

NOAA Education Council Meeting

Date/Time: September 23, 2009 (1:00–4:00 pm)
 Location: SSMC3, Room 14836
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AGENDA

- 1:00 Welcome/Opening Remarks
- 1:10 Evaluation Working Group presentation – Atziri Ibanez & Kate Thompson (*decisional*)
 (30 min presentation/80 min discussion)
- 3:00 Update on selected ELG grants – Sarah Schoedinger (*input request*)
 (10 min presentation/20 min discussion)
- 3:30 Updates & Announcements

Upcoming Council Meetings:

October 21, 2009
November 18, 2009

Attendance

In person: Louisa Koch (LK), Lexie Brown (LB), Thanh Vo Dinh (TVD), Ron Gird (RG), Jennifer Hammond (JH), Atziri Ibanez (AI), Marlene Kaplan (MK), Judy Koepsell (JK), Luis Leandro (LL), Paulo Maurin (PM), Christos Michalopoulos (CM), John McLaughlin (JMc), Frank Niepold (FN), Bronwen Rice (BR), Irelene Ricks (IR), Peg Steffen (PS), Steve Storck (SSt), Kate Thompson (KT), Sharon Walker (SW), Carla Wallace (CW).

On the phone: Stephanie Bennett (SB), Shannon Sprague (SP), Paula Keener-Chavis (PKC), Sarah Schoedinger (SS)

Announcements (LK)

- Finished briefing Commerce Deputy Secretary Hightower. NOAA was last bureau to meet with him. There were 20 NOAA leaders in the room and I was pleased to be one of them. My inclusion in this meeting is a testament of the good work being done by the Ed Council. Dep. Sec. Hightower was interested in lots of NOAA issues, e.g., sea level rise. I gave an overview of NOAA's Educational Partnership Program (EPP) and what we have accomplished. He was also interested in climate change services. He met with various line offices, including the Office of Education (OEd). I got 3 minutes with him at the end and highlighted our informal education efforts. I also invited him to the EEP forum and he expressed eagerness to attend.
- B-WET bill may be introduced sometime today by House Committee on Natural Resources. This bill would authorize B-WET and ELG programs.

Evaluation Working Group presentation – Atziri Ibanez & Kate Thompson (*decisional*)

AI: Luis will take general notes, but Lexie will take specific notes on get-backs from this discussion to make sure we do not miss anything important.

- SW: If what we want is option 3 the problem is the reality of funds. This is the difference between options 2 and 3. I appreciate the work of this group. I would like to know better what the reality of our fiscal commitment is.
- LK: I expect the Office of Education (OEd) to pay for the majority of it. I do not want our office to become the "Office of Evaluation". But I also want a certain degree of commitment from the line offices. I don't want OEd to be the only supporter in terms of resources. I obviously do not have right now a \$350K check to put into this pot. We do not know what FY10 looks like, but if we get what we think we will, we should be in good shape to lead this effort.
- Action Item 1 (LK):** I think the working group needs to go back and prioritize items first. We need to answer the question better as to what we want to see happen and when. We need to also see what the schedule/timeline looks like beyond November. We want to be strongly supported with people and resources, but we need to carve out some of these details beforehand.
- PKC: Ocean Exploration had an evaluator define priorities. Would that be relevant to answer these questions?
- CM: I agree with all that you said. I agree that Option 3 is where we need to be. I agree that OEd cannot take the burden all on its own. This capability is a long term investment. We need to think this through and come up with ideas on where the money will come from.

