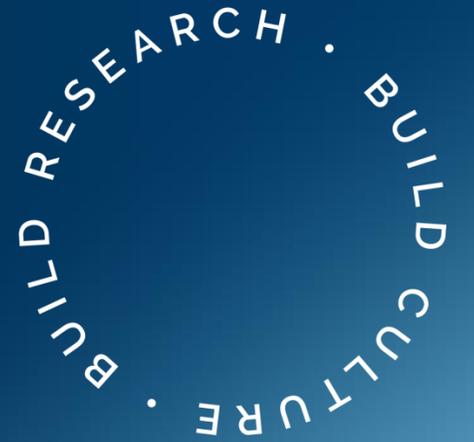


Evaluating research culture – a UK university perspective



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Dean for Research Culture and Strategy

Newcastle University

All Island Research Culture Conference, 13th May 2025

Why evaluate research culture?



- To see where you are and **inform actions** you might take
- To **track progress** towards change you want to see from interventions you're making



Why evaluate research culture?



- **Communicate** successes to enhance community engagement
- **Team learning** about what does and doesn't work
- To **justify investment**
- Strengthen **REF 2029** submissions



Evaluating research culture – some **challenges**

- What do we consider a success measure – **outputs or outcomes?**
- How do we ensure we have **responsible** metrics?
- How can we track and report progress if **culture change is slow?**



Research Culture at Newcastle University

**WHAT DEFINES
A POSITIVE
RESEARCH CULTURE
AT NEWCASTLE?**

**COLLABORATION
AND COLLEGIALITY**

**FREEDOM TO GROW
AND EXPLORE**

**FAIRNESS
AND INCLUSION**

**OPENNESS
AND INTEGRITY**

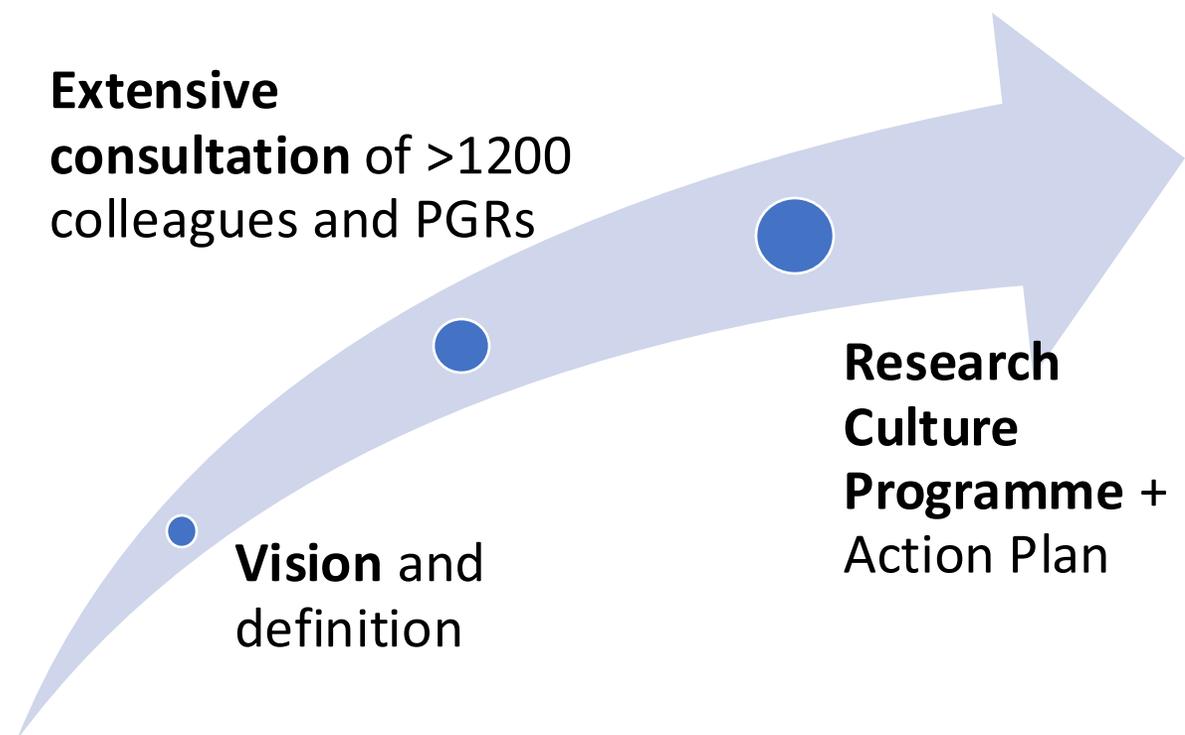
Research Culture at Newcastle University

