

Research Shared Services: A Case Study in Implementation

November 19th, 2015

YOUR MISSION | OUR SOLUTIONS

© Huron Consulting Group Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Huron is a management consulting firm and not a CPA firm, and does not provide attest services, audits, or other engagements in accordance with the AICPA's Statements on Auditing Standards.
Huron is not a law firm; it does not offer, and is not authorized to provide, legal advice or counseling in any jurisdiction.



Jenna Lee

Director

P 312.823.8381

jlee@huronconsultinggroup.com

Jenna has served in interim leadership positions and as a business advisor to universities and academic medical centers across the country. Jenna focuses on research administration transformation and her areas of expertise include organizational redesign, pre- and post-award administration and business process redesign.



Brian N. Squilla

Vice President of Administration and Chief of Staff to the Provost and Dean of the Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University

P 215.503.0418

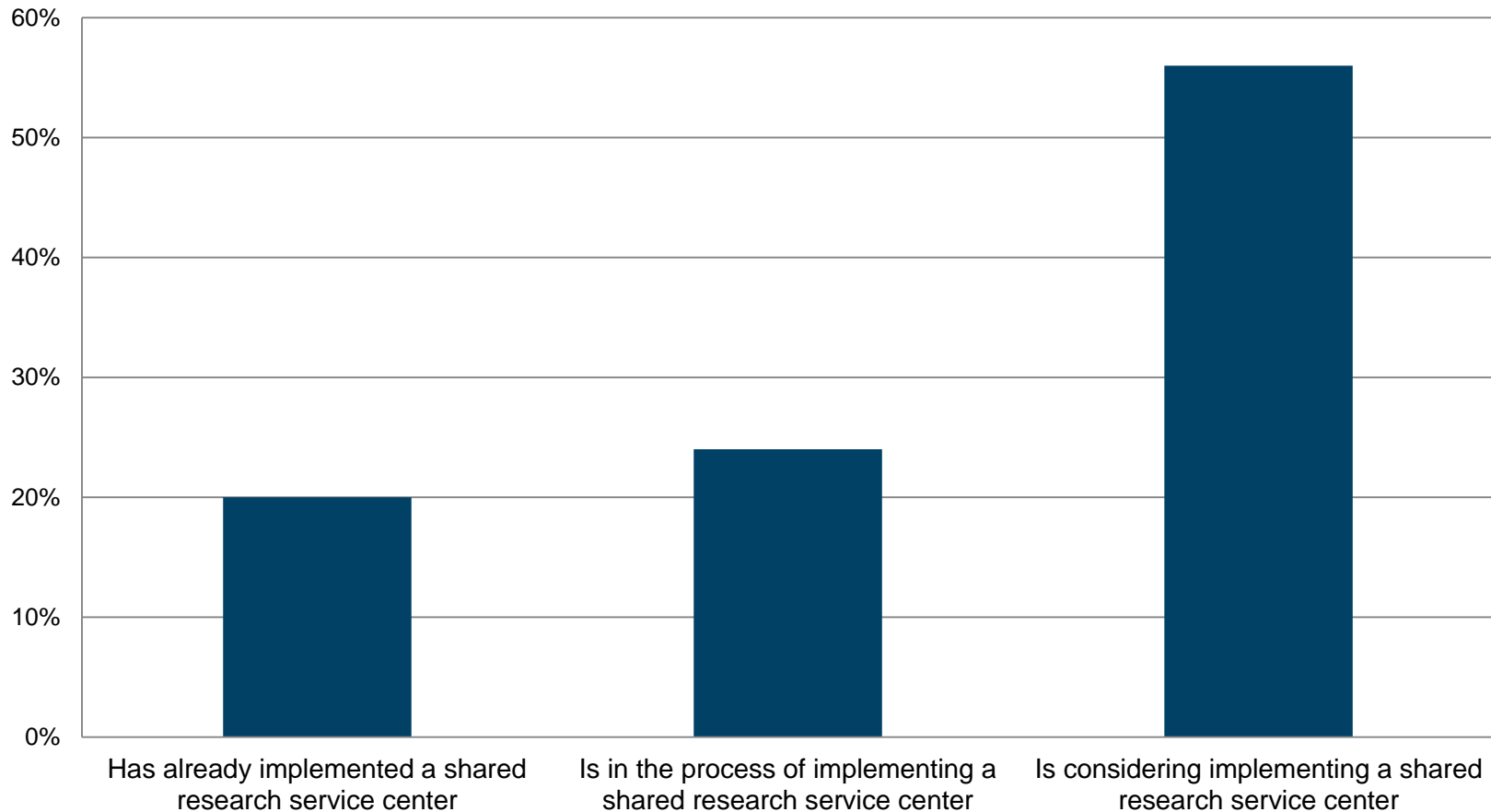
brian.squilla@jefferson.edu

Brian has responsibility and oversight of all research administration at Thomas Jefferson University. Brian works directly with senior level management and faculty involving operations, strategic planning and implementation, information technology, human resources, institutional research and budget preparation

