

## MEETING OF THE NHERI USER FORUM COMMITTEE

June 7, 2019

In-person Meeting at the Summer Institute

University of Texas, San Antonio

Alamo Boardroom

### AGENDA

Time	Description
9:00 – 9:30 am	Welcome; Approve meeting minutes from May 23, 2019
9:30 – 10:00 am	User Satisfaction Survey Subcommittee – quick review of results to date
10:00 am – 11:00 pm	Meeting with NHERI Facilities PIs
<b>10:00</b>	Tricia Clayton, UT Austin
<b>10:15</b>	Forrest Masters, UF
<b>10:30</b>	Tim Cockerill, DesignSafe
<b>10:45</b>	Pedro Lomonaco, OSU
11:00 pm – 12:15 pm	User Satisfaction Survey Subcommittee
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	Report out from ECO, Facilities Scheduling, and Technology Transfer Representatives
2:30 – 3:30 pm	Meeting with NCO and NIAC

All times are Central time zone.

#### Call-in Information:

Host02 DesignSafe is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: NHERI User Forum - June 2019

Time: Jun 7, 2019 8:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://DesignSafe-ci.zoom.us/j/216043494>

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Meeting ID: 216 043 494

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/a9e0e4B2C>

**In Attendance (in-person):** Elaina, Mohammad, Stephanie, Antonio

**In Attendance (call-in):** Max, Maggie (to represent Liesel)

### **1. Welcome; Approve meeting minutes from May 23, 2019**

Elaina reminds us of action items for UF members. Elaina made a motion to approve the minutes; Stephanie second; no objections.

### **2. User Satisfaction Survey Subcommittee – quick review of results to date**

Elaina states the User Satisfaction Survey is open and a reminder email was sent out on June 6, 2019. Ideas to discuss with Joy Pauschke include having the user satisfaction survey sent to users directly (or indirectly) from her; requiring users to include the survey as part of the report submission after the project or after completion of a test; developing another strategy to collect the user satisfaction data (other than a survey); include an external member, such as a project PI, in the User Forum on a one-year basis or expand the User Forum to include more members to encourage further participation and feedback. User fatigue is expected to contribute to low response rates on the survey.

Maggie shares her screen and discusses survey updates (see attached document). Targeted small population identified as regular users include 137 users and 20 responses have been recorded. The general survey has resulted in 36 responses. Survey closes on June 14. The two groups were targeted with the expectation that regular users would be able to provide in-depth feedback on facilities. Most survey responders indicated they had written a NSF proposal or worked with the facilities. Several surveys were started but not finished. Open-ended questions received much lower response rates. Most users are not even opening the survey. Maggie verifies the list of regular users was sent to Julio Ramirez (Action Item from May 23, 2019 meeting).

Of the responses recorded, Maggie verifies feedback is not drastically different compared to the 2018 survey and is overall positive. Two respondents (out of six) indicated DesignSafe is slow and difficult to use. However, response rates are so low that they are not generalizable to the general user group.

### **3. Meeting with NHERI Facilities PIs**

Elaina explains the purposes of these meetings are to describe what the UF is doing, to discuss what the Facilities are doing, and how we can work together to meet metric requirements and obtain information needed by both.

#### **a. Tricia Clayton, UT Austin**

Tricia explains they give the survey to users after they finish the project and ask them to complete the survey upon project completion. Response rates are 100%. They have no data from users in the pre-proposal stage. Their survey is quantitative and close-ended. Users of the facility are typically asked by other committees in NHERI to present at conferences or give talks, so users may feel overwhelmed by being asked to complete another task for being a user of a NHERI facility (facilities would like to continue to recruit users and keep users satisfied).

An area of mutual benefit is to have Liesel's expertise aid UT Austin with further developing survey questions and for the User Forum to include a few user satisfaction questions to survey users of UT Austin.

