BID Pacific Workshop on Biodiversity Data Mobilisation

Final Report on the on-site event in Apia (WS), July 2017

The **BID workshop on biodiversity data mobilization** is part of the capacity enhancement approach of the [Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) programme](#) led by GBIF. The workshop has online and onsite components, both with a strong practical approach. This report refers to the **third edition of the workshop** offered to the recipients of selected proposals from the Pacific, which included an on-site event held at the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme in Apia, Samoa, 24-27 July 2017.

Each edition of the workshop aims to contribute to enhancing the capacity of the BID-funded project teams to plan and implement biodiversity data publishing efforts effectively and according to GBIF standards. The workshop has a strong focus on the technical aspects of data mobilization — in particular, everything related to the data lifecycle: digitization, management and online publishing.

At the conclusion of each edition, the work of participants who have successfully completed all assignments is evaluated, and those participants that achieved successful scores receive an official certification in the form of a Mozilla Open Badge.

Based on recommendations from the evaluation of the previous edition of this workshop held in Trinidad, 2017, the following changes were implemented:

- A new use case was developed to address Invasive and Alien species. This use case was directly applicable to participants' projects and was well-received.

- This workshop was unique in that two of the organized groups were of regional project teams. These teams were able to come together with their mentors to begin active planning of their projects.

- A Darwin Core presentation was added to the course materials. This presentation was the second highest rated with a score of 4.82.

- In an effort to improve support materials and by utilizing features of the elearning portal, participants were provided with access to an online glossary of biodiversity terms and a section of categorized links to more information regarding the course topics.

- For this edition, all students spoke English, however, there was partial support for French with the availability of translated materials and a francophone trainer and a francophone mentor for two participants.

The participants' overall evaluation of the event was extremely positive. This report summarizes the feedback received and suggests areas for improvement for future events.

1. Contents

The workshop brochure can be found on the event page (http://goo.gl/s7WmNT). The complete structure of the workshop, including details about the activities and materials used can be found in the course collaborative platform (http://elearning.gbif.es -- password required).

2. Participation

Eleven students participated in the on-site event. All of them represented BID-funded projects. The countries involved were: Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu. The participants were nominated prior to the event by their project leads and were expected to possess the following capabilities:

Basic skills in computer and internet use, and, in particular, in the use of spreadsheets, databases, and tools for geographical data representation (e.g. Google maps, GIS software).

- Basic knowledge about geography and biodiversity informatics: geography and mapping concepts, basic taxonomy and nomenclature rules, basic knowledge about GBIF and other relevant initiatives working in biodiversity informatics.
- Willingness to disseminate the knowledge learned in the workshop with partners and collaborators in your project by adapting the biodiversity data mobilization training materials to specific contexts and languages maintaining their instructional value.

The course was led by trainers from the GBIF community: Sharon Grant (Chicago Field Museum), Sophie Pamerlon (GBIF France), and John Wieczorek (VertNet). Grant and Pamerlon were part of the team that developed and taught the original edition of the course and continued to provide valuable consistency in the delivery of this edition. Wieczorek was chosen as he is well-known leader in the biodiversity informatics community and is an expert in Darwin Core, data cleaning and transformation, and georeferencing.

The event was also supported by four BID mentors: Daniel Amariles (International Center for Tropical Agriculture), Anne-Sophie Archambeau (GBIF France), David Bloom (VertNet), and Katia Cezón (GBIF Spain). Amariles and Bloom were chosen for their project management skills and capability to mentor the two regional projects. GBIF France is serving as a partner/mentor to a project in Vanuatu and, as such, Archambeau was chosen to mentor that national project with her experience as the GBIF France Node Manager. Cezón was chosen from her previous mentor experience on the Kigali event and her continuing support through GBIF Spain of the elearning portal.

A GBIF Programme Officer for Participant and Engagement, Laura Anne Russell, coordinated the training and a local host, from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, David Moverlay, coordinated all the logistics.

During the course, the participants were divided in three working groups, each under the supervision of one of the mentors. The trainers rotated groups whenever they were not presenting. The full list of registered participants can be found on the event page (http://goo.gl/s7WmNT).

3. Evaluation

Attendees evaluated the event by filling out an anonymous online form to which a link was provided during the last session. It included two sections: the first based on quick assessments of key topics and of the course sessions, and the second based on free-text questions. **11 out of 11 participants** completed and submitted the form.

3.1. Key topics

The table at right includes the course features that the participants were asked to rate from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

Topic	AVG score
Course contents	4.91
Course structure and schedule	4.64
Course materials	4.73
Trainers	5.00
Interaction with my peers	4.91
Preparatory activities	4.36
Practical organization	4.91
Support for languages	4.80
Use of digital and online resources	4.73
Applicability in my work place	4.45

All scores were very high (only two under 4,5 out of 5). Attendees valued the quality of the trainers, interaction with peers, the quality of the contents, and the practical organization of the workshop most highly. Again, as in the previous two editions of the workshops, the small group sizes allowed extended discussion time with the trainers and mentors, in fact, the two regional projects planned to use the results of the Project Planning exercise as a basis for their real work. In terms of the content, a new use case was developed (a recommendation from the previous edition) as many of the projects in the Pacific concern invasive or alien species. This targeted content approach proved successful.

