ESIC EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS INFRASTRUCTURE COLLABORATIVE

Memo:
Tech company engagement

Last updated:
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Background

- Evidence synthesis gives us rigour in learning from scientific studies and UN evaluations; AI gives us speed. AI-enabled living evidence synthesis can deliver localized, actionable insights with both rigour and speed.
- The Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative (ESIC) is making two foundational investments that will be of significant interest to technology companies:
  - an open data system that will provide AI-ready synthesis data
  - a living inventory of AI-enabled digital evidence synthesis tools (AI-DESTs), including any available performance metrics and evaluation results, to support choice and reporting.
- In a joint project with UN Partnerships, ESIC is also seeking to create AI Commons:
  - an open-source repository showcasing AI use cases for sustainable development, including any available performance metrics and evaluation results, as well as ESIC-derived evidence about whether the application is addressing an approach that the evidence has found supports SDG achievement.

Proposed principles for tech company engagement

- In pursuing any engagements with tech companies, ESIC will ensure the engagements follow the six principles described in the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP's) policy on due diligence and partnerships with the private sector:
  1) advance ESIC goals
  2) maintain integrity, independence and impartiality
  3) ensure transparency
  4) non-exclusivity and no unfair advantage
  5) cost-effectiveness
  6) clearly defined roles and responsibilities and shared risk and benefits.
- ESIC notes in particular the importance of principle 4.
- An excerpt of key sections for the UNDP policy accompanies this memo.
- Note that it is acceptable for a single organization – acting alone and not as ESIC – to work with a tech company to test and support improvements to an AI application, and such an organization would be expected to share the performance data and evaluations results with the living inventory of AI-DESTs.

Proposed types of engagement with tech companies

- ESIC proposes to engage in four of the seven types of engagement described in the UNDP policy:
  1) advocacy and policy dialogue – ESIC will seek to influence and encourage the private sector to bring about a change in the way business – in this case, AI-enabled evidence synthesis – is done through more responsible and sustainable approaches, particularly in **using AI to conduct risk-of-bias assessments and other currently neglected parts of synthesis workflows**
  2) resource mobilization - ESIC will seek to **mobilize financial resources (roughly US$5 million) to support the creation and maintenance of AI Commons** and to **mobilize in-**

kind resources to support the routine sharing of performance metrics and evaluation results for AI-DESTs and AI Commons

3) core business for inclusive market development – ESIC will seek to harness tech companies' core business strengths (expertise, services, technology, etc.) to implement or promote inclusive business models, particularly the **creation and implementation of a pricing model that will reward those sharing synthesis data for use in AI models** (e.g., a Spotify model based on usage)
4) transformational partnerships – ESIC will seek to expand its existing multi-stakeholder and multi- dimensional partnerships to leverage tech companies' core competencies to address a systemic issue on a broad scale, particularly the **transformation in how we learn from others to support SDG achievement.**

Summary of 'gives and gets'

- ESIC brings to the table: 1) a remarkably diverse community of communities, ranging from 50+ UN entities (through the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition), the world's largest producers of evidence synthesis (e.g., Campell, Cochrane and JBI), and key networks of evidence intermediaries (including science advisors and evidence-support units), among others; 2) a clear roadmap and US$126 million in already committed funds; and 3) a commitment to governing, coordinating and funding for collective impact.
- ESIC is seeking: 1) opportunities to provide its expertise for AI applications in evidence synthesis; 2) limited financial resources (US$5 million) and the in-kind resources needed to keep abreast of performance metrics and evaluation results; 3) support in developing a pricing model; and 4) an exploration of a broader transformation in AI-enabled living evidence synthesis.

Proposed participants in calls/meetings with tech companies

- Tariq Khokhar (and delegate Isabel Fletcher), Wellcome Trust
- Jen Gold (and delegated James Canton), ESRC/UKRI
- Donika Dimovska (and delegate Andrew Bollington), Jacobs Foundation
- Isabelle Mercier (and delegate Shiv Bakrania), UNDP and Global SDG Synthesis Coalition
- David Kelly, UN Secretary-General Scientific Advisory Board
- Benjamin Rosman, University of the Witwatersrand (benjros@gmail.com)
- Solmy Lee, UN Office for Partnerships