

## Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) Business Plan

### Governance Straw Man:

A number of organizational options exist for GLOS. Numerous suggestions have included various incarnations of a non-profit corporation, from an independent entity to one attached in various ways to an existing organization, e.g. a federal agency, an educational institution, or an existing, larger non-profit organization or NGO. Other options that could be explored include an un-incorporated affiliation of interested parties and a for-profit corporation.

Drawing from conversations with individuals involved in the GLOS project and experience gained in the Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System, the following is offered as an initial governance outline. Modification and refinement will take place as business plan development proceeds:

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It is recommended that GLOS be implemented as a nonprofit corporation and structured as an “organization of organizations”. Based on insights from the GoMOOS *Lessons Learned* document, for GLOS to be sustainable and effective, it will need to balance organizational goals, funding realities, and the priorities of the individuals and agencies involved in the development and maintenance of any tools to be integrated into GLOS. Several elements will need to work well together in order to meet these needs – a leadership body, a staff devoted to GLOS-specific operations, operational and data handling policies that foster positive interaction and good communication with researchers and data creation agencies, and sufficient GLOS-specific funding to obtain commitment to GLOS needs from those researchers and agencies.

#### Board of Directors

The GLOS Board will function as the leadership body for the organization. GLOS Board responsibilities will include policy and budget finalization, determination of service and product development priorities, and coordination with the broader Integrated Ocean Observing System program.

The Steering Committee involved in the Business Plan development effort will be replaced by a GLOS Board of Directors with the beginning of Business Plan implementation. This Board of Directors may initially consist largely of members of the current Steering Committee, but it will consist of a smaller number of individuals than does the current Steering Committee. The Board may need to recruit representatives of sectors not directly represented on the Steering Committee (commercial and consulting industry, commercial navigators, local units of government...)

Chairmanship policy for this Board will be determined during Business Plan development. Options under consideration at this point include a 2-year rotating chairmanship among agencies funding GLOS and/or among federal agencies and research institutions involved in data collection and use.

#### Secretariat/GLOS Staff

This body will be accountable to the Board. It will be tasked with most administrative, accounting, communications and organizational functions of GLOS, including organization of meetings and meeting follow-up; creation, distribution and storage of documents; management of grants and other GLOS-specific funding responsibilities; and GLOS-related interagency activities not handled by agency-specific GLOS liaisons.

The Secretariat function may be contracted to a particular agency, hired outright or shared among agencies, depending on the final structure determined in the business plan. Of these choices, the latter (distributing GLOS staffing functions among multiple agencies) is considered the weakest option by far. Given the extent to which most GLOS roles (governance, data functions and information resources) will be distributed among

numerous agencies, a centralized group focused on day-to-day GLOS operations seems critical to the system's durability.

### Regional Associates

Members of this group will be drawn from the broader group of agencies and institutions contributing directly to GLOS, making use of GLOS products, or interested in applying GLOS tools or output to issues or areas within the Great Lakes region. This group will include those acquiring data, those processing or providing access to data, and those hosting modeling tools or information/data archives. It will also include those using GLOS tools and data for research, education, policy development and commercial purposes and interested in continuation and enhancement of the system.

The Regional Associates will be the primary resource base for GLOS, providing the necessary and very diverse data/information gathering and access services. They will also determine needed services from GLOS that reach beyond those called for by IOOS, including additional data needs, information consolidation, value-added products and other tools.

A GLOS Advisory Board may be drawn from the larger Regional Associates group and tasked with providing detailed insights to the GLOS Board of Directors regarding new technologies, allocation of specialized resources, etc. [*Continue to explore...*]

Depending on the sustainability model, Regional Associates may also be separated into categories and expected to contribute to GLOS operational costs as determined by those categories. Contributions may be in the form of membership dues by level of government or budget, or may be based on other parameters.