

ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

Bridging the Gaps



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Slide details
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research
Council

Bridging the Gaps

- To date, Bridging the Gaps has funded four rounds of awards (from July 2006 to March 2010) which equates to 23 awards totalling £10.5m of funding.
- Each round evolved and had a different focus.
- Following this investment, we wanted to take a hiatus and review the scheme.
- The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact that the *Bridging the Gaps* (BTG) scheme has had on the cross-disciplinary culture at institutions while also reflecting on the current investment.
- One other key objective was for the outcomes to be used as an input to the future strategy planning of the scheme.

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BTG Review

- Internal Review
- Broken down into four key areas:
 - Sustainability of collaboration formed
 - Impact on Institution/research strategy
 - Institutional support
 - Impact on people
- Happy to circulate the review electronically.

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Sustainability of Collaborations Formed

Key findings

Bridging the Gaps has been successful in establishing 'new' as well as developing existing partnerships, collaborations and networks.

Many institutions have stated that researchers have achieved funding from proposals created from the collaborations formed through *Bridging the Gaps*.

Key Successes

Bridging the Gaps funding has led to high-level collaborations, surpassing many institutions' expectations.

Majority of institutions involved have seen an increase in the amount of new collaborations being created within Cross-disciplinary Research

Key Recommendation

'Sustainability' hard to determine due to the time constraints of scheme.

Need to highlight most consistent collaborations and help maintain initial networks created through *Bridging the Gaps*.

Impact on Institution/Research Strategy

Key finding 1

100% of responses stated that *Bridging the Gaps* had an impact within the institution. However, the nature of the impact varied greatly and there was also some concern over the longevity of the impacts.

Key finding 2

Cross-disciplinary research is now part of many institutions' 'strategic plan' and the majority of institutions have stated an increase in cross-discipline proposals being submitted.

Key Successes

Bridging the gaps has raised awareness of the importance of cross-disciplinary work, causing a shift in the way research is funded with many institutions being much more geared towards funded interdisciplinary research.

Key Recommendation

- a) Need to visit institutions on an 'ad-hoc' basis to see if a 'cultural change' has occurred
- b) Need to carry out another (more in-depth) evaluation when all institutions have finished their projects to see if *Bridging the Gaps* has impacted the institutions in the long term.

Institutional Support

Key findings

The institutions have embraced the scheme with two thirds (66.6%) of responses stating that their Institution provided support in addition to the *Bridging the Gaps* award.

Following the success of the *Bridging the Gaps* scheme, a small number of institutions have continued the scheme by funding it internally.

Key Successes

Institutions have continued the scheme in some capacity by providing leverage to help continue supporting cross-disciplinary research.

Key Recommendation

Need to create mechanisms to help institutions continue supporting cross-disciplinary research.

Impact on People

Key findings

Many of the most successful BTG funded projects are products of strong partnerships.

Early career researchers were much more open to cross disciplinary collaborations although this partly can be attributed to the funding streams made available to them.

Many researchers whose work was funded by *Bridging the Gaps* have developed vital interpersonal and organisational skills which have helped further their careers.




Key Success

Bridging the Gaps has had a direct impact on early stage researchers. In addition, BTG led to the acquisition of valuable skills, and knowledge transfer between disciplines

Key Recommendation

- a) To consider seeking new opportunities to bring the established collaborations/partnerships into contact with other funded researchers from institutions.
- b) There is a role for EPSRC to be involved with institutions in maintaining most successful partnerships / Networks.

Conclusions

- Flexibility of the scheme 
- Range of approaches 
- Value for money 
- Impact on early career researchers

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Next Step for BTG?

- Can an institution receive 2 awards?
- Breadth of themes?
- C-DIP Future's Forum 2 Feb
- Recognise the need for time up front and people based activities.

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End of Presentation