



# Evaluation Data Report

## Biotic Interactions Working Group

### Meeting One: February 1-4, 2013

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# Biotic Interactions Working Group, Meeting One Evaluation Data Report

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## Evaluation Design

### Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of the working group 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 working group and also to inform future meetings. Several questions constituted the foundation for the evaluation:

1. Were participants satisfied with the working group overall?
2. Did the meeting meet participant expectations?
3. Do participants feel the working group made adequate progress toward its stated goals?
4. Do participants feel they gained knowledge about the main issues related to the research problem?
5. Do participants feel they gained a better understanding of the research across disciplines related to the working group's research problem?
6. What impact do participants feel the working group will have on their future research?
7. Were participants satisfied with the accommodations offered by NIMBioS?
8. What changes in accommodations, group format, and/or content would participants like to see at future meetings?

### Evaluation Procedures

An electronic survey aligned to the evaluation questions was designed by the NIMBioS Evaluation Coordinator with input from the NIMBioS Director and Deputy Director. The final instrument was hosted online via the University of Tennessee's online survey host mrlInterview. Links to the survey were sent to 14 working group participants on February 4, 2013 (organizers were not asked to evaluate the meeting). Reminder emails were sent to non-responding participants on February 11 and 14, 2013. A total of 12 participants filled out the survey, for a response rate of 86%.

# Evaluation Data

## Respondent Satisfaction

Figure 1. Satisfaction with content and format of the working group

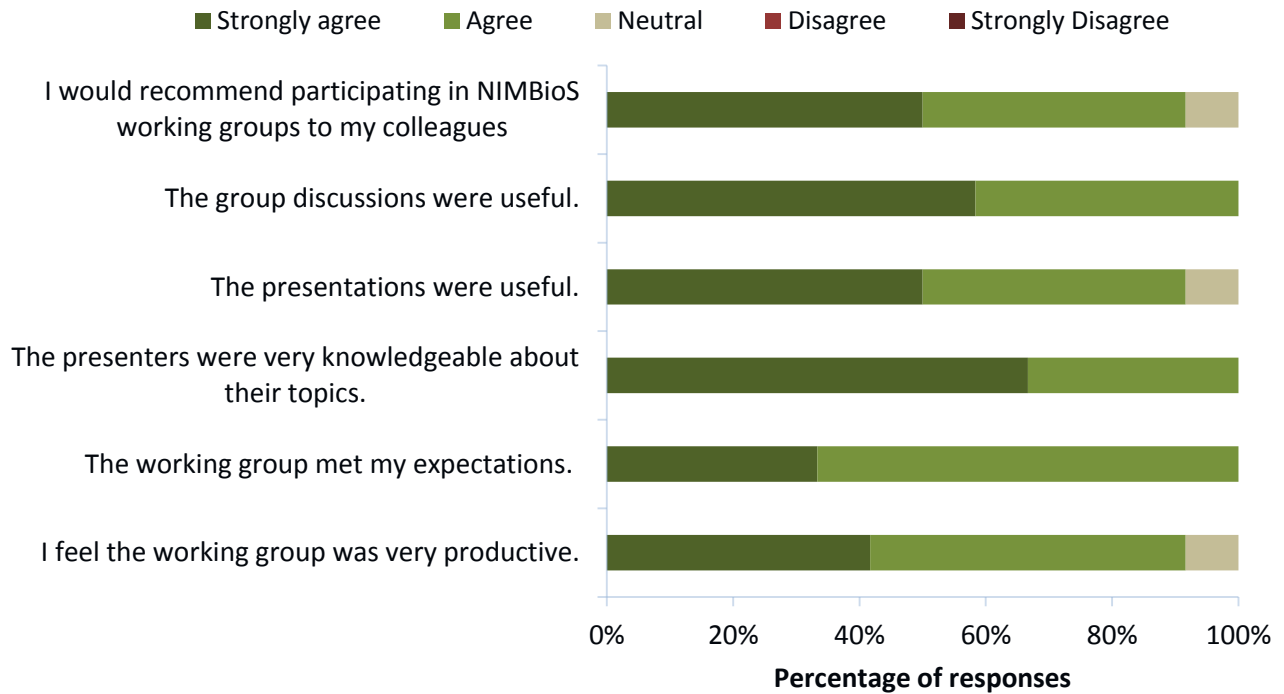
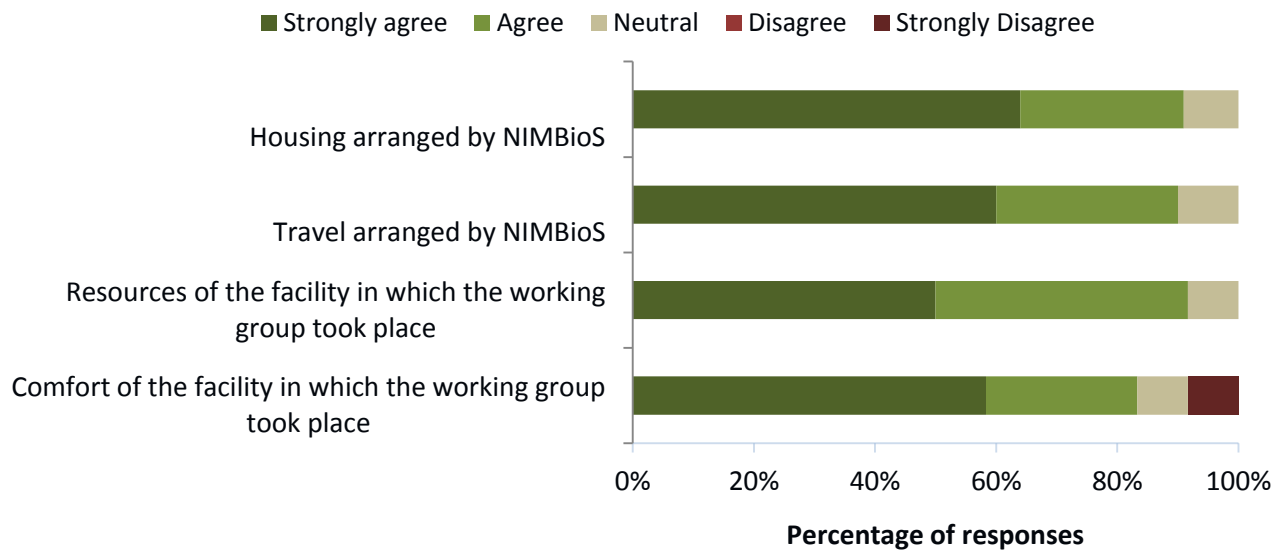


Figure 2. Satisfaction with working group accommodations



***Suggestions for NIMBioS to improve the resources and/or accommodations available to working group participants:***

*The temperature of the rooms was not adequate. The food provided could also be improved.*

*It was a little cold, otherwise no complaints. Perhaps catering foods that are separate so that people can avoid categories would help some people, but the food was generally good.*

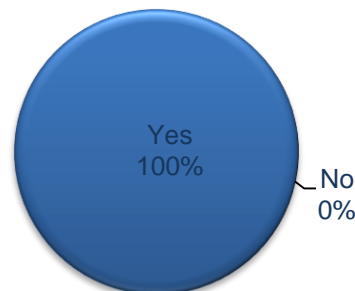
*Let us go out to lunch. Provide a restaurant list. Field trips. Meet at a field station.*

*Meeting room was cold....*

*More options for herbal tea (only chamomile was offered).*

**Views of Group Progress**

**Figure 3. Do you feel the working group made adequate progress, for its first meeting, toward finding a common language across disciplines in the research area? (n = 12)**



***Comments about finding a common language:***

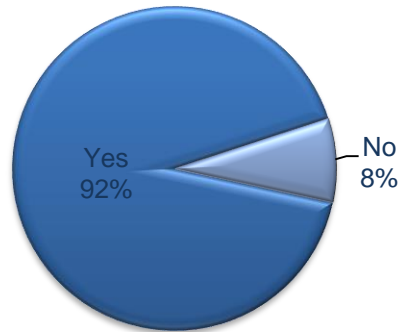
*However, I felt that the group was a bit bimodal between pure mathematicians and primarily empirical biologists. More people that bridge the gap would have been helpful.*

*Well, sort of, but I have very little experience modeling and using theory to explain the importance of biotic interactions reinforcing/maintaining species' range limits. Most of my research is devoted to collecting empirical data related to understanding how biotic interactions can have a impact on species' range limits.*

*Yes, we actually did things rather than just talk about them.*

## Working Group Format and Content

**Figure 4. Do you feel the participating in the working group helped you understand the research happening in other disciplines in the group's topic area? (n = 12)**



