

Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS) Business Plan

Sustainability Options

Sustainability has emerged as one of the foremost topics at almost all Great Lakes Observing System planning meetings. Below are several categories of sustainability strategies potentially available to an entity like GLOS. At this juncture, few of them appear mutually exclusive. Indeed, given the variety of possible tools and services currently under discussion for GLOS, a combination of these strategies is probably appropriate for consideration over the course of implementation.

Initial operational funding for GLOS will almost certainly be come from GLOS-specific federal and state support (option 1). That funding may cover portions of the first years of GLOS activity, or it may continue well into the future. The GLOS organizational structure and other Business Plan elements will probably have some influence in this, but so will state and federal budget issues in general.

Agency-specific support for GLOS-related activities (option 2) will continue to be a large source of funding for the data gathering and information processing efforts that feed GLOS, but will probably play a small role in terms of operational funding.

The Steering Committee is encouraged to explore the other options listed as part of Business Plan development. As GLOS tools and services develop, several sources of funding not traditionally considered for this type of project may become viable. A broader audience may make it possible for some GLOS operational costs to be covered by other funding sources, such as those in options 3 – 6.

Comments and additional input will be sought in conjunction with the next GLOS Steering Committee meeting/conference call.

Option 1: *Federal/State support, GLOS-specific*

Federal and state budgeted allocations specifically for GLOS operations. Unlikely, but worth exploring in case coordinated, multi-agency arguments for funding could lead to better results than individual agency attempts to fund portions of the program.

Option 2: *Federal/State support by agency for GLOS-related programs*

Individual agency pursuit of funds for GLOS-related programs and projects. Standard procedure at this point for most federal sources of funds. Appropriate for many of the research and development efforts GLOS will incorporate, but less than ideal for long-term operational monies.

Option 3: *Commercial user support*

Membership fees to support GLOS as a whole, or access fees paid by commercial users based on services/information obtained either from the GLOS website or from GLOS data or software services.

Option 4: *Subscription services*

Fees charged to individual users for information access via select portions of the GLOS website. One option for supporting value-added services developed using GLOS information or resources.

Option 5: *Paid advertising on public use-oriented pages*

Advertising integrated into public value-added pages on the GLOS website. Possibilities include tourism-related advertising for particular geographies, boating manufacturers, educational institutions with relevant degree programs, etc.

Option 6: *Agency and Regional Associate dues (by service level?)*

Dues paid to support GLOS operations based on agency budgets, GLOS usage or some similar factor.