learning function impact company success, and can you prove it? Really, truly keep this in mind at all times.

What's the Theme for Section A?

In Section A, ASTD wants you to explain how your learning organization is structurally integrated into your company, via inputs like governance structure and your influence on corporate direction. Do you have a “seat” at the strategy table? To what extent do you impact business outcomes? Is learning appropriately linked with performance measures, and are they linked with business metrics? You get the picture, yes?

1. To whom does the learning function report?

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Chief Information Officer (CIO)
- Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO)
- Vice President – Human Resources
- Vice President – Talent Management
- Line Executive
- Other (please specify)

The higher up, the better.

1a. Provide a statement of endorsement from the CEO/COO for learning in the enterprise (If applicant is chosen as a BEST winner this statement may be used in write-ups about the enterprise's learning practices.) **DO NOT include the individual's name in this answer. You may refer to their title only.**

No word count is given here. I'd advise 150-250, though if your CEO feels strongly and has a lot to say, by all means, let her. Clearly, this is an opportunity to demonstrate that senior management cares about learning, is involved with learning, invests in learning and views it as integral to business success.

Note: Take heed of the highlighted instructions, added this year.

2. Does the enterprise have a senior-level officer who is a member of the executive team and has responsibility for enterprise-wide learning, knowledge management, or other human capital management functions?

- Yes
- No

3. Describe the governance of the learning function. Who determines the role and scope of the learning function? Describe how the governing body drives/supports the enterprise learning strategy **and how learning supports strategic goals. (500 words or less) *Previously question 2a***

Governance structure (or lack thereof) says a lot about how the learning function is viewed by leadership. Is the C-suite involved? To what extent are other stakeholders involved/represented? Does/do the governing body/ies help drive business strategy? Effectively advocate for learning priorities? Identify and drive efficiencies, enhancements, advancements, etc.?

Be careful here to address each aspect of this multipart question: