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Making an Impact

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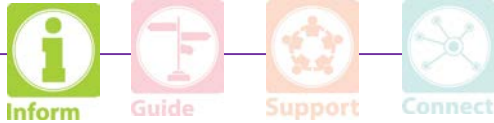
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What is Impact?

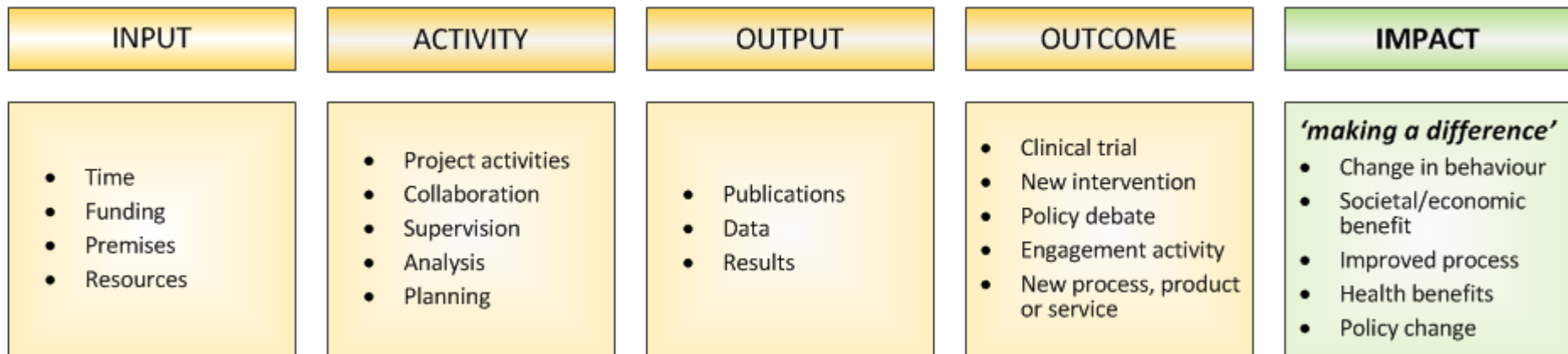
- RCUK defines research impact as ‘the ***demonstrable*** contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy’.
- For REF purposes, HEFCE defined impact as ‘an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life ***beyond academia***’.
- **Why make an impact?** - the government has placed increasing emphasis on the need for evidence of economic and social returns from its investment in research to justify the £3 billion public funds spent on research annually.
- Impact is ***not*** dissemination! Telling people about your research does not demonstrate a tangible benefit.



Understanding Impact

- Research activities, outputs and outcomes are often confused with Impact.
- Think about Impact as the **tangible difference** your research makes.

UNDERSTANDING IMPACT: WHAT IS IMPACT?



R E S E A R C H → D I S S E M I N A T I O N → I M P A C T



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The benefits of Impact

Economic and societal impacts embrace all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

- Fostering global economic performance, and specifically UK economic competitiveness.
- Increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy.
- Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

Benefits for society - By ensuring that decisions on policy and practice are informed by secure evidence, research can help to:

- Improve the effectiveness and sustainability of public, private and third sector organisations.
- Improve social welfare and cohesion.
- increase economic prosperity, wealth creation and regeneration.
- enhance cultural enrichment and quality of life.

Benefits for researchers - Researching with impact in mind can help researchers with:

- Early feedback – to help shape your research agenda and improve methodologies.
- Relevance – engagement with key stakeholders, involve them from the start.
- Recruiting participants, for example for focus groups or surveys.
- Developing new skills and raising your profile.
- Stakeholders can be your evidence providers.

*from the ESRC Impact Toolkit: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/impact-toolkit/>



Pathways to Impact

Research Councils UK (RCUK)



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Other Funding Bodies

Innovate UK

Ask for impact statements but do **not** necessary mention impact!



The Leverhulme Trust



Department
for International
Development



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Examples of implicit impact

- Relevance to economic development and social welfare.
- How do you expect the results of the proposed project be taken forward and used more broadly?
- What are the expected benefits of this research?
- Do you have plans for engaging with the non-academic public about your work?
- Please indicate the ways in which patients and the public will be actively involved in the proposed research.
- Who have you consulted about this proposal and how have you taken on their views?
- How will you ensure end user focus?



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Research Councils UK



Academic Beneficiaries – within academia

- who will benefit / how will they benefit / how will the results be disseminated.

