



STATE LEADERS OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION Draft Operations Guide-1/11/2024

Mission (Compiled from 2019, 2021 and 2022 documents)

State Leaders in Assistive Technology in Education (SLATE) is a professional network of leaders of state, regional provincial and national Assistive Technology (AT) programs that school districts' use of AT for students with disabilities. SLATE's mission is to provide opportunities for networking and professional development among state-level AT program leaders in preschool and K-12 educational environments. The primary goal is to network and share ideas. In virtual meetings we share innovative ideas, discuss issues common to state, regional and provincial AT programs, and act as a professional learning community for our members.

SLATE explores current and emerging issues about the use of assistive technology and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Preschool and K-12 schools. In monthly meetings, we learn about activities of member programs, share information about new initiatives, hear from speakers from other national, state and regional groups. SLATE participants work together to promote common understanding and use of innovative strategies for AT services that support diverse AT local educational agency (LEA) programs' ability to enhance educational participation and achievement of students with disabilities.

Benefits of SLATE participation to AT programs include:

- Increased collaboration, networking, and resource sharing with other state-level Assistive Technology programs
- A monthly forum where programs can ask questions and receive suggestions about problems common to state-level AT initiatives.
- Materials and resource sharing with other states.
- Participation in SLATE-sponsored focus groups such as the MTSS Focus Group and the State ATIA Learning Center Contracts group.

SLATE Operations and Guidelines

LOGISTICS

- The SLATE Facilitator manages a SLATE mailing list and shares it in the [SLATE folder \(Google Drive\)](#). SLATE participation is limited to those whose programs support multiple school districts/agencies that provide AT devices and services. No persons are added to the mail list without their specific request.
- Monthly meetings last 1.5 hours. A list of meeting dates and times for the school year is provided annually to everyone on the mailing list.
- In general, meetings are recorded, and the recording, handouts and other meeting resources are stored in the cloud and shared with the mailing list. On occasion, at the request of the presenter or the membership, no recording is made.

- SLATE Meetings are virtual and use a video conferencing platform. (Zoom). Captions are provided through the videoconferencing platform for all meetings and recordings.
- As of January, 2024, the SLATE Advisory Committee has decided that the group does not need a web presence.

SLATE COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER AGENCY GROUPS

Letters of Support

SLATE maintains a policy that the group do not write letters of support for grants or other activities. SLATE is a coalition of independent voices with cross interests and purposes. SLATE is loosely knit and cannot represent all the states who attend the meetings. We function as a community but not necessarily with a common voice that would allow us to write support letters, etc.. Because of this, our structure does not allow for direct SLATE support for grants.

Informational Emails from Other Groups

Other agencies and groups occasionally request that their information be distributed to SLATE members. SLATE does not maintain a mailing list for this purpose. SLATE emails are limited to one meeting announcement and one follow-up email each month. Groups or individuals that want to share information with SLATE members are invited to attend a monthly SLATE meeting as a guest to share their announcement. Alternatively, announcements may be included in the SLATE meeting follow-up email.

SLATE Participation with Other Groups-Process for future requests

Some groups request SLATE representation or participation during their meetings or specific activities (e.g., ASES(CCSO), AT3/ED PAL Project, ATIA Learning Center). When this happens, the SLATE Facilitator will contact the advisors/sponsors to describe the request and type of collaboration requested. If approved by the advisors/sponsors, liaison(s) will be recruited from SLATE participants based on the nature of the activity and the interest of individual state programs.

VENDOR PARTICIPATION WITH SLATE

Funds for most SLATE member programs are allocated through state dollars. Most states have very clear guidelines that require employees and programs to avoid the appearance of impropriety or conflict of interest. Most state representatives are not allowed to accept benefits, promotions or product samples. Any benefit offered exclusively to a particular group (like state leaders of AT programs) is a concern. For this reason, the SLATE collaborative does not accept any promotions from vendors.