- Overview
- Thomas Jefferson University – The Research Shared Service Opportunity
- Making the Business Case
- High-Level Steps for Implementation
- Lessons Learned
- Q&A

Poll Question

Please choose the option that best describes your interest in the topic of research shared services. My institution:



Overview

Over the past few years there has been increasing attention toward the idea of shared services as a model for supporting research administration at research-intensive institutions. While there is no one size fits all model for research shared services, this type of organization generally has the following attributes:

1

Centralization of Services

A level of centralization of services that are traditionally performed by local (school/department) research administration professionals.



2

Standardization of Services

Standardization of these services across the stakeholders served.



3

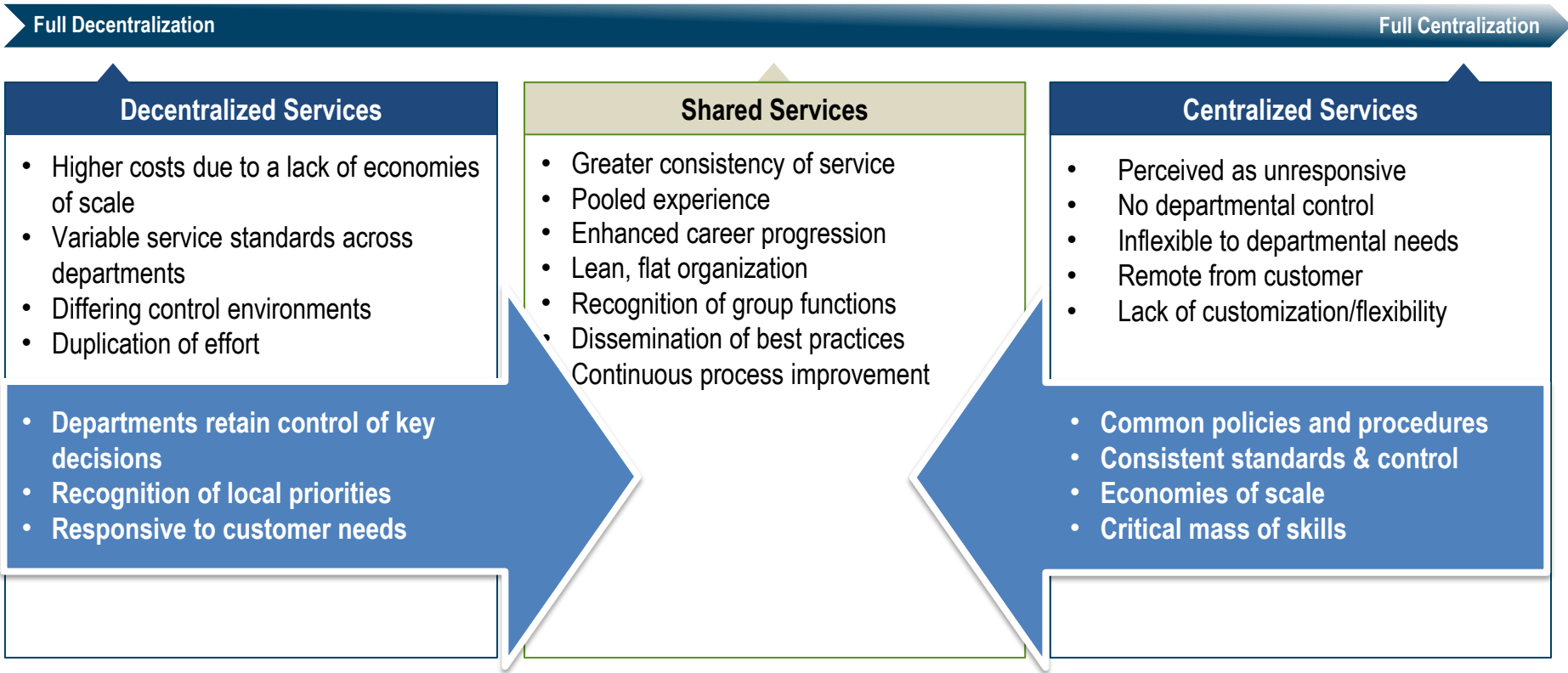
Service Level Agreement (SLA)

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) that guarantees support and levels of services provided to customers which can include a feedback mechanism and metrics to measure the quality of support being given.

