TRANSFORMING CONSTRUCTION NETWORK PLUS

GUIDE

CREATING IMPACT FROM RESEARCH

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

UK Research and Innovation

IMPACT

A MARKED EFFECT OR INFLUENCE

TO HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON SOMETHING

A POWERFUL EFFECT THAT SOMETHING, ESPECIALLY SOMETHING NEW, HAS ON A SITUATION OR A PERSON

One of the main objectives of the Transforming Construction Network Plus (N+) programme is to support academic research leading to a marked effect or influence on industry. To achieve the aims and objectives of the N+ programme we wanted to recommend an impact framework that would be best placed to support project teams.

After identifying and reviewing the options it became clear that existing frameworks covered many, but not all, of the elements we felt project teams needed when working to a tight timescale in a complex multi-stakeholder environment. To address this, we generated a simple and straightforward approach to assess and structure research and engagement activities to maximise impact for research project teams. This guide is for anyone who is undertaking research from which they would like to create impact.

We hope you find this guide useful, and welcome any questions or feedback you may have. You can reach the team at **enquiries.tcnetworkplus@ucl.ac.uk.**

THE TRANSFORMING CONSTRUCTION NETWORK PLUS

The Transforming Construction Network Plus mobilises a new movement in the construction community, bringing together experts from a range of disciplines to tackle the most pressing problems across the digital, energy, construction, and manufacturing space.

The N+ is funded by UK Research and Innovation, an investment supported by the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. The N+ is a joint project between The Bartlett, UCL Faculty of the Built Environment, Imperial College London and WMG, University of Warwick.

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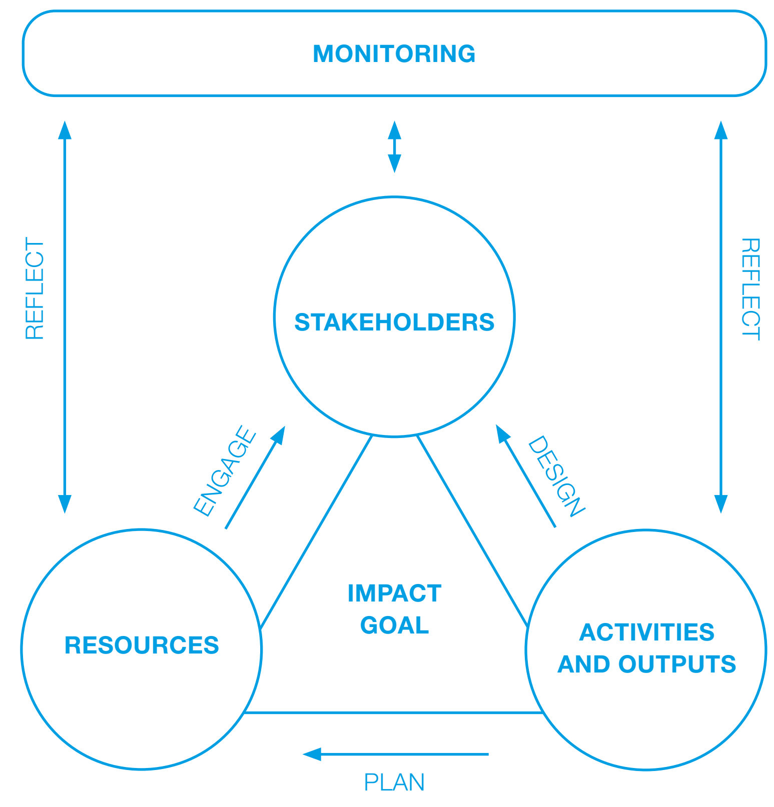
Godsell, J., Kaya, L., Glass, J., Plante, D., Hanselmann, L., McGilvray, J., 2020 Guide: Creating Impact from Research, Transforming Construction Network Plus.

A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPACT CREATION

The framework consists of five steps. Each step represents planning and activities that combine to provide a foundation for developing impact in a structured and consistent way. Questions and tips are provided for each step to help prompt thinking and activity planning.

