Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN)
Executive Council Seeks Letters of Interest for the
Establishment of the IABIN Hub

The goal of the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) is to develop a biological information infrastructure in the Americas and establish agreements to exchange biodiversity information across national borders. (For further information on IABIN, see http://www.iabin.net/.) To support this goal, IABIN is seeking to establish a small secretariat or Hub, comprising a small coordination and support group that will be accountable to the IABIN Executive Council. Responsibilities of the Hub and criteria for selection of a Hub host are included below.

It is anticipated that for about the next 5 years, the majority of salary costs of a small number (2 to 3) of Hub staff would be covered by a forthcoming World Bank/GEF project grant. It is not expected, however, that funds will be available to cover other needs of the Hub, such as office space, telecommunications, computer infrastructure, and access to specialized technical personnel including information technology experts.

The IABIN Executive Council is seeking Letters of Interest from institutions interested in hosting the Hub and capable of providing the necessary infrastructure to support Hub personnel. Institutions interested in hosting the Hub should send a letter to the Chair of the IABIN Council by Monday July 21, 2003, documenting that interest. **(NOTE: Full proposals to host the Hub are NOT requested at this time.)** Each institution submitting a Letter of Interest will be invited to make a 10-minute presentation at the upcoming joint IABIN-CHM meeting in Cancun, Mexico, August 12-14, 2003. (Additional information concerning the Cancun meeting is available on the IABIN web site, http://www.iabin.net/.) The presentation should include a summary of the capabilities of the institution and a discussion of the contribution the institution can make to the establishment of the Hub (e.g., provide office space, telephone service, etc.). Institutions making presentations at the Cancun meeting will be invited to submit full proposals, including funding requirements, for hosting the Hub. Full proposals will be required during 4th quarter of 2003; a firm deadline for the submission of proposals will be established at the Cancun meeting.

Letters of Interest may be emailed to gcotter@usgs.gov, with a copy to barbara_bauldock@usgs.gov; faxed to (703) 648-4224; or mailed to:

> Gladys Cotter, Chair, IABIN Council
> U.S. Geological Survey
> MS 300
> 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
> Reston, VA   20192   USA

Letters must be received by Monday, July 21, 2003. This will ensure that interested institutions can be included on the agenda for the Cancun meeting.

Responsibilities of the Hub[1]

Central to the implementation of IABIN is the establishment of an IABIN Hub, a small secretariat that will perform the following functions for the network as a whole:

- Promote cooperation amongst the network's partners (e.g., meetings, workshops, newsletters)
- Facilitate understanding of and commitment to the network's goals (e.g., issues being addressed, users to be served)
- Facilitate preparation of strategic plans for information production (e.g., information needs analysis, information product design, objectives and targets for the network's partners)
- Facilitate implementation of strategic plans (e.g., through formation of multi-partner teams)
- Facilitate access to data (e.g., through custodianship, data access agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, metadata, standards)
- Facilitate the development of the network (e.g., assess capacity, identify areas for restructuring or investment, seek support)
- Market the network's products and services
- Monitor the effectiveness of the network's products and services
- Provide editorial and office support for preparation of key documents (e.g. strategic plans, project proposals, marketing literature)
- Brief the network's partners on new opportunities, plans and progress (e.g. newsletters, email)
- Handle inquiries about the network's activities, referring to individual partners as appropriate
- Maintain copies of the network's products and services for distribution to users
- Manage data on the status and availability of the network's capacity
- Provide network and user support, possibly including a help desk
- Manage central information services, including a Web site and portal (Web site could be remotely managed at a site other than the Hub)

Criteria for Hub Selection

The IABIN Council will soon request bids from organizations interested in physically housing the IABIN Hub for at least a period of 5 years (with the annual endorsement of the IABIN Council). A set of selection criteria was proposed at the First IABIN Council Meeting. These criteria appear below, with slight modifications that result from the need to operationalize the criteria and ensure that a higher priority is accorded to bids reflecting the most pressing needs for a future Hub.

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[1] Information on Hub creation and management was derived from output from the first two IABIN Council Meetings (Dec 1999 and Jan 2002).

Within each criterion, bids will be weighted based on how well the organization responds to the expressed need and on costs, with higher weighting being awarded if the services are offered for free as opposed to requiring IABIN to cover costs.

CRITERIA	PRIORITY*
Ability to provide office space, overhead and infrastructure such as facilities, utilities, and meeting space for Hub staff	1
Access to good telecommunications infrastructure, including high-speed Internet connections	1
Available staff that is knowledgeable about biodiversity issues and their importance	1
Knowledge of the biodiversity structures in member governments; understanding of whom to interact with within governments	1
Capable IT support staff	2
Internet technology application experience, especially distributed Web architectures	2
Multilingual staff (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French)	2
Excellent reputation for raising money from varying sources including governments, private sector, foundations and NGOs	2
Secretariat/program direction experience	3
Ability to contract and recruit easily and broadly (including outside Hub country)	4
Easily accessible by air from major cities of the Hemisphere	5

*1= high; 3 = medium; 5 = low.

CANDIDATE TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS
International Bodies
National Focal Points/Centers
NGOs
Academic-based Institution/Museums/Foundations
Commercial Contractors