Overview

DIFFERENTIATION FROM CENTRAL AND UNIT-BASED SERVICES

Shared service centers are designed to capture the efficiencies available through consolidated services, but still remain accountable to the customer.

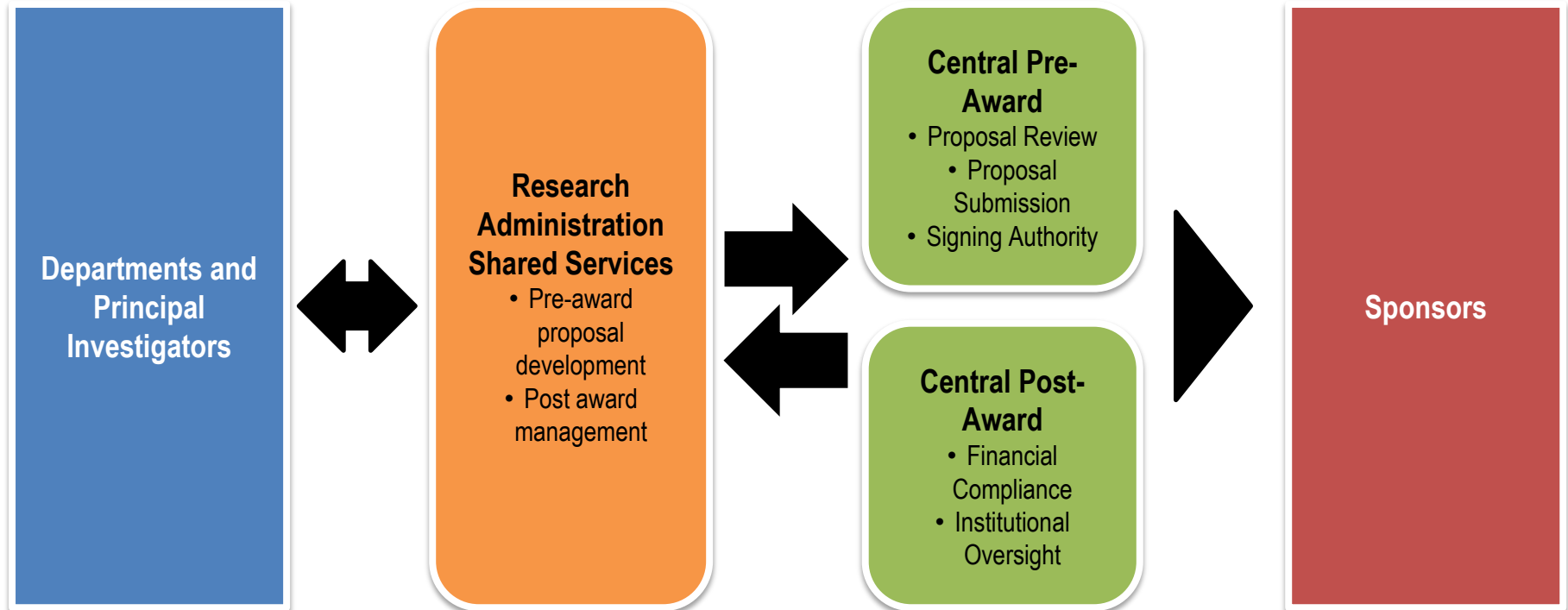


By maintaining local connections and utilizing Service Level Agreements and ongoing metrics assessment, shared service centers can improve levels of responsiveness and service to its customers.

Overview

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ROLES IN A SHARED SERVICE CENTER

Research administration shared services provides faculty-facing grants management support currently provided by departmental or school-based administrators. The central pre- and post-award offices provide institutional oversight and approval and generally provide a source of expertise.

