

CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guide

2

Engaging people with your Institutional Strengthening Programme



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About this Guide

This Guide is number 2 of a series of 6 CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guides developed by the CIRCLE Programme to help institutions design and deliver a successful Institutional Strengthening Programme, a change management process, to support the career development of researchers as part of research capacity strengthening.

This Guide provides information on how to engage stakeholders with your ISP, how to create a communications plan and various tips on keeping your institution updated on your progress and achievements and embedding activities into “normal business”.

Content in this Guide is expanded and developed upon in further Guides.

You can access all of our Guides on both the [ACU website](#) and the [Vitae website](#).

Making a difference with your ISP

Whatever the aims for your Institutional Strengthening Programme (ISP) are, you will ultimately be making changes and improvements in research capacity and in career planning and professional development for researchers.

The success of your ISP and the extent of the improvements you make will not only depend on the actions themselves, but also on how you engage others throughout the design and implementation process.

It is worthwhile for your ISP Implementation Group to take time at the beginning of the ISP process to consider what change you would like, what success would look like and what stakeholders can help or hinder you getting there.

This will enable you to create an important engagement plan to support your ISP activities. Consideration of stakeholders needs and interests will help you to embed or normalise your outcomes into your institution, as ‘the way we do it here’. This has many advantages in attracting and retaining talented researchers and growing your institutional research base. Refer to Guide 1 for further information.

This guide will discuss how to engage key stakeholders with your ISP activities throughout the ISP process, as well as how to communicate successfully implemented actions and improvements you make to the support provided by your institution. Improving engagement with key stakeholders and developing strategic communication will increase the chances of institutionalising your work and embedding activities in “normal business”.



Engaging different stakeholders

An important step early in ISP institutionalisation is to identify different stakeholder groups for your activities and decide how to engage with them. Stakeholders are groups or individuals who can affect or be affected by the ISP actions, objectives and policies.

There are three main reasons to identify key stakeholders:

1. To find out varying stakeholders' views and feed these into your planning processes
2. To help evaluate and measure engagement with ISP activities and outcomes from different perspectives
3. To ensure that communication is appropriate to each stakeholder group according to their interest and influence in the ISP

You may find carrying out a stakeholder mapping exercise useful at this stage.

MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders can be both within your institution (such as researchers, senior researchers, senior management, professional staff) or external to it (such as funders, external partners, policy makers, communities and governments).

First of all, you should create a list or a spider diagram of all your potential ISP stakeholders.

CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups identified the following stakeholders for their Action Plans which can be helpful for you to consider. This list is not exhaustive. Your Group may identify other stakeholders who will be interested in your activities and outcomes.

VCS / DVCS	HEADS OF DEPARTMENT	DEANS	COURSE LEADS
EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS	RESEARCHERS	SENIOR RESEARCHERS	FEMALE RESEARCHERS
LECTURERS	ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF	HR STAFF	ACADEMIC SUPPORT STAFF
NEW STAFF	STAFF WITH DISABILITIES	STAFF REQUESTING ABSENCE LEAVE	ACADEMIC SUPERVISORS
STAFF ON FIXED-TERM CONTRACTS	EXTERNAL TRAINING PROVIDERS	POTENTIAL MENTORS/ MENTEES	INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
FUNDERS	OTHER INSTITUTIONS	LOCAL BUSINESSES	LOCAL COMMUNITIES

This activity will help you to prepare your action plan and target engagement to different stakeholders.

