

Empowering next generation open scholarship with an open science fellows program

This poster will present the main actions, the management framework and outcomes of a scholarship program for next generation researchers, that works towards changing the knowledge creation process so as to create natively free/open knowledge. Over the past three years, we have developed and constantly improved our mechanisms of capacity and community building. We hope that by demonstrating success stories we encourage other parties to use this scholarship program as a blueprint for other institutional, national or international activities. We will also address the challenges of sustainable set up and stabilization, as well as creating a knowledge hub for capacity building.

The main approach of this program is to mentor researchers by acknowledged experts in Open Science over a period of eight months. Since 2016, the program supported over 50 junior researchers in learning how to open up their research projects, and how to best combine requirements of traditional scholarly routines (such as publishing in high impact journals) with those encouraged by open science principles (e.g., sharing research data, dissemination). The fellows also act as ambassadors for Open Science and free knowledge in their research communities (e.g. via personal contacts, within institutional training formats, or talks at academic societies).

In addition to a financial grant, the fellows receive holistic support: they build a network of peers, engage with one another, and receive mentoring by experts in Open Science. They also get the chance to present their projects in non-academic environments. While they work on their Open Science projects, they also participate in a series of hands-on workshops (e.g. book sprints), to improve their 'open' skills and abilities.

The evaluation of our program indicates that our model seems to be effective for making impact and that it has helped the fellows advancing their research: So far, we have supported 50 researchers from various academic disciplines and the vast majority stated that they could increase their knowledge about open science significantly by participating in the program.

Moreover, the scholarship tackles a crucial aspect of academic careers: The competitive nature of the scientific reward and funding system often hinders broad application of open science principles. The program's combination of financial support, strong community support and mentoring convincingly shows that the right framework conditions make open science a success.