

Archived Information

APPENDIX

IV

**Interim Evaluation of the Regional Educational Laboratories
Nomination of Signature Works
Instructions to Laboratories**

Introduction

While the Interim Evaluation is designed to assess Laboratory performance in the first three years of the current contract period, it is neither reasonable nor feasible for panelists to review all of the work initiated to date. As an alternative, DIR is asking each Laboratory to nominate five or six significant illustrative works (e.g., major products, strategic thrusts, or service packages) that best exemplify the work of the Laboratory in the past three years. DIR understands that signature works may not represent a typical cross section of the work conducted at a Laboratory. However, these “signature works” will provide peer reviewers with a more in-depth look at some of the major program areas of the Laboratory. (For further information on how signature works will be incorporated as part of the independent evaluation plan see the Evaluation Framework Narrative in Section I.)

To be considered a signature work, the nominated work should meet the following criteria:

- Be central to the major strands of work as described in the REL technical proposal, modifications, or annual update
- Represent a significant percentage of REL allocated resources (in \$ and/or staff)
- Be primarily funded by REL monies and/or represent a significant portion of the funding within a particular REL task
- Have the potential for “scaling up” and expansion
- Be work accomplished in this contract period (December 1995-December 1998)
- Be supported by sufficient data sources to facilitate a thorough review of the work

Although signature works may be in various stages of development, at least one of the works nominated by a Laboratory and selected for review must be developed beyond the design stage and be currently “in the field” (e.g., implemented as a pilot project, disseminated broadly, part of a scale up effort). The bulk of the work for the nominated signature items should have been conducted in this contract period. We recognize that in some cases there may have been an initial phase of the project or start up work completed in a previous contract period. Similarly, plans for the project may call for additional work to continue into a subsequent contract period. This does not preclude that signature work from nomination. However, only the portions of work accomplished in this contract period are eligible for review in this evaluation.

The combination of signature works selected for each Laboratory will ensure that reviewers evaluate a representative sampling of works which collectively cut across the four functional areas (R & D, Field Services, Strategic Alliances, and Specialty Area).

Nomination of Signature Works

When nominating signature works, the Laboratory should consider which of the illustrative pieces from the current contract period best exemplify the work of the Laboratory across contract tasks. Each nominated signature work is not required to address all contract tasks, nor must each nominated piece address the specialty area. However, it is anticipated that nominated works will cross multiple contract tasks, and one or more of the nominated pieces is expected to pertain to the specialty area. Sufficient data sources should be available to enable peer reviewers to address the evaluation questions and indicators included in the framework. When considering possible data sources, keep in

mind that the printed and electronic materials/data source(s) should be readily available for duplication and provided to panelists prior to arriving on-site. In exceptional circumstances, peer reviewers may review certain documents and materials on-site. However, the majority of time on-site will be devoted to in-depth interviews, group interviews, and face-to-face contact with Laboratory staff. Local site visits to observe activities or interview users or partners may be conducted where distance is reasonable and feasible and when there is a definitive added value.

For each signature work nominated, Laboratories must complete a Summary Page and a Proposed Data Sources form (see attached). The **Summary Page** should include basic information about the signature work, including:

- Name of the work
- Estimated amount of resources (in \$ and staff and as % of REL contract) allocated to this work over the course of the current contract
- Source and amount of funding other than the REL contract, if applicable
- Current stage of development
- Specific REL tasks that have been billed for this work
- Years in which the signature work was conducted (1996, 1997, 1998)
- Relationship to the Laboratory's specialty area, if applicable

In addition to this information, the Laboratory should provide a brief description of the work, including:

- Major components of the work
- Target audience
- Goals/objectives
- Relationship to work described in the Laboratory technical proposal
- Functional areas that the work encompasses (i.e., R&D, Field Services, Strategic Alliances, Specialty Area)

The narrative should also address why the Laboratory perceives the work to be "signature" and how the work fits into the mission of the Laboratory. This narrative is the Laboratory's opportunity to provide a context for the signature work, such as defining the history of the work, describing the development process, and/or providing more detail on the funding sources, including outside funding if applicable.

The **Data Sources** page should include a listing of potential data sources to address each of the evaluation questions and the format(s) in which the data are available (e.g., hard-copy, electronic, in-person). When considering a "work" for nomination as signature, each Laboratory should take into account the amount and type of data sources that are or can be made available to peer reviewers to evaluate the work and address the evaluation questions. Data sources may include, but are not limited to:

- Program plans
- Project reports
- Needs assessments
- Internal/external evaluations
- Interviews with selected individuals (staff, partners, users)

- Observation opportunities

For other potential data sources, refer to Table 1 of the Evaluation Framework. Laboratories may also wish to consult Table 1 to review the specific indicators that peer reviewers will use to address the evaluation questions as a guide in selecting appropriate data sources.

Each signature work nominated should be presented in the same format using the attached forms. Laboratories are invited to prioritize the list of nominations if they so chose. DIR, in collaboration with the OERI Program Officer and Planning and Evaluation Service, will select two to three nominated signature works for review by panelists. Selected signature works will collectively constitute a broad representation of the major work of the Laboratory, across functional areas and tasks.

Given the wide variety of activities, program areas, and strategies that the Labs are involved in to meet the needs of their regions, DIR has purposely left the criteria for nomination of signature works loose enough that the Labs have the option of nominating whatever items they feel best illustrate their work.

DIR will be guided by several factors when selecting signature works. Collectively, the works selected will:

- Represent major functional areas
- Include at least one signature work in the field
- Represent the specialty area, if possible
- Have adequate, yet manageable data sources
- Avoid multiple works within a single content area

Additionally, DIR will consider the priority ranking assigned by the Lab to the nominated works, as well as the level of effort identified by the Laboratory in relationship to the development of the signature work.

At the time the signature works are selected, Laboratories will be asked to supply multiple copies of the identified support materials (data sources) for distribution to the peer reviewers. It is possible that some “pieces” of work nominated but not selected as part of a signature work may constitute other selected outputs for review by panelists.