

LTER Information Management Committee (IMC) Bylaws, Version 4

*Recommended for approval by IM Exec on June 16, 2021
Approved by IMC on July 27, 2021 with 23 of 27 sites approving*

1. Overview

The LTER Information Management Committee (IMC) is an LTER network-wide standing committee as described in the LTER Bylaws. IMC provides a forum where information managers from all the LTER sites work collectively.

2. Purpose

The LTER IMC is responsible for leadership and coordination of information management activities across sites that support LTER Network goals. The IMC works collectively to balance responses to immediate needs with long-term planning. The IMC works with various partners at multiple levels, e.g. site, network, organizational, community, and international.

3. Membership

Membership includes an information manager at each site that serves as the primary site information management contact (SiteIM). Additional members may be identified by individual sites, by the LTER Network Office (LNO), and by the Environmental Data Initiative (EDI) from among site or project personnel who are involved with information management.

Voting

Elections and other committee-wide votes may occur in person at the annual meeting or electronically during the year.

In all cases, each site is entitled to a single vote, to be cast by the SiteIM or by a designated representative of the site. At least two-thirds of all sites must be available for any formal vote to constitute a quorum, but voting on issues of significant consequence will be planned such that all SiteIMs will have the opportunity to vote.

When representation on committees or boards requires an election of members, elections are decided by plurality vote.

Issues that potentially set a precedent or have significant ramifications will be put to a vote. IMC co-chair(s) (as described in section 5) will initiate an IMC voting process by first asking whether there is a motion to recognize the issue as one of significant network consequence. With a motion and a second to this motion, a vote will be taken to pass the motion. More than one-third of the votes indicates that the issue is one of significant network consequence and that further discussion is required. On issues of significant consequence, a two-thirds vote of all of those voting is required to end discussion and move to a final vote. Issues will be decided by a simple majority vote.

4. Executive Committee (IM-Exec)

Authority: The IM-Exec makes day-to-day decisions and authorizes actions on behalf of the IMC. All members of IM-Exec shall act on behalf of the LTER Network rather than their individual sites. They are accountable to the membership of the IMC and are expected to recuse themselves on matters where they have a conflict of interest.

Decisions and projects with long-term or network-wide ramifications (such as participation in major projects or adoption of standards) are referred to the IMC for debate and approval as outlined in the voting process. IM-Exec routinely makes decisions that are not referred to the entire IMC. In these cases, should five or more sites object to a decision of IM-Exec, they may request an appeal, in which case IM-Exec will bring the matter before the IMC for consideration by the full committee.

Membership

IM-Exec consists of five members including the IMC co-chair(s). All members, including the co-chairs, are voting members. The term is three years and is renewable. Members are elected on a rotating basis each year to replace those members rotating off (typically 1 or 2 members). If a regular member does not complete their term, a replacement member will be elected at the next annual meeting to fill out the term. Terms begin at the end of the meeting after elections. The IM representative to the LTER Executive Board (EB), if not currently an elected member of IM-Exec, is a non-voting, ex-officio member.

Responsibilities

Current responsibilities of IM-Exec include:

- coordinating and planning (e.g., logistics, agenda, exploring meeting venue options, and seeking or coordinating funding from the LNO or EDI or NSF supplements) for the annual IMC meeting in consultation with IMC members
- coordinating and overseeing IMC and IM-Exec videoconferences, and inviting necessary guests.
- coordinating the preparation of reports and minutes for videoconference and in-person meetings
- staying informed of IMC working group activities and requesting annual reports from active committees
- acting as a liaison between the IMC and the LNO, other LTER Network committees, and other partners

As necessary, IM-Exec responsibilities may include:

- coordinating responses to requests for information
- making recommendations to the LTER Executive Board (EB)
- coordinating participation of IMC members in development of LTER Network-level information management plans or tools
- reviewing support proposals for IM-related activities

- development and coordination of partnerships

Additionally, IM-Exec maintains a Roster of Membership on IM-Exec updated annually after IM-Exec elections. IM-Exec maintains Rosters for IMC consisting of site primary contacts and attendance by verifying the SiteIM annually and recording the representatives in attendance at the annual IMC meeting. IM-Exec also maintains a Roster of Actions that includes important IMC and IM-Exec decisions, decision types, requestor, and approving body for requests (see appendix 12.2 for list of types of action including RFC, RFE, and RFA). Rosters of Membership and Rosters of Actions are posted online.