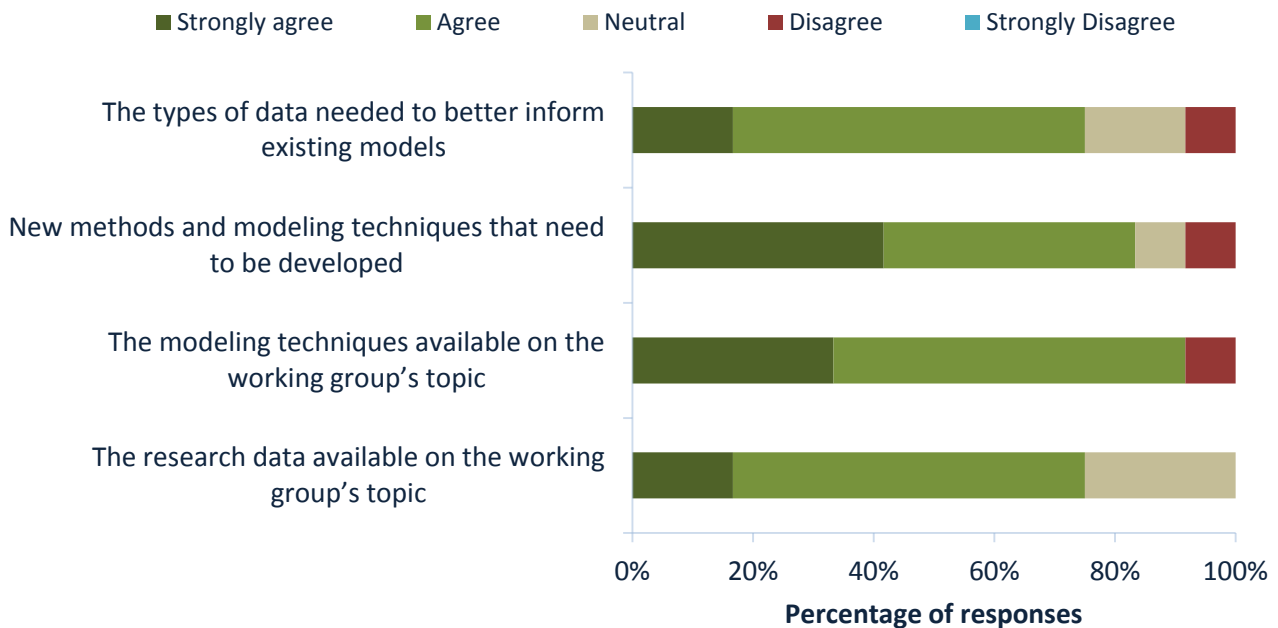
Comments about understanding research in other disciplines:

*Always nice to see how the other half thinks.*

*I think the group functioned well and is likely to produce some good new science.*

**Figure 5. Learning about issues related to the working group's research problem**

***As a result of participating in this working group, I have a better understanding of:***



## ***Most Useful Aspects of the Meeting***

*Meeting scientists that I would otherwise not likely have the opportunity to meet.  
Seeing how much faster it is to put together simple models.*

*Broad spectrum of skills.*

*Integrating theory and empiricism; excellent co-leadership.*

*Learning about using theory and models to explain how biotic interactions can have a large impact on species' range limits, and combining empirical data, theory, models to explain these questions regarding range limits.*

*Making new or stronger connections with other participants, resulting in new ideas and research directions.*

*Mixing people with different backgrounds and forcing us to get away from our comfort zone.*

*Start of a joint modeling activity.*

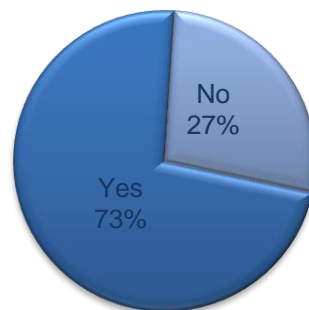
*We actually did something*

*Working on an initial collaborative project.*

*Working as a group.*

## **Impact on Future Research Plans**

**Figure 6. Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the working group will influence your future research? (n = 11)**





**Comments about influence on future research:**

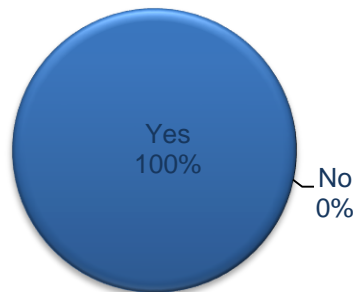
*Collaborative projects started.*

*I am already involved in working on a sub-project developed by the group.*

*Nothing ever turns out like you expect, but I can see this affecting the questions I feel competent to approach.*

