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HUMANITIES AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

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# Assessing impacts in the humanities and social sciences

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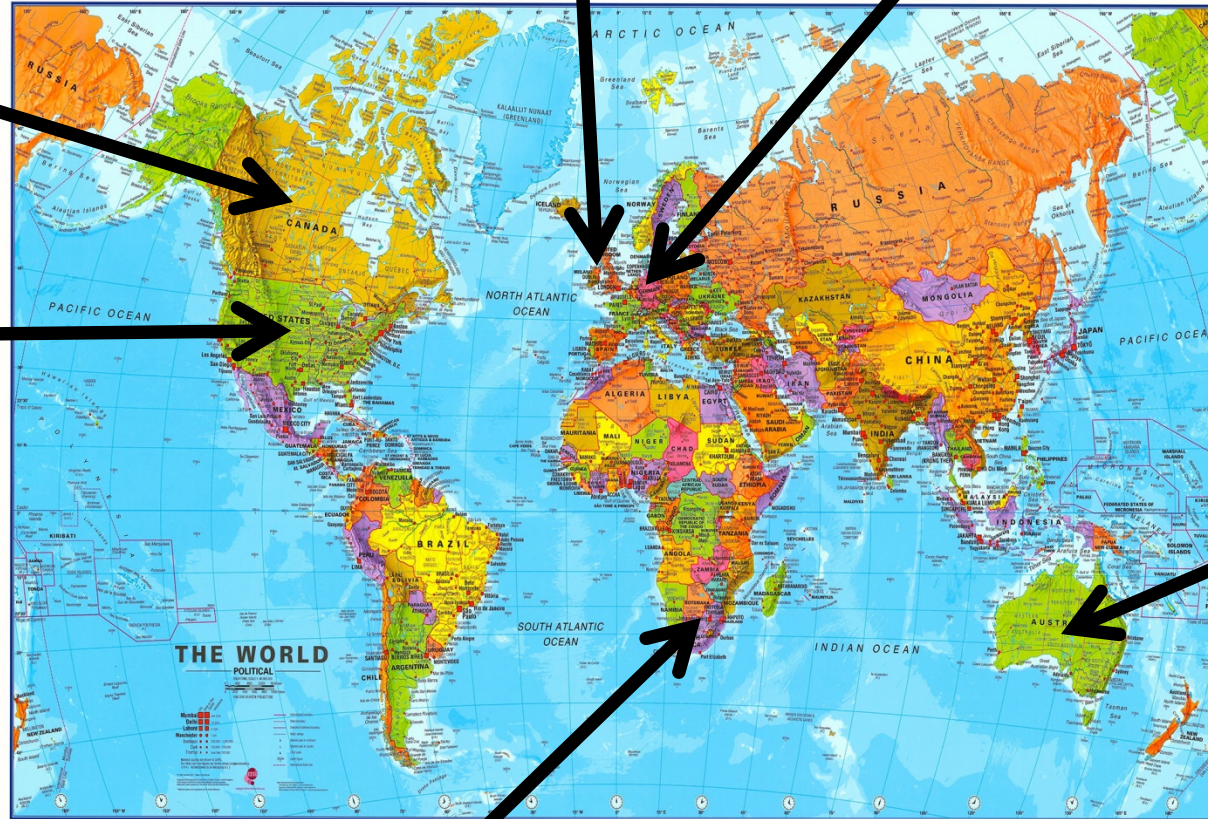
# some examples of impact systems

**research impact**  
turning research into action

**NABI**  
National Alliance for Broader Impacts

**REF2014**  
Research Excellence Framework

Standard Evaluation Protocol  
2015 – 2021  
Protocol for Research Assessments  
in the Netherlands  
NWO



**DRUSSA**  
Development Research Uptake  
in Sub-Saharan Africa

**NATIONAL INNOVATION & SCIENCE AGENDA**  
Engagement and Impact Assessment



# Overview

- Objectives of the Federation's Impacts Project
- Canadian context for impact assessment
- Key findings and recommendations of Federation report