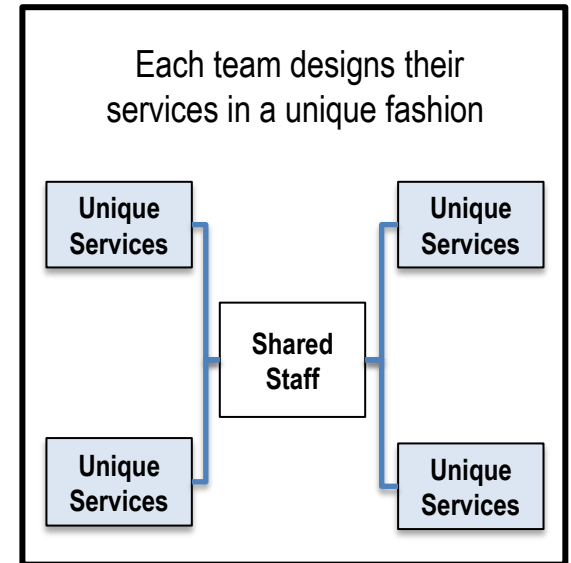
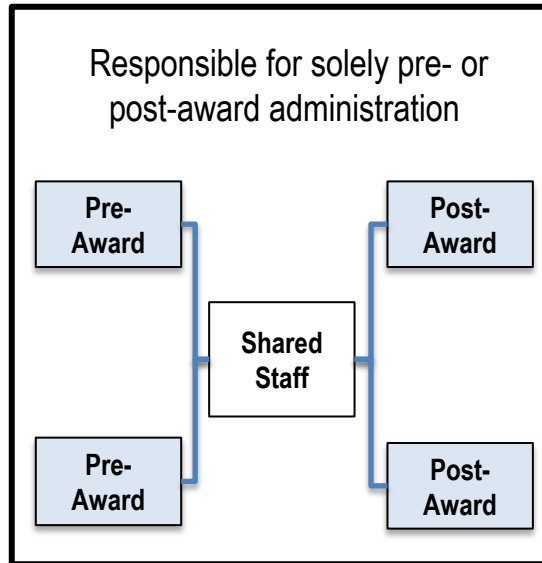
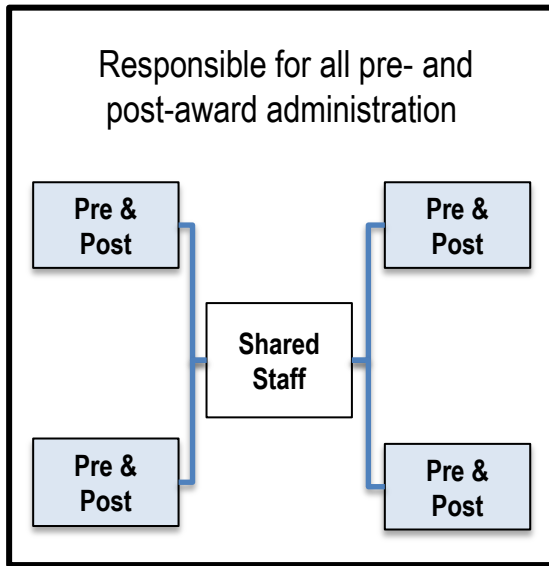


Overview

ILLUSTRATIVE MODELS



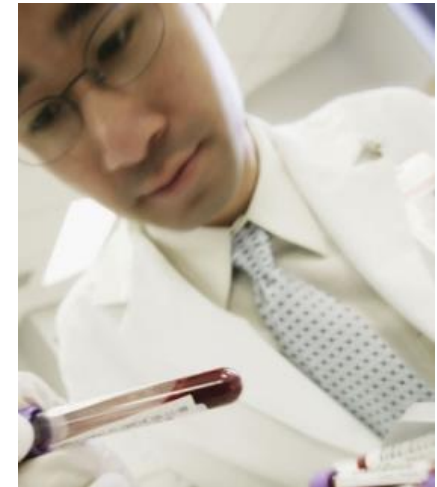
While various institutions that have this type of organization vary in their approach, there are three primary models for research shared services.



It is important to recognize that there is no “best” model for all institutions. Leadership must evaluate measurable data elements, task similarities, system and technology, functional unit geography, reporting and funding, as well as institutional culture to determine the optimal structure.

