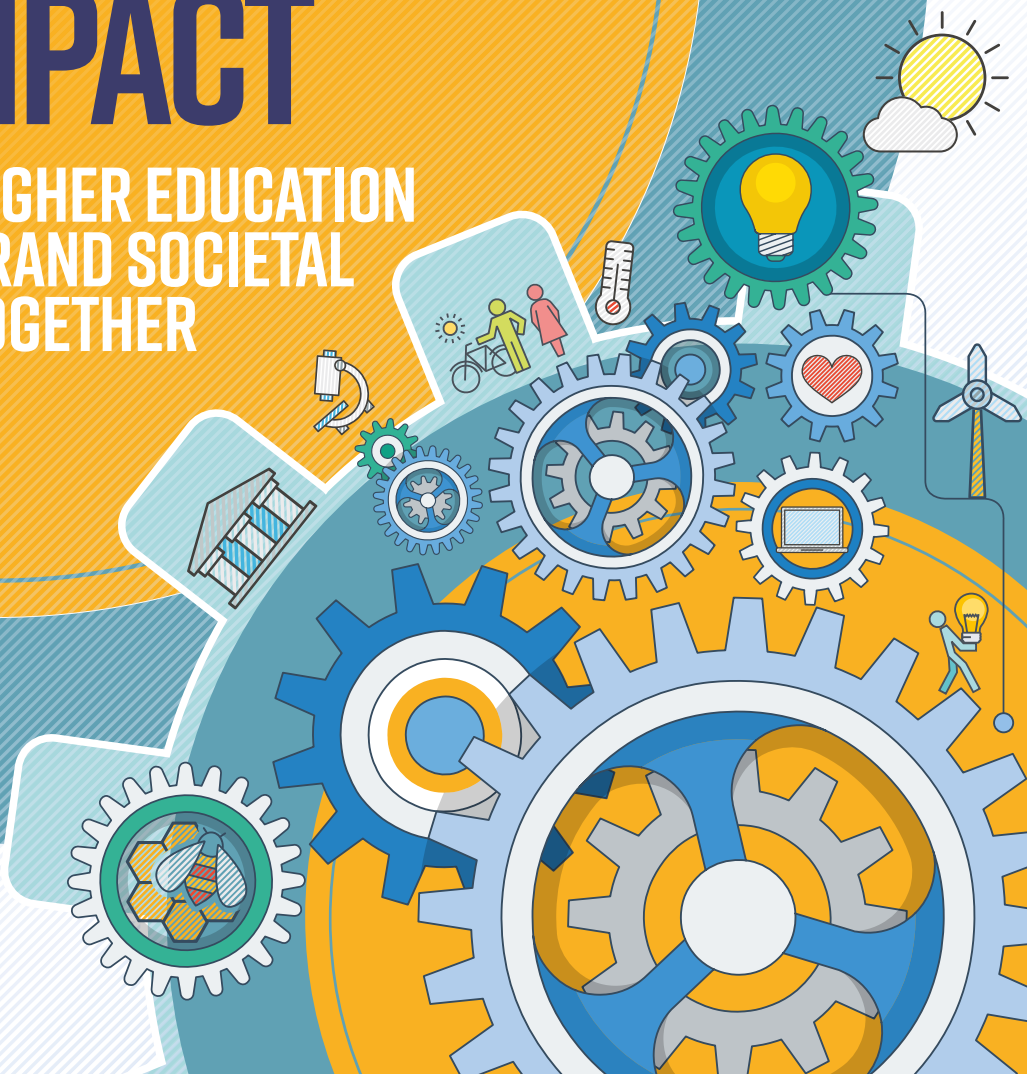
CampusEngage

A HOW TO GUIDE

ENGAGED RESEARCH PLANNING FOR IMPACT

SOCIETY AND HIGHER EDUCATION ADDRESSING GRAND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES TOGETHER 2022



Engaged research

Engaged research describes a wide range of research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaboration with societal partners. Engaged research aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges and sustainable development goals. It is advanced *with* societal partners rather than *for* them.

Societal partners include service users, product users, policymakers, civil and civic society organisations, industry partners, members of the public, and other relevant stakeholders (Campus Engage, 2022).

Planning for Impact

The following Framework aims to inspire and support researchers and innovators to maximise their impact. This Framework has been updated to incorporate latest associated frameworks published between 2017-2022. This Guide is informed by a review of the most recent grey and academic literature relating to planning for research and innovation impact. It is also informed by a national and international consultation with researchers, policymakers, funding agency personnel and societal partners. The information provided is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather attempts to inspire and guide researchers when planning for engaged research project longer term impact and drafting funding applications.

