

Business Plan FY2015

1. Recent situations and new direction

The Institute for Future Engineering (IFENG) achieved a business surplus in the fiscal 2013 as a result of management reconstruction efforts after restructuring in the fiscal 2011, including restructuring of the activities and enhancement in the research management after its qualification as a public-interest corporation in 2013. IFENG's position in the GGTTI think tank ranking in the science and technology area has risen to the sixth place in 2015 from the eighth in 2012-2013.

This enabled IFENG to shift its target from management issues back to the mission proper to a think tank and its enhancement. While management still needs improvement to counter the adverse financial situations and strengthening the manpower for this purpose, IFENG believes that it is now the time to pursue further the quality of its activities adding to the 44-year performance record.

IFENG's history and feature have been described as follows:

It was more than 40 years ago that "soft science", or science of political decision making, was proposed as a field to study complex and interdisciplinary problems concerning social and political issues, involving interactions of humans, society, nature and technology. IFENG, one of the first-generation think tanks in Japan, was created just in that period, when the country was facing new and universal problems of environmental pollution and limits in resources and energy.

IFENG's activities have been focused on the fields of science and technology as well as research and development, which was a unique feature in Japan.

The institute has thus developed original methodologies for analysis of social trends, identification of real issues in society, and development of comprehensive strategy to settle them, as well as conception, implementation and evaluation of relevant policies. These methodologies have proven to be effective in application to policy issues and socioeconomic problems.

The purpose of the Institute is summarized as follows:

Our research activities start from gaining insights into the developing tendency of science and technology and into presages of socioeconomic changes in order to predict a likely future and its inherent problems. The goal is to conceive, design and propose measures for solving those problems, such as desirable social systems, policy making, research and development systems, or implementation of technologies, by analyzing relevant data with "engineering" methodologies, thus contributing to advances in science and technology as well as socioeconomic development at large.

More specifically, our research tasks and ancillary works are divided into the following units: Research Center for Policy Analysis, Research Center for Information and Telecommunication, Research Center for Social Issues, Programs Related to the Great East Japan Earthquake, and Academic Associations Support Center. Studies are performed by platforms formed by internal researchers, which are networked with external experts. Results are released in forms sharable with the general public as far as possible, for example through social media or on websites, in addition to network meetings, conferences, lectures and publications.

Specific activities are classified into three categories: Commissioned Investigations, Independent Investigations, and Interactive Research. Within each category, balance is controlled between Nonprofit Activities for the general public and For-Profit Activities for specific parties.

Based on our history and general guidelines for activities described above, IFENG will enhance its activities by focusing on the Interactive Research, relatively inactive so far, in order to "create wisdom for society".

We are well aware that the definition of what is "for" society depends on the view on social justice. We will present frankly wisdom based on our own view and eventually share it with the general public.

In addition, an Internal Control Committee will be established for assuring the quality of our messages.

2. Business plans for individual categories

(1) Nonprofit Commissioned Investigations (N1)

IFENG performs investigations commissioned by governmental agencies, foundations and other organizations. The results are to be shared with the general public including the originators.

"Commission" in this category, usually obtained through open application, may mean either contract or funding. While a contracted investigation is carried out in accordance with the specifications by the commissioning party defining the general framework of the project as well as expected results, a funded investigation allows more discretion of the applicant. The category N1 consists basically of these two types of investigations commissioned through open application.

Investigation projects are financed either by the commissioning parties or foundations: contracted investigations are compensated for principally by government agencies, research institutions, or incorporated foundations, while funded investigations rely on foundations for research promotion.

Activities in think tanks require a great variety of detailed leading-edge knowledge in different disciplines. No single organization could cover this entirely with its internal manpower even for a project fit for its background. We adopt, therefore, a platform-network system where our staff works on the platform for the core activities in a project while peripheral knowledge is provided by networked teams of external specialists. Even non-skilled works such as questionnaire counting may be outsourced to specialized contractors on economic ground.

(2) Nonprofit Independent Investigations (N2)

IFENG also performs self-financed Independent Investigations on subjects attracting much public attention. The results are open to public. The Special Earthquake-Related Project started in FY2011 belongs to this category. Here the process of emergence and

recognition of the social impacts of the quake was compared with that of social response in terms of time series, in order to explore appropriate social systems requisite for short- and mid-term response measures. Original works on this subject by our staff will further be encouraged in FY2015. Results of these activities will appear in our website and annual report. They are to be financed by operating capital drawn from the basic fund of the former Exceptional Corporation.

(3) Nonprofit Interactive Research (N3)

Interactive Research aims at sharing the results with society and, for new problems suggested by the results, collaborating with the general public for deepening insights into them or finding solutions through iterative dialogues.

Activities in this category are thus characterized by involvement of the general public in the process towards better understanding of problems by sharing research results and tasks suggested by them, along with continued dialogues, on open platforms such as digital space, public meetings or printed publications. The "Forum" and "Insight" sections in our website typically provide such opportunities for dialogue. While the Forum is intended for discussion with the public, the Insight is the channel for presenting IFENG's research results as questions to society, and inviting discussions by registered external specialists. The progress of discussions is made accessible to the public by timely disclosure on the website. The "Publication" section of the site provides IFENG's publications in the past as the basis for discussion, complemented by public lectures and printed publications.

This category will further be enhanced in FY2015 financed by a part of the revenue coming from commissioned investigations.

IFENG believes that a commissioned investigation does not end by preparation of the report, but continues until reaching a certain maturity through further examination on the web.

(4) For-Profit Commissioned Investigations (F1)

This category consists of investigations performed for a specific party, mostly business companies and other organizations that order the investigations. Projects assigned through open application may also be categorized here if the outcome is unlikely to be shared publicly.

(5) For-Profit Independent Investigations (F2)

An example of Independent Investigations performed for specific parties is consulting service based on IFENG's knowledge and findings obtained in the past think tank activities.

(6) For-Profit Interactive Research (F3)

This category includes lectures, training courses and publications based on our research results for specific target groups.