

Waipapa
Taumata Rau
**University
of Auckland**

How to Plan your Research for Real World Impact

Brittany Bennenbroek

Research Impact | *Pānga Rangahau*

Research and Innovation Office | *Te Puna Tiketike*

01 July 2025

Karakia Timatanga

Whakataka te hau ki te uru

Whakataka te hau ki te tonga

Kia mākinakina ki uta

Kia mātaratara ki tai

E hī ake ana te atākura

He tio, he huka, he hauhū

Tihei mauri ora!

Cease the winds from the south

Let the breeze blow over the land

Let the breeze blow over the ocean

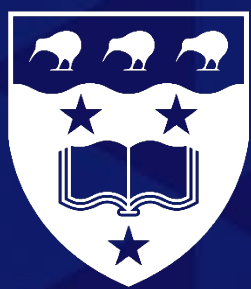
*Let the red-tipped dawn come with
a sharpened air.*

*A touch of frost,
a promise of a glorious day.*

Today's agenda

- ❖ Karakia timatanga
- ❖ What is research impact?
- ❖ Why is it important?
- ❖ The results-chain framework
- ❖ How to begin planning for impact
- ❖ What next?
- ❖ Karakia whakamutunga





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What is research impact?

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What is research impact?

UoA defines research impact as:

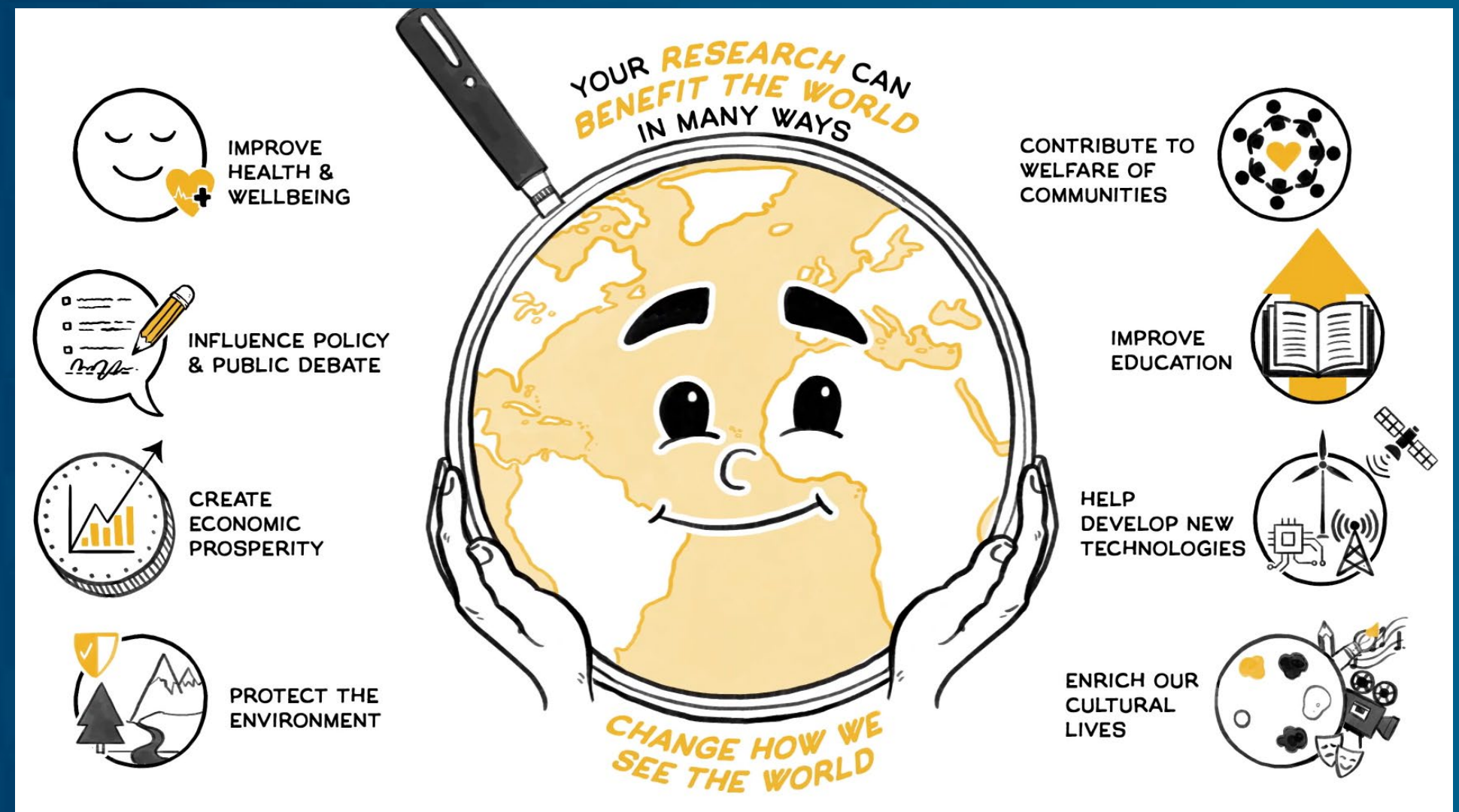
The contribution that research and creative practice makes to society, the environment and the economy.

MBIE defines research impact as:

A change to the economy, society or environment, beyond contribution to knowledge and skills in research organisations.

HRC defines research impact as:

The direct and indirect influence of excellent and innovative research on individuals, communities or society, including improvements to health and other social, economic, cultural or environmental benefits for New Zealand.



Types of impacts



Understanding and Awareness: Increased understanding and knowledge of an issue.



Attitudinal Change: A change in attitudes, typically of a group, towards a new attitude that benefits them or others.



Health and Wellbeing: Improvements in public or individual health, including emotional or physical health outcomes.



