

LTER Ad Hoc Communications Committee
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Presentation to LTER Science Council Meeting

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**LTER STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN
PURPOSE, APPROACH AND
UPDATE**

Outline

- Purpose
- Approach
- Survey Results
- Next Steps

LTER Mission

To provide the scientific community, policy makers and society with the knowledge and predictive understanding necessary to conserve, protect, and manage the nation's ecosystems, their biodiversity, and the services they provide.

Purpose

Develop a 'living' Strategic Communications Plan for the LTER Network that addresses:

- *who* LTER wishes to communicate with
- *why* LTER want to communicate with them
- *what* LTER desires to communicate
- *how* the information can be communicated

Approach

- ⦿ **Committee** – define scope and direction of effort
- ⦿ **Survey** – gather input on priorities and needs
- ⦿ **Interviews** – develop deeper understanding
- ⦿ **Models** – review and distill best practices
- ⦿ **Expert Advice** – solicit input on specific strategies

Survey Results

- **Survey Period** – April 5 to May 5, 2010

- **Respondents** = 216

- **Title**

 - LTER PI = 11

 - LTER Co-PI = 42

 - LTER site scientist/educator = 21

 - LTER information manager = 14

 - LTER education coordinator/ researcher = 13

 - LTER graduate student = 25

- **Age bracket**

 - 33 to 46 = 30.5%

 - 56+ = 23.4%

 - 21 to 32 = 22.8%

 - 47 to 55 = 22.8%

Part I: Scope & Goals

Scope of Communications Strategy:

- ◎ Focus more on external audiences (74.5%) than internal audiences (47.4%)
- ◎ Emphasize activities undertaken by LTER sites (59.3%) and the LNO (46.7%)
- ◎ Consider potential for leadership in cross-network communications efforts (51.7%)

GOAL	Very Important	Important
Improve the scientific foundation for <u>decision-making</u> related to ecological issues	68.4%	27.4%
Enhance understanding by <u>federal agencies</u> of the societal benefits of LTER and its return on investment	65.1%	30.2%
Expand the reputation of LTER among members of the <u>scientific community</u> as a network of excellence in ecological research	50.7%	36.7%
Enhance ecological literacy among <u>educators and school-aged children</u>	49.3%	42.3%
Raise <u>general public</u> awareness about the existence of the LTER Network and its capabilities	47.7%	42.3%

Part II: Audiences & Effort

AUDIENCE	CRITICAL & HIGH	CURRENT EFFORT
Funders (e.g., NSF)	95.5%	High (47%)
LTER scientists & students	89.6%	High (43%)
Decision makers (state & federal)	81-91%	Don't know (45%)
Conservation organizations	78.2%	Don't know (40%)
Media	76.7%	Low (42%)
Non-LTER scientists	73.3%	Low (43%)
Scientific societies	71.4%	Don't know (38%)
General public	60.9%	Low (57%)
K-12 teachers	57%	Medium (35%)

Part III: Roles & Barriers

- ◎ **LNO should expand current role:**
 - translate key results and messages
 - share results proactively with target audiences
 - employ wider array of technology and media tools

- ◎ **Split over extent to which LNO should:**
 - engage stakeholders to define key questions
 - integrate and synthesize existing research

LNO Role

- ◎ *The network office is not a think tank and should not be expected to integrate and translate research results from the various sites.*
- ◎ *I would like to see LTER scientists rather than LNO take the lead role in higher-level synthesis.*
- ◎ *The network office has a broader view of the project than the local sites and could do a better job synthesizing the research than the local sites.*
- ◎ *One way to increase collaboration across LTER sites is to have stakeholder involvement and stakeholder derived questions that would be disseminated across the network.*

Communications Barriers

- ◎ Scientists' and staff time (75 - 86%)
- ◎ Funding (72%)
- ◎ Effective process for engaging with stakeholders (72%)
- ◎ Skills for translating and communicating results to media & decision makers (60-64%)

Part IV: Program Direction

Target Audience	Activity	V. interested or interested
Decision makers	Workshops with stakeholders to define critical questions	65%
	Issue-based synthesis papers & documents translated for non-scientists	65%
	In-person briefings with management and policy stakeholders	56%
	Policy & communications training	56%
	Joint efforts with scientific societies to disseminate results	56%

Target Audience	Activity	V. Interested or interested
Media	Journalist site tours or “science days” at LTER sites	68%
	Media releases and events targeted to specific ecological issues	58.4%
	Short-term rapid response team	56.1%
	Media training for LTER scientists and students	54.3%
Educators	Partnerships with science museums	52.4%
Public	Field tours at LTER sites	62.2%

“I selected ‘not interested’ primarily because I don’t have time, not because these things are not important.

Next Steps

- ◎ **Committee meeting – May 14**
 - Finalize draft vision, goals, objectives, target audiences
 - Brainstorm and prioritize list of strategies for reaching target audiences
- ◎ **June/July**
 - Conduct interviews & solicit expert input on strategies
- ◎ **August**
 - Write draft plan
- ◎ **September**
 - Submit to Executive Board