



## Update on the Illinois SBDC Accreditation

### 1.1 Senior Leadership

#### **Recommendation:**

*Develop and improve analysis of performance results to identify opportunities for improvement in the health of the system and in results. This identification will enable the development of solutions that will drive more efficient use of resources and translate performance findings into priorities for improvement and innovation.*

As a part of the improvements made to our overall strategy development process we are reviewing our performance analysis process. During the weekly Network Center Coordinators staff meeting standing items on the agenda focuses on Financial and Programmatic Issues at which time the Coordinators and SBDC management discuss any major performance issues. The Illinois SBDC has also added a second joint review session where all the Network Center Coordinators and the Illinois SBDC leadership participate in a two day meeting completing a full review of each of the Illinois SBDCs. The combination of the weekly discussions and semi-annual full blown review supports an improved analysis of network performance and an opportunity for detailed discussions on needed improvements.

### 2.1 Strategy Development Process

#### **Recommendation**

*Because the team expected to see evidence of a better understanding of long-term issues we recommend consideration of such issues as: technological changes or innovations that might affect SBDC products, services and rate of innovation; workforce and other resource needs; the SBDC's ability to capitalize on diversity; opportunities to redirect resources to higher-priority products, services, or areas; financial, societal, ethical, regulatory, technological, security and other potential risks and opportunities; the SBDC's ability to prevent and respond to emergencies, including natural or other disasters; changes in the national or global economy; requirements for stakeholders and partners; changes in the host organization; and other factors unique to the SBDC. Consideration of these items will help understand the future long-term issues and provide understanding of appropriate actions.*

All of the issues outlined in the above recommendation, and others, have been and continue to be reviewed and studied through the Illinois SBDC's ongoing strategic planning process. These specific items are being considered and discussed by the recently formed strategic planning groups and were also addressed during the annual strategic planning sessions. Several of these issues are addressed in the revised strategic plan and others continue to be discussed during the regular sessions of the strategic planning groups.

**Condition:**

*This standard will be met when the Illinois SBDC develops and deploys a strategic plan that includes long-term strategic objectives based on factual information and quality analysis. The plan should include both timelines and routine tracking to give a clear picture of results. Upon completion, the goals and strategies should be integrated into the existing communication system and daily work of all personnel. A systematic and continuous improvement process with empowerment for modifying actions, products and services should be integrated into the strategic planning cycle.*

The Illinois SBDC has devoted considerable time, effort and resources toward addressing this condition. Although the leadership feels there continues to be room for ongoing improvement and strengthening of the plan and the planning process, we believe this condition has been satisfied. The month after the Accreditation Teams visit to Illinois the SBDC Network conducted its annual strategic planning session. The focus of that session was on enhancing the programs strategic planning process. These discussions resulted in establishment of the Illinois SBDCs five Strategic Planning Groups. The purpose of these groups is to provide for an improved strategic planning process by fully engaging members of the network in an ongoing process that provides the opportunity for key strategic issues to be identified and addressed throughout the planning cycle. The groups allow centers to be involved in a systematic and continuous improvement process.

These groups are described in the accompanying attachments. The attachments also include a description of the enhanced planning process, the revised Strategic Plan and other documents providing background on our ongoing strategic planning efforts.

**3.1 Knowledge of Customers and Stakeholders Needs and Expectations**

**Recommendation:**

*The team recommends the Illinois SBDC develop and deploy an analysis process to identify common needs and market segments that support both the strategic planning and continuous improvement cycles. While the team*

*recognizes the necessity of responding to the local business environment, creating alignment of the network through common issues and market segments is an opportunity to raise a mature program to the next level while still allowing center flexibility.*

The establishment of the Illinois SBDC Strategic Planning Groups has helped the program act on this recommendation. The groups are helping the Network to focus on the common issues that need to be addressed and provide a much greater degree of engagement from throughout the Network as developing solutions for these issues.

