

Consent Form

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), via the Regional Innovation Clusters (RIC) Initiative, is investing in regional clusters throughout the United States that span a variety of industries. The SBA has hired a small business research organization Optimal Solutions Group LLC (Optimal) to conduct the evaluation of the RIC Initiative. The objective of this evaluation is to determine if the RIC Initiative is meeting its intended business growth outcomes. The results are expected to provide suggestions for improvements to this valuable small business assistance program.

The research team will be conducting a brief web survey and an individual virtual interview with all RIC cluster administrators that have participated in RIC-funded activities or services in FY [YEAR]. The primary purpose of these data collections is to gather information on the implementation of clusters' activities, evolution of the clusters' structure and operations, and best practices. The interview will clarify and follow up on the content of the progress reports to gather information on the implementation of cluster activities, challenges, mitigations, and best practices. The interview will also obtain information about how the operations have evolved, the adjustments made, and the lessons learned during the year.

Your participation in these data collections is voluntary; however, failure to respond may be a violation of the terms and conditions of your contract with the SBA. The interview is expected to take no more than 75 minutes to complete, and the web survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality and Usage

Optimal Solutions Group will collect and store your responses to this survey on a secure server accessible to Optimal staff only. Your responses to the interview and survey will be kept strictly confidential, and your name will never be used in any reports produced for this evaluation. All survey responses will be presented as aggregated statistics in the form of averages, percentages, and frequency counts. All survey responses will be de-identified and then these data will be provided to the SBA. Any quotations or information from the interviews may be included in the public report without identifying the respondent, through such phrases as "one cluster administrator noted that..."

- If you have questions about the RIC Initiative, please contact Alison Evans at the SBA via email at Alison.Evans@sba.gov or 202-856-7386.
- If you experience any technical difficulties accessing or submitting the survey, try:
 - o Using a private or "incognito" window in your browser
 - o Clearing your browser's cache
 - o Consider using Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox
- For anything else, please feel free to contact us at clusters@optimalsolutionsgroup.com or 301-306-1170.

Your signature on this form grants the research team permission to conduct the web survey and interview as described above. The research team will not use the information provided for any reasons other than those stated in this consent form without your permission. If you understand and accept these conditions, please sign and date below.

RIC OMB ICR - Appendix D-2 Cluster Administrator Survey and Interview Consent Form

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Signature:

Date:

Printed Name: