

Societal Impact of Strategic Research

“Evaluation of the strategic research funding instrument” in Finland

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Impact Planning and Assessment



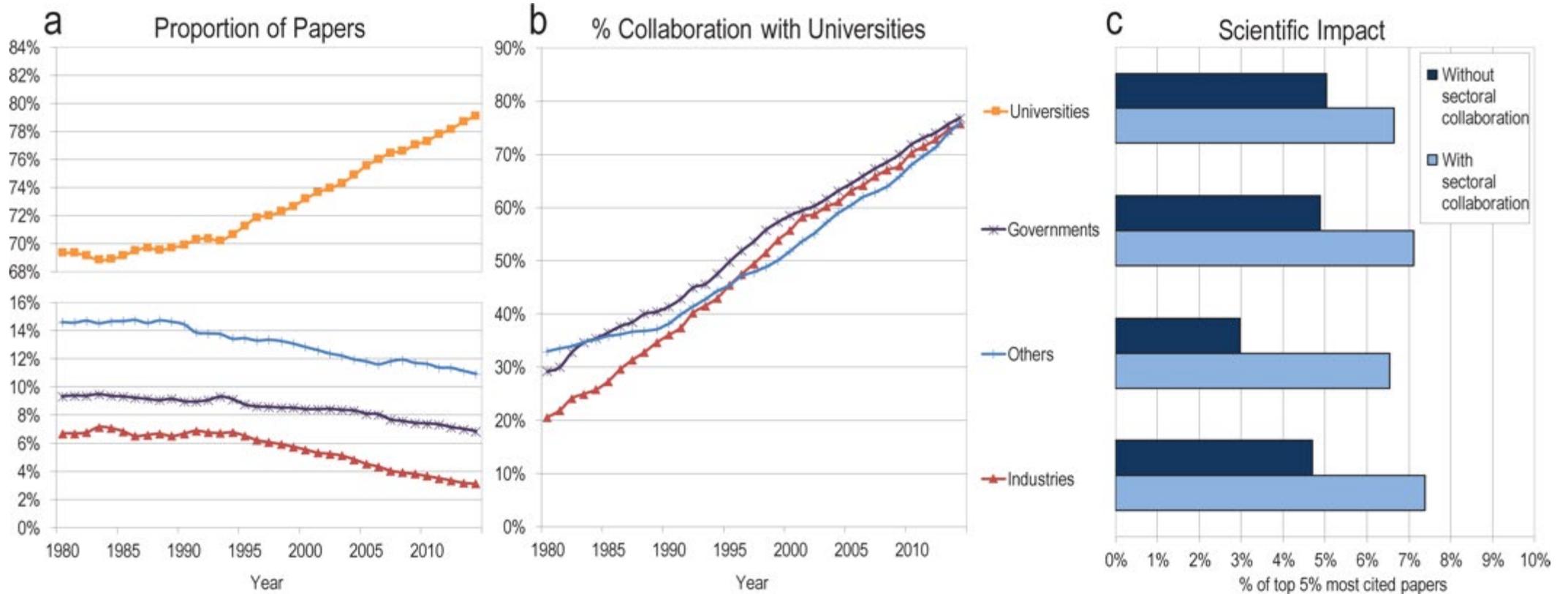
Societal Impact of Research

- Societal challenges need to be translated and broken down into tangible programmes and projects that connect researchers with stakeholders.
- Non-linear model of innovation: Technologies are not simply "transferred". Knowledge does not "trickle down".
- Active collaboration, problem-based learning, early engagement and partnerships are key to research impact
- Strategic research, mission-oriented research, problem-oriented research, action research, demand-driven research, ... 'a dear child has many names'.

