



Discussion Paper:

Developing UNSW's Societal Impact Framework Together

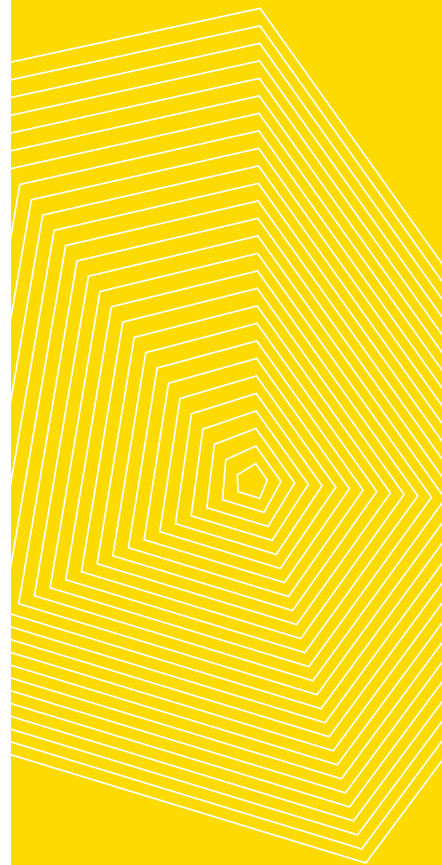


Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1. | Executive Summary | 3 |
| 2. | Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor and President | 4 |
| 2.1 | Importance of Societal Impact | 4 |
| 2.2 | How the Societal Impact Framework informs our new strategy | 5 |
| 3. | Framing UNSW's Societal Impact | 6 |
| 3.1 | How the UNSW Community creates Societal Impact | 7 |
| 4. | The Societal Impact Framework | 8 |
| 4.1 | Purpose of the Framework | 8 |
| 4.2 | What will be included in the Framework | 8 |
| 4.3 | Examples of Societal Impact Focus Areas | 13 |
| 4.4 | Examples from across Faculties and Divisions | 15 |
| 4.5 | Capabilities that enable UNSW's impact | 16 |
| 4.6 | Impact measurement and evaluation | 16 |
| 5. | The Consultations | 17 |
| 5.1 | Purpose and positioning | 17 |
| 5.2 | Objectives and Questions | 17 |
| 5.3 | Reach | 18 |
| 5.4 | Consultation Approach | 18 |
| 5.5 | Timelines | 18 |
| 6. | Acknowledgements | 19 |
| 7. | References | 20 |
| 8. | Appendices | 21 |

List of Diagrams

| | |
|---|----|
| Diagram 1: Connection between UNSW Strategy and Societal Impact Framework | 5 |
| Diagram 2: Indicative components of the final Societal Impact Framework | 8 |
| Diagram 3: Logic model example | 9 |
| Diagram 4: Example of research impact pathways | 10 |
| Diagram 5: Example of education impact pathways | 11 |
| Diagram 6: Example of operations impact pathways | 12 |
| Diagram 7: Example of engagement impact pathways | 12 |

List of Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| Table 1: Impact Categories | 6 |
| Table 2: Impact Focus Areas | 14 |
| Table 3: Criteria for selecting Impact Focus Areas | 15 |
| Table 4: Consultation objectives and questions | 17 |
| Table 5: Timeline of consultations and deliverables | 18 |
| Table 6: Examples of other societal impact definitions. | 21 |

1

Executive Summary

The development of UNSW's first Societal Impact Framework is taking place in 2024. This framework will inform the next UNSW Strategy beyond 2025, and answer the question; how do we increase UNSW's societal impact locally, regionally and globally, building on our current strengths? The framework will be informed by consultation, data analysis, cross sector research into best practice, and the recommendations and insights from Project Symphony (the UNSW brand strategy), the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings data and the ongoing work to develop the new UNSW Strategy beyond 2025.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to create a shared understanding of what UNSW's Societal Impact Framework is aiming to achieve and the importance of the consultations as a key source of insights. A shared understanding will help elicit relevant feedback and focus the discussions during the consultations. We expect many early views or examples shared in this paper will undergo changes as we listen, learn and reconsider during the consultations.

The Societal Impact Framework will be our shared, anchoring purpose and commitment to improving environmental sustainability and resilience, social cohesion, health and wellbeing, and economic prosperity for all. It will:

1. identify impact focus areas where we can concentrate our efforts for greatest impact,
2. outline our unique capabilities that enable our impact, and
3. define how we will measure and learn from our progress.

Our impact focus areas will be reinforced by our strategic priorities and require our concentrated and collective efforts to advance. They will be areas of impact where progress is vital for a thriving society and planet. Their complexity will allow researchers, educators, professional staff, students and our extended community from multiple disciplines to contribute and build strengths in these areas. The impact focus areas will not be pursued at the exclusion of other areas. UNSW recognises that supporting the whole academic ecosystem is important to our ability to foresee and tackle complex societal needs as they evolve.

At UNSW, societal contribution is a collective effort achieved through our research, education, engagement with our extended community, and the way we operate. It includes, but is not limited to:

- our researchers solving the world's most complex challenges in partnership with those experiencing the realities of these problems,
- our educators who equip students with the skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy to grow meaningful careers, and thrive in rapidly changing environments,
- our professional staff who create safe and supportive environments for colleagues and students, improve the sustainability of our campuses, or improve our systems and processes to maximise time spent on education and research outcomes,
- our academic and professional staff who engage with our extended community to improve decision making and behaviours or support community-led initiatives, or to enhance our education and research outcomes (improving quality, reach, and relevance)
- our partners from industry, government, other universities, foundations and local community who contribute their resources, insights and expertise to achieve societal impact with us,
- our students who can contribute to positive societal change now, and as our next generation of leaders, and
- our alumni who become experts in their field and contribute to progressing society.

At the centre of our approach is an inclusive consultation process with staff, students and our broader community to understand our current and future potential to improve lives here in Australia and around the world. We want to hear from you to make sure we capture all examples of impact, not just those that appear in our current reporting processes. The consultations will occur in February and March 2024 both in Sydney and Canberra and will include dedicated Indigenous sessions. The consultation process is a critical data collection mechanism for understanding where UNSW excels and why.

Societal impact is a complex and meaningful pursuit, and one that everyone in the UNSW community contributes towards. This is why your participation in the consultation process is so crucial. We should be proud of what we have achieved, and we want to take this unique opportunity to reflect and refresh our aspirations for a better future for all.

To register for the consultations, please visit the Societal Impact website:

<https://www.unsw.edu.au/societal-impact>

2

Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor and President

2.1 Importance of Societal Impact

At their best, universities have for millennia been communities that have generated knowledge, provided learning and actively engaged in civil society with an aim towards collective, positive progress.

UNSW itself was established 75 years ago in a post-war era, explicitly to meet huge skills requirements in NSW and generate knowledge with, and for, the benefit and prosperity of the people of NSW and Australia. For 75 years, we have stayed true to our founding mission, continuing to anticipate and respond to the changing needs of the society we serve – in our state, in Australia and around the world.

UNSW is a public university. We are, and always will be, an inclusive university. Our vision – to improve lives globally through innovative research, transformative education, and commitment to a just society – drives everything we do. Our motto, *Scientia Corde Manu et Mente*, Knowledge by Heart, Hand and Mind, reflects the importance of 'heart' as a guide for all that we do: the way we engage and connect and the fundamental purpose of our actions: positive impact on society and the long-term pursuit of collective progress. Our focus on societal progress not only stems from our historic mission as a public university but is deeply embedded in our values, beacons for people and partners who share our aspiration for an ever-improving, just society. At UNSW, how we do things is just as important as the things we do.

The renewal of our strategy beyond 2025 provides the opportunity to refresh our aspirations and think in new ways about how we can make significant and distinct societal contributions. UNSW is uniquely placed to tackle some of the world's greatest challenges and grasp some of its most incredible opportunities. This comes through our deep and broad expertise and the distinctive way we connect, across the University, across disciplines and across society. This comes through the immense resource we have in our 375,000 and growing community of alumni who, with skills honed at UNSW, shape businesses, governments and communities around the globe. This comes with the benefits but also the responsibility of being a top 50 university globally.¹

We have a track record of tackling some of the most challenging and urgent societal issues on a global scale and we want to strengthen that capability. But as society grows increasingly fractured, dynamic and complex, we need to be increasingly innovative, multi-disciplinary, inclusive and deliberate in our approach to creating positive societal impact. This needs to be a whole-of-University effort, involving the breadth of our Faculties and Divisions, educators, researchers, students and local and global partners. Our collective passion and expertise are a necessity for UNSW to deliver far-reaching and lasting positive change in Australia, the region and globally.

