EWU WANDER

Workforce and Network Development to Engage Research (WANDER)

FINAL REPORT

by the Office of Grant and Research Development (OGRD),
Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington

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Welcome!

This final public report summarizes the outcomes and impacts of Eastern Washington University's (EWU) Workforce and Network Development to Engage Research (WANDER) project funded by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) GRANTED program June 1, 2024-May 31, 2025 (#2422765).

> **Our purpose was to develop a model comprised of a cascade of listening activities that build workforce capacity and networks to better support the research enterprise at EWU. As a Planning Award, our goal was to conduct a needs assessment of the research enterprise at EWU to subsequently develop a workforce model here***.*

This public report will: (1) describe our efforts to collect data and build network; (2) share the results, outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned; and (3) begin to dream up a workforce model. With the generous support of the NSF, we have achieved significant milestones and have made strides toward our overarching mission.

The needs assessment—and the workforce model we eventually propose in follow-up to WANDER—could be adapted by other institutions of higher education (IHEs), especially primarily undergraduate institutions (PUIs), emerging research institutions (ERIs), [Research Colleges & Universities (RCU)](#), or other resource-limited institutions (RLIs).

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Background

About EWU

EWU is a public, rural, regional polytechnic university in Cheney, WA, with an AY 2023-24 enrollment of 9,787 undergraduate and graduate students. In the fast-growing Spokane region 35 miles from the Idaho border, 42% of students are the first in their families to earn a college degree, 35.7% identify as being in an historically excluded group, and 38.5% are Pell-eligible. As a PUI and the most affordable public institution in Washington State, EWU prides itself on being a teaching-oriented, student-centered school that prepares students for the STEM workforce, develops projects that promote increased participation in undergraduate research, and trains next-generation scientists. EWU serves the predominantly rural "Inland Northwest," which includes Eastern and Central Washington and Northern Idaho.

About EWU's Office of Grant and Research Development (OGRD)

OGRD is a centralized, cradle-to-grave office of sponsored programs (OSP) that reports to the Provost's Office in Academic Affairs.

> *Vision:* Create a culture where grant-seekers and project directors feel confident and supported in a community of peers.

> *Mission:* To inspire, support, and supply EWU faculty and staff with the tools to pursue grants and research as a community of practice.

> *Tagline:* "Crafting Your Dreams. Together."

EWU's proposal was submitted and accepted in Spring 2024. Prior to notice of award, the aforementioned vision, mission, and tagline emerged upon a significant investment by the Provost Office to expand and modernize OGRD's operations in early 2023. The execution of these modernization efforts has still been met with a recurring contraction and expansion of its workforce. However, OGRD's workforce has managed an upward trajectory in two ways: (1) after a two-year vacancy, OGRD hired an experienced Director beginning April 1, 2025; and (2) OGRD now employs 5.4 FTE, a 35% increase from two years ago. These FTEs include more research development and pre-award support.

Additionally, in February 2025, OGRD began to implement Cayuse, an electronic research administration software, with the intent to streamline practices and procedures in the research enterprise at EWU. Implementation should be complete in early 2026.

Faculty Climate

The United Faculty of Eastern ("the Union") negotiates a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the administration every three years. The CBA addresses many facets of faculty appointments, including recruitment; retention; tenure and promotion; modes of instruction; compensation and benefits; leaves; and grievances. While policy often is developed independently from the Union, it must comply with the CBA, requiring ongoing conversations between the Union and EWU. Unionization reduces the likelihood of inequities in working conditions, however, problematic policies remain and have to be addressed on an ad hoc basis. For example, as recently as Summer 2023, the Union negotiated changes to the CBA to provide birthing parents the same flexibility for paid family leave as non-birthing parents.

Per the CBA, EWU tenured/tenure-track faculty have an 80% teaching load (36 credits), 10% scholarship, and 10% service; lecturers have a 100% teaching load (45 credits). Each of the four colleges at the university approach scholarship slightly differently: the grantsmanship requirements range anywhere from a minimum internal grant award of $1,000, to an external grant submission only, to the choice to conduct other forms of scholarship (e.g., publishing) in lieu of a grant. These policy choices contribute to inequitable faculty participation across colleges and departments.

Institutional Climate

EWU has four colleges: College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS); College of Health Science and Public Health (CHSPH); College of Professional Programs (CPP); College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (CSTEM).

At the time of the proposal, and continuing during the project, EWU has undergone a number of improvements, including:

- A new Strategic Plan with four goals:
  - Student Success and Student Experience
  - Belonging through Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
  - Investing in Our People and Places
  - Regional Anchor / Regional Impact
- A new positioning as "the region's polytechnic"
- Three new Carnegie classifications:
  - Research Activity: Research Colleges and Universities (RCU)
  - Student Access and Earnings: Opportunity Colleges and Universities (OCU)-Higher Access, Higher Earnings
  - Institutional: Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
- A new designation as an eligible host institution for the Washington Research Foundation (WRF) Postdoctoral Fellowship program
- The appointment of a new Provost to begin June 16, 2025
- The appointments of three new, permanent college Deans (CAHSS, CPP, CHSPH)

- Restructuring of the Business & Finance division into two separate appointments: VP for Business and Strategy and VP for People and Culture

Additional executive leadership developments are planned and forthcoming.

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WANDER Project Objectives

WANDER aimed to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1
Build workforce capacity in OGRD.

Objective 2
Conduct data collection/listening activities about PI attitudes toward grant-seeking, perceptions of OGRD, desires for increased OGRD support, and/or other institutional sponsored programs models.

Objective 3
Develop internal networks with stakeholders in OGRD's primary ecosystem.

Objective 4
Develop external networks with more successful sponsored programs at institutions of higher education in the Pacific Northwest.

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Theoretical Framework

Success in Research Administration (RA) requires cooperation, feedback, and personal accountability from all levels of an organization (Katona, 2022). However, each unique funding opportunity requires RA professionals to work in a constant state of decision-making to meet the demands of all stakeholders. In response to these high demands, the tendency is to "wander between two worlds" (Dewey, 2012, p. 111)—between craft and technical skill; compliance and research autonomy; the needs of the funder and the researcher; acceptance and rejection; and attrition and longevity (or potential absence of industry knowledge and innovation, respectively).

Meanwhile, just a few RA professionals in under-resourced sponsored programs must perform all these responsibilities while competing against well-resourced programs. Especially among PUIs, ERIs, RCU, or RLIs, the culture tends to be characterized by acting first and thinking second, as these generalist professionals are juggling immense amounts of workload, knowledge, and skill. As a result, whoever or whatever does the 'speaking' suppresses the act of listening (Corradi Fiumara, 1990).

It appears that this culture of action-before-reflection is not only a major contributor to attrition and burnout in RA, but to anti-innovation, as well. In an anti-innovation culture, groups and individuals will tend to form things in their own image, thereby creating an intellectual vacuum. To overcome this provincial thinking, groups and individuals must have experiences; to gain experiences, they must ask questions of objects; and crucially, they must listen to the answers to those questions (Corradi Fiumara, 1990). As such, experience is directly linked to the listening practice.

> *The understanding of complex human phenomena like the research enterprise, as well as the ability to innovate RA, hinges on the practice of listening.*

Furthermore, the quality of questions matter. According to Dewey (2012), the question: *How is knowledge possible?* must be abandoned in favor of: *What is knowledge?* The latter seeks to understand human values across time, space, and matter; here, individuals are wandering *in* two worlds, not *between* them. *In* two worlds, relations precede relata where reality emerges from and are defined by interactions (Barad, 2007).

As a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) focused on craft—or doing a job well for its own sake (Sennett, 2008)—OGRD addressed RA culture in this WANDER project by (a) giving primacy to listening and (b) pursuing knowledge *in* the worlds in which it functions.

