

Regional Group Coordinators Guide



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Regional Group Coordinators Guide Committee Members 2006

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General Overview

This guide offers basic information for the development and practices of TxDLA Regional Groups and may be used as a guide for Regional Group Coordinators (Coordinators). The TxDLA Bylaws related to Regional Groups are included at the back of this guide for reference. Please read the Bylaws for a complete understanding of the purpose, function, and operation of TxDLA Regional Groups.

Regional Groups originated as a way to bring the distance learning communities together from a more local perspective in Texas. At the time these groups were originated, TxDLA was a very young association still establishing its presence in and becoming recognized for its annual conference. Marci Powell, a then Board member and now one of TxDLA's Past-Presidents, led the idea and effort to designate Regional Groups in Texas for the purpose of offering local networking opportunities among colleagues who worked within a geographic region that would lend itself to day trip travel for meetings held in different members' work places.

It is recommended that Regional Groups meet four to six times per year. Some groups have been known to not only have official meetings with formal agenda, but other informal activities such as Back-to-School Mixers and/or holiday parties. Although official meetings are typically hosted by members at their places of employment, it is recommended that other social activities be scheduled at a geographically central location in order to offer convenience and encourage higher attendance during non-working hours.

Groups are encouraged to use the meeting formats that best serve their needs. Suggested formats include face-to-face and/or distance learning technologies such as interactive videoconferencing. Meetings might focus on a single topic of interest or multiple topics. Regional Groups might want to invite guest speakers or colleagues from their areas to present. Many times the hosting party might offer to present and/or provide tours of their own facilities.

Regional Groups are encouraged to operate in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere to allow opportunities to share successes, find solutions for common and uncommon problems, and network with colleagues.

TxDLA has always promoted fun so participation in Regional Groups is encouraged to take a fun approach too.

Regional Groups do not charge membership dues and one does not have to be a TxDLA member to attend group functions. The Regional Group Development Chair will work with the Coordinators to find no-cost or low-cost ways of managing the groups when assistance is needed. In-kind support from Group members is encouraged. For instance, group members might rotate hosting responsibilities or offer the use of videoconferencing rooms to support meetings.

The next sections of this guide are intended to offer further detail about important areas of responsibility held by Coordinators. Regional Group Governance, Funding, Recruitment, Communications, Examples, and Regional Group Bylaws are included for informational purposes and future reference.

Governance

Structure

Each Regional Group shall designate one or two coordinators and a steering committee to plan and organize the group's activities. Each Coordinator automatically becomes a member of the Regional Group Development Committee and meets periodically with the Board-appointed Chair. It is the responsibility of the Coordinators to report their individual group's activities to the Regional Group Development Chair, who prepares a summary of statewide Regional Group activities and reports to the TxDLA Board at its quarterly meetings.

Election Process

TxDLA's bylaws govern the Regional Group Coordinator election process as follows:

Each Regional Group will appoint, by majority vote, one or more coordinators to plan and organize the group's development and activities. Coordinators, who must be members in good standing of TxDLA, are generally appointed for a two-year term with review and reaffirmation done each year by a majority vote of their respective Regional Group members. The Coordinators serve as ex officio voting members of the Regional Group Development Committee, which is described in Article VIII of the Bylaws.

The annual conference holds a timeslot for Regional Group meetings. It has become a traditional practice to utilize this time to hold elections or reaffirm Coordinators at that time.

Resources and Benefits

TxDLA Regional Groups support distance education and implement TxDLA's goals, specified in Article II of the Bylaws. TxDLA provides the resources necessary to meet the needs of its members at all stages of distance learning development, at any level of activity, and through a variety of methods.

Resources

TxDLA offers a wealth of resources to its members such as:

- Quick access to past newsletters and Public Policy Committee's work
- Regularly communicated employment opportunities
- Collective Voice
- Information Exchange
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Leadership Opportunities
- Annual Conference
- eNewsletter
- Regional Group Networking
- Funding Opportunities

Speakers

Regional Groups contain a wide resource of speakers within their membership. Many times, hosting organizations will present on their operations and give tours of their facilities. Additional speakers might be invited in from external resources including industry representation for new products, non profit activities, and others.

Funding

Internal Funding

TxDLA's annual operating budget sometimes allows funding for Regional Groups to be applied toward their meeting expenses (e.g. meals). This funding is contingent upon the financial status of TxDLA and the current year's budget. The President and Manager have this information with instructions for processing payment and/or reimbursement.

