

SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) – SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Action number: TN1302

STSM title: Impact, innovation & communication: best practices in pre- and post- award research administration

STSM start and end date: 19.03.2018 to 21.03.2018

Grantee name: Jason Means

PURPOSE OF THE STSM

The STSM was designed with the aims of BESTPRAC in mind, particularly its focus on allowing networking and the exchange of administrative experience, knowledge sharing and its transfer, and increased efficiency in project management.

The grantee, Jason Means, is an early-career research administrator at the Centre for Social Sciences (CSS) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. At CSS he is responsible for providing pre-award support for researchers submitting international grant applications (primarily Horizon 2020). As researchers have tended to be less focused on impact, he has begun to develop expertise in formulating the Impact section of H2020 proposals, including the development of communication, dissemination, and exploitation plans, as well as stakeholder engagement strategies.

The University of Jyväskylä is an exceptionally good institution to learn more about best practices in impact, innovation and communication—JYU has a dedicated office for research and innovation services, and trainings and workshops for its researchers covering subjects like impact, idea creation, and communication. Perhaps most significantly, this dedication has a proven track record: Since 2014 JYU has acquired over EUR 21 million in H2020 funding alone.

The purpose of this STSM was for Jason to visit JYU to learn more about best practices in research administration in order to facilitate knowledge transfer back to CSS' research management team. Concretely, he has been tasked with the creation of a communication plan for CSS projects based on what was learned at JYU, and also with contributing to CSS' guidelines and instructions for selecting, planning, implementing, and finalizing research projects.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSM

The STSM schedule was as follows:

Monday, 19 March 2018

- 9:00 – 10:00 Arrival and meeting with colleagues at Research and Innovation Services, JYU
- 10:00 – 11:00 Participation in the weekly team meeting of the Research Funding Team
- 11:00 – 12:00 Presentation of pre- and post-award services at CSS by Jason Means to the Research Funding Team
- 12:00 – 12:30 Lunch
- 12:30 – 14:00 Research funding services at JYU, Senior Grant Advisor Elina Humala
- 14:00 – 15:00 MSCA IF training for applicants & foundation funding, Funding Advisor Leena Sivula

15:00 – 16:00 H2020 funding, Funding Advisor Anne Höytö

Tuesday, 20 March 2018

9:15 – 11:00 Post-award services at JYU (Project Administration Team, Sanna Ahoniemi)

11:00 – 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 14:00 JYU communication guidelines for projects (Communication Manager Liisa Harjula)

14:00 – 15:00 Grant writing services, Senior Grant Writer Päivi Fadjukoff

15:00 – 16:00 Converis Research Information System & Academy of Finland, Funding Advisor Satu Huhtala

Wednesday, 21 March 2018

9:00 – 10:00 Workshop on model texts for proposals (Research Funding Team)

10:00 – 11:00 Innovation Services at JYU—IPR Counseling & Evaluation, JYU seed funding company, pre-incubation services at business factory), IPR Advisor Riikka Reitzer

11:00 – 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 13:00 Impact workshop, Funding Advisor Anne Höytö & Senior Grant Advisor Elina Humala

13:00 – 14:00 JYU support process for Business Finland's funding for commercialization of research results, Funding Advisors Maria Värre and Anne Höytö

14:00 – 15:00 Enhancing collaboration with enterprises, Funding Advisors Maria Värre and Anne Höytö

15:00 – 16:00 Wrap up discussion

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

This section will summarize JYU's notable best practices (separated into four primary categories), and will be followed by an overview of main focus areas for knowledge transfer to CSS.

General Activities

- The Research Funding Team maintains a genuine and realistic approach to providing support for JYU's researchers through a customer service mindset.

Structural

- The Research Funding Team is comprised of 7 people, all with different (yet interlinked) areas of expertise which allows them to cover a comprehensive range of funding schemes.
- JYU's Research and Innovations Services are centralised but the team members try to approach researchers and faculties in a variety of ways in order to help them with current funding calls.
- Have received an HR excellence in research certification and WWF's Green Office certification.
- Research and Innovation Service's mission is linked to JYU's strategy.
- Approval process of proposals is via electronic signature in their research information portal (Converis).
- There is financial support for MSCA IF applicants to come to JYU to meet prospective advisors and receive application trainings.
- There is available funding for one month paid leave for researchers to prepare ERC funding applications.
- There is financial support for meeting consortium partners when preparing H2020 proposals.

Research Funding Support Activities

- There is a Research & Innovation Services bulletin (once per month).
- Additionally, comprehensive research funding information on new calls is sent out once a month.
- Have begun to conduct breakfast meetings to bring researchers and businesses together for collaboration on innovation and commercialization calls.

- There are consistent and proactive initiatives taken by the Research Funding Team to develop new services based on JYU researchers' needs (akin to a "citizen science" approach to research administration—i.e., ask what is needed, develop service, keep if working).
- Trainings for researchers on Converis and intranet, held in addition to many funding-related trainings (usually attended by about 700 people per year).
- Impact workshops (attendance is linked to internal funding for proposal development).
- The embodiment of proposal development as a "co-creation" process between grant writer and researchers.
- Grant writer is only involved from the early stages of proposal development—also provides conceptual development support and model (ready-made) texts, particularly for more administrative sections.

Communication Activities

- Communication services (henceforth CS) advises researchers but do not engage in communication activities for them (mainly for practical reasons, though this encourages researchers to better plan for and integrate communication activities into their projects).
- CS finds suitable experts for media interviews and cooperates with journalists.
- CS utilizes science portals where one may submit press releases (AlphaGallilea, EurekAlert)
- Meltwater commercial service is used to track outputs, they purchase RSS feeds to include on website (after review).
- Almost every faculty has its own communications officer.
- Maintains communication guidelines for researchers (i.e., what are researchers' rights when interacting with the press).

Main focus areas for knowledge transfer to CSS:

- Updates within intranet: clear information on roles and support that is offered; clear information on general funding schemes; integration of proposal review and approval into intranet (for both Institute Directors and Director General)
- Creation model texts for H2020 proposals in particular
- Creation of communication guidelines to support researchers
- Update of communication strategy, including tracking CSS outputs and establishing social media presence
- Creation of impact strategy, including the introduction of impact workshops (potentially inviting guest(s) for the first round)
- Creation of research management team strategy: how to inform researchers on who we are, what we do, and the implementation of trainings to mitigate the process of applying for funding.

FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

No concrete actions have been planned, though this STSM has certainly strengthened the relationship between CSS and JYU, which of course has the potential to lead to future collaboration.