# Roles and Responsibilities of Partners in a RoboBraille Project

The purpose of this memo is to describe the roles and responsibilities of partners in a RoboBraille implementation project in a new country or region. In this context, partners are considered the local institutions, organisations, companies and individuals who participate in the implementation with Synscenter Refsnæs as the coordinating partner.

In most cases, the scope of the project is defined in an approved project application to a private foundation or public programme. The project application defines the project in terms of overall objectives, milestones, deliverables and budget. The initial tasks of the project often involve recruitment of partners in order to ensure that the project can be completed as approved. However, although the local partners are recruited to match the formal requirements of the project, the roles and responsibilities of the partners may extend beyond the scope of the project as the implementation of RoboBraille may present new opportunities and possibilities to participating partners.

With few exceptions, the project is a partnership of professional collaborators rather than commercial interests. As such, most partners will have a professional interest in joining the project and will be willing to contribute to the project without financial compensation. Examples include academic institutions who conduct research and publish papers based on the project, disability organisations who offer member services based on the outcome of RoboBraille and teachers who implement teaching practices based on the timely availability of alternative media. In addition to joining a partnership of professional collaborators in the country in question, partners also join the international network of RoboBraille partners from current and past RoboBraille projects in other countries.

The exception to the professional collaborators includes professional service providers such as interpreters, technical specialists, communication specialists and project coordinators who do not have professional interests in joining the project beyond creating an income.

From a project management perspective, local partners are recruited with two overall purposes in mind:

1. **Stakeholders**: The combined group of partners must represent all main stakeholders of the RoboBraille service.

2. **Competencies**: The combined group of partners must be able to complete the project as approved in terms of skills, experiences, network, and formal and informal roles.

## Stakeholders

The main target groups of the RoboBraille service are blind, partially sighted, dyslexic people with poor reading skills. The derived list of main stakeholders includes the following:

- The primary users: People who are blind, partially sighted dyslexic or have poor reading skills.

- Organisations representing the primary users: Organisations for the blind, partially sighted, dyslexic.

- NGOs working for the needs of the primary users: Organisations providing services, technology training, vocational training to the blind, partially sighted, dyslexic.

- Relatives of the primary users: parents, grandparents of siblings of the primary users.

- Parents organisations.

- Teachers of the primary users in both special schools and mainstream schools.

- Psychologists, vision professionals, reading professionals working with the primary users in both special schools and mainstream schools.

- Management and faculty at special schools for the blind and partially sighted.

- Management and faculty at mainstream schools with integrated pupils/students.

- Faculty at academic institutions responsible for teaching special education and developing special education practiced.

- School administrators at local, regional, national level responsible for special education and mainstream schools with integrated disabled pupils/students.

- Policymakers at local, regional, national level responsible for special education and mainstream schools with integrated disabled pupils/students.

## Competencies

As each country differ in terms of structure, organisations and individuals, it is not possible to define a set list of partners. It is, however, necessary that the partners are capable of making the following contributions to the project:

**Technical and alternative media specifications**: Providing translated specifications of the official Braille code(s) of the country; listing and evaluating preferred speech synthesisers; listing preferred enabling technologies such as Braille displays, Braille embossers, screen readers, Daisy players; providing information on character sets and code pages.

**Interpretation**: Providing interpretation services in meetings and presentations between English and the local language.

**Testing**: Providing test cases and testing the Braille, audio, ebook and conversion output of RoboBraille. Testing digital media on frequently used devices.

**Translation**: Translation of technical and information material from English into the local language. The material includes the web interfaces and email templates of the service, a localised version of the RoboBraille web site, the RoboBraille service summary, RoboBraille Best Practices in Education Catalogue, RoboBraille leaflets and other material.

**Pilots and user surveys**: Recruiting users for pilot tests and conducting pilot tests of the service during the course of the implementation. Sampling user opinions through qualitative and quantitative surveys.