Cultural Change: Changes in the prevailing values, attitudes, beliefs, discourse, and patterns of behavior.



Environmental Impacts: Benefits for conservation, biodiversity, ecosystems, and physical landscapes, including actions to mitigate climate change and benefits for humans.



Policy: Contributions to new or amended laws, regulations or other policy mechanisms.



Capacity or Preparedness: Enhanced skills, resources, or infrastructure to cope with change and negative effects.



Other Social: Benefits to specific social groups or society not covered by other types of impact, and broader societal changes such as improved education access or human rights.



Economic Impacts: Monetary benefits arising from research, either through money saved, costs avoided, increases in profit or funding, or the creation of new businesses or technologies.



Decision-Making & Behaviour Change: Whether directly or indirectly, research can inform a wide range of individual, group and organisational behaviours and decisions leading to impacts that go beyond the economy, environment, health and wellbeing, or policy.

Types of impacts



Retrospective (past) impact:

These are the benefits that have *already occurred* as a result of your research. This might include the uptake of your findings, changes in practice or policy, or improvements for a community. These are impacts you can identify and provide evidence for — and they often form part of your track record in funding or award applications.



Prospective (future) impact:

This refers to the potential future benefits your research might lead to. It's what you describe in the 'benefits' or 'significance' sections of research proposals, outlining how your research might lead to positive change if it's successful, and it's the kind of impact you can plan for and work toward.

Why research impact is important

The value of research impact:

❖ **Benefiting society**

Undertaking research that addresses societal issues and inequities.

❖ **Making research more relevant**

By bridging the gap between research and public knowledge, research can address community needs more directly.

❖ **Accountability**

Public funders need to demonstrate the value of research supported by taxpayer investment (exchequer sources).

❖ **Stakeholder understanding**

Showing how research creates value helps secure buy-in, support, and uptake from a wide range of stakeholders.

Why research impact is important

What it means for you as a researcher:

- ❖ **Supports future funding**

Funders are more likely to invest in work that delivers clear benefits to Aotearoa New Zealand.

- ❖ **Enhances institutional reputation**

Demonstrating impact helps your institution attract more funding, students, and partnerships.

- ❖ **Strengthens your track record**

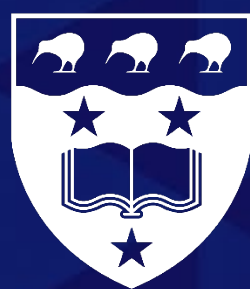
Evidencing past impact contributes to successful applications and academic recognition.

- ❖ **Enables truly collaborative research**

Impact-focused research is done with, not on, communities — prioritising areas of greatest need or concern.

- ❖ **Encourages holistic approaches**

Especially in areas of emerging strategic, cultural, societal, or economic importance.



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The results-chain framework

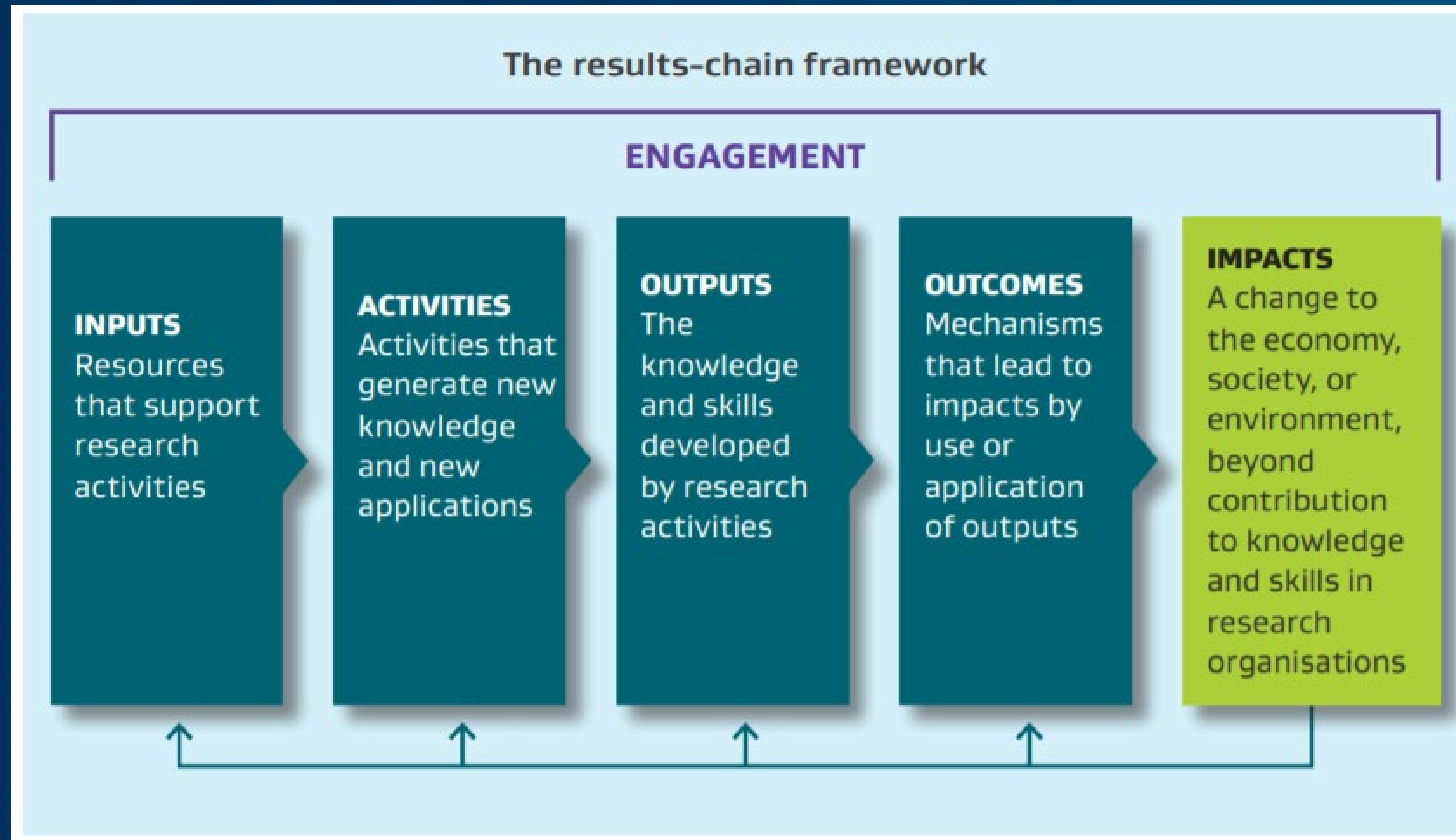
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The results-chain framework