> *The purpose of this WANDER project was to develop a model comprised of a cascade of listening activities that build workforce capacity and networks to better support the research enterprise at EWU.*

Our intent was to explore how knowledge and being are "mutually implicated" (Barad, 2008, p. 147) in RA (internal and external to EWU), where we wonder about the material arrangements that provide the possibilities for RA professionals to make decisions (Barad, 2007).

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Methods

With the ultimate goal to build workforce capacity and lead organizational development efforts that build stronger networks across campus and the region, the WANDER project collected data and knowledge—in other words, we conducted listening activities—from its own institution, as well as three others in the Pacific Northwest, about all areas of opportunity in RA. To achieve project objectives, we employed the following listening activities to collect data and build networks:

Research Climate Survey
We deployed a confidential Research Climate Survey (RCS) of all faculty and staff with the intent to understand their perspectives of OGRD's current support, as well as desires for

future support of the research enterprise at EWU. For institutional timing purposes, EWU's Office of Institutional Research (OIR) collected survey responses prior to the beginning of the award. OIR waited to analyze the results until the project officially began, however.

RCS questions sought to understand areas of opportunity and sources of frustration in how grants and contracts are administered at EWU. The RCS included inquiries into general satisfaction of OGRD; familiarity with university policies and procedures; the efficacy of current tools and resources to manage an award; and motivations and barriers to submitting a grant proposal.

The focus groups, semi-structured interviews, dialogue circles, and institutional assessments were specifically planned to scaffold the RCS to yield in-depth insights and patterns among the challenges faced by those involved in grantsmanship.

The RCS met Objectives 1 and 2.

Focus Groups & Semi-Structured Interviews
We conducted four, 60-minute focus groups of faculty and staff who opted in upon completing the RCS. Based on the number of responses, we held the following four focus groups: (1) Prospective Principal Investigators (PIs); (2) Current or Recent PIs and Project Directors (PDs); (3) Current or Recent PIs; and (4) Fiscal Administrative Staff.

Following this, we conducted 10 semi-structured, 45-minute interviews using quota sampling to invite faculty and staff from historically excluded groups, as well as underrepresented *and* overrepresented colleges at EWU in terms of grant activity.

These focus groups and semi-structured interviews met Objectives 1 and 2.

Dialogue Circles
By very nature of their responsibilities, RA professionals interface with every part of higher education, which tends to operate within a fragmented ecosystem. To break down silos and develop organizational networks for the purpose of determining how to meet RA workforce needs at EWU, we felt that it would be prudent to initiate a practice of dialogue, beginning with offices primarily adjacent to OGRD *involved in research infrastructure*.

To leverage this organizational change, OGRD used the Washington State procurement process to hire Circles of Resilience (CR), with consultants Lori Austein and Leon Berg (circlesofresilience.net). CR facilitated three four-hour dialogue circles with all staff who work in operations primarily adjacent to OGRD. These included, but were not limited to, Human Resources, Payroll, Purchasing, Office of Advancement, Provost's Office, and OIR. Although no attendance requirement existed, we communicated to executive and senior leadership about this essential practice to encourage their direct reports to build Council into their schedules.

The first and second dialogue circle sessions occurred back-to-back across two days. The third session occurred approximately three months later. *A detailed and adaptable agenda and marketing plan may be found here.*

The theme of the first session focused on setting the field by exploring the intentions and modus operandi of Council. Further, CR began to help us envision meeting Research Administration workforce needs at EWU and acknowledge what is working. The second session focused on expanding what is working and how that might be improved, as well as looking at possibilities for change, such as coordinating efforts so that research has increased multidisciplinary collaboration.

In between the second and third sessions, CR provided 16 hours of training each for up to 16 staff members across departments who expressed interested in facilitating future Circles for EWU. These "train the trainer" sessions were held on Zoom in 90-minute blocks of time over eight consecutive weeks. Participants were required to receive approval from their supervisors to participate, and a total of five people ended up committing to and finishing the training. In between each training session, participants met in dyads, triads, or small groups to gain more practice facilitating Council. Their experience and process questions were explored in the subsequent training sessions with CR. Those trained will have the skills to bring the Council practice into their daily work throughout EWU. In essence, the practice of Council will make EWU a "listening university."

In the third session, we decided to open the Dialogue Circle to all faculty, in addition to the population from the first two sessions, to engage a wider audience. This event was heavily focused on gleaning feedback from participants about their experience with OGRD, as well as their desires for a stronger grants and research culture. New participants were caught up to speed on how to practice Council.

CR submitted a written report to the PIs within one month of completion of the third and final dialogue circle. The report reflected observations and the conversations that were had, and offered short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations for moving forward. The report also included recommendations that helped OGRD propose organizational change and make plans for additional Dialogue Circle facilitation trainings. This report may be found in Appendix A.

Note: Dialogue Circle and Council may be used interchangeably.

The dialogue circles met Objectives 1, 2, and 3.

Institutional Assessment
We developed a 173-question assessment tool for three Pacific Northwest IHEs with larger research expenditures to complete.* These IHEs were: Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR), University of Idaho (Moscow, ID), and Western Washington University (Bellingham, WA).

Questions included inquiry into their OSP organizational structure and their approaches towards their challenges and limitations similarly identified in the RCS.

This assessment tool may be adapted by other IHEs to interview other institutions or even for internal assessment of their own OSP. In addition to program improvement for the purpose of an OSP workforce model, the responses allowed us to make improvements to the assessment questionnaire.

Initially, we planned to interview these OSP teams, but in the middle of the project we pivoted to an assessment questionnaire that they could answer on their own time.

The institutional assessment met Objectives 1 and 4.

Conference Networking

We presented our preliminary findings and the research activities we conducted up until that time (~3 months' effort) at the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) Region VI/VII conference September 22-25, 2024, in Albuquerque, NM. As well, we presented the WANDER framework at the 17th Annual National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP) Research Development Virtual Conference April 28-May 1, 2025. Both conferences enabled us to formalize external partnerships, identify common challenges and solution tools, and learn best practices from more skilled and experienced research administrators to better inform our knowledge-collection efforts to build workforce capacity in OGRD.

Conference networking met Objective 4.

Results and Outcomes

Key Achievements

Key achievements are mapped to each of the four objectives in this WANDER project. These achievements will be addressed throughout the remainder of this report, including in our discussions of the results.

Achievement 1: Build workforce capacity in OGRD

The intent of the WANDER project was to assess the needs and areas of opportunity of the research enterprise at EWU so that we may have the data required to propose a workforce model that could be especially conducive for PUIs, ERIs, RCU, and RLIs. We successfully completed all WANDER activities, garnering results that supply the justification for an innovative workforce model at EWU. Additionally, the WANDER project now acts as a needs assessment model that OGRD should conduct a minimum of every five years or more frequently as needed.

Achievement 2: Conduct data collection/listening activities about PI attitudes toward grant-seeking, perceptions of OGRD, desires for increased OGRD support, and/or other institutional sponsored programs models

The WANDER project successfully completed all planned data collection/listening activities, including the Research Climate Survey, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, dialogue circles, and institutional assessments. These listening activities enabled us to explore attitudes, perceptions, and desires PIs and other stakeholders have toward the research enterprise at EWU. Additionally, we collected data about the OSP operations at three other IHEs in the Pacific Northwest, each who have larger research expenditures than EWU.

Achievement 3: Develop internal networks with stakeholders in OGRD's primary ecosystem

The data collection/listening activities developed stronger networks among stakeholders in OGRD's primary ecosystem. In particular, the dialogue circles enabled us to create awareness of the research enterprise among colleagues from Human Resources, the Office of Institutional Research, the Office of Advancement, Information Technology, Risk Management, Compliance, and Procurement and Contracts, etc. Furthermore, WANDER's activities acted as a vehicle to draw more attention to EWU's research enterprise, as well as OGRD's essential responsibilities at the university.

