

Excellence and Impact

SFI Impact Webinar

May 2015

Aisling McEvoy, Ph.D.



SFI Agenda 2020

Excellence and Impact



Fondúireacht Eolaíochta Éireann
Science Foundation Ireland



1 To be the **Best** science funding agency in the world at creating **impact** from **excellent** research and demonstrating clear value for money invested

2 To be the exemplar in **building partnerships** that **fund excellent science** and drive it out into the market and society



3 To have the most engaged and **scientifically informed public**

4 To represent the **ideal modern public service organisation**, staffed in a lean and flexible manner, with efficient and effective management.



Impact and Excellent concept



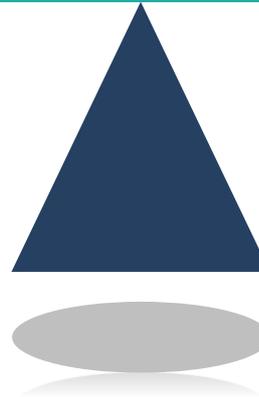
Fondúireacht Eolaíochta Éireann
Science Foundation Ireland



EXCELLENCE

IMPACT

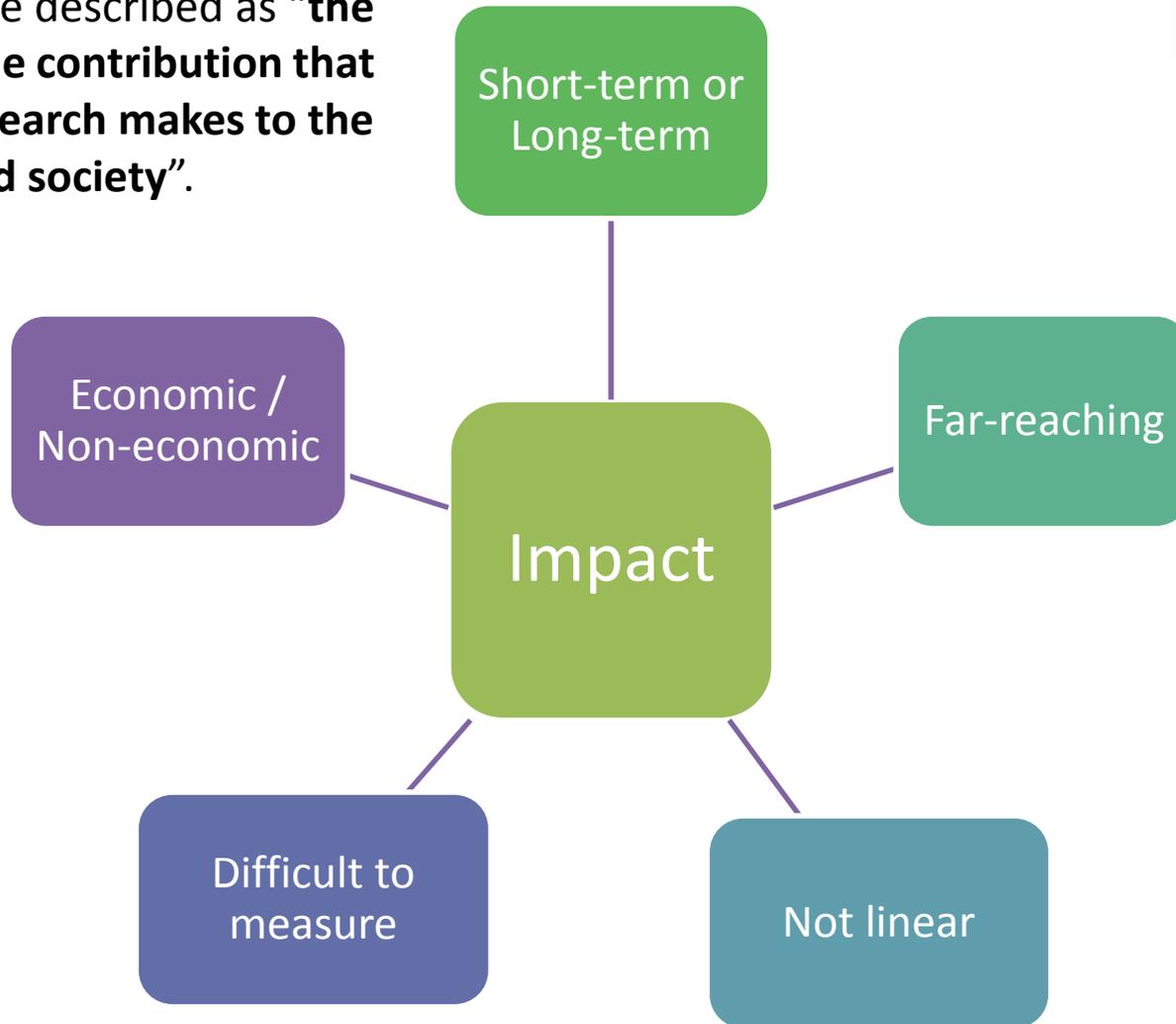
Ensuring
Quality/Excellence
both of the person and of
the proposed programme
via International
Peer/Merit Review



Increase focus on applicants
**demonstrating and
delivering impact
from research** due to an
absolute need to demonstrate
to government and the public,
**the value to the Irish
economy and society
of public funds spent
on research**

What is Impact?