STEPS

1. Identifying Impact Goal(s)
2. Stakeholder Analysis
3. Identifying Activities and Outputs
4. Identifiying Resources
5. Motinoring and Reflection



STEP 1
IDENTIFYING IMPACT GOALS

Impact can be defined by the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to the economy, environment and society. The first step in planning your pathway to impact is to establish what you want to achieve from your research. The more the project is linked to the identification of solutions that address a clear and recognised industry challenge, and are able to be implemented in the form of a trial, proof-of-concept or prototype, the easier it will be to demonstrate impact.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What is your research question?
   A good research question is essential to drive your research project. It pinpoints exactly what you want to find out and gives your work as a team a clear focus and purpose.
2. What wider problem do you aim to solve? Where has the problem you're trying to solve originated from?
   It is important to make sure that this wider problem is understandable for a range of people, from your academic peers to industry representatives, policy-makers, third sector stakeholders or the general public. Getting input and advice from someone outside of your field is a good way to ensure comprehension of the problem that you are trying to solve. Try to find someome who will act as a 'critical friend' throughout the process.
3. What is your high-level impact objective?
   Keep in mind that your impact goal may be something that you don't have a direct influence on (e.g. due to changing political, environmental, economic and social conditions).
4. What long-term and short-terms changes / outcomes do you see as a direct result of your project which you have some degree of control over?
   It is essential to determine in your project the difference between change and impact. For instance, a short-term change could increase awareness, knowledge or motivation. A long-term change could transform behaviours and practices, increase collaboration between disciplines, or help people embrace new technologies. Looking at the long-term and short-term changes, and identifying the links and relationships between them, should lead you to your long-term impact goal.