Research impact is a shared endeavour, and progress is unpredictable.

‘Line-of-sight to impact’ means each researcher and institution can articulate their part in this shared endeavour.

The results-chain framework



The results-chain framework

USE/UPTAKE OF OUTPUTS
BY NEXT USERS

OUTPUTS

The knowledge, skills, products, and services developed from activities.

- Publications
- Presentations
- Prototypes
- Patents

OUTCOMES

The changes or effects that result from the implementation and application of your outputs.

- Citations
- Licences
- Follow-on income
- Changes in policy

IMPACTS

The contribution that your research and/or creative practice makes to society, the environment, and the economy.

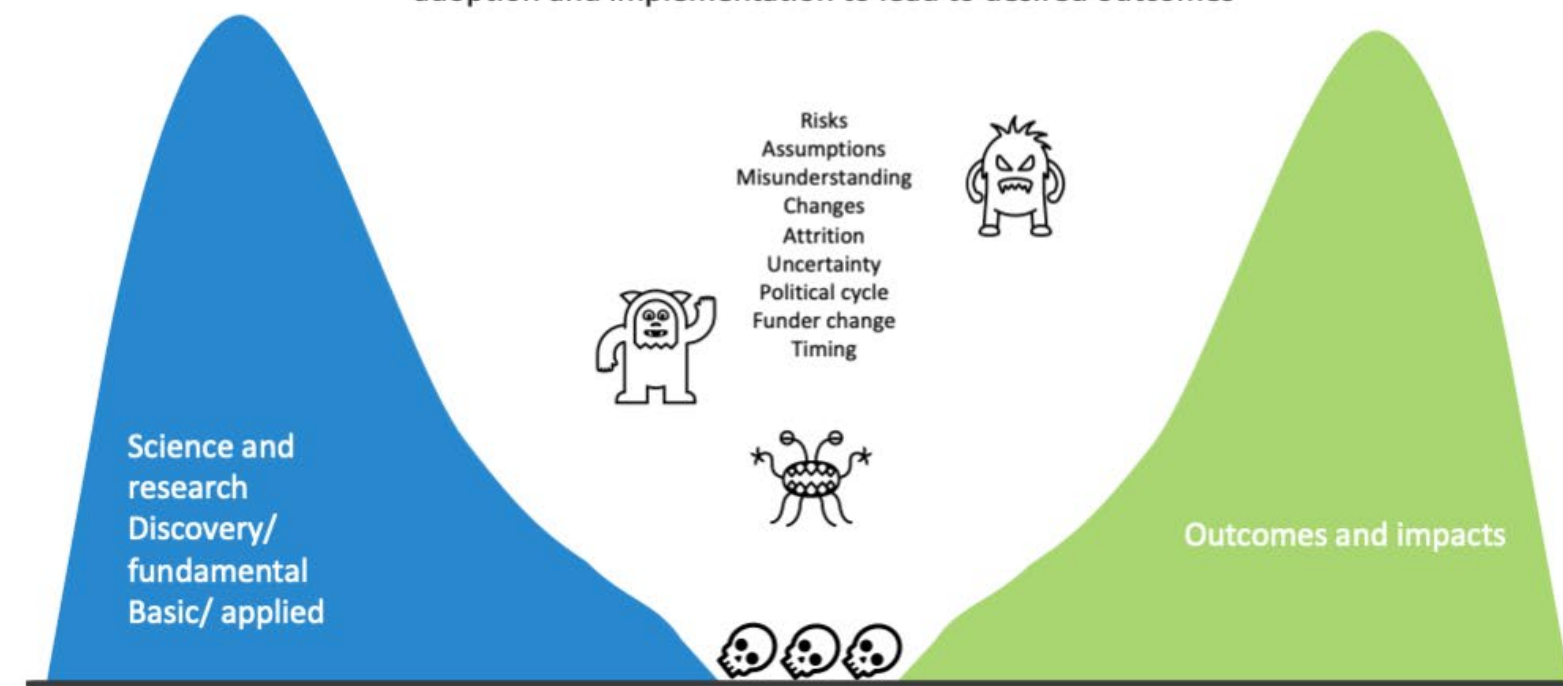
- Cultural
- Economic
- Environmental
- Improved health and

The valley of death

WHY?....THE RESEARCH 'VALLEY OF DEATH'