Impact can be described as “**the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to the economy and society**”.



SFI describe impact in different categories

**Health &
Wellbeing**



**Human
Capacity**



Economic



Environmental



**Professional
Services**



**Policy &
Public
Services**



**International
Engagement**



Societal



Economic & Societal Impact

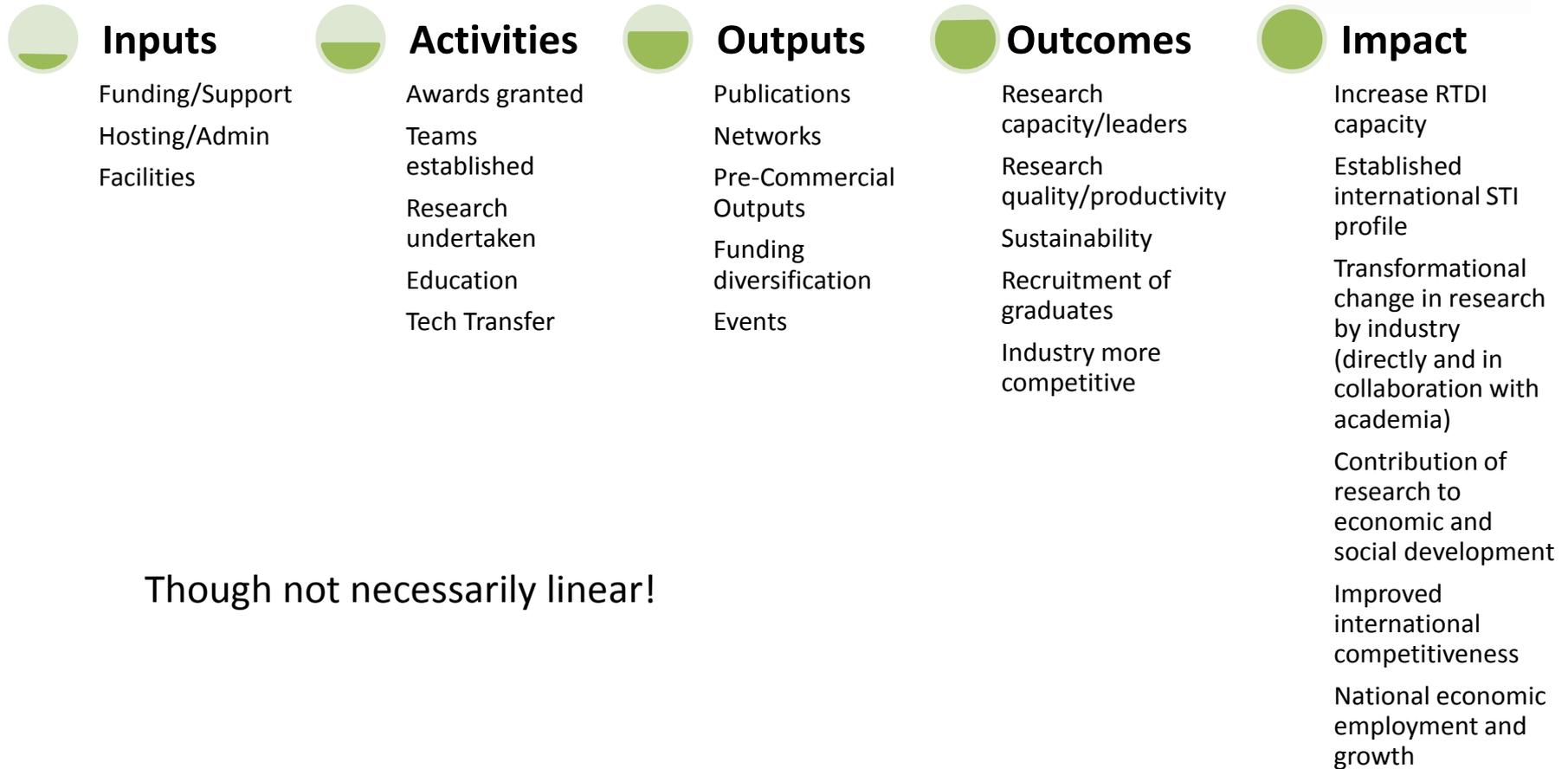


- For many SFI programmes *scientific excellence is both necessary and paramount but is not sufficient; applications must also demonstrate potential impact*. SFI emphasises the importance of the Impact Statement in submitted proposals.
- Impact embraces the **diverse ways** in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:
 - Powering an **innovative and enterprising economy**
 - Creating **high value jobs**
 - Attracting, developing and nurturing **businesses, scientists and talented people**
 - Increasing the **effectiveness of public services and policy**
 - **Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output**
 - Developing the **country's international reputation**
 - **Educating and training** the population
 - **Solving major national and global problems and challenges**, such as food security and world hunger, climate change, energy security, ageing population, rural sustainability, and other sustainability challenges

Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, Impact...



Fondúireacht Eolaíochta Éireann
Science Foundation Ireland



Though not necessarily linear!

Impact Review Criterion



- The **impact review criterion** is:
 - *Quality, credibility and relevance of the impact statement, including the likelihood, scale and value of societal and economic effects on Ireland as a result of the proposed research.*
- The impact statement should answer the following questions
 - **Who** will benefit from this research?
 - **What plans** will you put in place to **increase the chances of economic and societal impacts** from the proposed research?
 - Over what **timeframe** might the benefits from your research be realised?

Examples from High Quality Impact Statements

- Clearly delineating the **beneficiaries**
- Outline how the research will impact the beneficiaries including specific deliverables e.g.
 - **H2020 bids**
 - » past success and what is proposed
 - **Industry**
 - » industry collaborators engaged officially, meaningful LoS
 - » the benefits to the researchers and the industry clearly explained
 - » target IDFs, patents
 - » new industry engagement;
 - **High level job creation**
 - » size of the sector, predicted market growth
 - » better healthcare products in various sectors – market share and expected growth;
 - **Better informed public**
- **Realistic timeframes** – dividing into short to mid-term, and then longer term

Examples from High Quality Impact Statements



- **Mechanisms for achieving impact** with specifics:
 - » **Publications:** increased visibility and research leadership – influencing industry e.g. in conjunction with IDA by hosting MNCs
 - » Active in **setting standards, developing policy** (area specific) – influencing