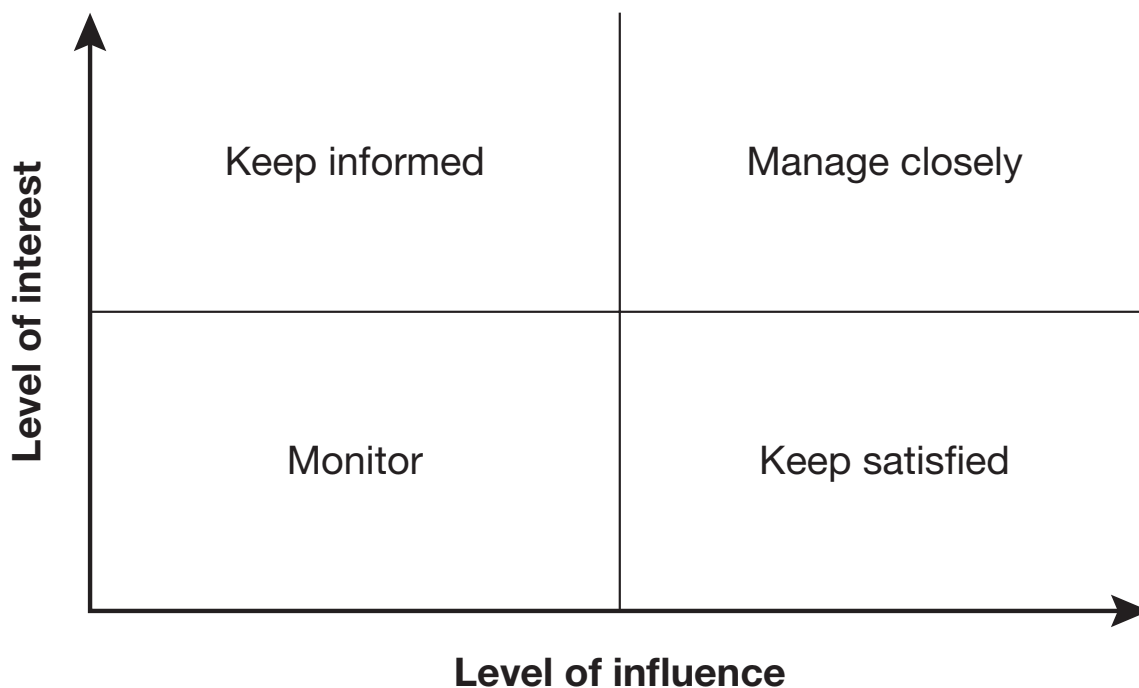
Once you have mapped your stakeholders, you should consider:

- Who are your primary stakeholders?
- What elements of your ISP would each stakeholder be most interested in?
- Who can help you achieve your ISP goals?
- Would you need any data from the stakeholders to successfully deliver ISP activities?
- Who will support or enable change?
- Who will you need to convince to support your ISP?
- Who will benefit from your ISP?

- What opportunities are there and how can you make best use of them?
- What barriers might there be and how would you overcome them?
- What other factors will influence engagement?
- What approaches could you use to engage different stakeholders in the ISP?

You can make an analysis of your stakeholders in terms of their level of interest and their level of influence using a chart like the one below. This will help you to decide how best to engage with them.

This is a good exercise to undertake within your Implementation Group. Copy the chart below onto a flipchart and, using sticky notes, agree where each stakeholder group belongs.



Here is a guide on how to adapt your Engagement Strategy to stakeholders within each section of the chart:

Level of interest	Level of influence	Action	Engagement Strategy
High	High	Manage closely	This is an important group that can support or hinder the ISP. With high levels of influence and interest they are likely to be research leaders and senior management.
High	Low	Keep informed	This group might include researchers who have high interest but little influence, and so it is important to have a representative on the ISP group to make efforts to understand their needs and gather evidence of positive impact on this group. This might include potential funders and external partners.
Low	High	Keep satisfied	This group has high influence but low interest and so it is important to make sure you address their concerns and to encourage their support.
Low	Low	Monitor	This group may not be interested or especially affected but as your ISP develops they may become more affected so monitor these groups over time to identify any changes required in engagement.

Preparing an ISP Engagement Plan

An ISP Engagement Plan will ensure that you involve different stakeholders in the right ways, which is crucial success in ISP institutionalisation. You should consider how and when to engage with your stakeholders, and how to utilise feedback or comment that results from engagement activities:

METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

Here are some examples of methods of engagement with stakeholders that can take place before, during and after your ISP activities.

Please note this list is not exhaustive, your institution may offer other platforms and opportunities.

- Private emails
- Group emails
- Posters
- Meetings
- Roundtables
- Focus groups
- Formal presentations
- Workshop Compendium
- Staff/Student newsletter
- Kick-off events
- Representation at other institutional events
- Seminars
- Progress report publication
- Handouts/Leaflets/Other materials
- Twitter/Facebook/Other social media platforms

- Noticeboards in Departments or Institutional Residences
- Open calls for feedback/Feedback surveys
- Showcase/Celebratory event
- Online resources/Intranets
- Student/local newspapers/Websites

Think about how these methods will give your Group the opportunity to obtain data on engagement, and how this data can be used to adapt your Action Plan to address issues highlighted in your Gap Analysis.

For example, if you have identified that there is a gap in support on writing for publication, you may need to engage with various stakeholders.

