

ARMS 2024 CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Theme: Professional Research management as an embedded practice

Title: Navigating the Terrain of a Project Management Tool Rollout in a Research Institution

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Abstract:

To enhance efficiency of research teams, continuous process improvement is vital, including regular review of tools utilised to support research managers in tracking project time, scope, and budget. Project management tools hold significant potential in enhancing project success but can also introduce challenges if not carefully considered.

While recognising the need for improving tools can be relatively straightforward, implementation requires securing buy-in from internal stakeholders. This can be particularly challenging in a research environment. Researchers face severe time pressures due to very competitive funding sources and a wide range of complex roles which they are expected to perform at a high level. Therefore, any administrative task can be perceived as taking away from the researcher's core responsibilities. Researchers also inherently value their own autonomy, which is essential for an innovative and successful research career. However, it can sometimes bring researchers into conflict with organisational imperatives. Past negative experiences, such as using inadequate tools or encountering insufficient support, can also increase resistance to change among researchers and other internal stakeholders. Clarity is required on why change is necessary and how it benefits them in, for instance, simplifying their workflows.

In this context, we share our experiences and strategies in deploying a project management tool within an applied research institute. Our findings underscore the significance of being able to adopt a clear and considered approach that respects the diverse needs of key stakeholders. Additionally, effective communication emerges as a key element for change management success.