

# EVALUATION OF THE GEORGIA TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES PROGRAM (TIP)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

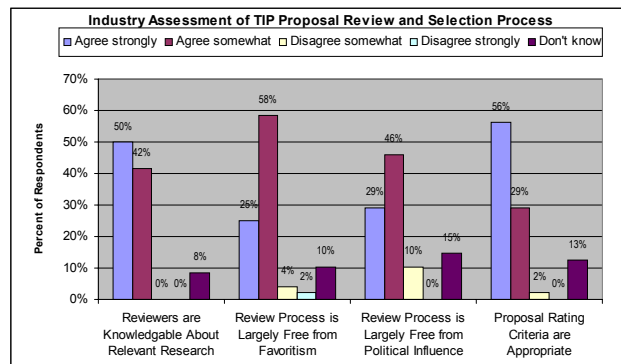
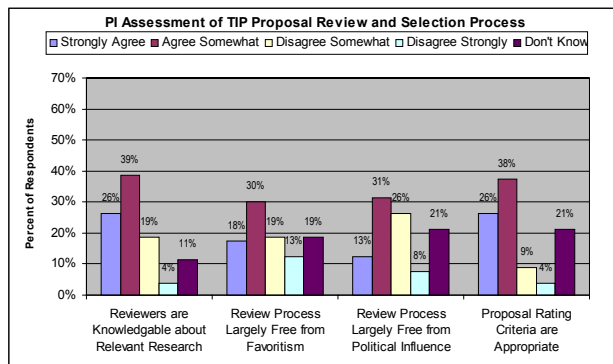
In September and October of 2001, SRI International conducted an evaluation of the Georgia Traditional Industries Program (TIP) at the request of the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). The evaluation covered:

- TIP’s proposal review and selection process;
- the process for the distribution of research findings;
- whether the Georgia wood products industry is appropriate for participation in the program;
- what indicators of success might be developed and regularly used by TIP in the future.

SRI conducted interviews, analyzed publicly available data, and conducted two surveys, one of TIP researchers and one of industry participants, to develop the data and information that were used in developing conclusions. The following sections briefly summarize the results of the study. More detail can be found in the full study and its appendices.

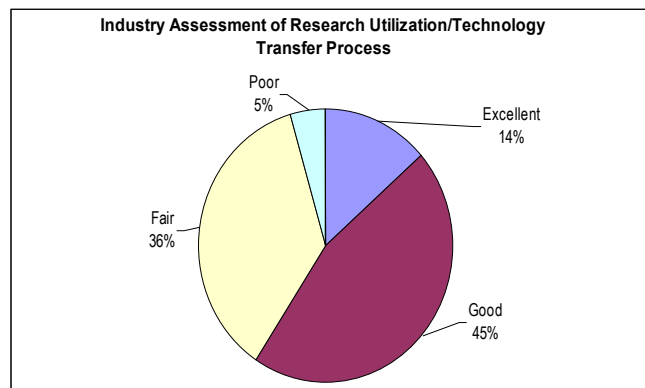
### Research Agenda-Setting, Proposal Review, and Project Selection

- These TIP processes draw generally favorable responses from both industry and researchers, and are consistent with processes used by federal and state research funding agencies. However, a significant minority of university researchers reports some weaknesses.
- Adequate pre-proposal communication appears to be taking place, including industry specification of research problems for TIP and the TIP Request for Proposal process.



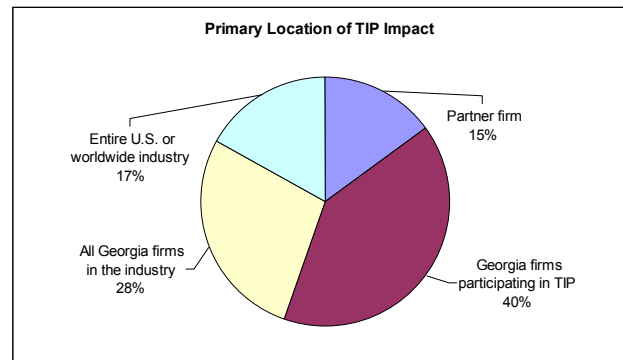
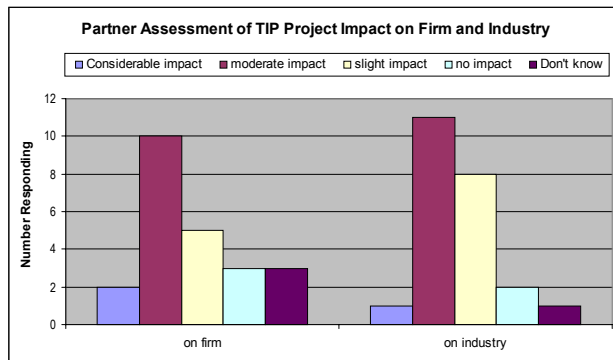
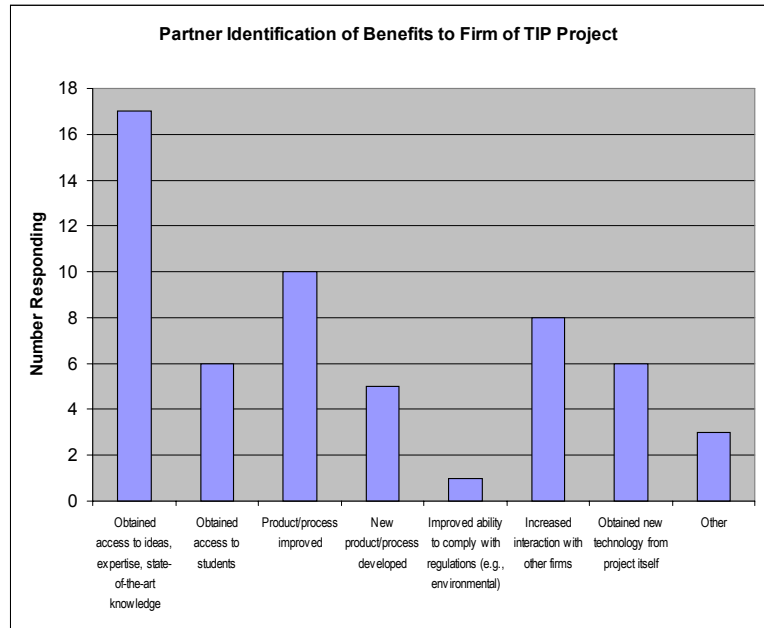
### Distribution of Research Findings