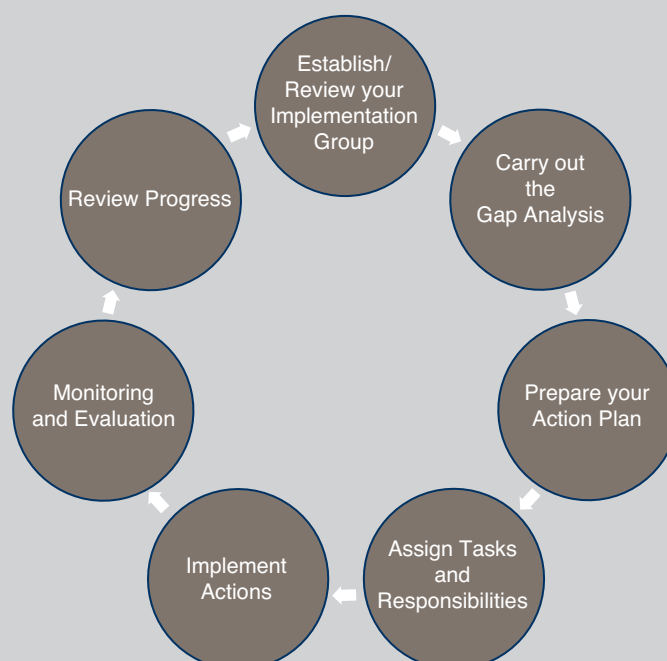
PREPARING AN ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

You may need to engage with your stakeholders at various stages in the implementation of your ISP Action Plan. Engagement at each stage can help to inform and adapt your Action Plan depending on feedback from your stakeholders.

For example, if one of your actions was to run a training workshop on scientific writing skills for female early career researchers, there are various stages in the delivery of this action that you can use to measure engagement. It is worth creating and agreeing a methodology and data collection process to ensure that engagement is efficiently captured and organised in a consistent manner. It is also important to consider data storage which should keep information about individuals secure and confidential.

Here is a reminder of the stages in the design and delivery of an ISP:

There are a series of stages in the design and delivery of an ISP:



Here are some examples of engagement benefits for each stage:

ESTABLISH YOUR IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

Engage with your stakeholders when you are forming your Implementation Group to ensure that your Group is representative. Key stakeholder groups will need to be represented and having members from range of groups can lead to quicker action implementation, as there will be established links with key decision makers across the institution.

CARRY OUT THE GAP ANALYSIS

It is important to engage with various stakeholder groups when conducting your Gap Analysis to ensure that all perspectives are included. For example, senior members of staff may not recognise gaps in support experiences by early career researchers or newly recruited members of staff. Some stakeholder groups may also be able to provide valuable data on support provision, for example, data on numbers of newly recruited staff, numbers of female research staff, or the total number of training opportunities available across the institution.

PREPARE YOUR ACTION PLAN

When preparing your Action Plan, you may need to consult stakeholder groups to review your SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound). For example, if you plan on running a series of workshops, Heads of Departments or students can provide feedback on the best time of year to run these workshops, in line with other deadlines and events. Where actions in your plan rely on stakeholder contribution or participation, it is worthwhile to engage with them on the Action Plan and obtain feedback before you move forward with implementation.

ASSIGN TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

When assigning tasks and responsibilities, you should ensure that key stakeholders are informed, particularly those who will be directly impacted by activities being implemented. Ensure that you give stakeholders the opportunity to be involved in action implementation, and that they are adequately introduced to key members of your Implementation Group. This way, they feel as though they are a part of the process and know exactly who to speak to if they have any concerns or feedback.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

This is the most important stage of engagement! When you are in the implementation stage of your ISP, you should ensure that all key stakeholders are adequately engaged with your activities. For example, if you are running a training workshop, you should not only ensure that your training participants are engaged, but also other groups such as management, events and admin staff, your HR department, your institution communications team, and so on. You should also provide opportunities for feedback in the implementation of actions and give stakeholders the choice to engage at any level they prefer. For example, some stakeholder groups don't need to attend a training workshop, but they may be able to engage with the action by promoting the workshop, ensure that participants are supported to attend, and in monitoring the impact of the learning delivered.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Once your actions have been carried out, you will need to engage a range of stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the impact of your activities. Some stakeholders may need to know how successful the activities were, which could influence how your action plan becomes institutionally embedded.

