

The Research Management Office: benefits, challenges and the way forward

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Today, many research organisations and universities have a Research Management Office (RMO), a team of scientific and financial managers that coordinates the organisation's international projects and supports scientists in managing their research projects. Sometimes called differently depending on the institution, the RMO offers a wide variety of administrative and coordination services to the researchers, such as consultation for the preparations of project proposals, grant management, training for scientists and project managers, shared knowledge database, and templates and forms.

Similarly to the Project Management Office (PMO) in a corporate enterprise, the RMO can provide "an organisational structure that standardises project-related governance processes and facilitates the sharing of resources, methodologies, tools and techniques". The RMO team is a key player throughout the life of every project, to support in all the phases of the project from proposal development through to project closure and reporting, developing and harmonising project management methodologies and best practices, monitoring compliance with policies and requirements of the organisation (internal) and funding agencies (external), and coordinating communication across the various projects.

Building on the experiences of the RMO at the Alfred Wegener Institute Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research and Technische Universität Dresden, in this paper we discuss the benefits of establishing a RMO in universities and research organisations and the challenges of the academic context in which the RMO work. Finally, we also explore possible development pathways for a full integration of the RMO in all public research organisations.