

# Developing a theory of change

Outline and agenda

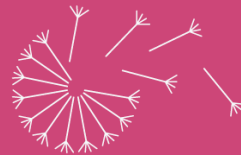
Full-day (6-hour) session:

Virtual delivery - split over two days

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Delivered from 2025 by the Institute for Methods Innovation,  
a registered non-profit organisation.

## Course description

This live online workshop guides participants through the process of strategic planning for achieving research impact. The focus is on making informed decisions about impact strategies, refining objectives, and developing a robust theory of change to map pathways for targeted impacts. Participants will begin by self-assessing the impacts they aim to achieve and identifying desired changes from their research or engagement activities. The workshop provides step-by-step guidance on creating an evidence-based theory of change—a systematic and dynamic tool for conceptualising the interventions and outcomes needed to reach impact goals.

### Key benefits:

- Define realistic goals and clarify the changes you aim to achieve through your research or engagement.
- Build an evidence-based theory of change that maps pathways to desired outcomes and impacts.
- Learn the value of stakeholder analysis and participatory methods to strengthen impact strategies.
- Utilise practical methodologies such as surveys, qualitative interviews, and participatory workshops.
- Identify intermediate and long-term outcomes while systematically conceptualising impact interventions.
- Apply knowledge to real-world scenarios through interactive group exercises and discussions.
- Learn how to engage stakeholders in the process of clarifying and validating theories of change.

At the end of the workshop:

- You receive slides and links to useful resources you can borrow and adapt for your work.
- Prof Jensen continues to answer all questions from participants via email after the course, guaranteeing a response to all questions within one week.

# Indicative agenda

## Day 1: Developing an evaluation framework

Start: 09:30 am (20-minute break included)

### Part 1: Introduction to theory of change and evidence-based research impact

- Introducing evidence-based research impact
- Initial overview of theory of change (ToC)
- Defining impact

### Part 2: Engagement strategies and the value of participation in stakeholder analysis

- Levels and modes of engagement
- Value of participatory approach
- Stakeholder analysis

### Part 3: Stakeholder analysis for theory of change development

- Stakeholder analysis to lay the foundations for ToC development
- Gathering input into ToC from relevant parties

### Part 4: Developing evidence-based theories of change

### Part 5: Worked examples of theories of change

### Part 6: Clarifying impact objectives

- Intermediate, long-term and overall impact levels
- Group activity

### Part 7: Closing plenary discussion

Close: 12:30 pm

## **Day 2: Developing a theory of change**

*Start: 09:30 am (20-minute break included)*

### **Part 1: Clarifying impact objectives continued**

### **Part 2: Developing impact pathways**

### **Part 3: How to roll out ToC draft development systematically for your programme or project**

- Introduction to methods for developing ToCs for research programmes or projects
- Surveys
- Participatory workshops and qualitative interviews

### **Part 4: Rolling ToC impact pathway clarifications and validation process**

- Walk-through of agenda, approach, framing and delivery of ToC participatory workshops

### **Part 5: Closing plenary discussion**

*Close: 12:30 pm*

## About Fast Track Impact

[Fast Track Impact](#) is an international training platform, delivered by the [Institute for Methods Innovation](#), a non-profit organisation. Its mission is to change the way busy researchers generate and share knowledge so that their ideas can change the world and they can get their thinking time back.

Fast Track Impact runs training for researchers from every discipline, from PhD students to Professors, from departmental away days to cross-institution training days. It has trained 15,000+ researchers from more than 200 institutions in 55 countries.

## About the trainer



### Professor Eric A. Jensen

Prof Jensen is a social scientist with a PhD from the University of Cambridge in sociology. He is part-time professor at the University of Warwick, where he has led courses on public engagement with science, science policy, audience research and social research methods (including surveys and statistics). He is also a doctoral research supervisor for the University of Oxford. As a visiting research scientist at the National Center for Supercomputing

Applications at the University of Illinois, Jensen works on a Sloan Foundation-funded project on research software policy.

Prof Jensen has 20+ years of research and practice experience in social research, evaluation, public and policy engagement and science communication. He has delivered hundreds of training workshops on evaluation methods and evidence-based science communication, as well as leading and consulting on projects large and small on public engagement with research, impact evaluation, socially responsible research, and environmental communication. Prof Jensen also serves as an Independent Ethics Mentor for European Commission-funded projects, reviewing data management and ethics planning. He has extensive experience in ethical approval processes in higher education.