May 2018 Executive Update and Call for Candidates for 2019-2020 IPDLN Director

Dear Colleague,

We are pleased to provide this update from the IPDLN leadership. The subtitle of this could be, "Wow, how time flies!". It seems like just yesterday that we were jointly elected to co-direct the IPDLN for 2017 and 2018, and yet here we are, only a few months away from the 2018 IPDLN Conference in Banff, Alberta, and the election of a new IPDLN Director for a two-year term.

We are seeking applications from individuals interested in running for election as the new Director of the IPDLN for calendar years 2019 and 2020. The Director must be a member of the IPDLN and their home institution should preferably be an institutional member of the IPDLN. The Director and their home institution will take responsibility for the planning and execution of the 2020 IPDLN Conference, and he/she also chairs the IPDLN Executive Committee.

Why you should consider running

In the 12 months since our last update to members published in the IJPDS we've achieved a number of objectives:

- Appointed an Interim Executive Committee of the IPDLN and drafted Terms of Reference. The committee met three times over the year, including a face-to-face meeting in Toronto. A new Executive Committee will be elected by membership after a new Director is identified. This process will begin in September 2018.
- Built a new IPDLN website that can be more easily transferred to the next organization to lead the IPDLN as it is hosted externally by an independent vendor.
- Increased membership both in terms of number of members and number of countries represented, while at the same time removing inactive members from the list.
- Partnered with the International Journal of Population Data Science, the leading journal of population data linkage.
- Increased the social media presence of the IPDLN.
- Partnerships and collaborations between various IPDLN member organizations have grown, and some likely only occurred as a result of connections made or strengthened through the IPDLN.
- And most importantly, set the stage for a fabulous IPDLN conference in Banff, Alberta, from September 11-14, 2018, under the leadership of the science committee's Drs Astrid Guttmann and Hude Quan.

Guidelines for applications

Each applicant must provide:

- a description of their institution including brief biographies of key staff that will be part of the IPDLN team, including the proposed Director
- an outline and plan, with location, for the 2020 IPDLN Conference
- an outline of the proposed two-year vision/plan for the IPDLN with key deliverables

All expressions of interest must be sent to info@ipdln.org by June 30, 2018. Submissions should be no longer than two pages, size 12 font and submitted in PDF format. The election of the new Director will take place online over the summer. Submissions will be made available to

members for voting purposes. The winner will be announced at the general meeting of IPDLN members in Banff on September 13, during the 2018 IPDLN Conference.

Network momentum

In our update last April, we said, "The IPDLN is well-positioned to shape the global scientific agenda in emerging areas such as 'population data science' and/or 'Big Data'. Such terms, describing domains of scientific inquiry, mean different things to different people. Our network and its broad and interdisciplinary international membership can help to define what these areas are, by identifying high priority population data science questions and opportunities for ambitious collaborative efforts on a global scale. We were delighted to see our membership respond, for example by publishing *A Position Statement on Population Data Science* under the leadership of Drs Kim McGrail and Kerina Jones in the IJPDS. This seminal article helps to lay the foundation for our young and growing field.

But there is more that we need (and had hoped) to do. We did not get as far as we wanted to in developing the website as a place for IPDLN members to exchange ideas and tools or develop collaborative projects across our members and institutions. While membership has grown, we want to see even more representation from countries that are under-represented in the IPDLN, including the United States, northern European countries and developing countries. Beyond the biennial conference, the IPDLN itself has not taken on a major initiative that could use our individual and collective strength to advance an issue of importance to our membership.

Yet we remain a young field and organization, with the upcoming conference being only the sixth including the founding conference in 2008. Enthusiasm remains strong, if the large number and high quality of abstracts submissions and workshop proposals received is any guide. The growth in popularity of the conference, both in terms of registrants and abstract submissions opens the door to it perhaps being time to consider moving to an annual, rather than biennial, conference.

Today, at a time of major public-sector policy challenges requiring evidence to guide solutions in all our countries, with massive expansion of available data (often of questionable quality), with hype surrounding the promise of data science to revolutionize our lives and a nervous public increasingly concerned about who is doing what with their data, the expertise of IPDLN members in data management, privacy protecting linkage, secure access to sensitive data, and advanced analytics combined with the skill to ask the right questions and engage relevant stakeholders is more important than ever.

We look forward to receiving your nominations for Director, and we are pleased to answer any questions. We look very much forward to seeing you in Banff in September.

Sincerely,

Michael Schull
Co-Director, IPDLN
CEO, Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences

William Ghali
Co-Director, IPDLN
Scientific Director of the O'Brien Institute for Public Health