

ARMS 2024 CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Theme: Professional research management as an embedded practice

Title: Enabling effective research management through technological innovation on the ground

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Abstract:

Research managers provide indispensable support to researchers navigating the complexity and fast-changing requirements of the funding landscape, distilling information from diverse sources into recommendations that are tailored to particular researchers' needs. However, doing this manually in a context of high workload may present research managers with the dilemma of whether to spend more time confirming their advice by referring to source documents, or to risk errors by relying on memory.

As subject-matter experts, research managers are well-placed to tackle this problem by formalising their knowledge and extracting core principles that may be reused across cases. I discuss how research managers may approach this problem through an iterative process of (1) identifying common themes across individual cases, (2) abstracting shared elements into fundamental or core principles, and (3) making these core principles readily accessible to research management staff.

I then focus on innovative software-based implementations of this process introduced by research managers within the Monash Research Office's Awards Team since 2021. Most of these innovations were successful and increased the consistency, accuracy, and timeliness of the Awards team's communications. They were less successful where they were overly restrictive to users or ambitious in scope.

Based on these results, I suggest that technology implemented 'on the ground' should be designed to adapt to changing requirements, accommodating existing workflows, and complement enterprise software. This talk will offer research managers both a general framework and a specific implementation for the reduction of mental overhead that may be adopted and adapted to their own needs.