Establishing a Framework for Student Research in a Non-Academic Setting
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Problem Statement: There are scant data on how service provided by an IRB is viewed by researchers. Virtually all feedback from researchers is anecdotal and is received de-centrally. Feedback communicated through intermediaries may be miscommunicated. Complaints seem to be voiced more often than thanks and praise and it is unclear if this is an accurate reflection or a function of poor collection of feedback. IRB managers can do a better job leading their offices if this feedback can be collected in a more consistent, centralized fashion.

Program Description: Our university's HRPP implemented an electronic customer satisfaction survey to better inform quality improvement efforts. HRPP leadership reviewed publications on measuring customer service, and consulted with colleagues at business units and IRBs. A link to the survey is emailed to the principal investigator following approval of every new study. The survey is short, consisting of six questions scoring satisfaction with issues such as timeliness of review and helpfulness of IRB staff. Text fields are provided to allow for elaboration. A few demographic questions are included. Responders may request a response, in which case they are asked to identify themselves and provide contact information. We made use of a commercial electronic survey already implemented at the behind university firewall protections. HRPP leadership receives a weekly report of survey results. Managers review reports and share and discuss the feedback. Our Quality Improvement Unit contacts those who request a response. HRPP leadership monitors the data for trends and responds before a systemic problem develops. When there is a change in business operations, managers review the survey data to help measure outcomes. Importantly, HRPP leadership suspected that IRB staff was more highly regarded than anecdotal evidence suggested, and the satisfaction survey confirmed this. The IRB staff members have responded favorably to positive feedback obtained from the survey.

Evaluation Plan: We evaluated feasibility and found distribution, analysis, and response to results was manageable. The response rate has held steady at about 20%.

Suggestions for Future Use at the University: The survey may be useful for other compliance offices and we will share our experience.

Suggestions for Other Sites: We will share our survey for others. It can be easily reproduced on many electronic survey platforms. To maximize employee engagement, we recommend involving IRB staff in the decision to implement the survey.