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# The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences

- Represents more than 90,000 scholars in the humanities and social sciences
- Organizer of the Congress for the Humanities and Social Sciences
- Advocacy group focusing on research and education
- Website: [ideas-idees.ca](http://ideas-idees.ca)



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# The Federation's Impacts Project

- Research and consultation
- Working paper in 2014
- *Approaches* report in 2017



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**To succeed, the research community will need a shared understanding of the key factors that underlie the assessment of scholarship.**

# Objectives

- Support a productive and positive dialogue
- Promote an understanding of the possibilities and limitations
- Ensure key factors relevant to HSS are taken into account
- Help the HSS community better articulate its impacts



# Impact assessment in Canada

- Government interest in performance measures
- Limited role of impact indicators in research funding
  - Impact statements, knowledge-mobilization plans
  - Funding decision still driven by peer review
- Universities using impact assessment in planning and communication



# Benefits and risks

## Benefits

- Recognition of value of HSS
- Increased attention and support
- Research co-development
- Enhanced impacts

## Risks

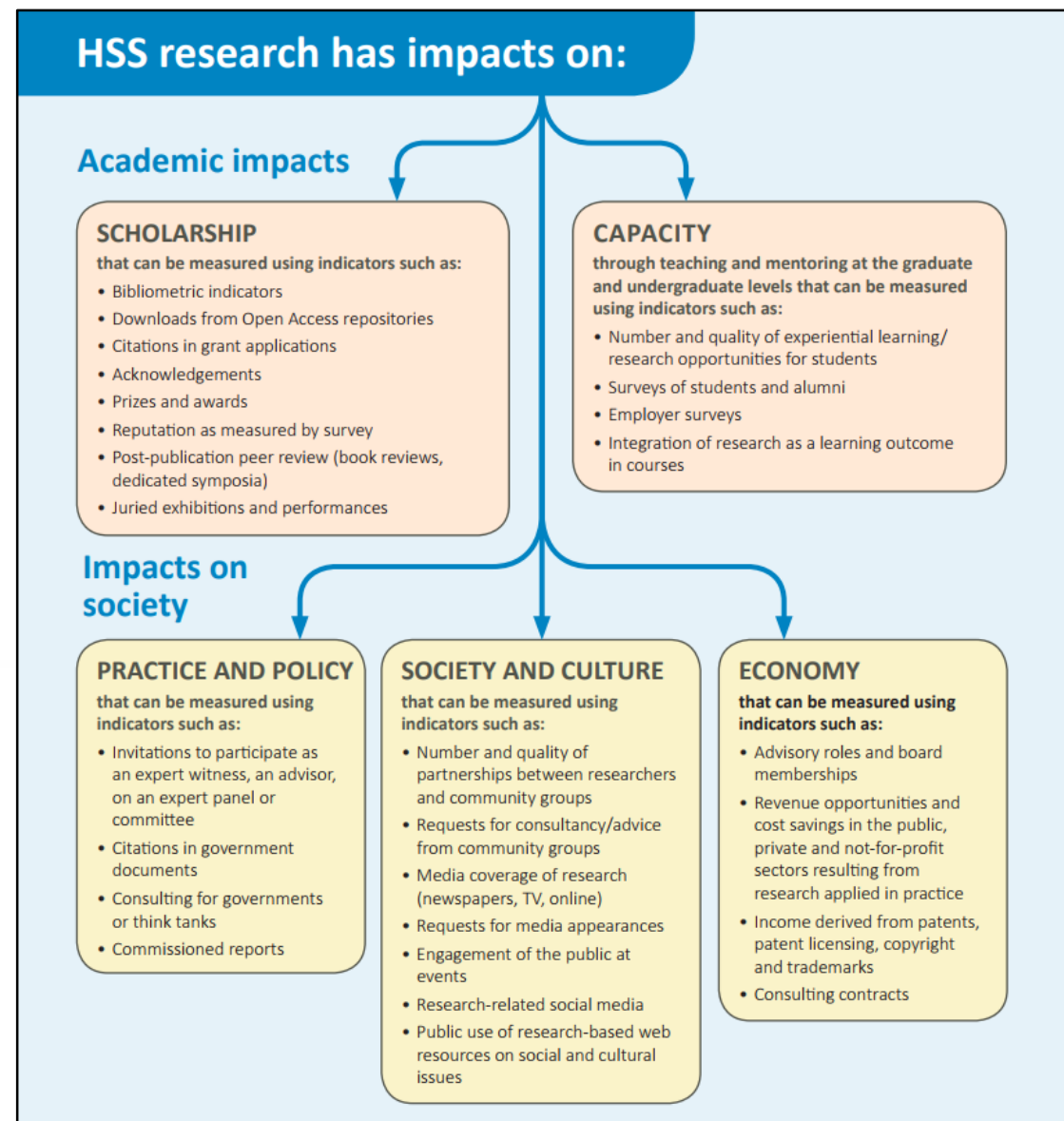
- Perverse incentives
- Skewed research priorities
- Valuing what is measurable