- KT: We need to take baby steps. Sanctuaries is five years in and not there yet. We should start creating capabilities first.
- CM: Remember, this does not replace programmatic evaluations. Programs already should be investing resources to evaluation, but we all need to chip in just a bit more for NOAA-wide evaluation efforts.
- KT: I agree, but if we as a council develop a NOAA-wide toolbox for evaluation, I see no point in us developing our own.
- JH: As the facilitator for this discussion, let's remember that today's focus is not "the how", but "the what". For today, we need to decide if we are agreeing to move forward with one of these options.
- JMc: I would also like to extend my complements to this working group. I am wondering if this group looked at existing databases or current ones being developed, such as the Sanctuaries database. Are there existing databases that we can look at and use?
- AI: We have an intranet site in OEd. Separate from that, Steve and I have been looking at what other offices have developed. This is an important step to take, but we need help from an external expert to do this.
- SSt: There are several websites and databases out there that we should look at. We need to have this discussion, obviously a bit premature to discuss this right now.
- AI: We have someone that has been acting as an advisor and has provided technical input on this framework. One major thing that this expert recommended was to develop a metric system first before asking all the specific questions.
- CW: At the Weather Service we have a database. If you already have a database, you should continue to use it. But if there is a general database for NOAA-wide education, we need to make sure we are all on the same page.
- KT: People in the field do not have the time to input the same data twice.
- FN: There are people that are very good with databases that will not input the data twice. But there are experts that can link databases together to avoid duplication of effort. I encourage us to be more aggressive on measuring performance. We have to be able to demonstrate success on priorities outlined by the President. Option 2 is not sufficient. I hope we can solidly agree on option 3. It is important for us to think a bit on 'the how'. We just missed the FY12-16 PPBES, but we should include some of these needs during the FY13-17 process. We need an institutionalized system for requesting resources. On the monitoring side of things, we do not have baselines to assess how effective we are. This is important.
- TVD: For the database, could we use CasaNOSA?
- CM: After we have in place performance metrics and use them, maybe, but until then we need an easier database that is more user friendly.
- TVD: It is critical to have in house capability on developing performance metrics. We already have this capability in NOAA. If we bring an external expert, sooner or later, we have to develop our own metrics. So, I think it would be best if we used our existing capabilities.
- CM: I have been asking this from PPI for the last 2-3 years and the answer was always no. No one could/can direct me to this capability. I appreciate your comments, but I do not know where to go to get this capability. We wanted to build on this internally, but couldn't find anything and no one in PPI was able to point us in the right direction.
- TVD: The people that developed this capability in NOAA are still here. We can get them together.
- CM: Three months ago I tried to look for this. It used to be posted on the PPI website, but I couldn't find it.
- **Action Item 2 (LK):** Thank, if you could please send us the link to the website and the names of people that can help, we would be interested in connecting with those efforts.
- MK: But we are also going to need people with specific expertise on education evaluation.
- PS: I agree. We need an education expert to look at our evaluation efforts. I would also suggest that we look at options 2&3 and know what evaluation systems other agencies are using and costs associated with them so we can get to a hybrid.
- PKC: One of the things brought up in this document is the need to collect data from grantees. Grants Management Division (GMD) uses a different language. As we discuss development of tools we may need to consider asking grantees to fill out a common tool once that's developed.
- SS: Paula, you raised a very good point. This is something we looked at for ELG. What the grants system collects would not be very helpful. Grantees are required to send semi-annual reports. We found that if we do not have one person to collect all of this data it becomes hard to use. This is something that we need to look at.
- SB: The Grants Online system for data collection is not transferable to another database.
- JH: We all are agreeing that we need evaluation (refer to slide 20). We also need to address performance measures before deciding.
- FN: When we refer to performance measures, are we talking about cross programs and inter-operable performance measures?
- AI: We are basing these on NOAA's Education Strategic Plan to advance outcomes.
- TVD: Programs may also need their own performance measures in addition to corporate level ones.
- SSt: We need to think about tracking and reporting and also need to think about raising everyone's knowledge about how to write their own performance measures. A writing workshop on this is included in both options 2 and 3.
- PS: Any grant that gets NOAA money should input their data into this database.
- LK: NOAA-wide taglines for broader effort to supplement program-level measures.
- FN: One piece that is missing is data entry into the database. This is something that should be done at the end of any major event. The system of getting the data into the database is equally important as the database itself.

