

# Research management in Africa and India

**“Since research activities could grow only by creating a robust pipeline of competitive funding, we realised that this would require setting up proper grants management, and also an institutional push in terms of creating opportunities for our principal investigators to enlarge the portfolio of competitive grants they could access. The value of setting up the Research Development Office has been unequivocal.”**

**Professor Satyajit Mayor,  
Director of the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, India**



Will & Deni Mcintyre/Science Photo Library

## **How to improve research management in Africa and India**

Africa and India face some of the world's greatest health and development challenges, but their research capacity is not yet sufficient to meet them.

To help rectify this, we believe researchers should operate in a supportive environment that allows them to focus on their research. Strong research management within institutions enables this.

In recent months, we've consulted organisations in Africa and India to find out what research management systems they have in place and

how we can help to build on them. As a result, we're developing systematic approaches to further develop research management structures in these areas, building on existing initiatives.

We strongly believe that these initiatives should be led by organisations in these regions in order to make them more relevant and sustainable. But we also want efforts to be cooperative, bringing together international good practice and expertise. We hope that research institutions, funding bodies and individual research managers from across the world will want to join with us.

## **Why is research management important?**

Good research management is crucial if research and innovation is to underpin social and economic development in Africa and India. It helps researchers access new funding, helps them navigate complex rules and procedures, provides the tools for effective management, and helps ensure that findings are used effectively. It also provides reassurance to donors that their funds are being well-used. It allows talented researchers to focus on their work.

It also helps build international partnerships, which are increasingly important to research institutions globally. The UK's Global Challenges Research Fund, which has made £1.5 billion available for such partnerships, is an example of the huge opportunities now available for international collaborations aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

## How strong are the existing systems in Africa and India?

Our consultations show that much has already been done to promote effective research management in **Africa**, and we're keen to build on this.

However, progress has been uneven across institutions and regions. Research management is still not established as a profession in its own right, and its functions are not always understood by institutional leaders and senior academics. Where research management offices are established, they're not always recognised or used throughout their institutions.

In **India**, our consultations suggest that universities and research institutes have the staff, processes and management in place to receive core funding from specific arms of government. But systems to help academics compete for, negotiate, manage and make use of competitively won external resources appear to have been slower to develop.

Evidence suggests there are gaps in the perception, implementation and evaluation of research management in Indian research institutions, but there appears to be significant interest in developing structures that will address this.



Monty Rakusen, Cultura/Science Photo Library

**“Working at the interface of research and administration, RADIO (Research Administration Development Integration Office) at IISER Pune brings to the table a rich understanding of the research enterprise and offers skillsets that can complement researchers as well as administrators. Collectively, this has led to an increase in the efficiency, productivity and visibility of the institute.”**

**Professor Sanjeev Galande, Dean (R&D), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune, India**



“The University of Ghana’s research management framework has led to the university applying for and winning more grants at various levels, and this in turn has increased the university’s research income, grown faculty research output, led to patentable discoveries and ultimately enhanced the university’s visibility and stature as a research-focused institution.”

Professor Francis Dodoo, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Development, University of Ghana

## What does our new initiative propose?

The initiative will focus on four themes:

- Generating **leadership support** for research management.
- Making research management offices **sustainable**, for example through robust policies for recovering indirect costs.
- Identifying common **standards and good practice** for research management. For example, with the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) we’re developing a set of standards for the financial management of grants at African institutions.
- **Individual capacity development:** ensuring recognition of research management as a profession and developing a pool of qualified staff.

The initiative will be led from Africa and India – through the AAS and the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance. Involving regional organisations – such as the African Research Universities Alliance and the Research and Innovation Management Associations for central, eastern, southern and western Africa – will be essential for building an effective research management ecosystem.

The Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance has also set up the India Research Management Initiative (IRMI). It will establish a more detailed account of research management at Indian research institutions, identify gaps and find solutions that address them. To be fully effective though, it needs involvement from both funders and practitioners globally.

## How can international research managers help?

Strong research management in Africa and India benefits all sides in international collaborative partnerships. This is why we want established research management offices from across the world to be involved in the initiative.

You can help through direct contributions or those in kind, such as providing training or materials, attending relevant conferences in the regions, hosting placements or engaging in relevant networks. A group of UK universities – initially led by the universities of Leicester and Kent and SOAS – have already agreed to participate.

If you'd like to get involved, express interest or find out more, contact:

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“The establishment of the Research Support Centre enabled, for the first time, a well-coordinated research support system that allows researchers to concentrate on their core research activities. It also significantly increased the ability of the university to attract research funding.”

Professor Midion M Chidzonga,  
former Dean of the University of Zimbabwe (2007–17)





## Current university partners

The mission of ARMA (the UK Association of Research Managers and Administrators) is to “enhance the profession of research management and administration”. It provides members across all career stages and specialisms with a wide range of training and development opportunities, which are underpinned by its professional development framework and professional qualifications. ARMA has developed relationships with many of its sister societies around the world, including those in east, west, central and southern Africa, and is well-placed to support this initiative to recognise research management as a profession in India and Africa.

The universities of Kent and Leicester and SOAS University of London are delighted to be working with Wellcome and partners on this important initiative. Each institution has particular experience in developing equitable international partnerships and working with institutions in Africa and India to build capacity and embed effective research management structures. The past experience of those involved – outlined here – will provide real benefit to the programme.

Silke Bohm from SOAS is an expert in higher education management, systems and process development, governance systems, research capacity building and infrastructure development, with in-country experience across three continents. Her recent work at SOAS includes a

joint project with the University of Kent that took place at the University of Mauritius. It involved working with senior leadership and the vice-chancellor on designing and supporting a research evaluation exercise to more effectively and strategically build research infrastructure and a supporting governing framework.

Pauline Muya from the University of Leicester has a strong track record in delivering training and development – both in the UK and internationally – across the full spectrum of research management, including financial sustainability, costing, pricing and recovery of indirect costs. Most recently she presented on these topics at the Eastern African Research and Innovations Management Association (EARIMA) conference in Tanzania in August 2017. The University of Leicester is engaged in building strategic equitable partnerships with several universities in Africa.

Simon Kerridge from the University of Kent has hosted visits from the research offices of the University of South Africa, the University of Fort Hare and the University of the Free State over the past 12 months in order to exchange good practice in research management. He is also very active in the standards arena, having recently completed a large international survey on ‘Research Administration as a Profession’, which included investigating the pervasiveness of the certification of research managers and administrators.



The **African Academy of Sciences** is a pan African organisation headquartered in Kenya that aims to drive sustainable development in Africa through science, technology and innovation.

The **Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance** is a public charitable trust in India funded by Wellcome and the Government of India's Department of Biotechnology to build excellence in the Indian biomedical scientific community by supporting future leaders in the field.

**Wellcome** is a global charitable foundation that exists to improve health for everyone.

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