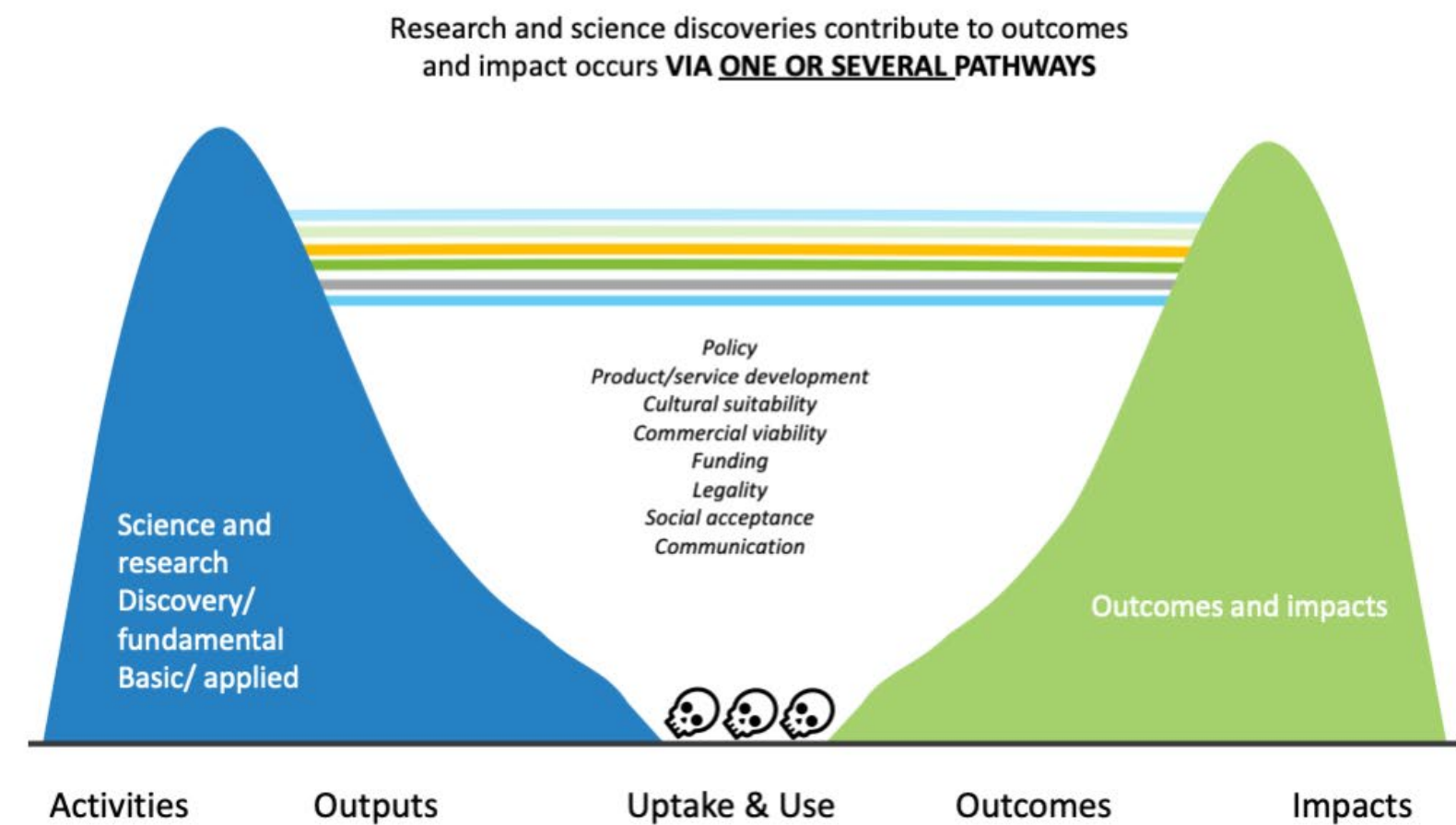


Failings most frequently manifest between dissemination of research findings/distribution of outputs and sufficient adoption and implementation to lead to desired outcomes

