

## **Metabolomics Society 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan for Membership Retention and Expansion**

In 2017, the Society executed a broad survey of its members to assess the degree of its current success in achieving its mission, define opportunities for improving its service to the community, and make plans to establish the future goals and direction of the Society. The summary of our methodology and main findings of this evaluation have been published in *Metabolites* (2019, 9(5), 89; <https://doi.org/10.3390/metabo9050089>). In the publication, we also provide access to the results and make key conclusions defining how the Society should aim to move forward to continue to support community needs and promote metabolomics. The main findings of the survey were the basis for the development of the Society's *Strategic Plan for Membership Retention and Expansion*. A summary of the conclusions and strategic plan objectives are outlined below.

### **Main Conclusions from the Survey**

Based on the survey results, areas for the Society to focus on to support member needs are:

- collecting and monitoring of demographic data during the membership registration process;
- continuing to support the early-career members of the Society through initiatives such as the EMN; and
- developing initiatives that focus on member networking to retain and increase Society membership, including increased interaction with the Society's local affiliates to identify specific needs for various geographical regions.

### **Strategic Plan Focus Area 1: Collect and Monitor Demographic Data During the Membership Registration Process**

The Society collects minimal information at registration that includes no demographic information other than if the registrant qualifies as an early-career member, which is defined as being within five years of the attainment of a graduate degree. Therefore, the Society should consider collecting additional demographic data that are asked of all members upon registration, while still allowing any member to opt out of providing personal information if desired. Having sufficient member demographic data would position the Society better to determine what initiatives would best serve the membership and track trends over time. Furthermore, it would allow the Society to establish targeted recruitment efforts and determine if those efforts were meeting the established goals. Based on the survey, the Society should be targeting increased membership recruitment in Africa and South America; however, without collecting these data from member registrations, it won't be possible to evaluate whether recruitment effort initiatives are successful.

Focus Area 1 Objectives:

1. Revitalize the Society's Membership Committee to lead this focus area by January 31, 2020.

2. Determine what demographic data should be collected at the point of member registration by July 31, 2020.
3. Implement strategies for targeted membership recruitment in Africa and South America by September 30, 2020. The Membership Committee should work in conjunction with the South African Affiliate to identify specific needs for this region.
4. Establish a procedure for monitoring key data to determine if the Society is meeting its recruitment and retention goals by September 30, 2021.

## **Strategic Plan Focus Area 2: Continue to Support the Early-Career Members of the Society**

The survey data showed that a significant portion of the Society membership was in training positions. Additionally, 80% of respondents had been in the field less than 10 years. Forty-seven percent of those respondents had been working in the field less than 5 years, which primarily reflects early-career members. This suggests the still nascent nature of metabolomics and the continued adoption of the technology by additional research groups. To support this sector of the membership, the Society established the Early-career Member Network (EMN) Committee in 2013 to provide a forum for metabolomics researchers at the start of their professional career and serve the early-career members of the Metabolomics Society. The EMN Committee has several ongoing projects and initiatives including a webinar series, bursary program for early-career members to travel to conferences, and organization of workshops and a reception at the Annual Meeting. Additionally, members of the EMN Committee participate on several Society Committees and Task Groups, and the Chair of the EMN Committee holds a position on the Society Board of Directors. Survey respondents considered one of the most important initiatives/activities currently supported by the Metabolomics Society to be the EMN.

Although the broad membership agreed that networking and the annual meeting were the most important benefits of being a Society member, trainees held career development opportunities as being more important than the senior, more established members of the Society. Specifically, those initiatives/activities that were more important to trainees were job postings on the website, opportunities to apply for travel awards, opportunities to apply for conference support, and membership in the Early-career Member Network. The Society provides travel awards to the annual meeting for early-career members. Additionally, in 2018, the EMN established a bursary program to support increased participation of early-career researchers at both the Society's annual meeting and other metabolomics-focused conferences. Considering the significant presence of early-career scientists within the membership, the Society should review the current career-development focused initiatives and consider expanding them to include additional support.

Focus Area 2 Objectives:

1. In collaboration with the EMN Committee, review survey data and ongoing career-development initiatives to identify gaps in support for this sector of the membership by July 31, 2020.
2. In collaboration with the EMN Committee, identify and subsequently establish/expand key initiatives/programs for continued support of early-career members by July 31, 2021.
3. Identify and implement novel opportunities for early-career members to network with their peers and senior Society members by July 31, 2022.

### **Strategic Plan Focus Area 3: Develop Initiatives Focusing on Member Networking to Retain and Increase Society Membership**

The survey data showed that 72% of respondents had attended a Metabolomics Society Annual Meeting; however, only 38% remained a Society member in the years that they do not attend the annual meeting. This suggests that the Society should develop additional incentives to retain members even when they do not attend the annual meeting. Respondents felt that best strategies to maintain the current membership to be increased networking among members and increased opportunities to participate in annual meetings, which provides members an opportunity to network. Furthermore, respondents considered the best strategy to increase membership to be increased networking among members. This was consistent regardless of professional status; therefore, increased opportunities to network across the broad membership should be explored to both maintain and increase membership. Several activities have recently been held at the annual meeting to increase networking opportunities. The EMN holds a reception for early-career members to network with their peers and the Board of Directors. Additionally, regional affiliates have held receptions to encourage those in geographical proximity to each other to network and join their local affiliates. Based on the survey, these types of activities are in line with what the membership regards as the most important strategy to maintain and increase Society membership. However, additional networking opportunities should be explored and established for the full membership and in conjunction with the Society's regional affiliates.

#### **Focus Area 3 Objectives:**

1. Revitalize the Society's Membership Committee to lead this focus area by January 31, 2020. The Membership Committee should work in conjunction with the International Affiliations Task Group to identify specific needs for various geographical regions.
2. Evaluate current Society networking opportunities by September 30, 2021.
3. Identify and implement opportunities/initiatives/programs to increase networking across the broad membership to both maintain and retain members by September 30, 2022.

### **Evaluation of Strategic Plan**

In addition to implementing the strategic plan, the Society should establish an evaluation plan to monitor progress toward achieving and completing the proposed objectives. This will allow the Society to demonstrate the impact of the strategic plan, as well as increase the productivity and effectiveness of the strategic plan throughout the duration of implementation. Evaluation will

also provide data for the establishment of the 2025-2030 strategic plan. Equally important, an evaluation plan will provide data that can be shared with the membership to increase transparency.

Objectives:

1. Society Strategy Task Group will develop and implement an evaluation plan in collaboration with the Board of Directors, Membership Committee, International Affiliations Task Group, and Early-Career Member Network Committee.
  - a. Focus Area 1 by September 30, 2021.
  - b. Focus Area 2 by July 31, 2022.
  - c. Focus Area 3 by September 30, 2022.
  - d. Data collection and reports to the membership through September 30, 2025.