- Researcher and industry assessment of technology transfer from TIP projects is mostly “excellent” or “good.”
- Most technology transfer mechanisms are rated “very effective” or “moderately effective” by a majority of both TIP researchers and industry participants (higher by researchers than industry)
- More interaction between researchers and industry during all phases of the TIP research process is desired by all.



## Impact of TIP

- Benefits to partner firms are mostly in terms of access to expertise, knowledge, and ideas (a finding typical of programs to promote industry-university cooperative research). Secondary benefits are improved ability to comply with regulations and developing and improving new products/processes.
- Half the industry participants described TIP projects as having either “considerable” or “moderate” impact on their firms and on their industries.
- Over 80% of industry respondents believe that the impact of TIP projects is mostly within Georgia.
- Almost 70% of industry respondents said their firms would *not* have done the TIP-supported research in the absence of the Program.
- Nearly all (88%) of industry participants in TIP report that TIP has become a valuable forum for intra-industry discussions about common technical problems.



## Addition of New Industries to TIP

SRI studied the Georgia wood products industry to evaluate whether TIP could make a significant contribution to its competitiveness. The available data and information about the industry do not indicate clearly whether the wood products industry could benefit significantly from participating in TIP. The majority of firms in the industry are quite small, probably have minimal internal scientific or engineering staff, and may not be able to absorb and implement research outcomes effectively. In fact, many of the technology problems of the industry may be better addressed through units such as the Business and Industry Services Group of Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Institute, the Engineering Outreach Program at the University of Georgia, and the Georgia Environmental Partnership. Nonetheless, there are some large firms in the industry, and according to a recent report on the Georgia wood products industry, many of them already use external sources of research.

## **SRI Recommendations**

The following are abbreviated recommendations. The complete recommendations will be found in the full report.

### ***General***

- Based on the information developed in the study, SRI concludes that TIP is a sound public investment, and that Georgia should continue to support TIP with resources equal to or greater than the current level.
- TIP management will need modest increases in personnel and financial resources.
- TIP needs a more comprehensive central database for the entire TIP program, particularly to collect new indicators that are recommended in the full report.
- TIP management should look for additional ways to increase the interaction between researchers and industry partners.
- TIP should encourage participating industries to prepare 5-year strategic research plans, updated annually.
- TIP should consider implementation of a new set of management and outcome indicators detailed in the body of the report.

### ***Project Review and Selection***

- TIP should provide more ways for researchers to become familiar with industry needs.
- TIP should initiate pre-proposal workshops for potential researchers.
- TIP should review the ways that TIP RFPs are distributed to and within Georgia research institutions.
- The presence of (non-voting) academic advisors during the final project selection process can have the appearance of conflict of interest. This arrangement should be reviewed.

### ***Distribution of Research Findings and Technology Transfer***

- Technology transfer activities are not given sufficient prominence in TIP. Therefore, Georgia should consider allocating a portion of the TIP appropriation explicitly for technology transfer activities, such as:
  - A TIP Project Website where all project reports can be published quickly and be made available for all to read.
  - A proactive system to familiarize all industry members of TIP results that may be of interest to them.
  - A proactive system to search out non-TIP research relevant to TIP industries and make it easily accessible to firms in these industries.
- TIP should consider requiring researchers to include a technology transfer plan in their TIP proposals and again in final reports.
- TIP should establish connections between TIP and the Business and Industry Services Group of EDI, the Engineering Outreach Program at UGA, and the Georgia Environmental Partnership.
- TIP should require more frequent contact between researchers and partners while research projects are ongoing.