To realise our collective vision for societal impact, we are creating UNSW's first Societal Impact Framework and we are seeking input from all in the UNSW community. Through extensive consultation we seek to understand how we can optimise our impact in areas where we can be most effective and renew people's connection to our public purpose. Each of us, from all areas of the University community – students, educators, researchers, professional staff, alumni, donors, our industry and community partners and supporters – has an important role to play.

I encourage you to read this discussion paper and to be involved in the engagement process. The UNSW Societal Impact Framework will anchor all our efforts as UNSW envisions our next 75 years of positive impact, striving to improve lives around the world.

Attila Brungs
Vice-Chancellor and President, UNSW Sydney

2.2 How the Societal Impact Framework informs our new strategy

The Societal Impact Framework is a crucial part of our next UNSW Strategic Plan. The consultations for the framework form one stream of a broader consultation process to inform our new strategic priorities. This is a unique opportunity to better understand our current achievements and influence our strategic choices.

The Societal Impact Framework will be our shared, anchoring purpose and will help us make the choices necessary to create a distinctive and effective strategy.

- The Societal Impact Framework will:
- provide the clarity required to naturally collaborate for greater impact in select areas,
 - ensure we leverage our distinctive capabilities,
 - build on our existing strengths,
 - help us identify new capabilities and opportunities,
 - guide how we measure and learn from our progress, and
 - position UNSW as a leader in local and global societal impact.

Once we know what we want to achieve and the capabilities required to do so, we can design a new, cohesive strategy in which our strategic priorities and supporting activities, structures and processes are coordinated and complementary.

Further strategy consultations will take place in April through to June 2024, with the final strategy completed by December 2024.

Visualising how the Societal Impact Framework intersects with the new Strategy

Our societal impact will be achieved through our core activities of teaching and research, and our enabling functions (people and culture, operations, etc.). It is not a separate function or activity. This is illustrated in Diagram 1 below. The green components represent the Societal Impact Framework inputs, and the blue are UNSW's core strategic activities.

Diagram 1: Connection between UNSW Strategy and Societal Impact Framework

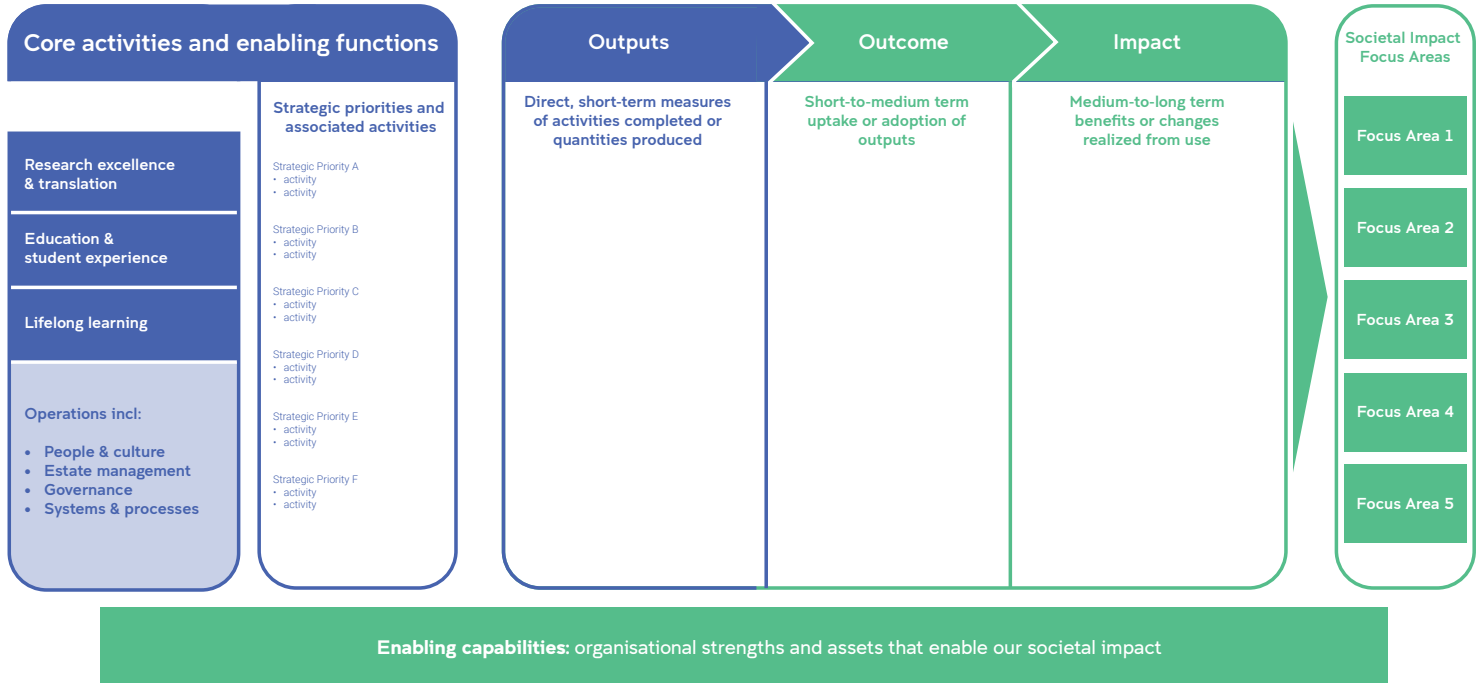


Diagram 1*: This diagram illustrates how the Societal Impact Framework and the new Strategy correspond. The core activities and enabling functions are reflective of current priorities and may evolve with the new strategy.
*Note that this diagram is indicative and not final and will be updated as research on the Societal Impact Framework progresses.

3

Framing UNSW's Societal Impact

Societal impact encompasses our ability to improve the world we share by progressing environmental sustainability and resilience, social cohesion, health and wellbeing, and economic prosperity for all.

These three impact categories represent complex and overlapping opportunities to achieve societal impact. While we have listed them separately below in Table 1, there are examples that fall into multiple categories, such as the planning and development of future cities and transport. As such they will require UNSW's pragmatic and multidisciplinary expertise to understand and solve.

Table 1: Impact Categories

| Impact category | Possible examples of inclusions |
|---|--|
| Environmental sustainability and resilience | Sustainable management of our campuses and assets, climate adaptation, water sanitation and biodiversity, heat impact mitigation, biodiversity and conservation, energy efficiency and renewable generation, waste reduction and reuse including circular economy, construction industry and infrastructure resilience, decarbonization technologies, Indigenous knowledge and protocol, disaster response and recovery, food security and sustainability, environmental ethics, among others. |
| Social cohesion, health and wellbeing | UNSW's efforts to improve equity and inclusion amongst staff and students, changes in the healthy functioning of individuals, families, communities and populations (physical, psychological, and social aspects of health and wellbeing), robust social and health service systems (policy, practice and system design), medicine, medical technology and innovation, vaccines, disease control, creative arts and cultural participation, human rights and anti-discrimination mechanisms, regional and global security and stability, equity and diversity, inclusive and accessible design, cultural and language preservation and understanding, education access and innovation, humanity and 21st century technology, re-skilling and adapting to a rapidly changing world, future cities and spaces, affordable housing, health promoting environments, stigma reduction, violence prevention, political voice and governance, among others. |
| Economic prosperity for all | Macro-economic measures (i.e. unemployment, national income, rate of growth, GDP, inflation), trade and competitiveness, productivity and efficiency, new services, products and market niches, securing and protecting existing markets (i.e. increase or maintain returns from existing markets) economic inclusiveness and poverty alleviation, economic sustainability (debt management), UNSW's investment in staff professional development, creating ecosystems that support innovation and entrepreneurial activity, among others. |

Table 1*: Examples of topics and challenges that fall within the three proposed impact categories.
*Note that the 'possible examples of inclusions' are indicative and not intended to be a final list of inclusions. Rather, the intension is to provide examples of how a subject or topic might be grouped within an Impact category.
Our starting point for defining societal impact is informed by other accepted definitions (see Table 6 in Appendix A).
UNSW's definition may evolve based on insights gained during the consultations and further research.



