

## **Special Interest Group Meeting Guidelines**

### **Updated: October 2015**

This document describes the structure of a Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting, the financial and organizational relationship between SIG organizers and ISCB/ISMB organizers, the responsibilities of each, and the SIG application process. The goals of this document are to facilitate smooth conference organization and to clarify expectations in order to prevent misunderstandings.

#### **A. What is a SIG meeting?**

ISMB is a broad meeting that covers the main currents in computational biology. A SIG is a group that is interested in a specific topic within the field. A SIG meeting is a one- or two-day focused meeting that is held in conjunction with ISMB. It provides a broad and/or deep perspective on recent developments in the topic of interest, and is a way to address a topic more extensively than can be done in the main conference.

One way to get a feeling of the scope and structure of SIG meetings is by looking at the programs of previous meetings; the ISCB website has links to previous ISMB meetings at <http://www.iscb.org/iscb---past---conferences#past---ismb---conferences>, with SIGs accessed under the Program menu item of each ISMB website.

A SIG may have activities in addition to its meeting at ISMB, though such additional activities are unusual at present.

#### **B. When and where**

SIG meetings are held in the same venue as ISMB, during one or both of the two days prior to the main meeting. Other ISMB-related activities such as Applied Knowledge Exchange Sessions (AKES) and the Student Council Symposium may be held in the venue at the same time.

#### **C. Delegates and registration fees**

ISCB will determine the one- and two-day registration fees for attending SIGs. The fees will be as low as possible to encourage delegate participation and will include ISCB member and nonmember pricing. The fees will take into account the services to be provided. In addition, they will allow profitable SIGs to benefit from their success and minimize financial risk to ISCB.

Each delegate registers and pays for one or two days of SIG meetings. When registering, a delegate specifies a primary SIG (or two, if registering for different SIGs on different days). For registration purposes, a two-day SIG will be considered the equivalent of two one-day SIGs; that is, delegates will be able to register for each day of a SIG independently.

The number of delegates who choose a specific SIG as their primary SIG will count as the SIG's attendance. This may differ from day to day, as noted above. Non-paying participants, such as keynote speakers, are counted in the attendance. The attendance numbers will be used to determine room assignments and registration/logistics management fees.

Attendees may move freely between sessions on the day(s) of their primary meeting(s). To facilitate this movement, the SIGs will share a common budget format and fee structure (i.e., registration is charged to any SIG on an individual day basis).

## D. Finances

ISCB takes the financial risk for SIG meetings. This includes providing startup funds in addition to the agreed upon, determining the budget, managing the budget and finances, approving all expenses and payments, and deferring any losses until they can be repaid in a future year, or absorbing them entirely if the SIG is not repeated after a recorded loss.

Given a SIG's attendance, as defined above, its base profit or loss will be its registration income less the fixed and per-person costs in the standard-package portion of its budget. In the event of a base loss, ISCB will cover the loss, until the loss is repaid, as noted above. In the event of a base profit, 50% of the profit will be held by ISCB in the SIG's escrow account and 50% will go to ISCB's general resources fund.

If a SIG becomes inactive and does not host an event two consecutive years, the SIG's escrow will be automatically released back to ISCB to be used to support other developing SIGs or travel fellowships to ISCB official conferences and events.

SIG budgets include a fee for registration services (\$15 per delegate) and a fee for logistics management (\$15 for each delegate who registers for one day and \$20 for two days). SIG budgets include charges for any fees ISCB incurs by hosting a SIG at ISMB. This is modest compared to fees of similar societies; ACM, for example, includes in the budgets of its SIG conferences a 15% fee to cover conference deficits and a 16% fee for management services.

ISCB may cancel a SIG that does not have sufficient registration by the early-registration deadline to cover the SIG's fixed costs plus per-delegate costs. A SIG with insufficient registration can choose to use available surplus funds and received sponsorships to cover the difference instead of cancelling the SIG meeting. Cancellation decisions will be taken after the early-registration deadline, by which time registration trends are generally apparent.

## E. Special requests

If a SIG requests additional logistical support beyond the standard SIG package, an hourly or flat-rate meeting-planning fee will be charged for coordinating the additional arrangements. The choice of an hourly or flat-rate fee will be made by ISCB based on the kind of support requested. The per-hour cost is \$55; flat-rate fees will be determined per activity.

