



RCUK Impact Requirements

Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions about Impact Summaries and Pathways to Impact (formally known as Impact Plans). Please see page 8 for an [index](#) of the enclosed frequently asked questions.

Economic and societal impacts

The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. Economic and societal impacts embraces all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

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

When applying for Research Council funding via Je-S, pathways towards economic and societal impacts are expected to be outlined in the Impact Summary and Pathways to Impact. The [RCUK Statement of Expectation on Economic and Societal Impacts](#) outlines considerations that we expect every funding recipient to undertake.

Does this focus on impacts and benefits imply a shift away from blue-skies to applied research?

No, the aim is not to change the type of research you undertake, but to encourage you to think about the potential impacts of your research from the outset and the resources required to carry out the knowledge exchange/impact activities from the outset. The Research Councils Royal Charter have, since 1994, included a requirement for knowledge transfer and value for money – this is not a recent change of mission.

The Research Councils recognise that blue-skies research is essential in underpinning future academic advancements and they will continue to fund high quality blue-skies research. Research excellence remains the primary criterion for making decisions on funding.

What are the expectations on my institution, department or research organisation in relation to impact?

We expect organisations to develop a greater understanding of the importance of impact and help disseminate this to their staff, for instance, through guidance to researchers in preparation of their applications.

The Impact Summary and Pathways to Impact focus on potential impacts. How will the Research Councils enable researchers to identify changes or new impacts which emerge during the funded research?

We recognise that research impacts can become manifest at any stage in the research life cycle and beyond, and can often stem from unexpected or unintended outcomes. Impact Summaries and Pathways to Impact are designed to encourage researchers to start thinking about potential beneficiaries and pathways to impact whilst planning their projects. Hopefully, this will encourage researchers to make new connections and partnerships with relevant businesses and organisations, and to put in place resources and activities which then allow them to take opportunities when they arise.

How will the Research Councils monitor progress against the activities proposed in the Pathway to Impact?

allow researchers to record emerging impacts, and to update progress on the pathways to potential impacts identified in their applications. We also hope that researchers will continue to share the impacts of their research with us after the completion of their projects.

How do Pathways to Impact relate to the Research Outcomes project?

The Research Outcomes project is a cross-Council initiative to capture quantitative and qualitative outputs and outcomes from the research we fund. This is a complementary project but will not be a system used to monitor and report against Pathways to Impact. The project is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2011. Further information is outlined within the [RCUK Research Outcomes Project](#) web-pages.

Application Process

What do I need to write within my application?

Within the Je-

What if my research is far removed from potential beneficiaries in society, but could have economic/societal impacts if taken forward by other academics?

Plans for engaging with academic audiences may be included but only where these form part of the critical pathway towards economic and societal impact. This pw /P A

Our view is that knowledge transfer, public engagement or tech transfer office staff are NOT the equivalent of research staff and should NOT therefore attract estates and indirect costs, these staff should be treated in the same way as computing staff and so on, in that, as long as they are NOT included in the calculation of the indirect costs, they can be a direct charge to the grant. If they are included in the indirect costs, they cannot be a direct charge, as this would be double funding. The key point is that they should be available as a project-specific resource used at the discretion and direction of the Principal Investigator. They could be involved in such things like completing an exploitation agreement between the collaborating partners or arranging public consultations. In the case of the STFC, funding through separate schemes is available, allowing staff to be recruited to work specifically on impact activities.

Public engagement activities:

Societal impact is one of the key areas covered under the `Impact` umbrella and so it is legitimate for researchers to request resources to undertake PE activities. We certainly wouldn't expect every research grant to contain a large scale PE project but they could include, for example:

- training in public engagement or communications
- communicating the research to the public
- consulting and working with a particular user group where there might be a tangible relevant output
- for areas with potential societal or ethical impact, researchers might want to find out a bit more about current public attitudes and hopes/concerns for this area

Who will assess my Impact Summary and Pathway to Impact? Will my Impact Summary and Pathway to Impact be assessed by academic reviewers?

Your Impact Summary and Pathways to Impact will be looked at by peer reviewers as part of your application. This process may include involvement of users and potential beneficiaries as well as academics. In looking at the Impact Summary and Pathways to Impact, reviewers will be asked to consider whether they are appropriate and justified in terms of the nature of the proposed research project and whether sufficient attention has been given to who the beneficiaries might be and appropriate ways to engage with them throughout the project.

What if my research is assessed as excellent but my Pathways to Impact is deemed not suitable?

Research Councils UK reserve the right to withhold the award of a grant until Pathways to Impact are of a standard appropriate for the project.

My research is very risky, but is innovative and could have massive impacts. How will this be handled?

The introduction of Impact Summaries and Pathways to Impact will not disadvantage risky or speculative research applications and is not intended to discourage research creativity. When thinking about the potential impacts of their work at the planning stage, applicants should consider what is reasonable and expected for research of this nature. A statement that demonstrates this has been considered and explores how this will continue to be considered during the course of the research will be expected.

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