

National Centers for Ocean Science Education Excellence (COSEE) Network Operating Policies

Background

National COSEE Network (NCN, a.k.a. “Network”) business is conducted by the National COSEE Office (NCO) and National COSEE Council (NCC, a.k.a. “Council”) working in close collaboration. Terms of Reference for the Council have been developed to guide its efforts. This Operating Policies document complements the Terms of Reference by providing more detail on the governance and operational procedures being used by the Network in managing and coordinating its affairs.

The Council is the deliberative assembly that carries the Network vision, and moves Network goals forward. The Council is intimately involved in the implementation of the Centers’ work and informed by the collective work of the Centers to ensure that the Network learns, benefits from, and disseminates best practices that are representative of the sum of all efforts.

The NCO supports all aspects of the Network’s goals and work, facilitates the visibility of the Network’s accomplishments, and provides dependable communication avenues internal and external to the Network. The NCO team provides operational support with evolving responsibilities that reflect the evolving experiential nature of the Network. The team takes a pro-active and flexible approach that responds to the evolution of the Network.

The NCO is staffed by the following:

- **Executive Director:** The Executive Director is the official “voice of the Network,” oversees all Network business, facilitates workshops and meetings, seeks funding for Network-wide initiatives, serves as a liaison to the Council from outside partners, is a member of the Council Executive Committee, is a voting-member of the Council, and reports to the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Executive Director leads the NCO staff.
- **National Advisory Committee Liaison:** The National Advisory Committee (NAC) Liaison coordinates all National Advisory Committee business, is the liaison between the NAC and the Council, and leads strategic planning for the Network.
- **National Web Director:** The National Web Director directs the Network’s Internet presence, works with the Executive Director to plan the development of the website, and supervises the Network web team.
- **National Partnerships and Collaborations Coordinator:** The National Partnerships and Collaborations Coordinator works with the Executive Director to develop partnerships within and external to the Network, coordinates the Network presence at national meetings, and facilitates meetings and workshops.
- **National Network Coordinator:** The National Network Coordinator (NNC) has the long tenure responsibility of “corporate memory” for all network activities and history; coordinates various types of meetings; works collaboratively with the Executive Director, the Council Executive Committee, and Council; assists with Executive Committee business; works with the Collaborations and Partnerships Coordinator to foster partnerships and visibility at national meetings; works with the NAC liaison to ensure that the NAC has all appropriate documents and communications; and supervises the National Network Assistant and the editor of the COSEE monthly newsletter. The NNC is a member of and supports Council working groups.
- **National Network Assistant:** The National Network Assistant works collaboratively with the Executive Director and the Council, is responsible for documentation and reporting of Council and Network meetings, actively supports Network communication through technology, works with the editor of the COSEE monthly newsletter to produce Network

news items, is a member of and supports Council working groups, and serves the NAC and coordinates all NAC travel.

- *Managing Editor, COSEE Network News*: The Managing Editor works collaboratively with the Council, relevant Working Groups (e.g., Web Working Group), Centers, Program Managers and NCO to develop content and produce the monthly Network Newsletter. She/he also provides Network news for posting on www/cosee.net and monitors the <<mailto:allcosee@cosee.net>>allcosee@cosee.net listserv.

NCC Policies

The Council membership and charge are defined in the Terms of Reference. The following policy statements, formally adopted by the Council in support of Network goals, provide guidance to operations that are not in the Terms of Reference.

1. COUNCIL CHAIR ELECTION PROCESS

The Council is presided over by the current chair. The chair-elect (who serves in that capacity prior to becoming Council chair) is elected annually, preceding the annual spring Network Meeting. The election process includes two steps:

Step 1: Soliciting nominations from within the NCC

- The Executive Committee is responsible for assembling the slate of nominees.
- The process starts with the solicitation of nominees approximately two months prior to the annual spring Network Meeting (nominally held on the first Tuesday and Wednesday of May).
- Eligible candidates include Council members and alternate members from each Council member.
- Each Center and the NCO may nominate up to four individuals.
- Those individuals receiving the most nominations and who are willing and able to serve for three years (one year each as chair-elect, chair and past-chair) will be listed on the slate of nominees.
- The slate of nominees will be comprised of the top nominees, determined as follows:
 - Individuals with the highest numbers of nominations, using a minimum of 10% of all nominations as a threshold guideline
 - The Executive Committee will obtain affirmation from each nominee on his/her willingness to serve as Council chair-elect
 - If only one top nominee is interested in serving as chair-elect, the Executive Committee may recommend to the Council that a one-candidate ballot with a “write-in” field be used for the on-line vote
 - It is the responsibility of each Center to maintain biographical information on the current Primary and Alternative Council members on the COSEE Directory (www.cosee.net). This will better inform the chair-elect Nomination process.

