Overview

• We spend a lot of money at federal labs, and should get more for it.
• We should take program evaluation seriously.
• We should be cautious about making more changes in the rules of the game.
Getting More From Federal Labs

- Estimated 1999 obligations to Federal labs and FFRDCs totaled $23.5 billion, 32% of total
- “Technology transfer” has been an on again, off again lab mission
- Barriers to more effective transfer are largely understood
Barriers to Technology Transfer

- Lack of institutional commitment to technology transfer function
- Complex and inconsistent rules
  - fair access and conflict of interest
  - limitations on exclusive licensing
- Congressional interference
Improving Tech Transfer

• Make tech transfer success a contractor review criterion at FFRDCs
• Investigate opportunities for standardization of rules by administrative action
• Revive standardized assessment of technology transfer across the labs
Serious Program Assessment

• “Collective Reporting and Common Measures”
• OSTP or NSTC should oversee evaluation
• Evaluation should be part of program design
Serious Evaluation: Randomization

- We do not know social benefit of public R&D investments
- Selection problems make analysis of micro-level effects problematic
- Partial randomization of awards is the key
- Need not be arbitrary or unfair
Avoid Unnecessary Change

• Must be modest about our understanding of policy impacts
• Major changes have occurred in the last 15 years--firms are still adjusting
• Problems are there, but solutions could be worse
• Uncertainty is the greatest enemy of innovation