 - » **Licenses/patents** – route to commercialisation
 - » **Trained researchers:** developing human capital
 - » **Outreach activities:** *public interest and engagement in science*

Common Characteristics of High Quality Impact Statements

- Good knowledge of the **relevant beneficiaries of the proposed research** and the **NEEDS of this sector**
- Clear description of how the applicant intends to **reach and engage with the beneficiaries** of the research, including **clear deliverables** and **milestones**
- **Genuine inclusion of appropriate collaborators** in the research programme, especially in the application area of the research if interdisciplinary in nature
- **Involvement of beneficiaries and end users from the outset** taking this input into the design of the research programme. Industry collaborators may not be *a requirement* but where appropriate is encouraged
- Brief description of **track record and relevant accomplishments for training researchers, knowledge exchange** and impact-generating activities in the context of the proposed research project
- Good knowledge of **national priorities and activities** in the relevant areas
- Applicant demonstrates **clear commitment to maximising the impact of their research**
 - **CREDIBLE implementation plan – ‘PATHWAYS to IMPACT’** including **realistic timelines and stakeholders**

Common Characteristics of Poor Impact Statements

- Statement is **vague, lacks specificity** and clear deliverables
- **Activities are not project specific**, but are **routine** activities for academic research positions
- **Lack of inclusion of appropriate collaborators** in the research programme, especially in the application area of the research, if interdisciplinary in nature. Vague, non-committal letters of support
- **Too much focus on track record** rather than what will be done as part of the proposed project
- **Lack of knowledge of beneficiaries, likely impacts and appropriate mechanisms** for realising the potential impacts
- **Too focussed on outputs** for their own sake **rather than their contribution to impact generation**
- **Unrealistic expectations** (not to be confused with setting ambitious goals)
 - **LACK of CREDIBLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Impact - in summary

- Remit is broad – assessing research from oriented basic research to more applied
- Short-term and long-term impacts are acceptable – clarity in relation to timelines
- Economic and non-economic: societal, health, environmental, public policy and services, professional services impacts valued
- SFI aiming to have a balanced portfolio in terms of types of impacts
- Impact can be local (Ireland) or global. If global, likely to have a knock-on impact locally
- Official collaborators including industry are possible – letters of support should contain proof of meaningful collaboration / genuine commitment
- **Credible implementation plan with clear pathways to impact and realistic timelines with the involvement of beneficiaries**



Fondúireacht Eolaíochta Éireann
Science Foundation Ireland

Thank you
www.sfi.ie

