Notes workshop

Recognition & Rewards Festival 2024

Title session	Embedding and sustaining Research Data and Research Software Professionals in Research Teams and Institutions
Speakers	Marta Teperek, Lieke de Boer, Fieke Schoots, Yan Wang, Celia van Gelder, Jeremy Cohen, Sarah Coombs
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In short: Can you give a short summary of the discussions/talk (ca. 300 words)	The session focuses on embedding and sustaining research data and research software professionals in Research Teams and Institutions. After a short introduction and getting to know each other, challenges around embedding of these roles were introduced in short pitches. The challenges included: 1. **Appreciation and recognition:** How to appreciate and recognise these professionals and how to offer them appropriate career perspectives? Academic roles tend to be well recognised within research institutions. Some professional support staff roles are also well recognised. But what happens with the roles which fall in-between? How can grassroots

activities contribute to advocating for change and supporting institution-led strategies?

2. **Job profiles:** How to ensure that these roles have formal job profiles? A case study of introducing a job profile of a data steward within the Dutch universities job classification system was introduced through a community-driven effort. However, challenges remain around the adoption of these profiles, attracting and retaining talented people, providing suitable training etc.

3. **Training and skills:** these are essentials to provide professionals with growth opportunities through training. But at the moment it is rather unclear what training is needed, and what training is available. Finally, even if there is training, is there always capacity to deliver such training at scale?

4. **Structural embedding of data and software professionals within research institutions:** how to facilitate structural embedding? Should this be organised centrally or at a more granular level? Proper recognition and successful embedding depends on recognising and rewarding these roles. For this, cultural change is needed to change the perception of how support staff are viewed.

5. **Sustainable funding for research professionals:** Getting structural funding from institutions: How to get the buy in and commitment from the institution to secure structural funding? How to scale? How to focus on research quality and on contributing to a more sustainable ecosystem? How to convince researchers that hiring a data manager or an RSE for a project instead of another PhD student will lead to efficiency gains?

Subsequently, the participants split into groups where they discussed the challenges and possible solutions.

Example solutions which were discussed were for example:

1. Remove the divide between research and support roles;
2. Flexibility and mindset change;
3. Physical embedding of professional staff within research teams;
4. Supporting/enabling mobility between different roles;
5. Coordinated efforts across the country to show good practices.

	Finally, participants reflected on concrete actions they could take to address the challenges in the next 6 months: 1. Connect HR and Recognition & Rewards professionals with research data and software professionals communities; 2. Offer more training opportunities for professional support staff; 3. Brown bag luncheons for support and research staff - bring people together for informal lunchtime discussions; 4. Improve visibility and appreciation of support roles through case studies; 5. Facilitate team discussions around institutional policies; 6. Reach out to RSEs and listen what do they have to say; 7. Create an opportunity to widen the discussion and encourage a working group/project to look at pilots or case studies; 8. Make support FTEs mandatory for each project; 9. Check the status of the profiles, see if they work well, what needs to be updated; 10. Join ARMA-NL.
What are the main take aways of this sessions?	Everyone can drive change within their environment. You can start with local discussions and pitch the benefits and opportunities of positive change to your colleagues. Current role structures in many institutions do not provide ideal support for technical professional roles but there is no perfect solution - discussion and engagement are important to find suitable solutions. Improving support for roles relating to software and data can help institutions to improve the quality and sustainability of their research outputs.
What were some interesting quotes?	There should be a continuum between research and professional support staff roles. Good research support is the difference between research and good research.
Something else you want to mention?	ARMA-NL is the place where these discussions take place - they aim to gather groups of different professionals in the academic ecosystem to represent their interests.