

2008 ALCF INCITE User Survey

Summary Report

March 2009

2008 ALCF INCITE User Survey Results

Methodology: The 2008 INCITE User Survey was distributed via a link in an email to Principal Investigators on December 1, 2008. PIs were asked to either complete the online survey themselves, or to forward it on to one individual on their team who was best prepared to offer feedback on experiences with the ALCF.

Results and notes:

- Twelve individuals completed the online survey.
- Response rate of 2008 INCITE PIs (or his/her designee) was 60%.
- Not all individuals answered all questions.
- The overall rate of user satisfaction was 4.6/5.0.
- When mentioned specifically by the respondent, ALCF staff member names were removed and replaced with NAMED CATALYST.
- Two respondent comments were amended to maintain respondent anonymity.

Actual survey questions and responses appear below:

1. Did you or a member of your team attend an ALCF-sponsored workshop in 2008?

Total Responses	12
Yes	6
No	6

2. The ALCF hosted or co-hosted several workshops this year, including a "Getting Started" workshop, a Performance workshop, a Scaling workshop and a Porting & Tuning workshop. If you or someone on your project attended one or more of these workshops, please rate the effectiveness of the workshop(s) in addressing the following topics:

	Excellent	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Poor	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Introducing me to ALCF staff and services	83.3% (5)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.83	6

Getting my project up and running	83.3% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)	5.00	6
Providing relevant and necessary training	66.7% (4)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (1)	4.80	6
Providing access to experts	83.3% (5)	16.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.83	6
Answered question								6
Skipped question								10

Please provide any comments:

- Great job. Even when I (PI) could not make it, you gave our team the red carpet treatment.
- Person who attended has not yet responded to my request for information (after 10 days). In an e-mail from last March he commented that "The INCITE workshop last week at Argonne was excellent." I am basing our responses on this comment.
- c. Discussions were somewhat general. For example, in addition to "here's what Tau does", it would be good to have "...and here's an example of how Tau was used on the BlueGene for an INCITE project".

3. Please share comments about workshops you attended, and/or provide topics for future workshops:

- The feedback I got from team was very, very positive.
- The CCSM model has a large team of software engineers and performance experts and for the most part I rely on them for ALCF porting and performance issues. So I myself do not attend the type of workshops you mentioned above.
- Could we have a virtual workshop to cut down on travel?
- I attended the "Getting Started" workshop and thought that it was a good opportunity to meet the staff and that the content was appropriate and helpful for getting started on the ALCF resources.
- Although the ALCF staff is very knowledgeable, having a few IBM Blue Gene experts at the workshop was extremely useful as they helped me make the transition from BG/L to BG/P where the differences between the 2 systems can sometimes be very subtle from the developers' point of view.

4. The Catalyst Program provides you with a one-to-one partnership with a dedicated ALCF staff person (a performance engineer or computational scientist) to maximize your use of ALCF resources. Our catalyst team: Ray Loy, Katherine Riley, James Osborn, Scott Parker, Ramesh Balakrishnan, Kumar Kalyan, and Vitali Morozov. Based on your experiences this year with your catalyst, please use the scale provided to rate the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Having access to my catalyst has benefited my project.	66.7% (8)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	4.80	12
My catalyst is able to assist me with issues I bring to his/her attention.	75.0% (9)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	4.90	12
I have adequate access to my catalyst.	75.0% (9)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	4.80	12
My catalyst is prompt and professional in our dealings.	75.0% (9)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	4.90	12
Answered question								12
Skipped question								4

Please provide any comments:

- Because we are porting an OS to BG/P, this question is not really applicable.
- I do not know/remember who my "official" catalyst is. However, NAMED CATALYST* has been VERY useful. My answers reflect my interactions with NAMED CATALYST.
- NAMED CATALYST was excellent contact. Enabled me and my team to do research.
- NAMED CATALYST has also been helpful with PIO development and performance issues.
- NAMED CATALYST is a stupendous asset for us.
- The people who are part of catalyst group are very friendly and approachable.
- Many thanks to NAMED CATALYST.

5. ALCF provides user support, via email and phone, through our service desk. In regard to user support you have received, please rate the following:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
The ALCF staff provides accurate, complete assistance and/or answers to my questions.	75.0% (9)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	4.82	12
The ALCF staff is courteous and professional.	83.3% (10)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	4.91	12
Assistance from the ALCF staff is prompt.	75.0% (9)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	4.64	12
Online supporting documentation is helpful.	50.0% (6)	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	4.45	12
ALCF support is available when I need it.	58.3% (7)	25.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	4.45	12
Answered question								12
Skipped question								4

Please add any comments:

- Always there and always helpful.
- ALCF response was excellent through the middle of the summer. After this, it degraded, with no responses to some requests. Contacting individuals (e.g., NAMED CATALYST) allowed us to work around some of these issues, but e-mails to the standard help e-mail have not been useful.
- Excellent support via email for all issues
- ALCF web pages and support from NAMED CATALYST have been all that is needed. I've never had to contact other forms of ALCF user support.
- We tend to do a lot of work on nights and weekends. A significant fraction of the time we get responses then.
- When a technical question cannot be readily answered by the current support staff, other resource people are quickly summoned to solve the problem.