External Funding

Groups are encouraged to pursue monetary and in-kind support through:

- Industry - Regional Groups may seek monetary support for things such as breaks and/or meals at quarterly meetings. Sometimes this might be done in exchange for a brief presentation or 'commercial' from the sponsor who contributed funding.
- Hosting Organizations - Whoever contributes the hosting site for meetings might also cover expenses for meals, meeting handouts, and/or other related items. In the event that the hosting organization's budget does not allow for meal expenses, individual members might be required to pay for their meals if industry sponsorship is unavailable. If this is the case, announcements need to include this information with the amount that will be due and a method to collect payments.

Communications

Positive influence may be provided for the future of distance learning by utilizing the same technologies used for its delivery. The following means are recommended:

- Listserv - The management office maintains a list of active members, inactive members, and prospects for each Regional Group. These lists names are provided for Coordinators to use to communicate with their Regional Group members and potential members with the understanding that it is kept up-to-date by TxDLA's manager. It is the responsibility of the Coordinators to communicate any new contact information that they become aware of through acquaintances, referrals, and new meeting attendees.
- e-Newsletter – Coordinators can send out snappy announcements for upcoming meetings, publications, or other local events by submitting information to the President and/or Manager for the monthly newsletter. Regional Group events should be announced at least four to six weeks in advance for optimal attendance. Check with the President or Manager for the newsletter's scheduled circulation dates to make announcements in time.
- Website – It is recommended to search for a volunteer member who is willing to be responsible for a Regional group website. This website might reside on the TxDLA server or from an institution's own website. This is an excellent resource to the region. To view an example, see: http://www.netnet.org/ETXDLA_files/ETXDLA.htm
- Wiki/Blog- A wiki is an excellent way for committees to collaborate and communicate. Blogging is another effective way for posting ideas and opinions.

The responsibilities for communication are critical for maintaining an active, growing membership in each region. It is highly recommended to follow the structure as stated in the Bylaws and operate a Regional Group with two Co-Coordinators and a Steering Committee for maximization of regional members' satisfaction.

Recruitment and Member Benefits

Recruiting

Regional Groups are strongly recommended to have a membership drive prior to and during every meeting. Encourage visiting attendees to become members by making them aware of the benefits available to members. Things to focus on include:

- E-Newsletters
- Public policy updates and Board-approved positions
- Access to the membership database
- Awards
- Grants
- Job opportunities
- Officer elections
- Leadership opportunities
- Conferences and Workshops

Benefits

Coordinators are encouraged to emphasize the benefits offered through membership to TxDLA not only through their group meetings, but the organization as a whole. Benefits might be summarized using verbiage similar to the following:

Membership allows access to the comprehensive website (www.txdla.org), which includes a searchable online membership directory, job postings, and Regional Group activities. Use the “News at a Distance” e-newsletter to share your knowledge with your colleagues and keep updated on current events and announcements related to distance learning. As a member, you will be included in the important election process and invited to nominate candidates or possibly become a candidate yourself for leadership positions as a TxDLA Officer or Board member. TxDLA has a prestigious annual awards program and a grant competition available each year for you and/or your colleagues and employers to contend for as members. Awardees

are announced at the annual conference, an excellent event for learning and networking with colleagues who come from not only Texas, but nationally and internationally. New members are automatically enrolled in a Regional Group for discussions and networking opportunities among distance education professionals and practitioners.

In addition to past attendees, meeting announcements should be sent to identifiable target audiences who will benefit from technology and/or content-specific sessions. These are special instances where the target audiences might be located through member contacts (e.g. art museum hosting meeting and demonstrating virtual tours; Coordinator contacts Education Service Centers and requests forwarding of announcement message to all K-12 art teachers in the region).

Regional Group Database

It is recommended that each Regional Group maintain a database of past and current group meeting attendees. Not all members of the group have active TxDLA memberships since it is not required that one be a member to participate in a Regional Group.

The Co-Coordinator are responsible for forwarding all attendees' contact information to the TxDLA Manager. The Manager will follow up by contacting those who are identified as prospective members by sending an invitation to join TxDLA.

It is *very important* that the Manager receive these prospective individuals' information to ensure their inclusion in statewide recruiting efforts overseen by the Membership Committee. This information is also necessary for addition of the individuals' email addresses to the Regional Group's list that is used by each Coordinator to communicate with as many potential attendees as possible. For example, ntrg@txdla.org is the email alias used to contact the North Texas Regional Group. This list should include all new meeting attendees that are reported to the Manager, currently active members, and prospective members in the region.

Example A: Regional Group Meeting Announcement

Regional Group meeting announcements should be sent no less than one month in advance and given to the President and Manager for e-Newsletter announcements and website postings. Create a Regional Group Sign In spreadsheet to record rsvp's and print for attendee sign in at the meeting (see p.15).