REVIEW

Once actions have been completed, you will need to engage with your stakeholders to help you to review your progress and achievements. You may find that you need to carry out another Gap Analysis or propose changes to your Action Plan where actions have not been successful. It is useful to engage stakeholders during this process to gather feedback on how the ISP was perceived across the institution and with external groups. The review process can also provide opportunities for future engagement, particularly if you are planning on expanding your implementation activities.

Incentives to encourage engagement

Stakeholders may often need an incentive to become more engaged in your institutional activities. Most incentives are relatively easy to offer, but some require additional resources or financial support. Effective incentives can include:

- Public recognition for contribution to design and development stages (e.g. in reports or presentations)
- Evidence of effectiveness of training topics or actions to be implemented (e.g. reports on impact of the RDF or mentoring)
- Access to useful materials (e.g. an RDF planner, license copies of handbooks or toolkits)
- Opportunities to deliver presentations or training sessions
- Honorariums or payment for contribution of materials/expertise
- Access to networks outside of the institution (e.g. engagement with local communities, business owners, other institutions in the region/internationally) for the purposes of publications, research collaboration or research uptake etc.

Your Group will be best placed to determine what incentives you are able to offer, and what incentives are likely to be effective in engaging with your identified stakeholders. Don't forget to communicate the fact that their engagement can help to inform and adapt the ISP Action Plan, and that any feedback they can offer will be valuable.



Evaluating and measuring engagement with your ISP

It is important to track key stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation of your ISP, from the initial Gap Analysis to final Review. Not only will this help you to monitor and evaluate the progress of your actions, but it will provide valuable information on the impact on your wider institution.

You may decide to divide responsibility for each type of engagement amongst the Group members in accordance with their relevant experience and position. For example, if you want to run a focus group, you may ask a Group member who has previously facilitated focus groups to manage this activity and write-up a report afterwards.

CIRCLE ISP Groups used a variety of methods for collecting data on engagement, such as:

- Interview transcripts/reports
- Survey data
- Focus groups
- Feedback forms
- Event registration data
- Event attendance data
- Suggestion boxes

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, you may identify other opportunities for collecting data through your institution.

Once you have successfully developed a plan for engagement. You should then think about how you will communicate your actions and increase engagement with your ISP.

Tips for successful engagement

- Create short term wins
- Identify the outcomes that are most important to most people
- Choose early targets that are low cost/free
- Choose activities that will have the biggest positive impact on the largest number of people
- Be sure about the pros and cons and be able to provide convincing arguments
- Reward the people who facilitate positive change
- Build on the changes made rather than working on new activities
- Regularly review to enable continuous incremental enhancement led change
- Identify and remove obstacles to executing your vision – look broadly at your institutional structure, performance management systems, recognition and reward, and diversity and equality for making change happen
- Analyse your engagement activities and see what went right, what went wrong
- All feedback is welcome, but not always helpful. Sometimes feedback can be vague, discouraging, or based on miscommunication or lack of understanding of the issue at hand. Each time you receive feedback, good or bad, it is useful to ask for follow-up information where possible.

Developing a Communications Plan

Now that your ISP Implementation Group has developed an Engagement Plan for your ISP, it is useful to put together a comprehensive Communication Plan to communicate in the right way to your different stakeholders.

A solid Communications Plan ensures that the work carried out by your Implementation Group is open, accessible and transparent. It will ensure that stakeholders understand why the Action Plan has been developed, and how activities within the Plan will have a positive impact on them or others. It will also provide opportunity for engagement, feedback and support for your planned activities.

You may choose to develop a Communications Plan as a whole ISP Group or leave each Action Owner to create their own individual plan. Be careful that you do not ‘over communicate’ through multiple communication channels to the same stakeholder group; it’s better to have a coordinated approach.

It is useful to break down the development of the Communications Plan using the following areas: Who, Why, What, When and How.

We have provided a Communication Plan template in Appendix A. Please note that this is not a requirement, you may instead choose to integrate your Communication Plan into your ISP Action Plan.¹

Who

The first step in developing your Communications Plan is to consider the different stakeholder groups that you identified in your stakeholder mapping exercise and tailor your communications to these different stakeholders.

Why

Once you have identified your stakeholder groups, you will need to consider the best way to communicate with each of them. To do this, you need to think about why it is important to communicate with them in the first place, and why they would be interested in your activities. Consider the following:

- Why would your stakeholder be interested in your ISP?
- Why would they benefit?
- Why is it important that you communicate with them?
- Can they offer anything useful in the delivery of your Action Plan?
- What is your intended outcome for communication?
- Why is their engagement useful?
- Can you obtain data to help measure engagement with your ISP?
- Why would they or your Group be negatively affected if they were unaware of your activities?
- What would happen if you did not communicate with them?