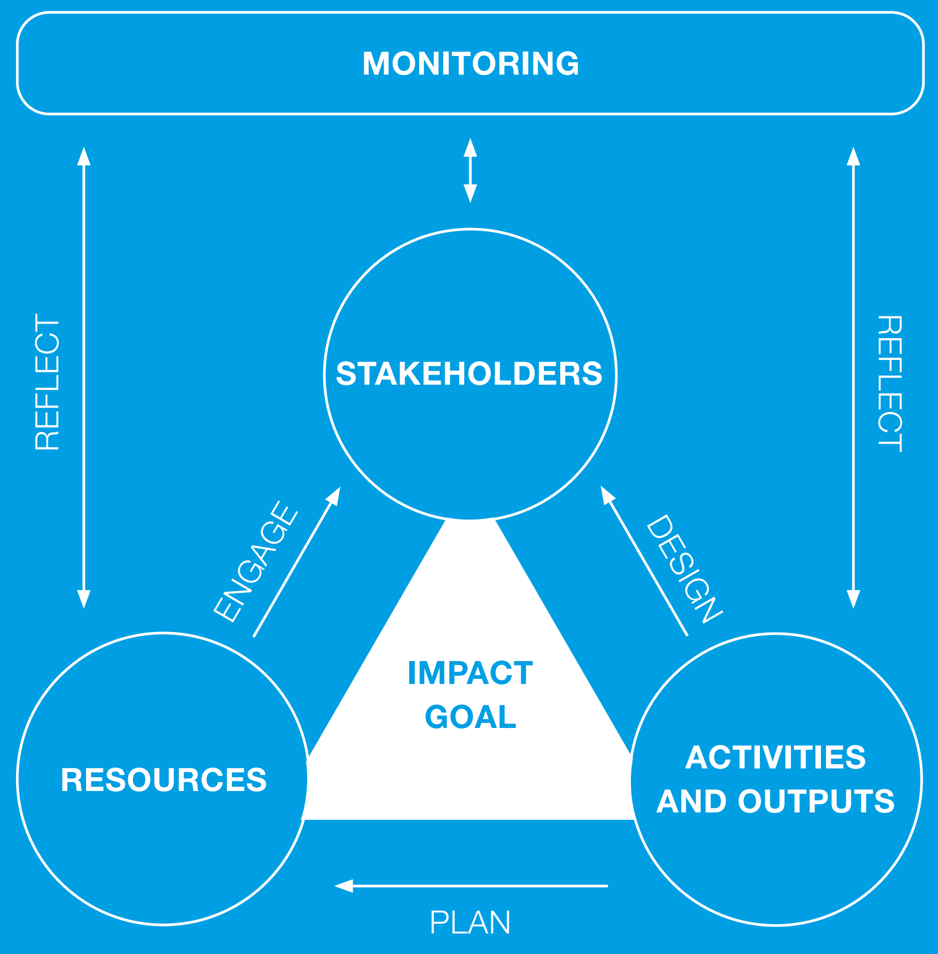
TIPS

Your research question should be focused, specific, appropriately complex and relevant to the industry.

It is important to understand what "impact" means to your project.

Long-term and short-term outcomes should be well defined to be able to identify "quick wins".

Thinking about research aims and impact aims separately can be helpful, but also think about how these crossover and complement each other.



STEP 2
STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Analysing prospective stakeholders is a crucial aspect of building an effective impact strategy. Stakeholders can be considered as being anyone with an interest in the research being undertaken and the output it will generate. The more thoroughly stakeholder needs and interests are understood at the outset of the research, the easier it will be to structure activities in a way that engages the various stakeholder linked to the project.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

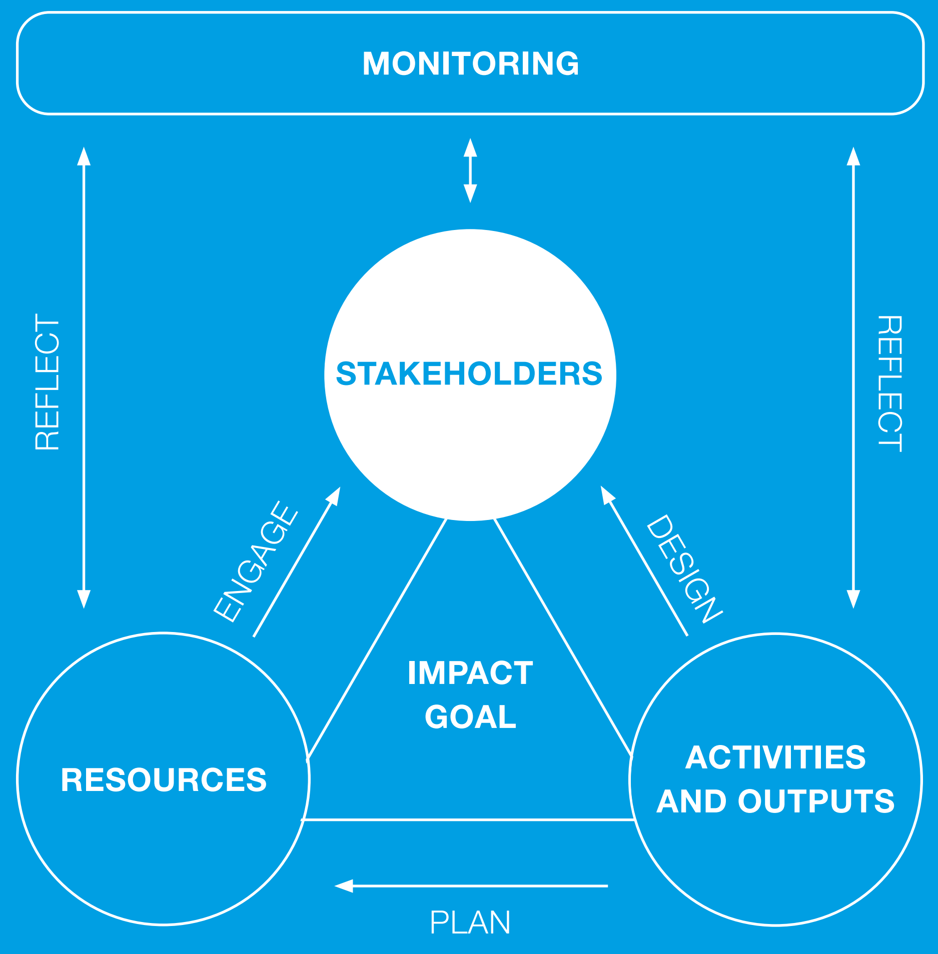
1. Which stakeholders are involved in your project? Who will actively contribute to your project?
   Consider the stakeholder categories and list the different types of academic and non-academic stakeholder groups that could be impacted by your project. Identify people that you may not have considered in past projects.
2. Who will benefit from your project? Which stakeholders are more crucial?
   Prioritise stakeholder categories according to their potential impact, ease with which they can be engaged, and the strength of the connection they have to the problems you are addressing. You should not only consider stakeholders with a direct interest in a successful outcome but also stakeholders who may be indirectly affected by a successful outcome.
3. Who might be disadvantaged as a result of your project?
   This stakeholders should be part of your analysis as they might have competing aims that are not aligned with your specific impact goal.
4. What are the initial perceptions of stakeholders about your project?
   Identify the perceptions of your stakeholders at the beginning of your project: What do they think of it? Are they likely to get involved? Are they likely to be motivated by your project? These are important questions that you want to address at the beginning of your project to ensure that you are adopting the right message and strategy.
5. What level of interest is each stakeholder likely to have in your project?
   Determining their level of interest, and the reasons for their interest, will help you to create tailored communications, activities and outputs for each stakeholder group.
6. Why do you want to engage with these stakeholders?
   Ensure you have a clear understanding of the reasons why these stakeholders are likely to support your research objectives.