Evaluation of Strategic Funding Instrument

- Strategic research within the Instrument should have “dual impact”:
 - Contribute with high-quality research that is relevant and usable for societal stakeholders and decision-makers – shed light on complex problems, and societal changes and trends, that will impact Finland in the future.
- Has the instrument delivered on its promise?
 - Evaluation finds that research funded under the Instrument has increased the interaction between researchers and stakeholders through co-creation, co-operation, strengthening of networks and dialogue, as well as increasing public debate selected topics.

High probability of SRC projects to produce high-quality research



Larivière V, Macaluso B, Mongeon P, Siler K, Sugimoto CR (2018)

Funding design

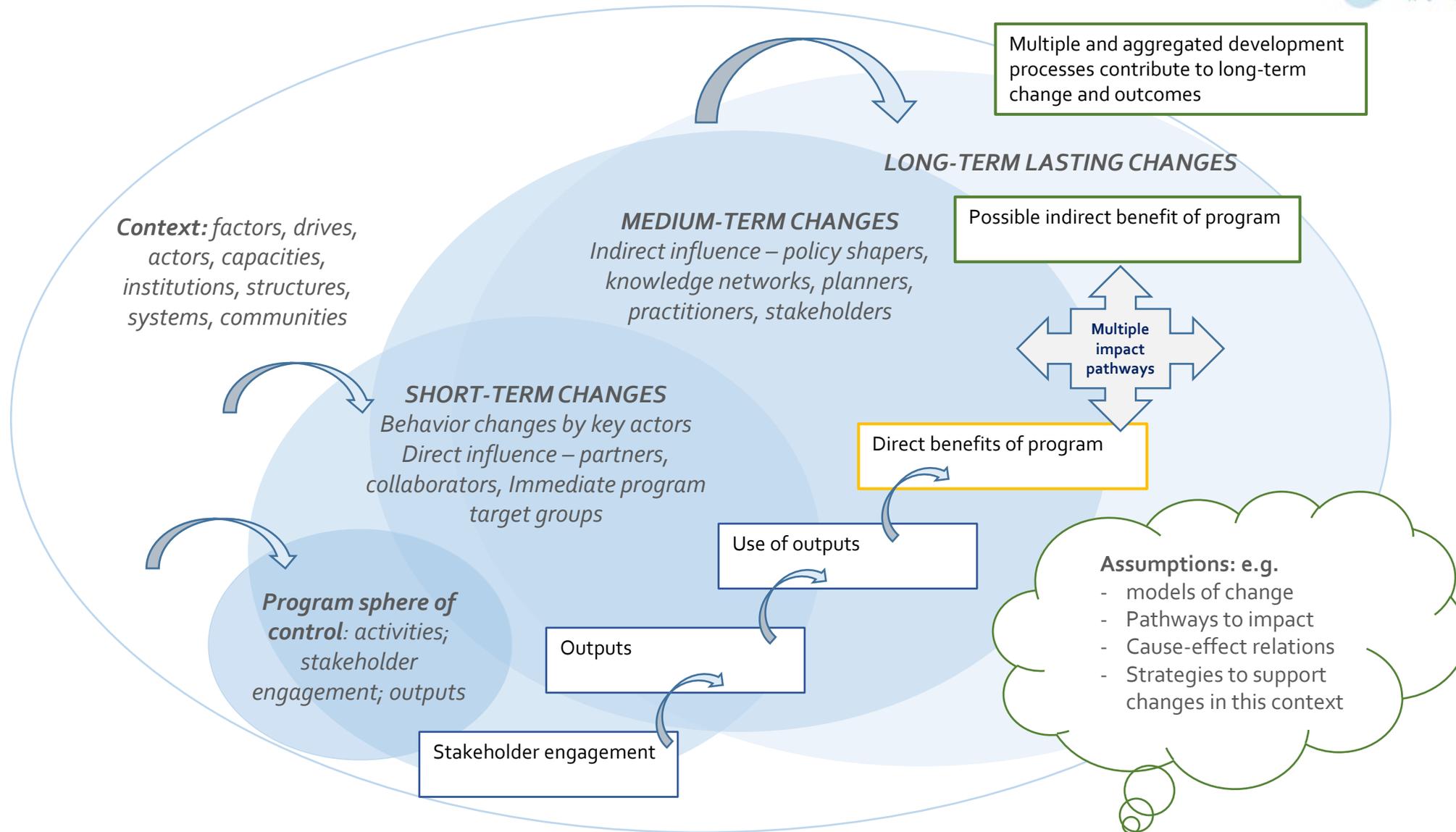
- Research under the Instrument has been co-produced together with various stakeholders
 - Collaboration and co-production of research (across the research project lifecycle) has proven to enhance and amplify impact.
 - Early engagement of stakeholders and ‘knowledge users’ in project design and scoping of research agenda, increases the likelihood of creating actionable and relevant outcomes.
 - Co-creation skips ‘knowledge dissemination’ by making research available to end-users, who can implement research findings and recommendations already during the projects.
 - Specially when supporting policy-makers with expertise and analysis, the Evaluation shows how early engagement creates mutual understanding and ‘joint problem space’.