It is important not to view your communication activities as a one-way street. Communication improves engagement with your stakeholders, and can provide an opportunity for your Group to gather valuable feedback and opinion on your activities.

What

Once you have contemplated why stakeholders would be interested in your ISP Actions, you can think about what information they would be interested in knowing. Here are some examples of the types of information shared by our CIRCLE institutions in their communication activities.

PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Data required/used in the Gap Analysis
- Design and process of the Gap Analysis
- Findings from the Gap Analysis
- Design of the ISP Action Plan
- Assignment of responsibilities to ISP Group Members
- Monitoring and Evaluation procedures
- Review process

KEY ACTION PLAN MILESTONES

- Timescales for expected implementations of policies/changes to support provision
- Dates of meetings with senior staff or other stakeholders
- Dates of training and events
- Review dates and opportunities to contribute feedback

IMPACT

- Your Vision for Change
- Expected outcomes – for the wider institution
- Expected outcomes – for the individual stakeholder
- Monitoring and Evaluation procedures
- Review dates and opportunities to contribute feedback

Not all of your stakeholders will be interested in all types of information. Rather than trying to communicate “everything to everyone”, you should think about their particular interests.

For example, some of your stakeholders may have contributed to the Gap Analysis stage, providing data to help identify areas of support which require improvement. They may therefore want to know how their input was used to inform the Action Plan.

Other stakeholders may directly benefit from the successful implementation of your Action Plan, or opportunities and events delivered during its execution. These stakeholders are likely to not only require information about planned activities, but also why they should be engaged and how to make the most of the opportunities available.

It is also important to note that stakeholders may become more or less interested in information as the ISP progresses. For example, your VC may only be interested in how the Action Plan was developed and the measurable impact that activities had once your progress is reviewed. If you are delivering a workshop for early career researchers to use the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), they would need to know about the workshop and its purpose ahead of time and may also need to know if there are any feedback or reporting requirements once the training has been delivered.

It may be useful to highlight two or three key areas of ISP activities that each stakeholder is likely to be most interested in to help guide your Communication Plan.

¹ Please refer to CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guide 1: Designing an Effective Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development for further information on developing your ISP Action Plan.

How

There are various ways you can communicate progress and activities conducted by your Implementation Group, as well as the various achievements, challenges and opportunities you have had along the way. Consider the following:

- How will you ensure that relevant information is communicated?
- How will you communicate with each group?
- What method will be appropriate? E.g. Face-to-face, email, social media etc.
- Where will you communicate with each group? E.g. training sessions/ committee meetings/ induction?
- How will you provide an incentive to encourage people to attend/ listen/buy-in?

When

The final step in constructing your Communication Plan is to review your ISP Action Plan and determine when communication can actually take place. Consider the following:

- When is the best time to communicate with each stakeholder group?
- How often will you communicate with each group to keep momentum?
- How long will your interaction need to be to keep interest?
- What arrangements need to be made to enable the communication to take place? Do you need to book a venue or arrange a suitable date and time?
- When should communication take place in relation to engagement opportunities? Have you given enough preparation time?

You may find it helpful to add communication activities to your ISP Task Planner(s).²

Below, we have provided some examples from the CIRCLE programme using the Communication Plan template found in Appendix A.

² Please refer to Good Practice Guide 1: Designing an Effective Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development for further information on developing your ISP Task Planner