**b. Forrest Masters, UF**

Forrest explains the disadvantage of sending a survey through email is that users receive too many emails including from DesignSafe. His response rate is about 75%. He expresses concerns with the User Forum not having a full representation of all types of users. There has been no effort to sort the user list on DesignSafe. Forrest suggests the survey is integrated into another activity the users are already doing; we suggest adding or modifying existing questions to the facilities survey.

**c. Tim Cockerill, DesignSafe**

Tim received a low response rate to his survey sent to ~3,000 account holders. They have, in the past, offered incentives by outsourcing a company to provide gift cards. Tim explains that many HPC users are not active and would not be able to provide quality data on the survey. There may be graduate students who are active and could provide good quality information. Tim will have a new hire who will data mine user data from DesignSafe and other facilities. Tim agreed to allow us to add or possibly modify his existing survey questions to target user satisfaction. Tim suggests targeting the top users (to be identified by his new employee) or graduate students and associated personnel on each project with the survey to improve response rates. Tim offers to link a User Forum (perhaps Liesel) to a "send grid", which will allow us to email the survey to users and it will appear to come from another person (perhaps Joy).

**d. Pedro Lomonaco, OSU**

Pedro points out that as he was going through the survey, several questions were not applicable to him because he is not actually a facility user. Pedro agrees to let us add or modify questions to his survey and offers to provide us with the survey they currently use. Pedro only sends the survey to project PIs. Response rates are about 80% after several reminders. Surveys will be sent to participants at their upcoming workshop, and this survey is completely different than the facilities survey. Pedro brings up that the

title “User Forum” brings up the question of “What is a user?” Users may not realize this implies users of facilities, DesignSafe, data, etc. so they may not complete the email.

**ACTION ITEM:** Identify questions from the facilities surveys that can be modified or areas to add questions to obtain user satisfaction data from facilities users.

#### **4. User Satisfaction Survey Subcommittee**

Elaina suggests:

1. work with the NHERI PI’s to include user satisfaction survey questions in the facility surveys;
2. leverage data provided by Tim and the DesignSafe team to target specific user groups;
3. consider doing something different than a survey, such User Forum members perform a qualitative assessment after NHERI events documenting general user comments and satisfaction;
4. add personal information to the list of regular users and analyze data to determine if there are trends in the data (e.g. PI is a senior researcher, PI attended a NHERI workshop previously).

Antonio suggests we use a qualitative method, in addition to the survey, to assess user satisfaction.

Overall, users are fatigued, a cumulative survey may better serve the users, as well as reducing the number of emails from NHERI. In general, response rates decrease as the number of people who are surveyed increases. This may be because the type of user changes with the larger population, there is less direct interaction between facilities managers and users, etc.

In summary: the UF suggests using targeted lists (PI of the sites PLUS grad students; pre-proposal stage users who have interacted with facilities) and have the survey “sent” from Joy. Also suggest including a PI on our monthly meeting.

#### **5. Lunch**

#### **6. Report out from ECO, Facilities Scheduling, and Technology Transfer Representatives**

ECO: Mohammad reports out that the ECO will meet later today (June 7) and the Summer Institute is currently being held. The first cohort of REU students is currently underway. All REU students will attend the Natural Hazards Workshop.

FSC: No update. Max reached out to Dan via email to schedule a meeting, but Max received an automatic reply from Dan stating he was out of town.

Technology Transfer: No update.

Other items: Elaina met with Joy to discuss the issues the User Forum is having with low response rates. Joy did not agree with putting her name on the email; however, she was encouraging of the User Forum working with facilities to leverage and include additional questions without duplicating efforts. Joy also suggested to look into other programs that conduct user satisfaction surveys and identify methods the UF could employ. Joy stated the qualitative assessments should be systematic, such as using a rubric, so that they are not anecdotal and they are consistent between members.

**ACTION ITEM:** Work with Liesel to develop a rubric for the UF to perform qualitative assessments of user satisfaction and to develop/modify facility survey questions to reflect user satisfaction.

Elaina motioned to adjourn; Stephanie second. The meeting was adjourned at 2:18 pm CT.

