26 March 2021

Dear Editor, PLOS ONE Journal,

Today I am submitting my methodology paper "'Reverse engineering' research portfolio synergies and tradeoffs from domain expertise in minimum data contexts" to PLOS ONE.

In the article, I propose a novel method to rigorously deduce synergies and tradeoffs between R&D proposals or policies in a given portfolio. I discuss how the proposed method can improve the transparency, objectivity, and optimality of research fund allocation decisions.

The motivating context is agricultural research for development, but the method applies to any R&D portfolio planning context where a relative lack of data regarding future proposal impacts is compensated by a relative abundance of expert domain knowledge. Researchers in many such contexts have noted a sharp deterioration in donor-researcher relations, due in large part to opaque, ad hoc, or politically driven fund allocation mechanisms. The proposed protocol is designed to alleviate this toxic atmosphere.

I look forward to your reply.

Thanks and best regards,

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