

Global Access Program: Impact Assessment

On behalf of Tekes, The Evidence Network has conducted an assessment of the impact of the Global Access Program (GAP) on participating companies. Offered by the Anderson School of Management of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), the GAP program provides low cost management consulting services to non-US companies seeking strategic advice, particularly concerning operating in and selling to international markets. The GAP program matches a team of students from the Fully Employed MBA program with existing companies to develop a business strategy that enables the companies to move to the next stage of their corporate development.

Sixty Finnish firms participated in the GAP program between 2004 and 2009 inclusive. Fifty-three of these firms were asked to respond to a customized web-based survey, the remaining firms had either closed, been acquired, or no longer employed the executive who had engaged with the GAP program. After two email reminders and telephone calls to non-respondents, 33 firms responded to the survey for a response rate of 62%.

The findings are summarized below:

1. **Client Companies:** The Global Access Program serves companies in the following sectors: information and communications technologies; biotechnology, health and medical; energy and environment; construction and manufacturing. The companies that responded to the survey are an average of 14 years old; 82% have annual revenues in excess of €1 million and 70% have less than 50 employees.
2. **Importance of Offerings:** Seventy-five percent of the companies found the primary research, and 81% found the interpretation or analysis of research findings to be either 'very important' or 'extremely important'.
3. **Immediate Impact:** The Global Access Program achieves immediate impact on participating companies. On average, GAP's 'strategic business information and advice', 'information and advice on selling into new markets', and 'business planning services' either achieved or bordered on achieving significant immediate impact; for these three measures, the percentage of companies that reported 'significant' or 'very significant' impact was 55%, 33%, and 39%, respectively.

4. **Intermediate Impact:** The Global Access Program achieves longer-term impact on the market performance of participating companies. The top three average impact results are for the ‘new international customers’, ‘change in annual revenues’, and ‘export sales’ measures. For these three measures, the percentage of companies that reported ‘some impact’ or greater was 50%, 45%, and 53%, respectively.
5. **Comparing Immediate and Intermediate Impact:** The immediate impact of the Global Access Program ranks higher than the intermediate impact. This is understandable because services provided by innovation intermediaries have a direct and immediate impact on the resources and capabilities of client companies, while intermediate impacts emerge over a longer timeframe. In addition, intermediate impact is more difficult to attribute to innovation intermediary activities, as it is a consequence of many factors.

In a companion document¹, we report a statistically significant relationship between immediate and intermediate impact. Composite immediate impact measures of strategic information and advice, and information and advice on selling and operating in new markets, showed a statistically significant relationship with the intermediate impact of the GAP on company performance. This finding is consistent with the expectation of TEN’s logic model that immediate impacts on company resources and capabilities will lead to subsequent impacts on company performance.

6. **Value of the GAP:** Fifty-eight percent of all the companies found value relative to cost to be high or very high. Ninety-four percent had recommended or planned to recommend the GAP to others.

Overall, our findings on the impacts being achieved by the GAP are encouraging. Not only do most respondents assess core program activities to be ‘very important’ or ‘extremely important’, but overall impact on the resources and capabilities of companies is being manifested in improved company performance in the marketplace. These results are impressive as the companies that participated in the GAP are established and successful prior to participation, requiring targeted and effective interventions to achieve performance improvements.

1 Dalziel, M. and Parjanen, S. 2011. Measuring the Impact of Innovation Intermediaries: A Case Study of Tekes. *Forthcoming* in V. Harmaakorpi & H. Melkas (Eds.) *Practice-Based Innovation: Insights, Applications, and Policy Implications*. Finland, Springer.