AFRICAN MICROBIOME INSTITUTE (AMI)

Division of Molecular Biology and Human Genetics, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING MICROBIOME ANALYSIS SUPPORT

Scope:

The AMI employs a computational biologist who is available to assist SU researchers with microbiome-related research protocol development and analytical/technical support and/or link researchers with collaborators from an international network of researchers associated with the AMI. For such a service to be optimal, it is important to adhere to procedures outlined in this document. This will ensure that the best practise is followed and is beneficial to all parties involved.

Prioritize the following checks before seeking assistance from the computational biologist:

1. Ensure that **ample time** is allotted for the consultation process prior to submission deadlines relating to the research undertaken
   a. At least 4 – 6 months prior to thesis/dissertation/manuscript submission
   b. At least 1 – 2 months prior to conference abstract submission
   c. At least 3 months prior to grant application submission
2. Identify the **type of assistance needed** (e.g., protocol preparation, data management plan, sequencing plan, data analysis, data interpretation, etc.)
3. Identify, as far as possible, the **level of assistance expected** (e.g., advice, training, assistance, or collaboration that meets authorship criteria*).

* Authorship may be considered for manuscripts and conference outputs and should based on the criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE).
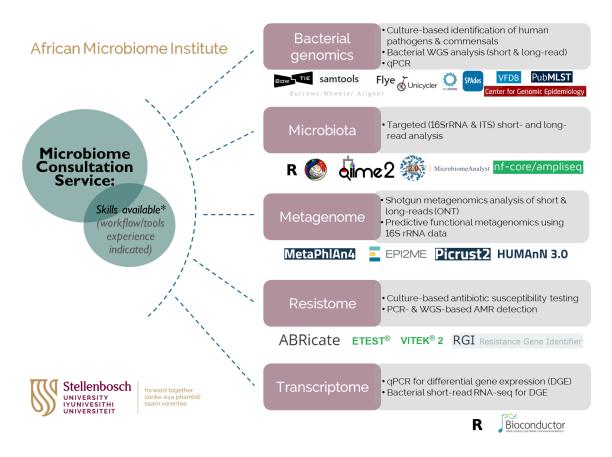
Key responsibilities:

1. The AMI is responsible for overseeing and notifying SU researchers engaged in microbiome projects about the availability of this service.
2. The AMI computational biologist will assist the researcher(s) with their analysis and/or protocols as determined and agreed on by both parties. Please see below for an indication of specific expertise available.
3. For projects in which the AMI computational biologist is unable to assist, the AMI could help researchers find potential collaborators and/or training opportunities, by tapping into the international network of researchers associated with the AMI.
4. The student/researcher/principal investigator (PI) is required to adhere to the stipulated regulations in this document and assumes ultimate responsibility for the protocol development and/or data analysis.
5. The student/researcher/PI is responsible for involving the AMI as early as possible in the research process.
6. The student/researcher/PI is responsible for ensuring that the AMI is acknowledged in all research outputs related to the service provided.

Procedure:

1. The student/researcher/PI must fill out the AMI support request form, available online or by request to Dr Kristien Nel Van Zyl (knvz@sun.ac.za).
   The request form gathers the following information:
   - Name of researchers involved
   - Project title, type & stage of research
   - Type of assistance required

2. Requests for assistance will be prioritised based on the date received by the AMI.
   Once approved, the AMI computational biologist will arrange a meeting with the student/researcher/PI to discuss the type of assistance required, timelines, and other requirements.

3. Following the first meeting, an agreement will be set-up and signed by both parties. In the case of consultation, fees will be estimated based on the projected number of sessions required. An hourly rate will apply, unless a collaborative agreement has been established.

4. Rates:
   - Internal (SU) clients: R400 per hour, may be paid be to the AMI cost centre by internal requisition upon receipt of invoice.
   - External clients: R800 per hour, may be paid upon receipt of invoice.

The computational biologist specializes in human-related microbiome studies, AMR & One Health, but could assist with listed analyses on other study types. Where a study is out of scope, we can assist in identifying training opportunities and/or connections with potential collaborators from the AMI network.