The Purple Module – Developing impact through research and partnerships

ICER - Pro

Engaging for impact

4 tools to help you explore impact through your research

October 1st 2026

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Interdisciplinary & Collaborative Education and Research Program (ICER-Pro)

Engaging in the EU funding environment

S1. Introduction to the EU funding
(University of Applied Sciences Utrecht)

S2. Horizon Europe: Keys of the EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme
(Universitat Politècnica de València)

S3. Other EU funding opportunities
(Turku University of Applied Sciences)

S4. Horizon Europe: Start building your participation strategy
(Universitat Politècnica de València)

S5. Getting on board: Becoming a strategic partner and project leader
(Universitat Politècnica de València)

S6. Gender and Diversity in research proposals
(Hamburg University of Applied Sciences)

Crafting EU grant applications

S1. Idea development and pitching
(Turku University of Applied Sciences & University of Applied Sciences Utrecht)

S2. Understanding calls and setting project objectives
(Turku University of Applied Sciences)

S3. EU Applications: Technical Process & Institutional Requirements
(Turku University of Applied Sciences)

S4. Consortium building, partner selection, target groups and stakeholders
(Universitat Politècnica de València)

S5. Workplan, workpackages, activities, deliverables, milestones
(Turku University of Applied Sciences)

S6. Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation in EU-Applications
(Hamburg University of Applied Sciences & Turku University of Applied Sciences)

S7. Happy Budget Planning
(Politécnico do Porto)

Developing impact through research and partnerships

S1. Engaging for impact
(University of Applied Sciences Utrecht & University of the West of Scotland)

S2. Research communication
(Hamburg University of Applied Sciences)

S3. Social media communication
(Politécnico do Porto)

S4. Storytelling
(Politécnico do Porto)

Programme

- 9.15 Welcome and overview
- 9.20 Images of Impact
- 9.40 What is impact?
- 9:50 Tool 1: Stakeholder identification
- 10.30 Tool 2 (intro): Exploring the real-life problem with stakeholders
- 10.45 Break
- 11.00 Tool 2: Exploring the real-life problem with stakeholders
- 12.00 Tool 3: Participation ladder
- 12.10 Tool 4: Engagement and impact planning canvas
- 12.50 Reflections and evaluation
- 13.00 Lunch

Check in

Within your group: introduce yourself by answering the question:

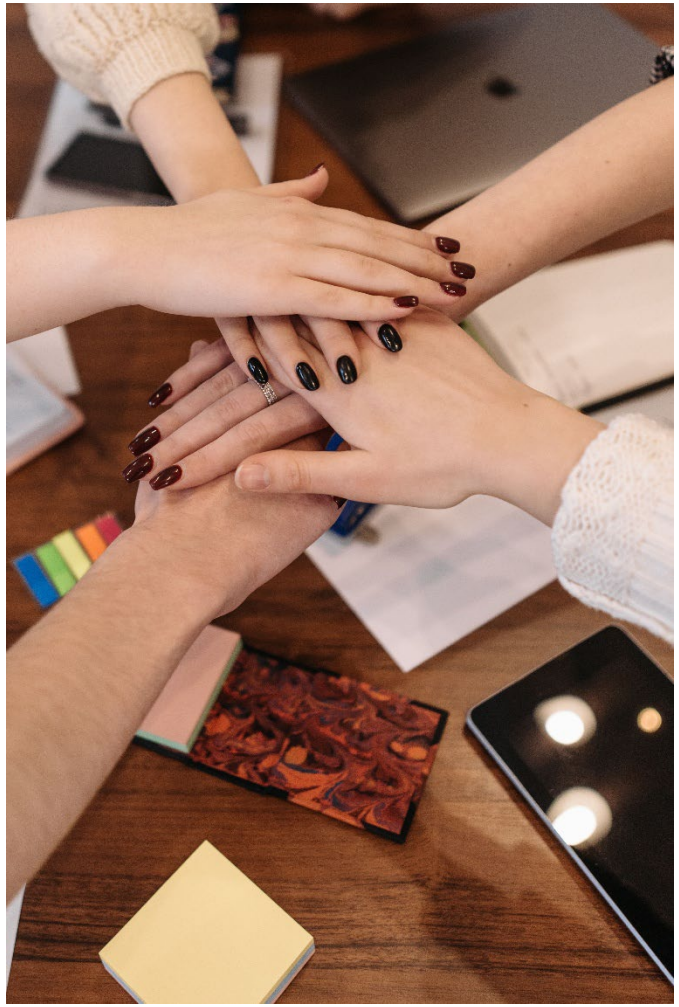
What do the shoes you are wearing today tell us about yourself?

