Technical and ECR Career Paths – Joelle and Alex

- Scribe/s: Joëlle
- BOG-1 18 people (10.5 identify as core facility, 10 identify as ECR); BOG-2 14 people.

- Suggested discussion starter points for each group

  ○ What are the key problems that our community are facing in this area? - expanded below
    - i. Career path categorisation
    - ii. Language
    - iii. Training
    - iv. Recognition

  ○ Have you experience of difficulty in filling positions? Any particular area? Would it be helpful to evidence this?
    ○ Software engineer / data scientist - salary scales can be significantly greater outside of academia.
    ○ Multiple rounds of recruitment may need to be held.
    ○ Candidates using job offers as stepping stones into future roles for career progression.
  ○ Are technical teams eligible/encouraged to apply for funding in your HEI/Institute? Are the funding bodies ahead of universities here? - Encouragement to apply depends on Institution but seems to be related to whether Institution is aware of recent changes to funding eligibility. Discussed further in point (2) below

- Identify at least 1 obstacle to try and overcome (don't just say lack of funding, be specific) and 1 action point to address it - detailed below, possible action points in **bold.**

- Generate a WIBGI (Wouldn't It Be Great If) wishlist (don't say more funding, be specific)
  ○ ….we had a database of willing professionals to be shadowed
  ○ ….we were paid more
  ○ ….acknowledgment came as standard
  ○ ….we could fill every core position

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1. Career Path categorisation
    a. 'Imaging scientists' come from a number of different backgrounds and their job roles also encompass different sectors (core facility, technician, researcher (academic aligned), software engineer).
    b. As such institutions often do not have appropriate career tracks. This limits job security (fixed term contracts), career progression, opportunities.
    c. Job title may not represent job role.
    d. This may also limit ability to apply for external grant money and supervise projects/students. Funding eligibility may depend on position being underwritten/supported by host Institution which often therefore excludes staff on fixed-term contracts.
    e. Universities of Liverpool, York, Glasgow have introduced new career tracks to include these roles to aid career progression. These include a 'technical specialist pathway' with progression up to Lvl 8/9 (Liverpool) which could be seen as equivalent to chief scientific/experimental officer. **Potentially could be used as pilot schemes to inform granting bodies and other Institutions.**
2. Language
    a. Whilst grant bodies are now open to 'non-PI' roles applying for funding (lead applicant can be core facility / imaging scientist) the language involved may preclude applicants and/or Institutions from applying.
    b. **Need to move away from requirements on job level and/or salary scale to identify eligibility for application to funding.**
    c. **Need to redefine 'what is a PI'**
    d. **Need for dissemination of changes in eligibility pushed through to Institutions. Greater communication needed from grant bodies using appropriate language to inform Institutions.**
    e. **Need for education to write technical support into grants. As above Institutions require communication/education from grant bodies to overcome fear of requesting higher grant funding**.
3. Training
    a. There are few training opportunities for new core facility staff - including basic microscopy training.
    b. Core facility training workshop run by RMS is great but hands-on experience / job-shadowing could enhance this remit.
    c. **Job shadowing scheme could be appended to the mentoring scheme being piloted by RMS/BioImagingUK**

      d. Job shadowing could form short (week) to longer (month/s) placements. Could involve industry placements.

4. Recognition
   a. Lack of imaging scientist recognition despite high use of bioImaging within research and publications.
   b. **Chartered scientist / apprenticeships could be beneficial for career progression / cv bolstering** - this is currently being investigated by the RMS. Would need to address; what is the value? How would this be assessed? What is the take-up of similar schemes and what is the feedback?
   c. Recognition could be received by developing career paths as detailed in (1).
   d. Lack of recognition for core facilities damages their infrastructure as supporting funding bodies and Institutions require evidence of impact.
   e. Reduced infrastructure support leads to failure to replace and install new instrumentation which damages usability of core.
   f. **Institutions need to make core facility positions available and need to replace roles when staff leave to other jobs.**
   g. General lack of recognition leads to lower salaries with respect to similar non-academic careers and therefore loss of people from these roles.

Volunteers:
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