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Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2014 4:56 PM
To: Donald Hobern (GBIF)
Cc: 'Berendsohn, Walter G.'
Subject: Consultation on funding GBIF activity

Dear GBIF Head of Delegation,

As you know, it has been difficult for GBIF in recent years to secure the funding levels agreed at GB17 in Suwon, Korea in 2011. The GBIF Task Force on Financial Sustainability reviewed this situation in 2013 and provided a report with recommendations on addressing this situation.

Two of the Task Force's recommendations discussed and broadly supported by the GBIF Governing Board at GB20 in Berlin, Germany in 2013, were:

2. Split the activities of GBIF in two separate parts, the Core Mission being the global science infrastructure for biodiversity informatics and the Supplementary Mission, manifested in a User Programme.
3. Identify the extent and content of the GBIF Core Mission (Biodiversity Data Infrastructure) and estimate its annual budget (or alternative budget levels)

It was recognised that further discussion and consensus was required around what activities form part of GBIF's "Core Mission", with some clarifications:

- ? First, the word "core" may be subject to misunderstanding. GBIF involves a vast range of national and international activity to deliver biodiversity information and to support use of this information. Only a small portion of this activity has ever been funded directly through GBIF Participant contributions. Defining a "Core Mission" does not imply that these other activities are less important. However, it is helpful to focus clearly on defining the particular outcomes that are best achieved, or only achievable, through coordinated international GBIF activity.
- ? Secondly, equating the GBIF "Core Mission" with "Biodiversity Data Infrastructure" may be misleading and at least requires further explanation. GBIF's existence depends on various activities that can be seen as supporting its role as an infrastructure, but which involve governance (Governing Board and standing committees), capacity enhancement (coordination, development and promotion of best practices and standard policies, information resources and training materials, etc.) and evaluation and communication of outcomes. GBIF also needs resources to ensure it can develop the opportunities and collaborations that may secure supplementary funding.

Agreement on the scope of this "Core Mission" is therefore essential. Once this is defined, we can for the first time develop a cost model for achieving this mission in a sustained fashion. This can then guide us in revising the GBIF funding model and in developing appropriate mechanisms to seek separate funding for what the Task Force called GBIF's "Supplementary Mission". (We are also exploring ways to enable GBIF Participants to assume more responsibility for some aspects of GBIF's work.)

The GBIF Executive Committee is keen to develop a workable proposal for debate and decision at this year's Governing Board meeting to define this "Core Mission" and for a suitable model to guarantee its funding.

As a first step in this process, as requested at GB20, we have produced a preliminary version of a short document (attached here as "DRAFT – Defining the GBIF Core") that seeks to define the concept of a GBIF "Core Mission". At present, our estimate is that the budget required to support this level of activity would be around €3.2M (70% of the total agreed at Suwon). As one of the financial contributors to GBIF over the years, I am interested in your country's views on this document.

In particular,

1. Do you agree with the perspectives outlined in the document?
2. Would it be easier for your country to fund GBIF if the contribution expected was based on a clear costing for such a "Core Mission"?
3. Would it be feasible for your country to secure long-term GBIF funding for a "Core Mission" of at least 70% of the current Suwon contribution level?
4. How would it affect your country's involvement in GBIF if voting rights were strictly tied to this level of contribution?
5. Is it likely that your country could also contribute to separate "Supplementary Mission" activities for international capacity enhancement or content mobilisation?

I welcome any other comments or input on this subject. If you would to discuss this with me in more detail, please let me know and we will arrange a time to talk.

Many thanks and best wishes,

Donald

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