## **7. Meeting with NCO and NIAC**

Each attendee introduced themselves. Elaina summarized the purpose of the User Forum and that the User Forum has been fairly ineffective at measuring user satisfaction through the survey due to low response rates. She describes the first change the UF plans is to include or modify questions the facilities are currently asking of the users. The second change the UF plans is to target user groups and send more personalized emails to increase response rates. This prevents excluding users who have not been successful at receiving funding. A summary of the day was also provided to the NIAC to update them on the UF progress. Lesley suggests we add a line item that allows users to reach the user forum directly. Several additional suggestions include: the UF should email users directly and offer our services to users, rather than only requesting information from users; send step-wise emails introducing the UF and our interactions with NHERI committees; the UF should build relationships with users via email; to reduce emails sent to users, send the email to focus groups (perhaps by discipline); consolidating emails from DesignSafe.

**ACTION ITEM:** Include some

## **Methods:**

Invitations to participate in the NHERI User Satisfaction Survey were sent to two populations in May 2019.

- 1) Known Facilities Users
  - a) Contact information for 137 users compiled from facility specific user lists (i.e., Contact lists, sign in documentation, etc.); this was provided by the facilities
  - b) Survey Launch Date: 5/13/2019
  - c) Reminder Sent: 5/20/19 (per Antonio's guidance last year, we sent just one reminder so as not to aggravate the recipients)
  - d) Responses to Date: 20
- 2) General NHERI Users
  - a) Contact information pulled from an existing DesignSafe list of users.
  - b) Survey Launch Date: 5/23/2019
  - c) Reminder Sent: 6/6/2019
  - d) Responses to Date: 36
    - i) 35 participated
    - ii) 1 opted out.

Data collection across both groups is on-going. Survey to close June 14th.

Rationale: By differentiating facilities users from the larger NHERI contact list we can focus on those that have more direct interaction with the facilities. These are people who may be able to provide more meaningful and substantive feedback on experiences working with the facilities.

## **The Instrument:**

To allow for comparison between years, no substantive changes were made to the instrument.

- 36 total possible questions designed to gauge user satisfaction with NHERI services and resources.
- Open ended questions included at the end of each module to allow for more detailed feedback from respondents.

## **Results:**

**Not much change in overall user responses from last year, although responses are on the whole more positive than last year with regard to:**

- Scheduling
- Quality of available training
- Technical support
- Feedback
- Information Accessibility and Comprehensiveness

### **Use of Facilities/Resources:**

- Most report using 2 facilities
- Most report using NHERI facilities/resources on at least one proposal prepared
- Most have completed experiments and are preparing another proposal

## 2019 NHERI User Satisfaction Survey Memo

Of those who have requested assistance in proposal writing from NHERI, *100% believed the assistance received was positive.*

Negative comments on open ended questions were limited, but are as follows:

- ***DesignSafe is slow to load, difficult to use (bolded to indicate comments made by multiple respondents)***
- Accessing data is difficult
- NEES data is disorganized
- Users should be able to upload non ASCII format data

Note: responses to other questions regarding accessibility of data contradict these particular comments as **most** indicate accessibility is **not** an issue.

Positive comments on open ended questions:

- The staff is extremely helpful (specific staff members are named in one case, but overwhelmingly positive comments here).
- Experiences with scheduling are positive.

Most respondents interested in participating in or using (top 3 listed in ranked order):

- Calendar of events/trainings
- Video footage of experiments
- Annual NHERI researchers meeting

Notable difference between the Known Facilities Users and General NHERI contacts:

- All of the Known Users report submitting or planning to submit a proposal using NHERI versus a majority of the General list indicating they had no plans to submit a proposal (42%) or were working on their first proposal (21%)

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Comments regarding NHERI services, information, facilities, and resources are **overwhelmingly positive.**
- Some concerns expressed with DesignSafe.
  - Comments on the speed with which DesignSafe loads and its usability came up a few times in open ended responses, consistent with last year.
- ***Results presented here are not generalizable, as the response rates to date are low.***