

An Operations Manual for Field Stations and Marine Laboratories

-Susan Lohr, Editor

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Update Schedule

Introduction

How to Use This Manual

I. Planning

A. Essential Planning

B. Other Plans

C. Unintentional Consequences

List of Tables, Figures, Documents and Links for Section I: Planning

II. Administration

A. Guiding Principles

B. Statements of Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives

C. Governance of the FSML

D. The Nature of the Directorship

E. Organization

F. Staffing and Human Resources

G. General Policy Development

H. Liability and Insurance

I. Constoriums and Other Formal Associations

J. Personal Behavior

K. Safety

L. Legal Issues

M. Regulatory Environment

N. Ecosystem Impacts

O. Land Management and Stewardship

P. Volunteer Programs

Q. The FSML Network

R. Public Relations

S. Other Administrative Policies

T. Emerging Administrative Issues for FSMLs

U. Record-keeping

List of Tables, Figures, Documents and Links for Section II: Administration

III. Programs

A. Technical Support

B. Research

C. Education

D. Outreach: Public Relations, Community Relations and Professional Service

E. Social Interactions

List of Tables, Figures, Documents and Links for Section III: Program

IV. Facilities

A. Guiding Principles

B. Buildings

C. Communication and Connectivity

D. Equipment

E. Habitat Resources

F. Operations and Maintenance

G. Facility Policies

H. Site Issues

List of Tables, Figures, Documents and Links to Follow Section IV: Facilities

V. Finances

A. Cost Centers

B. Chart of Accounts

C. Budgets

D. Grants and Contracts

E. Cost Recovery Policies

F. Software Tools

G. Financial Reports

H. Financial Policies

I. External Audits

J. Endowments

K. Funding Sources

List of Tables, Figures, Documents and Links for Section V: Finances

Bibliography

Organizations

Executive Summary

A guide to operational policies and procedures for field stations and marine laboratories (FSMLs) is presented, funded by the National Science Foundation. The purpose of the guide is to provide some information about standard operating procedures at FSMLs across the country. At least 40 FSML directors were involved in the initial elaboration of coverage for the operations manual. The final product is a web-based document available online as a narrative that covers Planning, Administration, Programs, Facilities and Finances. Examples are provided for each section as part of the initial narrative. Further specific examples are solicited from individual FSMLs. These will be added to each section as web documents or linkages. There will be regular updates to the manual text as more information is received from FSML directors.

Update Schedule

When the main text of the manual is updated by the editor, the date and the sections involved will be added to this table:

Date	Sections

Introduction

In September 1999 at the annual meeting of the Organization of Biological Field Stations the assembled membership expressed an interest in generating an operations manual for field stations and marine laboratories (FSMLs). The purpose of the manual would be to assemble some fundamental principles regarding policies and procedures for administering FSMLs. The inclusion of specific policy examples from a wide variety of FSMLs around the country was of great interest.

On behalf of OBFS Susan Lohr submitted a grant request to the National Science Foundation, which was funded in 2000. At the annual OBFS meeting that year 34 FSML directors participated in a detailed discussion of content for the operations manual. An outline was generated and participants for a subsequent workshop to write parts of the manual were selected.

The workshop was held in Gunnison, Colorado from November 30 — December 3, 2000. Twelve FSML administrators participated in an intensive three-day effort chaired by Susan Lohr. Small groups were assigned to address the specific topics covered by the table of contents. There were numerous opportunities for cross-checking progress with all the participants. After many hours of productive hard work, drafts of some text for each topic section were completed by the end of the workshop.

Susan Lohr compiled and edited the rough drafts into text for the manual, and wrote a number of sections that weren't covered in depth by workshop participants. She added tables and figures and organized the content into the web publication. She will continue to edit the document in response to suggestions from users.

Workshop participants who initially authored each section were:

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This manual is dedicated to the memory of Tom Callahan, FSML mentor at the National Science Foundation until his passing in 1999. Tom would have written this manual with much greater brevity, in just a few lines. His rules for FSML administration were:

1. Treat everyone decently.
2. Laugh at yourself.
3. Know that everyone makes mistakes, so Get Over It!
4. Don't call the authorities unless there is either fire or blood.

How to Use This Manual

This web-based document is designed for maximum utility for field stations and marine laboratories. The main text contains initial conceptual content. The tables, figures, documents and linkages that follow each text section are intended to provide an infinite number of specific examples.

Suggestions for editing or content changes, and additions to the bibliography or list of organizations, should be sent to the editor, Susan Lohr, at slohr@frontier.net. Suggestions and comments will be incorporated approximately biweekly as needed.

Examples of policies, forms, procedures, operations manuals, or any other documents for sharing with other FSMLs can be provided as links at the end of each section. These should be sent to Mark Stromberg at stromber@socrates.berkeley.edu either as email attachments or as web links. Mark can incorporate any number of examples in this fashion.

Users of the operations manual can link to different sections by clicking on broad topics in the table of contents. After reading the general principles, most users will probably want to locate specific examples concerning their topic of interest. Contact the FSML directly that provided the example for further information, not Susan or Mark.

Mark will be setting up a chat room for interactive discussions of a less formal nature. Experiences, problems, questions, informal surveys, product information and other resources can be shared in the chat room format. Susan and Mark will monitor the content for substantive information that could enhance the main text of the operations manual. They will add to the manual as needed. Mark is also considering setting up a FAQ board with frequently asked questions .

Hopefully together we can all create a maximally flexible document that meets the needs of field station and marine laboratory personnel. Please consider participating.