3.1 How the UNSW Community creates Societal Impact

Everyone in the UNSW community contributes to societal impact. Positive change can be created through:

- The design and management of our campus (open spaces, buildings, waste management)
- The application of the UN Sustainability Development Goals to workflows, campus management, research and teaching
- Procurement and ethical supply chain management
- Tech efficiencies and security: keeping our data safe and supporting effective workflows
- Positive and supportive culture and the wellbeing of our staff
- Supporting students to make informed course choices and navigating their first few months
- Students participating in clubs and societies with societal impact objectives or choosing an internship where they can contribute to societal progress (in corporate or for-purpose organisations)
- High-quality education with passionate educators, and an inclusive pathway for low socio-economic status students
- Donor contributions towards research that delivers societal impact, student equity scholarships, and programs that support startup development, among others
- Global partnerships to establish UNSW as the world's leading university in global Indigenous and First Nations exchange, and as the global leader in driving sustainability and resilience in vulnerable communities
- Achievements of our local and global alumni
- Pioneering researchers working closely with diverse stakeholders to tackle complex challenges
- Among others

4

The Societal Impact Framework

4.1 Purpose of the Framework

The purpose of UNSW's Societal Impact Framework is to provide the clarity in direction needed to increase our impact where the nation and world need it most. This will allow UNSW to:

- Amplify – Design a cohesive and coordinated new strategy around a shared purpose. The alignment of strategic priorities and activities will drive momentum.
- Differentiate – Differentiate ourselves on parameters that really matter, with specific impact proof points that distinguish our brand.
- Engage – Rally our whole community, local and global, around purposeful causes and reinforce our sense of pride and aspiration.
- Learn – Measure and evaluate our impact to ensure we continually optimise our contributions.

4.2 What will be included in the Framework

UNSW's first Societal Impact Framework will articulate UNSW's impact focus areas, what new and existing capabilities will enable even greater impact, and how we will measure and evaluate our success. It will also include a logic model describing the inputs and activities required to deliver the outputs, outcomes and impacts. Diagram 2 and 3 below illustrate this in more detail.

The framework is a critical input for UNSW's new Strategy. It will provide the clarity, around which a new set of complementary strategic priorities and activities can be designed.

Diagram 2: Indicative components of the final Societal Impact Framework

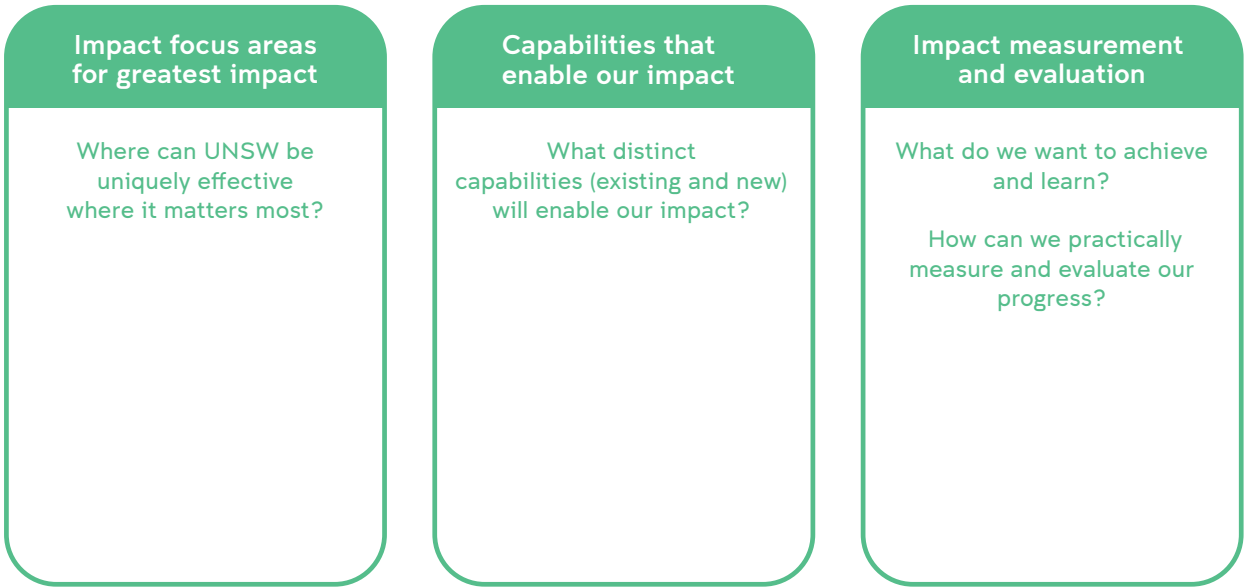


Diagram 2*: An outline of the three key components of our Societal Impact Framework.
*Note that this diagram is indicative and is based on current assumptions but is not final.
It will be updated as research on the Societal Impact Framework progresses.

Diagram 3: Logic model example

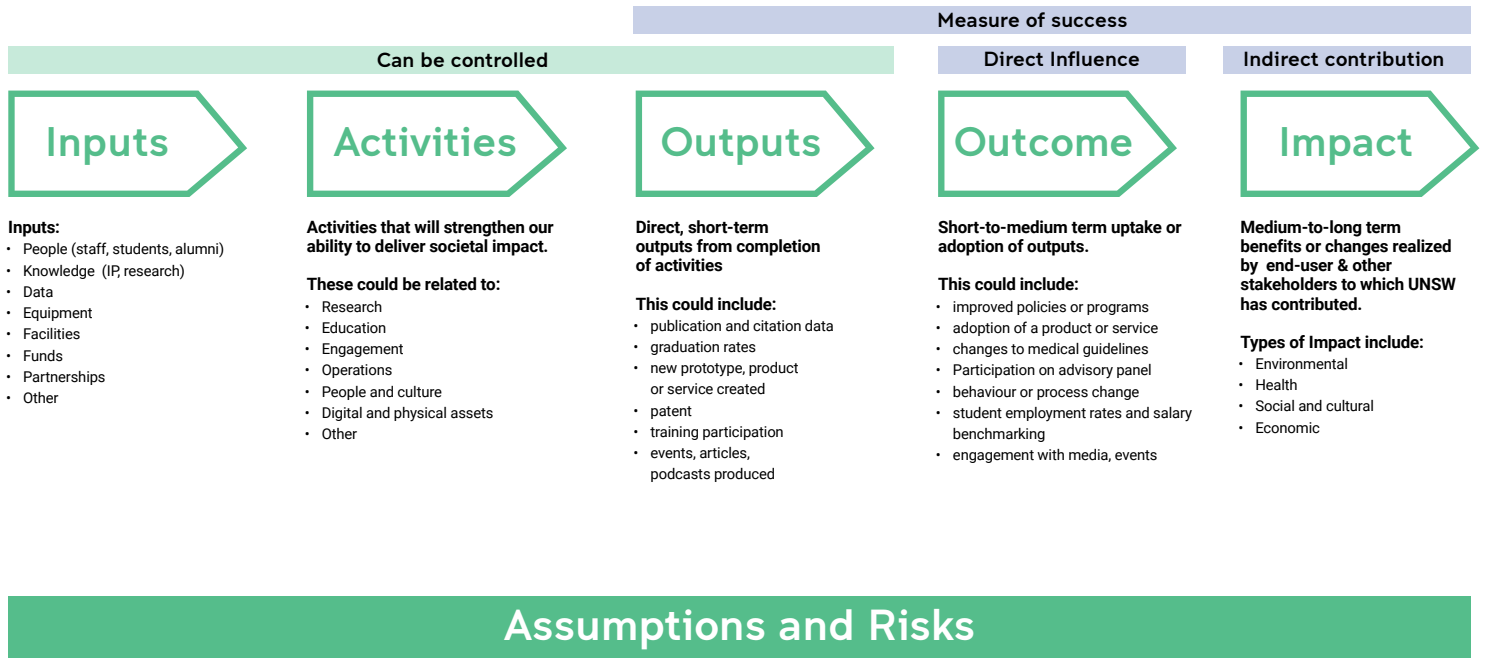


Diagram 3*: Example of the Logic Model components. This is an example only.
**Note that this diagram is indicative of a logic model and is intended as an example only. It is not final. The Societal Impact Framework logic model will be developed throughout the process of the development of the framework.*

Impact pathways for our research, education, engagement and operations

To identify what outcomes and impacts we want to measure it is critical to map how our core activities and operations deliver societal value. Diagram 4, 5, 6 and 7 below provide four examples of possible impact pathways for our research, education, engagement and operations. Each impact pathway requires very different measures for societal outputs, outcomes and impacts.

