

## RESEARCH MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS IMPACT CASE STUDIES

Case Studies Due – Friday, the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 to [ARMSCOO@researchmanagement.org.au](mailto:ARMSCOO@researchmanagement.org.au)

The promotion of the profession of research management is a key strategic priority of ARMS.

One way to promote the important contributions made by the profession is to share stories of situations, actions and outcomes that have had an impact on the research enterprise, which includes researchers, funders, institutions, students, the community, governments, or industry. Impact case studies are also an important means of celebrating these contributions within our research management community.

A template has been developed to help describe how the contributions you (or team) have made as a Research Management Professional which have benefited the research enterprise.

Applicants are invited to submit a Research Management Impact Study addressing the questions in the template below.

We encourage applicants to be creative and present case studies in innovative formats, such as a video, animated cartoon series, infographics etc. Applications in a standard document format, addressing the questions below are also encouraged. Watch this [video](#) to find out more about different formats that can be used for your Research Management Impact Case Study.

### RESEARCH MANAGEMENT IMPACT CASE STUDY TEMPLATE

A Research Management Impact Case study should be a narrative (maximum 1,000 words) around the following questions:

**Please include a heading for your Research Impact Case Study.**

***Creating a smooth transition: Implementing the online Grant Management System for the Research Funding Program, Cancer Council WA***

1. Please tell us about the research enterprise, and your role in it. What was the situation/project; what were the challenges that were faced; what was your role in it; and why did you do what you did?

Cancer Council WA has run a research funding program for over 50 years. We use an open and competitive application process to fund cancer research. I am one of the Research Team looking after the daily administration of the Research Funding Program.

Until recently we used the NHMRC application and assessment process for our project grant funding, which was great, but it wasn't suiting our changing needs. A new project grant application and assessment process was developed which meant an increase in workload for our small team. To support this change we looked into online grant management systems (OGMS) that would, in time, mean less manual grant administration. We reviewed several OGMS and selected one that allowed us to make changes and really 'own' the system.

Budget was a big factor in the platform we decided to use. To save on purchase costs, the Research Team opted to build the templates for each of the schemes. We were able to do this by adjusting the original templates developed by the OGMS provider for the first scheme.

We now have a good understanding of the OGMS and can easily make changes to improve the user experience, as well as make any changes to our grant criteria. This means we have a lot of control over the OGMS which saves time and money. We also have a good working relationship with the OGMS provider for support for problems we need help with.

Implementing the OGMS was a big change for us and our stakeholders, and our priority was to ensure a smooth transition from a largely paper- and email-based system to our chosen online alternative.

The challenges we anticipated facing included: acquiring the training to understand and effectively implement the system, implementing an evaluation structure to support continuous improvement, and building a good two-way relationship with the OGMS provider to ensure effective support.

### **Why did we do what we did?**

The OGMS was a significant change in the way researchers could apply for our funding. Our aim was to ensure a smooth transition from our paper- and email-based system to an efficient, streamlined OGMS which incorporates an embedded evaluation system to support our commitment to continuous improvement.

It is now just over 12 months since we started the transition to our chosen OGMS.

## **2. How did you add value, improve outcomes and/or otherwise positively impact the research enterprise? How was this impact measured?**

We took the following steps to optimise the transition to the OGMS:

- Training the research team staff and testing the new OGMS to ensure it could be tailored to our needs,
- Developing 'how to' guides for applicants on completion and submission of applications,
- Providing on-call assistance during working hours to both applicants and assessment committee members completing their applications/assessments,
- Designing an evaluation structure to support continuous improvement.

We measured the impact of undertaking this transition, and how well we implemented the change to an OGMS by the:

- Number of IT help requests registered with the OGMS provider
- Number of emails requesting assistance
- Time taken to complete jobs registered with the OGMS provider
- User surveys for feedback and testimonials
- Administrators' time spent on ongoing management of the OGMS

The number of IT help requests registered by the administrative team with the OGMS provider reduced over time, equating to approximately two requests per application for the first application round, shrinking to 0.12 requests by the final application round<sup>1</sup>. Emails requesting assistance were high for the initial application round reducing for subsequent rounds where they remained steady equating to one email per application.

