ACCELERATE
societal impact of research infrastructures

Leonie van Drooge – 16 December 2020
Workshop on Impact Assessment, Evaluation and Monitoring of Research Infrastructures
A research infrastructure, its stakeholders and their perceptions
ACCELERATE approach

• Approach contributes to improved governance, management and evaluation of societal impact of RIs

• Assumptions:
  • RIs can potentially contribute to many different societal impacts; however it is not in itself clear to which impacts
  • Societal impact is a complex process; it is not straightforward
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• Take the context into account, in which an RI operates
  • What organizations / stakeholders?
  • What perceptions or expectations?
  • What formal requirements?
  • What ambitions?
ACCELERATE approach - II

• In general, impact is a major effect, or a change, that is preceded by a complex and iterative process.
  • What is meant by impact?
  • What is expected of an RI regarding an impact?
  • (in case of evaluation): is the focus on the process or on the impact?
ACCELERATE approach - III

• Impact pathways describe the bigger story/narrative of the process towards impact
  • What is the overarching impact narrative?
  • The contribution of the RI includes the input the RI makes available, its activities, the results of these activities and the further use of the results towards the impact.
  • What is the sphere of control (of influence, of interest)?
  • What assumptions are included in the narrative?
ACCELERATE approach - IV

• Evidence (indicators) substantiates an impact pathway
  • What indicators provide evidence?
  • What evidence do these indicators provide?
  • “Indicators” include case studies (of something specific), descriptions
### Table 1: Comparison between traditional and developmental evaluation (Patton, 2006, p. 30)

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<tr>
<th>Traditional evaluations ..</th>
<th>Complexity-aware, developmental evaluations ..</th>
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<tr>
<td>Render definitive judgements of success or failure</td>
<td>Provide feedback, generate learning, support direction or affirm changes in direction</td>
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<td>Measure success against predetermined goals</td>
<td>Develop new measures and monitoring mechanisms as goals emerge and evolve</td>
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<td>Position the evaluator outside to assure independence and objectivity</td>
<td>Position evaluation as an internal, team function integrated into action and ongoing interpretive processes</td>
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<td>Design the evaluation based on linear cause-effect logic models</td>
<td>Design the evaluation to capture system dynamics, interdependencies and emerging interconnections</td>
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<td>Aim to produce generalizable findings across time and space</td>
<td>Aim to produce context-specific understandings that inform ongoing innovation</td>
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<td>Accountability focused on and directed to external authorities and funders</td>
<td>Accountability focused on learning and responding to what is unfolding</td>
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<td>Evaluator controls the evaluation and determines the design based on their perspective of what is important</td>
<td>Evaluator collaborates in the change effort to design a process that matches philosophically and organizationally</td>
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<td>Evaluation engenders fear of failure</td>
<td>Evaluation feeds hunger for learning</td>
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Thank you!

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