Economic Impact Assessment: Proposed Changes to Evaluator Protocol

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Overview

• Background and Conclusions on Economic Impact Assessment Project
• Recommendations, Principals and Disclaimer
• Proposed Economic Impact Assessment Process
  – Tools and Materials
• Summary: How Evaluator Duties Change
• Discussion
Background

• Goals IUCRC Economic Impacts Feasibility Study
  – To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current impact assessment strategy;
  – To assess the feasibility of improving the program’s ability to obtain credible and persuasive quantitative estimates of economic impact; and
  – Based on these findings, to make recommendations for a strategy for routinizing the collection of such impact data on an ongoing basis.
Major Conclusions

• Current evaluation strategy does a good job of capturing relatively short-term (but not long-term) impacts but often fails to provide quantitative estimates of their value

• Compendium of Technology Breakthroughs does a good job of capturing long-term “technological success stories” but often fails to provide quantitative estimates of their value

• Targeted (mature centers; outlier beneficiary) interview-based assessment strategy which includes option for confidentiality reliably documented long-term impacts and estimates of economic value ~ $1.2 billion
Recommendations

1. Modify the Process/Outcome Questionnaire to emphasize relatively proximate quantitative economic impacts.

2. Develop a standardized protocol and training system that facilitates collection of economic impact data by local evaluators.

3. Develop a simple and compelling methodology for reporting the impact data to important stakeholder groups.

4. Link the revised assessment activities with the efforts to periodically collect “technology breakthrough” cases.
General Principles

• Impact data collection should become a higher priority for evaluators at centers as they become more mature with an emphasis on Phase 2 and 3 of NSF funding
• Assessment should emphasize data collection via personal interviews of targeted high impact beneficiaries
• Must allow respondent the option of the case and/or the economic estimate remaining confidential in reporting
• A method for logging reports of forecasted impacts will be developed so that the evaluator can conduct follow-up interviews with informants in order to validate these estimates.
• A method for documenting the causal impact of IUCRCs, particularly when other factors may be involved, should be developed
• Since centers graduate from the IUCRC program and these mature centers are likely to be promising sources of transfer-derived economic impact, provisions must be taken to include graduated centers in this procedure
Disclaimers for our new role

• After 30 years of IUCRC evaluation experience and involvement in the economic impact study …
  – Blockbuster impacts happen but they are few and far between
    • Expect a lot “we’re benefiting but nothing really big”
  – Many important center impacts cannot with all the nudging in the world be easily monetized
    • However, they can be documented and let the audience decide on their value
• There is no expectation or quota that every center will produce x breakthroughs or $Y of impact
Proposed economic impact assessment process

[monitor progress for economic impact]

[typical routine year 1 to 5]

No

Contact director, informants on impacts

Significant Economic impact event?

Yes

Interview director on emerging developments

Interview external beneficiaries

[typical routine year 6 to 15]

Prepare “Success Story” Case in Evaluator Report

Significant Economic impact event?

No

[Gov’t eval; no IRB]

Submit for inclusion/follow up in Tech-Break Compendium?

[Confidential or not]

IUCRC Eval Project reminds evaluator to begin impact assessment 60 days pre-report (150 days pre-grant)

Yes

Prepare “Economic Impact” Case in Evaluator Report
List of Economic Impact Assessment Tools and Materials*

**Economic Impact Assessment Procedure**
- EcoImpact 1: Email to directors introducing project
- EcoImpact 2: Guidelines for identifying beneficiary organizations
- EcoImpact 3: Guide for first contact briefing with center director
- EcoImpact 4: Draft guide for interview with center director
- EcoImpact 5: Draft email from center director to beneficiary
- EcoImpact 6: Draft email from project team to beneficiary
- EcoImpact 7: Guide for pre-screening interview with beneficiary
- EcoImpact 8: Guide for interview with beneficiary
- EcoImpact 9: Sample center-level report: ERC-inspired

* All material will be on www.ncsu.edu/iucrc
Coaching help for impact assessment

• NSF has provided travel and effort in the budget of the IUCRC Evaluation Project for telephonic and/or in person coaching for impact assessment interviews
  – Contact NCSU Evaluation Team
Resources for conducting assessments

[monitor progress for economic impact]

No

[typical routine year 1 to 5]

Significant Economic impact event?

Contact director, informants on impacts

[typical routine year 6 to 15]

Yes

[5,6,7,8]

Interview external beneficiaries

Prepare “Success Story” Case in Evaluator Report

No

[Confidential or not]

Submit for inclusion/follow up in Tech-Break Compendium?

[9,10,11]

Prepare “Economic Impact” Case in Evaluator Report

Yes

IUCRC Eval. Project reminds evaluator to begin impact assessment 60 days pre-report (150 days pre-grant)
How Evaluator Duties Change

- Begin exploring potential impacts earlier in reporting year
- Solicit nominations from multiple sources
- When warranted, engage in personal and/or telephonic interview with nominated beneficiary
  - Solicit help from IUCRC Evaluation Team on interviewing technique
  - Ask George Vermont what “SWAG” means
- Contact beneficiaries who are not members
- Engage in subsequent follow up interviews for early stage impacts that have forecasted economic value (document in Evaluator Report)
- Clarify whether case and/or economic impact must be kept confidential
- Prepare local and national report according to confidentiality understanding
Issues for discussion

• Identifying potentially “high impact” beneficiaries?
  – Interviewing my director and others about possible beneficiaries

• Getting access to potential beneficiaries

• Conducting the beneficiary interview
  – To be or not to be confidential
  – How to get an economic impact estimate

• What and where of my success story/economic impact report

• General discussion