**One of the primary benefits of impact assessment, therefore, is to allow the HSS community to share exciting success stories that have gone untold for too long.**



# Understanding the impacts of HSS

- HSS has substantial and diverse impacts across society
- A framework to understand academic impacts and impacts on society





# Scope of HSS impact: Five baskets

## Academic impacts

### SCHOLARSHIP

that can be measured using indicators such as:

- Bibliometric indicators
- Downloads from Open Access repositories
- Citations in grant applications
- Acknowledgements
- Prizes and awards
- Reputation as measured by survey
- Post-publication peer review (book reviews, dedicated symposia)
- Juried exhibitions and performances

### CAPACITY

through teaching and mentoring at the graduate and undergraduate levels that can be measured using indicators such as:

- Number and quality of experiential learning/ research opportunities for students
- Surveys of students and alumni
- Employer surveys
- Integration of research as a learning outcome in courses



# Scope of HSS impact: Five baskets

## Impacts on society

### PRACTICE AND POLICY

that can be measured using indicators such as:

- Invitations to participate as an expert witness, an advisor, on an expert panel or committee
- Citations in government documents
- Consulting for governments or think tanks
- Commissioned reports

### SOCIETY AND CULTURE

that can be measured using indicators such as:

- Number and quality of partnerships between researchers and community groups
- Requests for consultancy/advice from community groups
- Media coverage of research (newspapers, TV, online)
- Requests for media appearances
- Engagement of the public at events
- Research-related social media
- Public use of research-based web resources on social and cultural issues

### ECONOMY

that can be measured using indicators such as:

- Advisory roles and board memberships
- Revenue opportunities and cost savings in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors resulting from research applied in practice
- Income derived from patents, patent licensing, copyright and trademarks
- Consulting contracts



# A pluralistic approach

- Scholars face vastly different realities
  - Different forms of impact
  - Different pathways to impact
  - Different opportunities to demonstrate impact
- A pluralistic approach accounts for impact in its many forms



# Key findings

- No single impact indicator or set of indicators can fully capture impact
- Bibliometrics are a useful but limited tool
- Not always possible to attribute impacts due to time lags and collaborative efforts
- Users and non-academic partners are vital – “pathways” assessment approaches are needed

**An impact pathway describes the causal linkages in the steps between research and impact and enables the collection of evidence of impact at each step.**



# Approaches

- Define impacts broadly
- Use diverse and flexible sets of indicators, qualitative and quantitative
- Researchers should play a leading role, in collaboration with research partners and users
- Assess collective impacts
- Develop institutional supports

**There is substantial support in the literature for using blended methods that combine quantitative measures with qualitative approaches.**



# Illustrating the approaches

## Illustrative case studies

- Impacts in folklore studies
- Policy impacts in a dynamic environment (basic income)
- Collective impacts in immigrant skill development
- Community-engaged research in history



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# Questions

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