Images of impact

Explore different views on what constitutes impact

When you think about impact in your own research, what does it look like and what contributes to this impact?

What does this image make you think about research impact?



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What does this image make you think about research impact?



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What does this image make you think about research impact?



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Introducing impact

What is societal impact?

Horizon: "*Longer-term effects that research and innovation activities generate for society, the economy, science, policy, or the environment, beyond the immediate results of a project*"

- Big and small impact (small wins)
- Visible and invisible impact
- Good and bad (but value is in the eye of the beholder)
- Impact through activities and results
- Impact during and after research
- Impact in both directions
- Knowledge is not canon ball

Think of your research project as a facilitator of learning and change instead of a producer of knowledge

Factors influencing impact

- **Engagement with Stakeholders**
- Research Design and Approach
- Institutional Factors
- Communication and Dissemination
- Impact Measurement
- External Context
- Chance and luck
- MINDSET: “I am a change agent”



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Source: Fecher, B., & Hebing, M. (2021). How do researchers approach societal impact? *PLoS ONE*, *16*(7 July), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0254006

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Engagement with stakeholders

- Productive interactions between researchers and relevant stakeholders play a crucial role in generating societal impact.
- This includes:
  - Direct collaboration with practitioners, policymakers, funders, and citizens
  - Targeted dissemination of knowledge products
  - Co-funding arrangements
- Engaging stakeholders throughout the research process helps ensure the work addresses real-world problems and increases the likelihood of uptake.

Tools for engaging with stakeholders

Tool 1: Stakeholder identification

Tool 2: Exploring the real-life problem with stakeholders

Tool 3: Participation ladder

Tool 4: Engagement and impact planning canvas

Tool 1: stakeholder identification

Stakeholder identification: cracks in solar panels

- Research into cracks in solar panels (researcher: Ville Lavonen, Turku University of Applied Sciences)
- Many installed solar panels have little, invisible cracks that can drastically shorten the lifespan of the panels and their energy production
- These cracks are primarily caused during transportation and installation
- For example, by installation workers who use panels to sit on during lunch breaks
- What stakeholders would you involve in a research project aimed at reducing these cracks?



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Tool 1: stakeholder identification

Who has an interest in this problem?

- Who directly suffers from the problem?
- Who can help solving the problem?
- Who can influence the problem or its conditions?
- Who is required to solve the problem?
- Who influences the conditions for success?

Who has an interest in this problem?

Who directly suffers from the problem?
Who can help solving the problem?
Who can influence the problem or its conditions?
Who is required to solve the problem?
Who influences the conditions for success?

Manufacturer

Home owner

Educator

Installation company

Regulator

Researcher

Installation people

Transportation company

...

Case: literacy among children is decreasing



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Assignment (until 10:20)

Within your group:

1. Who has an interest in the literacy problem?
   - Who directly suffers from the problem?
   - Who can help solving the problem?
   - Who can influence the problem or its conditions?
   - Who is required to solve the problem?
   - Who influences the conditions for success?
2. Write each of the stakeholder groups on a post-it memo

Tool 2: workshop for exploring the real-life problem with stakeholders

Tool 2: workshop for exploring the real-life problem with stakeholders

- To generate impact you need to understand the real-life problem you are working on
- from the perspective of **all** stakeholders
- "A problem is an interpretation of a feeling of discomfort" (Kessels, 2005)
- Solution: invite a group of stakeholders to discuss how they look at the problem



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Purpose of the tool

- Insight into the causes of the real-life problem as seen by stakeholders
- Get a feeling for the different positions of stakeholders
- Create a common understanding of the problem as the basis for the research plan



