

NITC Education Council Digital Education landscape project charter

As institutions (primary, secondary, and post-secondary) harness the potential of technology to enhance teaching and learning, students across the continuum must be prepared at multiple levels to engage successfully in a digital academic environment. This initiative will take a comprehensive multi-state, multi-institution approach to identifying the technical challenges students across the continuum face in the transition from primary to secondary to post-secondary education. Additionally, the initiative will attempt to help institutions address the daunting challenges of digital learning tool installation, integration, and interoperability.

Primary objectives of the project:

- Conduct a collaborative national research project to identify existing infrastructure and pedagogical efforts in primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions.
- Identify key challenges for transitioning students and conduct an environmental scan to identify successful approaches to mitigate those challenges.
- Partner with other organizations to create a guide for effective practices in the use of flexible learning technologies.
- Utilize collaborative procurement to encourage vendors to implement data exchange standards in their products and services.
- Work with partners, both in the higher education community and the vendor community to create a cohesive, evolving, long-term vision for digital learning environments.

Tactical approaches:

- Fostering a digital learning environment (DLE) in which solution components (such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), Student Information Systems (SIS), etc.) are interchangeable within the environment and easily interoperable with other components
- Utilize this architecture to facilitate easier and more meaningful data aggregation within institutions and between institutions within states
- Provide a vetted, competitively bid set of solutions for each component, differentiated by features and fit to institutional size and complexity
- Use large scale competitive bidding processes to:
 - Encouraging the vendor community to cooperate on data exchange between components and compete on innovation within components
 - Encouraging the vendor community to adopt current security standards
 - Encouraging the vendor community to adopt current accessibility standards

We hope to accomplish this by:

- Stage 1 - Survey
 - Work with states who have already surveyed their DLE, both to understand their landscape and design a survey instrument which would yield comparable data from states which have not yet surveyed their institutions
 - Survey Nebraska (and other non-surveyed partner state) institutions
- Stage 2 - Study data
 - Identify segments of the DLE (i.e. Learning Management Systems, Learning Object Repositories) in the primary, secondary, and post-secondary realms and arrive at consistent definitions and terminology for those segments across the realms

- Identify existing standards for data exchange between those segments and between realms (i.e. IMS, EdFI, PescXML)
- Identify the solution providers in each segment
- Stage 3 – Use procurement to shape the DLE environment
 - Utilize procurement activities sponsored through the Midwestern Higher Education Compact to influence the market to:
 - comply with data standards that exist, participate transparently with education entities both in the development of missing standards and in the long term evolution of standards
 - Provide value add and scalability benefits within the products to ensure that all institutions have a selection of solutions in each segment from which to choose

Players: Who needs to be at the table:

- Nebraska Information Technology Commission Education Council
 - Sponsor of the activity within Nebraska
 - Suggested representatives - Mary Niemiec, Gary Needham, Mike Carpenter, John Dunning
- Nebraska Department of Education
 - Key stakeholder within Nebraska
 - Provider of project management resources
 - Suggested representative – Matt Blomstedt or Dean Folkers
- Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC)
 - Potential sponsor of procurement activities if the project progresses
 - Provider of collaboration platform
 - Suggested representative – Ken Ries and/or Jennifer Dahlquist
- EDUCAUSE
 - ELI – provides guidance on DLE and interface with IMS Global
 - Suggested representative – Susan Grajek and/or Malcolm Brown
- State Partners
 - Indiana
 - extensive experience and data with the transitional phase of the DLE lifecycle (transcripts)
 - Suggested representative – Ken Sauer or Tari Lambert
 - Others?