# Research Impact Bitesize Video 1 – Types of Impact and Enablers

This is the first video in our new Research Impact Bitesize sessions. These recorded videos are short-form training that you can watch rather than read long articles on impact. Instead, we’ve read them for you!

In this video, we’ll give a brief overview of some **types** of research impact and also **enablers** of that impact.

**Types**

You may have heard the official REF definition of research impact: “…impact is defined 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”, so that is the after-effects of your research, and not your research itself.

But this definition doesn’t tell us exactly the *types* of impact we can create for these different sectors of society.

In the article, “The Landscape of UK Development Research Impact: An analysis of REF2021 impact case studies” by Padilla, Chadwick El-Ali, and Heintz (2023), they created frameworks based on the last REF’s case studies (so it’s not an exhaustive list of impact types).

1. **Conceptual impact** – changes in ways of thinking, addressing, or debating a topic
   1. Raising awareness
   2. Evidence of a shift in dialogue or reframing a debate
2. **Instrumental impact** – changes on policy, practices, government, businesses, professional academies, civil society
   1. Influence or shape policy decisions/agenda, contribute to the formulation of evidence-informed policies
   2. Influence changes in practices or behaviours with real-life interventions via the adoption of evidence-based approaches
3. **Learning and development** – strengthened capacities of Low/Medium Income Countries’ end-users
   1. Changes in LMIC end-users’ personal or professional knowledge and skills to engage with research results and generate novel solutions
   2. Strengthened capacities of LMIC organisations or systems to continue research in the future
4. **Networks and connectivity** – new or strengthened formal partnerships that deepen the use or application of the research
   1. Establish new platforms or spaces that bring people together
   2. Strengthen existing formal partnerships with civil society, practitioners, policymakers etc.
   3. Informal engagement with diverse groups to inform the research process or expand the reach

Some of these will be quite hard to evidence, for example, awareness raising, which is why an impact plan is crucial for the success of creating real impact from your research. It is important to recognise different forms of evidence and account for the resources needed to capture these throughout the timeframe of a project or funding grant and beyond.

**Enablers – the things that allow and enable you to create the impact**

1. Understanding impact
   1. Timescales (short vs long-term)
   2. Forms of impact evidence
   3. Address power imbalances in research outcomes
   4. Acknowledge research networks amplify impact
   5. Acknowledge serendipity
2. Funding approaches
   1. Encourage interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research
   2. Value multiple funding mechanisms
   3. Encourage decentralised funding approaches
3. Co-production with research users
   1. Support user involvement and ownership over research processes and outputs
   2. Embed ethics around research funding and consultations
   3. Address power imbalances in knowledge systems
   4. Engage with different users at multiple levels
4. Long-term equitable partnerships
   1. Long-term academic collaborations
   2. Recognise the role of local intermediaries
   3. Address power imbalances within partnerships
   4. Acknowledge value of lived experience and relationships
5. Embedded capacity building and learning
   1. Take a long-term programmatic approach
   2. Embed continuous learning processes across all partners and disciplines
   3. Focus on research management and support
6. Operational processes
   1. Balance contracts, partner capacities, and on-the-ground realities
   2. Support visa applications to enable two-way knowledge exchange
   3. Simplify due diligence and procurement
   4. Support project management and communication tasks

As always, we’re here if you’d like a chat about impact. Stay tuned for the second video in the REF impact bitesize series.