Multiplier effects

- Research under the Instrument has supported stakeholders and policy-makers with three different types of decision support
 - **Early preparation of policies**, strategies, guidelines, initiatives, know-how, operational readiness, etc. (conceptual impact)
 - **Support for organisational development** and capacity-building including ability to proactively respond to future challenges (organisational impact)
 - **Basis for legislative advice**, development and use of research for problem-solving, and development of new or enhanced business models (instrumental impact).
- In general, Evaluation finds that SRC research on average has been “timely and successful” in producing information for (little-researched) thematic areas.

Policy impact of research

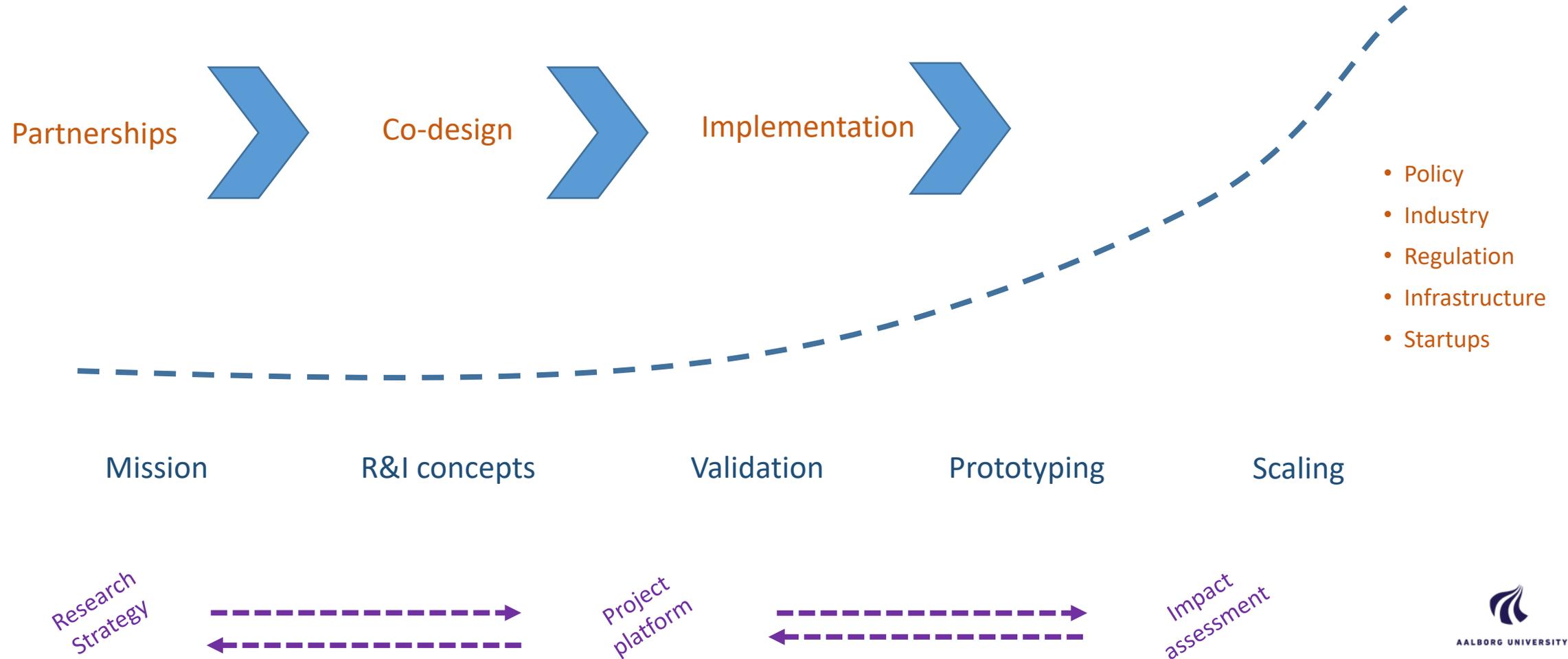
- Research under the Instrument was found to be especially relevant to ministries and policy institutions in the short- and mid-term (long-term not included)
 - SRC research has produced concrete changes and/or new practices among Finnish government organizations and decision-makers
 - SRC has contributed to the development of expertise and “usable information” and has increased capacity, readiness, and awareness of various complex problems and trends.
 - SRC research will likely have multiplier effects in the long-term which are hard to study and document in short-term project cycles (3-6 years).
 - Science that increases societal well-being, justice or equality, takes time (10+ years).



