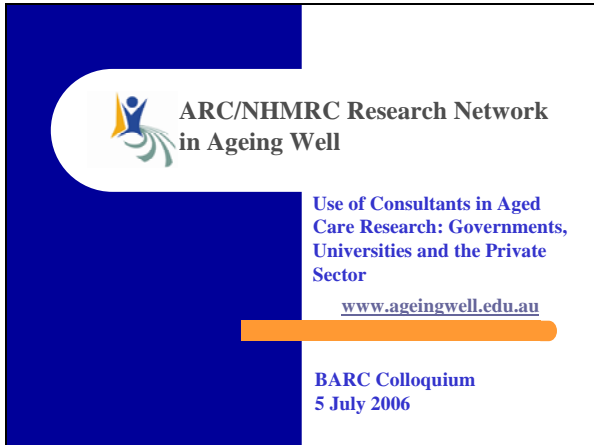


BARC Policy and Practice on Ageing Colloquium, Canberra, 4-5 July 2006

ARC/NHMRC Research Network in Ageing Well Research Development & Communication Processes

Workshop 3 - Use of Consultants in Aged Care Research: governments, universities & the public sector

Presentation Slides:



ARC/NHMRC Research Network
in Ageing Well

Use of Consultants in Aged
Care Research: Governments,
Universities and the Private
Sector

www.ageingwell.edu.au

BARC Colloquium
5 July 2006



Use of Consultants in Aged Care
Research: Governments, Universities and
the Private Sector

- Can consultant based research produce better outcomes than in house research?
- Should Governments and private organisations maintain an in house research capacity?
- Where are the dangers in consultant based research?
- How can consultant based research best be integrated into a research program?

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Covered at: The University of Sydney, ANU, Curtin, Monash, UNSW

Workshop Summary

Workshop Chairs:

Warwick Bruen (Chair)

Formerly Assistant Secretary, Community Care Branch, Department of Health and Ageing

Dr Diane Gibson (Co-chair)

Head, Welfare & Housing Group, Australian Institute of Health & Welfare

Rapporteur:

Lydia Ross, Ageing and Aged Care Unit, Australian Institute of Health & Welfare

Key questions to consider:

- Are there consultancy issues that are specific to ageing research or are they general?
- Do consultants do 'research' (i.e. generating new knowledge)?
- Does the contractual model constrain public availability and contestability?
- Is it cheaper to contract out or do in-house?

General comments:

There has been a mindset shift with people now weighing up what can be done in-house Vs. collaboratively with the trend growing for information needs to be addressed using to contract-based consultancies.

Types of consultancies

There is a range of models - not just government

1. Large 'generic' for-profits
2. Smaller niche consultancies
3. University-based centres
4. Academic 'moonlighters'
5. Hybrids (eg: AIHW, Australian Institute of Family Studies)
6. Professional societies (eg: actuaries)

Issues with contracts:

- May be seen as conflicting with the university culture.
- There are a range of circumstances across projects so need people need to be savvy in contracting leading to mutually acceptable arrangements
- Intellectual Property is complex and some consultants may not understand the differences between university and industry requirements – e.g. the academic need for peer review can result in ‘giving away’ some or all Intellectual Property. Legal structures can also be important
- Government procurement guidelines, Free Trade Agreement, legal requirements – the process is complex, lengthy, costly etc and need administration support re privacy, ethics, data access protocols
- There may be hidden costs of tendering
- Reliance on external income can be problematic for universities and public sector agencies
- “Generic” consultancy groups may not have the required expertise and so may subcontract to a limited pool of experts
- Public release of information may be problematic in terms of control over what information is released and when

Advantages with contracts:

- The consultancy model can be very useful for meeting the needs of industry – not just government funded consultancies.
- Consultancy serves a capacity–building purpose for industry
- Allows research/ers to directly influence practice, solve specific problems. A funding gap is not the only motivation for consultancies.
- “Industry Partnership” can promote relationships with providers, not-for-profits etc
- Allows greater flexibility to deal with staff changes, workforce changes
- Can promote collaboration, competition, and encourage new models
- May be required in some tenders which call for collaboration

Example of expert panel model for government departments

- Used to do specific pieces of research without the full tender process
- Reduces some costs but not in all cases
- May be harder for new people to break in and less flexible – some departments attempt to build flexibility into the system

Conclusion:

- Consultancies – should not necessarily be seen as a lesser activity

Possible Network actions:

- Develop guidelines for consultancies to help avoid pitfalls
 - Intellectual Property
 - Partnerships
- Draft/example clauses – Intellectual Property and Copyright
- It is vital that the Network be flexible.