5. Co-chairs

One or two people (IMC co-chair(s)) preside over meetings of the IMC and IMC Executive Committee (IM-Exec). Chairs are elected from IM-Exec membership by majority vote of the IM-Exec membership and serve a term coincident with their remaining term(s) on IM-Exec. IM-Exec may fill open chair positions at the first IM-Exec meeting after either of these two events: 1) the Annual IMC meeting or 2) a current co-chair ends their term on IM-Exec early. Should there be two chairs rather than a single chair, it is recommended strongly that their terms be staggered. Adjustment of term lengths may be necessary to accommodate staggered terms. A co-chair may serve more than one term if that member is re-elected to IM-Exec and if agreed upon by majority vote of the IM-Exec membership. An IMC chair must have served at least a partial term as a member of IM-Exec to be eligible for the position.

Responsibilities

Co-chair(s) generally oversee, supervise, and coordinate the governance and communication of the IMC. They ensure communication occurs among IMC members as well as between IMC members and other LTER boards, committees, and partners. Co-chair(s) will ensure communication between the IMC and the LNO, and will ensure communication between the IMC and the EDI.

6. Working Groups

The IMC carries out much of its work through ad hoc working groups (WG). IMC members may form a WG spontaneously or a WG may be organized by IM-Exec. Membership is voluntary and open to IMC members and associates. A WG may be formed to formulate recommendations on information management issues including but not limited to practices, standards, products, approaches, and assessment strategies. A WG determines its own leadership, agenda, and types of communication (see appendix 12.3 for examples of types of communication). When working groups conclude, they will prepare a summary document to be posted online.

7. Network Roles

The IMC contributes to LTER Network activities through elected representatives and volunteers who serve on other LTER committees and working groups including the EB, science working groups, synthesis activities, and LNO and EDI related groups.

The IMC elects from its membership a representative to the EB, who serves as a non-voting member of the LTER Science Council in accordance with the LTER Bylaws. The EB representative serves as liaison between the IMC and the EB, providing insight to the EB on matters related to information management

and providing updates to IM-Exec and the IMC on current activities of the EB. The term of the EB representative is three years. Terms begin following the annual LTER Science Council (SC) meeting. As the SC meeting typically precedes the IMC meeting each year, the new EB rep should either be elected at the IMC meeting during the last year of the term of the current representative, or via special electronic vote prior to the SC meeting. The SC meeting will serve as the final EB activity for the outgoing EB representative. An individual may serve as EB representative multiple times but not for consecutive terms. In the event that an EB representative is unable to complete their term, IM-Exec will assign an acting EB representative from within its membership and will either hold a special electronic election or wait until the following annual meeting to elect a new EB representative. The EB representative is an ex-officio member of IM-Exec if not currently an elected member of IM-Exec.

8. Meetings and Communication

IMC Meetings

The IMC will hold an annual meeting. There is tremendous value in meeting collectively and, ideally, in person at least annually. In some years, meetings may be jointly-hosted with a relevant partner organization, e.g., Earth Science Information Partners (ESIP), to promote professional development in addition to addressing an IMC-specific agenda. Sites are expected to send a representative to the annual meeting if funding is available. Should only partial or no funding be available, SiteIMs are nonetheless strongly encouraged to attend the meeting in person by minimizing expenses and exhausting all possible funding options. SiteIMs are expected to participate remotely in those cases where they are unable to attend in person due to constrained financial resources or other considerations. The IMC meets in conjunction with the LTER All-Scientists Meeting (ASM) every third year.

Committee and working group representatives as well as special participants from outside the LTER Network may be invited to attend the annual IMC meeting by IM-Exec. A portion of the annual meeting is designated as the annual business meeting and is open only to IMC members.

Additional meetings by videoconference are organized by IM-Exec or WG leaders, and are planned approximately monthly throughout the year to keep IMC members up-to-date on current issues and projects. SiteIMs are expected to participate in scheduled monthly virtual water cooler (VWC) videoconferences.

