

LONG TERM ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH NETWORK COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE (NCO)

Call for Working Group Proposals

In this packet, you will find all the information needed to submit a proposal to the LTER-NCO.

- [Overview and Deadlines](#)
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Overview and Deadlines

The LTER Network Communications Office (NCO) was initiated in 2015 to foster enhanced communication, collaboration, synthesis, training, and engagement across the [LTER Network](#). To promote analysis and synthesis of LTER data, the NCO requests proposals for Synthesis Working Groups, with research to begin before May 2017. Funding is available for 2-4 projects of up to 2 years in duration. The Project Selection Committee is most interested in proposals anticipated to return high impact results in the five core LTER thematic areas¹ as well as the urban LTER themes of land use change and human-environment interactions, but proposals in other areas will also be considered. Principal investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the NCO (proposals@lternet.edu) to briefly discuss ideas before submitting proposals.

The NCO is operated out of the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis ([NCEAS](#)) at UC Santa Barbara. The Center provides excellent meeting facilities, comprehensive in-house computing capabilities, and consultation and training for visiting scientists on computation, informatics, and in-person and virtual collaboration skills.

Proposal Deadlines

Proposals for Working Groups should be submitted by Wednesday, **October 5, 2016**. Decisions will be announced in early December.

Who Should Apply

Proposals may be submitted by individuals of any nationality who hold a position in an academic institution, free-standing research institution, scientific society, governmental or policy agency, non-governmental organization, or a consortium of such institutions. Working group members should include one or more LTER researchers who are familiar with the LTER sites and data that will be used in the analysis. For synthesis research that will require a large effort to integrate multiple LTER datasets, inclusion of one or more LTER site information managers who are deeply familiar with those data is strongly encouraged. Please refer to the description of Synthesis Working Groups for additional guidance regarding working group size and composition.

Funding

Generally, NCO Working Groups are expected to meet at NCEAS in Santa Barbara, CA where the NCO can provide significant logistical and technical support. One or more meetings at other venues are also possible if well-justified. To reduce project costs and carbon footprint, the NCO provides technical and logistical support for the use of virtual meetings as well as in-person meetings.

Funding is intended to offset meeting travel, lodging and per diem expenses.

Working group budget requests should not exceed US\$55,000 per year or US\$110,000 for a 2-year period, unless the proposers can bring additional funds from non-NCO sources. This level of funding is generally adequate to support a working group of 12 individuals meeting for 5 days three times per year in Santa Barbara. Working group costs may vary depending on group size, number of international participants, number of in-person vs. virtual meetings, and meeting duration. Smaller working groups of shorter duration are welcomed and may allow more working groups to be funded. Proposals may involve activities with partial support from other institutions or agencies, and co-funding is welcomed.

Please [download](#) and use this template to estimate your working group budget.

What We Will Not Fund

- The NCO will not fund projects that primarily address the goals of another organization.

¹ Primary production, population studies, organic matter dynamics, mineral cycling, disturbance patterns and processes

- The NCO will not fund collection of new data or field research.
- The NCO will not fund proposals requesting overhead or funds to be spent by the investigator at the investigator's home institution.

Data Expectations

We expect NCO Working Groups to emphasize use of existing LTER data. *Analysis and synthesis of LTER data from more than one site is required.* In addition to multi-site LTER data, non-LTER data may also be included in the research.

The NCO, the Environmental Data Initiative, and NCEAS have a strong commitment to developing means to locate, access, analyze and make data broadly available, and to encouraging an ethic of information-sharing. To this end, working groups must agree to make derived data publicly available according to the [LTER Network Data Access Policy, Data Access Requirements, and General Data Use Agreement](#) and the [NCEAS Data and Information Policy](#) in place at the conclusion of working group activities.

Information Policy in place at the conclusion of working group activities.

Reporting

We ask PIs on approved projects to provide an initial summary of research objectives, anticipated work, and desired outcomes. NCO support should be cited in publications, and copies of articles accepted for publication should be sent to the NCO Communications Officer. Questionnaires requesting updates on Synthesis Working Group experience and products are sent periodically to participants and are very important to measuring the success of NCO Synthesis Working Groups.

Guidelines for Proposals

ILTER synthesis working group proposals are relatively short (fewer than 2000 words, excluding cover sheet, table of participants, citations, figures, tables, literature cited, and CVs) and yet need to include enough information in an effective form to allow for an accurate evaluation. Please follow the [formatting and submission instructions](#) provided below.

