

BESTPRAC Working group 1: Research Support Staff Framework

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NARMA Conference
12/04/2016

What is BESTPRAC?

- COST ACTION TN1302: open to members of all participating countries

Objective

Establishing a network of research support staff around administrative, financial and legal issues and coming up with best practices (focussed on EU funded projects)

Tools

- Working Groups meetings
- Online communication
- Training schools
- Short Term 'Scientific' Missions (short visits between BESTPRAC members)

Practical details

Chair: Jan Andersen

Grantholder: Martina Poëll

<http://www.bestprac.eu/home/>

3 Working Groups

- **WG1: Administration**
Ellen Schenk
- **WG2: Financial**
Vanessa Ravagni
- **WG3: Legal**
Diana Pustula

Running from fall 2013 to fall 2017 (48 months)

Working group meetings every 6 months

Preliminary Dissemination

Reports of all events on the website

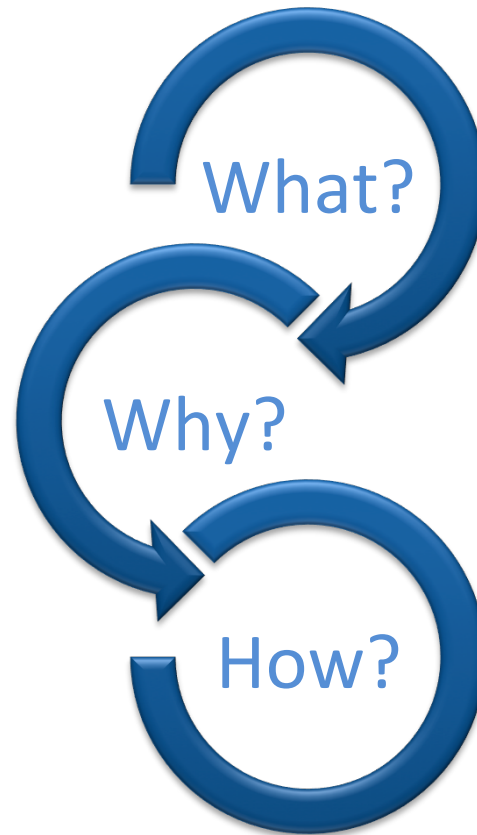
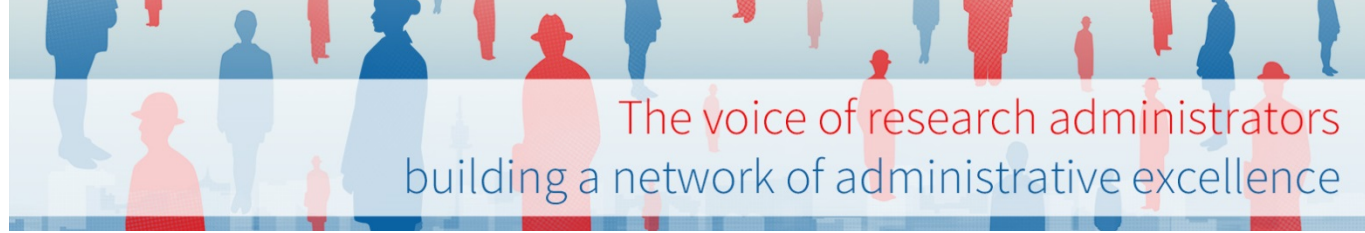
E.g. Training schools: Legal for non-legals

E.g. Flanders Universities group STSM

Some of the topics:

- Career paths
- IT-tools
- Consortia agreement
- Open science
- Communication
- Project management strategies

Research Support Staff Framework



What?

A framework that wants to differentiate between types of research support staff

At this point: a large brainstorming exercise

Focussed on EU funded projects

Why?

- BESTPRAC is about defining best practices
- Best practices are not the same for everyone
 - ⇒ Context differs from huge offices to one person operations with limited resources
 - ⇒ From administrators of all kinds of funding to project managers on one project
- All these people cannot be included in one definition unless it is very general and therefore not a useful tool
- How can we define best practices if we cannot define the group we are using them for?

A possible solution is to create a framework which differentiates between different types of research support staff (RSS)

- **Goals:**

- Create best practices that are suited for a specific type instead of ‘one size fits all’
- Define a list of tasks that will outline the services that are offered by each type
- Improve research support and the professional life or RSS

How?

- To create different types you need a defining criterion to separate them
 - ⇒ We are using the time on a single project as the defining criterion and the depth of the support you can offer as a consequence of that time
 - ⇒ The logic is that research support staff (RSS) should be able to offer similar support and have tailored best practices depending on the time they have available

Defining criterion = Time

How?

