

# Interim NSDL Governance Model

Adopted 12/4/2001

## 1. Purpose

The organizational structure defined here provides a means to capture and coordinate the interests of the entire NSDL across its many areas of expertise and responsibility. The purpose is to provide an operational environment in which to consolidate actions and inform and reach group decisions whenever possible to assure efficient use of our combined resources. This document is intended to serve that purpose for approximately a year, during which time NSDL (the National Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technical Education Digital Library) will be an unincorporated entity--without trustees, bylaws, or other legally binding governance mechanisms. The model reflects a vision of NSDL as a community-based endeavor, built through cooperative efforts by many players, while simultaneously recognizing the special roles of both the National Science Foundation (NSF) as the primary source of NSDL funding and the Core Integration awardees as responsible for integration of the NSDL projects. Therefore the governance model articulated herein is designed to ensure that NSDL is of value across the Science, Mathematics, Engineering, and Technical Education (SMETE) community and to:

- Create a public sphere of influence that promotes partnering and shared vision
- Establish a framework for accountability that also accommodates course corrections
- Foster communications among stakeholders, including end-user feedback
- Balance differing interests, with sensitivity to minority perspectives
- Provide checks and balances in formulating policy and decision making
- Reflect the special roles and commitments of NSF awardees

The policy committee is charged with implementing a stable community-based governance system for the NSDL.

## 2. Levels of Advice and Decisions

To achieve its purpose, the NSDL governance model is built around committees, subcommittees, taskforces, and interest groups that provide several domains of guidance. In decreasing order of authority (and formality), the advisory entities in this model are:

- A Full Assembly (composed of one Representative from each project)
- A Policy Committee (drawing its charter from action of the Assembly)
- Topical Standing Committees: (drawing their charters from actions of the Policy Committee)
- Subcommittees, Taskforces, etc. (chartered by one of the Committees)
- Spontaneous Interest Groups (self-forming and informal)

The advice, policies and decisions generated by these groups will reflect those of the NSDL and its members and can be acted on by the NSF and the many organizations and teams that are collaborating to build the NSDL. Of particular significance in the model is the role of these groups in communicating with the Core Integration (CI) team, which has been assigned responsibility by NSF for helping create a coherent, operational, and effective library in collaboration with other NSDL awardees and contributors. In addition, NSF will charter a

National Visiting Committee to provide accountability and high level feedback on the CI project and its relationship to the NSDL program as a whole. The following table summarizes the key elements of the governance model, organized by the types of guidance and decisions that pertain:

<b>Entity</b>	<b>Area of Decision Making and Guidance</b>	<b>Composition</b>
National Visiting Committee	Accountability and top level strategy and feedback (to NSF and the CI team)	NSF appointed advisory group
Full Assembly	Adopts the governance model, elects the Policy Committee, and responds to polls when appropriate	One representative from each project (PI or designee)
Policy Committee	Empowered to act on behalf of the Assembly, articulating policies, strategies, and priorities	Elected by the Assembly from a slate prepared by a Nominating Committee
Topical Standing Committees	Each reports to the Policy Committee, which charters it to reflect a sub-domain of responsibility	Defined by the Policy Committee
Subcommittees & Taskforces	Ad hoc groups may be chartered to address specialized needs of the NSDL such as a long-term governance, incorporation, and communications. Each reports to a specified committee	Defined by Policy or Standing Committees as needed
Spontaneous Interest Groups	Address ad hoc common interests from individual project members	Composed of individuals within and beyond the NSDL projects as appropriate
Project-specific	Operations, management, and budgets	Individual awardees

### **3. Advisory Structure**

The natures of specific governance model components are spelled out in the subsections below.

#### **3.1. National Visiting Committee**

*Charter:* Set by NSF.

*Authority:* Advise NSF on top-level decisions and strategies pertaining primarily to the CI team. Advocates NSDL interests to the larger community. Reviews CI-community governance relationships.

*Members:* Appointed by NSF, in consultation with the CI team.

#### **3.2. Full Assembly**

*Charter:* A suggested charter is presented in this document to be amended and adopted by community process during the December 2001 meeting of NSF grantees.

*Authority:* The Assembly is the highest authority in the Community Governance structure for NSDL. It elects the Policy Committee by majority vote and responds to polls when appropriate. Any project Representative can ask for a poll to determine a sense of the assembly on a particular issue by obtaining a petition signed by 15 other Representatives and presenting it to the Policy Committee.

*Members:* One Representative from each project (normally the PI). Projects include those selected by NSF for NSDL funding and other projects admitted by vote of the Assembly. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy Committee also serve these roles for the Assembly.

