

## Strategic quality assessment: A multi-level feedback system for improved management of animal facilities

**Jussi Helppi**

*Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics, Germany*

Animal facilities face the ever-increasing challenge of running an effective and well-organised programme. The operation of animal facilities is also extraordinarily expensive. The Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics in Dresden, Germany, addresses these challenges by implementing a full-service ideology in its scientific core services. This approach, particularly in the case of the animal facility, extends beyond standard animal housing to encompass comprehensive technical and scientific services, all delivered on a fee-for-service basis. To ensure the quality of services and to assess mission alignment, the institute utilises a multi-level feedback mechanism. A comprehensive costing matrix, coupled with a recharge principle, allows the animal facility budget to be collected solely through user fees, ensuring alignment with user needs. Additionally, each core facility, including the animal facility, undergoes regular evaluation by external advisory panels. One internal super-user and two external experts form individual panels that meet at the facility leader's discretion. A joint advisory panel, comprising representatives from each facility, convenes every three years, providing an evaluation integral to the institute's strategic development. This evaluation is also part of the Institute's SAB evaluation. This presentation will provide a concise overview of these management principles, drawing on past evaluations and recharge system examples. It will highlight the effectiveness of the approach in ensuring quality services, mission alignment, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the institute's core facility program.