Include the following in your proposal, where applicable:

COVER SHEET
Date of Submission
Descriptive Title
Short Title – Two or three words for use as a project name (25 characters max)
Working Group Leaders' Name(s), position(s), and complete contact information
Project Summary – A brief scientific abstract of your project (200 words maximum)
Proposed Start and End Dates – Proposed start and end dates of your project (month, year)
Proposed Data Release Date – Date you expect to submit data set(s) to the NCO (month, year)
Is this a resubmission? – Yes/No (If yes, provide date(s) of previous submission(s).)
TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS
Names of Participants (maximum of 20). Please indicate what expertise they bring to the project and whether their participation is confirmed.
Technical Liaison – Identify a technical liaison in the working group for NCO/NCEAS computing staff. This participant should have considerable analytical expertise.
Data Monitor – Identify one participant who will be responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the LTER Network Data Access Policy , Data Access Requirements , and General Data Use Agreement and the NCO/NCEAS Data and Information Policy are met.
BODY OF PROPOSAL – Not to exceed 2000 words, excluding reasonable figures and tables
Problem Statement – Clear and concise statement of what is to be done, why it is important, and how it will be accomplished
Data Sources – Brief summary of key data and data sources
Proposed Activities – Brief description of methods and why they are appropriate
Working Group Diversity – Brief summary of efforts to achieve working group diversity (see Proposal Tips, below)
Timetable of Activities
Anticipated Results and Benefits – Include description of data and software products and proposed public release date.
Is this proposal (or a closely aligned proposal) under consideration elsewhere? If so, please briefly describe the circumstances.
APPENDICES
Literature Cited
Curriculum Vitae for Each Working Group Leader – Two (2) page maximum, NSF-style biosketch

Formatting and Submission Instructions

Proposals will be accepted in digital format only, as a PDF file. Proposals should be submitted as single, complete documents, formatted to standard letter size (8.5" W by 11" L) with graphics embedded directly in the document. The body of the proposal should follow the cover sheet. Information to be included in the cover sheet and body of the proposal is provided in the table above. Do not send compressed collections of files, such as .ZIP files.

Send the proposal document as an email attachment to proposals@lternet.edu. All those who submit proposals and references will receive an email confirming receipt within 24 hours of submission. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please call (805) 892-2500 with the first PI's name and proposal title. Someone will follow-up with you shortly. Please contact proposals@lternet.edu if you have difficulty submitting your proposal, or if you have extenuating circumstances that would prevent you from submitting a digital version of your proposal by the deadline.

For answers to questions not addressed on this Call for Proposals site, please email proposals@lternet.edu or call (805) 893-2500.

Proposal Review Process

Proposals are evaluated for their scientific merit, contribution to LTER Network science, novel approaches, and rationale for involving the NCO. The proposal review panel will include both LTER scientists and non-LTER scientists. Panelists are given a list of proposals under consideration and submit a list of those they prefer to review. Review assignments are made considering these preferences. Reviewers recuse themselves from proposal review when there might be a conflict of interest. At the request of the panel, the NCO may obtain additional reviews from other individuals with expertise of special relevance to the proposed research.

Reviews written by panel members will be returned to the PI(s) without revealing the names of the reviewers. While reviews are provided to applicants, they may not reflect the full breadth of discussions that take place at the panel meeting. The final decision on which proposals to fund will be made by the NCO Director in consultation with the Chair of the LTER Executive Board. Based upon panel discussions, the NCO may request some modifications to the proposal (e.g., adjustments to working group size or composition, inclusion of additional data resources) before funding is awarded.

Proposals received after the deadline will be returned without review. Proposals that are clearly inappropriate for NCO funding (e.g., those that do not involve analysis of multi-site LTER data, requesting overhead, funds to be spent at the investigator's home institution, or funds intended to collect new data, etc.) will also be returned without review.

Proposal Tips

To help you develop successful proposals, here are a few rules of thumb to guide your proposal preparation:

- Proposals are evaluated primarily on the significance and novelty of the idea(s) under consideration and should be question-driven (i.e., not purely descriptive).
- Provide a clear rationale for why this should be, or can only be, done at NCO/NCEAS.
- Be clear and concise. Give brief examples of major points you are making or approaches you are using. "Trust me" proposals are not effective.
- Include a **diverse** array of participants who are committed to the project. Pay attention to gender balance, career stage, and opportunities to include individuals from underrepresented institutions and groups. For each participant, specify the expertise brought to the project and whether he/she has agreed to participate.
- Indicate the source(s) of the data used in your project and its availability.

Synthesis Working Groups

Based on twenty years of experience at NCEAS, we have identified a few characteristics of synthesis working groups that contribute to their success:

- Groups of 8-16 scientists (20 maximum) work at the Center for 3-7 days, concentrating on specific issues that require in-depth analysis of data and synthesis of ideas. Each Working Group typically meets 2-3 times per year. Center experience suggests that working groups of 15 or fewer individuals meeting for at least 5 days are the most productive.
- Working Group proposals must designate at least one participant with considerable analytical expertise who will serve as the liaison with the NCO/NCEAS technical staff.
- It is expected that Working Groups will involve a diverse group of participants, including gender diversity, diversity in career stages, and members of under-represented communities.
- The NCO is interested in increasing opportunities for early-career scientist and graduate student participation in LTER synthesis activities.
- Funding occurs through an [NSF](#) grant to [UC Santa Barbara](#), which reimburses actual expenses (i.e., the Center does not award grants to other institutions). Applicants are encouraged to consider additional funding sources to leverage NCO resources.
- An analysis of NCEAS Working Group productivity was published in:

Hampton, S.E., and J.N. Parker. 2011. [Collaboration and productivity in scientific synthesis](#) (PDF). *BioScience* 61: 900-910.