



# Communities of Special Interest (COSI) Guidelines

Updated July 2019

Board Approved October 2019

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR COMPUTATIONAL BIOLOGY

ISCB Communities of Special Interest (COSIs) are member communities of shared interest that have self-organized and have multiple activities or interactions ideally throughout the year, rather than solely meeting during the ISMB conference in the COSI track. An important goal of any COSI is to foster a topically-focused collaborative community wherein scientists communicate with one another on research problems and/or opportunities in specific areas of computational biology. The aim of the COSIs is to organize a yearly topical track at the flagship meeting or another official ISCB conference, promote virtual networks, and make ISCB a hub of activity throughout the year nurturing communities that can share information, hold regional or topical meetings and engage in 'long distance' sharing and discussions using a digital (internet) platform.

COSIs are built around major research themes within computational biology, or important activities such as networks of training, mentoring and/or support. They involve groups of people who have already been organizing themselves and holding COSI tracks at ISCB official conferences or ISCB focus conferences, Birds of a Feather gatherings (BoFs), and/or workshops at ISMB.

## **ISCB-COSI Organizational Structure**

To facilitate and organize the relationships between the ISCB and the COSIs, an organizational structure that includes two major committees with participation from ISCB Board of Directors and COSIs leadership have been established.

### *The ISCB COSI Committee*

The COSI Committee (Committee) will be made up of one (1) primary representative and one (1) alternate representative from each established COSI. The primary representative will be the voting member of the Committee. In the event the primary representative is not available, the alternate will be given voting privileges. Both representatives will be part of the mailing group.

The ISCB COSI Committee is responsible for the development, progression, and overall management of the COSI program. They will work closely with the ISCB Board of Directors to set the vision, goals, and implement the program. This may include providing advice, ideas, and improvement strategies such as:

- Developing and executing governance direction.
- Identifying possible synergies between COSIs in order to encourage these communities to work together more, e.g., by holding joint tracks at ISMB, webinars, or ISCB-focus meetings or suggesting gaps within the program or grouped into broader categories and presented in this way on the COSI web-

portal to help ISCB members understand the various themes and their relationships.

- Reviewing the non-COSI research presentations, special sessions, tutorials, workshops and BoFs program at ISMB, and assess whether organizers of these events should be approached to consider establishing a COSI.
- Discussing international conferences outside ISMB, and highlight papers/proceedings at ISMB covering topics not represented by COSIs, and consider whether to approach suitable representatives of these communities to encourage them to establish COSIs.

The Committee will meet by conference call three times a year and face-to-face at ISMB to discuss strategic development of the COSIs program, to provide feedback about existing ISCB activities, and to make suggestions on new initiatives/activities/public policies that the ISCB and COSIs could participate in to advance its shared mission.

### *ISCB COSI Advisory Group*

The COSI Advisory Group (CAG), is made up of the COSI representatives to the ISCB Board of Directors, the ISCB COSI Committee chair, at least one ISCB Conference Advisory Council chair, the ISCB president, and one member at large<sup>1</sup> who is an ISCB Director. This appointed group is responsible for reviewing new applications, assessing the lifecycle of current COSIs, and issuing decision letters (accept, decline, or other recommendations).

<sup>1</sup>At-large is a designation for members of a governing body who are appointed to represent the whole membership. This person will be a non-COSI organizer appointed by the Board who serves as a Director of the Society.

### *COSI Representatives to the ISCB Board of Directors*

ISCB perceives COSIs as a very important and integral part of the Society. Thus three (3) representatives of the COSI Committee will be elected by the COSI Committee in staggered terms to serve as Directors on the ISCB Board of Directors (BOD). Each representative will serve a three-year term with the option to be re-elected for a second term. Nominations will be sought in July and nominees should submit a candidate statement following the procedure described on the ISCB website. Votes will be collected over the Summer and the elected representative endorsed by the ISCB Board in October.

### **The ISCB Commitment to the Communities of Special Interest**

ISCB desires our COSIs to be a vibrant part of the Society. We are committed to supporting the success and growth of each of our groups by providing the necessary resources such as staffing support, funding, and technology platforms. Our collaboration and commitment to one another is a shared responsibility, but we believe with the proper support and dialogue we can together achieve our shared mission for advancing computational biology.

## *ISCB's Commitment*

Open collaboration: Reaching our shared goals requires open collaboration, transparency, and agreement. The COSI Committee representing the communities will work closely with the ISCB Board of Directors to collectively develop agreements, guidelines, and assign resource support.

Providing resources: ISCB will provide the necessary staffing, funding, and technology resources needed to achieve our collective goals. Programming for online digital communities, webinar platforms, overall management of the program are included as part of the Society operating budget. Additional resources can be provided upon mutual agreement of the ISCB Board of Directors and the COSI Committee. ISCB also provides the ISCBconnect platform. This online interactive platform allows the COSIs to interact in a digital environment. ISCB also provides programming assistance for Google Groups. The COSIs have the option to select the collaboration tool of choice.

Open science: ISCB provides an open access approach for ISCBconnect and content of captured meeting recordings. Members and nonmembers alike can enjoy this complimentary.

Support of volunteers: ISCB will provide a complimentary membership to a member of the COSI group who is responsible for the maintenance of the COSI webpage (wiki) and interactive online community.

Funding: ISCB provides funding for COSIs who are selected to organize a track at the flagship meeting, ISMB. Funding amount are set annually with the development of the ISMB conference. If a COSI chooses to organize events outside of ISMB, funding will be mutually agreed upon during the budget development process.

Escrows: ISCB will create individual escrow accounts for each COSI. The money in the escrow account may be used at any time by the COSI by submitting a payment request to ISCB with approval by two members of the COSI steering committee or appropriate leadership.

Promotion of the COSIs: ISCB will regularly promote the COSIs and their programs. If a COSI desires customized communication to those who have given permission in the ISCB database, ISCB will facilitate the email campaign. ISCB has also created a COSI focused online news feed system for the COSIs to use. COSIs at any time can post information to this news feed site.

Publication: COSIs have the ability to take advantage of the ISCB Community Journal platform through F1000 research. The COSI may create a customized channel within the ISCB Community Journal to publish papers, long/short abstracts, and posters.

Program Planning and Logistic Support: If a COSI desires to host a conference or webinar outside of the flagship meeting, ISCB will support the COSI by providing conference planning and logistical support.

### **COSI commitment to ISCB and ISCB members**

By working together, this program will flourish under the leadership of the COSI groups. In return for the ISCB support, the Society asks the COSIs for the following commitments.

#### *COSI Commitments*

ISCB membership: As part of the ISCB community, COSIs are asked to support the growth of the Society by encouraging their communities to become members and when possible by communicating information about ISCB's activities and announcements to their community. A COSI should have at least 10 members who are of the professional membership category of ISCB. Although ideally the COSI leadership should be members, the required membership do not need to only include core members of the COSI organization, but can be counted from all ISCB members signing up to the COSI. ISCB will keep track of all ISCB members attending a COSI track at ISMB and will ensure that all new/renewing members have the opportunity to register with their COSIs of interest when they join/renew their membership with ISCB.

COSI tracks within ISCB Conferences: COSIs are encouraged to organize regular COSI tracks in ISMB, satellite meetings, workshops, tutorials at ISMB or at other ISCB official conferences, as well as consider organizing webinars.

COSIs' website maintenance and content: COSIs will maintain their websites, and at ***least once a year*** provide information on their organizing committee membership and the mechanisms for joining the community. Other content is at the discretion of the COSI organizers.

Creating a dynamic online community: COSIs will endeavor to provide information on the tools/resources available, as well as facilitate a dynamic dialogue within their COSI ISCBconnect communities. Where possible, ISCB would endeavor to organize regular surveys sent out to members to collect information on tools/resources across the communities. It is also suggested that COSIs regularly check national/international repositories of relevance to their themes (e.g., ELIXIR tools/resources registry being established in Europe) to provide their members updated useful information on their sites that attract interest.

### **COSI Governance Structure**

In general and strongly recommended, COSI governance shall be comprised of two groups – The COSI's Steering Committee and COSI's conference-track Organizing

Committee. The COSI steering committee is responsible for complying with the guidelines as set forth in this document. This body will also appoint the contact(s) for the ISCB COSI Committee. The conference-track organizing committee is responsible for organizing the COSI track at ISMB or other ISCB conference. This would include appointing individuals for the roles necessary to successfully organize the scientific COSI track program at ISMB or other conference.

Suggested COSIs leadership roles may include, but are not limited to:

- COSI Steering Committee Chair(s)
- COSI Steering Committee members - often former COSI Conference Track Chairs
- Conference-track Chairs (could be 2 or more)
- COSI representative (liaison) to ISMB Proceedings Committee
- COSI Committee Representative (one representative and one alternate)
- Fundraiser
- Finances (including reimbursements and contribution to fellowships)
- Publicity and outreach (e.g., social media, mailing list maintenance, ISCBconnect online forum)
- Website manager(s), calendar
- Selection of and communication with keynote speakers
- Reports and publications
- Digital events coordinator (webinars)
- CompBio Wikipedia liaison

COSIs will endeavor to review their management structures (i.e., steering committees, ISMB track/workshop/tutorial organizers, website teams, etc.) regularly, and will regularly seek new volunteers to ensure sufficient levels of support and to allow new ideas to emerge to engage with the organization of the COSI activities.

It is strongly recommended to refresh the COSI ISMB track organizing committee at least partially every three years. It may be useful to retain former track organizers on the COSI Steering Committee for continuity.

#### *Assignment of Track Space at the ISCB Flagship Meeting, ISMB*

The CAG will seek track applications from each COSI on a yearly basis. A competitive application would include standards of timeliness of topic, good suggestions for keynote/invited speakers (ideally already committed to attending), funding plans and clear scientific program structure, as well as past achievements. The CAG will evaluate each application using a rubric criteria with detailed comments and/or improvement suggestions. Applications acceptance and rejection notices will be provided back to the COSI with the score and comments.

The ISMB Steering Committee and COSI Advisory Group will explore the option of making COSI selection for tracks/workshops/tutorials no later than November 1 in the

planning year to allow COSIs that are not selected the option to make other arrangements. They will also explore the option to award a track/workshop/tutorial for two years running. Another possibility is to have two layers of COSIs – new COSIs and well-established COSIs, which could be reviewed in different ways.

### *Managing Overlaps and Over Subscription of ISMB Track Space*

ISCB endeavors to include as many COSIs as part of ISMB as possible. However, from time to time there may be more COSIs seeking track space at ISMB than available. To allow as many COSIs as possible at ISMB, sometimes applications may be accepted with less allotted time than requested. Occasionally, an application may be rejected due to lack of space at ISMB, but options to organize displaced COSIs tracks at other ISMB conferences or as regional meetings will be provided. It is also encouraged to identify synergies with other COSI groups when submitting applications as well as major topical conflicts.

### *Managing Overlap with ISMB Special Sessions*

In addition, Special Sessions proposals for ISMB that overlap with COSI themes proposed for the ISMB meeting will be reviewed by the CAG and also sent to the COSI Committee, before decisions are made by the CAG and ISMB Steering Committee to accept those sessions to the conference so that conflicts or synergies could be managed.

## **The Lifecycle of COSIs**

COSIs are organized around interest on specific research topics, and reflect the ever changing landscape of computational biology. From time to time, some of these topics may gain popularity and thrive, some may converge, whereas others may lose traction or become part of the general fabric of computational biology research. These changes are reflected in the COSIs lifecycle and may prompt to the creation of new COSIs, their growth, merger, split, and occasionally their sunset.

### *Establishment of new COSIs*

The review and approval of new COSIs and assessment of existing COSIs will be done by the ISCB COSI Advisory Group (CAG).

A community wishing to establish an ISCB COSI should submit a proposal application.

The submitters should be prepared to discuss the following items:

- Overview of the topics to be covered by the COSI.
- Strategic importance of the scientific area.
- Evidence for likely support within the ISCB community (i.e., BoFs, workshops, tracks within conferences, stand-alone conferences, presentations in ISMB themed tracks or special sessions that have covered the proposed COSI theme).

- Ideas for conferences, including a track within ISCB official conferences.
- Plans for materials to populate a COSI website and promote their COSI to the ISCB general community.
- List of organizers and proposed leadership.
- Names and emails of 10 ISCB professional members in good standing that would join the COSI.

ISCB encourages applicants to review all existing COSIs before preparing the document to ensure a topical overlap does not exist. New COSIs will only be considered if the area is unique with little to no overlap.

Upon receipt of the application, the CAG will seek comments from other COSI steering committees on potential overlaps between the proposed new COSI and existing COSIs before making any decision of either accept or decline.

Upon approval and acceptance, COSIs will need to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which details who is responsible for each element of the community (website, planning ISMB track, leadership, etc.).

### *Assessment of Existing COSIs*

The CAG will conduct an annual review of the COSIs to assess their vitality and how they contribute to the shared ISCB mission. The review will be based on the annual reports submitted to ISCB, along with attendance record of recent tracks at ISMB run by the COSIs or other session/tracks at other meetings. The outcome of the review will allow to identify ways of helping COSIs where activity has fallen, e.g., perhaps by suggesting that related COSIs work together. In the event a COSI is under performing or in jeopardy of losing its track position at ISMB, the CAG will consult with the COSI Committee and seek advice before a final recommendation is made.

### *Annual Reports*

COSIs will submit an online report by October 31 each year. This annual report should include:

- Outline of the leadership structure (to include any changes that took place).
- Brief description of the activities conducted by the group over the past year, which can include the major scientific outcomes of your tracks, webinars, or conference and could also include how the group supported the advancement of bioinformatics and computational biology.
- Review of the ISMB track (if applicable).
  - number of total submissions
  - number of proceedings programmed
  - number of keynote speaker
    - how many were of a diverse (gender, ethnic, etc.) nature
  - number of total talks within track
    - how many were of a diverse (gender, ethnic, etc.) nature

- total number of posters
- sponsorship secure
- travel fellowships issued
- Recipient of complimentary membership for the group and confirmation that COSI website (wiki) has been updated.
- Feedback about existing ISCB activities and suggestions on new initiatives/activities/public policies that ISCB could participate in with the group to advance a shared mission.
- A list of active volunteers of the COSI and/or reviewers for ISCB appreciation listings.

COSIs are also requested to review and provide any necessary updates to their individual websites, ISCBconnect, wiki or personal pages. This may include educational activities, conferences, funding and fellowship opportunities, etc.

Reports will be adapted and included in the ISCB Annual Report which is published on the ISCB website in February of the following year.