Example First Announcement

Greetings TxDLA _____ Regional Group!

My name is _____ and I work at _____. I am your new Regional Group co-coordinator along with _____ from _____.

The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History will host our next _____ Regional Group event on May 15 at 11:00 a.m. I hope you will plan to visit the museum and learn about its distance learning applications and more (agenda coming soon). Lunch will be provided by _____, a TxDLA Partner.

The program will last from 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. with optional activities following the program that will be announced within a week, so if you are able to set aside an additional hour to hour and a half that afternoon, please hold that spot and I will be announcing the final program and post-program activities for you to choose from by next week.

In the meantime, if you can make it to the program itself, just email me with a reply to this message. Please indicate if you have any special dietary needs.

The museum is located at 1501 Montgomery Street and directions are here:
<http://www.fwmuseum.org/plan/directions.htm>

I look forward to meeting with you on May 15.

Thank you,

Distance Learning Specialist, _____ Independent School District
e-mail address

_____ Regional Group Coordinator
Texas Distance Learning Association
<http://www.txdla.org>

Example B: Meeting Reminder Message

It is recommended that a reminder message be sent twice; 2 weeks in advance first, then 1 week prior to the meeting date.

Example Reminder

Greetings TxDLA _____ Regional Group! Just a reminder if you haven't yet replied to please let me know if you will be able to attend our meeting .

Date: Monday, May 15, 2006

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: Fort Worth Museum of Science and History
1501 Montgomery Street

This meeting will involve a presentation, networking, and lunch that will be provided by _____, ending at 1:00 p.m. (agenda attached). Following will be a variety of optional activities that I would like to share with you now and ask that you let me know which one of these you will be attending if you plan to stay.

The options for you to choose from starting at 1:00 p.m., with the exception of one where noted at 1:45 p.m. are listed below:

- _____ product demonstration
- UNT Health Science Center Biomedical Communications field trip
- Behind the Scenes Tour with Museum Staff
- Networking with colleagues
- Omni Theater showing, Roving Mars at 1:45 pm

If you've not reserved a spot already, please let me know if you plan to join us and indicate if you have any special dietary requirements. I also need to know which one of the options listed above that you plan to stay for afterwards at 1:00 p.m., so please include that information in your message.

For those of you who have already reserved a seat and lunch, please let me know which option listed above that you would like to plan to attend.

Seating is limited for the program and some of the options listed, so it is important that we have an accurate number to ensure adequate space and meals. Please respond accordingly.

The museum is located at 1501 Montgomery Street and directions are here:
<http://www.fwmuseum.org/plan/directions.htm>

I look forward to meeting with you on May 15.

Thank you,

Distance Learning Specialist
Dallas Independent School District
e-mail address

_____ Group Coordinator
Texas Distance Learning Association
www.txdla.org

Example C: Agenda

It is an appealing draw and useful to the participants if the agenda can be sent out in advance whenever possible.

**TxDLA North Texas Regional Group Meeting
May 15, 2006
Fort Worth Museum of Science and History
Crossroads Room**

11:00-12:20

- Welcome
- Individual Introductions
- Fort Worth Museum of Science and History Educational Offerings
- Connect2Texas Videoconferencing
- Announcements

12:20 Lunch and networking with colleagues
(lunch provided by XXXX)

1:00 Overview of Program Options

- XXXX product demonstration
- University of North Texas, Health Science Center Biomedical Communications field trip
- Behind the Scenes Tour with Museum Staff
- Continued Networking with colleagues
- Omni Theater showing, Roving Mars at 1:45 pm

1:05 Program Options begin

Directions to Museum: <http://www.fwmuseum.org/plan/directions.htm>

Example D: Sign-in Form

Use this form to document who plans to attend as replies are received for reservations. Once the event begins, the same document can be used for attendees to sign in and share their contact information, whether or not they would be willing to host a future meeting, if they would like to volunteer to work on the annual conference, and if they are current TxDLA members. This information is extremely important for TxDLA Management to gather, and also for the Conference Chair, Membership Committee Chair, and of course the Regional Group Coordinator!

(Name of Group Here) Regional Group Sign-in Sheet					
	+	Date			
			Please check if interested in these items:		
	Name	Email	Host an ITRG Meeting	2007 Conference Committee Volunteer	Current TxDLA Member?