Achievement 4: Develop external networks with more successful sponsored programs at institutions of higher education in the Pacific Northwest

The WANDER project successfully collected institutional assessment responses from Western Washington University (Bellingham, WA), University of Idaho (Moscow, ID), and Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR). One of the product outcomes was a template of the *institutional assessment form*, which may be adapted by other IHEs for internal or external use and application. Additionally, attendance at NCURA's 2024 Region VI/VII Meeting and NORDP's 2025 Annual Conference allowed us to network with IHEs from around the nation.

Quantitative Results

Research Climate Survey

In January 2024, EWU's Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted a Research Climate Survey (RCS) of all EWU faculty and staff. The survey was available for approximately three weeks and we received 138 responses. All questions may be found *here*.

The vast majority (n=124) of the responses were by employees who self-identified as current or potential PIs. In contrast, a small number of employees (n=14) identified themselves as fiscal or administrative staff. As a result, in this report we chose to highlight only the responses from current or potential PIs. Even so, we chose to publish only a handful of responses that we felt yielded the most significant results.

In the future, we will need to exhaust additional efforts to retrieve more completed surveys from all staff, which will likely require us to pound the pavement to encourage supervisors

and their direct reports to complete the survey. That said, OGRD has done a lot of groundwork to build up our profile at the institution since the RCS was deployed in early 2024. Therefore, if we were to deploy the RCS today, the number of completed surveys would likely be higher. Furthermore, we will likely modify the survey to yield more robust information.

(1) How familiar are you with university policies and procedures, including payroll, HR (hiring), travel, procurement, and accounting?
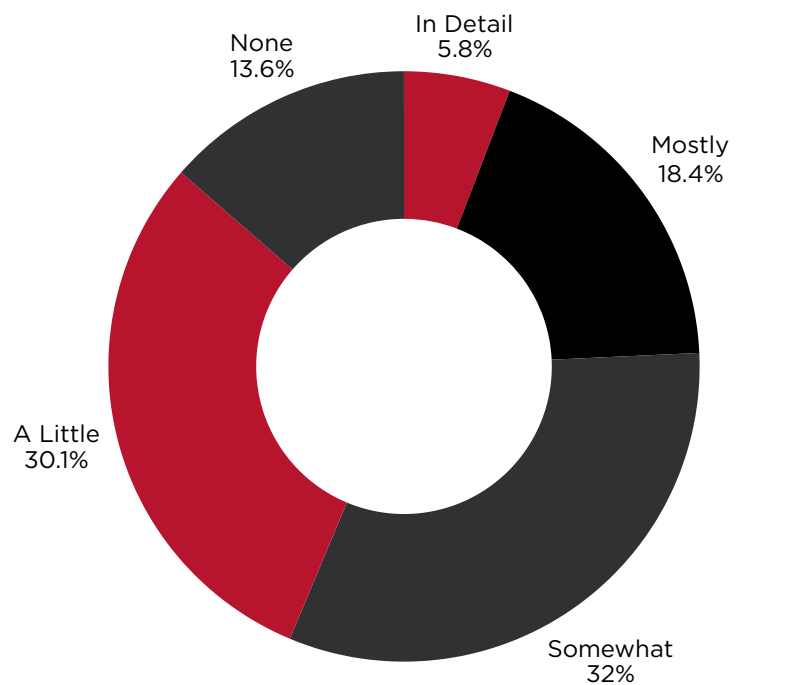

(2) You indicated that you have submitted a grant in the past 5 years. What were your top 3 primary motivations?

Release Time

Collaboration

Supporting EWU...

Interest/Passion

Financial Support
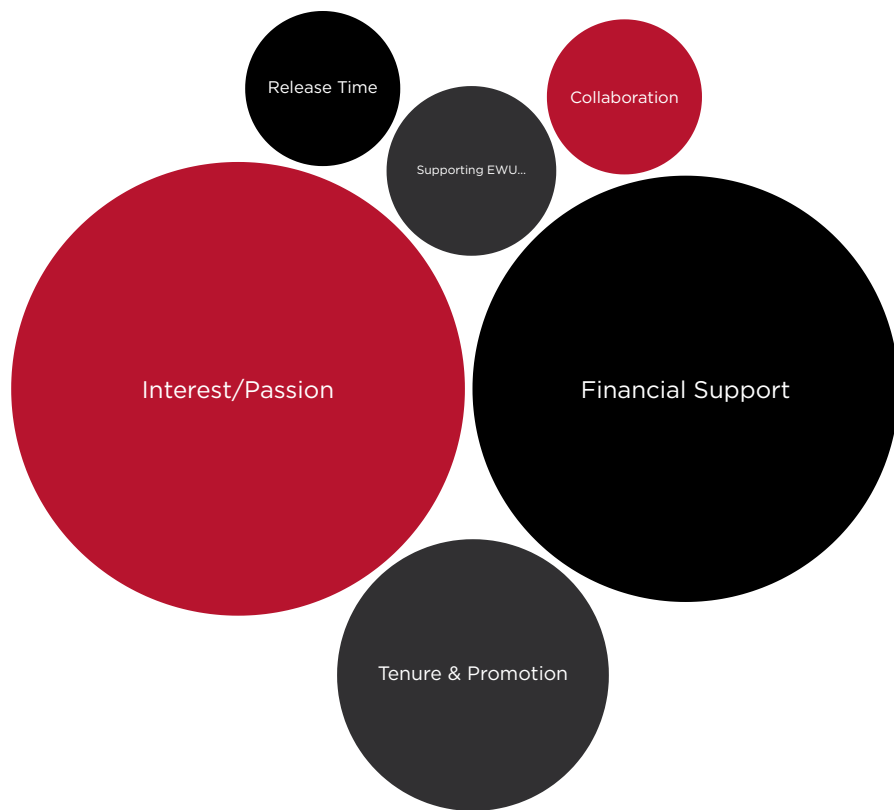
Tenure & Promotion

Note: Interest/Passion: 43%; Financial Support: 37%; Tenure & Promotion: 12%; Supporting EWU Mission: 3%; Release Time: 2%; Collaboration: 2%

(3) You indicated that you have not submitted a grant in the past 5 years. What were your top 3 challenges or barriers preventing your grant writing activities?

Length of Employme...
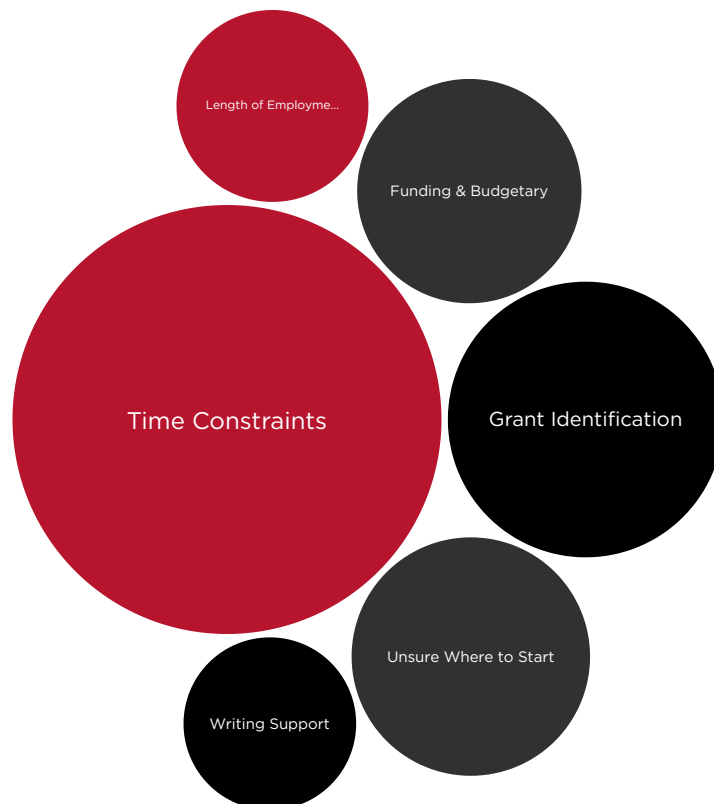
Funding & Budgetary

Time Constraints

Grant Identification

Unsure Where to Start

Writing Support

(4) Which of the following would you consider your top 2 incentives to apply for a grant? (Select up to 2)
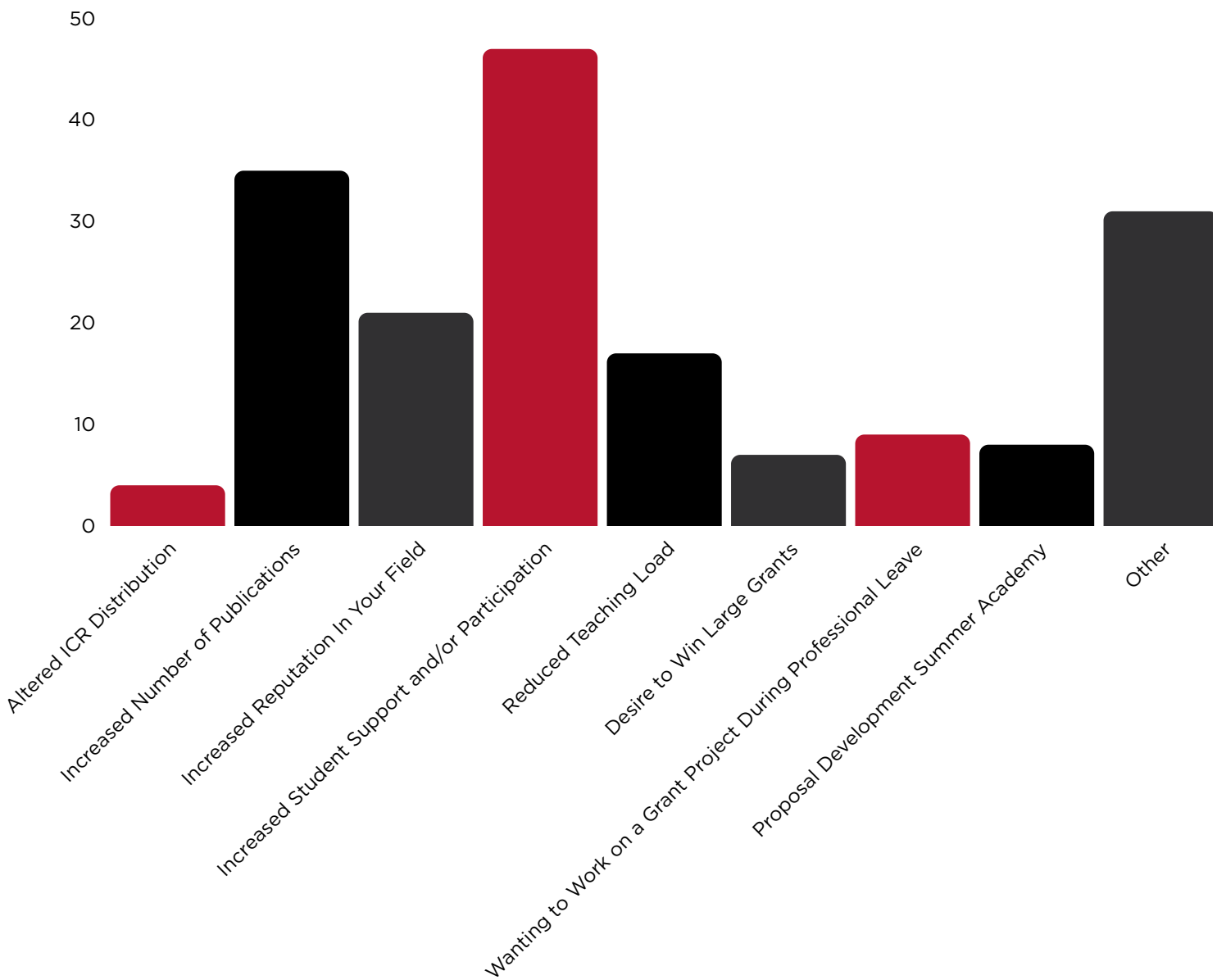
Discussion

These data clearly show that the majority (75.7%) of current and potential PIs at EWU lack strong familiarity with university operations that help execute and support grant-funded or contractual research projects. As addressed through the Dialogue Circles, one challenge is that the units responsible for supporting grants, such as procurement, payroll, and human resources, do not strongly identify themselves as part of the research infrastructure. Bridging these supports between PIs and the research infrastructure is therefore essential to building more awareness, knowledge, and understanding for the successful execution of grant-funded or contractual research projects.

Tenet 1: At EWU, units that support the grantsmanship lack identity with/in the research infrastructure.

At EWU, tenured/tenure-track faculty teaching load is 80%, 10% scholarship, and 10% service. To meet the scholarship requirements, the unionized faculty's CBA does not require a grant *award* to earn tenure, though about half are required to *submit* a grant; for the other half, a grant submission is optional and may be applied to their scholarship requirement. Without extrinsic motivation, the presence of intrinsic motivation is disproportionately weighted to maintain and bolster the research enterprise at EWU. It is therefore no surprise that 43.0% of PIs who have submitted a grant in the past five years indicated that one of their top three motivations is interest/passion, compared with just 12% of respondents who listed tenure and promotion. On the other side of the same coin, by far the top challenge for respondents (48.0%) who had not submitted a grant in the past five years was time constraints. Consequently, not only will OGRD always be fighting an uphill battle to motivate grant submissions, but those grant submissions will always be conducted by a small number of faculty and staff. This is an inequitable "hidden workload" that could be ameliorated with changes to institutional policies and the CBA.

Tenet 2: The presumption of intrinsic motivation paired with policies that restrict the amount of time for grantsmanship lead to a weak research enterprise.

Furthermore, when current or potential PIs were asked about specific incentives to apply for a grant, their top answer was increased student support and/or participation. This reflects the regional polytechnic, student-centered culture at EWU where 42% of students are first-generation, more than half the students are experiencing basic needs insecurity, and a concerted effort is being made to provide at least one hands-on learning experience for every student before graduation.

Tenet 3: Students are the impetus for a growing and robust research enterprise.

Conclusion: EWU's research climate may be characterized as: underdeveloped research infrastructure; intrinsically motivated; time-constrained; and student-driven.

These entangled factors all lead to a weak research identity. Therefore, EWU must embrace and reflect on the current research climate to leverage its strengths and address its weaknesses with appropriate policy.

Qualitative Results

Focus Groups & Semi-Structured Interviews

Transcripts from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews were uploaded to NVivo for coding and analysis by grouping similar ideas based on general patterns that emerged from the data ("bottom-up" approach) (Saldaña, 2021). This approach was done three more times to establish sub-themes, which ultimately culminated in the development of three

broad themes. NVivo's AI technology assisted in the process to act mainly as an additional "researcher" in analysis. In most or all cases, the "human researcher" overrode or modified AI's contributions.

WANDER's second objective was to conduct data collection/listening activities about PI attitudes toward grant-seeking, perceptions of OGRD, desires for increased OGRD support, and/or other institutional sponsored programs models. As shown and discussed below, three broad themes emerged from the data: attitudes, perceptions, and desires—all of which help meet our second objective in this study. In each theme, several sub-themes provide additional clarity and understanding and a word cloud displays the frequency of words.

