

NET Site Visit - Need for an Education Coordinator.

The NET proposal is requesting funds for an Education Coordinator at NET and funding for an annual meeting of education representatives.

Do we need an Education Coordinator?
What's the most effective way of funding this person?

We agree with reviewers that we need focus and define the specific role of the Education Coordinator.

Not many competitive proposals are written specifically to fund people or infrastructure, therefore it makes sense to include the request for an Ed. Coordinator in the NET proposal.

Once we define goals for Education, the Education Coordinator can help implement the goals (e.g. write proposals for projects that go beyond individual sites, push diversity agenda, foster data sharing among sites).

We agree about having an Education Coordinator. However, this person doesn't necessarily need to be working at NET or funded by NET. Because there seems to be some resistance from the reviewers regarding funding such a person, we propose some alternatives:

- Have Education Coordinator affiliated with an existing center or institution. For example, University of Northern Colorado could work on funding such a person to work on behalf of the whole network. Dean and Provost at UNC see the value beyond their own institution. This would increase the profile of UNC and would benefit the network of sites.
- Full time funding for the Education Coordinator could come from NSF to support this person for the first 2 years. Then NSF could fund 50% and the other 50% could be generated from grants obtained by Education Coordinator.
- LTER program could seek funding from EHR.
- Could explore with UNM if they're willing to cost-share a position.

Agree with reviewer about qualifications of Education Coordinator.

Goals for Strategic Plan

1. Develop a broad vision for LTER education, and acquire the new resources for achieving it.

2. Train, mentor and support the next generation of ecologists who are equipped to conduct long-term, collaborative research to address complex ecological problems.

LTERR are uniquely positioned to address and attract different sectors of the population, especially underrepresented groups. For example, LTER has sites on the southwest with Hispanics and Native American students, sites in Alaska with Alaskan Natives, sites in the South with predominantly African American student population.

Diversity is an NSF priority. We need to address it and can easily incorporate it at LTER sites.

LTER can promote Ecology as a career option.

LTER provides unique environments to bring students to the field and learn about long-term ecological processes. This is especially important for students in urban sites and for minority students who haven't had field exposure.

By working with diverse student populations LTER can learn about different ways of knowing.

3. Evaluate and Assess ongoing education programs at LTER

Is SLTER working? Do we know what we need to do next? This is essential so the scientific community is convinced of education efforts and plans.

It seems that we can do development and dissemination after we've assessed the programs.

LTER needs a project-wide assessment like what's being planned for the UMEB program. Need to develop an assessment instrument. (Alan has details).

Include all levels (including undergraduate and graduates) that PIs have struggled with. For example, do we know how many publications have come up from REU supported projects?

4. Develop models and resources for teaching and learning that are well documented and assessed, and then disseminate these broadly.

Sites work independently and can continue to do so. However, it makes sense to start working cooperatively to use the data generated by the network effectively.

Online courses could be developed for use at all sites. For example a course related to a specific system that is only taught at one site could be used by faculty at other network sites.

Similarly, lesson plans for teachers could be developed and put online. Teachers could incorporate these plans into their courses.

LTER network could have a library and use it in their courses (e.g. ESA's BEN project).

Data sets generated at LTER sites could be included in ecology lessons.

Develop fact sheets based on LTER core areas across sites.

Develop materials on biomes to put on the web that can be used by all (i.e. informal science education). Biomes are part of the Science and Math standards. LTER should be leading the teaching of biomes.

Use data sets to query data. Use the long-term data sets available at LTER sites. This is very unique.

Have LTER as a clearinghouse for materials.

5. Build our knowledge of how people learn about long-term ecological processes and the earth's ecosystems

LTER can start looking at the Education Research question as much as the Development question.

There should be a teaching and learning component seen as part of the LTER mission. There's an intellectual broadening of the mission. Research, scholarship and inquiry needs to be part of it.

Additional comments:

Need funding for the committee. Ed. Committee needs to be a real player and interact with the coordinating committee.

Need funding for a meeting of education representatives. It is desirable to have time and facilities for this. It is essential for ed. Representatives to spend time together (say 3 days) in working groups developing network wide projects (e.g. fact sheets, network wide RET programs). Education representatives need to meet to come up with products.

It would be desirable to find out how Judith Ramaley (NSF AD for EHR) is viewing LTER and the potential role of EHR in it.

Need to foster a receptive climate for education at NET.

Partnerships are essential but they are not goals but means to achieve our goals.

Come up with a 6-year plan and a matrix to incorporate goals and timeline.

Education activities have to link with network PIs. Need to facilitate information to Network PIs.

The strategic plan needs to include all levels not only K-12 if we need the PIs to buy into it.