*This is pretty far from my main research focus right now. I'll be glad to help out, but I don't think it's going to influence my current research direction.*

**Figure 7. Did you develop plans for collaborative research with working group participants with whom you have not previously collaborated? (n=12)**



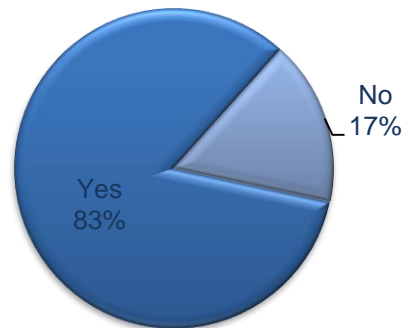
**Comments about plans for collaborative research:**

*I hadn't formally collaborated with anyone in the group, and we're definitely going to get something out of this.*

*Potential to pursue some ideas, but no clear plans.*

*The talks suggested a possible synthesis of ideas that are in my area of research but new to me in detail, and I have knowledge of relevant methods for achieving it.*

**Figure 8. Do you feel the expectations for the next working group are clear (in the sense that you are leaving this meeting with a good idea of what your contribution will be at the next meeting)? (n = 12)**



***Comments about understanding what is expected of working group members:***

*I have some ideas for what to do, but I think my role is peripheral/supportive at present.*

*I will organize my data, and many of the people in this workshop will be collaborating with me, working with my data*

*Most of us cannot do much except at the meetings, but I have a few clear assignments and one that is more of a long shot, in terms of likelihood that it will happen. Unclear on why three different modeling efforts are underway and how they will be organized into one paper, but I'm sure something will emerge.*

**Suggestions for Future Meetings**

*The topic (it's a stretch for me to justify working on species interactions)*

*Fewer/shorter initial presentations.*

*I would have cut down some general planning discussions to more concrete collaboration action as the planning discussions took most of the workshop.*

*I'm not sure...I was having a hard time speaking for the first meeting -- I've have a short-term problem with my speech...if I'd have more time preparing for the first meeting, I would have more time organizing my data, looking at papers who are authors in the meeting group, thinking about questions related to biotic interactions & range limits, etc.*

*More structured discussions.*

*Nothing -- the leaders did a great job of keeping a diverse but very collegial and talented group of people on track.*

*Some people need to talk less*

*The rooms were extremely cold and as a result i got ill. This is definitely not good.*

### Additional Comments about working group

*I appreciate the opportunity to participate, thanks!*

*It was good.*

# Appendix

Biotic Interactions Working Group Evaluation Survey

## Biotic Interactions Group Survey

Thank you for taking a moment to complete this survey. Your responses will be used to improve the working groups hosted by the National Institute for Mathematical and Biological Synthesis. Information supplied on the survey will be confidential, and results will be reported only in the aggregate.

Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about this working group: (Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied)

I feel the working group was very productive.

The working group met my expectations.

The presenters were very knowledgeable about their topics.

The presentations were useful.

The group discussions were useful

I would recommend participating in NIMBioS working groups to my colleagues.

Please check the appropriate box to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

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

(Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree)

the research data available on the working group's topic

the modeling techniques available on the working group's topic

the types of data needed to better inform existing models

new methods and modeling techniques that need to be developed

Do you feel the working group made adequate progress, for its first meeting, toward finding a common language across disciplines in the research area?

Yes

No

Comments:

Do you feel the participating in the working group helped you understand the research happening in other disciplines in the group's topic area?

Yes

No

Comments:

Do you feel the expectations for the next working group are clear (in the sense that you are leaving this meeting with a good idea of what your contribution will be at the next meeting)?

Yes

No

Comments:

Do you feel that the exchange of ideas that took place during the working group will initiate or influence your future research?

Yes

No

Please explain:

Did you develop unanticipated plans for collaborative research with other working group participants with whom you had not previously collaborated?

Yes

No

Please explain:

What do you feel was the most useful aspect of the working group?

What would you have changed about the working group?

How do you feel about the format of the working group?

This was a very effective format for achieving our goals

This was not a very effective format for achieving our goals ->

The working group format would have been more effective if:

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the working group accommodations:

(Very satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied)

Travel arranged by NIMBioS

Housing arranged by NIMBioS

Comfort of the facility in which the working group took place

Resources of the facility in which the working group took place

Please indicate any changes NIMBioS can make to improve the resources and/or accommodations available to working group participants:

Please provide any additional comments about your overall experience with the working group: