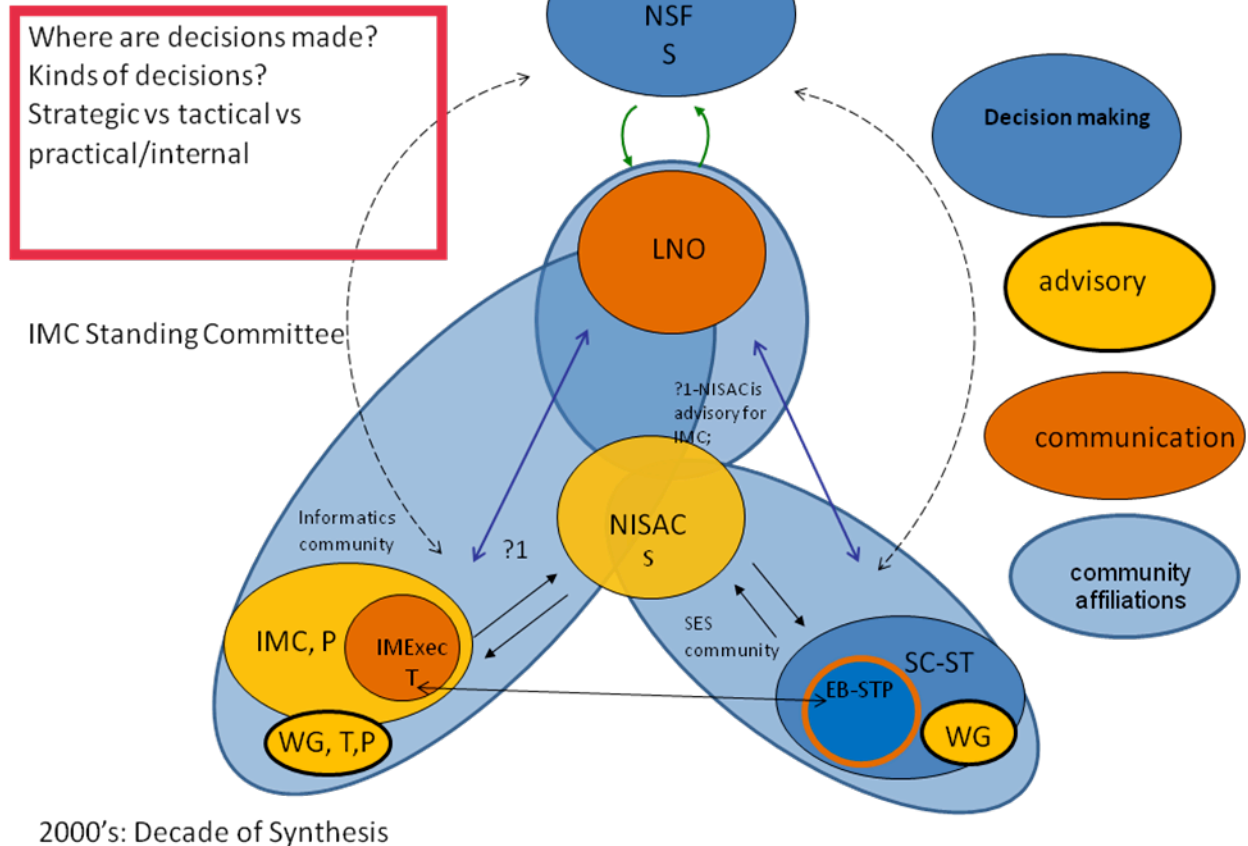IMC Governance Working Group (IMC GWG) Report – full group discussion
Information Management Committee (IMC) Meeting September 2009

The discussion of governance focused on decisions made by and communications between committees and boards across the LTER organization framework. A figure developed by the IMC GWG over the last year was shown an aid to facilitate discussion. Some current roles and practices were discussed:

- LNO recommends when working groups or sites have needs for resources and implementation that they contact NISAC as a way to approach the EB.
- Some NIS modules are developed by sites, while some are a whole network effort (PASTA); NISAC could play a larger role in reviewing and coordinating this.
- We need to be aware as we move from informal to semi-formal to formal in our practices, the strengths inherent to the informal/semiformal and that exploring similarities and differences make for stronger products
- A critical mass of sites may be useful for vetting
- Science working group projects go through an approval process with the EB, while LNO holds funds for the IMC, but how are projects funded? For now projects may be funded outside the IM. It would be useful for IMexec to have an annual budget so they can plan accordingly.
- Form of affiliation for projects may be useful to have, each with its' own criteria, a designation as to their relationship with LTER

  - LTER affiliated
  - LTER Endorsed

  and if part of LTER they have a designation as to their development when related to NIS, ie
  - NIS core, in production
  - NIS core, in development
  - NIS core, proposed
  - NIS module, in production
  - NIS module, in development
  - NIS module, proposed

NSF
S

Where are decisions made?
Kinds of decisions?
Strategic vs tactical vs
practical/internal

Decision making

advisory

communication

community
affiliations

IMC Standing Committee

LNO

?1-NISAC is
advisory for
IMC;

Informatics
community

NISAC
S

?1

IMC, P   IMExec
T

SES
community

SC-ST

EB-STP

WG, T,P

WG

2000's: Decade of Synthesis

Please note that this diagram may be missing elements as the types of decisions and who makes them was not discussed in detail at the meeting or at any time by larger groups of information managers. However a need was identified to improve procedures for knowing who needs to be making decisions. Alternate models may need to be explored.

We focused on how IMC and IMexec interfaces with NISAC and the EB, as well as the LNO to facilitate and support progress on potential NIS modules, standards, and other projects related to IM. NISAC is well positioned to broker communication between IMexec and EB. The work of the controlled vocabulary working group was used as an example to explore not just who, but how decisions are made regarding the design, development, testing, support and adoption of IM or science driven CI "products". Working groups that have an idea or design for a product should speak with NISAC early on to get people thinking about how products can be developed to fit within a coordinated CI LTER NIS framework. This correspondence can happen in the form of a short report including the current status of the effort, useful ways it may be implemented, and some technical specifications. NISAC can use this information to propose how such tools may be incorporated into other projects. It was recognized that we have moved

from developing tools, standards, and best practices in informal ways, to using semi-formal consensus to advance efforts, and now may need more formal steps. During the design and development phase of any project NISAC may work closely with IMC, working groups, IMexec and LNO. At the point when resources are assigned from LNO a more formal process should be followed between NISAC and the EB.

We also discussed the partnership between IMC and LNO and how LNO resources are commonly available when LNO staff are serving as active participants and developers on working groups. In 2004, NISAC developed some requirements for potential NIS modules. It was recommended that this document should be revised. In addition, since 2004 network governance has changed so that EB now would now assign resources through LNO. This arrangement, however, means that technical proposals are not vetted through a group with the appropriate expertise. This procedure needs to be revised to handle proposals in a more informed way so the scope and ramifications of the project as well as its coordination with the larger network framework is taken into account. This may mean that in addition to the traditional flow of information from NISAC to EB that EB will ask for a review or advice from NISAC on issues relating to NIS and data. In addition there was wide agreement that potential NIS modules and other projects related to IM standards, protocols, best practices, and controls should address in written form a set of topics including but not limited to design, prototyping, testing, maintenance, update, site-level enactment, training, etc.