*Nominating Committee:* To select of the Policy Committee nominees, as discussed below, a Nominating Committee comprises five individuals as follows: the chair of the current NSDL Coordinating Committee (Cathy Manduca); the lead PI on the CI team (Dave Fulker); and three additional community members selected by the Coordinating Committee (before December).

### **3.3. Policy Committee**

*Charter:* Set by the Assembly. Specifically, this document is to be amended and adopted by the Assembly on December 2-4, 2001.

*Authority:* Advise the CI team, other NSF grantees, and NSF on operational strategies, policies and implementation priorities. Among these policies are ones that define the NSDL "community" and determine any constraints on NSDL usage and contents that are necessary to ensure that its mission is fulfilled. The Policy Committee acts on behalf of the Assembly to work with NSF and the CI team in coordinating the activities of the Standing Committees, Subcommittees, Taskforces, etc., and individual projects.

*Members:* Membership is designed to represent the NSDL community as a whole, with a combination of voting and non-voting members, as follows

- (Voting) Ten members, including the Chair and Vice Chair, elected by the Assembly from a slate prepared as described below.
- (Non-voting) The PIs from the CI Team (Fulker, Arms, and Wittenberg).
- (Non-voting) Representatives of stakeholder agencies, as determined by NSF

The nominee slate is prepared as follows:

- Six nominees will be selected by the Workgroups listed below (one nominee each) during the December 2-4 meeting. These individuals are to be viewed as at-large members of the Policy Committee, *not* representatives of the Workgroups which nominate them.
  - Community/Education
  - Collections
  - Evaluation
  - IP/Sustainability
  - Services
  - Standards/Metadata.
- Soon after December 4th, the Nominating Committee will select four additional nominees, with an eye toward balance and diversity. In specific the committee will strive for a slate of individuals broadly representative of the entire NSDL that includes diversity of content or discipline, project type and size, geographic distribution, institution or audience type, gender and ethnic background. This committee should include representatives from new and established projects. Suggestions from the community will be sought.
- .

The slate will be elected by electronic vote prior to year's end.

Chair and Vice-chair (of committee and assembly) selected by policy committee

### **3.4. Topical Standing Committees**

Titles, charters, and memberships to be determined by the Policy Committee. Among these, a Users Standing Committee will be established to provide a voice for all NSDL patrons.

### **3.5. Subcommittees, Taskforces, etc.**

*Charter:* Title, charter and Chair determined by Committees as needed.

*Authority:* To develop recommendations in a particular task area and advise the Committees. Conduct operational agenda within specific task area. Seek input and enhance communication when tasks and policies have potential impact in other areas.

*Members:* Membership determined by self-selection by any member of the NSDL community or as recruited by the Chair or chartering Committee.

### **3.6. Spontaneous Interest Groups**

*Charter:* Set by a community member who initiates a listserv in a specified area of interest.

*Authority:* To conduct dialogue pertinent to the specified area of interest and to seek Policy Committee action on well-debated recommendations that emerge, including the creation of new, formally chartered Committees, Subcommittees, or Taskforces.

*Members:* Self selected by listserv participation.

The following cases are provided to show examples of the processes that would be involved in Community Governance of the NSDL:

#### **4.1 Illustrative Scenario**

- Potential contributors experience the need for a new NSDL interface option.
- The CI team is approached directly and asked if the new option is possible.
- The CI team indicates that implementation would require choices that might impact other members of the community and should be brought to the Services Standing Committee for consideration.
- The Services Standing Committee, in discussion with CI team, might on its own authority agree that the proposal is desirable, feasible, affordable, and consistent with the (previously agreed) NSDL architecture.
- The implementation recommendation is then reported for review to the Policy Committee with an analysis of its expected impact on other NSDL matters.
- The Policy Committee may deem it appropriate to get consultation of other Topical Standing Committees before accepting the decision and ask the Chair of those Standing Committees to report back on this.
- The Policy Committee might after consultation with affected parties allow the decision to stand or on its own authority it might ask for endorsement of the decision from the Full Assembly.
- If the Policy Committee determines not to ask for a decision from the Full Assembly, any project Representative can ask for a decision from the Full Assembly by obtaining a petition signed by fifteen other Representatives and presenting it to the Policy Committee.

#### **4.2 Other Test Case Policies or Decisions Requiring Similar Process**

- Policies on intellectual property and business models
- Selection of metadata standards

- Target areas for new NSDL projects in future years
- Quality standards on all official NSDL collections

Additional recommendations put forward at time of adoption:

- Future governance models should provide stronger mechanisms for community selection of policy committee (competition between multiple slates, multiple nominees, etc.)
- Mechanism be implemented immediately for incorporating non-NSDL funded projects.
- User committee include a representative addressing access for disabled persons.
- Attention be paid by policy committee to issues of project sustainability
- Policy committee take responsibility for orienting new members