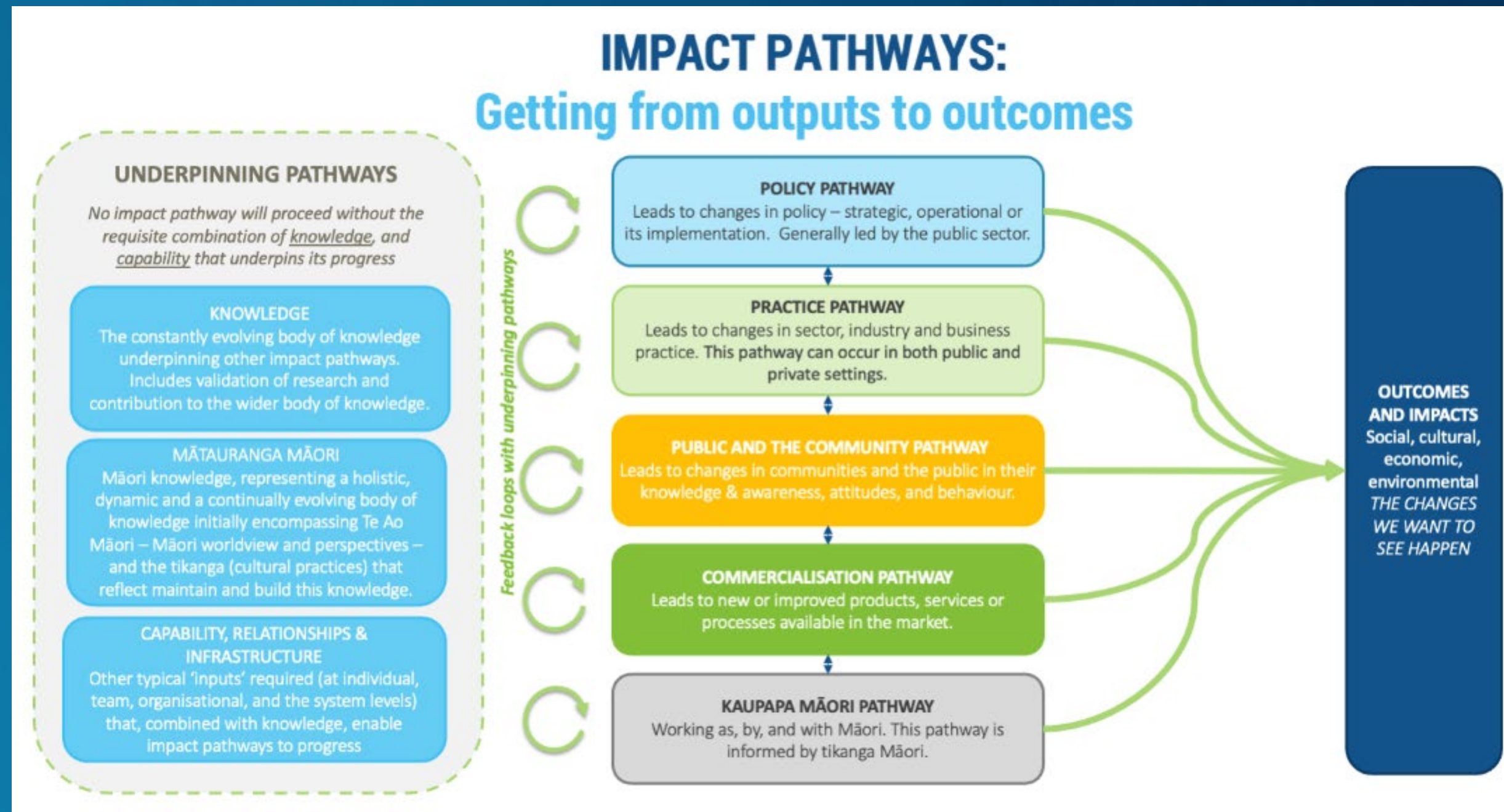


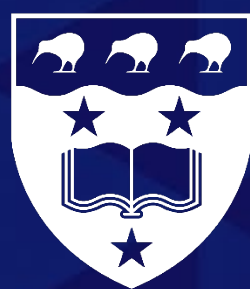
The valley of death

ESCAPING THE VALLEY OF DEATH 'Stronger bridge' from activities & outputs to outcomes



Impact pathways





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Planning for impact

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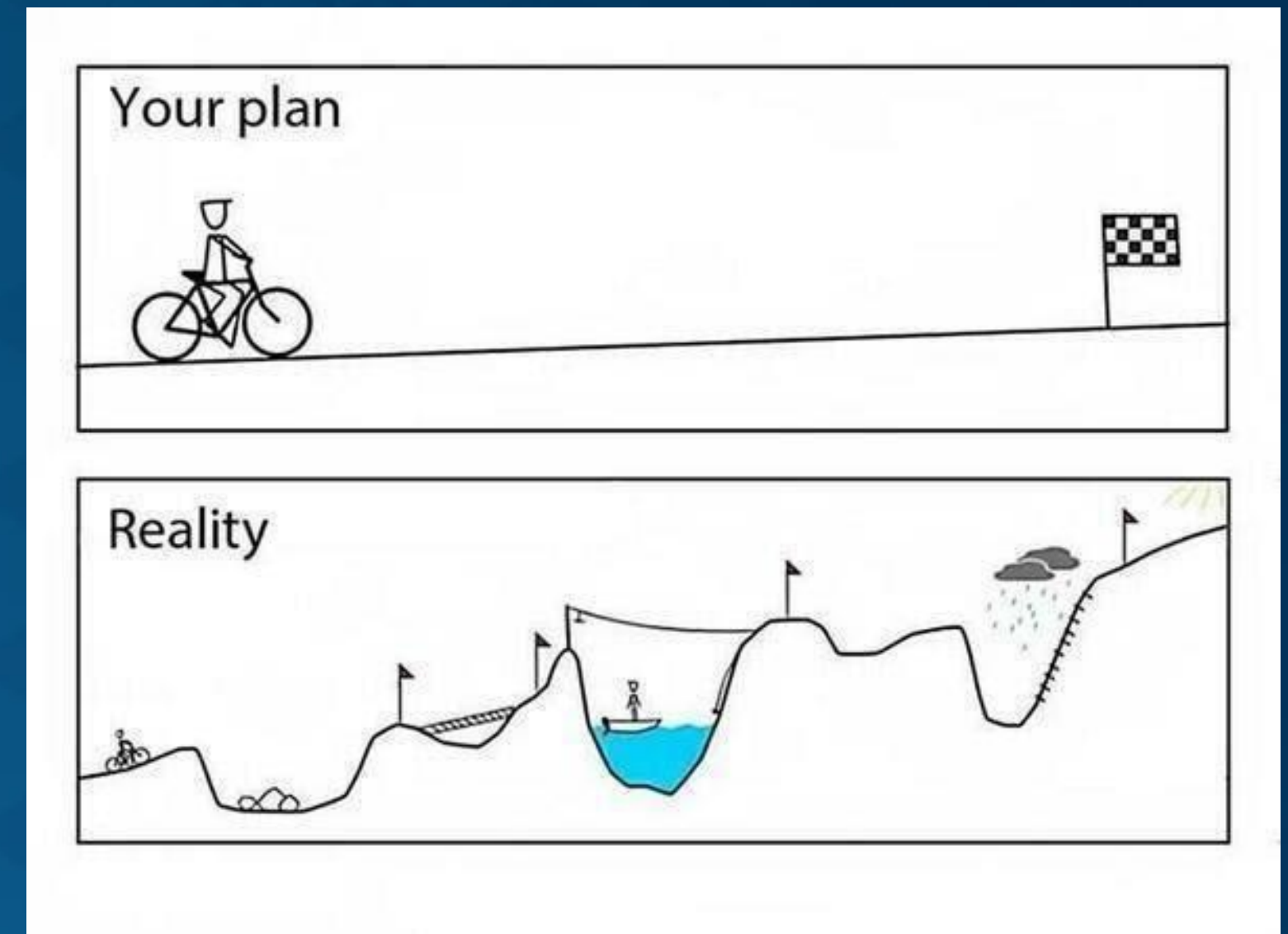
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The planning process

1. Identifying the research need
2. Defining your (potential) impact
3. Mapping your stakeholders
4. Prioritising your stakeholders
5. Developing engagement plans
6. Piecing together your implementation plan



as a CHANGE AGENT you

can't make change happen

but you CAN create in

ENVIRONMENTS that

increases the odds.