These diagrams are illustrative only and are intended to stimulate discussion and elicit feedback. We expect these will evolve as a result of the consultations, and research into existing pathway models.

Diagram 4: Example of research impact pathways

How **research** can result in positive societal outcomes

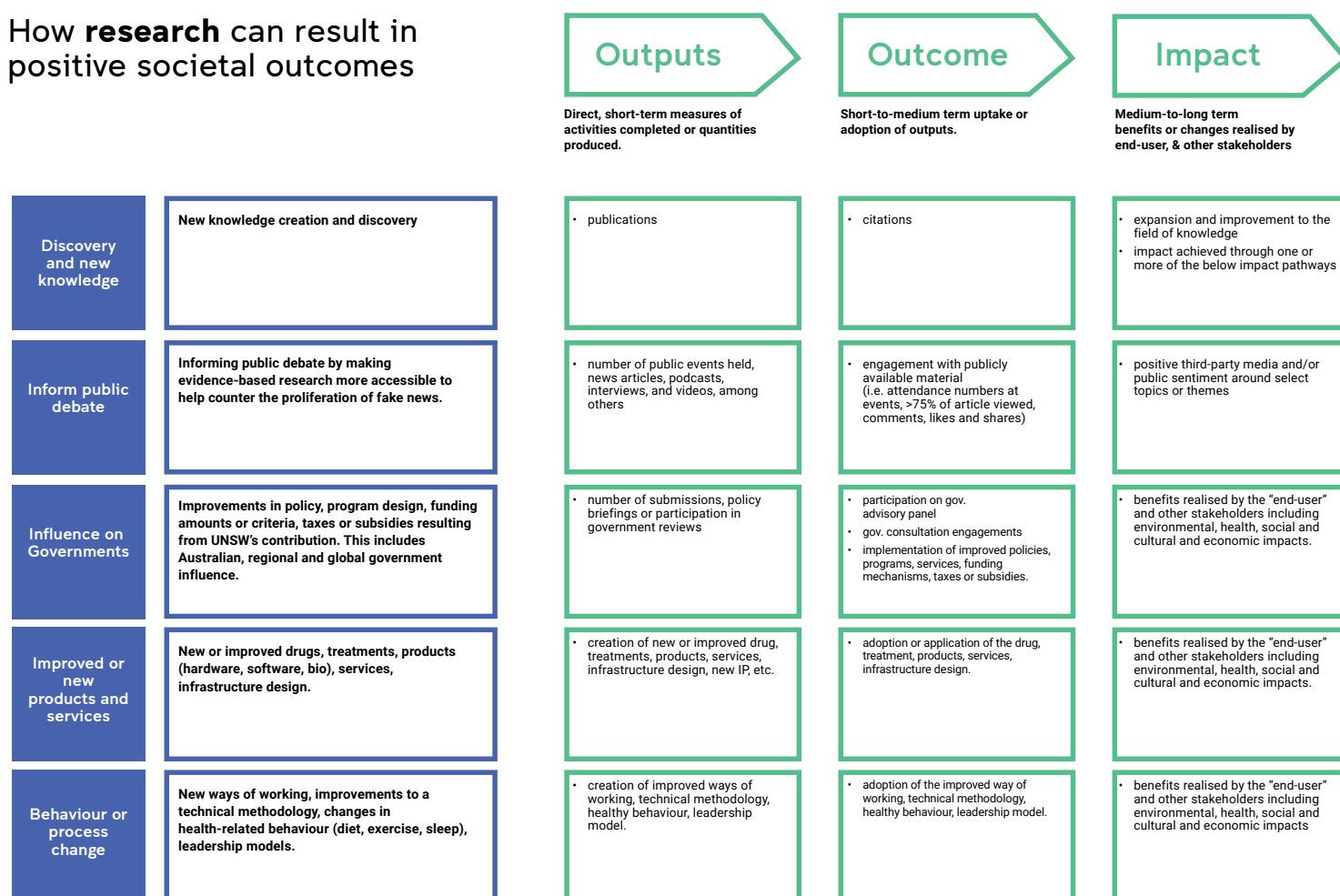


Diagram 4*: Example of how research can result in positive societal outcomes and impact. The output, outcome and impact measures are examples only.

This has been informed by the UK's REF Guidelines for Submission, 2019.

**Note that this diagram is indicative and is intended as an example only. It is not final.*

Diagram 5: Example of education impact pathways

How **education** can result in positive societal outcomes

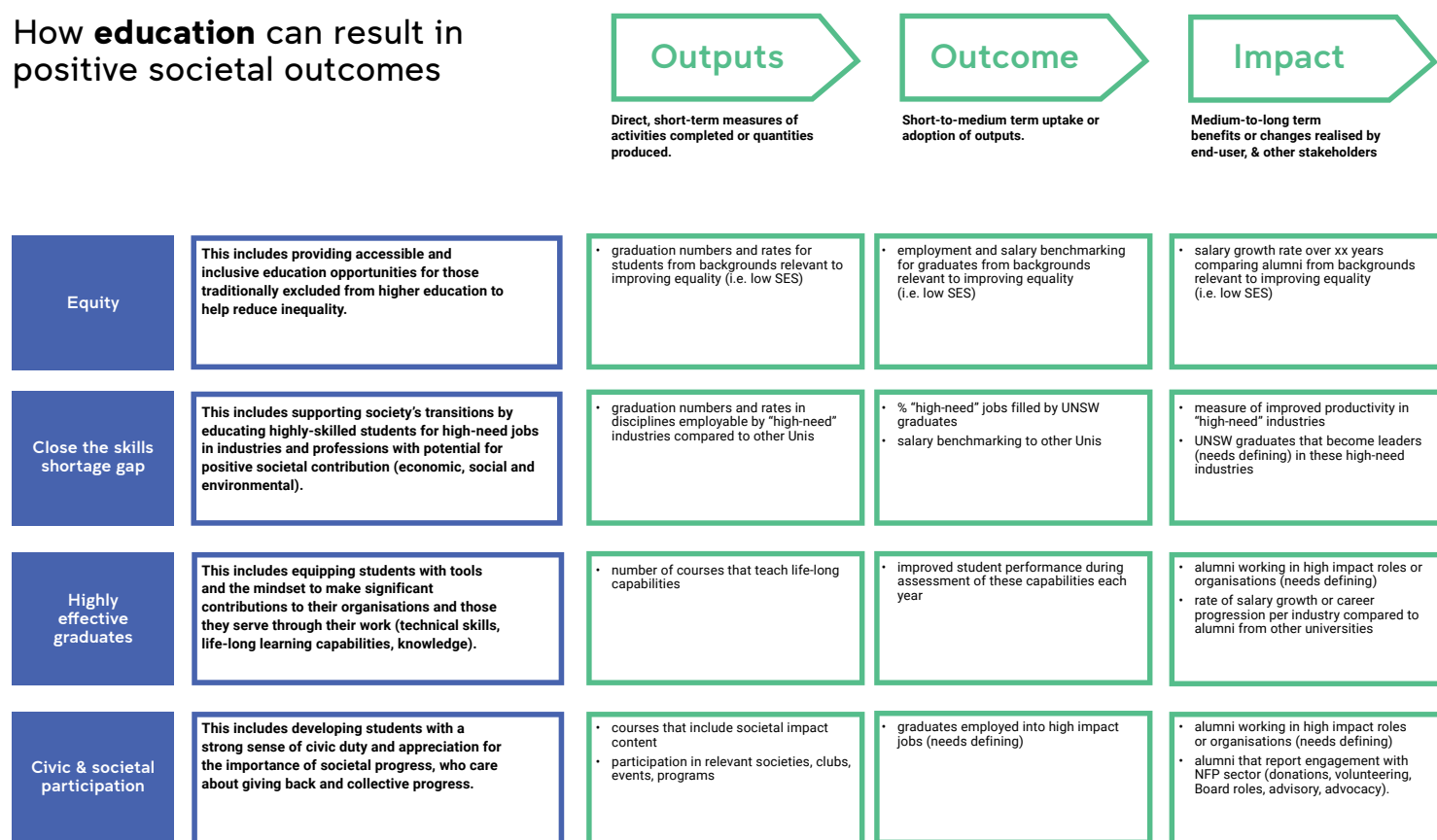


Diagram 5*: Example of how education can result in positive societal outcomes and impact. The measures of output, outcome and impact are examples only.