Pathways to Impact – beyond academia

- What activities will be undertaken to realise the potential impact?

Impact Summary – beyond academia

- benefits to society/economy.
- who will benefit / how will they benefit.

DON'T FORGET

- to link your pathways activities within your Case for Support
- reference activities in your Project Plan / Gantt Chart



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Pathways to Impact - Top Tips

- Consider potential **beneficiaries**: private sector; government bodies; policy-makers; public sector; third sector; professional or practitioner groups; wider public?
- What is the real-world problem you are trying to solve? **Is it relevant?**
- **Identify and engage potential stakeholders early** - build relationships and trust over time.
 - What do they want to get out of the project - give them a reason to be involved.
 - What can they contribute - collaboration should benefit both parties.
 - Obtaining agreement early can prevent difficulties in obtaining evidence later.
- Think **'outside of the box'**:
 - Could the research benefit other disciplines and/or a different set of stakeholders?
 - Could local **reach** translate to another geographic area and/or different demographic?
- **Check funder and/or Je-S submission guidelines** for call specific impact requirements.
- **Write your pathways to impact statement early in the process** – this will allow time to:
 - Contact potential stakeholders; gain agreement/letters of support; build-in activities
 - **And** get your pathways statement **reviewed** internally (RIS/colleagues can all offer support)



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Pathways to Impact - Top Tips cont.

- **Think timescales** - short/medium/long-term *or* during/after project.
 - Make impact activities integral to the project not just *'bolt-on'* at the end.
- **Make your impact statements project specific.**
 - *'we will present the results at conferences and create a website'* are too vague.
 - Identify your audience? Describe how you will engage with them? When will this happen?
- **Public Engagement should be two-way engagement not just outreach**
 - Engaging the public with your research can improve the quality of research and its impact, raise your profile, and develop your skills. It also enables members of the public to act as informed citizens and can inspire the next generation of researchers.
- **Be realistic in terms of what you can achieve within the timeframe/funding.**
- **Don't forget about costs** - most funders allow costs for impact generating activities.
- If your project really has no identified pathways to societal/economic impact use the Impact Summary and Pathways to Impact statements to **justify why**.

Developing Pathways to Impact is not about predicting the future it is about paving the way to give the greatest chance of benefits arising from your project.



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Impact in REF 2014

- The Impact element in REF2014 received 20% of the weighting of each submission – this is likely to increase for REF2021.
- Each case study had to be underpinned by outputs of at least 2* quality:
 - ‘recognised internationally in terms of rigour, originality & significance’.
- Research underpinning the claimed impact must have been carried out by staff while working at the submitting institution.
- Impacts were assessed in terms of their *‘reach and significance’*.



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Reach and Significance

Reach: the extent and breadth of the beneficiaries

This does not refer specifically to a geographic scale but as appropriate to the nature of the research and its impacts.

Significance: the degree to which the impact has:

enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the products, services, performance, practices, policies or understanding of commerce, industry or other organisations, governments, communities or individuals.

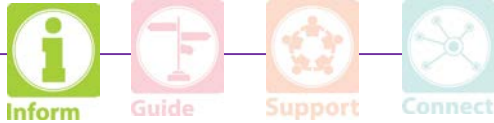
4* Four star: Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance.

3* Three star: Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.

2* Two star: Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.

1* One star: Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance.

Unclassified: The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit.



Impact Case Study – an example

Vertual and VERT (Virtual Environment for Radiotherapy Training)

The Research (2001-2008): Collaborative project with NHS to investigate innovative and beneficial applications of immersive environment technologies in Radiotherapy treatment of cancer identified the potential for VERT (Virtual Environment for Radiotherapy Training) to address a skills shortage and improve the radiotherapy workforce.

The Impact (2008 onwards): Health trust/student training; improved patient safety; economic benefit; jobs created; secondary economic benefit to system component suppliers. International reach.

The Story: Commercialisation of system. Skills training facilities rolled out to 40 clinics and 10 universities in the UK [scope of original project]. Sold to over 90 institutions worldwide. Training centre established with further 3 simulation centres established using same model. User community established leading to International user meetings. International recognition and adoption by world-leading centres.

The Evidence: practitioner report; financial and sales information; practitioner publication; stakeholder testimony; user community programme, presentations and survey results.