Attitudes Toward Grant-Seeking	• Motivation and Encouragement • Institutional Perspectives • Healthy Connections
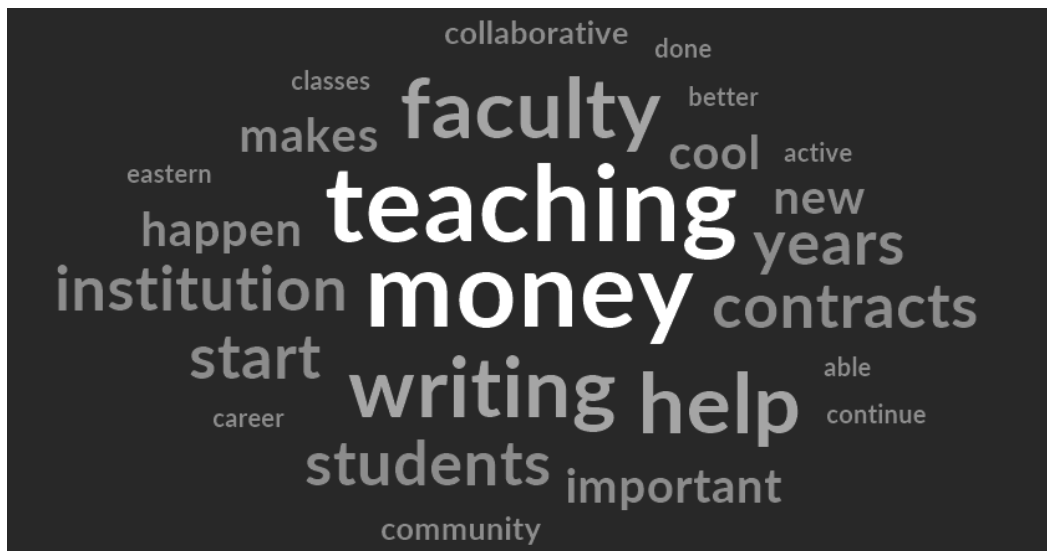
| Perceptions of OGRD and EWU's Research Enterprise	• Undefined OGRD Roles and Responsibilities • Student and Administrative Support • Procedures and Bureaucracy • Perceived Workload • Mentorship and Guidance • Current OGRD Support • Confusion and Lack of Clarity • Challenges with Funding and Budgets
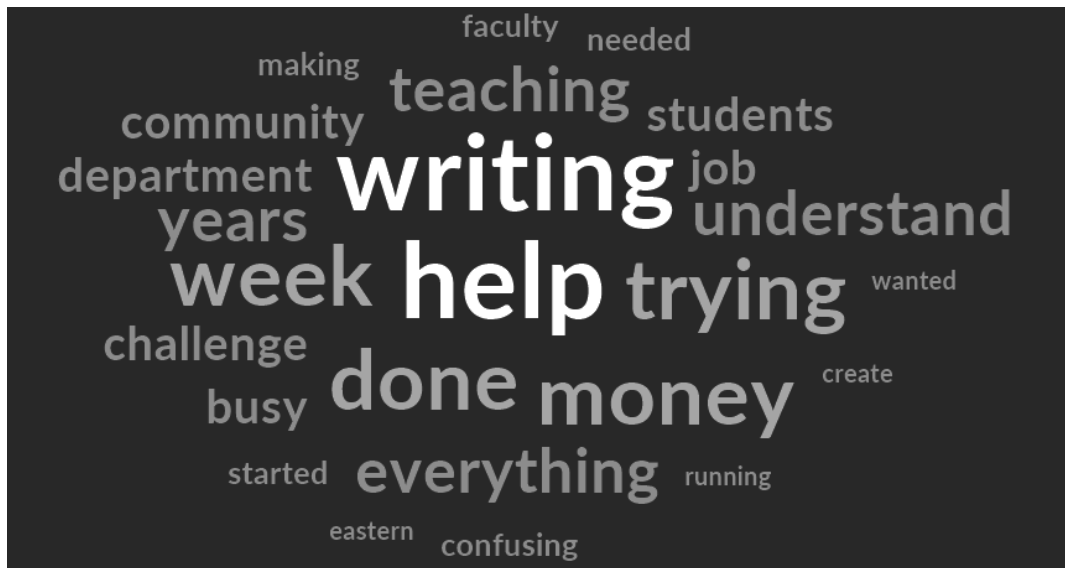
| Desires for Increased Support | • Desired OGRD Supports
• Desired Institutional and Administrative Supports
• Aspirations for Future Grants and Research |

Like a three-legged stool, attitudes, perceptions, and desires inform and stand up a research enterprise. When these phenomena are viewed as an entangled entity, emergent solutions may include policy changes, institutional climate and culture interventions, and motivational strategies.

A three-legged stool labeled "Research Enterprise" on the seat, with legs labeled "Attitudes", "Perceptions", and "Desires".
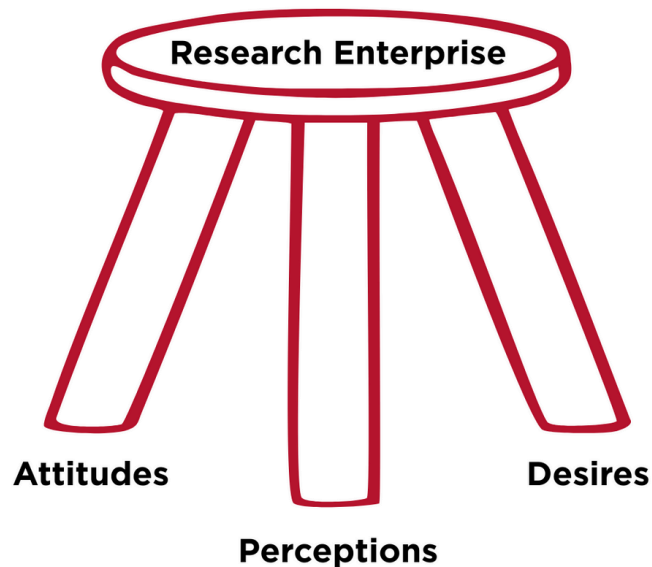
What are attitudes, perceptions, and desires?

First, we remember that relations precede relata (Barad, 2007). According to Barad, there is an ontological priority of phenomena over objects, so an atom is not a separate object but rather an "inseparable part of the phenomenon" (p. 315). Here, reality emerges from and are defined by interactions—or intra-action to be exact— and agency is the "doing" or "being" of intra-activity, not something someone or something has. People, animals, and objects are constantly "rework[ing] what matters" (p. 178) because they are part of a fabric of the universe; nothing can be "excluded from mattering" (p. 178). In this way, binary thinking is rejected and replaced by "agential realism" where entangled potentialities emerge among the notions of agency, identity, embodiment, objectivity, power, ethics, matter, and more.

With agential realism in mind, we turn to George Herbert Mead who was arguably the father of self, identity, and sociality. Mead's (1934) "conversation of gestures" shifts the emphasis of the development of the self from language and symbol to embodied experience and meaning. The conversation of gestures results in a social process that produces a whole set of new objects in nature, which exist in relation to the process. In addition, the gesture and response of organisms surface the relationship that exists between the beginning and completion of any given act. Due to afferent and efferent responses in the lived body, it is nearly impossible to differentiate between late-stage and early-stage influences and gestures. Sociality is entangled in the objects that constitute it.

Mead (1934) suggested that the self consists of the *Me* setting the situation and the *I* as the responder. The self is mutually supported by the *I* and the *Me*. As the *I*, consciousness acknowledges certain experiences, such as pain or pleasure, while as the *Me*, self-consciousness goes a step further by placing the self into experience. The *Me* and the *I* are not unlike Kahneman's (2011) System Two and System One, respectively. The rational, represented, empirical world lies in System Two; and espoused theories, the virtual world, and independence live here. In contrast, the irrational, embodied, relating world constitutes

System One, and this is where trust, love, habits, marginalized populations, and interdependence reside. Reflection is associated with System Two, while awareness is associated with System One. As soon as awareness occurs, however, it no longer remains in System One, indicating that individuals can never get outside themselves. It is like trying to see one's backside: without the help of other perspectives, like a mirror, individuals cannot see all sides at once. Individuals need other perspectives to see what they cannot.