HENRIK KNIBERG #ALI2018



Creating an impact goal

Some questions to consider...

- ❖ What is the challenge, opportunity, issue or gap in knowledge that your research addresses?
- ❖ How big is the problem?
 - ❖ How many people, who is affected, and where is it? What extent of change are you looking to make?
- ❖ How do you know this is a problem?
 - ❖ Look for evidence from government priorities, policy documents, media reports, testimonials etc.
- ❖ How can your research help?
- ❖ How is your research different to the existing research?
- ❖ Imagine you've successfully delivered a research project addressing the previously described challenge – what has been achieved?
- ❖ What would your stakeholders say about how they have benefitted?

Creating an impact goal

Some tips!

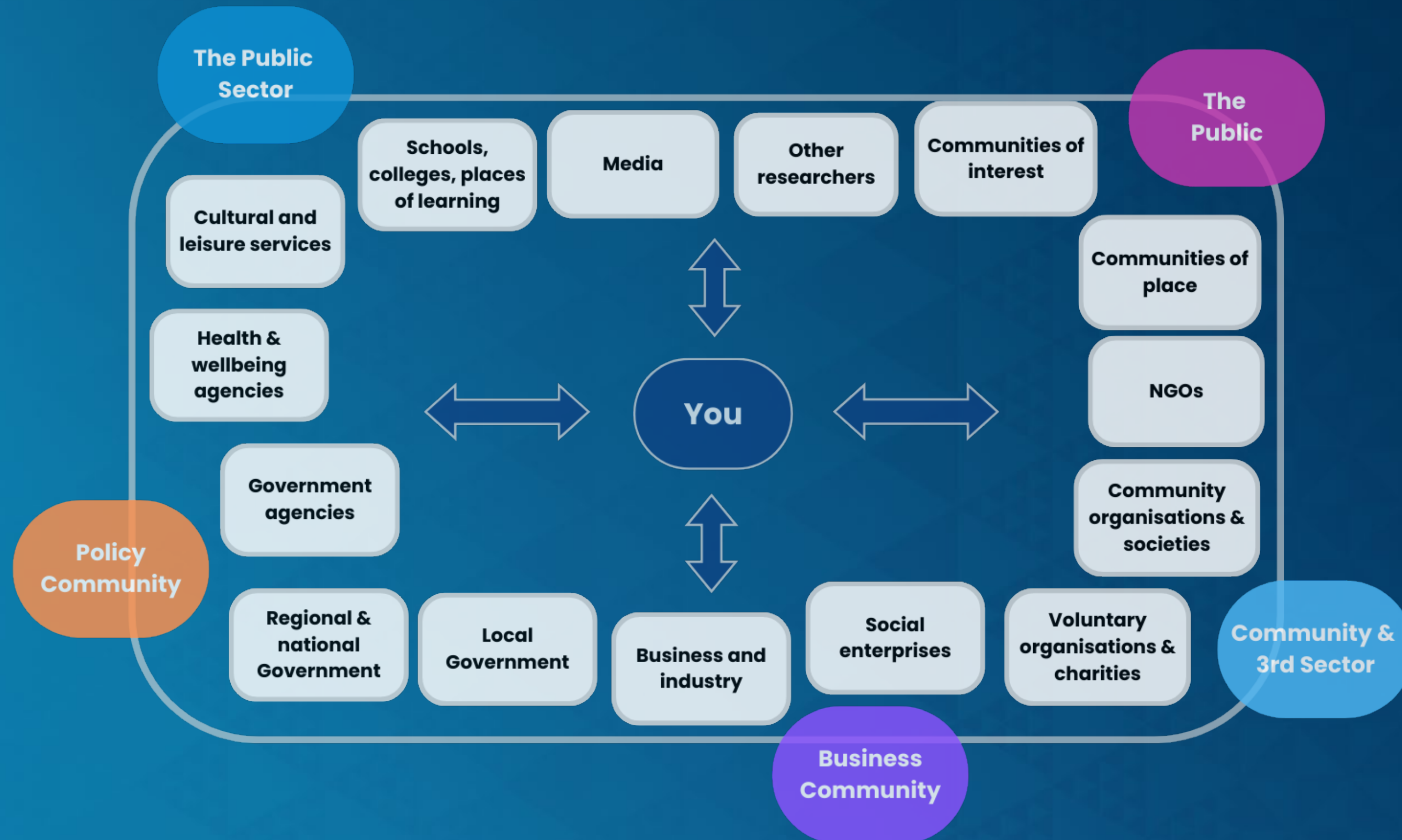
- ❖ It can help by flipping the problem upside down!
 - ❖ E.g. Difficult to do [something] > faster or easier [something] within communities.
- ❖ Impact goals should be **SMART** – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound
 - ❖ Specific – Be specific about the extent of your potential impact
 - ❖ Measurable – What evidence/indicators will prove you're making progress
 - ❖ Achievable – Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal given your resources and any constraints
 - ❖ Realistic – Be realistic about what might be able to occur within your sphere of influence. Evidence of an impact plan will help your credibility
 - ❖ Time-bound - consider how long it will take to achieve your impact goal. This may be by the end of your research project, or in twenty years' time! You can build in milestones to keep on track.