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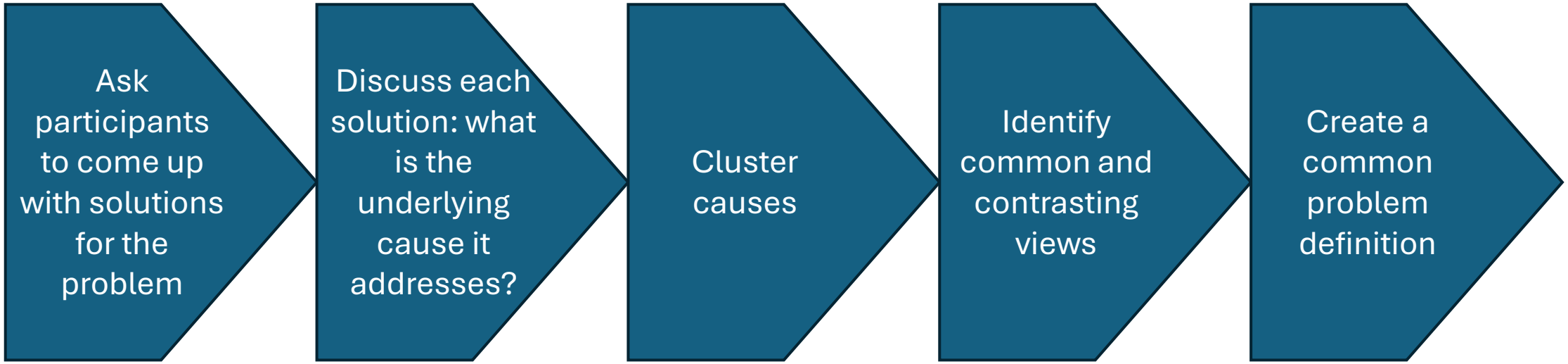
Preparation

- Identify representatives of the various stakeholder groups that are important to engage
- Invite them for a half-day workshop to collectively determine the practice-problem

The way the tool works



Example: cracks in solar panels

Installation company: *Make panels more robust* → Solar panels are too fragile

Home owner: *Give installation people more time to install* → Installation people have to rush

Educator: *Raise awareness among installation people* → Installation people are not careful enough

Installation people: *Give us chairs to sit on during coffee breaks* → Installation people have nothing to sit on during breaks

Tool 2: Exploring the real-life literacy problem

Within your group:

1. Divide the roles
2. Write your role on a Post-it and put it on your shirt
3. Have coffee break and find someone with the same role and discuss: what **solutions** to the literacy problem would your character come up with?

Roles:

1. Researcher
2. Child
3. Parent
4. Teacher
5. Educational Policy maker

Coffee break

Tool 2: Exploring the real-life literacy problem (until 11:40)

Within your group:

1. Individually: think about 2 possible **solutions** to the literacy problem your character could come up with. Write each of them on a post-it memo.
2. Discuss each solution: what does the solution assume the problem to be? What underlying **cause** of the problem does the solution address? Write this on a new post-it memo
3. (Cluster the causes)
4. Can you spot contrasting views? Can you come to a common definition of the problem?

Roles:

1. Researcher
2. Child
3. Parent
4. Teacher
5. Educational Policy maker

Examples

Teacher:

"Do not allow mobile phones into the class room"

Cause:

Childers are distracted during class

Parent:

"Spend more time on literacy in the classroom "

Cause:

There is not enough time for literacy in the curriculum

Policy maker:

"Develop protocol for literacy education"

Cause:

Teacher do not work evidence-based

Tool 2: Exploring the real-life literacy problem

Within your group:

1. Individually: think about 2 possible **solutions** to the literacy problem your character could come up with. Write each of them on a post-it memo.
2. Discuss each solution: what does the solution assume the problem to be? What underlying **cause** of the problem does the solution address? Write this on a new post-it memo
3. (Cluster the causes)
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Roles:

1. Researcher
2. Child
3. Parent
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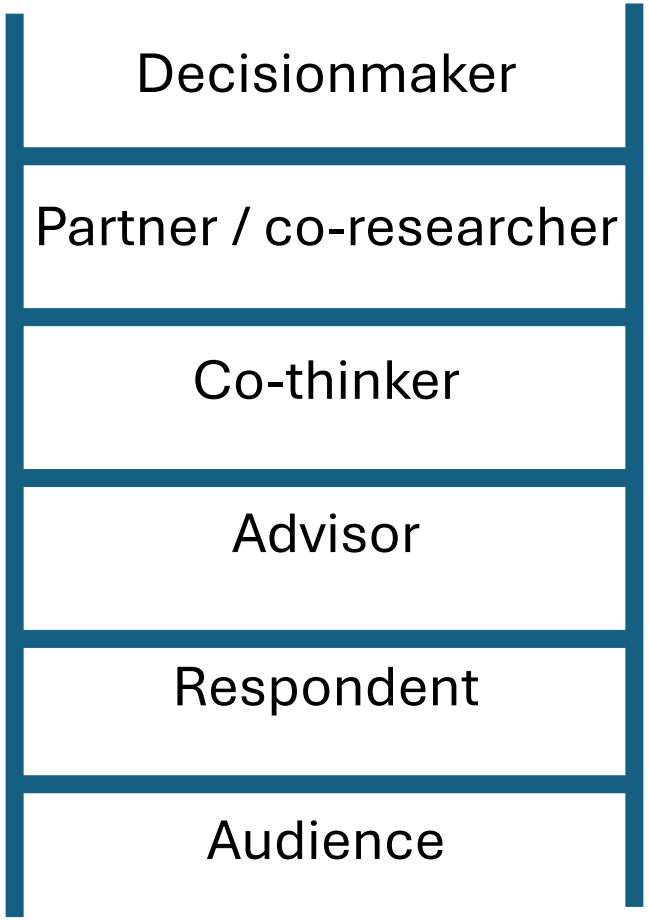
Collective learnings

