

The 2002 request for renewal of the LTER Network Office (LNO) Cooperative Agreement anticipated the need for increased resources for administrative and service activities. When funds to address this need were not received, we proposed to assess the appropriate level of staffing of the LNO as part of our Strategic Planning effort. This effort has now proceeded sufficiently far to identify key needs for the short-term.

Since the beginning of the present Cooperative Agreement (March 1, 2003), we have made significant progress on the tasks described in Scope of Work associated with that Agreement. During that period, the LNO has endeavored to conduct its operations with as lean a staff as possible. Since March, our single Administrative Assistant, supported by one part-time hourly student, has accomplished the following tasks:

- Administered NSF and UNM funds for specific LTER activities described in the Cooperative Agreement as well as supplements for the All Scientists Meeting, ILTER program management, and the African regional ILTER meeting in Botswana. During the past eight months, 14 separate grant accounts, 3 supplements to these grants, and 28 working group awards were managed out of the Network Office. Another 10-15 working groups will be initiated from the 2003 All Scientists Meeting.
- In addition to administering funds, organized meetings and maintained communications for four significant grants addressing global IT infrastructure (SEEK, RCN, KDI, and NPACI).
- Managed the close out of the previous Cooperative Agreement (DEB-9634135).
- Supported the preparation and submission of supplemental proposals for the All Scientists Meeting, ILTER program management, and African regional ILTER meeting in Botswana and competitive proposals for activities related to the global IT infrastructure effort
- Organized, coordinated logistics, managed finances, and helped prepare reports for the following meetings: Coordinating Committee (2), Executive Committee (4), Information Management Committee (1), IM Executive Committee/Network Information System Advisory Group (2), International LTER Coordinating Committee (1), National Advisory Board (1), All Scientists Meeting (1), SEEK Workshops (7), Research Coordination Network (RCN; 2), RCN OBFS informatics training (1), Canopy/LTER Database Workshop (1), EML Implementation Workshop (1), and Environmental Infrastructures Workshop (1). A total of 1081 participants attended these meetings.
- Helped prepare and distribute two Network Newsletters, provided clerical support for the Dryland Biodiversity volume for the Oxford University Press series, prepared printed materials for All Scientists Meeting, and assisted in the preparation of the report "Environmental Cyberinfrastructure Needs for Distributed Sensor Networks".
- Helped coordinate the annual ILTER meeting planned for Beijing, China. When this meeting was cancelled, facilitated (e.g., provide letters of invitation, arrange visas, organize travel to LTER sites) participation of international scientists in the 2003 LTER All Scientists Meeting.
- Organized and participated in LNO strategic planning meetings and retreats.

In order to complete all service tasks scheduled for Year 1 on time, the LNO Executive and Associate Directors have had to devote more time than planned to administrative tasks, particularly regarding the management of accounts and the organization of meetings. We anticipate that the LNO workload will increase in Year 2 as activities relating to strategic planning, global IT infrastructure, and the All Scientists Meeting mature and three new sites are added to the Network. The present pace cannot be supported indefinitely without additional help. Specifically, assessment of tasks indicates that a separate accounting function should be established within the LNO to provide real-time budgetary information on all accounts and projects being managed. At present, the LNO relies on monthly budget reports from UNM, which do not include the most recent transactions and are therefore inadequate for accurate and timely planning and budget management. An additional administrative assistant dedicated to accounting would address this problem and allow other LNO staff to focus on their primary responsibilities. The annual cost of such a position would be \$50K including fringe benefits and overhead..

As recommended by the recent Site Review, the LNO is in the process of becoming a University of New Mexico center, a change that will involve additional reporting and budgetary tasks. The LNO Strategic Planning process has identified the need for a Senior Program Manager to address these new tasks and to enable the Executive and Associate Directors to concentrate on developing initiatives in network-level synthesis, global information technology, and the Network Information System. By assuming duties such as meeting coordination, collection, maintenance and analysis of data on LTER operations, preparation of reports, oversight of administrative staff, development of operating procedures, cost and productivity analyses, proposal preparation, recruitment, and grant management, this new position will contribute significantly to the capability of the LNO to address the core objectives of the LTER Network. Annual costs associated with such a position are approximately \$115K including fringe benefits and overhead.

In addition to the two positions described above, the LTER Information Management Executive Committee wrote the LTER Executive Committee on October 14 requesting the creation of a new position in the LNO to provide technical outreach to the LTER sites and production level maintenance in the development of the LTER Network Information System. The position would provide technical assistance to the sites in EML implementation, the design and implementation of relational databases, the construction of web and GRID services as well as provide education in technical issues in both verbal and written forms. The position could also be used to provide assistance to new LTER sites at the beginning of implementing an information management system, to move network-level databases and tools for synthesis into production mode, and to provide maintenance for these components. These tasks would be an extension of efforts initiated under the KDI project, which comes to a close in February 2004. We are awaiting input from the Executive and Coordinating Committees before determining how this request should be addressed in the LNO Strategic Plan.