- AI: I share your vision of a robust database. I support the idea in option 3 of a robust database system. We need to have a performance monitoring system before we can go into all the details.
- LK: The Weather Service already has a database that people use on a daily basis that we can look at. They will not create a new database. We need to think about a way to put these pieces all together.
- RG: This is the first year. It's a start, but the database will likely evolve.
- KT: Is entering into database part of performance plan? Percent of people actually inputting?
- RG: 1-2 entries from each forecast office (2 people per office). Not sure about performance plans.
- JH: Let's move away from database for now onto slide 7. These are strategies that are influencing options 2 and 3. Others haven't had much time on these strategies. I want to make sure that you clearly understand that we would use either option 2 or 3 to address these. Is there anything that you think is missing from the strategies?
- SW: Is it within our own programmatic area that we are supposed to help out with evaluation once the system is set? How do we get the NOAA-level info back to field?
- AI: See strategy 5 slide – if we want to undertake a cultural shift to become stronger in evaluative thinking, then people across NOAA working on education need to understand evaluation methods, techniques, etc. We envisioned some level of support at the regional level to raise the bar in terms of evaluation. We want to make sure that there is a NOAA wide evaluation system that programs can follow.
- KT: Our West Coast regional training was all done online and it worked really well. It goes beyond evaluation training. It also addresses tools and outcomes.
- LK: Regional nodes of implementation have not been thought through. We need programmatic aspect because each program has different needs. Also want to leverage knowledge and expertise existing in regions.
- SS: There is a node of expertise developed in each agency, in addition to an outside partnership. We need to move toward this type of model.
- CM: I agree with what Steve said. I think we all agreed that we need to do this. FY12-16 is a perfect example of this. Not having a robust evaluation system has been an obstacle for requesting education funds through PPBES. For example, Teacher at Sea FY11 request to DOC. PPBES is not the process for doing this. We cannot wait until FY13. We have to come up with money and come up with a sustained resource for this effort. We have to take this seriously and make it happen.
- AI: I want to know what your comfort level is. Just overall moving forward with minimally option 2.
- **Vote 1(AI):** Agreeing to at least move forward with option 2 for now. **Passed!**
- **Vote 2(AI):** How about agreeing to move forward solidly with option 3? **LK shows red card.**
- LK: I am not ready to commit to 350K until we know the details, logical next steps. I am not ready to firmly commit to option 3.
- CM: 350K is not that much money relatively to NOAA education resources. With Sanctuaries, part of the reason why it is taking 5 years is because resources were insufficient.
- AI: Louisa, we will not be able to answer these questions by October. We need an expert to look at all the databases before we can come up with a proposal.
- LK: If the working group brings a proposal for an evaluator that the Ed Council endorses, then we can move forward and the OEd will support financially and with staff support. Congressional appropriations are generally not supportive of money used for internal capability. I am supportive of this effort. Just not able at this point to commit to option 3 until I know more details.
- PS: Does your office have a COTR certified person?
- CM: No. I would love to recruit a line office COTR certified person.
- AI: I want to thank you all. This was a very productive conversation. I just want to make sure that everyone is comfortable with moving forward. Please feel free to contact anyone in our group if you have any questions.
- PKC: So, what was the conclusion?
- JH: Based on the vote, we all agreed that the working group was moving forward with option 2. Come back to council with timeframe beyond Nov and what option 3 would look like. Move forward with option 2, keeping option 3 in mind.
- **Action Item 3 (LL):** From what I have in the notes, it seems like the decision was to take a hybrid approach of options 2&3, and carve out the details next month in terms of commitment after the working group prioritizes items and comes back to the Council with a schedule of events beyond November.
- AI: OK, moving forward with option 2 hybrid for now.
- LK: It is implicit in this conversation that we are all OK with strategies in this framework. No vote needed.

Update on selected ELG grants – Sarah Schoedinger (input request)

- KT: The money listed on slide 6 is what will go to each aquarium?
- SS: Yes.
- FN: The Environmental Literacy Grants (ELG). Have those been announced?
- SS: Yes, awardees have been contacted.
- FN: So, can we speak openly and publically on the ELG?
- SS: Yes. Awards listed on slides 3 and 4 are public information.
- PS: Some awards are to develop curriculum? Will this developed curriculum become public domain and eventually reside in the NOAA website?
- SS: Some of them will, others will not. The one that will not is UC Berkeley because they already have a commercial publisher for that curriculum. We will have access to copies for our own use at no cost, though.