Mapping your stakeholders

Stakeholders may:

- ❖ Be invested in the outcomes of your research
- ❖ Be affected by your research (positively or negatively)
- ❖ Benefit from your research findings
- ❖ Want to use or implement your findings
- ❖ Be fundamental to achieving impact
- ❖ Co-design the research project or co-produce research outputs
- ❖ Provide lived experience to improve research design and identify relevant outcomes or impact measures
- ❖ Offer specific expertise or access to equipment, data, or other resources
- ❖ Support dissemination through large or influential networks
- ❖ Oppose, block, or challenge aspects of your research

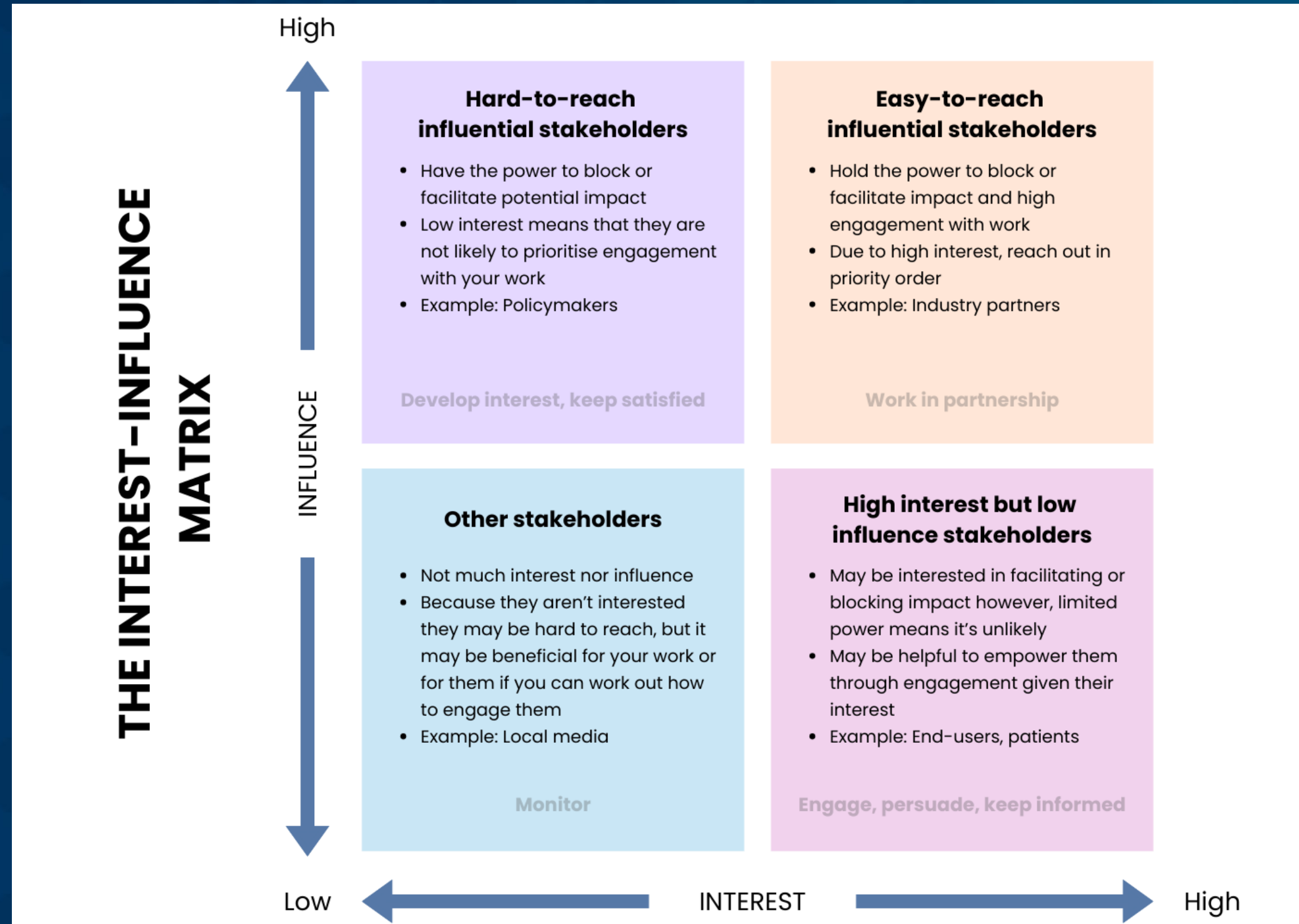
Mapping your stakeholders



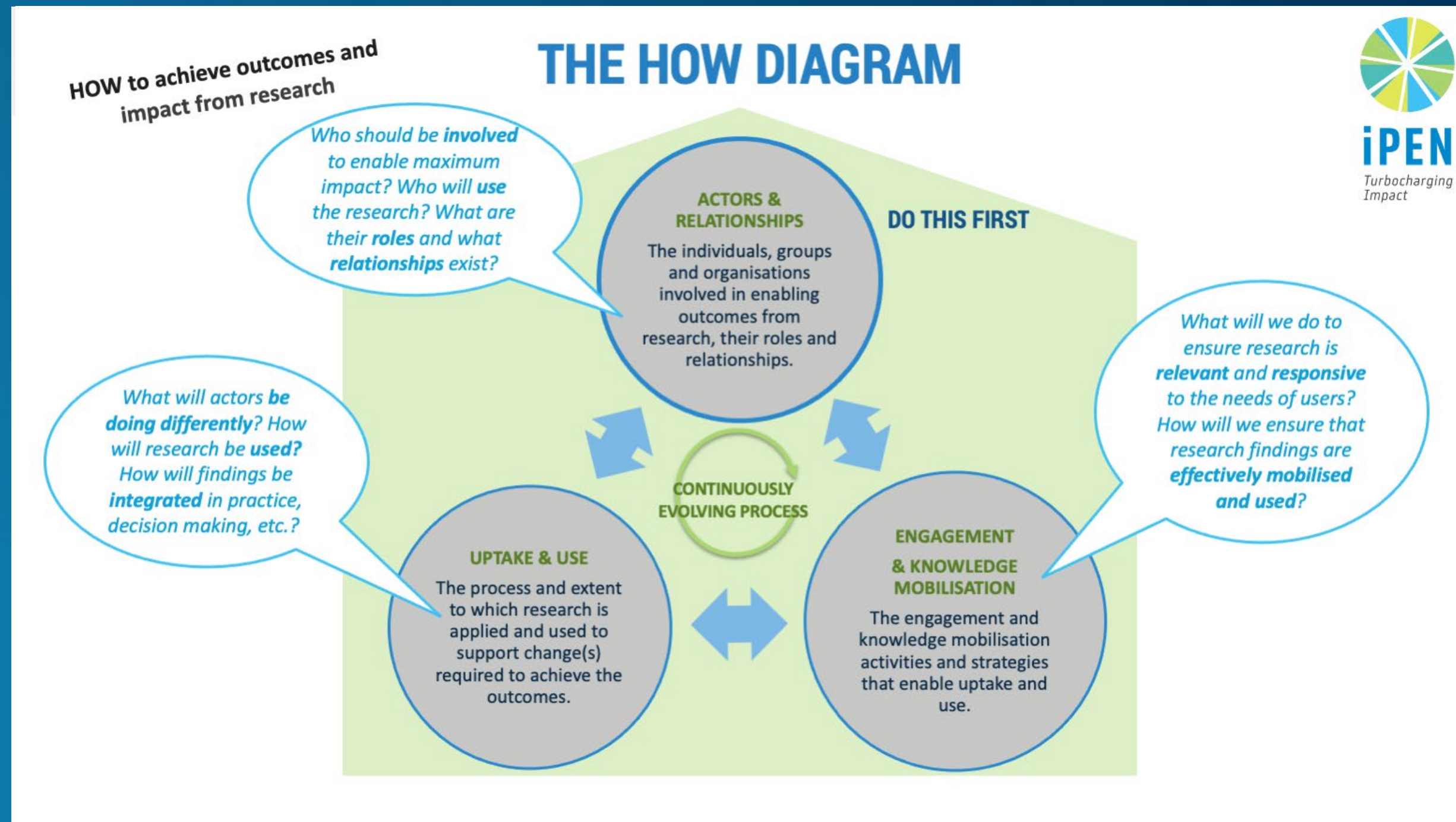
Mapping your stakeholders



Prioritising your stakeholders



The how diagram



Developing engagement plans



- ❖ Co-design of research
- ❖ Co-production of knowledge
- ❖ Provide data
- ❖ Help communicate
- ❖ Use the outputs
- ❖ Beneficiaries of the research

Engagement activities

Activities

Co-design Workshops	Project Advisory Board	Secondments
Public Events	Stakeholder conferences	Community hui
Webinars	Policy dialogues	Training events

Outputs

Policy briefing	Toolkit	Social Media
Media release	Videos	Prototypes
Datasets	Methods & processes	Reports
	Guidelines	

Piecing together an implementation plan



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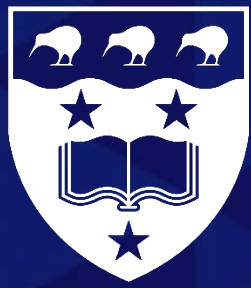
Create an engagement plan.

Stakeholder(s)	Timing	Purpose	Activity	Potential challenges/ barriers to engagement	Budget	Responsibilities/ Expertise
Chartered Association of Building Engineers Building contractors	End year 5	To upskill building contractors in new best practice	Training workshop x3	Time constraints, potential reluctance to adopt new technologies or methods	\$5,000 per workshop	Organise workshops, ensure high-quality trainers, coordinate with Geoff to align content with industry standards
National and local govt agencies Iwi reps Industry experts	Every 6 months over project duration	Co-design initial project. Provide feedback on direction of the project	Stakeholder advisory group	Differing priorities or interests, travel constraints	\$4,000 per year (every other meeting in person – allow for travel and catering)	Ensure alignment of project goals, manage communication between meetings, and follow up on action points