I/System One	*Me*/System Two
Consciousness	Self-consciousness
Acknowledges experience	Places self into experience
Responds to the situation	Sets the situation
Irrational, embodied, relating world; trust, love, habits, marginalized populations, and interdependence	Rational, represented, empirical world; espoused theories, the virtual world, and independence
Awareness	Reflection
Affectivity	Meaning

Note. Kahneman, 2011; Mead, 1934.

The completion of the act consists of the conversation of gestures between the *I* and the *Me* mutually supporting each other—in relation to one another (Mead, 1934). The relation to one another is what fundamentally constitutes the *I* and the *Me*, which Mead called "taking the attitude of others" (p. 256). The *I* is expressed through the action of the *I* in harmony with taking of the role of others in the *Me*. In addition, the *I* is expressed when the *Me* sets the situation to which the *I* responds, and both the *I* and the *Me* support each other. In this way, individuals are more or less consciously seeing themselves as others see them; human beings live in the *Me* most of the time. According to Mead, "[We are] continually arousing in ourselves those responses which we call out in other persons, so that we are taking the attitudes of the other persons into our own conduct" (p. 69). One's orientation to the world is entangled with others' orientations; attitudes are built upon perceptions and vice versa.

Also significant to the conversation of gestures is a meaningful symbol. In order for a symbol to be meaningful, a symbol must call out a group of reactions and act as a stimulus (Mead, 1934). Crucially, the symbol must be distributed through language. Language is not merely mechanical, however, but acts as a cooperative activity that is more or less arbitrary. In that

sense, affectivity is required since a person "has to affect himself as he affects others" (p. 75) in order to have a conversation. Further, it is unnecessary that a person be aware or conscious of the meaning of the social experience; meaning is therefore present before awareness or consciousness is.

Considering language is a cooperative, affective, meaningful activity, the meaning of language emerges from the conversation of gestures (Mead, 1934). In particular, emotion, or what Finkenthal (2012) called affectivity, mediates the gestures and responses that help complete the process of identity formation. Identity formation is crucial in organizations. Recently, Harding and Ford (2025) drew the connection between identity, language, meaning, and organizational activity in their paper, "Organizational Soundscapes and the Sonicity of Voices: The Power of the 'Sounds' that Carry 'Words'." The authors' premise rejected binary thinking for the sonics of agential voices that "are like whispers carried upon the wind . . . wreath[ing] their way into meaning, affect, thought and desire" (pp. 21-22). The sonicity of voices results in a power-to-care that desires relational, embodied ethics where actors in all areas and levels of an organization influence thought and action.

However, gaps remain between bodies in the three-legged stool of attitudes, perceptions, and desires. This "emptiness" (Finkenthal, 2012) is the site of human affectivity:

> Affectivity includes potentially a contradiction, therefore, it must be governed by a new logic; it is not that reason is discarded in an emotional act, but rather we have to deal with a dynamic situation which implies some sort of a "flow" from A to non-A. (para. 6)

What transpires among material bodies in this new logic is a kind of "incorporeal bloom-space," Seigworth and Gregg (2010) said (p. 9). Emerging from a "muddy, unmediated relatedness" (p. 4), affectivity succeeds precisely through the potential and capacity for the material to engage the non-material, and vice versa. As a result, the body emancipates itself from binary categories and dichotomies, choosing instead to affect and to be affected in a "perpetual becoming" (p. 3).

Moreover, the body is a specific material configuration, not a generic one, indicating that affective phenomena have no singular or agreed-upon definitions (Cromby, 2015; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). According to Cromby (2015), "[A]ffective phenomena are intimate, experiential and embodied, incapable of perfect capture or absolute representation in language; yet, at the same time, thoroughly bound up with and shaped by history and culture" (p. 4).

In this way, there is no meta-definition, no closure, and no pinnacle of the research enterprise or research identity. The research enterprise at EWU, or any institution for that matter, is always in the *middle* of a state of negotiation with the systems in which it is related (e.g., state and federal regulations). The middle is the reality of the lived experiences of those participating in the research enterprise. Importantly, reality is not the same as the real. The

real is a product of objective knowledge that is concealed forever, whereas *reality* is always accessible through human experience via attitudes, perceptions, and desires.

Summary

Research identity is always being (re)negotiated through academic and research training, language, culture, policy, regulations, categories and classifications, institutional mission, and a power-to-care ethic.

In its simplest form, WANDER assessed EWU's current research identity to build and grow a research enterprise that works for all. The pleasant surprise of the new RCU Carnegie classification, in particular, is one of many factors that are inviting EWU to renegotiate its relationship with research and its identity in the research enterprise. Research identity formation will require all actors in the organization to become aware of and embrace their role in the research infrastructure; to lean into the "conversation of gestures" that constitute the renegotiation of identities (individually, organizationally, and globally speaking); and, crucially, to never cease imagining a future that increasingly provides students with opportunities to contribute to knowledge generation for societal impact.

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Challenges and Lessons Learned

Throughout the project, we encountered several challenges, including:

Challenge 1

The act of conducting listening activities, particularly in the form of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and dialogue circles, is no doubt time-consuming. When working with a large group of faculty and staff with conflicting schedules, it is impossible to find something that works for everyone. Given the time limitations in WANDER, there was little wiggle room to push activities to a later time.

Furthermore, the adoption of the practice of dialogue circles was a challenge for two reasons:

(a) The practice itself was a barrier that many people struggled to overcome, despite the time we spent familiarizing participants to it. In fact, the catch-22 was that the more time we devoted to teaching the practice, the fewer people who were able or willing to give additional time to it. As a result, we lost people over the course of the dialogue circles and many people did not stay long enough to the point where we dove into the heart of the research enterprise issues at EWU.

(b) EWU staff in the dialogue circles were expressly invited because they contribute to the research infrastructure at EWU. However, we quickly discovered many of them did not identify themselves working in research infrastructure. Instead, many considered

"grants and research" to be solely for those who apply for grants. Though a bit simplified, the sentiment was that "grants and research" is something "out there" that faculty to do to advance their own scholarly desires. This realization emerged at the end of the first day of the dialogue circles and was not necessarily resolved by the completion of the third dialogue circle.

Challenge 2

The intent of the institutional assessment was to build our network in the RA profession and learn from IHEs who likely have stronger research infrastructure than EWU. The challenge was that—after pivoting to a questionnaire-style data collection method—we did not know what to do with the data from the three Pacific Northwest IHEs. It was impossible to quantitatively analyze open-ended questions among all three responses; likewise, it was methodologically flagrant to analyze the content. As a result, we chose not to analyze these data inside of the WANDER project.

However, upon conclusion of WANDER, and in the process of proposing a workforce model in a standard NSF GRANTED proposal submission, OGRD will conduct a two-hour dialogue council to explore the lessons learned from the institutional assessment responses (which will be anonymized). Each OGRD employee will read the responses in advance and then in Council, we will ask questions such as: *Which practices by other OSPs intrigued you the most? In what ways are other OSPs aligned with our practices? In what ways do their practices differ with ours? What do we want to adapt in the future of OGRD and the forthcoming workforce model?*

A different approach, which we will not take at this time, is to provide pre-determined answers in the institutional assessment and then query a large number of institutions (perhaps an N of 50 or more). The responses from those institutions could then be quantitatively analyzed to yield significant results about the practices taken by IHEs on average.

To take it one step further and make it a mixed-methods study, the institutional assessment would also include the opportunity for IHEs to explain the philosophy of their business decisions and practices. We suggest this additional step because we found varied responses among the three IHEs we queried but did not always understand the reasons or context for them.

