

# Best Practices for NIMBioS Working Groups

NIMBioS Working Groups focus on well-defined scientific questions at the interface between biology and mathematics that require insights from diverse researchers. Working groups should ideally have between 10-12 participants (maximum number of participants is 15) and meet 2-3 times over a two year period, with each meeting lasting 3-5 days. This document describes some best practices for conducting a successful NIMBioS Working Group.

## Before the first meeting:

- At least two weeks before the first Working Group meeting, provide participants with a clear but flexible agenda for the meeting, including the overall goals. Flexibility is important--Be prepared for last minute schedule changes from cancellations due to a variety of reasons. Remember any changes to a Working Group's composition must be justified by the Working Group organizers and approved by the Associate Director for Scientific Activities. Sometimes people cannot make a meeting and want to send a graduate student or postdoc instead. In general, NIMBioS does not approve such changes, but exceptions may be possible.
- Have participants provide short introductions (1 brief paragraph) on the Group's "Wiggio." The Wiggio is an online communication tool for posting agendas and other documents as well as emailing all participants. NIMBioS will establish a Wiggio for each Working Group. Watch for an email from "NIMBioS Admin" <groupname@wiggio.com> notifying you that you have access.
- At least two weeks before the Working Group, provide participants via the Wiggio site access to relevant background information related to the Working Group topic (e.g. papers, presentations, datasets). Organizers should also ask participants to post resources they feel are relevant to the topic as well.
- Select a subset of participants to give presentations on topics focused on the goals of the Working Group (e.g. needed background, available data, existing models). Ensure that presenters and co-organizers are clear about what their roles will be in the upcoming meeting.

## During Working Group meetings:

- On the first day of the meeting, have participants briefly introduce themselves and give their research perspectives on the goals of the group.
- At the start of each day, communicate the objectives for the day to the group.
- Remember that everyone in the group has different levels of expertise in different areas. Allow for plenty of questions and discussion after presentations.
- When forming subgroups within the group, ensure that each subgroup understands clearly their short and long-term objectives. Link these objectives to the larger Working Group goals.

- Ensure that participants in each subgroup understand how their work will tie in to the work of the other subgroups to achieve the overall Working Group goals.
- Be organized, but flexible. Allow new ideas to be explored, but keep the group focused on the ultimate Working Group goals.

### **Before the conclusion of the first meeting:**

- gain a clear consensus on the specific objectives for the Working Group;
- define the products that will be produced by each of the subgroups;
- ensure that each participant clearly understands what his/her contribution will be at the next Working Group meeting; and
- ensure that each subgroup has clearly defined plans for how work will occur remotely between meetings.

### **Between Working Group meetings:**

- Immediately following each meeting, write an informal summary of the meeting and post it to the Wiggio site for all participants to reference.
- Within two weeks of the conclusion of each meeting, provide the necessary reports to NIMBioS via email to the Associate Director for Scientific Activities Sergey Gavrilets ([sergey@nimbios.org](mailto:sergey@nimbios.org)). Click here for information on what to report: [http://nimbios.org/research/reporting\\_requirements](http://nimbios.org/research/reporting_requirements)
- Stay in regular contact with Working Group participants to monitor progress toward objectives and address any issues that arise.
- Remind Working Group participants to upload any relevant resources to the Wiggio that may be of interest to the group.
- Because subgroups rely on collaborations, it is important that all Working Group participants attend subsequent meetings. Organizers should strongly encourage attendance at all Working Group meetings by all members of the group.
- Be sure to report to NIMBioS any publications or other products that arise from work related to the Working Group. NIMBioS support should be cited in publications and products. For suggested acknowledgment formats and information about press releases, click here: <http://nimbios.org/research/acknowledgment>  
For NIMBioS logo image files for inclusion in presentations about NIMBioS-related work, click here: <http://nimbios.org/logos/>  
Results may be reported here: <http://nimbios.org/research/products>.