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORIES

- Project Delivery Team: individuals across each of the partners actively involved in the delivery of a research project
- First Tier Stakeholders: stakeholders with a direct interest in a successful outcome
- Second Tier Stakeholders: stakeholders indirectly affected by a successful outcome

TIPS

It is important to consider the active contributors and the beneficiaries of your project (organisations, communities that have the power to help you achieve your project). Engagement activities may be different for each of them.



STEP 3
IDENTIFYING ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

To increase the likely impact from a research project, activities and outputs need to focus on your research aims, while also encouraging stakeholder involvement and support. You can achieve greater impact by ensuring that your activities and outputs communicate the aims of the project. This will help to build consensus, establish a common vision and support the development of results that can be implemented with stakeholders.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are the activities you would like to do in order to disseminate your project/findings to your targeted stakeholders?
   By having clear impact goals and stakeholders, you can now identify the most appropriate activities for your project. Think beyond a typical project plan and consider activities you can do to get your outputs to a much broader audience. Go beyond the obvious and use your creativity.
2. What outputs and channels would you like to create before, during and after these activities in order to communicate with your audiences?
3. How are these activities and outputs going to help you to amplify your work?
4. Which of these engagement activities are “nice to have” and which ones are “must do”?
   This ranking will help you identify the most important activities and prioritise your time and resources accordingly. Activities can be unusual and creative, but you need to identify which ones are really useful.
5. When are you planning to do these engagement activities and when will you create outputs?
6. Who will be responsible for each of these activities and the creation of outputs? How can your stakeholders assist and contribute to these plans?
   This can help to share the impact workload, while ensuring that your beneficiaries are actively involved in the project
7. What are the success indicators for each activity and output? How will you measure the success of your impact from each engagement?