**Extensive
consultation** of >1200
colleagues and PGRs

Vision and
definition

**Research
Culture
Programme +
Action Plan**

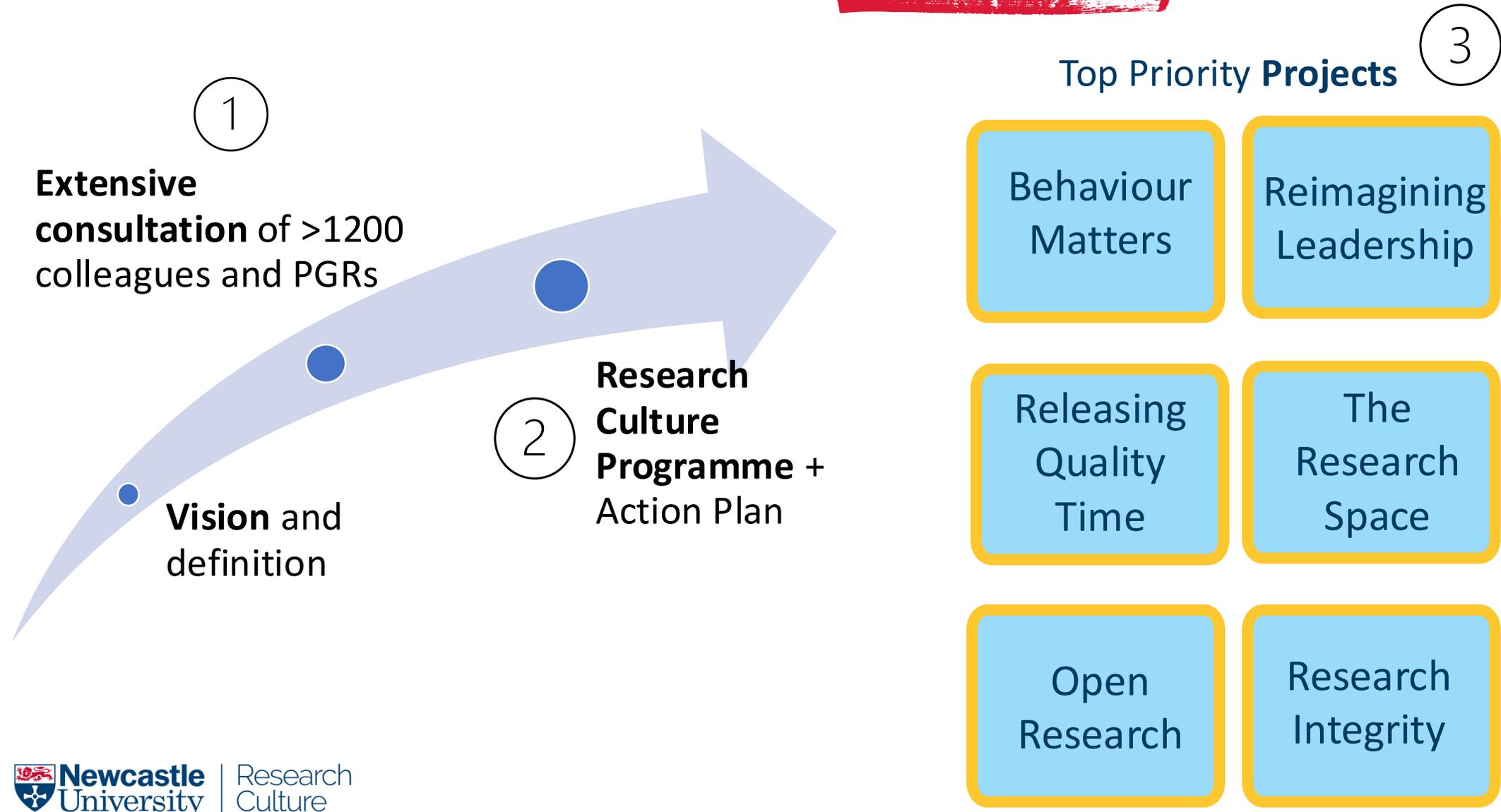
Research Culture at Newcastle University



