



Service Level Agreements: What are they? Why should I care?

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are, in essence, a contract between a technology service provider and a customer or customer base. Service agreements are negotiated documents that spell out exactly what is expected of both the customer and the service provider. These are important documents because they provide a realistic set of goals and deliverables that a service provider can actually meet (hopefully), as well as penalties and consequences of not meeting the expectations stated in the agreement. Well-formed SLAs help establish a shared set of measurements that will help a Tribal Archive, Library or Museum (TALM) and service provider create a common definition of success. SLAs are very important for customers of in-house technology services, but especially important in situations where a library or archive is contracting with an outside provider for mission critical services. SLAs may be formed with a wide range of service providers including:

- commercial and non-profit vendors and service providers (e.g., internet service providers, digital content or asset management)
- partner institutions, like universities, government agencies, or other TALMs (e.g., for server space or physical storage space)
- other departments within your tribe or nation

SLAs are the who, what, when, why, where and how of a technology service. An SLA will cover such things as overall uptime¹ of a service, quality of service, and of course an agreed upon price. Many SLAs get very specific and can be confusing if not written well. The most basic and important piece of an SLA is ensuring that somebody knows every bit of it and can explain it to others in your organization. If there are any ambiguous acronyms or terminology in the SLA – inevitably that is the section that becomes a problem down the line. Think of it as a technology Murphy's Law. Below you will see the major sections of an SLA with links to a more detailed breakdown and some examples.

- Name of the IT Service
- Clearance information (who, when and where the SLA was signed on both sides)
- Contract duration (and how the SLA can be changed within the contract period)
- Service description

¹ A measurement of the amount of time that a computer or computer service is available for use.

- Relations to other IT Services
- Procedures for requesting the IT Service
- Responsibilities (for both the Client and the Provider)
- Quality assurance and service level reporting (**This section should be easily verifiable by the client and the metrics clearly laid out**)
- Service accounting (\$\$)
- Glossary

More Detailed Breakdowns of SLAs

http://wiki.en.it-processmaps.com/index.php/Checklist_SLA_OLA

[http://wiki.en.it-processmaps.com/index.php/Checklist_Service_Level_Agreement_\(SLA\)](http://wiki.en.it-processmaps.com/index.php/Checklist_Service_Level_Agreement_(SLA))

SLA Template

There are many examples of SLA documents openly available on websites. Below is a link to a good example with all the major portions filled in with example text.

<http://www.slatemplate.com/ServiceLevelAgreementTemplate.doc>