



Purpose of the grant

The awarding of a travel grants from DARMA facilitated my participation in the EARMA BESTPRAC Event—“Bridging the Gap”—held in Barcelona. The stated objective of this engagement was twofold: first, to represent the Danish Technological Institute (DTI) as part of a broader dialogue within the European research and innovation community; and second, to deliver the presentation: *“Managing pre-award and post-award in the same office: how to manage and leverage dual responsibilities (in search of synergies).”* This topic is highly relevant for research managers and administrators who are, with increasing frequency, tasked with supporting the entire project lifecycle, from initial concept to final reporting. The grant enabled me to share DTI's experiences and gather feedback from international peers.

Activities undertaken, and RMA insights

The central activity during the event consisted of the delivery of a presentation structured to highlight several key themes:

- **Context Setting:** Initially, I sought to situate DTI within the landscape of leading European Research and Technology Organizations (RTOs), explicating the architecture of our support office. This included details of our role in facilitating strategic networking, proposal development and project management.
- **From Pre- to Post-Award Support:** The evolution of our office was traced, particularly the identification of a ‘support gap’ in post-award management and the subsequent establishment of a demand-driven project management service for Horizon Europe projects. This development, in effect, was catalysed by a perceived need to mitigate risk in the most research-intensive DTI units.
- **Management Dilemmas:** Considerable attention was devoted to the inherent tensions faced by teams with dual pre- and post-award responsibilities, including questions of motivation, professional identity, and the allocation of scarce resources.
- **The Search for Synergies:** A central proposition of the presentation concerned the possibility that post-award learning might, in turn, enhance pre-award proposal development. Specific preliminary findings, for instance, the need to formulate more realistic travel budgets and to develop a deeper grasp of lump-sum project modalities, were shared and critically discussed.
- **The “Winner’s Curse”:** Finally, the concept of the “winner’s curse” was discussed. It describes how winning highly competitive grants (like Horizon Europe) can lead to unforeseen challenges due to over-ambitious proposals with squeezed budgets, tight timelines, and numerous deliverables. This often makes it difficult to translate post-award “lessons learned” into more conservative, realistic proposals, as excellence and ambition are required to win in the first place.
- **Interactive Dialogue:** The presentation concluded with a call for input from the audience, asking them to share their own strategies for bridging the gap between pre- and post-award.

Thank you to the DARMA board for this opportunity. The grant has allowed me to contribute to an important international discussion and bring valuable perspectives back to my work in Denmark. I remain available for follow-up dialogue with members of DARMA who may have become interested in our ongoing journey and practices.