Communication Plan examples

Stakeholder Group (Who)	Communication Outcomes (Why)	Key Areas of Interest (What)	Communication Activities (How)	Proposed Schedule (When)	ISP Group Members Responsible
Vice Chancellors Office	<p>To gain support from VCs Office for the ISP Action Plan</p> <p>To understand how the ISP Action Plan aligns to the institutional strategy</p>	<p>Why we are carrying out the ISP for our institution</p> <p>How the Gap Analysis and ISP Action Plan was designed</p> <p>The anticipated impact our planned actions</p> <p>How the ISP supports the institution strategy</p>	<p>Formal meetings between ISP Lead and representative at first stage.</p> <p>Group Presentation on Action Plan and Vision for Change.</p> <p>Sharing of review and reporting via email with follow-up meeting with ISP Lead.</p>	<p>Meeting to be arranged to gain permission for the ISP and Gap Analysis</p> <p>Meeting to be arranged when Action Plan completed (presentation to be delivered)</p> <p>Catch-up meetings to be arranged every 6 months throughout implementation</p> <p>Final presentation to be delivered once first review and report produced</p>	
Female Researchers / Staff	<p>To inform female early career researchers about targeted training workshops</p> <p>To inform all female staff about proposed changes to maternity leave policy</p>	<p>Why targeted training workshops have been developed, their expected outcomes and when they will be held.</p> <p>To gain feedback on proposed policy and inform female staff on likely timescales.</p>	<p>Workshop to be shared on training calendar, staff intranet and noticeboards across campus. Supervisors and Heads of Department will also be informed and asked to share information.</p> <p>News of changes to policy to be shared in staff newsletter. Focus group to be arranged with female staff to share details on proposed changes and expected impact, and to gather feedback.</p> <p>Final policy to be shared before being sent for approval</p>	<p>Training workshop to be advertised 3 months before it is to be held. Feedback reports to be shared one month after workshop with wider institution. 6-month follow-up report to be shared with wider institution.</p> <p>Changes to policy and invitation to take part in the focus group to take place 1 month ahead of activity. Updated policy to be shared with participants before being sent for approval. News to be shared with wider institution once response has been received.</p>	

As mentioned above, use of this template is not a requirement. Your Group may prefer to integrate the Communications Plan within your Action Plan or your Task Planner. If you do choose to use this template, you can decide if you want to create a Communications Plan for the wider Group, or alternatively, each Action Owner can create a plan for the actions for which they have responsibility.

Making the Case

There are two methods you can use to quickly make the case for your ISP.

Create an ISP Presentation

Use the work you have done on your Communication Plan, Stakeholder Mapping and SWOC to create slides that can be used to share and present to others.

Slides could include:

- Vision for Change
- Benefits
- Gap Analysis and Action Planning and processes
- Differences it will make to the group you are addressing
- A question for the group which will start honest discussions and give dynamic and convincing reasons to get people thinking and talking
- Next steps

Elevator Pitch

You can also create an Elevator Pitch of 5 minutes or less demonstrating the above.

An Elevator Pitch is a brief, persuasive speech to spark interest in the ISP. A good Elevator Pitch should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 5 minutes. It should start with something relevant to the person/people you are speaking to, explain how the ISP will be of benefit to them and finish with a request relating to the ISP.



STAR Method for Communicating Success

When you are carrying out communication activities, it is helpful to anticipate key questions that your stakeholder could ask you. Most stakeholders will want to know why and how you are carrying out an ISP, as well as how your activities are likely to benefit them.

A useful technique to prepare answers is to use the STAR model. This framework can be used to present information and provide clear examples or evidence of your work and the potential or actual impact.

Think about a success you have achieved, or intend to achieve, as a result of your ISP activities. When communicating about this success, break down information into the following areas:

S – Situation (Describe the current/former situation that was being addressed)

T – Task (Describe the task that you were faced with/area of support that needed improving)

A – Action (What action did your Implementation Group design to address the gap)

R – Result (What results did you achieve/do you anticipate? What conclusions did you reach? What did you learn from the experience?)

Here are some examples of achievements of CIRCLE ISP Groups, presented using the STAR model.

Success: Development of a mentoring policy

S: Early career researcher’s programmes, such as mentoring, were absent.

T: How to establish a functional formal mentoring programme for early career researchers.

A: Initiate the mentoring policy development. Draft a policy and obtain senior support.

R: Mentoring policy was developed with input from senior staff and is in the process of approval from Council.

Success: Affirmed mentorship as a very important institutional strengthening tool

S: Mentoring programme is already in place.

T: Awareness of the mentoring programme was limited and needed to be improved.

A: Workshops and summer schools were organised to create awareness of mentoring opportunities for early career researchers.

R: Much more awareness was created. Attendees were made confident of their career paths and learned that mentoring was a really positive tool in institutional strengthening.

Success: Mainstreaming mentoring into the institution

S: There was a mentoring system in place but perceptions were mixed.

T: Task meant to dispel the notion that as mentoring was not compulsory, it was not part of work of academics.

A: A two-day workshop was carried out that examined the benefits of mentoring and challenges faced by both experienced researchers and early career researchers.

R: Following the workshop, there was a positive change in view on mentoring held by senior academic managers which has now been mainstreamed and linked with the grants office of the University.

