RIC OMB ICR - Appendix D-6 Cluster Administrator Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Cluster Administrator Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

For the interviewee - The main focus of this interview is on:
- Lessons learned and best practices for facilitating business, innovation, and regional outcomes within the local contexts
- Cluster implementation challenges encountered and how challenges were resolved
- Suggestions for the RIC Initiative improvement

The bolded sections below represent topics covered in the Cluster Administrator Interview with example questions included for each topic. Exact questions are subject to change based on cluster-specific context.

Cluster Governance
- Have there been any major changes in how your cluster is governed during the past year?
  - Any changes in cluster goals or performance targets?
  - Any changes to the cluster's business model, administration, or operations?

Cluster Activities and Interactions with Small Businesses and Other Organizations
- What would you say were the most effective tools or strategies your cluster implemented for outreach and recruitment of participants?
  - Any challenges?
  - How have you advertised that an event/activity is connected to [cluster name], part of the RIC Initiative, or sponsored by the SBA?
- What would you say were the most effective tools or strategies your cluster had in facilitating collaboration and exchange of information between large organizations (or other regional stakeholders) and small businesses?
  - Any challenges?
- What would you say were the most effective tools or strategies used by your cluster in connecting small businesses and supporting organizations into the business ecosystems of resources in your region (e.g., business networks, suppliers, and clients)?
  - Any challenges?

Innovation
- What were the best practices your cluster had in facilitating innovation among partner organizations (or other regional stakeholders) and small businesses? *Note: In this context, innovation can mean developing new or improving existing technology, products, services, or production/delivery methods.*
  - Any challenges?
  - How were cluster services typically delivered?
  - How were cluster partner organizations typically involved in cluster service delivery? What type of services did they typically provide?

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Regional Cluster Growth
- What would you say were the most effective tools or strategies your cluster implemented in facilitating small business growth?
  - o Any challenges?
- How did your cluster enhance or develop the business ecosystem in your region?

Lessons Learned over the past year
- What were the most effective tools or strategies in administering the cluster?
- What were your most important learning experiences in administering the cluster?
- What were the most effective ways of addressing the challenges your cluster faced?

Sources of Funding:
- How does your cluster plan to sustain itself financially once the SBA funding ends?

Equity
- What were the most effective tools or strategies your cluster implemented for facilitating equity in innovation and business growth outcomes among small businesses?
- How did your cluster tailor outreach and events/activities to engage underserved businesses and communities?

  - o *Note: Underserved populations include racial and ethnic minority, LGBTQ+, disabled, low-income, women, veterans, immigrants, and rural residents.*

Additional questions for the cluster based on the Q4 report of [year]
- Has the cluster been able to achieve its goals set for [year]?
  - o What has SBA funding helped you achieve over and above what you could've achieved otherwise?
- What goals have you NOT been able to achieve and how are you planning to remedy this? Is there anything the SBA can do to help you achieve them?