White Paper on organizing a "Nano-X Speed-Networking Workshop"

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Introduction

Scientific collaborations are born out of personal contacts and information exchange. Traditional Symposia and Workshops are useful, but time-consuming, and not always effective. Often the most animated interactions and the most valuable learning take place during breaks, meals, and receptions. Extending these unstructured networking periods may provide one way to improve these events. But another, more extreme attitude consists in replacing traditional meetings by carefully structured networking sessions, which are variations on the "speed dating" model. Sessions in conferences and workshops, whether keynote addresses, panels, or town hall meetings, share a common characteristic: one person at a time speaks, and everyone else is expected to listen. After hours in that role, participants pour out into coffee breaks, hungry for conversation. Speed networking takes these conversations a step further by focusing on a specific topic of interest and by recognizing that individuals fill different roles in many conversations.

Background

Speed networking can be based on one of three models: meeting random attendees sequentially in a round robin, meeting with specific people based on preassigned match ups (the first two models are one-on-one), or a third assembly-based model where individuals speak to a preselected group. Most speed networking events begin in the style of a more traditional meeting: an open room for mingling. Following this open forum, during which drinks or food may be served, the event can be called to order by the host who explains the structure of the event, which differs slightly based on the available models (see below). In general, speed networking events all have time limits placed on the interactions and a moderator that will time and announce these intervals. In addition, if the speed networking model calls for specific movements of participants (to a preassigned table or group, for example) then the moderator would also facilitate these details.

Models

- **Round robin**. In the round robin model of speed networking attendees meet each other sequentially. The pairings are therefore random. Chairs are often organized in two circles or facing rows of desks. The host calls for the beginning of the meeting – often by use of a bell or buzzer – and the persons introduce themselves, taking turns to give a brief summary of research interests and goals. Often business cards are exchanged and possibly additional information for a follow up meeting. After a set period of time – usually a few minutes – the moderator/host calls time and the meeting is over. Then either the inner or outer circle sitters – or the front or back line of desks – would move to the next space. Following a brief settling in period, the moderator would call for the next meeting to begin. In this round robin model, an attendee would meet an average of 10 contacts during an hour-long event.

- **Station-based.** In the station-based model of speed networking, attendees meet each other individually based on a pre-assignment. Prior to coming to the event, attendees fill out a questionnaire listing their scientific background (job title and institution) and whom they wish to meet (e.g. physicists, materials scientists, clinicians, bioengineers, etc.). The profiles are then matched electronically and a list of meetings is generated for participants based on their preferences. At the event, numbered stations are set up where attendees meet with their assigned partners according to their list for a set period of time. A typical station-based speed networking event may yield 7 to 10 contacts during an hour-long event.

- **Group-based.** In the group-based model of speed networking attendees do not meet individually but instead are assigned to a sequence of tables. Each table seats a specific number of participants, depending on attendance. A typical event may call for tables of four to 10. Table assignments are often predetermined by computer software but other techniques can be used to determine the groups each attendee participates in. Each person at the table takes a few minutes – the length of these introductions can also be set – to introduce him or herself. Time at the table varies based on how the event organiser coordinate the event but usually lasts five to 15 minutes.

Project Outline

We propose organizing a "Nano-X Speed-networking Workshop" inviting the participation of all group leaders in the Institutions members of the Gulf Coast Consortium who participate in nano-related research. The event will take place at the BRC and will last 3 hours, to be structured as follows:

• During 20 minutes the participants will have access to refreshments and will start approaching each other;

• The moderator will then invite the participants to take place to their pre-assigned initial position, depending on the chosen model (5 minutes);

• During 1 hour, the participants will interact in six 10-minutes slots. Conversations will last 8 minutes, and 2 minutes will be allowed for shifting place and introductions. Participants will have received detailed instructions beforehand;

• A 15 minutes break will allow the participants to rest, and will offer a first opportunity for extending personal contacts;

• Another 1-hour session will allow each participants to contact six more people

• The event will continue and end with an 80-minutes free networking session, in which people will be able to further the most promising contacts previously made, and to meet with other people than the previous 12.

BUDGET

This is a low-cost event

Beverages - Water bottles	50	$	2	$ 100
Coffee	50	$	1	$ 50
Room rent	1	$	500	$ 500
Total				**$ 650**