**Thomas Jefferson University –
The Research Shared Service Opportunity**

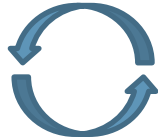
- Thomas Jefferson University (“TJU”) , located in Center City, Philadelphia, is a health science university home to the Sidney Kimmel Medical College, as well as the Colleges of Biomedical Sciences, Health Professions, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Population Health. Public and private funding of TJU research exceeds \$100 million annually, with more than 1,500 active research studies.
- TJU is beginning an effort to map out a new blueprint for strategic action. The blueprint is a focused, creative, and strategic framework for moving through the next ten years.
- One of the primary areas of focus is high-impact science. The Provost’s research strategic vision focused on programmatic team science and diversification of TJU’s sponsored research portfolio and research administration was a major component in delivering this vision.
- The goal of creating a research shared service model was to provide faculty-centric research administration support across TJU by standardizing processes and restructuring positions.



As TJU embarked on a new blueprint for strategic action, one of the areas of focus was high-impact science. The Provost's research strategic vision focused on programmatic team science and a diversification of TJU's sponsored research portfolio.

TJU Blueprint for Strategic Action - Research

Focus on Advancing High-Impact Science



Provost's Research Strategic Vision for TJU

Domain/Program Centric

Diversified Portfolio

Science Impact Focused

'Value Creation' Driven

Enhanced Faculty Engagement

Clinical Trials and Health Services Research Engaged

The Opportunity

- Ensure that TJU research administrators were positioned and trained to assist research faculty with preparing more complex proposals from a variety of sponsors and able to manage these projects once awarded.

The Vision

- Provide faculty-centric research administration support across TJU by standardizing processes and restructuring positions.

Key Outputs

- Enhancing service for all researchers across campus.
- Ensuring consistent processes and procedures across colleges and departments.
- Provide grants management staff a clear career path and opportunities for professional development and networking..

Making the Business Case

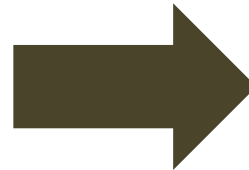
Making the Business Case

BENEFITS BEYOND COST SAVINGS



While some institutions may approach research shared services as a cost-savings measure (as they might finance, IT, or HR), with research, an organization should think about it as an *investment*.

A shared services organization with well-defined governance structures, deliberate alignment of activities, and key technology upgrades leads to improved:



Customer Service

Training/Expertise

Accountability

Efficiency

Career Growth Opportunities

Compliance

The business case should focus on the unique needs of the PIs, Central Units, and University: it is critical to define why shared services are a good fit for your institution, which elements your model will incorporate, and what result you expect to gain.

High-Level Steps for Implementation

High-Level Steps for Implementation

OVERVIEW



Designing and implementing shared services in higher education can present a number of challenges.

Common Challenges / Complexities

Organization Design / Staffing

Staff Anxiety / Concern with Process Changes

Gaps in Process Standardization

Unique Unit Requirements

Underestimating Level of Effort / Change

Decide Key Stakeholders

- Principal Investigators
- Individuals most effected by the change (i.e. staff currently doing the work)
- Research Community

Tailor Messaging and Work Groups to Fit the Needs of Key Stakeholders

- Faculty Advisory Committees
- Business process design working groups
- Town halls, websites, etc.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

- Inform key stakeholders of all timelines, milestones, and accomplishments

High-Level Steps for Implementation

REVIEW CORE IT AND HUMAN RESOURCE COMPONENTS



In order to understand how ready your organization is for a shared services model, it is important to consider the HR and IT components currently in place at your institution.

Information Technology



Consideration:

Does your institution have an IT model that can support a more centralized model of local grants administration support?

Example:

TJU lacked the IT infrastructure to support faculty requests for real-time projections for each active grant. As such, multiple FTEs were required to generate these reports manually each month.

Human Resources



Consideration:

In order to attract and retain top talent to your research shared service center, you should be able to offer the same or better benefits than the local departments and institutions offer.

Example:

At TJU, HR was a key business partner and member of internal committees in completing these analyses and building career ladders for the members of the new organization.

High-Level Steps for Implementation

DECIDE ON A MODEL



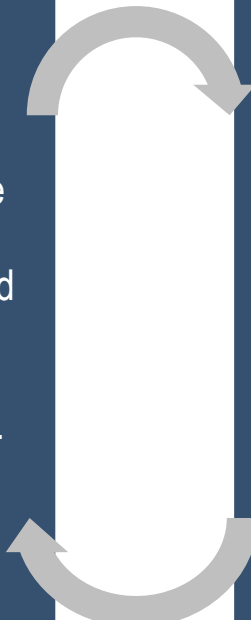
Once the internal assessment is complete, it is important to present those findings to your most important constituency – the faculty.

