

Session 2

IDEAS FOR UNIVERSITIES: ENCOURAGING INNOVATION WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

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The challenge? Anyone with an interest in their Higher Education Sector job will have a number of ideas floating around in their head about ways to make their job better. Ideas are those solutions that come to you at 2 am in the morning when you wake up worrying about a problem that just won't go away, or those flashes of inspiration that occur when you're thinking about how to make the most of the opportunities that lie in your day ahead. But how do you know if your ideas have genuine merit? And even if there were a way of evaluating them, is there a clearly identified pathway supported by senior management to encourage you to take your idea forward? Your challenge is to evaluate your idea and then decide for yourself if it is worthy of taking the necessary steps for approval. Your institution's challenge is to create an environment where innovation is encouraged without fear of failure and to provide a simple and efficient approval and implementation process.

The Australian Public Sector (APS) has an agenda to make itself the best public service in the world, partly through supporting a culture of innovation among its staff. This requires encouraging staff to develop new ideas and providing clear avenues for staff to take their ideas forward for evaluation. Although there are differences between the APS and the Higher Education Sector (most obviously the political imperatives) the two sectors are sufficiently alike (large, slow moving bureaucracies; multiple objectives; multifaceted organisational arrangements) to allow comparisons to be drawn. The first part of this presentation is a case study of a project to support innovation that was implemented within the APS and focuses on what the Higher Education Sector (HES) might learn from it.

The second part of the presentation discusses relevant findings by the Australian Innovation Research Centre from the world's largest survey of innovation by public sector organisations, covering all European Union member states, with 4,500 respondents. The main findings include the single most important drivers of innovation, barriers to innovation and comparing the top down to bottom up approach.

The third part of the presentation will describe how the case study, the survey, and research into the HES have informed the development of a program designed specifically for professional employees within the HES. **IDEAS for Universities** (Innovation Development Early Assessment System) is a structured way to assess genuine merit of ideas. This presentation will explain how it can be used to evaluate and promote innovative ideas in the Higher Education Sector.

Presenters Biography

Carol Harding is the Deputy Director of the Australian Innovation Research Centre at the University of Tasmania. She has worked for UTAS since 1999, having held previous positions including Assistant Director, Governance & Legal, Executive Officer to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning), (Acting) Director of the Cradle Coast Campus, and Administrator of the Graduate School of Management. Carol is a member of the AIRC Management Committee, the Faculty Executive Committee, the Faculty Research Committee, and is the Course Co-ordinator of the Graduate Certificate in Commercialisation. She holds a Masters of Business Administration from the University of Tasmania.