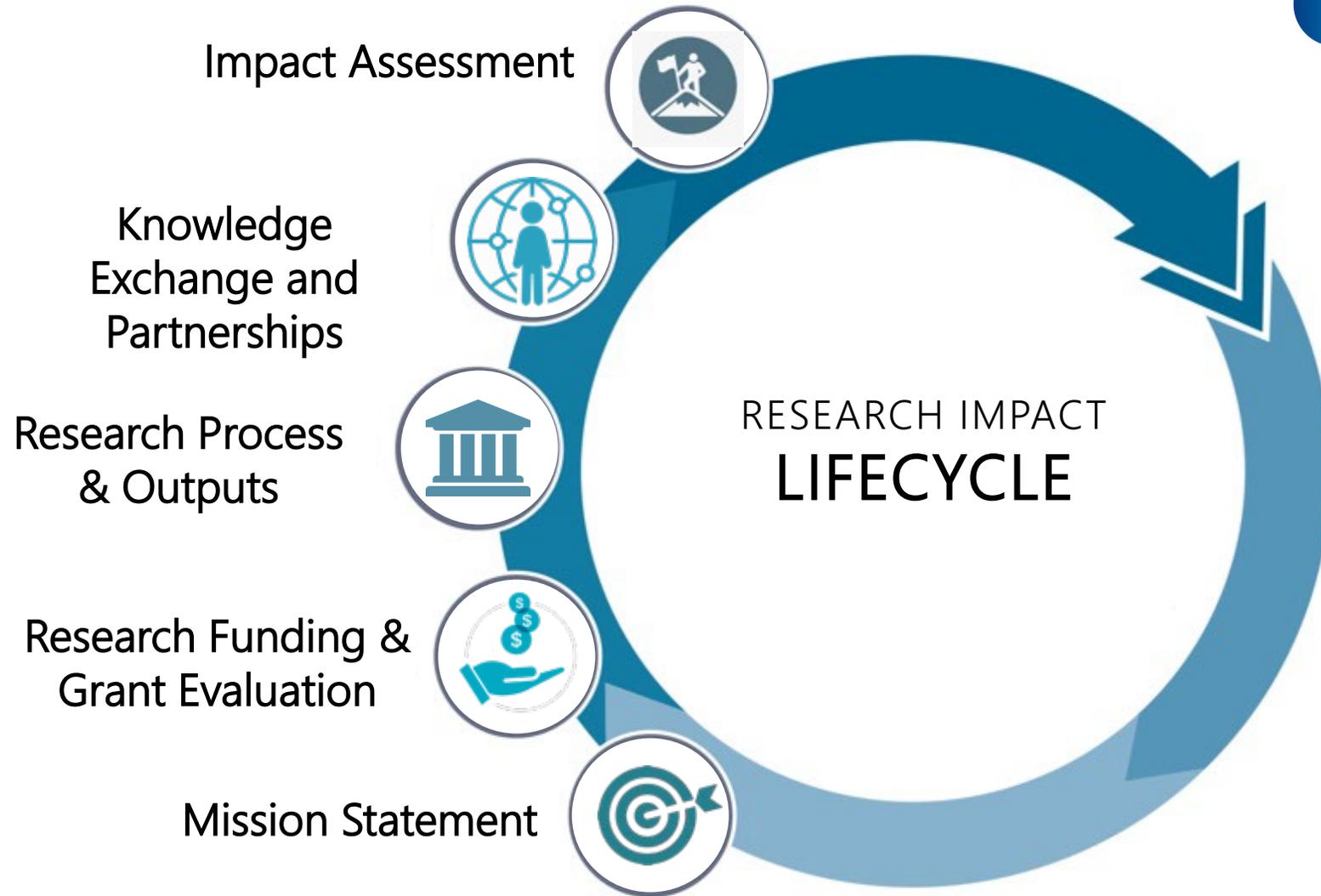
Impact failure vs. readiness

- Research under the Instrument did to a lesser extent lead to impact on businesses and non-governmental organisations
 - SRC research has primarily been geared towards organisational support for government agencies and decision-makers (public-public partnerships).
 - Survey respondents who considered themselves to be active stakeholders were most satisfied with the implementation of research.
 - Companies viewed stakeholder interaction as less successful than the average level of stakeholder satisfaction in the survey data.
 - SRC research could include more public-private partnerships AND earlier engagement and mapping of knowledge needs (topics) among private entities.

Problem-solution alignment



“Hall et al. (2018) argue that strategic research projects need to include “knowledge brokers” that are able to “connect otherwise isolated individuals and help to diffuse innovative ideas within a network” (p. 537). Knowledge brokers may be “publishing with a variety of different scholars” and facilitating the involvement and co-creation of stakeholders and research collaborators” (p. 538).



“**The evaluation gap** is the phenomenon... that the criteria in assessments do not match the character or goals of the research under evaluation or the role that the researcher aims to play in society.”

Wouters 2014



Fewer numbers, better science

Rinze Benedictus, Frank Miedema & Mark W. J. Ferguson

26 October 2016

Scientific quality is hard to define, and numbers are easy to look at. But bibliometrics are warping science — encouraging quantity over quality. Leaders at two research institutions describe how they do things differently.

[PDF](#)[Rights & Permissions](#)

Subject terms:

[Research management](#)

“Publications that directly influence patient care are weighted no higher in evaluations than any other paper, and less if the work appears in the grey literature (official reports rather than in **scientific journals**). Researchers are actively discouraged from pursuing publications that might improve medicine but would garner few **citations**. ... Publication pressure is keeping scientists from doing what really matters”

Conclusions

- Congratulations with a comprehensive evaluation.
- The SRC Instrument has been a success, e.g., number of partners; topics addressed; utilization of research, third party funding, 'cultural change'.
- Impressive systemic implementation of co-creation methods (unique international comparison).
- Early engagement with business and third sector organizations can help improve impact readiness.
- Build KTE Leadership Course and Capacity to educate next generation **knowledge brokers**

Thank you for the attention

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Publication series of the Government's investigation and research activities 2022:x

Evaluation of the strategic research funding instrument

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Government Office Helsinki 2022