The research team sent a survey to all applicants following the submission of their application. Their responses were reviewed at the end of each application round and relevant feedback incorporated into the next application round, resulting in adjustments to the guidance to applicants' documents and the application forms. Their responses were also collated at the end of the annual funding year to evaluate the effectiveness of our commitment to a smooth transition. Of the 62 recipients, a total of 36 responded (55 per cent). Overall, 56 per cent of respondents indicated that the new system was more time efficient; 22 per cent indicating it was neither more or less efficient, and 22 per cent indicating it was less efficient. Feedback indicated that this unexpectedly high level of dissatisfaction with the OGMS was mostly due to unresolved issues in the application form. These have since been addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> One job remained open across all application rounds

**3. Who were the key stakeholders in the research enterprise and how did you work with them to achieve a common goal? Please include any testimonials you have from those key stakeholders (ensure that approvals have been received prior to publishing testimonials).**

Our key stakeholders are the users of the OGMS: researchers; assessment panel members; our research team; and the OGMS provider.

To work towards our goal, we developed 'how to' resources for users, and always aimed to ensure there was at least one team member on-call during work hours to respond to help requests via phone or email. Where possible we worked to address relevant emails within a four-hour period, and to resolve IT issues as soon as was practicable. We also ensured open communication lines with the OGMS provider.

Feedback from applicants to date has proven to be invaluable, helping the research team to refine processes and forms. The anonymous surveys also supported testimonials, with responses affirming the effectiveness of the system, such as:

*Very happy with the application process.*

*No feedback for improvement at this stage.*

*I am happy with it! No problems.*

An example of the constructive feedback received and implemented by the Research Team: it was clear from the feedback that there was a problem with the way word count limits were represented in the application form. We were able to address this by adding word count placeholders to create a better visual display of the accurate word count for each section. Also, in response to feedback, we added a Word template, which included word counts, on our website as some researchers prefer to work offline to develop their applications.

Additionally, the research team worked closely with the OGMS provider to attain the training needed to use the platform effectively, there is also a good two-way communication system in place that helps us to develop our skills within the system, and fix problems quickly.

**4. What lessons did you learn that you would like to share with your fellow research managers? e.g., better communication protocols; tips for negotiating successful industry partnerships; more transparent reporting of research expenditure?**

Implementing successive rounds of research grant schemes over a short time through the new OGMS stretched the team's capacity limits. An alternative would have been to trial the OGMS initially with one grant scheme while using our previous system for our subsequent grant schemes. This would mean more time to finesse forms and processes within the OGMS before implementing it for all our grant schemes, and could have addressed the following:

- While the OGMS is very agile, the team underestimated its complexity, resulting in greater workload for staff than anticipated,
- The second application round was delayed as more time was needed for its development,
- There were systemic problems within the initial application form that were not resolved for subsequent application rounds. While information was provided in the application form assuring applicants these problems would not disadvantage their application, the amount of pressure on some researchers regarding application submissions could not be underestimated. A delay in implementing the system for subsequent rounds would have allayed some of the stress associated with these issues occurring in the application form.

Overall we are really pleased we have moved to an OGMS. It has been a busy, and sometimes frustrating transition but for the most part it has been rewarding with the benefits outweighing the difficulties, paying dividends for our small team here at Cancer Council WA.

**NOTE:** Templates must be submitted to the ARMS Executive Office by COB 5 PM on Friday, the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 to [ARMSCOO@researchmanagement.org.au](mailto:ARMSCOO@researchmanagement.org.au)

Different formats for your Research Management Impact Case Study can be used. Where possible, applicants are encouraged to submit any images to support their case and to ensure that all approvals to use such images are obtained prior to submitting your case study.