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5 October 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re Mr Mark Smith

It was my pleasure to work with Mr Smith for ten years (2011 to 2020 inclusive) when I was the Director of the Research and Education Network in the Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD), based at Westmead Hospital. He was a man of the highest integrity and admirable commitment to his work. Mark was our Research Development Manager, a task that built on his background in biomedical medical research and his experience in research management and administration in the University of Sydney and the (then) Westmead Millennium Research Institute.

Within the Research and Education Network Mark handled the processing of research proposals that were managed through our research office on behalf of research workers throughout the entire Local Health Network.

Work with NHMRC

As the research administration officer, Mr Smith was responsible for grant advertising, submission, and reporting. Reporting is done in conjunction with REN Finance. He has managed NHMRC grants for the past ten years and is now familiar with the NHMRC Sapphire grants management system. Mr Smith managed relations with the NHMRC on behalf of the WSLHD because it is an NHMRC Administering Institution. It was his job to relate all changes to the Research Director and REN Operations Director to assure full compliance strategy. It was his job to review grant applications submitted to the NHMRC via RGMS/Sapphire.

Mr Smith also managed awarded grants, ensuring the grant recipients create and submit the required reports by the deadlines requested in the grant schedule. He also liaised with our finance manager to ensure the financial reporting and acquittal was complete.

He prepared the Institutional Annual Compliance Report (IACR) that keep WSLHD accredited. This is an institution-wide compliance report and covers research ethics and financial administration, for which he gathered information from the WSLHD HREC Executive Officer, the Director of Animal Care/Secretary of the WSLHD Animal Ethics Committee and the REN Finance Manager.



The NSW Health Translational Research Grants Scheme

TRGS grants are offered through the NSW Health Office of Health and Medical Research (OHMR). The TRGS scheme is a two-stage process: as the TRGS co-ordinator for WSLHD Mr Smith was responsible for all aspects.

The first stage is an Expression of Interest (EOI) in which each LHD is normally allowed to submit only five applications as the Host Organisation. The OHMR may invite WSLHD to submit some of these as (second-stage) full applications. This scheme is relatively new (6 rounds) and so the timing of each round has been different. COVID-19 affected the last two rounds.

As TRGS co-ordinator for WSLHD, Mr Smith was responsible (in consultation with the Director of Research) for advertising, setting internal closing dates, arranging internal reviews, facilitating the WSLHD Executive choice of the five EOIs to be submitted, liaising with partner LHDs for sign off, and preparing briefs for the LHD chief executive to sign. Mr Smith was also responsible for the management and submission of reports in liaison with the REN Finance manager.

Other granting agencies

Similar procedures were Mr Smith's responsibility when administering grants from the Heart Foundation, the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, the Royal Colleges, and industry.

Managing internal research grants and support

Mr Smith also managed several research grant schemes that were internal to the WSLHD. For example, REN offered grants valued up to \$50,000 for one year and were open to all staff/researchers. There were three categories of grants: New researcher; Early-Mid career researcher; and Experienced researcher. They were offered via a two-stage process similar to that described above for translational research grant applications.

A prestigious grant, the Westmead Fellowship, was offered every three years through REN. Two Fellowships valued up to \$150,000 pa for three years were awarded and are open to any researcher internal or external to WSLHD to be embedded in WSLHD. There were also several Kickstarter Grants offered internally that Mr Smith managed.

Mr Smith's responsibility for all these grants was to construct the application forms and advertisements, advertise, post on website, receive applications, check compliance, contact reviewers (as determined in consultation with the Director of Research), send out for review, receive review scores, collate scores and rank applications, provide ranking to the Director of Research, prepare letters of offer or not for the Director of Research to sign and distribute to successful and unsuccessful applicants accordingly. He was responsible for post-award management and reporting (in liaison with REN Finance). Similar procedures were followed for grants awarded by the Westmead Charitable Trust.



Servicing major research committees

Mr Smith serviced several major research-related committees. These included the Research Development Committee, which sets research policy for the District. For over twenty years Mr Smith was the secretary of the WSLHD Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), which managed research involving gene technology for WSLHD, the Westmead Institute for Medical Research and Nepean Blue Mountains LHD. His responsibilities included protocol assessment, facility inspection and certification, reporting to and sensitive liaison with the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator

Communications

Mr Smith has been an assiduous communicator, offering comprehensive research-related information each week via an attractive electronic newsletter *Matters of Research Interest*. It was widely and enthusiastically received by the research community. For content he used several sources of information including the NHMRC Tracker and the Sydney University Faculty of Medicine and Health research bulletin. News items, conference, seminars, and grants were gathered and summarised in the newsletter.

In summary, Mr Smith is a highly effective research manager and administrator, strongly committed to his work that he views as public service in the best sense, whose own background in research is a great asset in his establishing rapport with the research community and winning and holding their respect.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen Leeder".

Stephen Leeder