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REF Impact Case Study – Top Tips

- Consider the **story** you are telling:
 - there need to be strong links and clear narration between the underpinning research and its distinct and material contribution to the reported impact.
- Think about **Reach** and **Significance**:
 - Impact Case Studies in REF2014 that failed to demonstrate reach and significance beyond activities that would be expected as part of the research project tended to score less highly.
- Does it need to be you?
 - Impact generating activities and evidence collection can be undertaken by the wider research team/dept./faculty, support staff or stakeholders.
- Be **proactive**:
 - Impact may arise in unexpected ways but can be facilitated, building and maintaining stakeholder relationships is a good starting point.



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What is Evidence?

‘the **demonstrable** contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy’

Consider:

- If you had to provide tangible proof that your research had made a difference to your identified beneficiaries how would you do that?
- Could you demonstrate both reach and significance?
- Would you need to build additional activities into your project plan?



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UNDERSTANDING IMPACT: EVIDENCING IMPACT

IMPACT INDICATORS

(associated to but not a direct measure of impact)

- Citations outside academic literature
- Media coverage
- Visitor/Audience/Participant numbers
- Count of book mentions in syllabi
- Website hits
- Number of downloads
- Altmetrics

IMPACT EVIDENCE

(proof of benefit/change)

- Documented policy change
- Client/customer feedback
- Quantifiable health benefits
- Commercial evidence
- Documented change in behaviours
- Organisational benefits
- Adoption of new product/process

R E A C H - S I G N I F I C A N C E

Impact Case Studies (ICS) submitted to REF 2014 were assessed in terms of **reach and significance** seen as a single criterion

Evidence should consider **both** elements

ICS that provided evidence for reach only, scored poorly in REF2014.



Reach or Significance?

Examples of evidence and indicators	R	S
Business performance measures, for example, sales, turnover, profits or employment associated with new or improved products, processes or evidence of service change.		✓
Documented evidence of changes to public policy/legislation/regulations/practice/guidelines/professional standards or behaviour.		✓
Documented evidence of policy debate or use in scrutiny or audit processes at, for example, parliamentary Select Committee or non-governmental organisations (NGOs).	✓	
New/modified professional standards, codes of practice, technical standards or protocols.		✓
Replication/inclusion of work in teaching/training/CPD materials and/or bibliographies.	✓	
Documented changes in knowledge, capability or behaviours of individuals benefiting from training.		✓
Traceable reference to inclusion of research in national or international industry standards or authoritative guidance.		✓
Commercial adoption of a new technology, process, knowledge or concept.		✓
Broadcasting data, download figures, sales, or database and web-site hits over a period.	✓	
Testimony of experts or users who can attest to the reach/significance of impact.	✓	✓

Full list of examples of evidence and indicators for impact from the REF 2014 guidance: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B1DgIGhF2NAfdUIGWxpFT1Q4Rm8>



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Collecting Evidence – Top Tips

- **Evidence should be collected on an ongoing basis** (be proactive):
 - Retrospectively gathering evidence at a later date can prove difficult, resulting in limited evidence even if significant benefits were achieved.
- When engaging with a commercial partner **discuss** the types of evidence you may wish to obtain from them during contract negotiations.
- If impact generating activities are carried out by other parties ensure evidence collection is **planned and ownership agreed** before the activity is carried out.
- **Is your evidence balanced** in terms of reach (who benefited) and significance (what changed)?
 - E.g. Visitor/delegate/audience numbers can provide supplementary evidence of reach but do not evidence the change or effect to the participant group.
- Don't forget to **capture baseline measurements** in order to assess the significance of the change – understand the landscape before you engage.



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Recording Evidence of Impact – Pure system

Pure is the University's Research Information System used to record details of research grants, projects, outputs and activities and its use for internal and external reporting has been endorsed by the University Executive Board.

The **Impact module** within Pure should be used to capture impact narrative and to record evidence of the effects and benefits arising from research activities.

All staff who need to capture evidence of impact in Pure will be invited to attend a training session on how to enter data into the system.



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Useful Impact Links

- [Impact Resources Folder](#)
 - Google Drive folder open to all UoP staff containing help and guidance for Impact.
- RCUK Pathways to Impact Guidance:
 - <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts/>
- ESRC Impact Toolkit:
 - <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/impact-toolkit/>
- Dee Summers, Research Impact Officer:
 - Email: dee.summers@port.ac.uk



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Questions

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