**Note that this diagram is indicative and is intended as an example only of education impact pathways. It is not final.*

Diagram 6: Example of operational impact pathways

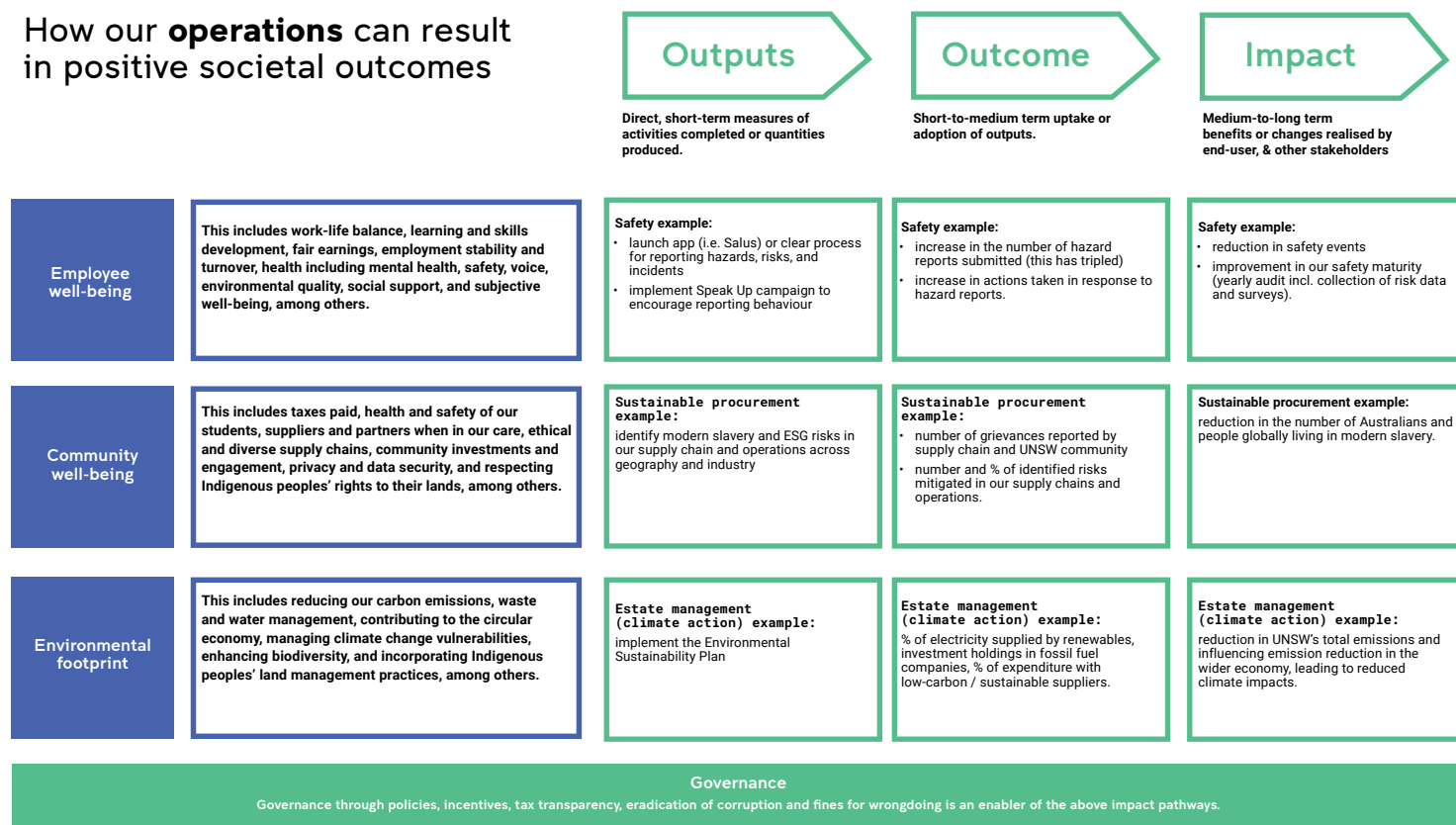
How our **operations** can result in positive societal outcomes

Diagram 6*: Example of how our operation can result in positive societal outcomes and impact. The measures of output, outcome and impact are examples only. This has been informed by OECD, Measuring the Social Performance of Firms through the Lens of the OECD Well-being Framework, 2022, Policy Insights (OECD, 2022).

*Note that this diagram is indicative and is intended as an example only of operational impact pathways. It is not final.

Diagram 7: Example of engagement impact pathways

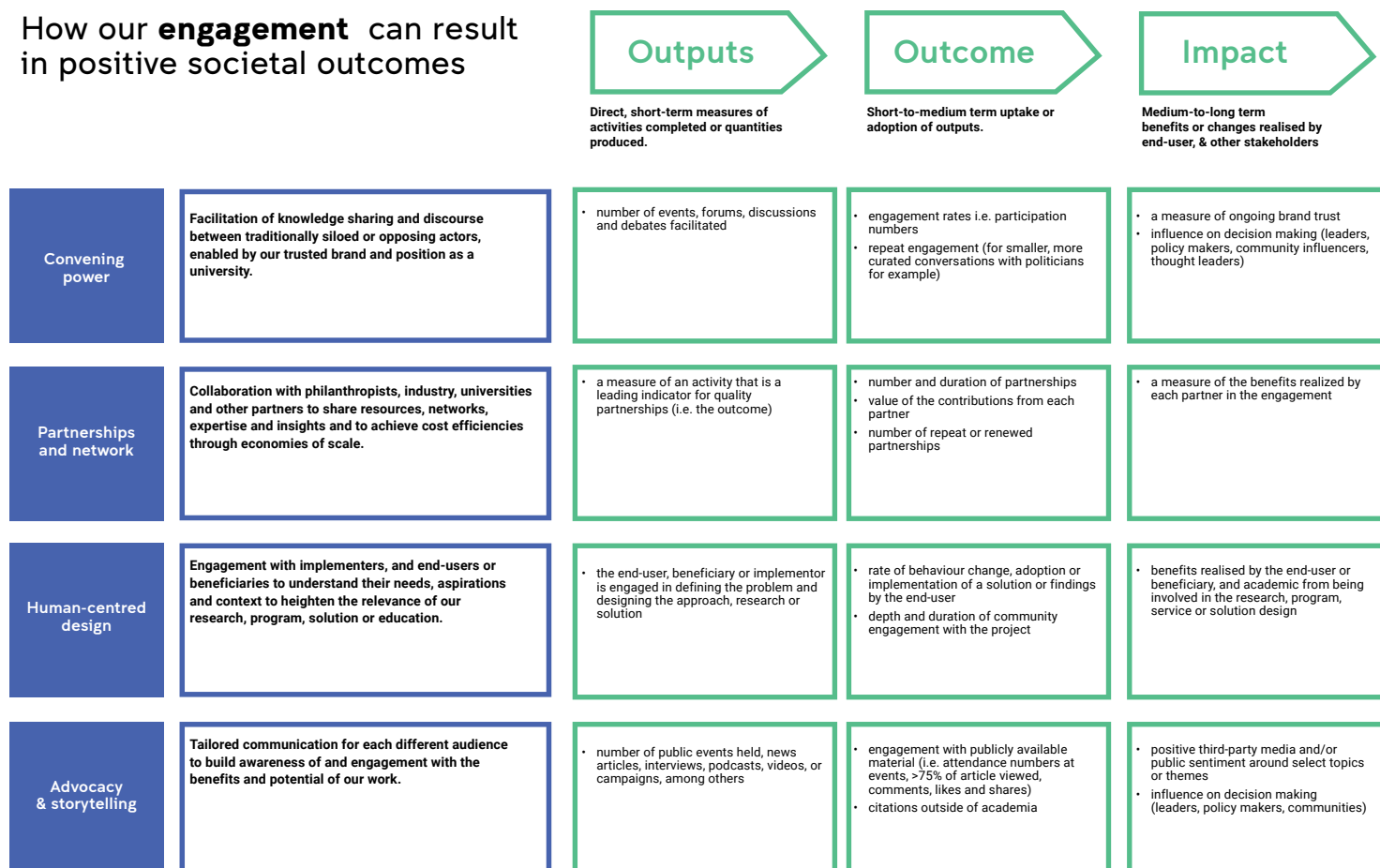
How our **engagement** can result in positive societal outcomes

Diagram 7*: Example of how our engagement can result in positive societal outcomes and impact. The measures of output, outcome and impact are examples only.

