

LTER Information Management Committee (IMC) Bylaws

Version 3, March 30, 2018

Approved by IMC on April 30, 2018

1. Overview

The LTER Information Management Committee (IMC) is an LTER network-wide standing committee as described in the LTER Bylaws Article VII, Section II (2017, Revision 5). 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 Communications Office (NCO), 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 4) 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. Co-chairs

One or two people (IMC co-chair(s)) preside over meetings of the IMC and IMC Executive Committee (IM-Exec). Co-chairs(s) are non-voting members of the LTER Science Council in accordance with the LTER Bylaws Article IV, Section 2.5 (2017, Revision 5). The term of the IMC co-chair(s) is three years. Should there be two co-chairs rather than a single chair, the co-chair terms should be staggered. Adjustment of term length may be necessary to accommodate staggered terms. A co-chair may serve more than one term if re-elected. An IMC co-chair must have served at least a partial term as a member of IM-Exec.

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 NCO, and will ensure communication between the IMC and the EDI.

5. Executive Committee (IM-Exec)

Authority: The IMC reserves ultimate authority for decisions on matters that fall within its purview and relate to responsibilities outlined below. To this end and without limitation of this authority, the IM-Exec has power to make day-to-day decisions and authorize 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. In the event that an IMC co-chair is unable to complete their term, IM-Exec will assign an acting co-chair from within its membership and will either hold a special electronic election or wait until the following annual meeting to elect a new co-chair. 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 NCO or EDI or NSF supplements) for the annual IMC meeting in consultation with IMC members
- coordinating and overseeing IMC and IM-Exec teleconferences (TC), and inviting necessary guests such as representatives of NCO or EDI
- coordinating the preparation of reports and minutes for meetings and TCs
- staying informed of IMC working group activities and requesting annual reports from active committees
- acting as a liaison between the IMC and the NCO, other LTER Network committees, and other partners

As necessary, IM-Exec responsibilities may include:

- coordinating responses to requests for information
- making recommendations to the 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.

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). A WG achieves formal status by completing and posting WG Bylaws.

Working groups may submit documents regarding their work in various forms, including a semi-formal Report on Progress or Request for Comment to IMC and/or IM-Exec. A WG may submit formal Requests for Endorsement and Requests for Adoption to IM-Exec. IM-Exec reviews a request, records it in their Roster of Actions, and takes appropriate action. When wider exposure is recognized as useful or when the request involves mandatory participation by sites and/or the commitment of site or network resources, the request is designated as having significant network consequences and brought before the IMC for discussion and voting (as described in section 3). Requests not submitted two weeks prior to an IM-Exec meeting or TC may be considered at the following meeting or TC.

Active working groups are tasked with maintaining a list of members (Roster of Membership), keeping a list of activities (Roster of Actions), and preparing a report for the annual IMC meeting website. When working groups conclude, they will prepare a summary document to be posted to the IMC website.

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 NCO and EDI related groups. SiteIMs contribute LTER site data to the currently designated LTER Network data repository and/or to any other data repository that meets National Science Foundation (NSF) requirements.

The IMC elects from its membership a representative to the EB in accordance with the LTER Bylaws (article V, section 2.4). 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 in the spring. 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 current rep's term, or via special electronic vote prior to the spring SC. 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. In non-ASM meeting years, the IMC will either meet alone or as part of a larger conference depending on venue and cost considerations. SiteIMs are also expected to participate in scheduled TCs.

The NCO and EDI may provide travel expenses on a limited basis for the IMC co-chairs and one representative from each site. 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; their costs may be supported by the EDI if the budget permits. A portion of the annual meeting is designated as the annual business meeting and is open only to IMC members.

Additional meetings by teleconference 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.

IM-Exec Meetings

IM-Exec meets regularly by TC, and designated individuals may be asked to report on particular activities. Working group representatives may be included in meetings, and NCO or EDI representatives may be invited when deemed necessary by IM-Exec. Minutes of meetings are posted on the IM website. Assignment of tasks to individual members (including liaisons to active working groups) is normally made at the first TC after the annual election. Examples of individual roles include logistics for the IMC meeting, scheduling of TCs, maintaining lists of committee and working group members, and preparation of minutes for meetings and TCs.

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

9. Elections

Candidates for IMC co-chairs, EB representative, and IM-Exec are drawn from the membership of IMC. IMC co-chair and EB candidates must have served or are currently serving as a member 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 IMC co-chairs, 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 NCO 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 NCO 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
- NCO Network Communications 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
- TC Teleconference
- ToR Terms of Reference (now Bylaws)
- 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, teleconferences, 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.