Some final things to consider



- ❖ **Roles and Responsibilities:** Consider who is responsible for managing stakeholder relationships and engagement activities. Can you share the load with your wider research team?
- ❖ **Expertise:** Do you need to bring in specialist expertise, e.g. a knowledge broker?
- ❖ **Budget and resources:** A credible impact plan will include budget for resources such as staff time, event costs, honoraria, materials, expert support, etc. If funding for impact activities is limited or non-existent you can still develop an impact plan but will need to prioritise and think creatively about how best to support engagement and impact activities.
- ❖ **Timeframes:** Where possible give yourself deadlines or targets for your activities and impacts. This could include milestone or deliverable reviews. Some timeframes may need to be negotiated with relevant stakeholders, particularly if you require their input. Include regular check-ins with your stakeholders and share progress of the research and impact plan.
- ❖ **Risks:** Include a risk assessment of your intended impacts and impact plan and consider how you will mitigate them. What might go wrong or not work? Could there be any unintended consequences?
- ❖ **Evaluation:** How will you know you have achieved your impact goal? Have a plan in place for how you will gather evidence of the impact of your research



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Support and resources

- ❖ There are additional online resources on the ResearchHub:
<https://research-hub.auckland.ac.nz/subhub/research-impact>
- ❖ Impact through Culture Change and Research Impact for Public Good webinar series
- ❖ Impact Stories on the ResearchHub
- ❖ Email researchimpact@auckland.ac.nz

Karakia Whakamutunga

Kia whakairia te tapu

Kia wātea ai te ara

Kia turuki whakataha ai

Kia turuki whakataha ai

Haumi e. Hui e. Tāiki e!

Restrictions are moved aside

So the pathways is clear

To return to everyday activities