### **3.3 Marketing and Promotional Programs**

#### **Condition:**

*The integration of the SBDC into the Illinois Entrepreneurial Network logo dilutes the image of a cohesive SBDC network such that the logo is not a recognizable symbol for the SBDC. With the merger of Entrepreneurship Centers into the SBDC, it provides an opportunity to create a recognizable brand that portrays a more cohesive SBDC network. To meet this condition, the SBDC must revise the logo to more appropriately identify the cohesive network as SBDC.*

As previously reported to the Accreditation Team the Illinois SBDC believes this condition has been satisfied. A new Illinois SBDC logo has been adopted and fully deployed throughout the Network. A new logo/marketing style guide (attached) was developed and distributed with detailed instructions on the required use of the new logo.



### **4.1 Development and Implementation of a Performance System**

#### **Recommendation:**

*Metrics should be reevaluated as to their effectiveness in driving the desired behaviors toward results in both strategic directions and daily operations. Processes should be evaluated for the effectiveness of metrics in driving the continuous improvement process cycle.*

The Illinois SBDC is utilizing the new strategic planning group structure to review the current scope of work and key performance indicators being utilized by the program.

#### **4.2 Measurement of Economic Impact**

**Recommendation:**

*Review the impact collection process to determine if the current approach can be improved to ensure that impact is collected and validated at all centers.*

The Illinois SBDC is currently reviewing its economic impact verification and collection process in order to increase the verifications/attributions received from clients. Enhancements will be made to the guidelines and instructions to ensure the process is deployed consistently throughout the Network.

**Recommendation:**

*Metrics should be re-evaluated as to their effectiveness in driving the desired results in strategic direction and daily operations. Processes should be evaluated to ensure effectiveness in driving the continuous improvement process cycle.*

The Illinois SBDC is utilizing the new strategic planning group structure to review the current scope of work and key performance indicators being utilized by the program. The required Scope of Work for the SBDC and the SBDC specialty initiatives are being closely reviewed by the planning groups. Any suggested revisions will be fully reviewed and necessary changes will be made to the economic impact metrics in conjunction with the new program Request for Proposal.

#### **5.1.1 Key Positions**

**Recommendation:**

*The current organizational structure has the potential to support center personnel in deploying strategic and tactical issues across the state. For example, the Center Coordinators could be the conduit for the collection of market information from center personnel for analysis to identify common issues and needs that span the network. Coordinators could also coach center personnel in deploying strategic objectives.*

The Network Center Coordinators are deeply engaged in the Strategic Planning Groups and are playing a key role in both strategic deployment and also in the review and analysis of information and feedback coming from the centers on network issues. Strategic issues have also been added to the standing weekly agenda for the Network Coordinators meeting to allow the SBDC leadership to address tactical and strategic issues with these key staff.

## 5.2 Workforce Learning and Growth

### **Recommendation:**

*Analysis and understanding of business and client needs to identify gaps in SBDC results could better identify and strengthen the professional development process by focusing on building skills most important to the client and in achieving client results.*

The work of the Services and Core Competencies Strategic Planning Group is helping to identify professional development gaps that currently exist. Members of this planning team and key Lead Center staff are fully engaged in the planning for the Illinois SBDC professional development conference that is hosted by the Illinois Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth Association.

## 6.1 Key SBDC Services

### **Recommendation:**

*Identify customer groups and associated customer needs within each of the segments to determine if current offerings and services address the key need of the selected customer groups and are in alignment with SBDC strategy.*

The Services and Core Competencies Strategic Planning Group is working to more clearly identify specific client groups and the specific programs, tools and resources used to serve those client segments.

## 7.1 SBDC Service Results and Outcomes

### **Recommendation:**

*Develop metrics for key offerings before the next accreditation review.*

As indicated above the Illinois SBDC is conducting a complete review of its current metrics and will revise then as needed prior to the upcoming request for proposal process.

## 7.2 Customer-Focused Results and Outcomes

### **Recommendation:**

*Develop metrics with benchmarks or comparables regarding customer needs and expectations. These metrics should determine the extent to which identified client needs have been satisfied by the SBDC.*

One of the changes being implemented as a part of the improved planning process is the revision of the overall methods used to track customer needs, expectations and satisfaction. A working group is revamping the process to ensure the SBDC is securing timely feedback from clients.