Top Priority Projects



Research Culture at Newcastle University



1

Our Research Culture Survey

- For the research culture team to **develop an action plan**
- To better **understand** peoples' experiences and perspectives of research culture
- To provide a **benchmark** for future change
- To identify '**red flags**'



1

Our Research Culture Survey

- ✓ Collected a **large dataset** (>840 responses)
- ✓ **Deep insight** into current culture
- ✓ Identified **key themes** and **priority areas**

- X Qualitative data took a **long time** to analyse (>4 months)
- X **Insufficient data** to analyse at unit level
- X Can't be **repeated** every year



2

Institutional **KPIs**

- For **annual reporting** to University Research and Innovation Committee, and University Council
- To **easily track** improvements arising from the Research Culture Programme at institutional level
- Metrics need to be **responsible and meaningful**



② Institutional KPIs – using the **SCOPE** process



2 Institutional KPIs – using the **SCOPE** process



② Institutional **KPIs**

- ✓ Puts values first - measures what matters and is **meaningful**
- ✓ Metrics **fit** our own context
- ✓ **Quick** and **easy** to collect

- ✗ Initial SCOPE process quite **involved**
- ✗ Process can sift out metrics that still feel **important**
- ✗ Dial may not shift for a **long time**



3

Evaluating **projects**

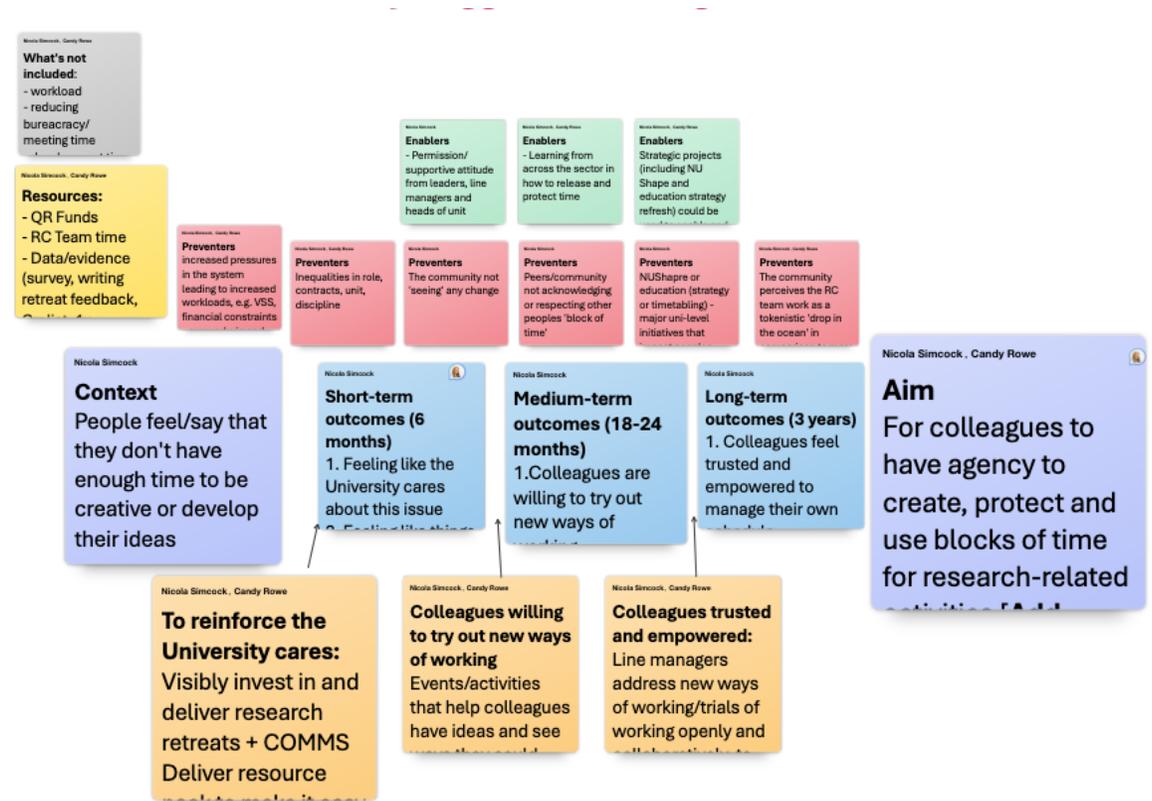
- For understanding the **direct impact** of the actions taken
- For **team learning** what works and what doesn't – where we invest our time and resources
- For reporting **successes** and **progress** with our community – increase confidence and engagement