IM-Exec Meetings

IM-Exec meets regularly by videoconference, and designated individuals may be asked to report on particular activities. Working group representatives may be included in meetings. A representative from the LNO and/or EDI may be invited by the IM-Exec to attend selected IM-Exec meetings as circumstances require or with a standing invitation to serve as a non-voting liaison to the respective organization. Assignment of tasks to individual members (including liaisons to active working groups) is normally made at the first IM-Exec meeting after the annual election. Examples of individual roles include logistics for the IMC meeting, scheduling of VWCs, maintaining lists of committee and working group members, and preparation of meeting notes.

Rosters, meeting notes, reports, and agendas of IMC and IM-Exec meetings are posted publicly by IM-Exec.

9. Elections

Candidates for IM-Exec and the EB representative are drawn from the membership of IMC. Candidates for EB representative must have served or be currently serving as members of IM-Exec.

IM-Exec issues a general call for candidate nominations prior to the annual IMC meeting or any special electronic vote held for IM-Exec representative(s) and the EB representative. Once nominated, candidates willing to stand for election will provide to IM-Exec a one-paragraph description of their experience, qualifications, and goals. IM-Exec keeps the community informed of nominations, and issues a final call before assembling and publishing a list of candidates and candidate statements prior to the convening of the annual IMC meeting or special electronic vote.

Optionally, IM-Exec will accept candidate nominations at the annual IMC meeting for elections occurring at that meeting. Elections will be conducted by secret ballot when there are more nominations than positions available; otherwise a verbal vote is adequate.

10. Budget and Expenses

A budget is maintained at LNO to support the IMC and IM-Exec meeting expenses. Occasionally funds are available for targeted activities such as workshops and ad-hoc tasks.

IM-Exec consults with LNO and EB to set priorities for any additional funding available.

11. Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended by two-thirds vote of the IMC at its annual meeting or electronically during the year. Revisions approved by the IMC are archived in the LTER Network document archive.

12. Appendices

12.1 Abbreviations

- EB: LTER Executive Board
- EDI: Environmental Data Initiative
- ESIP: Earth Science Information Partners
- IM: Information Manager or information management
- IMC: Information Management Committee
- IM-Exec: LTER IMC Executive Committee
- LTER: Long Term Ecological Research
- LNO: LTER Network Office
- NSF: National Science Foundation
- RFA: Requests for Adoption
- RFC: Request for Comment
- RFE: Request for Endorsement

- ROP: Report on Progress
- SC: LTER Science Council
- SiteIM: individual designated as a site's information management contact
- ToR: Terms of Reference (now Bylaws)
- VWC: Virtual Water Cooler
- WG: Working Group

12.2 Types of Action

The IMC, IM-Exec, and WGs typically make decisions of the following types:

- Formal: votes are taken, e.g. on endorsement or adoption of a community standard
- Semi-formal: consensus, e.g. where a meeting is to be held
- Informal: iterative discussion and agreement or informational; e.g. meeting agenda
- Tacit: tradition, e.g. having an IMC meeting opening mixer
- Compliance: response to mandate, e.g. template developed by EB

12.3 Types of Communication

Examples of types of communication used within the LTER IMC:

- Roster of Membership: A list of participants, their roles, and terms (if applicable)
- Roster of Actions: A list of actions or decisions and the type of decision making involved
- Annual Report: A summary of the year's actions, plans, and products developed
- Meeting Notes: a record of participants and discussions at an event
- Agenda: A schedule of items to be covered at a given event
- Informal Reports: Verbal reports and digital presentations
- Survey: a collection of information made by asking a series of questions
- White Paper: a review that provides an overview of a particular topic or theme
- Best Practice: a document that provides guidelines for IMC-accepted practices for a particular task or activity
- Written or oral summaries: Lessons learned and cautionary tales
- DataBits articles: feature articles, news bit, and/or commentary
- Site-to-site visits: follow-ups on general themes or specific topics
- Informal multi-site communication via discussion at mixers, panels, videoconferences, break-out groups, and so forth
- Report of Progress (ROP): an informal demonstration, prototype, break-out group, posters and/or document summarizing progress of a working group
- Request for Comment (RFC): a semi-formal process of public discussions and revisions that documents response to a project or plan of action during its development
- Request for Endorsement (RFE): a formal request in writing for support of a project that eventually will involve mandatory site participation and/or the commitment of personnel time, funds, or other site or network resources.
- Requests for Adoption (RFA): a formal request in writing for adoption of a standard that will involve mandatory site participation.