**Dissemination**: Dissemination of information about the service and its application to the main stakeholders through multiple channels including newsletters, member magazines, press releases, conferences, workshops, teaching practices, libraries, social networks,

**Teaching practices, inclusion practices**: Evaluating current teaching practices and inclusion practices involving the blind, partially sighted, dyslexic and poor readers with the aim of considering how such practices may be augmented through the use of enabling technology, timely availability of alternative media, self-service alternative media provisions, etc.

**User support**: Respond to queries from users regarding the service. Explain how the service is used. Feedback to the developers based on support issues arising from these activities.

**Sustainability**: Once the project is completed, the service will remain in operation for use by all stakeholders as part of the core RoboBraille system. However, to ensure that the service is sustained, used and maintained in each country, it must be incorporated into the ordinary services, practices and policies of the participating partners. Furthermore, the participating partners must be encouraged to exploit the use service in other areas. Finally, tangible results of the project such as equipment for material production will need a permanent base, preferably with a non-profit organisation.

## Responsibility and delegation of assignments

Synscenter Refsnæs encourages local partners to resume responsibility for the management, planning and execution of subtasks in the project. Such subtasks would often fall within the current scope of the partner and be an extension to current activities. Subtasks could include but are not limited to establishing a local version of the RoboBraille website, conducting a survey amongst users, running a dissemination campaign amongst potential users, submitting a paper to a peer-reviewed conference or academic journal, specifying the national Braille code in a country or researching available speech synthesisers for a particular language. Whereas the professional collaborators are expected to contribute the vast majority of their hours to the project without compensation, the project will cover direct costs associated with the execution of subtasks and as such, the budget for such costs may be transferred to partners. Often the delegation of assignments to specific partners need not be governed by an actual contract. Rather, the tasks, deadlines and financial implications of subtasks are discussed and agreed at project status meetings and subsequently monitored. If a contract is needed by a partner, it will be made available.

Preferably, the local coordination of the project is the responsibility of one of the professional collaborators. However, if the local coordination of the project cannot be managed by one of the professional collaborators, a local project coordinator is hired on a framework agreement with a maximum number of hours per month. Activities are agreed on an on-going basis and may include project scheduling, arrangement of meetings, facilitation of mail campaigns, printing of information material and reporting. Similarly, it may be necessary to recruit communication specialist and technical specialists for specific tasks on fixed price agreements. In case it is not possible to communicate in English, a local interpreter is hired on local terms for such services.

## Examples of partners and roles

Examples of professional collaborators' roles include:

- An association for the blind may participate to promote RoboBraille amongst its members for individual use and to use RoboBraille and the digital library as part of its own services to members. The association will provide en English version of its Braille code for implementation. Furthermore, it will conduct tests of the service and its accuracy amongst its members during the implementation.

- A special school for the partially sighted may use RoboBraille and the digital library to produce educational material in alternative formats and to create a library collection of such educational material for use at the special school as well as in mainstream schools with integrated disabled students throughout the country.

- School administrators at regional level or national level may evaluate RoboBraille and the digital library and consider how automated alternative media production can be used to facilitate a higher level of integration of students with special needs in the mainstream education system.

- An academic institution may conduct research into how RoboBraille and the digital library can be used to facilitate integration of visually and print impaired students in the mainstream school system and submit papers to appropriate journals and conferences.

- An association of parents with dyslexic children may promote RoboBraille amongst its members and use RoboBraille and the digital library as part of its own member services. The association will conduct tests of the service and its accuracy amongst its members during the implementation.

- An association of parents with blind children may promote RoboBraille amongst its members and use RoboBraille and the digital library as part of its own member services. The association will conduct tests of the service and its accuracy amongst its members during the implementation.

- An NGO offering services to people with visual impairments may include RoboBraille in its vocational training. It may furthermore use RoboBraille and the digital library in its own material production and dissemination.

- An association of special education teachers may evaluate the RoboBraille service and promote its use in education amongst members. A catalogue of best practices will be developed as part of the project and distributed to special education teachers.