Shared Service Project Team

- Manage the day-to-day aspects of the initiative.
- Develop team structure and determine portfolio volumes.
- Develop service level expectations and performance metrics.
- Map business processes and procedures of current and future state.
- Develop job descriptions.

Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC)

- Oversee the project's process.
- Verify team structures, roles and responsibilities, and locations best meet faculty needs.
- Provide input to service level agreements and verify performance metrics.
- Sign-off on business processes and procedures
- Review final applicants for senior positions.



Based on these findings, the committee should weigh in on which model to move forward with and help identify some of the challenges that will be faced from other faculty members and department administrators.

High-Level Steps for Implementation

RECRUIT THE LEADER/DIRECTOR



It is important to begin recruiting your director immediately after your institution has decided to move forward with research shared services. This should be the first job description written, analyzed for compensation, and posted.



The new director will need to own the process and become the face of your new research shared services organization.

High-Level Steps for Implementation

DEVELOP MESSAGING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS



In the months following implementation, TJU leadership began a rebranding effort with the goal of formalizing the partnerships between their new shared service organization and the university's central pre-award office.

The Offices of Research Support Services, as the parent organization is now called, provides a much needed bridge between the university's faculty-centric support services for research administration. Thus far, key accomplishments of this partnership include:

- ✓ Creation of roles and responsibilities matrices/FAQs spanning the full lifecycle of research administration.
- ✓ Professional development opportunities.
- ✓ Establishment of an Online Training Library, consisting of 38 research administration training courses in Blackboard.
- ✓ Development of an ORA SLA that complements the RACE SLA.



Your key stakeholders will want and need frequent updates on the progress of the new organization and key decisions regarding the design.

High-Level Steps for Implementation

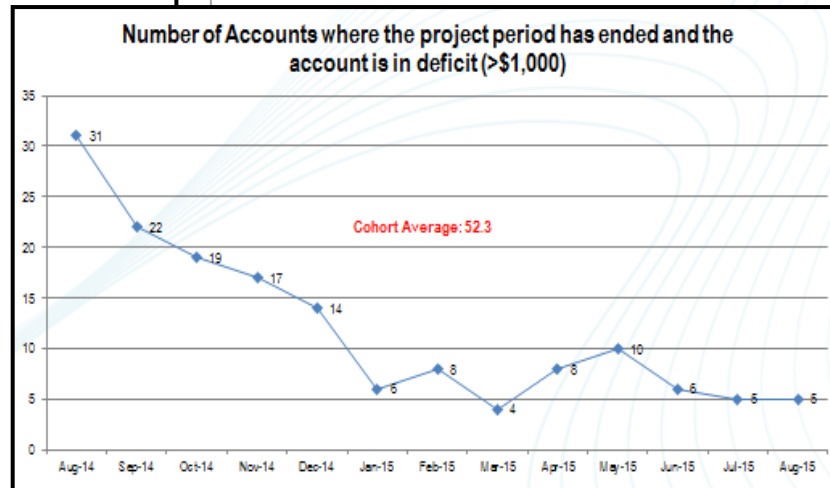
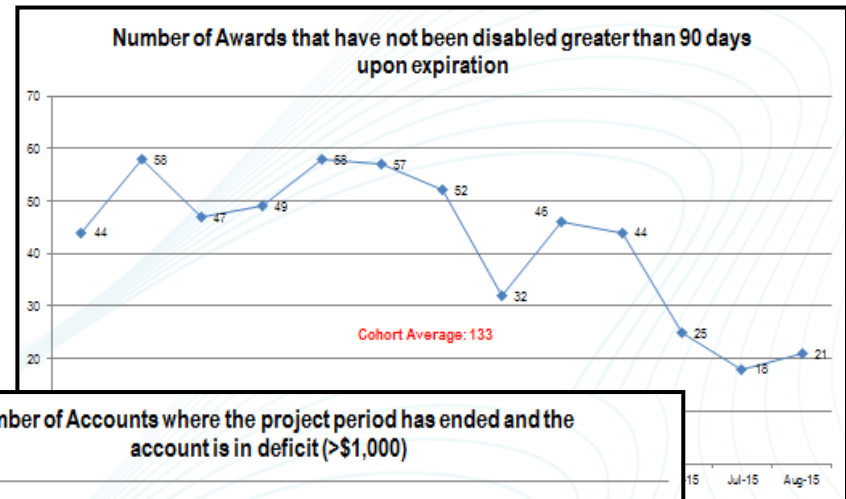
DEVELOP MESSAGING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS



The Office of Research Support Services leadership also provides updates to the campus' research community. This is a great opportunity to obtain feedback from the research faculty and college and departmental administration.