Tool 3: Participation ladder

A tool to help you decide what role to give to your consortium partners and

Tool 3: Participation ladder



Assume control

Delegated responsibility

Plan jointly

Advise

Consulted & provide information

Receive information

Source: Banfield, Yen & Newby, 2011
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What role should each stakeholder play?

Cracks in solor panels



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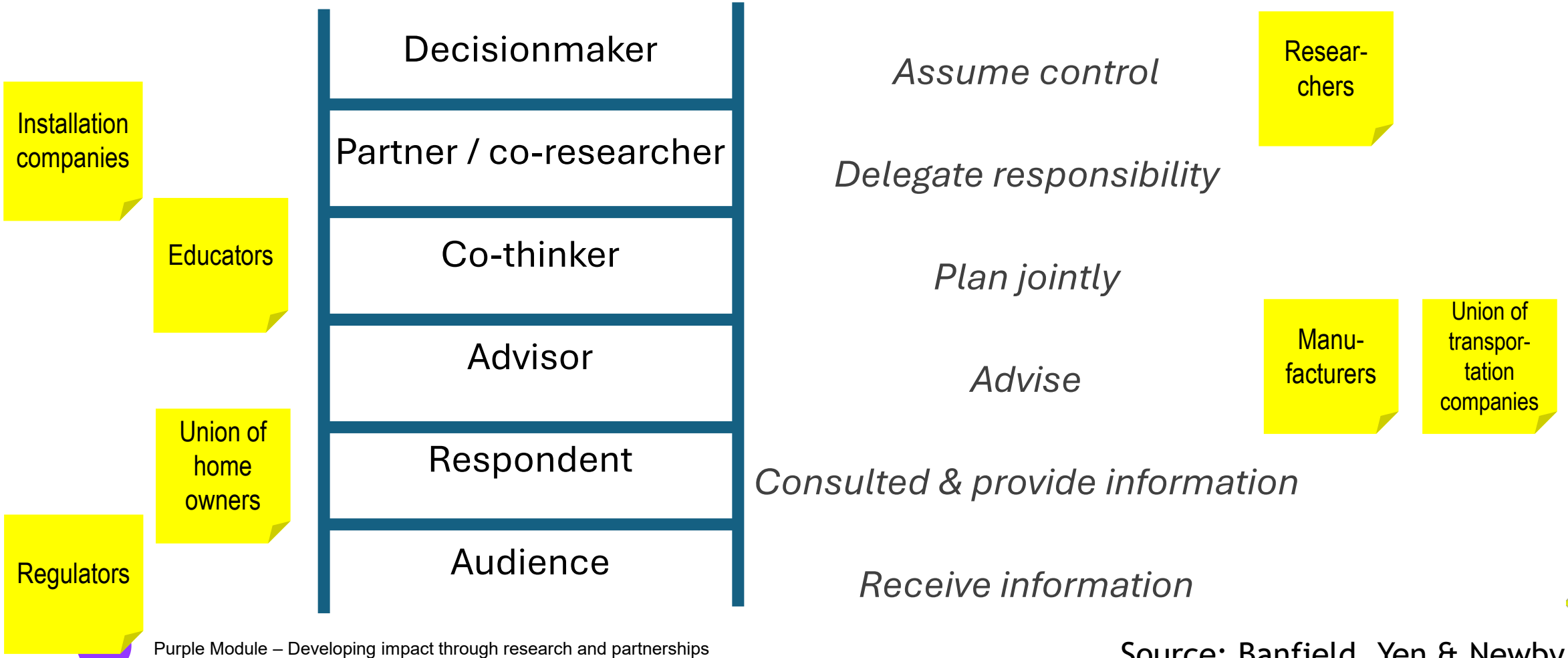
Tool 3: Participation ladder



Source: Banfield, Yen & Newby, 2011

Tool 4: Engagement and impact planning canvas

Reflect for a moment about your own project

1. What is really important about the research you do/support?
2. Why is this?
3. If you imagine 5 years into the future, how might the findings from your research be utilised by others, or experienced in practice?
4. What is the research project you are going to focus on for this afternoon's session?

