

# **KEC IMPLEMENTATION SERIES 2022: MEASURING NON-FINANCIAL IMPACT**

## **BREAKOUT GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY**

*Wednesday 14th September 2022*

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### *Overview*

This summary presents the recommendations emerging from the breakout group discussions during the second half of the Measuring Non-Financial Impact webinar. We are very grateful to all breakout session participants for engaging so meaningfully with our prompts and for taking the time to share these additional comments with us.

We hope that this summary may help to share ideas, shed important light on current thinking among colleagues, and help to build further on the conversation from the first half of the webinar.

We will continue to revisit these and other insights emerging from the webinar throughout the KEC Implementation Series 2022 and beyond, with the aim of testing and building on these learnings to make collective progress that helps knowledge exchange flourish.

In addition to this summary, we encourage the reader to consult the accompanying **Webinar Presentations Summary** for further ideas emerging from the presentations made by our panel of speakers. We have also collated **a list of resources, tools and further reading**, as recommended by our speakers and participants. The full webinar recording and speaker slides are also available **here**.

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We have preserved the original wording from group notes as far as possible, throughout this summary.

For more information on the KEC Implementation Series 2022, please visit:  
<https://www.keconcordat.ac.uk/events/kec-implementation-series-2022/>

For any questions about this or other webinar materials, please contact Ariadna Tsenina at [ariadna.tsenina@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:ariadna.tsenina@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

## I. Suggestions for non-financial metrics and activities that could be captured by non-financial metrics

- **Focusing on direct change**

- Influence on and changes in policy and legislation
- Innovation, such as the creation of new products and processes
- Influence on and changes in the curriculum
- Capturing enhanced confidence of particular beneficiaries and what that means for those beneficiaries (HE-BCI metrics act as a disincentive to this)
- Community perception change
- Spillover of financial impact - e.g. not to partners but to community

- **Focusing on improvements to existing processes**

- Indicators of methodological changes - e.g. changes made to methodology and practice, and how services have been delivered, modified, etc.
- Metrics external to institutions - e.g. new staff in a business (as a result of engagement)

- **Focusing on externally-defined value**

- Capturing relational interactions and the mutual value for partners (co-develop metrics with partners so that this reflects both what the institution and the partners value)
- Customer feedback / partner feedback
- Repeat business
- Testimonials from external stakeholders

- **Focusing on actors**

- Diversification of relationships (internal metric to HEI)
- Volume - number of staff engaging with partners, number of partners, number of citizens engaged, etc.
- Metrics relating to student KE - given OfS investment in HEIF
- Student employability examples
- Skills, capabilities and credit-bearing CPD

- **Focusing on different levels of analysis**

- Consider linking indicators to external frameworks, such as the Happiness Index and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDGs can provide a framework through which non-tangible benefits can be referenced and specific impacts can be drilled down further.
- Combine a unifying high-level system of tagging instances of positive change with specific metrics at the lower levels. For example, on a higher level, a framework could be capturing links to SDGs, links to other sectors (e.g. health, legal, etc.) and type of positive change achieved by a KE project (such as change in awareness, thinking, understanding, behaviour, etc.). This high-level system could be used to build a holistic picture of the transformative power of an institution. Those interested in learning more about specific outcomes could then drill down to the lower level, where more specific (and therefore more 'niche') metrics appropriate for the project can be found (e.g. percentage change in product development time).
- Suite of indicators depending on the different areas of KE, which could then be summarised more collectively.

- **Additional recommendations and comments**

- Include long-term assessments - continuing impact/achievements, longer-term benefits (which also applies to financial impact).
- Non-financial impact is often well-captured through case studies rather than institutional-level metrics.
- Measures and associated administrative burden need to be proportionate to any request for non-financial impact data.
- The nature of specific academic subjects needs to be considered within HE-BCI - the arts and humanities has specific outcomes which are typically qualitatively measured and this should be taken into consideration.
- REF already has a lot of guidance on non-financial indicators - we should use the same or similar framework wherever possible. The REF case study element is a good example for how both quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in measurement and reporting.
- Social return on investment (SROI) is a method which is generally used for justifying additional funding for charities and other organisations - so is the thought that we could have a mix of financial, quantitative and qualitative information
- Capturing impact should be about internal improvement not just reporting

## II. What further support, information or activity would be useful on this topic?

- **Sharing good practice**

- Specific examples or case studies of how this has worked well at other institutions
- Lessons that can be applied everywhere - even in smaller institutions
- Examples of theories of change would be useful

- **Common frameworks or other guidance**

- It would be great to have useful recognised frameworks that we could work from. Finding universal units for quantifying non-tangible benefits is very, very difficult - which makes cross-comparison difficult.
- Guidance on how to establish a baseline for non-financial impacts in the absence of agreed/standardised non-financial metrics
- Further guidance on the breadth of non-financial metrics, such as a list of non-financial impacts that could be measured
- A list of non-financial metrics could be linked to case studies where they have been recorded (for example, using the REF case study portfolio)
- Requests for quantitative data on impact should be accompanied by practical tools and clear guidance on exactly what data needs to be collected and how, in order to provide high quality and consistent data

- **Community-building activities**

- Networking or groups to continue these discussions
- Community forum - practical steps and help; sometimes it is only a handful of people in the institutions

- **Improving the links between and the communication from the different reporting and benchmarking initiatives**

- There should be consistency across all HE reporting exercises.
- There needs to be more clarity about how reporting mechanisms - such as REF, KEF, KEC and HE-BCI are linked to and overlap with one another. This will also help to legitimise KEF to many academics, who prefer to focus only on research when discussing impact.
- Early indication of the HE-BCI review and how the metrics will change is needed. HEIs are developing their KE / Impact strategies now, following the last REF, and it is important for us to understand what metrics will be used in the HE-BCI return in the future.

- More indication of how the sector measures outcome and quality of KE and evaluates the impact of their R&I strategies would be much appreciated.

### **III. Are there any wider policy implications that should be highlighted?**

- How does the current steer from BEIS on commercial impact align with these discussions from UKRI on non-financial measures and impact?
- If the HE-BCIS review is unlikely to significantly change the data requirements/measures and, similarly, there will be no changes in KEF - in what context are we considering adoption of non-financial measures? Does this need to be developed outside of the HE-BCIS/KEF Review framing?
- Could this be considered within revised REF Environment measures? And to what extent are measures for Environment possible, or desirable in terms of administrative burden?
- HEIF Annual Monitoring Statement has been a good location for HEIs to provide details about their non-financial metrics previously - but what happens to this data? If it is not serving a necessary purpose, do we need to continue to supply it, or could this data be captured elsewhere?
- Further consideration needs to be given to the inter-relationship between the REF & KEF. For example, considering mirroring the return period so that they are the same. The REF Environment statement has a great deal of cross over with the narrative statements required for the KEF.
- Taking into account the maturity/culture of KE in organisations - how do we measure / compare institutions on this front?