From these challenges, we learned valuable lessons, such as:

Lesson 1

The unofficial motto of the RA profession is "it depends." In that vein, grantsmanship is a long, arduous, and unsettled experience; in fact, if there was one word to sum up what the data was telling us in WANDER, it was that grantsmanship is "confusing." At some point in the cradle-to-grave experience, inevitably the PI or admin would feel confused. Perhaps there

was confusion about how to find a funding opportunity or exactly when their account was greenlit so they may starting spending their grant funds. Maybe they had bigger questions about whether their research aligned with EWU's strategic plan or how to find time to perform grant activities with a high teaching load.

In effect, we are asking PIs and admins to live in two worlds of teaching and research scholarship, which can be a massive challenge to bridge. The complexities that emerge as the result of the interactions in these two worlds is what leads to the context-dependent nature of grants and research. The job of RA professionals, then, is to provide the proper infrastructure, guidance, and support for folks to live in—and cross over that bridge into—both worlds simultaneously.

Lesson 2

A strong research enterprise is only as strong as its research infrastructure. Infrastructure includes data analytics and strong record-keeping; clear, defined policies and practices; an organizational culture that values grantsmanship; a sense of identity and belonging in the research enterprise; and progressive recruitment and retention practices into the RA profession. Special attention paid to research infrastructure will lead to a robust research enterprise that benefits all. One of OGRD's responsibilities will be to bridge PI support with a strong research infrastructure that not only functions properly and efficiently, but also identifies as a full participant inside the research enterprise.

Lesson 3

The experience of exploring the research enterprise at EWU while working inside that system —as PIs in the "other world" no less—provided immense yet unexpected insight into the experience of grantsmanship inside our institution. We experienced where the research infrastructure broke down; the conflict of time juggling our WANDER project work with our day-to-day responsibilities; and the frustration when research projects go longer than planned. So, if nothing else, the act of OGRD staff directing a grant themselves was a crucial learning experience in itself. If we are experiencing challenges, then we can expect most EWU PIs to have them, too.

Gaining perspectives (in the plural) is one of the most essential impetuses for change. Crucially, the perspectives we gained could *not* have happened without the PIs simultaneously working in research administration. The entangled relationship of those two roles allowed us not only to see problems and bottlenecks, but also afforded us the power to effect change now or in the future.

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Evaluation & Assessment

	Evaluation Questions (EQ)	Data Collection
OBJ1/EQ1	How effectively did the proposed strategies address potential challenges or barriers to workforce capacity building within OGRD?	Interviews with OGRD leadership, reviewing documented challenges and mitigation strategies.
OBJ2/EQ2	Were the data collection and listening activities inclusive and representative of diverse stakeholder perspectives?	Interviews with OGRD leadership, reviewing documented challenges and mitigation strategies.
OBJ3/EQ3	How well were internal networks established within OGRD's primary ecosystem, and what impact did they have on collaboration and engagement among stakeholders?	Reviewing communication strategies and feedback from internal stakeholders, as well as observing network-building activities.
OBJ4/EQ4	Did the data collected from the questionnaire lend to modifications needed to produce a final product for external institutions to adopt?	Document differences between the initial and final products showing where feedback of questionnaires and interviews impacted the changes.

OBJ1/EQ1

How effectively did the proposed strategies address potential challenges or barriers to workforce capacity building within OGRD?

This objective was met. The strategies effectively address the challenges of OGRD. They created additional capacity to streamline future operations while building a contextual understanding of internal limitations. This project built the necessary groundwork to propose a sustainable and scalable workforce model.

Accomplishments

- The WANDER project successfully hired an experienced RA Director after a two-year vacancy, increasing FTEs in ORGD by 35%.
- The office expanded its operations, purchased the Cayuse software, and proposed an adaptable workforce model for PUIs and ERI's.
- Listening activities identified confusion and time constraints as key workforce challenges. These informed short- and long-term strategies in the proposed workforce model.

Summary

In alignment with the EWU Strategic Plan pillar, *Investing in our People*, the WANDER project increased workforce capacity and identified systemic barriers.

OB2/EQ2

Were the data collection and listening activities inclusive and representative of diverse stakeholder perspectives?

This objective was met. The approach was inclusive and representative. The recruitment of marginalized voices, diversity in participants, and attention to emergent themes revealed deep needs around OGRD administrative clarity, workload equity, and meaningful mentorship.

Accomplishments

- Mixed-methods data collection included 138 Research Climate Survey responses, ten interviews, four focus groups, and three facilitated dialogue circles.
- Participants included historically excluded faculty and underrepresented departments.
- The use of Circles of Resilience consultants introduced inclusive, equity-centered facilitation techniques.

Summary

By meeting this objective, the OGRD held inclusive listening activities with diverse faculty/staff voices which created themes for future institutional sponsored programs. This objective is in alignment with the EWU strategic plan pillar, *Belonging through Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*. The three-legged stool that holds up the research enterprise (desires, attitudes, and perceptions) were collected in an equitable manner showcasing the diverse reactions of EWU's faculty and staff.

OB3/EQ3

How well were internal networks established within OGRD's primary ecosystem, and what impact did they have on collaboration and engagement among stakeholders?

This objective was met. Internal networks have been clearly strengthened. The lasting impact is evident in the training sessions proposed continued use of Council to support research culture and collaboration. It is also evident that the process helped redefine "research infrastructure" as a shared, campus-wide responsibility.

Accomplishments

- The Dialogue Circles successfully convened HR, Payroll, Procurement, Advancement, OIR, and others.
- A train-the-trainer model now supports ongoing Council-based facilitation to sustain collaboration.

- Qualitative analysis showed improved mutual understanding and identified internal misalignment around research infrastructure identity.

Summary
This objective was met through the creation of sustainable internal networks and interdepartmental bridges. With collaboration across administrative silos this project enhances the research enterprises agility and effectiveness. Better understanding of OGRD's ecosystem and internal networks can affect EWU's impact on the region with more research and funding for such. This helps move EWU toward accomplishing its strategic Plan pillar as a *Regional Impact and Regional Anchor*.

OB4/EQ4

Did the data collected from the questionnaire lend to modifications needed to produce a final product for external institutions to adopt?

This objective was partially met due to the limitation of the formal analysis. However, there is a clear mechanism to complete this work in the next phase of this project. The project details how the tool can be adapted for future use. On the other hand, this process created an opportunity for internal dialogue to extract future insights.

Accomplishments

- Three Pacific Northwest IHEs (Oregon State University, University of Idaho, Western Washington University) completed an institutional assessment tool developed by the project.
- Participation in NCURA and NORDP conferences established partnerships and knowledge exchange.

Summary
The questionnaire was meaningfully shaped by data, and therefore future collections can lend to the ability for external institutions to adopt modifications.

Future OGRD Workforce Model

At the conclusion of this NSF award, we are now moving from the *WANDER*ing stage to the implementation stage where we are drafting an action plan in the form of a future OGRD workforce model at EWU that any PUI, ERI, RCU, or RLI could reasonably adapt. The model will re-think our current organizational structure to create FTEs that thoughtfully and adequately support the entire cradle-to-grave research experience and empower PIs and the research infrastructure to bridge current gaps and challenges. Additionally, the workforce model will test and gather metrics on various recruitment, retention, and performance efforts, including: training and professional development; professional identities; and salary structures. We believe an innovative workforce model in research administration will be the

extra boost needed for institutions who are primed and ready to grow and gain a competitive edge in the nation's research enterprise.

