

STEAC MEETING REPORT

(05/15/2024)

The members of the STEAC met on May 15, 2024, with a quorum of eight members attending (Henry Bart, Rich Fiorella, Shannon LaDeau, Steve Petruzza, Sydne Record, Daniel Rubenstein, Shawn Serbin, Adrienne Sponberg). Ten NEON-Battelle staff attended (Darcy Gora, Steve Jacobs, Christine Laney, Claire Lunch, Paula Mabee, Chris McKay, Tanya Maslak, Steve Stone, Kate Thibault, Michael SanClements).

The meeting was virtual, and the following topics were discussed: I. Approval of the minutes, II. NEON Updates, III. Addressing underuse of Mobile Deployment Platforms (MDPs) and Airborne Observation Platform (AOP) for Assignable Assets (AA), IV. Data portal Planning.

- I. **Approval of previous minutes for 04-11/12-2024.** Minutes approved (Unanimous vote). Meeting minutes from the in-person meeting were summarized in the STEAC report given the emphasis on the strategic plan of the in-person meeting.
- II. **NEON Updates:** NEON is crafting a response to the report that the STEAC wrote with recommendations for Battelle from the in-person meeting. Paula will be reaching out to new STEAC members based on recommendations from the STEAC. NSF is continuing to consider the proposed name change of Assignable Assets to Research Support Services. The STEAC was asked whether they know of examples of the use of the name 'Assignable Assets' with regards to other infrastructure.
- III. **Addressing underuse of MDP and AOP for AA/RSS:**

The STEAC requested this topic as a potential area for further discussion at the end of the in-person meeting in April 2024. Some STEAC members have heard from the community that the Mobile Deployment Platform and Airborne Observation Platform AA are very expensive, which prohibits use of these resources. NEON confirmed that the charges are 'cost recoverable', i.e., no money is made providing these services – the costs are simply being recovered to break even. There is concern that PIs need to have a better idea of costs that might not be obvious for such requests for AA to plan for needed cost shares, etc. when scoping project and use of these AA. The STEAC brainstormed ideas to increase use and awareness of costs. For instance, some agencies supporting Earth Observing communities (e.g., NASA) have a pool of funds to support user proposed activities with resources.

NEON fielded several STEAC questions about the use of the MDP and AOP. NEON confirmed that costs for AA can be variable depending on situations. If multiple projects could share the costs of calibration, then there could be cost savings for using the AOP. However, the bottom line of costs depends on where the flights are needed relative to where NEON two active payloads happen to be for the time requested. NEON described their efforts for outreach to the community about these resources via publications. NEON confirmed that there were no examples of requests being turned down because of costs. Ultimately the funding agency decides if the cost is worth the investment for good science.

Moving forward, there were suggestions to write another memo to NSF similar to one written years ago about considering how to increase use of the AOP and MDP. Ideas included approaches like those the [National Center for Atmospheric Research](#) has taken for requests to use lower Atmosphere Observing Facilities and joint agency funding

opportunities (e.g., NSF-NASA for the AOP and NSF-DOE for the MDP). For instance, could the AOP be used to prototype new NASA missions? There was also discussion of potential opportunities for the MDP to be deployed for a semester to support educational activities, such as a field course. NEON will bring past memo to NSF regarding underuse of the AOP and MDP for the STEAC to review and make further recommendations on this matter.

IV. Data Portal Planning:

Christine Laney from NEON began giving a presentation on data portal planning, but we ran out of time shortly into the presentation. An off-cycle STEAC meeting was planned to go over the data portal planning including a planned request to NSF to use contingency funds from the risk register for the data portal.