What is impact?

A change or a benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life (Horizon Europe, EU Commission)

Engaged Research maximises impact by:

- Allowing for greater public accountability;
- Requiring tacit knowledge exchange to address societal challenges;
- Setting evidence-informed research impact performance indicators;
- Stimulating a stronger external demand for innovative policy, practice, products and services;
- Increasing reuse of data and decreasing duplication of effort;
- Maximising the value of research investment and providing a better return on investment;
- Creating better public support and understanding of the importance of research in our everyday lives.

Deciding on intended impact?

The early engagement of stakeholders, including researchers, public service and product users, and policy makers, for example, enables a better understanding of the relevance of the research and, in return, the potential for knowledge translation, positive outcomes and longer-term impacts. The consensus which emerged from national and international consultations that informed this document indicated that impact is more readily achieved when it is factored into the planning of a research project. Campus Engage recommends a logic model approach for effective project planning that allows relevant research stakeholders to systematically work through the connections and components of a project and set appropriate and realistic impact targets.

Logic modelling: A planning tool for success

A logic model allows the research team, including research stakeholders, to perform a situation and needs analysis and refine the research question or hypothesis. It can support the team to plan for impact by agreeing to, and setting targets for the intended longer-term effect on the societal challenge or issue of concern.

A logic model identifies the inputs and activities, requiring the project team to allocate the available resources to deliver the research project. The outputs are clearly identified as the planned activities based on the allocation of resources. Outcomes are the anticipated short-term results of the research project and its outputs. See the Logic Model below which presents this information graphically.

Outcome vs Impact

While the terms *outcome* and *impact* are sometimes used interchangeably, there is an important distinction between the two. Outcomes are more immediate than most forms of impact. Outcomes can be considered as intermediate steps towards longer-term impacts. The importance of individual indicators of success varies by discipline and sector, and there can be a significant time lag between inputs and outputs and between outputs and impact.