ACTIVITIES

- Webinar
- Conferences
- Workshops
- Public events
- Exhibitions
- Meetings

OUTPUTS

- Website
- Social media accounts and groups
- Presentations
- Success stories and blog
- Toolkit
- Academic publications

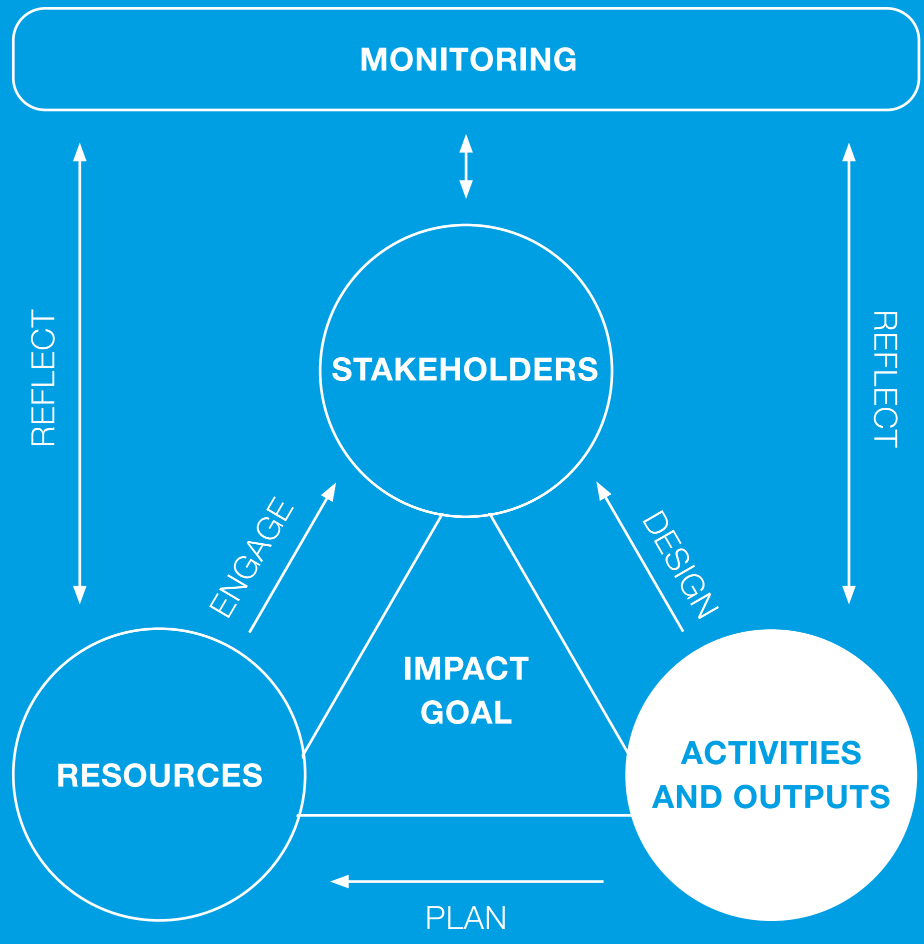
TIPS

It is important to identify suitable activities and outputs and to tailor these for each audience group.

Assigning time, staff, budget for each activity and output will help you to track your impact progress.

Identify “quick-wins”.

It is crucial to identify what success means to you and how to measure the impact (see p.12 for more information on evaluation).



STEP 4
IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

Access to the right resources to support your project is of course, crucial to its successful delivery. However, the resources needed to deliver your impact plan are likely to differ slightly to those required to deliver the research objectives of the project. One of the most important resources needed for a well-constructed route to impact is the participation and commitment of stakeholder groups. Establishing and communicating this fact early on is important in managing expectations of project partners and encouraging their early commitment to the vision.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What resources do you have in order to achieve overall impact / long-term and short- term outcomes?

   It is important to be realistic and have a clear overview of your resources.

2. What resources do you need in order to achieve overall impact / long-term and short- term outcomes?
3. If there is any gap between what you have and what you need, how can you close this gap? What actions should you take?