*Note that this diagram is indicative and is intended as an example only of engagement impact pathways. It is not final.



4.3 Examples of Societal Impact Focus Areas

Earlier we suggested that societal impact encompassed three broad categories; environmental sustainability and resilience, social cohesion, health and wellbeing and economic prosperity for all. The framework intends to define societal impact focus areas under these categories that will allow UNSW to concentrate our efforts and amplify our impact. In this section we will discuss why selecting impact focus areas is necessary, propose some examples in Table 2, and discuss how they fit into a thriving and diverse academic ecosystem. Then we will turn to the proposed criteria for selecting these focus areas and the principles for how they will be defined.

How we have arrived at these examples of focus areas

These initial focus areas are informed by previous UNSW surveys, strategy preparations, and consultations and are subject to change. We have referenced qualitative data collected during other consultation processes and Faculty and Division strategy planning sessions. The QS and THE Impact Rankings against the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Project Symphony insights were key references, among others. While existing data has been a useful guide, our current measures of success do not adequately tell the full story. The consultation process is a critical data collection mechanism for understanding where UNSW excels and why. We will collectively debate, iterate and evolve this first draft as the Framework is developed.

How focus areas fit into a diverse and thriving academic ecosystem

The impact focus areas will not be pursued at the exclusion of other areas. UNSW recognises that supporting the whole academic ecosystem is important to our ability to foresee and tackle complex societal needs as they evolve. This includes the value of discovery and knowledge creation in enabling us to anticipate and prevent future issues and unearth new solutions and opportunities.

The focus areas will attract a larger portion of the university's resources and be used to engage external partnerships and resourcing. They will act as a focal point around which people can build connections with or direct their work. They will be defined broadly enough to require multidisciplinary contributions, while also being specific enough that we can measure our progress and evolve our approach.

We recognise that while everything we do has a direct or indirect societal impact, it will not necessarily fall within a chosen focus area. Everyone from researchers, educators, and professional and technical staff, our students and extended community advances UNSW's public contribution.

Example societal impact focus areas

The societal impact focus areas in the table below are examples presented for feedback and discussion during the consultation period in early 2024. We will need to prioritise for the final Framework as ten societal impact focus areas will not allow for the concentration of effort required to really magnify our impact on chosen issues.

Table 2: Impact Focus Areas

| Impact focus area | Possible inclusions for each impact focus area (not exhaustive) |
|---|--|
| Lifelong learning and connection | Education design for developing the skills, knowledge, attributes and values for lifelong learning; collaboration and social connection, resilience in the face of failure, critical and creative problem solving, responsible and adaptive leadership, and social commentary and connection through the arts, culture and education as a method for humans to adapt and evolve. |
| Climate resilience and social adaptability | Measuring and responding to climate risk, resilient infrastructure, re-insurance, predicting and resilience to natural disasters, Indigenous land management, human behaviour in response to climate change, biodiversity loss (land and ocean), waste reduction and recycling. |
| Renewable energy and efficiency | Energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy transition (policy, infrastructure, behavioural), decarbonisation, energy storage and batteries, carbon trading. |
| Food and water sustainability | Agri-Tech, land use, regenerative agricultural practices, lab-grown meat and meat alternatives, weather modelling, developing more resistant crop strains, human behaviour and sustainable consumption, water security and sanitation. |
| Security and stability | Cyber security, geo-political stability and diplomacy, migration and refugee security, nuclear, defence, security in urban environments, political violence, post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction, transition to peaceful politics. |
| Health, wellbeing and aging | Health systems, equitable models of care, biomedical devices, viruses, preventative health, obesity, mental health and wellbeing, creative arts as therapy and rehabilitation, social connection and wellbeing and health. |
| Humanity and 21st century tech | Quantum computing, artificial intelligence (advancement, ethics and biases, policy, impact on workforce and markets, etc), digital privacy and trust, space tech. |
| Equity and human rights | Indigenous knowledge, culture, language and reconciliation, refugee and migrant protections, poverty, LGBTIQ+ inclusion, disability inclusion, affordable housing, workforce participation and accessibility. |
| Fair and sustainable economic prosperity | Tax policy, productivity, supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, governance and leadership models, economic growth, mentally healthy workplaces, decent work, strengthen our knowledge economy to broaden Australia's industrial base, consumer protection without stifling innovation. |
| City communities and wellbeing | Mobility and accessibility, functional buildings, affordable housing, urban planning, public amenities and infrastructure, safety and participation, night-time economy, heat mitigation, community cohesion, aging population. |

Table 2*: These are examples of impact focus areas for feedback during the consultations.

* Note that the terminology within this table is indicative and is not final.

The final contents will be informed by the consultations and further research as the Societal Impact Framework progresses.

Criteria for selecting focus areas

To identify where UNSW can amplify our impact, we will need clear criteria for selecting the focus areas.

Considerations include (possibly with different weightings):

Table 3: Criteria for selecting the Impact Focus Areas

| Criteria | Inquiry questions |
|--|---|
| UNSW has unique capabilities to advance the issue or opportunity | <p>What has enabled our impact historically?</p> <p>What capabilities will continue to serve us, and should be strengthened?</p> <p>What capabilities are unique to UNSW?</p> |
| It is critically needed by Australia and the world | <p>Reach: How many people are impacted?</p> <p>Significance: How significant is the impact?</p> |
| We can develop or acquire any new capabilities or resources to be world leaders | <p>Does UNSW have existing funds or assets that can be repurposed?</p> <p>Who else is interested in solving these issues or creating these opportunities that have the funds or capabilities we need?</p> |

Table 3: Proposed criteria for selecting the impact focus areas.

The consultations are a critical data source to answer these questions. We will also leverage cross-sector research, existing data from Project Symphony (our branding initiative), reporting for the THE Impact Rankings, ARC Engagement and Impact data (2018), insights from our HR survey, and insights from existing strategy work from our Faculties and Divisions, among other sources.

Principles for how the focus areas will be defined

The way the impact focus areas are categorised and defined will have implications for:

- the multidisciplinary collaboration it will enable (while still valuing world-class single discipline efforts),
- how the impact for each focus area is measured,
- how easily it can be aligned to other globally adopted categories for benchmarking (like the UN Sustainability Development Goals)
- attracting external partners and funding
- engaging our talented staff, students and alumni

A proposed set of principles to guide their definition is proposed in Appendix B.

4.4 Examples from across Faculties and Divisions

Impact case studies from across the university are being collected and will progressively be published on the website unsw.edu.au/societal-impact to highlight a few examples. The consultations will be a critical source of data on where and how we have the greatest impact.

4.5 Capabilities that enable UNSW's impact

The consultations will play an important role in understanding which capabilities enable our societal impact and how, and which give us a unique advantage to amplify our impact in the future. We want to build on our existing strengths but where necessary will invest in developing new ones.

To aid the discussion we have included a series of questions that will help consultation participants explore a range of possible capabilities.