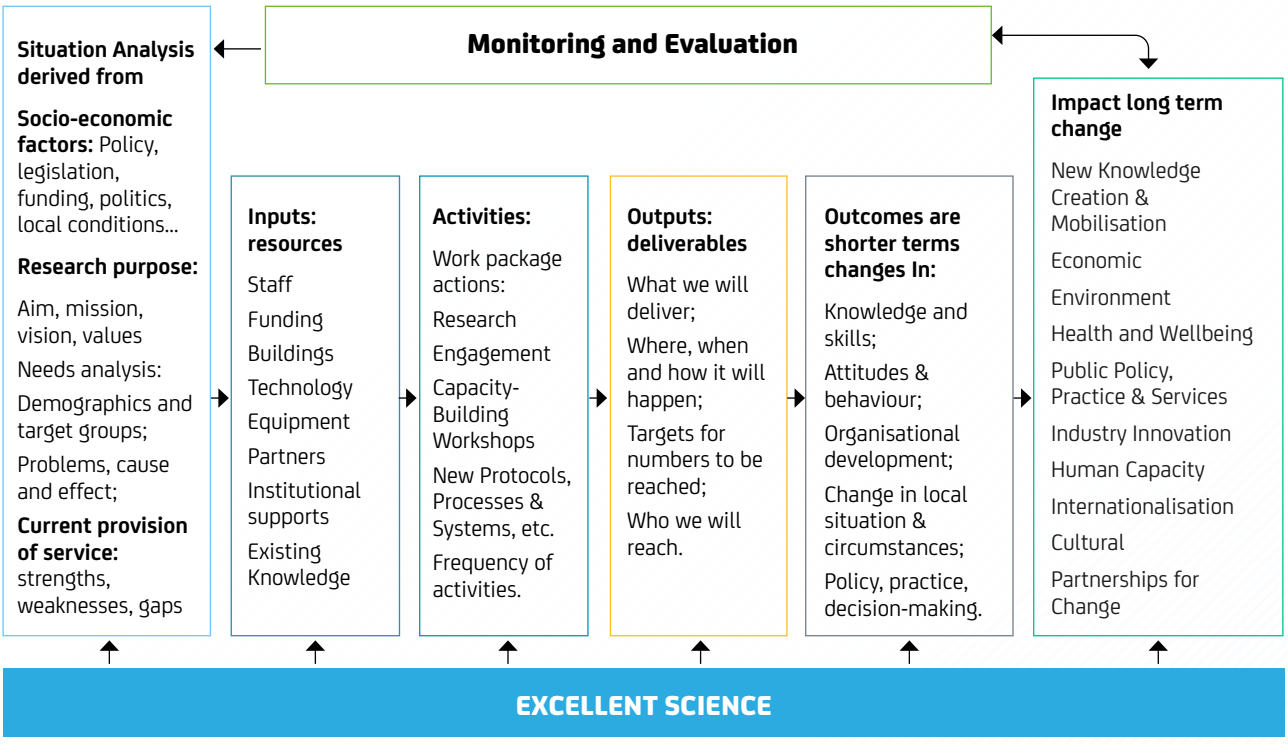


Figure: A sample Logic Model used to plan for research impact

*Key message: Impact sections don't exist in isolation, they must be connected to excellent science and implementation plans.

Thinking universally about research impact

Effective communication and engagement between research stakeholders is key to defining appropriate, responsive metrics, or key performance indicators. Measurement of performance can be applied both during the project (formative indicators) and upon completion (summative indicators). However, during a project, new findings and discoveries may result in unexpected outcomes which highlight the importance of flexibility and time-sensitive monitoring to assess impact during the lifetime of the project and beyond.

A comparative analysis of the latest impact frameworks across the Irish and EU system illustrated a good deal of overlap between types of impact in different discipline specific classification systems, and some notable absences. These shortcomings are addressed in the following reorganisation of categories in order to present a single all-inclusive and transdisciplinary Impact Framework for Engaged Research.

The Campus Engage Impact Framework below is based on a synthesis of current impact categories appropriate to the Irish research context*.

Planning for Societal Impact - Impact Categories

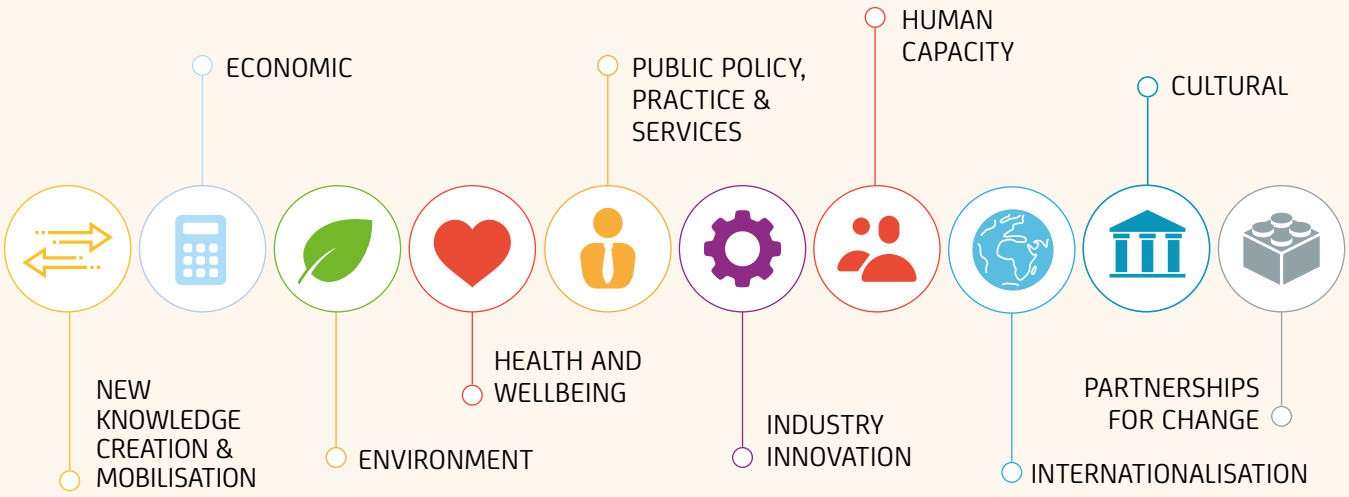


Figure: Impact categories for consideration by research teams.

The Campus Engage Impact Framework

The information provided is not intended to be prescriptive or conclusive, but rather attempts to inspire and guide researchers when planning for engaged research project longer term impact and drafting funding applications. The following metrics and indicators for research and innovation activity for impact are informed by the latest national and international literature*.