Step 2: Election from the slate of nominees

- The election from the approved slate takes place approximately one month prior to the spring Network Meeting.
- Each COSEE Center and the CCO National Office has one vote.
- A simple majority will determine the outcome for the chair-elect.

Both steps currently employ an online voting process, such as the polling available on www.SurveyMonkey.com.

2. COUNCIL AND NETWORK MEETINGS

The Council meets on a regular basis to keep abreast of Centers' progress and work, make decisions for the Network, plan Network activities, strategize on important directions and/or changes for the Network, and review and reflect on the impact of the Network's work. There are two mandatory meetings of the Council as required by its by-laws:

- The spring Network Meeting,
- The fall Council Meeting. The fall Council Meeting should include time to discuss plans for the following year, including strategic actions by the NCO, the Network, and the Council.

The NCO develops an annual operating plan for the Network in consultation with the Executive Committee. Once agreed upon by the Council, the plan will be widely distributed to the entire Network.

The Council has adopted a rotating meeting schedule where funded Centers volunteer to take turns hosting the annual spring Network meetings. Responsibilities of the host Center include assisting the NCO with logistical planning, including hotel and catering arrangements, and providing a site tour or appropriate program of interest to help Network members better understand and appreciate the host Center's work and mission.

To support the Council between the spring Network and fall Council meetings, the Council and NCO have established seven additional categories of meetings to conduct Network business:

- Impact review meetings (for review and reflection of the business of the Network, to look at long-term trends of where the Network is heading, and to look at patterns and impacts of what the Network is doing) facilitated by the NCO, Council chair and/or a Working Group chair;
- "Best practices" work sessions (to determine Network proven effective practices related to specific topics) facilitated by the NCO;
- Evaluators' workshops (an annual workshop for Center and Network evaluators) facilitated by the NCO;
- Check-in meetings (monthly conference call or virtual meeting) facilitated by the Council chair;
- Planning meetings (for overall yearly operational planning of activities, events, conferences, etc.) facilitated by the NCO and Council chair;
- Tactical meetings (to respond in a timely manner to issues that need to be addressed more rapidly; these meetings will vary in size and focus) facilitated by the Council chair;
- Strategic meetings (Network-type meetings encouraging input from the Network members and National Advisory Council focused on long-range planning and strategic thinking) facilitated by the NCO.

3. COMMON OPERATING AGREEMENT FOR ALL COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Members of the Network or external participants that express interest in serving on a Council Working Group or ad hoc Committee agree to the following:

- One member must serve as chair. Duties of the chair include:
 - Set-up regular communications,
 - Distribute workload, and
 - Document progress and actions in collaboration with all members.
- Members must continuously participate and contribute to the stated group/ committee goal.
 - Members must inform the group/committee chair ahead of time of any expected extended absence from group/committee meetings so that responsibilities may be

- reallocated among remaining members of the group/committee in a timely manner.
- Lack of communication with the group/committee or non-contribution to group/committee work for a period extending beyond three regular working sessions will automatically end tenure on that group/committee (e.g., removal from the working group's email listserv).
- Each group/committee should capture, review and disseminate minutes of each meeting.
 - Each group/committee member is expected to review meeting minutes to avoid delaying project progress.
 - Minutes are sent to all group/committee members before next session by chair or such member in charge of minutes.
 - Once approved by the chair, minutes are to be posted on the COSEE online File Manager.

The size of a working group/ad hoc committee will be flexible but reasonable in numbers, as too many participants can hamper progress. As the group/committee evolves, it will regularly reassess if and what additional expertise is needed, and whose contribution might only be needed temporally.