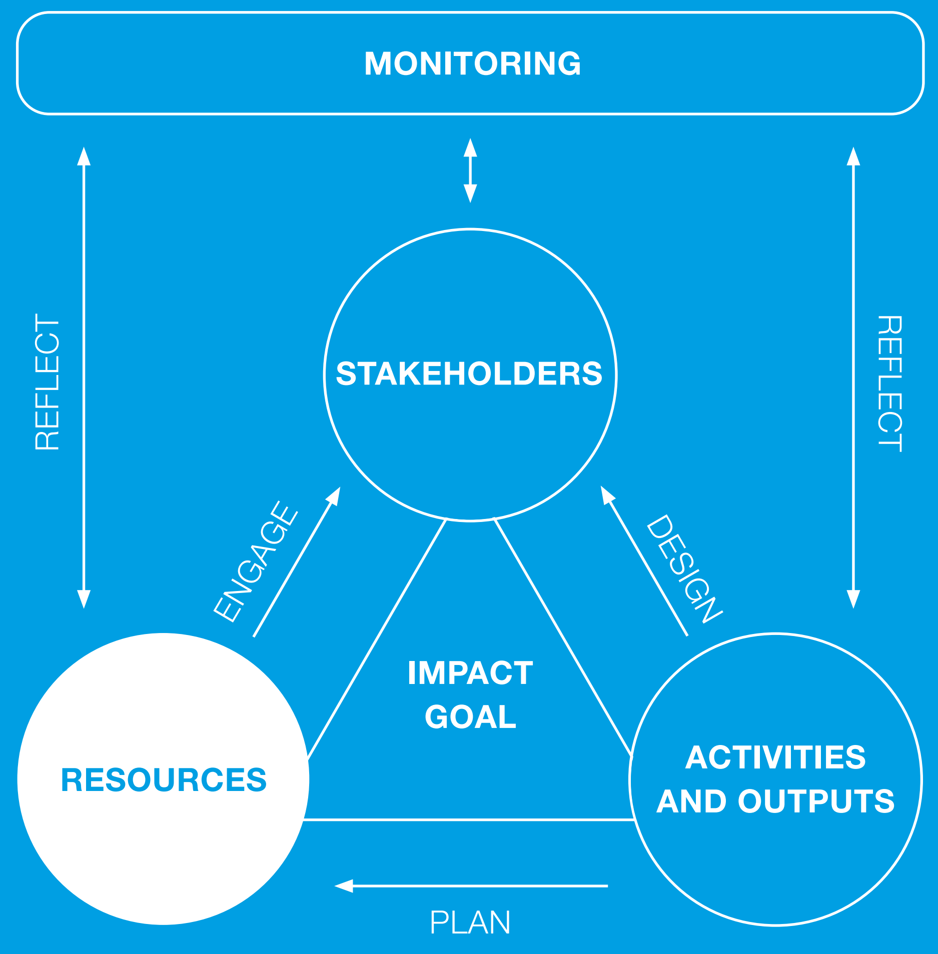
   A gap can be filled by creative thinking. Exploring options before the start of your project could open up new opportunities. You may not be aware of the resources that your stakeholders could offer the project.

TIPS

Bring together stakeholders to brainstorm answers to the above questions: which of your partners can provide help and in what way?

Resources can include:

- Number of staff
- Skills / talent / knowledge
- Training
- Finance
- Access to facilities
- Advice from colleagues



STEP 5

MONITORING AND REFLECTION

Monitoring and reflection is a key part of developing a successful impact plan. A good impact plan is a careful balance between the research objectives of the project team and the objectives of the stakeholders whose involvement is needed to undertake that research. As the project progresses, it is inevitable that new information will come to light that positively or negatively impacts this balance. If monitoring and reflection is adopted as a regular process it allows for adjustments and changes to be incorporated that will improve outcomes for all parties.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How will the monitoring be conducted?
   This is the last step, but it shouldn't be bypassed - metrics are relevant and important. Delivering a successful impact plan is an ongoing process. Monitoring your progress will allow you to adjust your activities, outputs and the allocation of your resources as the project moves forward.
2. When will the monitoring take place? How frequently? In which steps?
   This step should include the success measures established in step 3 (see p.8).
   Asking for feedback and advice from stakeholders and a 'critical friend' can help to plan this.
3. How will the monitoring be documented?
4. Are you on track to achieve your impact goals?
5. Do any adjustments or changes need to be undertaken?
   If you are not on track on achieving your impact goal, it's important to understand why your plan didn't work and to adjust it accordingly. Change can be constructive as long as lessons are learnt and shared.
6. What are the learning points?
   Step back and reflect on your learning from this project. Take the time to reflect with your stakeholders.