Success: Construction of ramp to enable physical challenged students/staff to be part of institute

S: The university had stairs all over which made it difficult for physically challenged students and staff to participate.

T: To support physically challenged staff and students and to convince management to invest.

A: We convened several forums with university management which resulted in arriving to consensus to make further surveillance and estimates for improvement.

R: We now have ramps constructed all over the university, enabling fellows with wheelchairs or other physical challenges to move comfortably and freely within the campus.

Communicating Challenges

You may need to communicate challenges your Implementation Group has encountered or may encounter in the delivery of your ISP Action Plan.

You might be communicating challenges for a number of reasons. Perhaps to reassure the stakeholder that you have already anticipated the occurrence of challenges, and that your Group has prepared solutions just in case. You may be asking your stakeholder for support in overcoming specific challenges or obstacles, in which case you will be explaining why their contribution is valuable and why you are confident that your solution will work with their help.

In any case, it will be useful to brainstorm solutions to anticipated challenges, which can later be used in communication activities. Here are some examples of solutions to commonly reported challenges brainstormed by our CIRCLE institutions:

Challenge: Having a large number of staff with diverse support needs

Solutions: Segment the needs of the different categories of staff. Pick which areas from the RDF apply to each category of staff. Have an objective method in place for selecting who will be included in each category, e.g. if training is to be provided, use this method to select who will participate in the training to increase reach

Challenge: Mobilising institutional resources to support ISP innovations

Solutions: Align CIRCLE activities with other university activities for which there is already allocated funding. Review funding opportunities from within the institution and appeal to senior staff. Explore the possibility of obtaining funding from external providers. Tap into existing resources accessible online or via the network of the Implementation Group.

Tips for successful communication

- Ensure your whole group is well informed of the Communication Plan and engagement activities set out in the Action Plan.
- Preparation is key! Your whole group should be able to communicate successes and challenges and should have an Elevator Pitch prepared in the event of direct stakeholder engagement.
- Make sure that the stakeholder feels valued and that they are aware of how their engagement will be beneficial to the implementation of the ISP.
- Be responsive – endeavour to answer emails or enquiries in a timely fashion. Have a selection of materials or other resources at hand if they require further information.
- Communicate changes made as well as new activities. Start with what they know and elaborate with how the ISP addresses gaps in support that your group has identified.



Institutionalising your ISP

The process of the ISP is designed to facilitate change and institutionalise actions that are delivered by your Implementation Group. Achieving institutionalisation of your ISP involves engaging people with the ISP and communicating your success.

Here are some suggestions to help you think about how to institutionalise your ISP, by engaging with different groups and individuals:

- Make a persuasive case for the ISP, using evidence from your activities or other sources
- Identify a senior Champion to advocate for the ISP at senior level
- Bring together a strong ISP Group with institutional influence to develop your ISP vision, lead and deliver ISP activities
- Work with different groups to implement your ISP Action Plan
- Engage the full range of stakeholders who will be affected by ISP
- Communicate effectively about ISP vision and activities to raise its profile in your institution
- Achieve short term successes, evaluate outcomes and celebrate them
- Consolidate successes to build ISP credibility and advance your ISP action plan
- Publicise, engage, celebrate and spread ISP across institutional research culture, systems, structures and policies

For more information about institutionalising change, see *Leading Change* by John Kotter (2012).

CIRCLE Tips for Institutionalisation of the ISP

Our CIRCLE Champions offered the following advice on the best ways to institutionalise your ISP activities.

- Create a more inclusive and stimulating environment for ALL researchers, i.e. from students to academics but also inclusive of less visible individuals (research officers, soft funded researchers, contract researchers)
- Entrench professionalism into all cadre of research and teaching in the entire university system. Professionalism is the university system being able to generate (conduct research), reproduce (train), and translate (apply knowledge) efforts for economic development
- Mainstream specific activities with relevant departments, for example, ensure that use of the RDF is a component in all activities of the Directorate of Research and Outreach
- Embed the programmes of ISP by aiming to introduce institutional policies – this increased the likelihood of achieving sustainable change
- Make sure all staff of my university feed into the ISP – give everyone the opportunity to provide support and ensure that you communicate openness and transparency
- Mainstream ISP ideas into existing institutional development frameworks – leverage support systems that are already in place or use the ISP as an opportunity to improve or adapt them.
- Entrench ISP in institutional annual work plans and budget – make the case for financial support and investment from your institution!
- Promote recognition of the ISP as a tool for monitoring university activities and support provision – market it as a valuable resource for senior university staff!

