

Snowball Metrics and measuring Success Rate

Measuring Research Grant Applications Success Rate

The Snowball Metrics (www.snowballmetrics.com) partners have defined a set of metrics that inform all areas of research activity. Their purpose is to provide agreed methodologies which can be consistently applied to research management information thereby facilitating benchmarking between institutions. Snowball Metrics is a bottom-up initiative which is owned by research-intensive universities around the world; the metrics are data source- and system-agnostic and the definitions work across geographies other than the UK. To facilitate Snowball metrics becoming global standards and which enable institutional benchmarking across the entire spectrum of research activities, the metrics are available in the CERIF format and as CASRAI standard exchange files.

Measuring the success rate of grant applications is a key measure as rightly pointed out by Simon Kerridge in his Research Fortnight article of May 2015. In the article, Simon asks “How, for example, do you measure proposal success rate?” The Snowball Metrics group has completed the definition of a recipe for calculating success rate which we would like to share in this article.

Success Rate methodology

Definition: Success rate calculates the proportion of research grant applications, submitted to external funding bodies, which have been successful.

- Success Rate by count is calculated according to whether submitted applications have been awarded or rejected, or whether a decision is pending.
- Success Rate by value is calculated according to the proportion of the total requested price associated with awarded or rejected applications or whether a decision is pending.

The y-axis would be % successful, pending or rejected with respect to count or value and the x-axis would be application year.

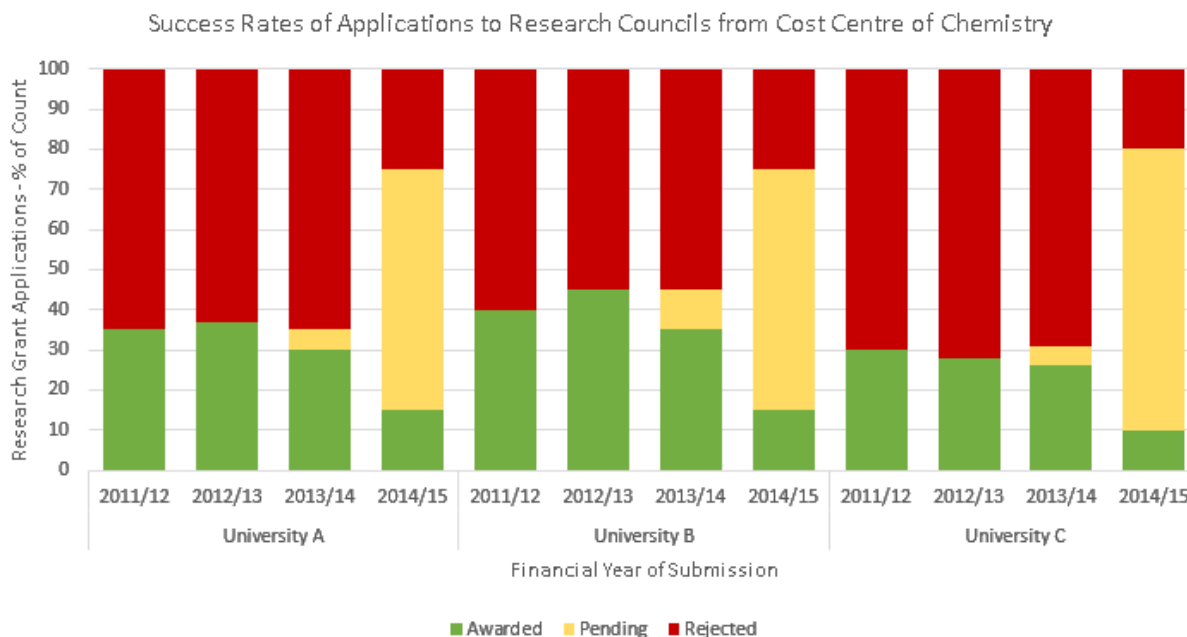
The price used in the calculation should be the most up-to-date available. For example, if the price is revised by the funder or in negotiations with research partners, this new price should be used as the basis for the calculation.

The UK application of the methodology would have denominators such as institution, HESA Cost Centre (HCC) or funder type. However, the partners have also aligned with the US working group to successfully map the HCC to the National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development (NSF-HERD) classifications and tested the metrics applicability in the US.

“It was great to be able to work with the Snowball Metrics Steering Group to help define the Success Rate metric – I was able to successfully incorporate the specific metric here at my own institution (Washington State University) and was pleased to be part of such a dedicated and knowledgeable team who have obviously put so much rigorous work into the recipes for Snowball Metrics.”

Derek A. Brown, Washington State University

The figure below provides an example output from the application of the metric recipe and the full definition of the Success Rate methodology can be found at (www.snowballmetrics.com/successrate).



The methodology will be published and be freely available later in 2015 as part of the third Snowball Metrics recipe book.

“The success rate of peer-reviewed grant applications is a key indicator of research quality and competitiveness. It is pleasing that the partners from the Snowball Metrics Steering Group, in conjunction with colleagues from the U.S., have come to a clear and unambiguous definition which we believe can be applied internationally.”

Ian McArdle, Imperial College London

John T Green, University of Cambridge, on behalf of the Snowball Metrics Steering Group

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Please see <https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/funding/know-how/Managing-your-Project/2015/11/snowball-metrics-as-a-way-to-measure-success.html> for a further article regarding Snowball Metrics and measuring Research Grant Applications Success Rate. (Please note you need a subscription to Research Professional to view the article).