

inorms 2010

Professional Development for research administrators and managers

Presentation Session TS3
Building a 21st Century Profession
Dr Don McMaster
The University of Adelaide, Australia



inorms 2010

This presentation will focus on an Australasian review and survey, the

ARMS Body of Knowledge Project and Accreditation – Stage 1

Commissioned for the **Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS)** by Melbourne Consulting and Custom Programs in 2008.



inorms 2010

- First I will talk about the categories of research administrators and managers – What do these labels mean – who are research administrators and who are managers?
- Secondly I will look at what professional development opportunities are available for Australian research service staff or professionals.
- I will conclude by outlining what are the gaps and what is needed for research service staff



inorms 2010

What is meant by research managers and research administrators?

- Confusing terms: generally research management is carried out by researchers, since they manage the research projects and deliver outcomes, whereas
-
- research administrators provide support and ensure that the research outcomes can be delivered effectively and efficiently
- These professionals therefore should be called “research service professionals” to provide a boundary in terms of accountability for research outcomes on the one side (researchers in the research function of the research organisation) and accountability for high quality research services on the other side (research service professionals).



inorms 2010

- **So how did the review and the survey work?**
- **Desktop research** was done to determine the characteristics and roles of professionals engaged within research management and administration, their skills sets and needs and the preferred type and content of professional development based on their perceived current needs,
- **Interviews using a Voice of the Customer (VOC) approach** were used to determine key requirements that need to be addressed. Open-ended face to face interviews as well as phone interviews were done. Interview findings were used to develop an image map of the current working environment of research administrators and managers in different organizations.



inorms 2010

Types of research service models

There are several different research service models in use:

- centralised research offices with all aspects of research services co-located in one office,
- devolved research services where part of the services are provided via a centralised core and other parts are distributed throughout the research organisation's business units.
- a third model, usually in smaller research entities like institutes or research centres, the research service function done by the organisation's senior and middle management with support of general administrative staff.



inorms 2010

Training for research support service professionals.

- In general, the training for new entrants is on the job and on demand.
- However, training content is not universally available or accessible when needed.
- There is a heavy reliance on other co-workers and managers and trial and error which leads to stress, especially during peak demand periods.
- Early research service professionals tend to rely heavily on local and more basic courses, or formal internal training courses which sometimes are shorter and more organisation process targeted.
- In the later career stage, training requirements become more specific in terms of subject matter and content, such as legal, technical subject matter and industry specific training.



inorms 2010

What does ARMS offer?

- The current ARMS training and professional development suite of offerings is clearly not sufficient to meet requirements. Currently the main vehicle for training is the annual conference and state chapter events.

South Australian Chapter as case study

- Professional Development workshops in demand for:
 - Introduction to research administration
 - Ethic and compliance
 - Understanding Contracts
 - Intellectual Property for non-lawyers



inorms 2010

These workshops were very popular and high in demand which reinforces the need for professional development training for research service support staff.

However the Chapter Executive Committee would have liked to have a suite of training modules to draw on. This is needed to have a consistent and national approach to training and would need to be repeated at regular intervals to capture new staff entering the research service area..



inorms 2010

- Recommendations:

ARMS should develop a long term strategy of how it wants to develop professional development modules and strategies.

Based on that, ARMS should develop a professional development strategy for research support service professionals in specific areas of need and call.

In the short term, ARMS should focus initially on developing solutions that includes:



inorms 2010

1. Developing a training package for entry level research management and administration staff (under one year work experience).
2. Developing a list of locally accessible high quality training courses that can be accessed by the current ARMS members, and expanded if ARMS chooses to expand its member constituency actively in the future.
3. Upgrade the ARMS website substantially so that it has up to date information on it and can be accessed for training use.
4. Develop suitable case studies or other 'live' training materials to provide an up to date and user-attractive learning environment, in an e-learning environment via the website.

inorms 2010

In conclusion

One of the goals for ARMS is to:

Develop professional standards and a program of general and specialist training for people working in research management and administration.

Key points from the review were:

- Research management roles are poorly understood and ill-defined,
- Training is mostly on-the-job, piecemeal, and sporadic
- New starters desperately need a stand-alone, easily accessible training package



inorms 2010

Thank you

