

From: Sarah Townsend (RCUK, Executive Directorate)
Sent: 20 April 2016 10:53
To: 'Directors and Heads of Research Services'
Subject: Research Councils plans to upgrade grants service

To Directors and Heads of Research Services,

Research Councils UK are pleased to inform you that we will be upgrading our electronic grants submission service in 2017. The Je-S system has come to a natural end and this is a fantastic opportunity to design a smarter, simpler more user friendly service in line with the latest digital standards. Work is already underway to design the new awards service. This work is based on extensive user research to ensure that when the changes come into effect, you will find they better meet your needs.

So what sort of improvements can you expect?

As an applicant, peer reviewer or research office administrator, you will no longer use the Je-S system to apply for grants, submit reviews or manage your research organisations grants activities. There will be an entirely new external portal. In future the whole grant application form will be digitised, which means in the majority of cases no more uploading of attachments. And there are other improvements such as in-built formatting for font size and word count, improved dashboards to help you manage your grant activities as well as guidance relevant to a particular funding opportunity close at hand, all on the one screen, while you are applying. This is just some of the functionality being developed and iterated through user testing and feedback.

When will the new system go live?

The ambition is to start to run a small number of funding opportunities through the new system by March 2017 to test that everything is working as it should be. After March 2017, there will be parallel running of the new awards service and Je-S, which will be gradually phased out throughout 2017. We expect the full transition from Je-S to the new awards service to be completed by May 2018.

Who have we spoken to?

We have conducted user research with a wide range of applicants, peer reviewers, panel members, and RO staff from both big and small institutions. This has helped us to find out what parts of the current process create the most challenges for users. There is still a lot to work out, and research with users is certainly not complete. For example, we still need to better understand how the new service should interface with ROs' systems to allow the exchange of data so this is an area that we are still exploring. And we will be doing a lot more user testing to make sure we have a system that works. There are a few upcoming events that you may be interested in attending, which will be an opportunity for you to let us know your thoughts:

- Those of you attending the ARMA summer conference on 8th June 2016 can join us at our session on 'Future of RCUK grants delivery' 11.30-12.45 by registering [here](#)
- We are also running a workshop through Jisc aimed at data and system experts including system vendors to explore system interoperability and research information management. This event is taking place on 11th May in London. If you would like to pre-register your interest in attending this event you can email sarah.townsend@rcuk.ac.uk. Places will be limited and we will be looking to ensure a good spread of representation across different research organisations and roles.

Working with others

As part of our on-going commitment to work closely together with other BIS partner agencies, particularly with Innovate UK who have similar funding processes, there is a work stream already underway to explore the opportunities for sharing technology and aligning processes where appropriate.

How can you keep up to date with what's happening?

This is an important programme of work and we are keen to keep you informed of progress. Please let us know who in your organisation should be the primary coordinator for us to engage with going forward. Ideally we would see this being someone who can disseminate information more widely and act as the local expert who will help manage business change within your organisation. We would also see this person helping us shape what the user needs are for the new service and who can get involved with user testing. Please let us know by emailing sandra.jenkins@rcuk.ac.uk. If we have not heard back by the end of April, we will use your current Je-S contact. You can also receive regular updates about this project by subscribing to our mailing list [here](#).