Vendor Information Shared in Meetings

On occasion, vendors are invited to participate in SLATE Monthly meetings. This happens when the vendor can contribute to a topic which applies to all members. As a general rule, several vendors may be invited to the same meeting in order to contribute to the conversation. An example of such a topic was accommodations in high stakes state assessments. In this meeting each vendor described the products that they had which could be used to make state

assessments more accessible. These presentations did not include sales information but focused on features.

SLATE SPONSORSHIP

SLATE sponsors are recruited annually beginning in March. Specific topics for action and investigation are chosen based on priorities determined by SLATE Sponsors and the general membership. Leaders and invited speakers share information and resources and work together in focus groups when the need arises.

SLATE Sponsorship Benefits:

SLATE is guided by sponsors who determine the network's direction and provide guidance to the contracted facilitator when questions arise. Sponsors meet quarterly to review completed activities and plan for future initiatives. SLATE sponsors contribute funds for project maintenance and develop a statement of work for the fiscal agent and the contracted facilitator. Benefits to the sponsoring agencies include:

1. The ability to help guide SLATE's direction, program, topics and formation of working groups in ways that directly address the needs and interests of the sponsor's program.
2. Influence at a national level in guiding direction of accessible technology and AT services through direct sponsor contact and collaboration with other related national organizations. Examples include:
 - Assessment, Standards, and Education for Students with Disabilities (ASES)
 - Collaborative, Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits (ATOB) Journal
 - State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)
 - National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE).
 - Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP) and;
 - Invitations to provide direct feedback about national and state AT needs to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) when requested.
3. Increased exposure and recognition of the sponsor's AT program and national acknowledgement of the sponsor's AT leadership
 - State's AT program logo posted with the SLATE logo in presentations and other print materials.
 - Acknowledgement of sponsorship during SLATE meetings and virtual events
 - Acknowledgement of sponsorship during SLATE in-person events at conferences and national meetings

The list of SLATE sponsors changes annually. In order to share leadership and ensure that every state program is equally represented, new sponsors are invited beginning in March. Sponsors are recruited from the membership until there is a commitment of funds equal to the amount needed as determined by the current year's sponsors.

Typical sponsorship contributions range from \$1000-\$5000/year and are determined by the sponsor agency. Sponsoring agencies complete an agreement with the *Nebraska AT Partnership* which acts as the fiscal agent for revenue and the contract with the SLATE facilitator. A statement of work and contract with the facilitator are developed by the *Nebraska AT Partnership*. All sponsorship funds are expended within the agency's fiscal year. No carry-over is allowed, and funds do no accrue.

Facilitator Contract Information

The fiscal agent (Nebraska DOE) develops a single contract with the SLATE facilitator.

For the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year the Statement of work includes:

1. Host and facilitate 10 monthly SLATE sessions
2. 2 special sessions (ATIA +1)
3. Quarterly advisory committee meetings (4 @ 2hours/meeting)

Contract with Facilitator for 2023-2024 School Year=12 Meetings @ \$725/meeting to include all SLATE activities. Contract with Gayl Bowser for 2023-2024. Future facilitator to be determined by advisors.

Notes from our last meeting

- We hope to keep the same sponsorship structure and add state new sponsors next year.
- Brian recommended that we start the process of recruiting sponsors for next year in March. When we do that we will give everyone timelines for contracting as well as information about the role/benefits of sponsorship. This should be done even if a state's contract has to wait until a new fiscal year.
- We addressed the topic of sponsorships for portions of meetings. While sponsorship of a full meeting is most desirable, Brian recommended that sponsors not fund less than half of a meeting. This is to reduce the number of contracts required. A question was raised about what partial sponsorship means. We did not come to any decisions about this.
- It was noted that some programs have asked for a membership option rather than sponsorship of a full meeting. It was decided that, at this time, we would like to keep sponsorship of individual meetings rather than a membership fee. The question will be addressed at a future planning meeting.