Tool 4: Engagement and impact planning canvas

The canvas will help you:

- Reflect on what we do and why it matters
- Explore each other's research and our potential for impact
- Plan for an impactful research design

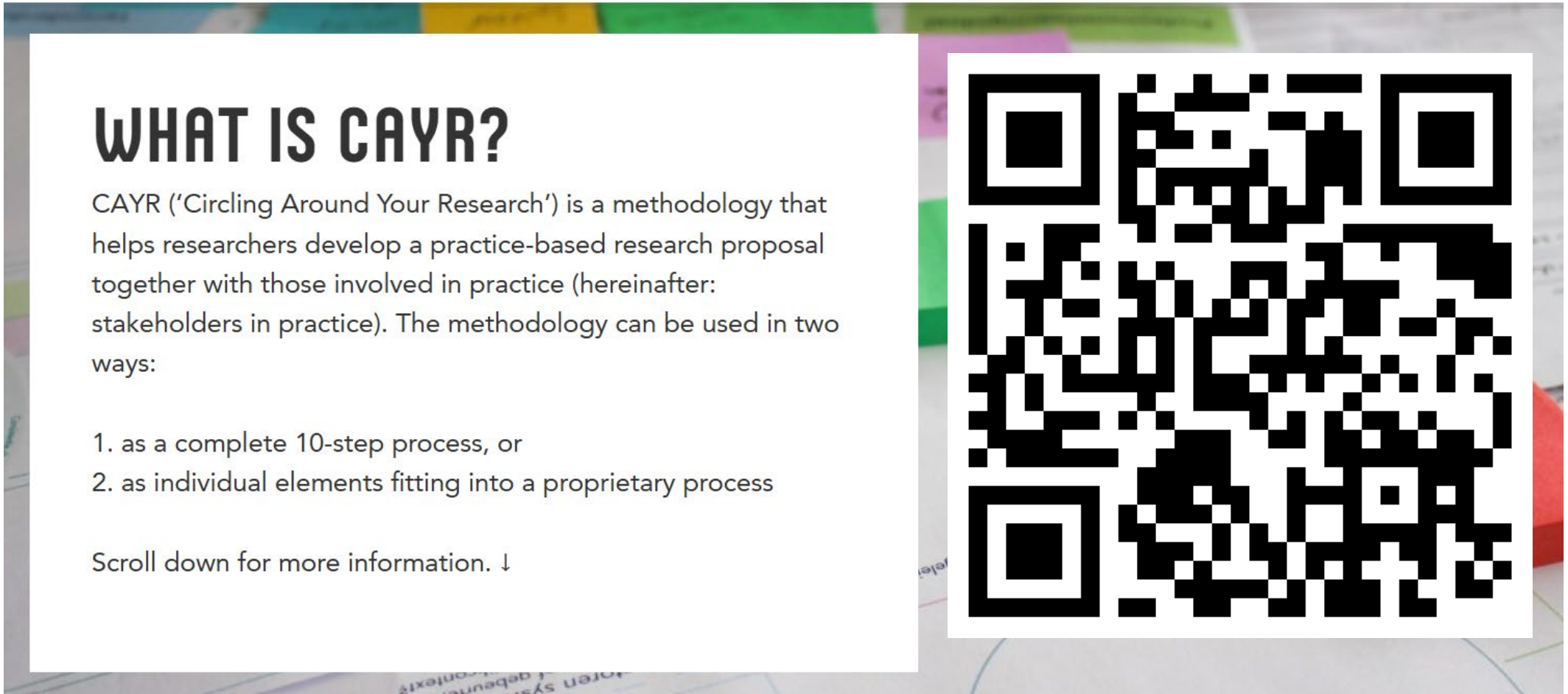
Tool 4: Engagement and impact planning canvas

1. What real-life problem could your research help address?	2. What impact would you like your research to have?	3. How will your research create this impact?	4. Who needs to be engaged with your research to help create this impact?	6. What evidence will you collect to evaluate the impact?
			5. How will you reach and engage with these stakeholders?	

Key point from this session

- Think of your research project as a facilitator of learning and change instead of a producer of knowledge
- Involve end users and other stakeholders from the very beginning of drafting a proposal
- Collect different perspectives on the practice problem, possible solutions and the research project
- Give stakeholders meaningful roles in your project
- See yourself not only as a researcher but as a change agent

More tools like these on the Circling Around Your Research website



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Thank You!

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Please check the following tools for further information:

CARPE Website
(general project information & training material)

LinkedIn
(news & up-dates)

ENCARE - Enhancing Capacities of UAS staff for more successful EU funded Research
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