

University of Exeter recovers over £1/4m with Spend Analysis and Recovery Services

The requirement

University of Exeter, having undergone changes in management within the finance function and introduced a new finance system, considered it appropriate to commission a recovery audit to identify and recover any erroneous payments to suppliers and provide comment upon the current processes in use within the accounts payable area.

The scope of the project would include a detailed examination of all expenditure with third parties, from 1st August 2014, to identify duplicate payments, overpayments, credit notes not processed and unclaimed VAT.

The solution

Having undergone restructuring of our management across the finance function and introduced a new finance system, we judged it appropriate to undertake a further review. The objectives of the review were:

- To have minimal impact on the day-to-day routine of the accounts payable team
- To maximise recoveries
- To ensure all communications with staff and suppliers were handled with complete professionalism
- The project would be undertaken on a 'performance-related' basis

Having utilised Meridian's services for an earlier review in 2014, with which we were entirely satisfied, we appointed Meridian, by 'direct-award', using the framework Analysis and Reconciliation Services agreement. The formalities of engagement were straightforward, using the simple call-off form.



The results

The project was completed within the timescale anticipated and was managed by a single point of contact within our AP finance team, with whom Meridian's Account Manager liaised throughout the recovery phase.

Meridian provided guidance to support data extraction, undertook thorough investigation of all potential claims and sought approval before taking any claim to a supplier.

Meridian provided a weekly report with full detail of the status of every claim 'signed-off' by Exeter.

Recoveries included duplicate payments, which occurred during the changeover to the new finance system and changes of personnel in the accounts payable function. Meridian's painstaking approach to the review of supplier statements and accounts, recovered a significant number of credits, which did not appear on our systems or on statements received from suppliers.

Meridian's project review report presented at the conclusion of the project provided summaries of findings and recommendations of strategies, which might be adopted to further strengthen control of the payment process.

"Once again we have been very pleased with the manner in which Meridian undertook the project. As with the earlier project, Meridian called for little resource and input from our AP team."

Meridian's Account Manager communicated with our AP team and suppliers in a professional manner and with sensitivity. Meridian were able to recover significant funds for the university, and provide recommendations which will enable us to further strengthen controls of the payment process. We should be happy to engage Meridian for a further audit and would recommend them to other universities considering recovery audit."

Donna Fitzgerald, Deputy Director (Finance Services) – University of Exeter

For further information:

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