Regular updates are provided at departmental meetings, professorial meetings, as well as the Provost Council and The Jefferson Committee on Research. The purpose of these meetings are two-fold:

1. Provide general updates from RACE leadership, including an overview of the unit's key performance measures, comparing the organizational performance against the agreed upon SLA, and;
2. The VP of Administration provides a macro overview of the state of research administration at TJU.



High-Level Steps for Implementation

DEVELOP MESSAGING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS



One key element to the success of shared services is *transparency*. The implementation of community feedback tools, such as a survey link included in staff email signatures, provides leadership the ability to celebrate “wins” and create corrective action plans when customer service deviates from the SLA.

Jefferson RACE Community Input

1. Please provide feedback on your most recent experience with RACE. We welcome positive feedback as well as opportunities for improvement. If you would like us to respond to you individually, please include your name and contact information.

2. Contact Information (Optional)

Name

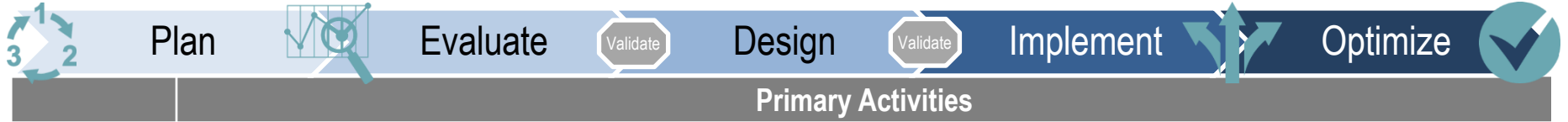
Email Address

Phone Number

Community feedback results are regularly shared with senior leadership and the Faculty Advisory Committee. Any issues are discussed with the RACE and ORA Directors and a corrective action plan is created and progress is reported at subsequent meetings.

High-Level Steps for Implementation

FINALIZE TIMELINE



Assess Business Case

- Assess current state business processes, systems, organization structure, and staffing, and identify key improvement opportunities
- Develop business case, including costs, benefits, key assumptions, and risk factors as well as a high-level implementation roadmap
- Develop initial communication plan

CIRCUIT BREAKER—validate the decision to implement research shared services

Design Service Delivery

- Design new processes, including enabling technology, roles and responsibilities matrix, and process documentation
- Determine organizational structure and staffing requirements and complete detailed new organization design
- Identify facility and logistical requirements and develop a facilities and logistics plan
- Develop and validate new governance model and structure
- Complete deployment planning, prepare facilities and workspace, and finalize transition steps and timing