Further support in the CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guide Series

You may find the following guides useful for the next stage of your ISP:

Guide 1: Designing an Effective Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development

This Guide shows you how to set up your own Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development by introducing each of the design and delivery stages. This includes how to establish your ISP Implementation Group, carrying out your Gap Analysis, preparing and implementing your Action Plan, and how to monitor success.

Guide 2: Engaging People with your Institutional Strengthening Programme

This Guide provides information on how to engage stakeholders with your ISP, how to create a communications plan, and various tips on keeping your institution updated on your progress and achievements and embedding activities into “normal business”.

Guide 3: Enhancing Institutional Researcher Development Programmes

This Guide introduces the concept of Researcher Development Programmes (RDP) and explores how to design an effective training programme using an experiential learning approach. The Guide also covers how you can scale up your workshop to a full-scale institutional programme of training support.

Guide 4: Approaches to Mentoring and Setting up an Institutional Mentoring Programme

This Guide explains the different approaches to mentoring, how they differ from academic supervision, and how to set up institutional mentoring programmes for researchers using tools such as the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

Guide 5: Institutions: using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to enhance researcher development provision and develop researcher competencies

This Guide explains how institutions can use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a framework for supporting the professional development of researchers within their institution.

Guide 6: Researchers: using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework for professional development planning

This Guide explains how individual researchers can use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a framework for supporting their own professional development.

Appendix

Appendix A: Communications Plan Template

Stakeholder Group (Who)	Communication Outcomes (Why)	Key Areas of Interest (What)	Communication Activities (How)	Proposed Schedule (When)	ISP Group Members Responsible

Acknowledgements

Africa is particularly vulnerable to the environmental, social and economic impact of changes in climate, with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggesting that Africa is likely to emerge as the most vulnerable region to climate change by 2100 (IPCC, 2007).

Despite consensus on the current and future impacts of climate change on Africa, there are significant uncertainties on the exact nature of future climatic changes. A better understanding is critical to developing sustainable and cost-effective responses. However, sufficient support and resources to build a solid research-base are lacking. Between 1981 and 2009, African scientists contributed less than 2% of global climate change publications. There are a number of initiatives in Africa helping to address Africa's climate change problems, but the research community remains in need of a boost.

The Climate Impacts Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa (CIRCLE) programme is an initiative of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), and aims to address the above issues. The project adopted the dual approach of supporting individual academics to undertake research while also working with their institutions to develop better professional development systems for their researchers.

CIRCLE was allocated GBP 4.85 million over 5 years (2014-2019) and facilitated capacity strengthening of African researchers to develop relevant local solutions and improve uptake and use in local, national and regional policy and implementation. It also enhanced the output of African researchers through delivery of focused training and support on grant funding and writing for publications.

The programme does not work in isolation, and seeks to contribute to local, national and regional policy agendas and the initiatives of institutions already working in climate change in Africa, as well as those yet to come. It is important that the individual researchers and academic institutions benefiting from this programme work in conjunction with existing frameworks to maximise their impact. The aim of the programme is not simply to produce a body of research, but to strengthen the mechanisms of research uptake and support institutions to develop and realise a clearly defined strategic approach to climate change research.

The information about CIRCLE ISP in this Guide has been generated by a wide range of programme participants including Senior Champions, professional and academic staff and early career research Fellows during our programme of workshops and in follow-up evaluations and with the support of the AAS and ACU teams.

We would like to thank all who collaborated in the CIRCLE ISP, undertook steps for institutional change and embraced the journey to strengthen institutional provision for the career development of researchers, and especially CIRCLE Fellows who have developed into research leaders for the future.

Alison Mitchell, Director of Development, Vitae

Jen Reynolds, Professional Development Manager, Vitae

Vitae (www.vitae.ac.uk) is the global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers, experienced in working with higher education institutions as they strive for excellence, innovation and impact. Vitae is a non-profit programme, part of The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) Ltd with over 45 years' experience in enhancing the skills and careers.

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George Lakey, CIRCLE Programme Officer, The ACU

Ben Prasadam-Halls, Director of Programmes, The ACU

The ACU is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education. International collaboration is central to this ambition: by bringing universities together from around the world – and crucially the people who study and work within them – the ACU helps to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds, and improve lives. The ACU champions higher education as a cornerstone of stronger societies, supporting its members, partners, and stakeholders as they adapt to a changing world.



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