TIPS

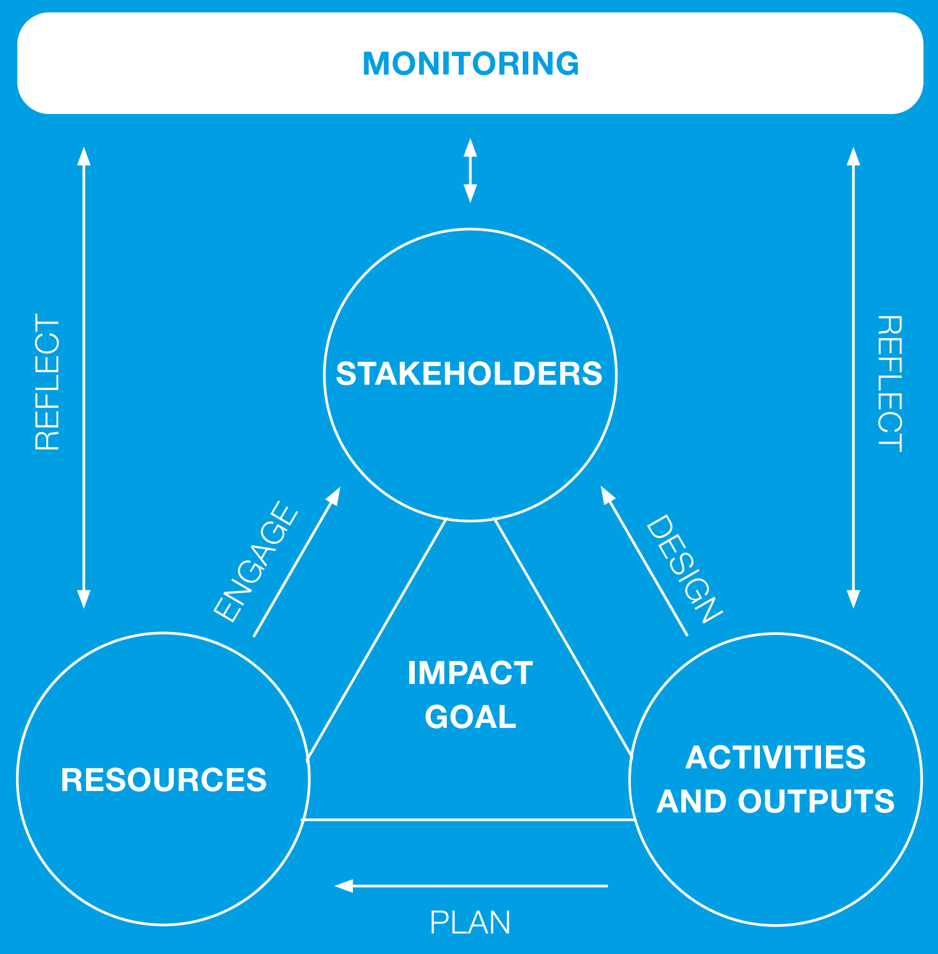
Monitoring and evaluation is aided when assumptions and hypotheses are identified early on in a project.

Make time for reflection and add it to your team meeting agenda as a standing item. Regularly monitor progress to ensure that all activities, outputs and outcomes help you achieve your objectives.

Spend time exploring similar work and how others succeeded to ensure optimum learning.

Receive regular feedback from your stakeholders about any concerns or ideas. Be ready to adopt them and adapt your approach.

Monitor your budget to avoid a shortfall in resources. Make sure you have an achievable plan.



