Research Administration "Pulse"

SRA INSIGHTS

by Zoya Davis-Hamilton on Monday, June 15, 2015

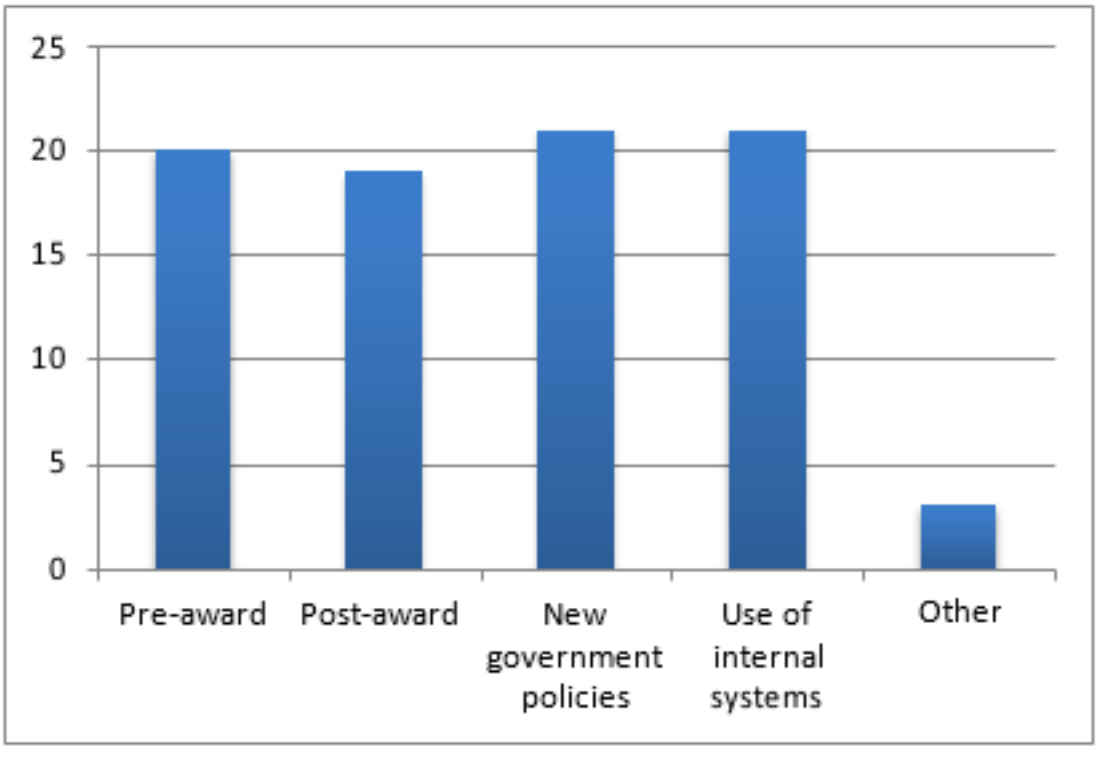
We wanted to learn more about pre- and post-award institutional training for faculty and staff on research administration topics. In this issue of The Pulse we share what we learned from our colleagues' responses to a six-question survey on the topic. The survey, available to the subscribers of the RESADM-L listserv between May 7th and May 21st, received 81 responses. In the survey we asked whether in-house training for pre- and/or post-award research administration exists in the participants' institutions; what the scope, mode, and target audience of such training is; whether the training is required or optional; and whether completion certificates are issued to participants.

According to our results, an almost equal number of participants reported having in-house research administration training (41 responses, or 51%) as having no in-house training (40, or 49%). Those who reported no formal training explained that at their institutions "training is by osmosis," and is "learn as you go," sometimes with the help of "a lot of reading materials found on the web." Others without formal training suggested that at their organizations, training is a responsibility taken on by existing research administrators in "an informal hands-on training approach." At these organizations, training "is done informally for those needing it," "new employees learn by working with others," and "coworkers help [with] training." Several institutions also reported a slightly more formal shadowing or mentoring approach, stating that "training is done by one individual assigned to the new person," or is delivered "by the Director upon being hired." Some discussed that training is seen as an outside responsibility, and "encourage conference attendance," or "rely on external training opportunities." Finally, several survey respondents noted that either their institutions or their research administration operation is too small for a formal in-house training program.

At those organizations that do have in-house research administration training, most respondents noted that they target all the listed topic areas (pre-award, post-award, new government policies such as the Uniform Guidance, revised NIH biosketch, use of internal systems, etc.)1, as well as additional areas, such as compliance and industry training.

**Due to an initial survey error that did not allow for more than one answer to the training topic question, several responses were recorded as "Other," with answers shared via text. The answers presented here were re-coded to accurately represent the information provided by the participants.*

The scope of training (not restricted to one answer):



At most of our respondents' institutions the target audience for research administration training is central or departmental research administration (83% and 69%, respectively), new investigators (41%) and/or all investigators (31%). The total exceeds 100% because the question allowed for multiple answers. It was noted that at some institutions "not all groups receive training in all areas."

We also learned that the training is most often strongly encouraged (43%) or required (36%) by an institution. Interestingly, at some institutions training may be required for some groups and optional for others. For example, one of the commentors stated: "training is required of central staff, encouraged for department staff, and offered for researchers." We would be curious to know if this tiered approach to training (offering a single type of training to all, with different attendance requirements) is used at other institutions.

Is it a required training?

Answer	Response	%
Yes, it is required	10	36%
Not required but strongly encouraged	12	43%
No, it is optional	6	21%
Total	28	100%

The most common ways to deliver in-house research administration training were reported as in- person (59%), and a combination of in-person and online (48%). Only 17% of respondents reported an online only delivery mechanism. Other delivery methods include "recordings of in-person training sessions and materials posted on

website," "forums and brown bags," "central staff training in person," and "other training for all groups is a combination of in-person and online."

Mode of the training

Answer	Response	%
In-person	17	59%
Online	5	17%
Combination of in-person and online	14	48%
Other	4	14%

While the institutions of most (66%) of the responding survey participants with in-house training do not issue certifications of completion, many (34%) do, which may indicate a more formalized approach to their training efforts.

Do you issue a certification of completion of the training?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	10	34%
2	No	19	66%
	Total	29	100%

These responses reveal that providing in-house research administration training is a common practice across some organizations, and that these trainings commonly include content about pre-award, post- award, changing government regulations, and the use of internal systems. Results also indicate that some institutions have formalized their training efforts, while others feel they are too small to have formal training on research administration topics.

After seeing these results we are interested to learn more about how the in-house trainings are run and staffed, including whether they are delivered by existing staff members who are working above and beyond their call of duty or by those whose positions are dedicated to training, in whole or in part. Please feel free to share with us your experience with in-house training via email.

We will continue to check the "pulse" of research administrators on various topics throughout the year. These results will be published in the SRA Catalyst every other month, so look for the next column in August of 2015.

If you have any topics or questions that you want to see addressed in Pulse in the future, please let us know. Send feedback, ideas, questions and inquiries to Zoya Davis-Hamilton at zoya.hamilton@tufts.edu.

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