

Managing research across large organisations

Managing a research portfolio across large organisations can be difficult and complex. Over many years, we've seen projects commissioned without a clear purpose or strategy application and in some cases, different parts of the same organisation end up commissioning a project which has already been conducted in another part of the organisation six months prior. There are also situations where staff in organisations fail to share the research insights or are unaware of the research information gathered. A further common case is where new staff have no knowledge of prior research insights or research findings are never disseminated.

Such issues are classic symptoms of organisations not considering the strategic context or benefits of research. For this reason, we recommend the following steps in ensuring that research is always well-considered from a whole-of-organisation perspective.

- Review the broader strategic priorities of the organisation – refer to strategic plans or other organisational planning documents to delineate the broader goals or the organisation or program
- Conduct working meetings with all major organisational units/divisions – to ascertain research information needs which could assist staff to perform their work duties or better understand their work roles
- Try to ascertain upcoming information needs to see if current projects can support or cover off future needs of staff
- Summarise information needs into broader themes or issue clusters to be researched
- Check to see whether past projects may have already been conducted to ensure that new projects do not duplicate
- Commission projects in line with staff information needs – aim to reduce duplication between projects and ensure that each commissioned project adds unique insights or benefit to the organisation
- Once research is complete, conduct not only a management presentation, but also smaller scale presentations to each of the organisation's divisions or work units – it can also be useful if the implications of key findings can be specifically linked to work activities of individual units (eg. the implications of the research for communications unit v operational areas)
- Develop a short summary of key findings and place on a central intranet which can be accessed by all staff – staff should be encouraged to access this site for all research information and should also be encouraged to share research insights on a common intranet location

To assist during the research commissioning phase, it can also assist with research projects to develop a common template to assist staff to prepare research briefs – this may contain useful background information such as information about the organisation's role and strategic goals and other general headings to assist with research brief preparation. This will also expedite with the preparation of the briefs. In some cases, a headings structure can also be supplemented with pointers to the type of information which should be provided in each section of the research brief.