

# What counts as impact?

The word impact is used in many ways across the national and international research sector. For Emerald, and for many key partners, impact is the **provable effects of research in the real world**.

Impacts are the changes we can see, demonstrate, measure and capture beyond the academic walls, which occur because of our research. Activities such as writing academic papers, talking about research in the media and receiving accolades by other academics are hugely valuable, but are not themselves *impact*. The single most defining feature of impact is the change or benefit which arises from this research, which can occur in any context, be big or small, and are measurable by both numbers and words.

Part of the challenge of impact is determining what's *enough*. The answer will always be tempered by any formal funding or assessment expectations, but the most important factor is understanding what is meaningful to the users of research. What is enough *to them*? When you ask them, *what counts*?

# So is it....enough?

We have designed a comprehensive set of resources to support you in your role.

*"A mainstay of a lot of the work I do is helping people understand that impact isn't a single thing, nor is it necessarily 'big'. Of course we all want to have the biggest influence we can, but if we blinker ourselves we can miss what is most meaningful to people. What is a small change through an academic lens can be a huge change in someone's life. Defaulting impact to 'big' also leaves academics daunted, trying to reach unreachable goals. Ultimately impact is in the eye of the beholder, and that's where the anchor should always be."*

Julie Bayley, Director of Research Impact Development  
at the University of Lincoln

In this [video clip](#) two prominent advocates of impact literacy discuss why so many researchers feel daunted by impact and the ways in which they try to create an supportive environment where impact can thrive.

# How can Research Impact be supported?

*"Building that system of support is the key to a healthy impact system."*

David Phipps, Assistant Vice President Research Strategy and Impact at York University

Embedding a culture of impact is crucial and required by many researchers. In a global survey of 1,600 Emerald authors\*:

97%

said they believe their research has relevance outside academia

36%

said they felt incentivized to engage with non-academics

15%

rely on incentives as a reason to enter into an existing collaboration

## Find out more

In the same survey, we found 45% want additional tools to help plan for Impact.

We've taken up the challenge and are working on an online service to support researchers and institutions alike.

**Want to be one of the first to hear about the service? [Register here](#)**

\*Emerald Change Report, Published 2019