The voice of research administrators
building a network of administrative excellence

- Problem: We do not know how much time people have to spend on a single project per type because the types have not been defined yet
- Therefore we have made a draft definition to guide the discussion

<p>Type 1 Compliance</p>	<p>Type 2 Extended support</p>	<p>Type 3 Day-to-day work</p>
<p>Least amount of time = focus on compliance with contractual obligations</p>	<p>Intermediate amount of time = focus on improving participation</p>	<p>Most amount of time = doing the day-to-day non-scientific work</p>
<p>E.g. Explain budget rules and check budget</p>	<p>E.g. Advice PI and project manager how to set up the budget</p>	<p>E.g. Set up the budget, contact the partners</p>



	Job title(s)	Description of the job	Estimated number of projects
TYPE 1	Research administrator	A person at the administration providing minimal support and checks, guarding the organisational processes and facilitating the signature process	Many projects
TYPE 2	European Liaison Officer/ EU Research Manager	A person with expert knowledge of EU funding providing advice and support to researchers in a multitude of ways	Many projects
TYPE 3	Project manager/ Project developer	A person dedicated to a limited number of projects helping the researchers in preparing and managing the project on a day to day basis	1-4 projects

- Step 1: Create a number of core tasks for each type (BUDAPEST)
- Step 2: Improvements and comments by chairs
- Step 3: A survey of about 1/3 of the tasks and related issues
- Step 4: Discussing the overlap and outstanding issues = further improvements (SOFIA)

Task	Supporting the financial and technical reporting
	Instruction of consortium on financial and technical reporting requirements and rules
	Management of the timely submission of financial and technical reports
	Responsibility for the non-scientific contents of the technical reports
	Completing financial reports with the support of the internal financial control (financial department) if available
	Monitoring of proper financial reporting by the consortium according to the work plan as laid down in the Grant Agreement
	Management of the distribution of the pre-financing, interim payment and final payments to partners
	Obtaining a Certificate of Financial Statement for the own organisation, ranging from managing the process in case of financial control support up to executing the full process in the absence of project control support
	Coordinating and supporting in 2nd level audits
Task	Consortium Management
	Guiding the consortium from start till the end
	Getting and keeping the consortium running
	Management of conflicts within the consortium according to the provisions laid down in the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement
	Monitoring the progress of the project according to the grant agreement
	Risk management
	Making key project information accessible to the consortium
	Helpdesk for any administrative, ethical, financial or legal questions from the consortium
Task	Functioning as a helpdesk and providing administrative support to the following issues:
	Is a subtask in consortium management for type 3
Task	Communicating internal procedures
	Compile and/or design internal procedures within the own institution
	Informing researchers from own institution on internal procedures
Task	Liaison between the coordinator and the European Commission and the consortium
	Contact person on behalf of the coordinator for the European Commission Project Officer and Financial Officer
	Preparing non-reporting related guides for the consortium
	Informing the consortium on any project-related issues apart from reporting and project meetings
Task	Contracts management and archiving
	Archiving all project documents
	Check if all documents are present/completed/signed
Task	Support for amendments of the Grant Agreement and Consortium Agreement
	Drafting of non-scientific texts for the amendment
	Management of the amendment procedure to be followed by the consortium
Task	Management of dissemination
	Reporting on dissemination
	Statistics on project publications and presentations for internal and external use
	Monitoring of project website
	Management of and contribution to general communications on the project

What do we want to achieve?

- A definition and list of tasks and best practices per type
 - = a standard for research support (EU funded)
- A framework that can be used:
 - To structure the work of individuals and offices
 - As a tool to create clear job descriptions
 - As a tool to discuss with internal policy makers
 - As a tool for expectation management towards researchers

Possibilities:

- Link up with frameworks for **skills and competences**
- Link up with frameworks for different **roles**
- Look at professional development

E.g. We want a type 2 officer that will do these tasks, **needs these skills** and will have that **role**

Interesting talking points:

1. Strong agreement on basic advice and taylor made advice
2. In consortium projects the line between advise and day-to-day work is often found in contacting all of the partners or not
3. Where do managers fit in the framework?
4. Can a type 2 officer exist without a type 1 officer?

- Disclaimer: We are in the middle of developing this framework
- This framework is being developed by WG1 of BESTPRAC
- Results will be made public

Follow our progress at: <http://www.bestprac.eu/home>