Regional Group Bylaws

ARTICLE X - Regional Groups

Section 1. Purpose

Area Regional Groups, hereafter Regional Groups, support distance education and implement TxDLA's goals, specified in Article II of the Bylaws, on a geographic regional basis. In addition, Regional Groups:

- A. provide input to the Board of Directors about how TxDLA can best encourage and utilize regional cooperation in developing strategic plans, implementing strategies to meet regional needs, and fulfilling TxDLA's mission and goals;
- B. provide a local forum for distance education practitioners to meet, network, discuss relevant issues, and learn from experts;
- C. initiate activities and promote partnerships that fulfill TxDLA's mission and goals; and
- D. enhance the professional practice of distance education and the image of TxDLA.

Section 2. Structure

TxDLA supports Regional Groups and will help to form and sustain groups as requested by the organization's membership through the Regional Group Development Committee, as defined in Article VIII. Regional Groups do not charge membership dues, and although Regional Group members are encouraged to join TxDLA, membership in TxDLA is not required for participation in a Regional Group.

Section 3. Regional Group Leadership

A. Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee

The Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee serves to encourage the development and growth of Regional Groups and the attainment of each group's goals. The Chair, nominated and appointed by the Board of Directors as described in Article VI of these Bylaws, serves as the liaison among the Board, Regional Groups, and the Regional Group Development Committee.

B. Coordinators and Development Committee

Each Regional Group will appoint, by majority vote, one or more coordinators to plan and organize the group's development and activities. Coordinators, who must be members in good standing of TxDLA, are generally appointed for a two-year term with review and reaffirmation done each year by a majority vote of their respective Regional Group members. A Regional Group Coordinator may serve an unlimited number of terms. The Coordinators serve as ex officio voting members of the Regional Group Development Committee, which is described in Article VIII of these Bylaws.

C. Regional Group Steering Committees

Regional Groups are encouraged to appoint steering committees to assist the Coordinator in helping the Group attain its mission and goals. Steering committee members may be nominated and appointed by the Regional Group membership or they may be appointed by the Regional Group Coordinator.

Section 4. Duties of the Regional Groups

A. Activities and Conduct

1. TxDLA's Success

Regional Groups, and their members, are expected to contribute to TxDLA's overall success, mission, and goals.

2. Group Management

Regional Groups are encouraged to operate in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. The Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee will work with the Coordinators to find no-cost and low-cost ways of managing the groups. Regional Groups are encouraged to pursue in-kind support from Regional Group members and assistance from the Executive Partnership Council and the public sector.

3. Needs Identification

Regional Groups shall develop mechanisms such as surveys or focus groups to identify the needs and characteristics of their particular region and shall share this information with the Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee.

4. Partnerships

Each Regional Group is encouraged to promote partnerships that fulfill the goals of Regional Groups and TxDLA.

B. Meetings

It is recommended that Regional Groups hold at least four (4) meetings per year with written notification of the time, place, and proposed agenda provided to members at least two (2) weeks prior to each meeting. Regional Groups are encouraged to use the meeting formats that best serve the needs of the group. The Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee is available to work with the Coordinators to formulate appropriate meeting agendas and opportunities to contribute to the success of the Regional Groups and TxDLA.

C. Reports

The exchange of information between the Regional Groups and TxDLA's Board of Directors and membership is critical to the attainment of the goals of TxDLA and the Regional Groups. Therefore, the following reports shall be completed as detailed below:

1. Quarterly Reports to the Board of Directors

The Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee shall present a written report quarterly to the Board of Directors. The report shall include a summary of activities from each Regional Group.

2. Annual State of the Regional Groups Report

The Chair of the Regional Group Development Committee shall submit a written "State of the Regional Groups Report" at least annually to the general membership. This report shall include:

- a) a list of all Regional Groups and Coordinators with their complete, up-to-date contact information;
- b) a summary of each Regional Group's activities for the current membership year;
- c) a summary of findings during that year regarding the needs and characteristics of each Regional Group;
- d) any barriers to Regional Group partnerships identified during that year within TxDLA or the distance learning community that have state-level implications;
- e) Regional Group recommendations for TxDLA Board action to ameliorate or eliminate barriers or improve upon weaknesses in the Regional Group system; and
- f) Regional Group recommendations for TxDLA Board action regarding opportunities that should be pursued that would benefit Regional Groups and/or TxDLA.