New Knowledge Creation & Mobilisation

Whilst some current impact categories list 'knowledge creation' as a type of impact, the consensus from workshop consultations was that knowledge creation and mobilisation is an aim of all research activities. Knowledge creation and mobilisation is therefore considered as a cross-cutting category and includes:

- New peer reviewed publications and citations
- Presentations to national and international conferences
- New grey literature, including research reports, interviews, policy briefings, editorials, newsletters, web articles, social media, presentations with/to stakeholders
- New systematic reviews and findings
- Revised educational curricula, across all levels, informed by new knowledge
- Increased availability of research outputs using open access channels/infrastructure
- Establishment of new datasets, databases or research data
- Research outputs disseminated through open knowledge infrastructures
- Share of open access research outputs actively used/cited

Economic

Beneficiaries of economic impacts may include individuals, businesses or other organisations whose activity helps create jobs and revenue. Additionally, the benefits may be more widely spread in terms of developing the conditions and environment to sustain productive economic activity or to advance long-term cost savings due to improved practices and processes. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Employment created or increased
- More efficient use of public resources
- Leveraging of national and international funding
- Increased income generated
- Aggregate investment in spin offs
- Spin out gross revenue
- Products on market
- Licenses & assignments

Environment

Environmental impacts are those in which the key beneficiaries are the natural and built environment with its ecosystem services, together with societies, individuals or groups who benefit as a result. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Improving awareness and understanding of climate change and its consequences
- Stimulation of public debate and awareness of climate change and biodiversity crisis
- Climate change policy or planning decisions are evidence-informed
- Improved management or conservation of biodiversity and natural resources
- Enhanced human and animal health and welfare
- Improved management of environmental risks or hazards
- Improved private or public services to meet relevant climate change and biodiversity policies or goals
- New/improved technologies or processes to reduce pollution and/or the impact of pollutants
- Improvement in sustainable use of resources for resilient societies
- Improved understanding of health risks to humans, animals, and disease risk to crops for better health and food security
- New or improved human capacity to support process, practice change to address climate change and reach EU and/or national emission targets
- Improved built environment infrastructure including transportation systems and agricultural, other land use

Health and Wellbeing

Beneficiaries may include individuals, groups or targeted populations whose health and wellbeing outcomes have been improved or enhanced, or where potential harm has been mitigated. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Better national or international health and wellbeing outcomes due to new or improved interventions, services, drug/treatments/therapies, diagnostic or medical technologies, care practices or processes
- Reduced inequalities in health status and health and social care access through information and policies targeting vulnerable groups

- Increased efficiency in the delivery of public health and social services, as well as health-related interventions and services delivered by NGOs and others in the community
- Improved quality of life due to improved health and wellbeing services/interventions, products or processes
- Reduction in costs and delays for treatments, interventions, practices, and processes due to newly developed or improved alternatives (e.g. new treatments, interventions, drugs, devices or diagnostics)
- Mitigation of risks to health or well-being through preventative or early intervention services and measures
- Increase in number of participants enrolled in clinical and community-based trials
- Increase in number of individuals engaging in healthy lifestyles

Public Policy, Practice & Services

Beneficiaries may include individuals or groups from professional, governmental and non-governmental organisations, charities and groups. The impact may be top-down through policy changes and bottom-up through behavioural practice. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Improved efficiency, efficacy of public policy, public services and resources, digital tools, processes, and government regulation due to research and innovation
- Research evidence is used by policymakers to inform policy and related budget decisions, changes to legislation, regulations, guidelines, or funding
- Increase in commissioned reports or projects from government departments or agencies leading to change
- New or improved public service professional standards, working practices, guidelines
- Capacity of public service improved due to training informed by research evidence
- Increased inter-agency collaboration arising from engaged research for public policy
- Improved public services evaluation methods and technologies
- Improvements in risk management across public sectors
- Increase in consultancy and/or collaborative research agreements & contracts with government agencies, departments, non-academic third parties

Industry Innovation

Beneficiaries may include private organisations or individuals involved in the development and delivery of professional services, products, improved processes. The impact may be top-down through policy changes and bottom-up through behavioural practice. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- New or improved industry standards, working practices, guidelines or training
- Quality, efficiency or productivity of a service
- Industry, professional body practices are evidence-informed
- Private practice or process changes in companies or other organisations through capacity building
- Improved services evaluation methods and technologies
- Improvements in risk management across private sectors
- New or expanded products, licenses, or services created
- New or improved equality, diversity and inclusion policy leading to greater diversity across governance of private companies
- Improved performance or processes adopted
- Increased licenses & assignments executed
- Increased consultancy and/or collaborative research agreements & contracts with non-academic third parties

