

## News release

1 July 2019

### Digital consultation launched seeking new knowledge about overlooked staff group in the cultural sector



A new research and knowledge exchange project led by staff at Oxford University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums is gathering information about the role of executive and administrative assistants within the cultural sector.

The aim is to better understand and define best practice for administrative support roles in the cultural sector, and create a range of resources and tools to encourage this.

Executive and administrative support staff play a central role in many institutions, but they are

consistently overlooked by studies of the cultural sector workforce and there is currently very little information available about this staff group.

The new project, *Supporting Leadership*, has been initiated to address this knowledge gap.

The project team are using online surveys to gather information from staff across the cultural sector. They are currently inviting contributions from administrative support staff from institutions of all sizes and remits - from galleries, libraries and museums to theatre, performing arts, gardens, heritage sites and charities. Contributions are invited from current and former support staff, as well as leaders and senior staff members who manage support staff. Information on participation is available on the project website at <https://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/supporting-leadership>.

The online surveys have been developed with input from focus groups of executive and administrative support staff from across the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums division and from senior leaders within the organisation.

*"Through the digital consultation, we're aiming to collect detailed information about the way that executive and administrative assistants support and enable dynamic cultural sector leadership."* says Vanessa Moore, from the project team.

*"We're also interested in the support that these staff members receive themselves,"* says Emma Thomas, from the project team *"We will be looking at current levels of provision for this staff group in relation to support, training and professional development and would like to explore possibilities for providing bespoke new support mechanisms and professional development opportunities."*



The outcomes will be of direct benefit to both leaders and executive assistants in supporting the development of more productive working relationships. The findings will also be of broad benefit across the sector as they will provide valuable information about the nature of the work and skills required, which will enable more informed decision-making about organisational structure and recruitment.

The final report is due to be published in November 2019 and will be available for download for free from the project website.

## Further information:

<https://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/supporting-leadership>

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## Notes to editors:

- The project is supported by the University of Oxford Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund which provides small-scale grants for early-stage innovative knowledge exchange ideas (<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/funding/ke-seed-fund>).
- The project has been partly inspired by the Museums Leaders Report research project conducted by the Saïd Business School and the University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums. The report looks at the changing nature of leadership through increasingly turbulent and stretching times, and sets out the challenges and opportunities facing cultural sector leaders today (<https://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/article/the-museum-leaders-report>).
- The University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums comprise the four University museums – the Ashmolean, History of Science, Natural History and Pitt Rivers – together with the Bodleian Libraries and the Oxford Botanic Garden & Harcourt Arboretum. Collectively these institutions hold some of the world's most significant collections, covering the breadth and depth of the natural world, global art and artefacts.

## Images:

- *Executive and administrative support staff from Oxford University's Gardens, Libraries and Museums taking part in a 'Supporting Leadership' focus group. Images: University of Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums*

*Images available for download from:*

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/956wzkaahbawifu/AACumGxNXPtAeaXrmFHg-xnta?dl=0>