



»»»» **Mini Guide**

HOW TO BUILD A HIGH-PERFORMING RESEARCH OFFICE

Introduction

Research offices are the engine of academic and scientific institutions. They face new pressures such as an evolving research funding landscape, increasing competition for grants and partnerships, complex compliance and reporting requirements, limited staff resources, and the need to support strategic research growth.

A high-performing research office balances efficient operations with proactive research development, supporting faculty and institutional goals. This guide provides actionable strategies to strengthen both administration and development functions.

Ready to see how
your office
measures up?

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Complete the Research Operations & Development Diagnostic to get your score, insights, and personalized recommendations for both administration and development functions.

➤➤➤➤ 1. Clarify Strategic Priorities

Alignment ensures resources target initiatives that drive institutional research growth.

Action Steps:

- Align RA and RD goals with institutional priorities.
- Identify KPIs for administration (proposal processing, compliance) and development (new funding, collaborations, strategic growth).
- Communicate priorities across all teams and faculty regularly.

2. Optimize Administrative Workflows

Smooth operations free up time for strategic activities.

Action Steps:

- Document SOPs for pre-award, post-award, compliance, and reporting processes.
- Map workflows for proposal submission support and funding opportunity management.
- Use digital platforms to track submissions, approvals, and reporting.
- Identify bottlenecks and streamline repetitive tasks.

➤➤➤➤ 3. Build Robust Research Development Capabilities

Proactive RD increases funding, collaborations, and institutional visibility.

Action Steps:

- Assign staff to funding opportunity identification and dissemination.
- Support proposal development: grant writing, budgets, collaborative planning.
- Encourage idea generation sessions for interdisciplinary projects.
- Track RD metrics: new awards, partnerships, proposal success rates.



4. Invest in Staff Development Across RA & RD



Skilled staff improve efficiency and strategic impact

Action Steps:

- Train RA staff on compliance, systems, and operational excellence.
- Train RD staff on grant strategy, funding landscapes, and proposal development.
- Encourage cross-training to increase collaboration and capacity.
- Offer certifications and professional development opportunities.

>>>> 5. Strengthen Collaboration and Faculty Engagement

Collaboration between RA, RD, and faculty ensures proposals are timely, strategic, and high-quality.

Action Steps:

- Hold regular joint planning meetings between RA, RD, and faculty teams.
- Develop communication protocols to track proposal progress and deadlines.
- Recognize faculty and staff contributions to successful projects.
- Collect feedback to continuously improve administrative support and RD services.

6. Implement Metrics and Continuous Improvement <<<<

Data-driven insights help your office operate efficiently and strategically.

Action Steps:

- Track RA metrics: proposal turnaround time, award compliance, processing efficiency.
- Track RD metrics: number of proposals submitted, funding secured, collaborations initiated.
- Conduct periodic reviews to identify gaps and opportunities for growth.
- Use continuous improvement cycles to refine processes.

>>>> 7. Leverage Technology and Innovation

Modern tools enable scalability, visibility, and data-driven decision-making.

Action Steps:

- Use platforms for proposal tracking, funding opportunity alerts, and collaborative development.
- Implement dashboards to monitor RA and RD KPIs.
- Explore AI or analytics tools for proposal writing, funding trends, or strategic planning.
- Facilitate virtual collaboration for multi-campus or interdisciplinary projects.

A high-performing research office integrates efficient operations and proactive research development. By optimizing workflows, building RD capacity, developing staff, fostering collaboration, and leveraging technology, your office becomes a strategic partner that drives institutional research success.