



NATIONAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S TOOLKIT 2005 eLEARNING LEADERSHIP & POLICIES

Step Two: Beginning the Conversation

As the eLearning Attributes Matrix makes clear, eLearning programs can include a wide range of characteristics and draw from different models that can look and function very differently from one another – there is no absolute when determining what an eLearning program must look like. Whether starting a brand new eLearning program within a state or refining a program that has existed for several years, state leaders constantly have to assess the eLearning issues with which the state is grappling and make informed decisions about how to proceed. Another subgroup of the eLearning Leadership and Policies work group wanted to provide leaders with a starting point for discussion when making these decisions and recommendations. Their work is intended as that – a beginning review of the issues a state leader must consider and some of the key decision points in the process – to assess a state’s capacity and need for eLearning programs. In sum, this is meant to help state leaders begin the process of identifying which eLearning programs might be appropriate for his/her respective state.

In choosing *which* type of eLearning model to adopt and implement, a state leader must make many key decisions about which of these different attributes and characteristics to include or exclude or which models to use. A subgroup of the eLearning Leadership and Policies Work Group created the Decision Points for State Leaders chart to further assist state leaders in identifying these key issues and decision points for determining the nature and scope of the particular state’s role regarding eLearning. This chart provides specific issues to consider at these various decision points and lists the potential benefits and policy implications associated with different choices. It can be used by state leaders to remind them of the issues they should consider before selecting an e-Learning approach. The group acknowledged that the particular context of the state—e.g. current policies regarding both traditional schools and eLearning, established funding formulas, historically accepted roles for particular levels of government—plays a large role in making these decisions. The information in the chart is, therefore, purposefully general and makes no recommendation regarding preference for one choice over another. This Decision Points tool, rather than being a comprehensive checklist, should serve as a starting point for discussion about important aspects to consider when choosing and implementing an eLearning model.

**Guide for Determining the role of the state in elearning:
Decision points for state leaders**

Beginning the Conversation	Current Reality:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess need • Determine ad hoc implementation across the state • Identify state resources • Assess political will and other influencing factors across state
Decision Points:	Issues and Options:
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation stipulating funding source • Student eligibility for funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On-site only ○ Any time, anywhere • Funding Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Full-Time Equivalent Model ○ Successful course completion ○ Charge back to LEAs (Local Educational Agencies) • Create new model for eLearning
Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses evaluated and approved by state • Accountability for quality is provided through student results from a statewide assessment or a state recognized course assessment • Quality assurance is predetermined locally by applying the state's criteria for online courses • Course meets a state accepted standard of quality • Courses not evaluated
Governance structure	<p>A. Centralized approach; or B. Decentralized approach</p>

A. Centralized Approach	B. Decentralized Approach
<p>Definition: State-directed through legislation and policy</p> <p>Models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Developed Courses • State Brokers Courses • Hybrid - State Developed/Brokered Courses • State as Clearing House <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Courses Evaluated ○ Courses not evaluated 	<p>Definition: Locally-directed by school district/local school board</p>
<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of quality and administration rests with one entity, the state • Consistency of program • More centralized accountability for student performance • Facilitates Data Collection • Easier assurance of equitable access for all students throughout state • Interoperability • Allows student mobility 	<p>Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State funding not required • Local buy-in to program • Ability to respond to and address local needs • Supports innovative programs

Considerations

- Single Funding Source
- Need for Legislation
- Development of Policies and Rules
- Need for Resources
 - Staffing
 - Infrastructure
- Need for Policies Regarding Issuing Credits

Considerations:

- Potentially inconsistent programs and offerings across state
- Differentiated data collection across districts
- Multiple management systems within the state
- Need for policies determining portability of both course work and credits across districts within states
- Local funding
- Variations in professional development for online faculty across districts within the state
- Differentiated online learning opportunities for students across districts within the state