

Minutes  
LTER Executive Board Agenda 17 January 2013  
10:00AM-11:30AM MDT  
Conference Call

Meeting called to order at 10:00AM MDT by Chair Scott Collins; Members attending: Dan Childers, John Blair, Emery Boose, John Moore, Evelyn Gaiser, Bob Waide, Mark Ohman, Mary Spivey, Gus Shaver, Steve Hamilton  
Also attending: Saran Twombly, Matt Kane  
Not attending: Karen McGlathery, Emily Stanley

1. Approval of minutes of October 2012 EB Meeting  
Approved

2. Report from NSF – Twombly and Kane  
No news on 2013 budget, and don't expect one anytime soon. Full steam ahead on planning for the upcoming minisymposium. Agency people have been invited. Gayle Pugh is working on the art exhibit. Plans for the afternoon to discuss various topics are well developed. The topics are: (1) LTER-NEON, (2) PASTA/NIS, (3) LTER-ILTER, and (4) LTER Synthesis efforts. These will be relatively informal discussions/presentations each lead by a different relevant LTER participant. NSF requested that the EB send invitations to NSF Brass and Program Directors to attend the afternoon meeting. The emphasis of this session will be to highlight the good things that are happening in the LTER Network.

Expecting the art exhibit to be bigger this year. Materials have been submitted for inclusion in the exhibit and are being considered by a panel of experts.

NSF is forming a core team to get input on the structure of the next version of the LNO. This core team will be chaired by Diane McKnight and Tim Kratz. They will submit a proposal to fund workshops, meetings, etc., to gather information from a broad range of people regarding how various "offices" or coordinating facilities similar to that of LNO function for other networks. This report will help form the basis of the request for proposals for the LNO. The core team will submit a report to NSF and the broader community. The report from the LTER Community (Chaired by Phil Robertson and Emery Boose) will also be considered when drafting the RFP. Either Tim or Diane will come to DC for the minisymposium to participate in discussions with Emery and the EB regarding the LTER Community recommendations.

The timeline for recompeting the LTER Network Office is as follows. NSF expects the report from information gathering workshops by early 2014. They will then develop a solicitation with hope of having proposals due March/April 2015 with a decision in summer 2015. It is possible, but unlikely, that NSF may decide to not have a central office, but instead reprogram the funding into the sites. LNO will likely run

out of money in Feb 2015, so we recommend accelerating the timeline by several months in order to maintain continuity.

Site visit teams are lined up for 2013. We will continue our discussion of the goals for site visit teams from the standpoint of NSF and the sites. We consider this to be a win-win situation.

NSF would like to receive the report from the ASM working group on the discussion of centralized versus distributed information management strategies. The report from this particular working group is quite relevant to LNO v2.0 RFP.

### 3. Discussion of NISAC/IMExec recommendations

NISAC put forward three recommendations to the EB:

1. NISAC recommends that the Executive Board revisit the LTER Network Data Access Policy with the specific purpose of revising the section on user acknowledgement of data use restrictions, identification and tracking. We recommend that LTER should cease all efforts to require identification of data users as part of the data download process. We additionally recommend that LTER pursue changes to data portals that will support voluntary identification of data users in order to foster collaborations and keep users informed regarding the availability of updates on the datasets of interest. The current LTER Network Data Access Policy (<http://www.lternet.edu/data/netpolicy.html>) includes a list of "Data Access Requirements" and would need to be modified should the Executive Board or Science Council decide to follow this recommendation.
2. NISAC recommends that the Executive Board encourage each site to address any of the specific issues related to accessibility at their site listed in Tables 1 & 2; especially the improvement of metadata to include meaningful titles, abstracts and keywords that aid searching, and descriptions of tabular data with links to the data itself to aid use; rigorously enforce the LTER Data Policy; and assure that data downloadable at sites also be available via the LTER Data Portal.
3. NISAC recommends that the Executive Board charge sites with discovering and making available any significant datasets that are not currently in either site or LTER data catalogs, in conformance with the LTER Data Policy.

The EB fully endorses recommendations 2 & 3, and recognizes that significant progress is being made on fulfilling these recommendations. It was agreed that the EB would provide an additional nudge to the sites to accept and move forward on recommendations 2 and 3.

The big issue of disagreement among members of the EB, among members of NISAC and among members of IMC is, Should we track data downloads and usage, and if so how do we do that without impeding access to the data, and without affecting the functionality of the NIS, for example the ability of workflows to access and process

data in the NIS. Some argue that we need to know who is downloading our data because agencies (like NSF) or our institutions consider that to be of value. Others are concerned that any barriers to accessing data where information is required will discourage use of LTER data. Both issues are valid and important. Regardless, we need an explicit mechanism to say up from to any user that they need to behave ethically. An additional carrot is that users can sign up for notifications when the data are changed, e.g., when new data are added, or when data are corrected or updated. We can only use that carrot if the user provides contact information and indicates interest in receiving updates. However, our goal is to have a uniform policy for data access via the NIS. Sites can put up whatever barriers they want to for those accessing data through site web pages. Sites can also limit the data they post in the NIS, and they can limit access to data within the NIS. However, they will have to justify their actions to NSF review panels and site visit teams.

Because of disagreements among members of the relevant communities, Gus Shaver, Steve Hamilton, Evelyn Gaiser and Mark Ohman drafted the following statement to be presented to the Science Council for discussion and approval, "We recommend that LTER should work to promote greater access to LTER data sets by reducing the barriers associated with identification of users and descriptions of plans for data use. Users who want to download data should only be required to provide their name, email address, and institutional affiliation. It may also be appropriate to request that they check a box stating that they agree to LTER policies regarding data use and publication. We also recommend that users be able to check a box indicating their interest in receiving future data updates and corrections."

#### 4. Other business

Bob Waide urged the EB to track the planning for the Network Office renewal. Under the proposed timeframe the coordinating facility selected by NSF will not be able to maintain momentum or continuity because it would start approximately three months after current LNO funding ends.

An LTER Annual Report was recommended in the Strategic Communication Plan. The first such Annual Report is being drafted currently. We plan to have information in it from all LTER sites, but we will highlight sites that submitted renewal proposals in 2012 as well as the mini-symposium presentations. The current Annual Report is on a tight timeline with plans to release it in time for the EB meeting and minisymposium. It will be of use to those conducting congressional visits. Among the overwhelming din of silence, Collins eagerly offered to provide comments on drafts of the document.