



Evaluation Data Report

Ecology of Niche Variation Working Group

Meeting Three: February 10-12, 2011

Pamela Bishop
Program Evaluation Coordinator
National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis
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Ecology of Niche Variation Working Group Evaluation Data Report

Evaluation Design

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the meeting was both formative and summative in nature, in that the data collected from participants was intended to both gain feedback from participants about the quality of the current meeting and also to inform future meetings, if applicable. The evaluation framework was guided by Kirkpatrick's Four Levels of Evaluation model for training and learning programs (Kirkpatrick, 1994¹). Several questions constituted the foundation for the evaluation:

1. Were participants satisfied with the Working Group overall?
2. How do participants feel about the format of the meetings?
3. How do participants feel about the content of the meetings?
4. Do participants feel they have a good understanding about the work being done by other subgroups within the group?
5. Do participants feel they gained a better understanding of t how the work of the various subgroups will tie together to reach the Working Group's goals?
6. How do the research collaborations happening in this working group differ from participants' other research collaborations?
7. How do participants communicate between meetings?
8. Do participants feel they have a good idea of what their continuing contribution will be within the group?

Evaluation Procedures

The final instrument was hosted online via the University of Tennessee's online survey host mrlInterview. Links to the survey were sent to 12 Working Group participants on February 14, 2011. Reminder emails were sent to non-responding participants on February 21 and 24, 2011. By March 3, 2011, nine participants had given their feedback, for a response rate of 75%.

¹ From Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1994). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Evaluation Data

Satisfaction

Table 1. Respondent satisfaction with content and format of the working group

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied
The amount of effort spent on working group activities	89%	11%	-	-	-
The adherence of meetings to schedules	100%	-	-	-	-
Utilization of time during meetings	100%	-	-	-	-
Organization of the meetings	100%	-	-	-	-
The diversity of disciplinary expertise of the participants	89%	-	11%	-	-
The level of task productivity of participants	100%	-	-	-	-
The quality of participant ideas and discussions	89%	11%	-	-	-
Overall satisfaction level with the working group	100%	-	-	-	-

Comments:

This group has been the most productive of any I have ever been a part of. Some of this is due to the people, and some to the structure - which has allowed subgroups a great deal of time to work during meetings.

Although I expected this to be a good working group, it was actually much better than expected: it was superb. Dan Bolnick did a really great job in choosing the group members according to expertise, in initiating work within subgroups, and in leading discussions.

Group Progress

Figure 1. Respondent views of group progress



Comments:

We managed to get work on conceptually new models started that incorporate genetic and phenotypic variation in ecological models. Personally, I have been engaged in two papers, one accepted, one accepted subject to minor revision, and I started working on a new project.

The group has approached the question of how phenotypic variation affects population and community dynamics in different angles, producing novel and relevant findings. As a result, the group has been extremely productive and has produced several manuscripts either accepted or close to acceptance.

Group Function

Table 2. Respondent understanding of group function

As a result of participating in this meeting, I have a better understanding of:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The work being accomplished by the other subgroups within the Working Group	89%	11%	-	-	-
How the work of the various subgroups will tie together for the working group's publication(s) and/or product(s)	89%	11%	-	-	-

Figure 2. Respondent understanding of what is expected of them after this meeting



Uniqueness of Working Group Collaborations

Table 3. Ways in which working group research collaborations differ from participants' other collaborations

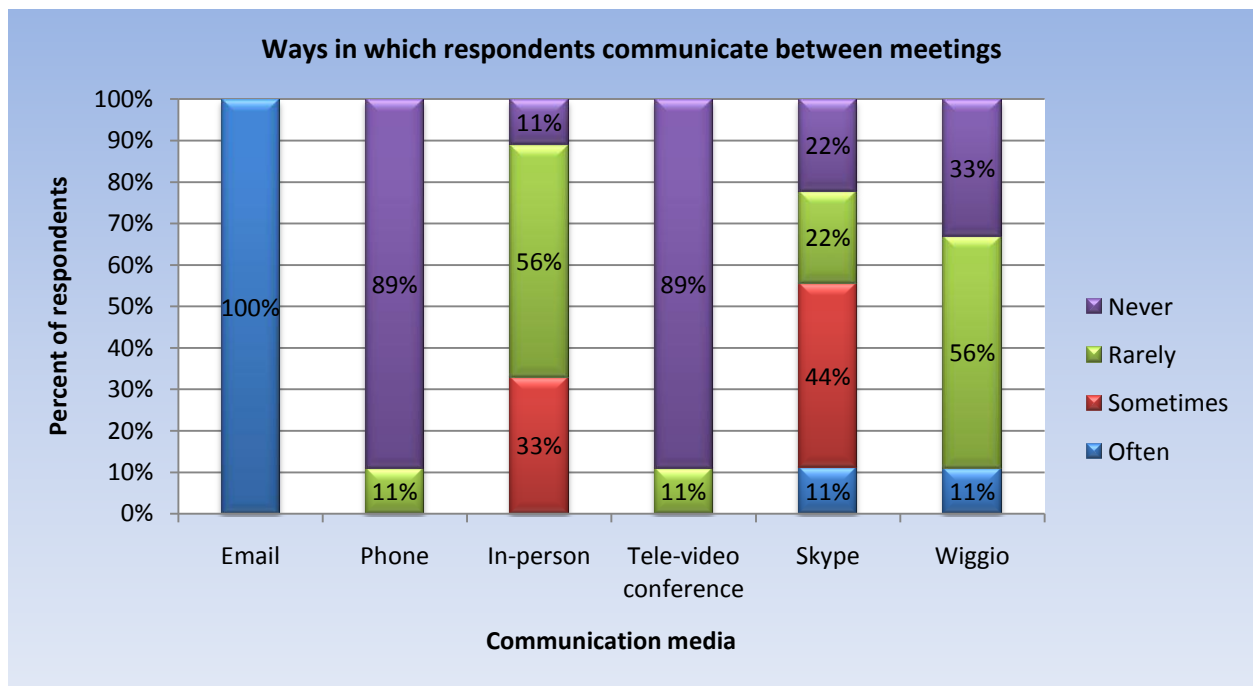
	Very different	Slightly different	Not different	Not applicable
Disciplinary topics involved	22%	67%	11%	-
Research methods used	44%	33%	22%	-
Scientific questions addressed	44%	44%	11%	-
Academic conferences at which research is presented	22%	56%	-	22%
Competitive grants applied for	11%	-	11%	78%
Journals targeted for publication	22%	22%	44%	11%
Academic conferences at which research is presented	-	22%	56%	22%

Comments:

None provided.

Communication

Figure 3. Ways respondents communicate



Comments:

None provided.

Additional Comments about Working Group

This working group was very productive. It was extremely informative as a mathematician to have the opportunity to interact with theoretical and empirical ecologists. This should help me to prepare my future manuscripts in a way that might be more accessible to non-mathematicians. One group I was working with has a tentative acceptance subject to minor revisions from The American Naturalist.