A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPACT CREATION

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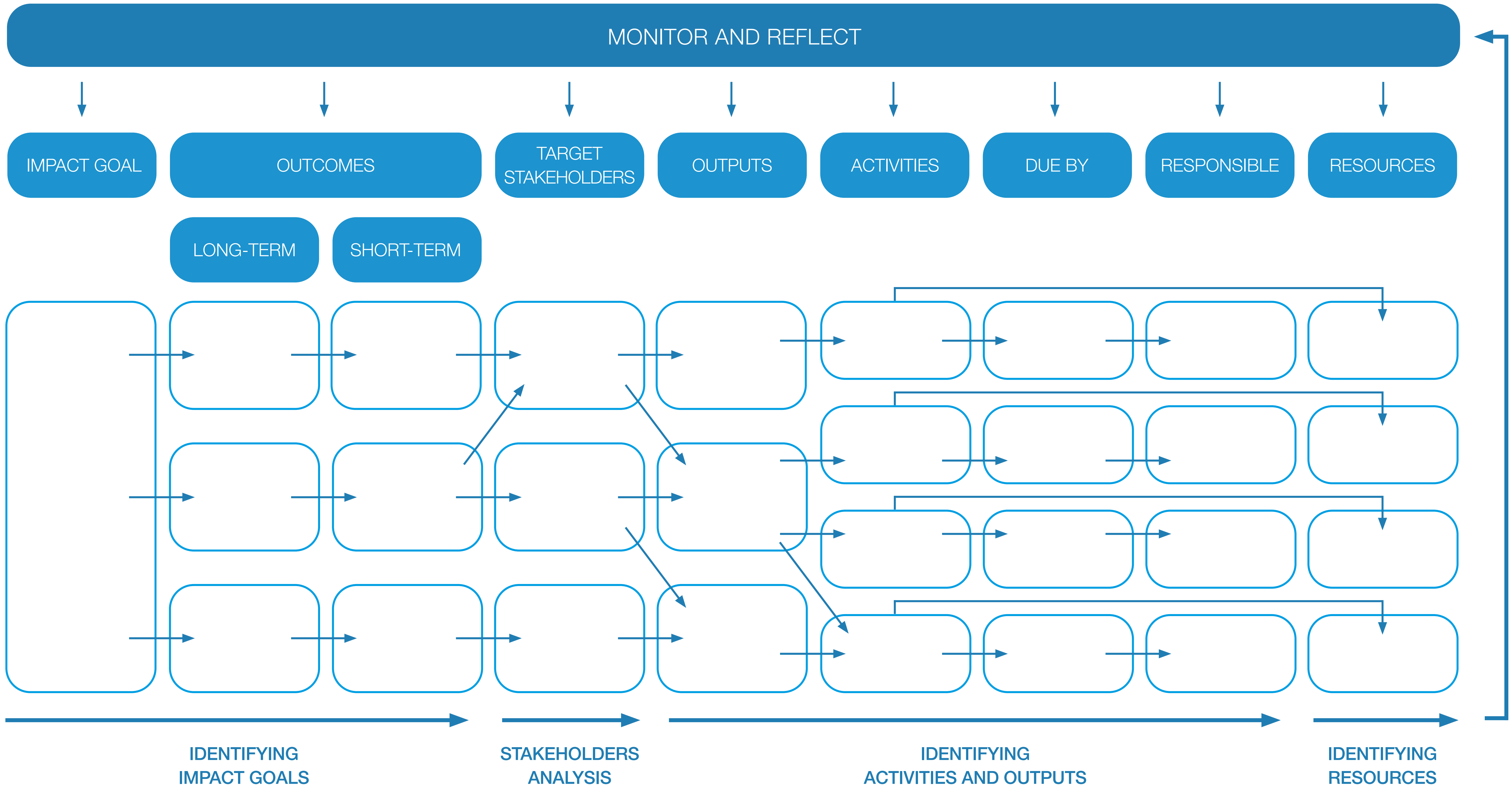

Boxes and arrows are only to demonstrate that one box can be related to several others.
You can have fewer boxes for each step, or add more if you need them.

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