**Project Summary:**
To develop and enhance the process for the handover of projects from REO to the Finance Office, ensuring that it meets customer (academic) expectations, facilitates the flow of research income and creates efficiencies and value for both service directorates.

**Project Lead:**
Sara McDermid

**Project Team Members:**
- Research Funding & Development Team (REO)
- Contracts Manager (REO)
- Research Accounts Team (Finance Office)

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**Background**
(how was the project identified)

The trigger for the project was the process stages brought about by the separation of these two areas of research support between two service directorates. There was a need for far more detailed briefing for the post-award staff as projects were handed over because they were not aware of some of the complexities around awards that came about through the course of the original bid development. Clarity was also required around some aspects of support that clearly sit ‘on the fence’ between pre and post award support.

It was accepted that, for the most part, the areas requiring attention were ‘invisible’ to customers within Schools, and rightly so – it would be reasonable for them to assume that there was a process in place between REO and the Finance Office that was fit for purpose and that would facilitate set-up for awarded projects quickly and efficiently.

**Objectives**
(what were the intended outcomes for the project)

There was a need to understand the problem areas and potential blockages in the process and identify solutions, accepting that a great proportion of the solutions would probably lie within the Research Management System (RMS), implementation of which was just beginning at the start of this project. As a result, the outcome of this project was to feed into the implementation of RMS, which in turn would contribute to the improvement and enhanced efficiency of services.

**Approach Taken**
(including tools applied)

The approach taken was a collaborative one between the two service areas involved, led by REO. Without doubt, the most useful part of the approach was a mapping exercise involving a group covering all aspects of support for research, across the whole research lifecycle, from REO (pre-award) and the Finance Office (post-award). The group mapped the process and identified many issues including the following:
- Accurate definition of activity
- Small awards (time taken to set up etc)
- Details for contracts to be prepared
- Amount of award differing from application
- Authorised signatories
Summary of Impacts and Improvements
(including measures and metrics)

- Finance not involved with development of application
- Funders being separately identified
- Management of spend

The solution to many of the issues discussed revolved around communication – how projects are handed over, the briefing given etc.

As anticipated, many of the solutions to the issues raised were bound up in the implementation of RMS – this is the systems hub for all information (including start/end dates, copies of applications, contracts, investigators, as well as a link to Agresso, the University’s financial system, for transactional information).

A summary sheet was drawn up to facilitate the handover, driven by the information that the Finance Office needed in order to set up the project on the finance system. This has worked well, although the Lean approach has been taken a stage further by removing paper completely from the process. The latter has been achieved through normal process development, which is encouraging, without the need to convene a project team. This has been successful because of the enhanced understanding and improvements to the handover process made as a result of the original Lean project, as well as the systems enhancements within RMS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>By who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary sheet</td>
<td>Drafted by Finance, completed by REO</td>
<td>Since mid-2012</td>
<td>Enhanced communication of project details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>By who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All relevant information loaded on to RMS</td>
<td>REO</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>Central location for both directorates for all info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover meeting/conversation for large grants (to cover any specific details)</td>
<td>REO/Finance</td>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>Facilitate set up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lessons Learned
(what advice would you give to others)

Ensure that any developing systems capabilities are fully utilised to create operational efficiencies. In this instance, we have been able to remove all paper from the handover process as RMS now holds all the relevant information required.

Once a piece of work is concluded, it should not stop there! Constantly look at, and review, processes to ensure optimum efficiency that facilitates the overall objective – in this case, income generation.