Evaluation brief: *Evaluation of the West of Scotland Science Park* (United Kingdom)

Key words: economic impact assessment, assessment of quality of service, science-industry cooperation, knowledge transfer

1. Introductory information

- The *Evaluation of the West of Scotland Science Park* was an evaluation of the Science Park facilities and services from when they opened in September 1984 to the present day.
- It was commissioned by Scottish Enterprise and carried out by EKOS Ltd, an independent consultancy that has experience in this arena.
- This is an evaluation of a 'science-industry cooperation initiative', which means that it aims to support the development of inter-organisational cooperation in the production and transfer of knowledge and innovation.
- The duration of the evaluation was four months and the cost was approximately £25,000 (€30,000).

2. Summary

The West of Scotland Science Park was intended to give high-technology companies access to affordable, well-equipped accommodation and the benefits of collocating next to the University of Glasgow and the University of Strathclyde.

The evaluation questions listed in the terms of reference spanned a wide range of issues, including a full economic impact assessment of the Science Park, an assessment of the management and quality of service provided at the Science Park and an assessment of the objectives and rationale behind supporting the Science Park.

This wide range evidence was designed to feed into a set of recommendations for the future direction of the Science Park, so that Scottish Enterprise could write its next strategy for the Science Park based on a new understanding of what its aims and objectives should be.

The methodology to answer the evaluation questions was defined in the Terms of reference and involved: a literature review, a benchmarking exercise of similar science parks in the West of Scotland, consultations with key stakeholders on the Science Park and a face-to-face survey of the 29 companies located on the Science Park.

Judged on its own terms, the evaluation was a success because it answered all the questions it set out to and used this evidence to feed into a set of recommendations for the future direction of the Science Park. At the end of the evaluation a workshop was held where the main actors could come together and discuss how they were going to take them forward. In particular, the recommendations highlighted the potential for improving the level of cooperation and interaction between Scottish Enterprise and the University of Glasgow, who agreed after the evaluation to work together to align their strategies for the Science Park and look for opportunities to increase their levels of cooperation.

Although successful in delivering the required outputs for the evaluation, the method that was set out in the Terms of Reference and ultimately put into action could have been further improved if it had taken a slightly wider approach. A particular challenge faced by the evaluation was to isolate the impacts of physical infrastructure when delivered alongside business support measures. EKOS therefore suggested that it

would have been more appropriate to run the evaluation at the level of a cluster of initiatives designed to support the same wider ambitions, such as increasing business-industry cooperation or supporting innovativeness. This would have given EKOS (and indeed Scottish Enterprise) the scope to look at the wider policy context that the West of Scotland Science Park operates in, and the scope to look in further depth at the package of initiatives related to the Science Park.

3. Further information

- Full case study can be found at: ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/projects/practices/index_en.cfm
- Link to the evaluation study: http://www.evaluationsonline.org.uk/evaluations/Browse.do?ui=browse&action=show&id=381&taxonomy=ESB.
- Link to the Managing Authority that commissioned the evaluation: www.scottish-enterprise.com.