Human Capacity

Beneficiaries include all members of society and includes the development and strengthening of people's skills, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to adapt, grow and thrive in a fast-changing world. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Education, training and improved skills of current and future populations and workers for public and industry services, and academia
- Improved relevancy of educational curricula at all levels
- Increase in retention rates of research personnel in national research system
- Increased leveraged funding due to number and level of highly skilled researchers
- Increased national, EU, international social capital
- Increased equality, diversity, inclusion across R&I ecosystems
- Increased levels of engagement of members of the public with researchers
- Increased levels of public confidence in science
- Development and use of novel research techniques

Internationalisation

Direct beneficiaries include Irish-based researchers striving to improve their international reputation, international researchers who wish to locate part or all of their research to Ireland and research organisations who want to increase their international engagement and reputation. Indirect beneficiaries may include research stakeholders from relevant local, national or international public and private organisations. Possible impacts may include, but are not limited to:

- Success of researchers and relevant entities in attaining international research funding, for example, through EU Framework programmes
- Improved international reputation of Ireland in the global research arena
- Attraction and retention of international talent
- New connections to international expertise providing access to state-of-the-art knowledge, ideas
- Leveraging of international funding through industry engagement and collaborative research
- New national/international collaborations or strategic partnerships formed with other research teams, community and industry partners or relevant agencies
- Increased global social responsibility, cultural awareness, and acquisition of languages
- Contribution to international relations and the international profile and reputation of Ireland

Cultural

Beneficiaries may include individuals, organisations or communities whose quality of life, knowledge and/or capacity is positively affected through creative practice, performance and increased preservation of cultural heritage and cultural understanding. These may include but are not limited to:

- Increased appreciation and/or design of cultural services such as museums, galleries, libraries
- Growth in opportunities for people to engage in cultural activities
- Widening participation and engagement by under-represented groups in arts, cultural and heritage activities and services
- Enhanced sense of belonging to community/city/country arising from participation in arts, heritage and cultural activities
- New collaboration with public arts venues, artists and programming professionals to produce new forms of artistic expression
- Increased understanding, recognition and appreciation of the historic and cultural elements of Ireland's culture and natural environment
- Enhancements to cultural, heritage preservation and interpretation, including digitisation of documents and materials, museum and gallery exhibitions
- Developing cultural tourism and contributing to the quality of the tourist experience
- Increased understanding and recognition of heritage, enhanced cultural preservation in any given context (e.g., Traveller, Roma other global cultures)
- New or improved public infrastructures for arts provision

Partnerships For Change

Beneficiaries may include individuals, organisations or communities that engage in, or benefit from, engaged research and innovation partnerships to address societal challenges. These may include but are not limited to:

- Stimulation or informing of public debate or interest on societal challenges
- Greater awareness of the public's role and responsibility in contributing to solving social challenges
- Increased confidence of the general public to address issues affecting them
- Exchange of public tacit knowledge to inform new or improved products, services and processes
- Local, regional or national development and regeneration plans informed by engaged research evidence
- Enhanced trust gained through working together using robust evidence to address shared challenges- i.e. using 'truth' to build 'trust'
- New processes and infrastructures for responding to public research needs and partnerships
- New transdisciplinary/trans-sectoral collaborations with users of open research and innovation outputs
- Collaborative research agreements and contracts with non-academic third parties

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- A New Horizon for Europe Impact Assessment of the 9 EU Programme for Research & Innovation (2018)
- Knowledge Transfer Metrics – Towards a European wide set of harmonised indicators (2021)
- Our Public Service 2020 - Selected Indicators & Trends - Prepared by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform gov.ie (2020)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (2016)
- Health Research Board Impact categories for evaluating HRB funded research (2016)
- The Declaration on Research Assessment (2012)
- UK Research Excellence Framework (REF) (2021)

Guidance for Drafting Impact Statements

What is a Research Proposal Impact Statement?

An impact statement is the articulation of the intended effect of your initiative. This will include a value judgement about the intended goals, as articulated by relevant stakeholders and partners to the project.

Here are top tips for drafting impact statements:

1. Choose jargon free, non-technical language;
2. Articulate how the team will engage or involve beneficiaries, and how the translation of knowledge will effect the societal challenge;
3. Use a logic model to identify stakeholder needs, inputs, outputs and activities, outcomes, and proposed impact;
4. Aim to assess research impact as you proceed (formative) and upon completion (summative);
5. Consider the background and range of expertise of those assessing the impact statement, along with the requirements identified in the call;
6. Articulate who or what is expected to change, how the change will take place, and the estimated timeframe for when this change will happen;
7. Set targets against the chosen key performance indicators to monitor progress;
8. Consider qualitative evidence across a range of impact categories; and
9. Consider dissemination, knowledge exchange and translational activities to scale up the project in the future and maximise impact.

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