

Peer Review Guidelines for IA Reports

THE INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Integrated Assessment (IA) projects are designed to produce practical and interdisciplinary results, thus the final report will differ from that of a traditional research project. The goal of IA is to summarize scientific knowledge in order to build consensus and guide decision making around a particular environmental issue. The emphasis is on collaborative work with stakeholders and analysis of existing data to help clarify the issue, rather than new experiments and data collection. The final report of an IA should: 1) describe the data and methods used, 2) explain the status, trends, causes and impacts of the issue, 3) evaluate practical strategies for addressing the issue, and 4) provide guidance for implementing new strategies.

In order for an Integrated Assessment to be truly effective at guiding policy, the project must be seen as relevant, legitimate/balanced, and scientifically sound. As technical experts on the subject, reviewers should evaluate the scientific creditability, rigor, and integrity of the assessment. The relevancy and legitimacy of an assessment is best evaluated by individuals familiar with the social and political context of an issue. The primary goal of the review process is to improve the quality and the presentation of the analyses and to identify misleading or unsupported conclusions.

More information about Integrated Assessment is available here: www.miseagrant.umich.edu/research/approach

POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR REVIEW

Presentation. Is the report written clearly and concisely, in a style and format that is easy to read and understand? Are the different components of the project organized logically and effectively?

Background. Is the purpose of the assessment adequately addressed? Are the objectives stated clearly?

Methods. Are the methods appropriate for each component of the project? Are they described in enough detail to permit others to evaluate the credibility of the work? Do you have suggestions for strengthening the methodology?

Data. Were the data retrieved from credible, reputable sources? Should other types of data be included?

Results. Are results presented in a straightforward manner? Are tables and figures well planned and used appropriately? Are there additional figures or tables that would have helped better illustrate the text?

Integrated Assessment. Projects may emphasize different steps within the IA methodology. However, please consider how well each stage of an IA is addressed. An IA project should:

- Define and refine the policy-relevant question
- Clarify the history, causes and consequence of the issue
- Identify and evaluate various policy options or strategies
- Develop tools and information that can guide decision making and help implement new strategies

Scientific Soundness. Are the methods, principles, interpretations, and conclusions based on current and sound scientific knowledge? Based on your professional experience, is the discussion of the issue comprehensive? Should additional information or perspectives be considered?

Conclusions. Do the data support the conclusions? Is conjecture clearly identified? Is the level certainty discussed clearly and appropriately? Based on your professional experience, are the recommendations reasonable?

Technical Errors. Please correct any errors in terminology, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Anonymity and Confidentiality. The identity of reviewers will not be disclosed unless the reviewer authorizes it. If you wish to remain anonymous, do not provide obvious clues relating to your own work or institution. If you do not desire anonymity, state so specifically. In turn, the material under review is also confidential. Do not abuse the privilege of having early access to it.

Timeliness. Prompt reviews are important to all participants in this project. Please complete and return your review within **four weeks** of receiving it. If you cannot meet this deadline, please notify Michigan Sea Grant immediately.

Objectivity. Your review should be objective. If prior connections with the authors or personal involvement with the subject matter would affect your objectivity, please alert Michigan Sea Grant.

Courtesy. Whenever possible, include constructive comments on how to improve the report. When negative remarks must be made, avoid sarcasm and insulting language. Criticize the report or the science, not the scientist.

SUBMISSION OF REVIEW

All major comments should be addressed on the electronic Review Form provided (MS-Word file). Minor comments and corrections may be inserted electronically within the manuscript PDF, written on the manuscript itself, or itemized separately in the Review Form. When possible, refer to specific pages and paragraphs in the comments.

If you have personal comments that you wish to make to Michigan Sea Grant, they should be made in a cover e-mail that will not be shared with the authors.

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