6. If you participated in a User Call(s), please share your feedback:

- I have participated once or twice, but I think they are now held during my class. I don't recall the calls I was on being that useful, but think it is a good idea to make such an opportunity available.
- The User Calls I participated in were generally helpful. I thought it was a good idea to reduce the number of calls to once a month.
- The User Calls are very informative. Some of the conversations don't involve information that can be found on the ALCF web pages or mailing lists.

7. Please rate each of the following resources you accessed through the ALCF this year:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A	Response Count
The performance tools I accessed were helpful.	18.2% (2)	18.2% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	63.6% (7)	11
The debuggers I accessed were helpful.	9.1% (1)	18.2% (2)	9.1% (1)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (0)	54.5% (6)	11
The libraries I accessed were helpful.	27.3% (3)	18.2% (2)	9.1% (1)	0.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	45.5% (5)	11
Answered question							11
Skipped question							5

8. What other tools should we provide?

- IPM (Integrated Performance Monitoring) <http://ipm-hpc.sourceforge.net/>
- Grid tools for faster file transfer. We archive files elsewhere and move a significant amount of data.
- It's not so much the tools but the training. I don't know how to use the debuggers effectively on so many processors on BG/P. The core files written to disk when a code crashes are probably meaningful but I don't know how to interpret them. A few hints posted on the web site would be useful...

9. What is your level of satisfaction with scheduling and turnaround of your jobs?

Very Satisfied	41.7% (5)
Satisfied	41.7% (5)
Neutral	16.7% (2)
Very Dissatisfied	0%
Not Applicable	0%

Please share comments:

- As with everything else this works very well.
- In the past there have been occasions when a reservation was added on short notice. That can result in jobs in the queue that become too long to fit in the remaining time slot, so they don't run until the next evening.
- At first I think the queuing system may have been a bit unclear, but the changes seem to have improved things.
- I would appreciate more tools to show me the state of the system with respect to the currently running and queued jobs. Specifically, I would like to be able to see how many partitions are currently available for a particular job specification (number of nodes/processes + required time), and also when currently allocated partitions might become available. Most of my simulations take more time than any available intrepid queue allows, so I try to pick a number of nodes and time that I think will run the soonest and for the longest time, and when it finishes (gets terminated by the system) I resubmit it (from its checkpoint/restart files) for another allocation.
- The running model has been relying too much on reservations... I just want to put my job in a queue and not worry about it until its done.
- No standard mechanism for long-running jobs. Machine goes down every week. This is scheduled, but it's still a very high outage rate compared to other sites I've worked with.

10. Was your storage allotment sufficient to meet your needs?

Yes	91.7% (11)
No	8.3% (1)

Please add any comments:

- I had need more time
- Didn't need much this year.

11. What other resources could we provide that would be helpful to you now or in the future?

Data Analytics?	2
Visualization Capabilities?	4
Tape?	1

Please list others:

- We would like to see a web page that would list planned machine availability for a week to a month at a time.
- Support for bbftp protocol on Intrepid would be appreciated. (Answer amended to remove identifiable information).

12. Overall, how would you rate your experience with the Argonne Leadership Computing Facility in 2008?

Total Responses	12
Excellent	8
Above Average	3
Average	1
Below Average	0
Poor	0

Please share any ideas or comments you have for ways we can improve our services to you.

- I cannot imagine any way in which it could be improved, it's that good. The people and facilities are great. You have fulfilled a dream for a place where users can do advanced supercomputing research on a shared resource. You are a model for ALL DOE HPC facilities. I wonder if we can get ORNL to take a look at what you have done? (Answer amended to remove identifiable information.)
- This is in comparison with "other" LCF, so average is not necessarily a bad rating.
- We have had some problems with files system instability and hope that has been solved. We have been able to get so much work done on Intrepid that it has really accelerated our progress.
- Keep improving the information on the ALCF web site. That's where I go when I have a problem and need to find the answer. Please keep it up to date and add more tips. I would probably consolidate the information found on the main pages with that found in the FAQ Wiki. It's a little confusing when navigating between them to find the answer to a question.