

LTERR Network Strategic Planning

The unique niche of the Long Term Ecological Research Network is a function of it being a large national network of field sites with scientists collectively engaged and dedicated to multi and interdisciplinary long-term research in environmental science. Strengths of the LTER network include synthesis of environmental information, collaborative, cross-site research, documented, archived and publicly available long-term data sets from a wide variety of ecosystems, a cadre of more than 1300 scientists representing virtually all subdisciplines in the ecological sciences and related disciplines (social science, geosciences, computing and information science, etc.), and a philosophy of fostering inclusion of additional sites, scientists, and disciplines outside the network to achieve the LTER network vision.

Long Term Ecological Research Network Vision

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

Long Term Ecological Research Network Mission

The mission of the LTER Network:

- Understanding ecological phenomena over long temporal and large spatial scales
- Creating a legacy of well-designed and documented long-term experiments and observations for future generations
- Fostering synthesis and theory development at individual sites and across the network to answer ecological questions at site, regional and continental scales
- Providing knowledge for the identification and solution of ecological problems

Long Term Ecological Research Network Goals

- Understanding:* Gaining ecological understanding of a diverse array of ecosystems at multiple spatial and temporal scales
- Synthesis:* Using the network of LTER and affiliated sites to create general ecological knowledge through the synthesis of information gained from long-term research and development of theory
- Information:* Creating well-designed, documented databases that are accessible to the broader scientific community
- Legacies:* Leaving a legacy of well-designed and documented long-term observations, experiments, and archives of samples and specimens
- Education:* Using the uniqueness of the LTER programs and network to promote training, teaching, and learning about long-term ecological research and the earth's ecosystems
- Outreach:* Providing knowledge to the broader ecological community, general public, resource managers, and policy makers to address complex environmental challenges

ILTER Proposal Review

EC consideration

- The EC recognizes the value of the ILTER program and appreciates the NSF support of this effort. It will put the global scientific community in the position of recognizing and addressing the long-term ecological and environmental issues.
- Important to have this process and potential for developing better international collaboration.
- Important to develop funding for proposals that will enhance international collaboration.
- We concur with NSF's proposal to maintain central coordination for ILTER in the US until such time as the ILTER community decides that responsibility should reside elsewhere.
- Efficient to have it in the LTER Network Office; however, the funding mechanism needs to be separate from the Network Office Cooperative Agreement.
- Should be the result of a competitive process, the LTER Network Office would plan to compete for it.
- Postdoc-level position is inappropriate. High turnover rate, little continuity of effort, memory, insufficient experience.
- Difficult to understand how level of work can be accomplished with only a coordinator position.
- Not reasonable to have a coordinator at the Network Office supervised by a different institution.
- Support is needed for a senior LTER scientist to take on the lead for representing the US LTER Network and developing collaborative efforts.
- Level of IM training proposed requires more effort/resources than can be reasonably expected of the LTER Data Managers, especially since the proposal has no financial support for trainers.

Decision Points

- Move that the network adopts a strategy of a tiered trajectory toward improved IM functionality for synthesis. The trajectory increasingly incorporates common, structured metadata. The network adopts a general goal of improving each site's position in the trajectory. The NIS Advisory Group will develop metrics for assessment of progress at site and Network levels.
- Move that individual sites commit to populate and update existing basic network databases (ClimDB, HydroDB, SiteDB), where applicable. This commitment would also apply to any new network databases agreed upon by the coordinating committee in the future.
- Move that NIS Advisory Group continues as a standing committee.