



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005 eLEARNING LEADERSHIP & POLICIES

Chapter Summary

Objectives

- To identify the range of possible eLearning models and current policies in place in different states as well as the implications associated with these different options and models; and
- To provide information and strategies to assist state leaders in effectively choosing, creating and/or implementing eLearning policies and programs.

Key Questions

- What are the key characteristics of different eLearning models and the policy implications associated with these different models?
- What are the key criteria or guidelines for evaluating whether to adopt an eLearning Program and for selecting which specific eLearning option to put in place?
- What are some examples of legislation and policies in place to guide eLearning efforts across and within different states and what implications does each of these kinds of policies have for implementing eLearning?
- What are the strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with implementing eLearning opportunities?

Work Group Process

During the 2004 National Leadership Institute (NLI), the eLearning Leadership and Policies Work Group worked from the shared premise that the term “eLearning” has an array of different purposes and meanings and encompasses many things—that *eLearning* can look very different when put into practice in different states and locales. Another shared premise in this work group is that effective

leadership is imperative to effective eLearning programs. An important component of effective leadership is drawing upon the successes and collective knowledge of programs at different stages of development. Members of the eLearning Leadership and Policies work group recognized that having leaders from so many states gathered to collectively discuss a common topic and build upon one another's individual experiences and expertise, was an opportunity that could not be missed. Thus, as one of its primary charges, the Leadership and Policies Work Group sought to identify the range of possible and actual eLearning models and policies in place in different states and the implications of those programs and policies. To make this a more workable task, Work Group participants began by identifying key aspects of the process a state leader must pursue when creating eLearning legislation as well as for selecting and implementing eLearning models within states. The Work Group formed subgroups around pivotal parts of this process.

One group focused on creating a matrix of key attributes associated with a range of different kinds of eLearning models, as well as potential policy implications associated with the different types of programs and options. This matrix is intended to give state leaders a common understanding of the potential eLearning models that exist. A second group focused on creating a guide to assist state leaders in identifying key issues and decision points for determining the state's role regarding eLearning. This chart provides specific issues to consider at these various decision points and lists the potential benefits associated with different choices. The third subgroup harnessed the potential of gathering representatives from so many states by creating a detailed list of the different kinds of eLearning policies and legislation currently in place in different states. This included breaking down the language and nature of these policies by the issues involved so as to provide state leaders with an easy reference guide of tangible examples when working to create legislation in their respective states. A fourth group created a step-by-step action plan to help state leaders overcome unforeseen challenges, along a wide variety of specific issues, while implementing eLearning programs within their states.

Another critical role for an eLearning leader is to be able to effectively communicate the importance of eLearning to policy-makers and the community. The work group, both as a whole and within these subgroups, also spent a great deal of time considering how to effectively "make the case" for eLearning to various audiences. Rather than creating an entire subgroup on this issue, ideas and strategies for reaching this goal are embedded within each of these tools—both explicitly with a step-by-step action plan to overcome the challenges of doing so with specific audiences and implicitly with benefits listed alongside different eLearning models throughout that provide compelling reasons for adopting such programs.

SETDA Tools Developed to Assist States

The tools developed by the Leadership and Policies Work Group are intended to provide state leaders with a guide to assist them in four key steps of the process of considering, selecting and ultimately implementing eLearning policies and programs within their

states. These tools are meant to address the key issues that arise and the essential leadership skills needed for individuals leading the efforts to create and implement eLearning opportunities for students within states.

- *Step One: Understanding the Models and Adopting a Common Language* – The Matrix of Key Attributes and Characteristics of eLearning Models outlines some of the key characteristics of different eLearning models that states either have developed or are in the process of developing and the advantages or disadvantages associated with these different models.
- *Step Two: Beginning the Conversation* – The List of Key Issues and Decision Points Involved in the Selection of eLearning Options will serve to alert state leaders and other stakeholders to the important issues that must be examined before selecting an eLearning option.
- *Step Three: Identifying Existing Legislative Options* – The Checklist of Key Legislative Issues will assist states in developing virtual learning legislation.
- *Step Four: Overcoming Barriers* – The Barrier Identification Matrix: The Building Blocks of a State eLearning Action Plan provides a set of questions to help guide state leaders to identify and overcome challenges associated with implementing eLearning programs.

Next Step

The Leadership and Policies Work Group recommends that some next steps be taken to supplement these tools and increase their utility for state leaders.

- As more state leaders develop and implement eLearning policies within their states, an important next step would be to fill in the Barrier Identification Action Plan with tangible examples of how different states have overcome the specific challenges.
- The group recommends the development of an action plan specifically targeted at helping state leaders deal with the challenges of making the case to stakeholders within their states.
- The group recommends the further development of the Key eLearning Legislative Issues Matrix to include current state examples and models for each of the policy options identified.