- **Distinct resources:** Where have we accumulated distinctive expertise and skills that are hard to obtain or develop?
- **Partnerships:** What makes some of our partnerships more productive and impactful than others?
- **Assets:** What physical or digital assets enable our societal impact (equipment, facilities, data, systems)?
- **Processes:** Do we practice specific ways of working, methodologies, techniques or processes that give us an advantage in creating impact?
- **Location:** What locational advantages do we have access to (Sydney, Canberra and regional campuses)?
- **Culture and values:** Have we developed a unique and deeply engrained set of values and culture that give us an advantage?
- **Brand:** What are we externally recognised at being uniquely good at, and how does this help us?

4.6 Impact measurement and evaluation

Measuring and evaluating societal outcomes and impacts at a University presents many challenges and opportunities. This Discussion Paper does not provide the answers, but rather outlines what we want to achieve, our approach, and acknowledges a few specific challenges.

Historically we have counted and funded outputs (what and how much we produce) but not outcomes and impact (whether it's making a difference, where and under what conditions). We need metrics that better capture our contribution to improving quality of life and wellbeing and the benefits and value of a healthy and sustainable environment, not just traditional measures of economic progress (Stiglitz et al., 2010). This will deepen our understanding of the interdependencies between the environment, our health, social cohesion and wellbeing, and our collective economic prosperity, and in turn improve how we tackle our most complex societal opportunities.

However, before identifying what we want to measure, we must establish why we want to evaluate our societal impact.

There are four objectives we want to fulfill:

- **Accountability to collective progress**
 - understand the extent of our progress relative to our own internal targets, others' impact and in relation to the size of the problem being addressed.
- **Learn and improve**
 - Understand why some things work and others don't and use those insights to improve.
- **Allocation and efficiency**
 - Inform how best to allocate limited resources for greatest impact.
- **Credibility and advocacy**
 - increase awareness of UNSW's impact, and strength our credibility and people's trust in us to make a real difference.
 - Advocate for approaches and solutions with robust evidence of long-term impact.

Our approach to developing impact measures and an evaluation approach

Establishing a set of impact metrics to aid evaluation will be a challenging task. The difficulty is accentuated by the diversity of UNSW's expertise and complexity of the societal challenges we want to solve.

To develop a reliable and relevant way of measuring and evaluating our societal impact we will:

- Research best practice across sectors
- Consult with subject matter experts nationally and globally
- Review current metrics and methods used across our diverse Faculties and Divisions

We will learn a significant amount from our first attempts at implementation and expect that further feedback, iterations and research will be required to improve the initial approach recommended in the final Societal Impact Framework.

Challenges of impact measurement and evaluation

Measuring and evaluating societal outcomes and impacts is difficult. Societal impact is multi-dimensional and subject to multiple influences, the time-lag between the output and the outcomes and impact can be significant, and the administrative effort to collect and evaluate both qualitative and quantitative data needs to be considered, to name a few. More detail regarding these challenges can be found in Appendix C.

The effort and cost to overcome these challenges needs to be weighed against the benefits to UNSW, our partners and society of having reliable and informative societal impact measures and narratives. We will need to decide whether to:

- Accept the limitation, and knowingly make decisions from clearly stated assumptions and/or imperfect information.
- Invest in pioneering a new method or approach to overcome the current limitation when the benefits of doing so are significant.

5

The Consultations

5.1 Purpose and positioning

The Societal Impact Framework consultations form one stream of a broader, university-wide engagement process to understand UNSW's new strategic priorities beyond 2025. Our societal impact is central to our vision, and insights from these consultations will inform other parts of the strategy. This is why these consultations are commencing the process.

Consultations will seek the ideas and perspectives of students, staff, and our extended community across our Sydney, Canberra and regional campuses, with dedicated Indigenous sessions.

The consultations will provide:

- 1. A genuine opportunity to influence strategic priorities, thinking and approach.
- 2. An opportunity to reflect on our unique contributions, strengths and values.
- 3. A means of understanding the diversity of UNSW's impact, and not just those captured in traditional measurement and reporting methods.
- 4. An elevated voice for Indigenous staff, students, and extended community through dedicated sessions.
- 5. An assurance that UNSW values the diversity of ways in which we achieve societal impact, and that the focus areas will not be pursued at the exclusion of other forms of societal impact.

5.2 Objectives and Questions

The consultation objectives and questions are outlined below. They will be tailored to each community group (staff, students, Indigenous peoples, government, industry and non-profit organisational partners, and alumni) but serve as a guide for what is intended.

Table 4: Consultation objectives and questions

| Objectives | Questions |
|---|--|
| Build awareness and understanding of the diversity of our societal impact, and how staff and students are already contributing, and can contribute to future momentum | This will be achieved through our communications strategy, collection of case studies and how we design the consultations. |
| Identify historic and current areas of greatest impact from across the University, and how they are impactful | Where have you seen the best examples of societal impact across the university? What was observed or measured that indicated impact was being achieved? |
| Understand the strengths and critical success factors enabling UNSW's societal contribution | What enabled these examples of societal impact to happen? What are UNSW's unique capabilities when it comes to achieving societal impact? |
| Identify untapped future opportunities for UNSW to have greatest impact | Where should UNSW direct our societal impact efforts moving forward, based on what the world needs? |
| Understand what changes should be made to increase our societal impact in the future | What should UNSW do to increase our societal impact in the future? |

Table 4: The Societal Impact Framework consultation objectives and questions.

5.3 Reach

To identify where we can make a meaningful difference (as part of the framework development) we need genuine collaboration – drawing from a multiplicity of voices, views and talents.

This will be achieved through:

- **27 workshops** with staff, students, our extended community and Indigenous peoples in Sydney and Canberra
- **A further feedback session to review the draft Societal Impact Framework** with
 - The Advisory Group, and
 - Indigenous staff, students and broader community
- **Webform to share ideas** asynchronously, for those who can't attend a workshop

5.4 Consultation Approach

There are four key pillars underpinning our consultation approach. These are:

- **A whole of university, opt-in approach**
 - We'll be intentional in reaching out to people in a range of roles that are strategically relevant to the questions – both academic and professional and technical staff, students, alumni and our external stakeholders.
 - We will also open registration for people to self-select and opt-in.
 - Ensuring diversity across disciplines, gender, ethnicity, and professional level is a key consideration when finalising consultation participants.
 - For those who can't attend there will be a webform to share ideas and feedback.
- **An Appreciative Inquiry** method – a model that seeks to engage stakeholders in self-determined change. This approach is beneficial because it:
 - Aligns with best practice advocated by Engagement Australia and Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, and
 - Helps groups identify areas of common ground across complex systems and issues, with the broad aim of mobilising organisational change through a shared vision.
- **Multidisciplinary** discussion
 - Combining professional, technical and academic staff from different Faculties and Divisions will help build understanding of UNSW's societal impact and reflect the multidisciplinary nature of the grand challenges we'll be aspiring to tackle.
- **Dedicated Indigenous** sessions
 - These will be held for staff, students and our extended community.
 - We will co-design these with Indigenous staff from Nura Gili and DVC Indigenous
 - Dedicated sessions with our Indigenous peoples from our stakeholder community for feedback on the draft SIF.

5.5 Timelines

The table below outlines the key consultation dates and when deliverables are expected to be completed.

Table 5: Timeline of consultations and deliverables

| Activity or deliverable | Dates | Comments |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| Consultations | 5th February to March 2024 | Exact dates will be published on the website and circulated by early December |
| Webform to share ideas available | February to March 2024 | Open to all staff, students and our extended community |
| Draft Societal Impact Framework available | May 2024 | |
| Feedback sessions to review the SIF draft | May 2024 | This will include dedicated Indigenous sessions, and an Advisory Group review |
| Final Societal Impact Framework | July 2024 | |

Table 5: Estimated dates for consultations and deliverables. These are subject to change.

