

I wrote to Directors and Heads of Research Services in April this year to inform them that Research Councils would be replacing our electronic grants submission service in 2017. More information about this project can be found here <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/2017update/>

You have been nominated by your organisation to be the primary coordinator for us to engage with going forward*. I hope we can work together in a number of different ways for example to disseminate information more widely across your organisation, to help manage business change and by getting involved with user testing or by recruiting other testers from your organisation.

We are looking for more people to get involved in user research. Can you help?

The user research team have had lots of volunteers but it has been difficult to pin people down. So I would like to ask you to help us recruit more volunteers. Initially we are looking for researchers; we need to test with both people who have never applied for a research grant through the Je-S system before as well as those who are more frequent applicants. At this stage we will predominantly be testing prototypes with users. We will be carrying out user testing throughout the year and would like to get a balance of organisations both large and small, research intensive and non-research intensive. User testing could follow any of the following formats:

- We come to your organisation and test on a one to one basis with a single user
- We come to your organisation and test with multiple users
- We test remotely over skype with a user
- The team are also considering running labs where users come to a central location nearby – would you be interested?

Test sessions tend to take between half an hour to an hour. If you would like to put yourself or colleagues forward please email charlie.dormer@digital.bis.gov.uk by the start of August. For each contact please provide as much of the following information as possible or leave blank if unknown:

1. Name
2. Organisation
3. Academic Discipline (high level)
4. Email address and telephone number
5. Have they got experience of applying for grants? yes/no
6. Are they likely to apply for grants in the future but haven't done so to date? yes/no
7. Do they work in a research development, finance or other research office role? yes/no
8. Have they conducted peer reviews for the Research Councils or any other funder before? yes/no
9. Have they sat on an assessment or moderating panel for the Research Councils or any funder before? yes/no

We would welcome your views on how best to engage the research community

We recently held a number of large events which included a systems interoperability workshop in conjunction with Jisc and a session at the ARMA summer conference. These have been a good opportunity to communicate with a larger audience and to hear your views.

Based on the success of these events we are planning to hold a number of regional workshops in the autumn of this year and we would welcome your thoughts. Current thinking would be to hold workshops based roughly in each of

the regions represented by the six regional higher education consortia - N8, M5, GW4, SES, Eastern ARC and St David's Day Group. These workshops would be an opportunity for us to showcase what we have been doing and get user feedback. We have a number of different audiences who we need to engage with which include researchers, research managers and administrators and information system managers. We would welcome your thoughts on whether stakeholders would benefit more from an event which brings together all of these different audiences at the same time or more targeted events. If you have any thoughts on what you would expect to see or hear and the burning issues that you would like addressed please send them to me directly at Sarah.Townsend@rcuk.ac.uk we will advertise these workshops by the end of July so that people can start registering to attend.

Can you help us add to our frequently asked questions?

We have an evolving set of frequently asked questions available on our website <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/grantservicefaqsv2-pdf/>

I would be interested to hear what questions people in your organisation have about the plans to replace the existing grants service. Please let us know any answers that you would like to see added here by emailing me Sarah.Townsend@rcuk.ac.uk