Special requests may also require Web programming and maintenance. The fee for creating an abstract submission/review system is \$100 per hour. The fee for adding specialty elements to the registration system for SIG activities beyond the standard package (e.g., a dinner) is \$100 per hour.

## F. External financial support and surpluses

A SIG may secure external financial support or sponsorships, or may draw on its available surplus funds from previous years, to fund activities that are outside the standard SIG package. Examples of such activities are honoraria, travel support, paper--review software, additional meeting rooms, more extensive audio---visual equipment, and a reception or dinner.

If more funds are raised than are needed, the SIG retains all those funds; ISCB does not

take a portion. However, if a SIG has a base loss but excess sponsorship funds, the latter must be used to reduce or eliminate the former as much as possible. Furthermore, if a SIG has a base deficit and is held again in a later year, it must budget to repay the deficit before sharing in any future profits.

If a SIG has excess funds (base + sponsorship), ISCB will hold those funds for the SIG's future activities. If the excess is more than 50% of the cost of holding the SIG meeting, the amount beyond the 50% is available as surplus funds and SIG organizers may use them. The available surplus funds can be used either for SIG activities during the year or to fund extra activities at later SIG meetings at ISMB.

### **G. Responsibilities of the SIG organizers**

SIG organizers are responsible for the scientific content of the SIG meeting. They may invite speakers, publish a call for submissions, organize panel discussions, or use a combination. They are expected to operate within the context of ISMB procedures, including setting the final program and providing materials by the deadlines, as well as working within the budget.

Organizers will collect and prepare handout materials, in the format specified by ISCB. They are responsible for ensuring that the material that they submit may be legally used and that appropriate copyright permissions have been arranged. Speakers are expected to grant permission to ISMB to copy and distribute these materials, including making them available for sale. SIG delegates will receive a combined SIG meeting schedule to facilitate movement between sessions.

SIG organizers should maintain a SIG website, which will typically provide more detailed meeting information than the abstract that appears on the ISMB website. This URL will be posted on the ISMB website before registration opens.

SIG organizers should pay particular attention to the deadlines for submitting information on complimentary registrations, poster board requirements and schedules. SIG participation is much more effective when delegates can view the schedules on the Web ahead of the meeting and when they receive the handouts from all SIGs together.

SIG coordinators are highly encouraged to attend a post-SIG review meeting during ISMB to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current year's SIG process. This meeting is typically held on the Sunday following the SIG meetings. The comments from this session will be used to improve future interactions and meetings.

### **H. Responsibilities of the ISMB organizers**

ISCB will handle the logistics of holding the SIG meeting in conjunction with ISMB and will take the financial risk for holding the meeting, as described in section C above. Each SIG will receive the following services from ISCB. The SIG budget will include the cost of the services, including the ISCB fees for providing the services.

1. Financial management, including budget preparation.
2. Conference registration, including meeting registration via the ISMB website, collecting registration fees, receipts, name badges for delegates, liability insurance, and a list of registrant names and e-mail addresses (when available)
3. On request, ISCB will provide the registration/attendance statistics for each SIG to the SIG organizers shortly after the ISMB meeting in order to help them plan their next meeting.

4. Meeting planning services, which include coordinating or arranging appropriate space at the venue; registration; food and beverage arrangements; audio--visual services; handouts; and liaison with the SIG, ISCB, and the meeting venue.
5. General promotion via the ISCB website and newsletters, on the ISMB conference website, and via e-mail announcements to ISCB members and the list of prospective conference attendees. Each SIG is expected to do additional promotion on its own.
6. Six complimentary SIG registrations for the day(s) of the SIG meeting (i.e., not for other SIG days, the main ISMB meeting, or Satellite Meetings) for speakers or organizers.
7. Each delegate will receive a common SIG schedule from all SIGs to facilitate moving between sessions. In addition, all SIGs will have the same starting and ending times for their sessions, including times of morning/afternoon breaks and lunch.
8. Meeting room space, consisting of one room to accommodate the expected attendance, based on previous years' attendance or on projections that are agreed to by ISCB and the SIG coordinators.
9. Audio visual services, which consist of the following.
  - a. High-speed Internet connection in the meeting room. Wireless access will be available.
  - b. One Windows-based laptop for presentations
  - c. One data projector and one projection screen
  - d. One cable to connect computer to projector
  - e. One podium or lectern with wired microphone
  - f. One wireless lapel microphone
  - g. One microphone for questions from the audience
  - h. One laser pointer
10. Food and beverage services, which consist of the following.
  - a. Morning break with coffee and tea (no food)
  - b. Lunch
  - c. Afternoon break with the same or similar refreshments as the morning break
11. The SIG budget will not include breakfast food, reception, or dinner; these items can be arranged through use of available surplus funds or sponsorships.

#### **I. How to apply to organize a SIG meeting (including current running SIGs)**

Applications to organize SIG meetings should be submitted as indicated on the ISMB website. The application deadline is something of a compromise; it is early enough to allow SIG organizers to get confirmation of acceptance so that they can confirm speakers and seek sponsorships, but is sufficiently after the previous year's meeting that financial information from the previous meeting is available.

A proposal should include the following sections, in the indicated order. The entire proposal should be no more than four pages long. It should be submitted in Acrobat (.pdf) format and named using the SIG's abbreviated name (e.g., the proposal for the ABC SIG should be in a file named abc.pdf).

1. Title (up to 20 words, preferably worded to pique delegates' interest)

2. Topic: Describe the field to be covered by the SIG meeting and its relevance for conference participants (about one page)
3. Meeting details
  - a. Duration (1 or 2 days)
  - b. Indicate a preference for which meeting day is preferred if submitting a one-day only proposal (or indicate that it does not matter). The ISMB organizers will try to accommodate these requests but do not guarantee that all accepted SIGs will receive their preferences.
  - c. Expected sessions / topics, if possible with an explanatory paragraph about each
  - d. Draft schedule showing how the sessions / topics will be organized within the SIG schedule template, including placement of keynotes, accepted talks, panel discussions, etc. The previous year's schedule for all the SIGs should be used as a template for the draft schedule of the upcoming meeting for purposes of the proposal.
  - e. How presentations will be selected (invitation, call for submissions, etc.)
  - f. Possible speakers. This is not required, but may add weight to the proposal—indicate speakers who have already agreed to participate.
  - g. Previous meetings of this or related SIGs, with attendance statistics, including activities organized outside ISMB
  - h. List of special requests not covered within the scope of a typical SIG, noting if any request is essential to conducting the meeting. ISCB will try to be accommodating but cannot guarantee to supply specially requested items.
  - i. Potential sources of sponsorship for the meeting. Indicate sponsors that have already committed funds for the SIG.
4. Information about the organizers: full name (including title), affiliation, e-mail and postal addresses, telephone numbers (work and mobile, if available, including country and city codes), URL of home page, and qualifications to organize this meeting.
5. Income generated for the meeting in grants, sponsorship, *etc.*
6. Standardized feedback forms of previous meetings
7. Registration information for other activities held outside of ISMB\*.  
\* Selection committee will be provided previous years registration information for current/past running SIGs

## **J. How proposals will be evaluated**

Proposals will be evaluated by ISMB's SIG Committee. SIG proposals submitted by COSIs (ISCB Communities of Special Interest) will also be evaluated by the COSI Advisory Group who will make recommendations to the SIG Committee. The following criteria will be considered:

1. Relevance and interest of the proposed program to attendees
2. Topics to be covered in ISMB, as well as in other SIGs and SMs
3. Relevant expertise and experience of the organizers
4. Effectiveness of the proposed SIG meeting organization
5. Sponsorship income raised for the meeting
6. Number of registrations for previous SIGs

7. Feedback from ISMB participants for previous SIGs
8. Other activities organized outside ISMB that highlight community interest in the theme
9. Clarity, quality, and completeness of the proposal

The number of accepted SIGs will depend on room availability, and is generally in the range of eight to ten meetings. SIG topics should not overlap substantially with those of other SIGs or Satellite Meetings; the Committee may recommend that submitters of similar proposals join forces to put on a single meeting.

#### **K. Contact information**

Please contact the ISMB Conferences Director or the chairs of ISMB's SIG and SM Committee at [sigs@iscb.org](mailto:sigs@iscb.org) with any questions.