6

Acknowledgements

This paper is the result of much work and conversations with many people who provided their time and insights on the topic of societal impact at UNSW. We acknowledge the contributions and expertise of the following people:

Societal Impact Project Steering Committee

Alison Avery, Acting VP External Engagement, Division of External Engagement

Professor Colin B. Grant, DVC Global, Division of VC & President

Dr Leanne Holt, DVC Indigenous, Division of VC & President

Professor Greg Leslie, Director, UNSW Global Water Institute (GWI), School of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Professor Dane McCamey, PVC Research, Division of Research & Enterprise

Scientia Professor Vlado Perkovic, UNSW Provost, Division of VC & President

Professor Bruce Watson Deputy Vice-Chancellor Equity Diversity & Inclusion acting, Pro Vice-Chancellor Inclusion

Societal Impact Project Advisory Board

Professor Frederik Anseel, Senior Deputy Dean (Academic), UNSW Business

Ursula Brown, Executive Officer, Division of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Dr Alison Butt, Director of the Research Strategy Office, Division of Research & Enterprise

Freya Campbell, Executive Director Strategic Communications, Division of VC & President

Professor Rita Henderson, Deputy Dean (Societal Impact), School of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Professor Rebecca Ivers, Head of School, School of Population Health, Faculty of Medicine & Health

Sofia Lloyd Jones, Director of Future Students, Division of ESE

Ashley Milosavljevic, Director of Operations, Division of Operations

Professor Bronwen Morgan, Director of Impact & Engagement, School of Law, Society & Criminology, Faculty of Law & Justice

Arthy Mukunthan, Chair of the Board, Arc

Professor Ben Newell, Director of the UNSW Institute for Climate Risk & Response (ICRR)

Professor Christy Newman, Associate Dean (Engagement & Impact), Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture

Professor Justine Nolan, Director, Australian Human Rights Institute, School OF Global & Public Law, Faculty of Law & Justice

Charmaine Roberts, National Strategy and Engagement Lead, Centre for Social Impact

Associate Professor Jim Rooney, School of Business, UNSW Canberra

Sarah Stephen, Senior Legal Compliance Officer, Division of Transformation, Planning & Assurance

Lindsay Robinson, Chief Development Officer, Division of External Engagement

Shelley Valentine, CEO of Arc

Quinton Vea Vea, Future Students Lead, Nura Gili, Division of VC & President

Contributors

Tarryn Hill-Cawthorne, Operations Lead, Office of the Provost

Emily Jimenez, Senior Project Officer, Office of the Provost

Rebecca Martin, Project Manager Sustainability Reporting, Division of Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

7

References

Australian Government, National Health and Medical Research Council NHMRC, *Investigator Grants 2019 guide to applicants on preparing an application*, [(accessed on 22 November 2023)]; Available online: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/funding/find-funding/investigator-grants>

Australian Research Council, *Glossary of terms for research impact*, [(accessed on 22 November 2023)]; Available online: https://www.arc.gov.au/sites/default/files/policy_glossary_for_research_impact.pdf?token=T7ZEqGB4

Department for the Economy UK Government, Research England, Higher Education Funding for Wales, Scottish Funding Council, *UK Research Evaluation Framework (REF), Guidance on Submission, 2019*, - https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1447/ref-2019_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf p.90.

CSIRO, *Evaluation Framework Guide*, [(accessed on 22 November 2023)]; Available online: <https://www.csiro.au/en/about/corporate-governance/ensuring-our-impact/evaluating-our-impact>

OECD, *Measuring the Social Performance of Firms through the Lens of the OECD Well-being Framework*, February 2022, Policy Insights. [(accessed on 22 November 2023)]; Available online: <https://www.oecd.org/wise/Measuring-the-Social-Performance-of-Firms-through-the-Lens-of-the-OECD-Well-being-Framework-Policy-Brief-February-2022.pdf>

Ramia, I., Powell, A., Stratton, K., Stokes, C., Meltzer, A., Muir, K. (2021). *Roadmap to outcomes measurement. Your step-by-step guide to planning, measuring and communicating social impact*. Centre for Social Impact. [(accessed on 22 November 2023)]; Available online: <https://www.csi.edu.au/tools-and-guides/roadmap-to-social-impact/>

Muir, K. & Bennett, S. (2014). *The Compass: Your Guide to Social Impact Measurement*. Sydney, Australia: The Centre for Social Impact . [(accessed on 22 November 2023)]; <https://assets.csi.edu.au/assets/research/the-compass-your-guide-to-social-impact-measurement.pdf>

Dotti, Nicola Francesco., Walczyk Julia. (2022), *What is the societal impact of university research? A policy-orientate review to map approaches, identify monitoring methods and success factors*, Evaluation and Program Planning. p.95.

Stiglitz, Joseph E., Sen, Amartya S., Fitoussi, Jean-Paul. (2010) *Mismeasuring our lives; Why GDP doesn't add up*, The New Press.

8

Appendices

Appendix A – Definitions of Societal Impact

| Source | Definition of Societal Impact of Research |
|---|---|
| The UK Research Excellence Framework, 2019 | "For the purposes of the REF, 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." |
| Australian Research Council (ARC) | "The demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia." |
| National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) | "The verifiable outcomes that research makes to knowledge, health, the economy and/or society. Impact is the effect of the research after it has been adopted, adapted for use, or used to inform further research" |

Table 6: Examples of other societal impact definitions.

Appendix B – How the focus areas will be defined

The way the impact focus areas are categorised and defined will have implications for the multi-disciplinary collaboration it will enable, how impact is defined and measured, and how easily it can be aligned to other globally adopted categories such as the UN Sustainability Development Goals.

The below principles will guide our approach to defining these focus areas:

- Be broad enough to allow for a multi-disciplinary approach to solving across Faculties and Divisions.
- Be narrow enough that we can describe and measure the impact we aspire to have
- Avoid assuming the solution and rather ensure the name reflects the desired impact or problem to solve
- Map to common, global frameworks like the UN Sustainability Development Goals for ease of reporting, discussion and collaboration with external parties
- Engage and inspire staff, students and external stakeholders through clarity, relevance, and a demonstrated understanding of the crux of the issue to be solved
- Distinguishable in the market and reflective of a distinctive UNSW lens
- Designed to complement UNSW's strengths and enable a coherent strategy to be built around them

Appendix C – Acknowledging the key impact measurement and evaluation challenges for UNSW

Below are some of the key impact measurement and evaluation challenges (more will be identified as we continue to build the Framework):

1. **Societal outcomes and impact are multi-dimensional, making causation and attribution hard to verify.** Societal outcomes are always attributable to multiple forces and influences. Consequently, verified causal links from one author, piece of work or output to societal outcomes and impact are frequently difficult to measure (causality). The portion of the outcome or impact can also be hard to attribute to a specific input, activity or output (attribution). Instead, we should focus on 'contribution' and acknowledge that progress on societal issues requires multiple parts of the system to change and encourage the collaborative effort of many.
2. **Critical benefits that may accumulate in the longer-term can be overlooked for easier to capture shorter-term proximate outcomes.** The lag between research and education, and their impact can be several years. Premature assessment may result in resource allocation decisions or policies focused on short-term impacts only. We must consider the time window covered by our data collection and the likelihood of important benefits being realised later and whether it's possible to capture it.
3. **Aggregating and evaluating impact across multi-disciplinary programs of work, not just an individual project level.** For UNSW to understand where it is accumulatively achieving positive change and where progress is stifled, we need to strive for an impact measurement and evaluation approach that scales across disciplines and functions with metrics that everyone can contribute to. This will require consistency and transparency in the assumptions we make and approach we take. A critical question becomes; to what degree can we achieve shared measures of success (per societal impact focus area) that all disciplines and functions can contribute towards, versus a more de-centralised approach supported by a guide to best practice?
4. **Minimising the administrative burden of data collection, analysis and evaluation.** We are likely to introduce new measures as UNSW's current reporting does not adequately capture our diverse societal impact. The additional effort required will not be ignored and we will need to ensure any changes are supported by adequate resourcing, clear responsibilities, improvements to technology, workflows, and processes.
5. **There are few shared measurements across the university sector that adequately capture true societal impact and allow for comparability.** This is both a challenge and an opportunity. We should identify existing, comparable benchmarking data for measuring the societal impact of universities, however where we see an opportunity to improve accuracy of these indicators we can seek to set new benchmarking standards in collaboration with local and global University, industry, and government partners.

Societal Impact Framework Team

Megan Donnelley

Strategy Lead, Societal Impact

m.donnelley@unsw.edu.au

Perrine Huber

Project Communications Manager, Societal Impact

p.huber@unsw.edu.au