The preparatory activities, along with applicability in the workplace scored the lowest, although still in the upper range of the scoring. The lower scores for preparatory activities are likely because several participants were in the field leading up to the onsite workshop and did not make plans in their schedule to complete the work. The blended learning approach is often new to the participants in the BID program and some may not have felt comfortable using the elearning portal. The lower score for the applicability in the work place may have to do with participants that attended whose roles were those of consultants – those without day-to-day responsibilities for mobilizing data. These roles are not generally the group recommended to attend this course (see section 2).

> Participants gave the workshop features an **overall score of 4.74 out of 5**.
>
> The Trinidad edition of this data mobilization workshop received a 4.47 out of 5.
>
> The Kigali edition of this data mobilization workshop received a 4.49 out of 5.

3.2. Workshop sessions

The next table summarizes the average scores that participants assigned to the different sessions using the same five-point scale mentioned in section 3.1. Each session scored above 4.5 with the exception of two, both of which still scored over 4.4. The OpenRefine session (led by John Wieczorek) received the highest score at 4.91. The techniques taught in this session were new and valuable to the participants and they were excited to learn how to standardize and correct their data using the OpenRefine software.

The Workshop Foundations presentation scored the lowest with a score of 4.45. This session is full of biodiversity informatics essentials, some of which are covered in the preparatory activities. Since several didn't complete the preparatory activities, this may have resulted in those feeling left behind in this session.

Session	Average score
01: Introduction	4.55
02: Workshop foundations	**4.45**
03: Digitization planning	4.55
04: Digitization planning practice	4.55
05: Digitization planning discussion	4.64
06: Darwin Core	**4.82**
07: Biodiversity data types	4.60
08: Principles of data digitization	4.60
09: Basics of data transformation	**4.80**
10: Open Refine	**4.91**
11: Data management tools	4.64
12a: Basics of data publishing	**4.50**
12b: Simple data publishing	4.60
12c: Advanced data publishing	4.64
13: Practical session	4.70

Participants gave the course sessions an **overall score of 4.64 out of 5**.

The Trinidad edition of the course sessions received a 4.28 out of 5.

The Kigali edition of the course sessions received a 4.52 out of 5.

3.3. Free-text responses

In the second section of the evaluation form the students had the opportunity to provide more detailed feedback in free-text responses. The questions and a summary of the responses follow below:

a) In which area did you **_increase your knowledge_** the most?
   - Data management, transformation and cleaning (4 people)
   - Planning a biodiversity data mobilisation project (3 people)
   - Data publishing (3 people)
   - Biodiversity data digitization (2 people)
   - Darwin Core (1 person)

b) Which of the topics studied will be the **_most useful in your daily work_**?
   - Biodiversity data cleaning and transformation (5 people)
   - Biodiversity data management tools (4 people)
   - Biodiversity data publishing (2 people)
   - Darwin Core (2 people)
   - Biodiversity data types (1 person)
   - All topics (1 person)

c) *Is there anything that you would have __added__ to this course?*
- o More about collection management software (1 person)
- o Time to use own project data (1 person)
- o Georeferencing techniques (1 person)
- o More on data cleaning (1 person)

d) *Any other __comments or suggestions__?*
- o More time/more days (3 people)
- o More information at the start about individual BID projects and clarifying aims of BID (1 person)
- o Trainers and mentors were great; made an awesome learning environment (2 person)
- o Too technical (1 person)

4. Evaluation and recommendations by the GBIF Secretariat

The high scores of this third edition of the workshop indicate that we are approaching a finely-tuned course that GBIF will be able to implement and share with the entire biodiversity community.

Based on the feedback received during the course and through the evaluation form, the Secretariat offers the following recommendations for improving future training events:

A. Continue to emphasize small, mentor-led groups

The organization of the course around small work groups focused on practical work led by volunteer BID mentors continues to be the success of this course. The two mentors that worked with the two regional teams were very effective and helped these participants to kick-start their projects. This was an effective use of our matchmaking process between projects and mentors to establish longer-term engagement between them. Bloom was invited to Fiji in October 2017 to continue his role as mentor during a working meeting for the project. Additionally, he has advised them on the installation and maintenance of their IPT and assisted them with the publishing of their first dataset – a checklist from Tonga.

We recommend that this small group, mentor-led approach be used in the development of the BID Data Use for Decision Makers workshop as well.

B. Include more information on the aims and goals of BID

During the second and third editions of the workshop, it became apparent that the participants in these Data Mobilization workshops are not always the project lead and, as such, do not have the background knowledge of the aims and goals of BID.

During project kick-off calls, project leads should be encouraged to include and/or disseminate BID information with the entirety of their project teams so participants are more knowledgeable when arriving at the course. Additionally, we recommend including a short session in the course content specifically on BID -- beyond the data mobilization/capacity enhancement topics – to allow participants to ask and have their BID-specific questions answered.

C. Develop additional use cases

The addition of a new use case targeted at the region's projects was extremely successful. We recommend the continued development of additional themed use cases that can be switched out as needed.

D. Increase participant engagement with the preparatory activities

Participants in this edition of the workshop and, somewhat in the previous editions, have not been sufficiently engaged with the preparatory activities. We recommend closer monitoring of their activities in the portal to assess problem areas for possible content improvement and more targeted email reminders that the preparatory activities are required to be fully prepared for the onsite portion of the workshop.