ALAMO AREA REGIONAL GROUP (AA)			CENTRAL TEXAS REGIONAL GROUP (CT)			COASTAL BEND REGIONAL GROUP (CB)			EAST TEXAS REGIONAL GROUP (ET)			FAR WEST TEXAS REGIONAL GROUP (FWT)	
1. Atascosa	18. Mason		1. Bastrop	15. Hamilton		1. Aransas	13. Kleberg		1. Anderson	16. Nacogdoches		1. El Paso	
2. Bandera	19. Maverick		2. Bell	16. Hays		2. Bee	14. Lavaca		2. Angelina	17. Panola		2. Hudspeth	
3. Bexar	20. McCulloch		3. Blanco	17. Hill		3. Brooks	15. Live Oak		3. Bowie	18. Rains			
4. Brown	21. Medina		4. Bosque	18. Lampasas		4. Calhoun	16. Matagorda		4. Camp	19. Red River			
5. Coke	22. Menard		5. Burnet	19. Lee		5. Colorado	17. McMullen		5. Cass	20. Rusk			
6. Coleman	23. Real		6. Caldwell	20. Limestone		6. Dewitt	18. Nueces		6. Cherokee	21. Sabine			
7. Concho	24. Runnels		7. Comal	21. Llano		7. Duval	19. Refugio		7. Delta	22. San Augustine			
8. Crockett	25. San Saba		8. Coryell	22. McLennan		8. Goliad	20. San Patricio		8. Franklin	23. Shelby			
9. Dimmit	26. Schleicher		9. Falls	23. Milam		9. Jackson	21. Victoria		9. Gregg	24. Smith			
10. Edwards	27. Sterling		10. Fayette	24. Mills		10. Jim Wells	22. Wharton		10. Harrison	25. Titus			
11. Frio	28. Sutton		11. Freestone	25. Navarro		11. Karnes			11. Henderson	26. Upshur			
12. Irion	29. Tom		12. Gillespie	26. Travis		12. Kenedy			12. Hopkins	27. Wood			
13. Kendall	30. Green		13. Gonzales	27. Williamson					13. Lamar				
14. Kerr	31. Uvalde		14. Guadalupe						14. Marion				
15. Kimble	32. Val Verde								15. Morris				
16. Kinney	33. Wilson												
17. La Salle	33. Zavala												



REGIONAL GROUP COUNTIES

GULF COAST REGIONAL GROUP (GC)			NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL GROUP (NC)			NORTH TEXAS REGIONAL GROUP (NT)			RIO GRANDE VALLEY REGIONAL GROUP (RGV)		WEST TEXAS REGIONAL GROUP (WT)				
1. Austin	15. Liberty		1. Archer	14. Mitchell		1. Collin	11. Johnson		1. Cameron		1. Andrews	18. Deaf Smith	35. Jeff Davis	52. Presidio	
2. Brazoria	16. Madison		2. Baylor	15. Montague		2. Cooke	12. Kaufman		2. Hidalgo		2. Armstrong	19. Dickens	36. Kent	53. Randall	
3. Brazos	17. Montgomery		3. Callahan	16. Nolan		3. Dallas	13. Palo Pinto		3. Jim Hogg		3. Bailey	20. Donley	37. King	54. Reagan	
4. Burleson	18. Newton		4. Clay	17. Scurry		4. Denton	14. Parker		4. Starr		4. Borden	21. Ector	38. Lamb	55. Reeves	
5. Chambers	19. Orange		5. Comanche	18. Shackelford		5. Ellis	15. Rockwall		5. Webb		5. Brewster	22. Floyd	39. Lipscomb	56. Roberts	
6. Fort Bend	20. Polk		6. Eastland	19. Stephens		6. Erath	16. Somervell		6. Willacy		6. Briscoe	23. Gaines	40. Loving	57. Sherman	
7. Galveston	21. Robertson		7. Fisher	20. Stonewall		7. Fannin	17. Tarrant		7. Zapata		7. Carson	24. Garza	41. Lubbock	58. Swisher	
8. Grimes	22. San Jacinto		8. Foard	21. Taylor		8. Grayson	18. Van Zandt				8. Castro	25. Glasscock	42. Lynn	59. Terrell	
9. Hardin	23. Trinity		9. Hardeman	22. Throckmorton		9. Hood	19. Wise				9. Childress	26. Gray	43. Martin	60. Terry	
10. Harris	24. Tyler		10. Haskell	23. Wichita		10. Hunt					10. Cochran	27. Hale	44. Midland	61. Upton	
11. Houston	25. Walker		11. Jack	24. Wilbarger							11. Collingsworth	28. Hall	45. Moore	62. Ward	
12. Jasper	26. Waller		12. Jones	25. Young							12. Cottle	29. Hansford	46. Motley	63. Wheeler	
13. Jefferson	27. Washington										13. Crane	30. Hartley	47. Ochiltree	64. Winkler	
14. Leon											14. Crosby	31. Hemphill	48. Oldham	65. Yoakum	
											15. Culberson	32. Hockley	49. Parmer		
											16. Dallam	33. Howard	50. Pecos		
											17. Dawson	34. Hutchinson	51. Potter		

