ERA Session - STAR Metrics Technical Perspective

STAR METRICS website: https://www.starmetrics.nih.gov/

High level overview Phase I and Phase II

Julia – Feb. 11 issue of Science will contain a piece on STAR METRICS

Why did it get started?

Reduce burden of reporting by leveraging existing data.

Phase I - 14 data elements. 65 institutions participating now. A lot of national visibility.

Phase II – working now to develop Phase II data elements.

If you want to participate in Phase II you want to be in Phase I. You must be in Phase I in order to be in Phase II.

New website makes it much easier to submit data that the previous method.

Overview from Mark S. (U Wisconsin – Madison) of what are you going to do and what you are going to see.

Star metrics is using the NIH Federated Logon. If you institution is participating you can authenticate with you own credentials.

FAQs – include questions from previous FDP meetings.

Web site portal (once you log in)

 Recent submission history – 4 data files you upload

  Wisconsin is doing a simple CSV file and that's where they started.

 As you submit your data it does a real time checking for data validation.

Packet handout has a sheet with most common errors.

Top part of web page is section is your recent submissions and recent reports (based on those recent submissions),

Upload section – guidelines for how you should label your files. Very standard interface for uploading your files.

Any problems uploading is clearly defined. Errors on specific lines are highlighted to make correction very easy.

All of the uploading is done via the website. First upload can be via secure email first time to work out any problems.

Comments/feedback from other institutions regarding STAR metrics.

Northwestern – error messaging was great, very user friendly, reporting team very helpful and supportive. HR effort F&A was hard for them at first because they hadn't done it. Leave a bit of time to work out the HR details. Very little benefit to do small trial run, but do big dataset. Work out the data first and then design the process flow. Overall a very good experience for us and glad we're in it.

Harvard – website has been really helpful. They've used a lot of content on the website to influence why they should participate. They have very disparate systems. There are some pain points. They started with a smaller data set. Concerns on how the data would be transformed and what it would look like. They went with ARRA awards first since that was going out.

Question – how long to marry all of these data elements? Harvard – 2 meetings, probably took about 20 hours.

Questions – frequency of reporting?

Frequency is quarterly. Wisconsin does it after their ARRA reporting. Set up jobs to create these 4 files and then they upload the 4 files. They have a reporting data warehouse and so the programs Mark wrote collect from here and then report/upload to STAR metrics.

STAR personnel – looking for historical data as far back as you are willing to give. They can also work with transaction level data if that's what you have.

For those who are considering or are in the early stages. Look at the website.

How is STAR metrics data related to FFATA reporting.

STAR metrics team is doing and analysis and will be putting up something on the website.

We want to hear from you as to let us know what do you want to know about FFATA so we can put together a session on FFATA reporting at a future meeting? What you would want to know about FFATA reporting.

Simone – one motivating factor they used is that there is clearly a crosswalk between FFATA and STAR metrics.

Q&A:

Question: Late personnel reporting? Example a person is on then off. How is STAR handling this as opposed to how FFATA is handling it?

Answer: In general, they get all kinds of adjustments. 90 percent of adjustments occur in a following quarter. They update the estimates as you put in revised adjustments. STAR would rather you re-submit the entire prior quarter if you have adjustments. The user doesn't have to split it into quarters and long as you have start date and end date. Much rather have this than to upload 40 individual quarter files. Much easier to resend the entire file. Can combine multiple years into one file.

STAR prefers to see one file.

How far back do you need to go back? As far back as practical is what they would like.

Question: Has there been an issue with diff. between ARRA and STAR reporting?

Answer: The data is sent back to you. They (STAR) are very clear that this is an estimate. At federal level they use an aggregate level. You as an individual are not identifiable. It's your data to do what you want with.

Phase II will be a different story in confidentiality. They are in consultation now. Idea now is that only data will be public data.

Question: If or how are you doing pcard transactions where don't have a DUNS number?

Answer: Right now Wisconsin is not including because these internal people don't have a DUNS number. Harvard is same. As long as you as the institution footnote what you are including that's okay.

STAR is really useful to show what these grants are doing.

Question: Is there any benchmarking potential other than just the national?

Answer: STAR would be happy to generate whatever sets of benchmarks you want. But this is up to the Phase I institutions. STAR wants us to tell them how we'd like the reports done. They're looking at possibly incorporating reporting into the website where you can design your own reports based on the data you uploading.

STAR is looking for ideas on what type/kind of reporting you'd like to see.

If your institution is not participating in the Federation you can still be authenticated at the STAR metrics website.   This is done specifically for the federal dollars coming into your institution.

Question: How much effort in hours or FTE to develop the dataset and number two to submit it on an ongoing basis.

Wisconsin – probably took 15 to 20 man hours to create the 4 files.

Ongoing basis is 15 minutes per quarter.

Harvard – about 20 hours to set up. 15 minutes to an hour to generate and submit per quarter.

Question: What is the value that institutions get out of it?

Answer:

Harvard – opportunity to influence future reporting. Opportunity to have data presented back is something they're hoping to use in a promotional sort of way internally.

Wisconsin – being able to see how many jobs have been created, etc. based on ARRA. Mark took this to an outreach group he met with.

Northwestern – looking forward to Phase II, Science and Faculty group already interested in this.

Question: Is there a time Phase I will close.

Answer: No Phase I is endless. They will carry on until forever.

Question: How do you handle F&A rates.

Answer: – they don't take that into account. Don't need any level of detail on F&A. STAR takes a proportion to allocate to generate estimates. We send them how to report it and they put the footnote on the reporting.

Concern from audience on comparing apples and oranges on benchmarks if we can each define our own F&A etc.

Julia – they're not ready to benchmark now based on this. Need to further discussions.

STAR does zero massaging of the data. In order to calculate the FTEs, etc. all of this documentation is on their website. It's auditable and transparent.

Julia – nickel and dime items are not a concern. They recognize it isn't an accounting exercise. There is clearly noise. ERA group might have a say in policy issues..

Question: if we not looking at Pcard and syquest level down to the vendors it might be a pretty big signal. If it's systematic across institutions they realize there is an under-reporting across institutions. So far has been very consistent across institutions.