- LK: Peg, you are asking an important question. We want to make sure the resources developed through these grants come in to enrich NOAA's education website and resources. We welcome additional thoughts of how these awards can maximize our long-term benefit. We need to think more about this.
- AI: Do we have a slide or something that maps out how these grants are connecting to people here in NOAA? I would love to see this.
- SS: We do not have the slide, but this is a really good suggestion. These projects do not get funded if they do not have a NOAA partner. I will be happy to add this information to a future update.
- PS: How able are we to tweak the language in the AZA announcements a bit to get work done that the Council needs, for example, for evaluation money?
- SS: Interesting question. In theory there is always a possibility. For evaluation it is a tricky issue. The lawyers may not allow us to use grant money solely for evaluation.
- LK: But this is probably the pot of money we would look into for funding the contract for evaluation.
- CM: We have debated this heavily internally.
- LK: But we have discussed heavily ensuring the ELG are in line with our strategic plan.
- PS: Has the Connects working group been working with you on the FY10 funding award? On distance learning, for example?
- SS: Not yet, but this is an excellent idea.
- LK: I think this is a great discussion to have outside of this meeting.
- FN: Picking up on Peg, Climate and Ocean Literacy far exceed NOAA. If grantee went for a multi-institutional solution would that be permissible? Provide framework for measuring progress across several agencies?
- SS: The question becomes do you want to run a group competition. I am not sure if this is a good idea. These grants are focused primarily on benefiting the external community, outside of federal agencies.
- JMc: We are trying to partner with NSF. This group funds educational research and has large effort underway to fund framework for evaluation on informal science education. NSF resources for this are much larger than any resources we could possibly come up with for this effort. So the key is to collaborate with NSF on this.

Updates and Announcements

- AI: NEERS is getting ready for national meeting in Nov. Climate is biggest topic to be discussed. Also looking at social marketing tools and community tools. Have several thematic sessions.
- KT: We have had a busy two weeks. Had education meeting with Sanctuaries educators for 4 days to go over strategic plan. Major goal is ocean and climate literacy. Had NEERS represented there too. Went over climate literacy principles and scored how well they match our sites. We hosted Ocean Literacy Summit in partnership with Oregon Sea Grant, NEERS, and Oregon Coast Aquarium. It went really well in discussing Ocean Literacy integration into programs and projects across NOAA and in Oregon. Frank presented on how to connect Climate and Ocean Literacy concepts. We still have some work on this. Participated on AZA conference along with other offices. Leadership was there and we came up with good partnerships to move forward. Have over 35 partnerships with aquariums. H.R. 21 put forth by House of Reps on Jan. Wanted to ask Council about QFR comments. There is a public comment that suggests taking all outreach and education programs in NOAA under one office (presume OEd). Any ideas of where this came from? I want to make sure as a Council we have a voice on this and understand where it is coming from.
- LK: We have not received this bill for comment yet.
- KT: It must have come from DOC.
- MK: I do not understand the public comment issue. This is not normally the process.
- LL: We definitely have not received anything from Leg Affairs on this, so my guess is that this is not going anywhere, otherwise we would have been notified and asked to provide comments.
- RG: The AMS annual meeting is coming up in Georgia. Weather Fest is scheduled for Jan 17 (Sunday). AMS meeting runs all of that week. Teacher training workshop in the morning and NOAA booths will be there. I have received an email from UAS science festival. They are organizing a large scale UAS science festival at the National Mall. I pointed them towards AMS Weather Fest. Next month once I have more info on this we will get back to the Council.
- SW: There is some information in SG newsletter that may be of interest to Council members. I will send out this letter to Luis for distribution.
- PS: Working with New Jersey science supervisor to tie New Jersey science standards to NOAA resources. We are moving forward with Climate Steward Program. The plan is to sell it to line office leadership and look forward to get support, at least for the pilot this year. A series of 8 seminars for the next year. We are cooperating with US. Forestry Service. Moving forward with online games.
- FN: COP15 planning progress. NOAA has secured 95% for having SOS there. David Herring will be there. Key leadership from NOAA will be there. There is a panel on climate literacy and other initiatives. AZA – lots of strong partnership language. Climate came up several times. They want to engage with NOAA. Their headquarters office happens to be right across the street. Cyber learning workshop next week 29th with reception. Please stop by. If you are interested in working on the climate portal section let me know. We have funding through an NSF proposal. There is clear education and education reporting language in the IOOS bill. I am interested in knowing who is leading this.
- MK: We need to sit down with IOOS folks and put forth a proposal. I will talk to them. They are aware that they do not have enough resources for the education piece.
- AI: We also have an IOOS person at one of our reserves.
- PS: IOOS in within NOS. There was a meeting scheduled for this that got cancelled. I can make some inquiries. Peg is taking the lead on this. Sharon also wants to be involved.

- PM: I will be attending NAAEE meeting in several weeks from now and will be presenting. I am also participating at a corals task force meeting at the end of October. Report to Congress should be over soon, and then we will move onto the strategic plan.
- MK: To make sure we keep making progress on the implementation plan, we have scheduled a meeting (October 14th) with all the working group leads and co-leads. We need to decide on a strategy to ensure we keep moving forward on our implementation plan and report to the Council. I am on the working group for the Next Generation Strategic Plan. There are currently 8 potential goals, one which is called environmentally engaged society. Not clear how this will all shape out. There is a stakeholder meeting Dec 2nd and NEP/NEC review for late October to get guidance on the process. We are shooting for a goal. Fortunately education is coming up at several venues. We could end up as a goal on the NGSP.
- JH: Fisheries education council has finished its implementation plan based on NOAA's education plan. Hoping to distribute within the next month. We are closing season for T@S. Piloted 5 teachers in the lab for the entire year. Application process begins Oct 1st. Will send application (online) to Council. Developing online training program. Next year looking to pilot teacher in the field.
- CM: Heard from NAS that pre-publication report for NOAA Education has been pushed back 3 months. Now they are saying that we will hopefully see this report early January. Final report will be available early March. The reason for this delay has to do with some scheduling issues and conflicts with field season that some board members are involved in.
- **Action Item 4 (SSt):** I sent out a message to council that we are ready for next stage of review of the implementation plan. I immediately got comments on some revisions needed. The copy that is currently posted on the website has been updated with these revisions. Within the next month, please circulate the document with field staff and your partners. We ask for you to consolidate comments from your contacts into one document. I will need comments from Council members back by 23rd of October.
- CM: As a reminder, we will not have an external review stage for this plan like we did with the strategic plan. Thus, we leave it up to council members to distribute this plan to contacts/partners. This is not a requirement; it is up to each council member to decide who should review the plan within their networks.
- AI: Are there any specific instructions?
- SST: No. Just the same general ones we used for the strategic plan. Page number and lines are also included in the latest draft. I will send a revised version with example and post on public site so Council members can use to send to contacts and partners.
- LL: I have been working on the NOAA education 2-pager for congressional outreach. If you remember, this is one of the milestones in the implementation plan. Once I am done with a draft I will send out for your comments.
- BR: B-WET awards have been finalized. We are funding 8 new projects in New England, Gulf Coast and Pacific Northwest. Please get in touch with me for specific information.
- JMc: Workshop on SOS network December 17-19 in Boulder Colorado. Online registration form available online and registration is due Nov 2. We are offering travel support for network members and launched travel request form. We are voting on agenda items and voting closes this Friday. If you are interested in knowing more about this workshop please let me know. Our grants team has been ramping up coordination with NSF on evaluation of informal science education and funding opportunities.
- SSt: We are still actively pursuing hiring a new person to work on the education portal. Kirk Beckendorf put together a listening group. This was mostly a brainstorming session with the Einstein fellows. We are working on scoping the document right now. Once we have a proposal, we want to put together a working group to look further into this.
- LK: On behalf of Stacey Rudolph, the purpose of the Jason meeting is to leverage NOAA investment, which was 6M in 2009.
- CM: Please, if you haven't done so, please consider attending this meeting.
- PKC: OAR coming online workshop. This is coming up the first week of October (6th). Two week online opportunity focusing on the Okeanos Explorer.