More specifically, we are beginning to envision a braided (Convening of Care Collective, 2024) OGRD workforce that acts as a safety net that empowers the entire institution to grow the research enterprise and be competitive in the national landscape. This workforce model will provide the cradle-to-grave support laterally and vertically where we lean on each other (inter- and intra-office) to deliver RA services and support to create a robust research enterprise at EWU and in the region even. Though uncomfortable in a lean culture like academia, we believe the best infusion of investment in the research enterprise is human capital. In fact, in the past year we have been asking ourselves, *What does EWU's research enterprise need?* and *What do OGRD staff need to contribute to the strength of the research enterprise here?* The second question is terribly underrated given the tendency for RAs to work in bare conditions, leading to burnout, resentment, and attrition.

Therefore, in our forthcoming workforce model, OGRD staff (current and ones we have yet to hire into new positions) will be the test subjects. As the lab in and of itself, we will be testing and gathering data about everything we do throughout the life of the study to find patterns and trends of our activities that help paint a picture of what leads to a competitive research enterprise.

Additionally, this workforce model will situate itself in the context of the lived experiences of research administrators. The workforce model will account for the specific historical time period that is currently emerging to convey research administration's value to advance knowledge generation and societal uplift. Thus, the promotion of the RA profession must be a key component in this workforce model.

A standard NSF GRANTED proposal is expected to be submitted in Fall 2025.

Dissemination

In addition to this public report published on OGRD's website and shared among the GRANTED and RA communities, future dissemination activities will include:

- RA journal article;
- All-campus virtual meeting in September 2025 to present this study's summary of results and to garner feedback about the proposed workforce model; and
- Potential conference presentations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the support from NSF's GRANTED program was instrumental in enabling us to achieve our project objectives. We have made significant progress in understanding the research enterprise needs at EWU toward the development of a Research Administration workforce model that not only could work at EWU, but also at other IHEs around the nation, especially PUIs, ERIs, RCU, and RLIs. We express our deepest gratitude for the opportunity to make a difference and look forward to continuing our work in this field.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Dialogue Circle Final Report

Appendix B
Resources & Templates

Appendix C
References

Appendix A: Dialogue Circle Final Report

Final Report: January 7, 2025
Office of Grants and Research Development (OGRD)
Comprehensive Analysis and Strategic Action Plan
Submitted by: Circles of Resilience (Lori Austein & Leon Berg)

Executive Summary
This report synthesizes findings from extensive stakeholder discussions and operational analyses of the Office of Grants and Research Development (OGRD). While OGRD provides essential services and has achieved notable successes, significant opportunities exist for enhancement and expansion of capabilities. This report outlines current operations, challenges, and a structured action plan for improvement.

Current State Assessment

Operational Overview
OGRD currently operates as a self-supporting unit through indirect cost recovery from grants, providing both pre-award and post-award services. The office is implementing new grant management software and developing a workforce model through a planned NSF grant submission.

Strengths

- Strong foundation in proposal development and submission support

- Successful track record in budget development and management
- Improved visibility and engagement with faculty
- Consistent post-award support improvements
- Effective cross-disciplinary collaboration facilitation
- Growing culture of collaboration over competition

Challenges

1. Structural Constraints

- Operating nearly two years without a director (a director will be onboarding shortly)
- Staff operating at maximum capacity
- High turnover among grant managers
- Limited resources for expanding services

2. Process Inefficiencies

- Complex institutional approval processes
- Time-intensive administrative procedures
- Inconsistent expectations and processes
- Limited infrastructure for collaborative projects

3. Faculty and Staff Concerns

- Insufficient support for arts and humanities
- Limited recognition for grant-related efforts
- Work-life balance challenges
- Inequitable access to grant opportunities
- Need for better understanding of systemic barriers in specific fields

Stories of Challenge and Growth

- **Self-Sufficiency to Collaboration:** One faculty member shared their evolution from feeling compelled to "do everything myself" to appreciating the value of interdisciplinary partnerships. Their frustration now lies in mobilizing collaborators with less flexible schedules.
- **Navigating Inequities:** A participant highlighted the systemic inequities in federal grant funding, where established researchers receive repeated funding while newer voices are left scrambling for residual opportunities. They emphasized the emotional labor of applying despite knowing the low likelihood of success.
- **Barriers in Non-STEM Fields:** A technical writing faculty member reflected on the scarcity of grant opportunities tailored to their discipline. Their experience underscored the time-intensive nature of searching for suitable grants and the need for consistent, focused efforts to identify opportunities.

Strategic Action Plan

Short-Term Goals (0-6 months)

1. Immediate Operational Improvements

- Complete director hiring process
- Establish clear communication channels for project status updates
- Implement standardized templates for common grant processes
- Create a recognition program for grant submission efforts o Institute regular celebration events for grant efforts, regardless of outcome

2. Resource Optimization

- Review and streamline current approval processes
- Develop quick-reference guides for common procedures
- Create a shared calendar for grant deadlines and milestones
- Establish regular check-in meetings with departments
- Implement a system for sharing resources and success stories

Medium-Term Goals (6-18 months)

1. Infrastructure Development

- Complete software implementation
- Develop comprehensive training programs for faculty and staff
- Create specialized support pathways for arts and humanities
- Establish cross-departmental collaboration frameworks
- Develop support systems for "third space professionals"

2. Support Enhancement

- Implement the College of STEM buyout model across colleges
- Develop data consultation services
- Create mentorship programs pairing experienced and new grant seekers
- Establish regular grant-writing workshops and support groups
- Create forums for sharing insights across disciplines

Long-Term Goals (18+ months)

1. Organizational Transformation

- Implement NSF-funded workforce model
- Develop comprehensive staff expansion plan
- Create sustainable funding mechanisms for additional services
- Establish centers of excellence for specialized grant support
- Build infrastructure for supporting interdisciplinary initiatives

2. Cultural Evolution

- Foster collaborative research environment
- Develop equitable access to grant opportunities
- Create sustainable work-life balance practices
- Establish OGRD as a proactive partner in research development
- Nurture a culture of care and recognition in academic research

Implementation Recommendations

Immediate Actions

1. Form implementation committees for each short-term goal
2. Develop metrics for measuring progress
3. Create feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement
4. Establish regular stakeholder communication channels
5. Expand recognition initiatives for grant efforts

Resource Requirements

1. Personnel

- Additional grant management staff
- Data analysis specialists
- Training coordinators
- Administrative support
- Dedicated staff for recognition programs

2. Infrastructure

- Software and technology upgrades
- Training materials and resources
- Collaboration tools and platforms
- Assessment and evaluation tools
- Recognition program resources
- Regular use of council for feedback and ongoing training

Success Metrics

1. Quantitative Measures

- Number of successful grant applications
- Processing time for approvals
- Staff retention rates
- Cross-departmental collaboration rates
- Participation in recognition events

2. Qualitative Measures

- Faculty and staff satisfaction
- Work-life balance improvements
- Quality of grant submissions
- Institutional reputation enhancement
- Sense of community and support

Future Development Areas

Emerging Priorities

1. Professional Development

- Support for "third space professionals"
- Recognition of non-traditional academic roles
- Enhanced dialogue between faculty and staff

2. Community Building

- Regular forums for sharing experiences
- Celebration of collective achievements
- Building stronger inter-departmental connections

3. Institutional Culture

- Promoting care in academic settings
- Fostering collaborative over competitive approaches
- Supporting diverse career paths and contributions

Conclusion

The successful implementation of this action plan will require sustained commitment from leadership, active participation from stakeholders, and adequate resource allocation. By following this structured approach, OGRD can transform into a more robust, efficient, and supportive organization that better serves the institution's research and grant development needs.

Regular review and adjustment of this plan will ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of the institution's research community. The proposed changes will position OGRD to better support the institution's strategic goals while fostering a more collaborative and sustainable research environment.

Appendix B: Resources & Templates

In the interest of helping other institutions of higher education conduct their own assessment of their research enterprise, we have created a public Google Drive with resources and templates, as well as this report.

Appendix C: References

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