

Title: **Small is beautiful – how highly targeted funding can have a much broader impact**

Presenter: **Simon Ball**
JISC TechDis

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Provide evidence to their own institution of the value of small, targeted funding schemes operated from a central base (such as staff development unit).
- Inspire colleagues who have never applied for funding to consider doing so.
- Conduct an evaluation of a series of small projects, by following the described methodology.

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

- Evaluation of three highly targeted funding streams (HEAT, Kickstart and Innovation Fund) showed how the impact of small projects designed to benefit a handful of students could each end up affecting the lives of hundreds. All three schemes focussed on supporting and encouraging the use of technology to embed inclusive learning and teaching practices and to disseminate these findings with the aim of enhancing teaching excellence across the department, institution or discipline.
- Focus will be on the HEAT scheme, under which 87 projects were funded, with the mean funding per project under £1400. The intention was that only technology would be funded, which the project holder would use to change an aspect of their everyday practice to make it more inclusive.
- An evaluation exercise took place a minimum of 12 months after the completion of the projects. This took the form of an online survey, followed by telephone interviews where permission had been granted. Questions were oriented to determining the depth, breadth and nature of the impact of the projects (if any) after the original project duration and beyond the original project cohort.
- 67% of projects impacted on the practice of the whole department, faculty or school, 33% on the wider organisation, and 25% on the wider discipline or practice area.
- 64% of participants went on to obtain further funding for other purposes, despite a majority having never applied for funding previously.
- The advantage of the HEAT approach is that it targets opportunities for small but highly significant changes which typically require less bureaucratic clearance to adopt.

In the HEAT impact evaluation, 97% of project holders agreed their projects represented time well spent (staff time was not funded).

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

-
- 5 mins describing the HEAT Scheme, Innovation Fund and Kickstart and the kinds of projects undertaken,
- 10 mins describing the evaluation process and findings,
- 15 mins discussion of the evaluation methodology and how it could be replicated or repurposed internally to provide evidence of the value of small targeted projects,
- 15 mins discussion of how the evidence presented could be used within institutions to press for internal funding schemes managed by staff development units, focussing on improved teaching practice, and how more effective use could be made within institutions of successful funding applications.