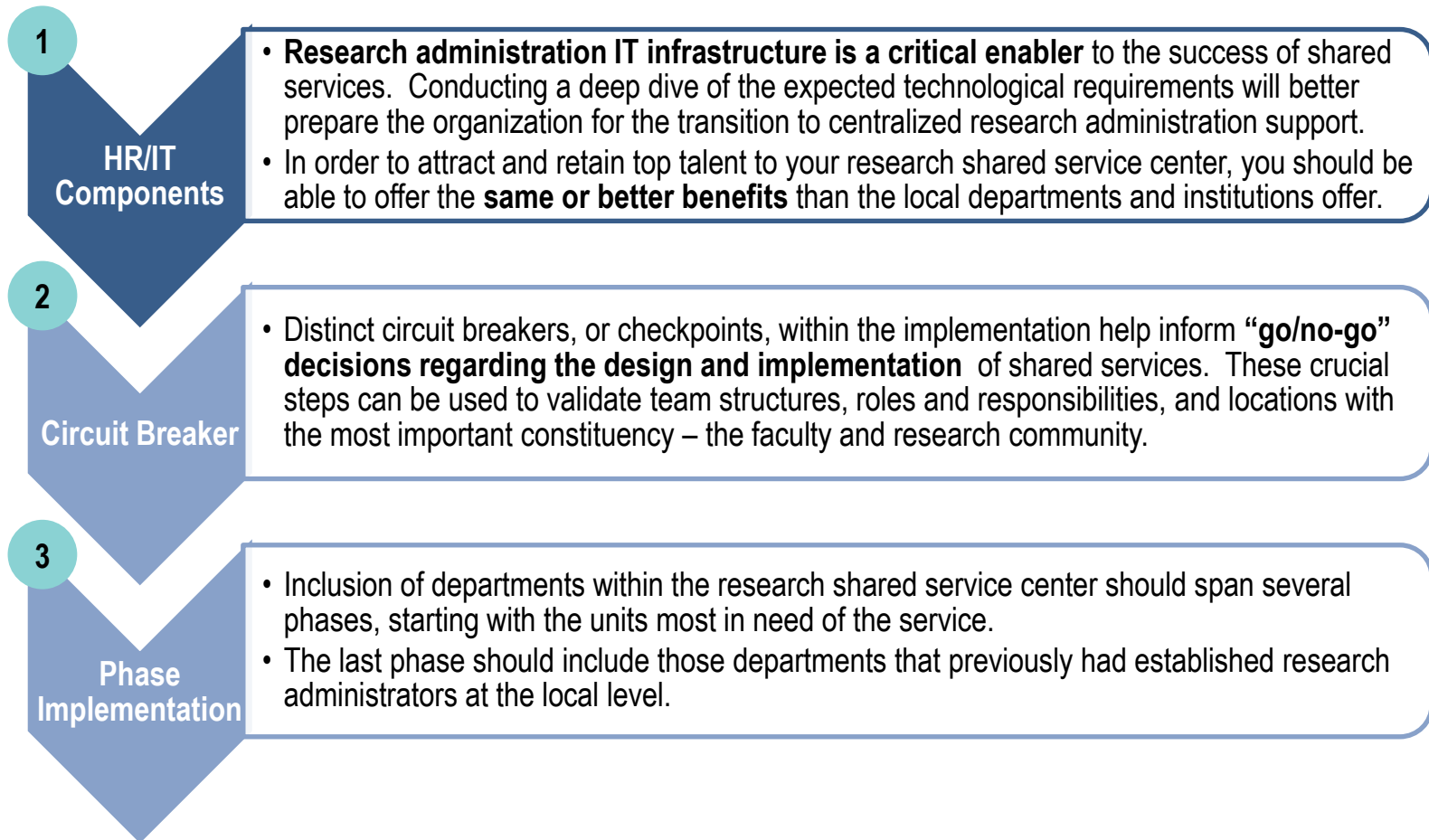
CIRCUIT BREAKER—validate the decision to implement select model of research shared services

Implement and Optimize

- Conduct training and execute transition plan, provide transition assistance
- Implement and monitor new processes, monitor progress, and identify / resolve issues
- Measure defined KPIs, Implement continuous process improvement, and conduct customer and employee satisfaction assessments

Lessons Learned

Implementing any new organization has its challenges – a research shared service group is no exception. While TJU’s shared service implementation was ultimately successful, there were several critical lessons learned from their process.



Lessons Learned

WHAT WORKED WELL?



✓ Communication Plan

- Quarterly Open Houses, Monthly Town Halls, Faculty Advisory Committee Meetings, and regular updates to the TJU Committee on Research and Provost Council helped incorporate transparency into the implementation.

✓ Stable Support

- Colleges and departments without previous local research administration support began increasing proposal submissions. For the first time, they felt there was consistent, stable support for their researchers.

✓ Enabling Future Change

- Lessons learned as a part of the research shared service implementation made future organizational changes easier, such as the Jefferson Clinical Research Institute (JCRI).

✓ Service Level Agreement (SLA)

- The document clearly outlined the difference in service between the central offices and the new shared service organization

✓ Monitoring

- Creation of an organizational dashboard, which is circulated to research administration leadership on a monthly basis. This has enabled organizational transparency and accountability.

✓ Establishing a New Culture

- Culture is now centered around customer service and cross-collaboration, involving both RACE and ORA.

Q&A

Clients include:

- More than 95 of the top 100 research universities
- Nine of the top ten largest healthcare systems
 - ranked by Modern Healthcare
- Eight of the top ten largest Children's hospitals
- Many of the premier academic medical centers