

Lessons in Coalescence + Cohesion + Culture from three centres of excellence



Three take home messages questions

Coalescence

• Your team must want to do what you're promising: Question: What grand challenge or shared vision are you rallying around?

Cohesion

• Your aim is organisational maturity as soon as practicable – hopefully already somewhat evident by the full application stage. Question: What will be your centre's strategic, structural and symbolic integrators for 7 years?

Culture

 Centres of Excellence do things differently and can shape a generation of HDR scholars and ECRs. Question: How do you plan to alter the status quo?



Coalescence

- You're asking people to get out of bed for \$35 million. What grand challenge and shared vision are you rallying around?
- It's all good and well to craft a proposal to wow grant reviewers, but you have to be able to deliver what you promise once you're funded. You, your team, your nodes and your partners must want to do all of what you say you'll do. Again, what are your rallying points? What people and organisations do you need?
- Your CIs will gladly coalesce around money! How you structure your budget will either incentivise or unintentionally damage collaborative research. Budget for *activities*, not for *individuals*. How are you structuring your budget to address your rallying point/s? "Every CI gets a postdoc and discretionary funds for 7 years" doesn't work.
- What's in it for your partners? What's in it for the centre? Choose partners wisely and make sure they know what they're signing up to. Can you define the mutual benefit of each partnership to rally around?



Cohesion

Strategic – Structural – Symbolic

- What will success look like? It's not just conducting your research, but running a successful, cohesive and impactful organisation. Take strategic planning and research design seriously. What strategic portfolios do you need to build apart from your research teams? Who do you need to hire? Early reality check: if you have trouble creating coalescence around strategy at the EOI stage, seven years of trying to implement your vision is going to be ... challenging.
- Governance, executive leadership, organisational structure and centre operations are critically important. What might your advisory body/ies look like? Who are the right people for leadership roles? How much regret do you want to live with if you underinvest in professional and third space staff?
- Symbolism is important. You may balk at terms like "branding" or "messaging" but
 this is more than mere marketing. You want to be recognised as an authoritative voice
 outside the centre and create invisible bonds for those within. People relate to
 symbols!



Culture

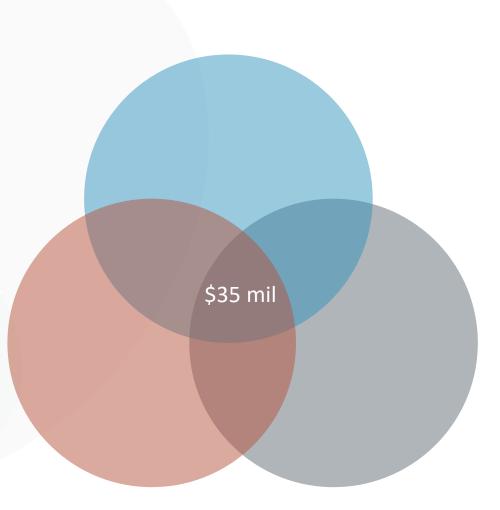
- "Culture eats strategy for breakfast" but what is culture in a cross institutional research organisation and how much influence do you as a leadership team have?
- You'll shepherd hundreds of HDR students and ECRs over 7 years. They are the future of research. What environment do you want to create for them? OR what environment will *they* create for *you*? What do your partners want in their future employees?
- Attributes of the centres I've worked in:
 - Dynamic & Innovative
 - Cooperative
 - Healthy, respectful debate
 - Nurturing
 - Progressive and equitable
 - Courageous
 - Integrated
 - Democratic
 - Kind and respectful



Coalescence

Cohesion

Culture





Thank you



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