3

Evaluating projects using Theory of Change

- Structured way to describe **how** and **why** a programme of work will lead to specific outcomes
- **Outcome** not output focussed
- **Visual model** of the steps, conditions and resources needed to achieve a desired change
- Communication and **evaluation tool**



3

Evaluating projects using Theory of Change

Current state:

People feel/say that they don't have enough time to be creative or develop their ideas

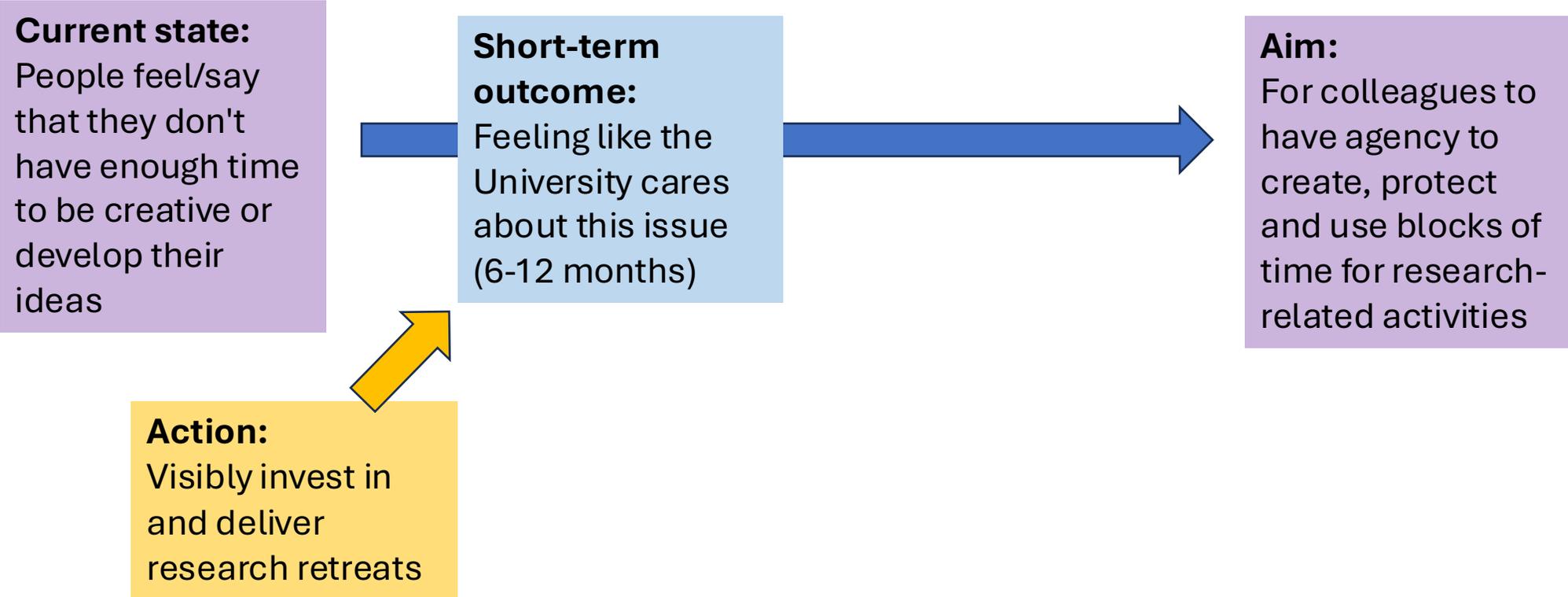


Aim:

For colleagues to have agency to create, protect and use blocks of time for research-related activities

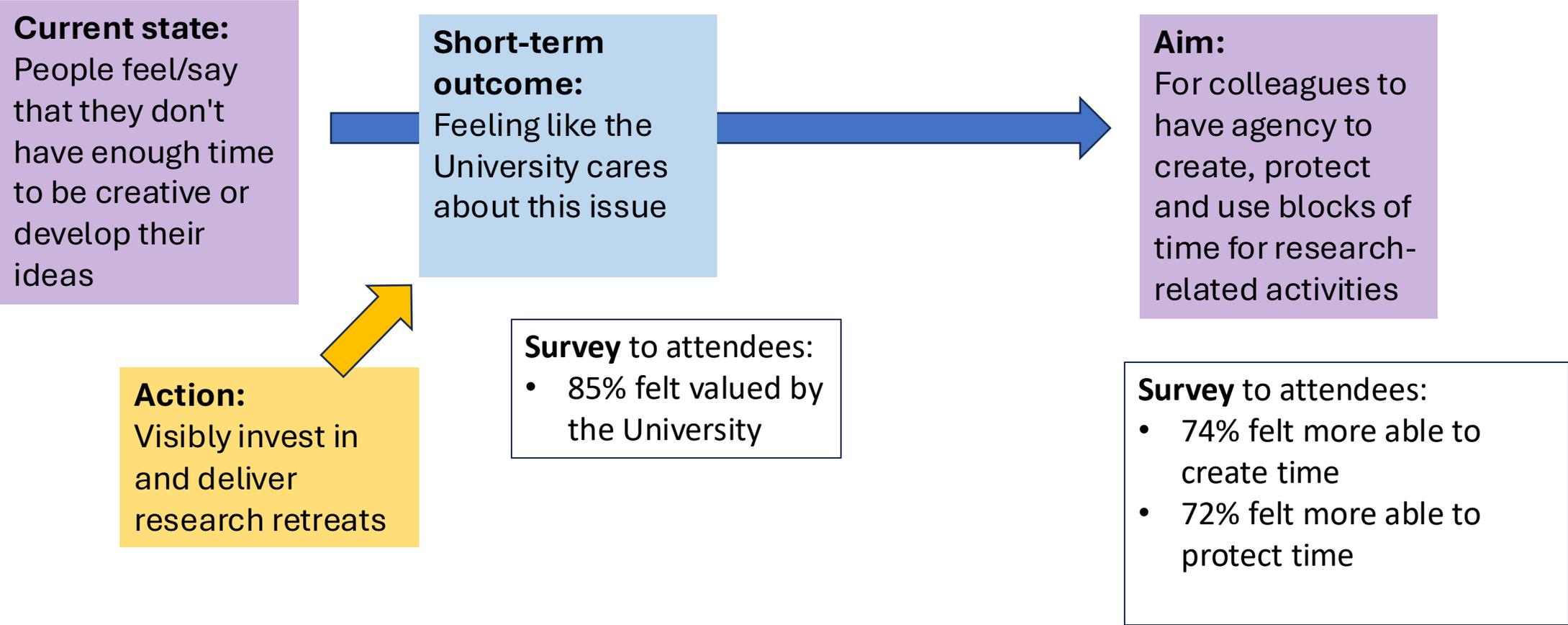
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Evaluating projects using Theory of Change



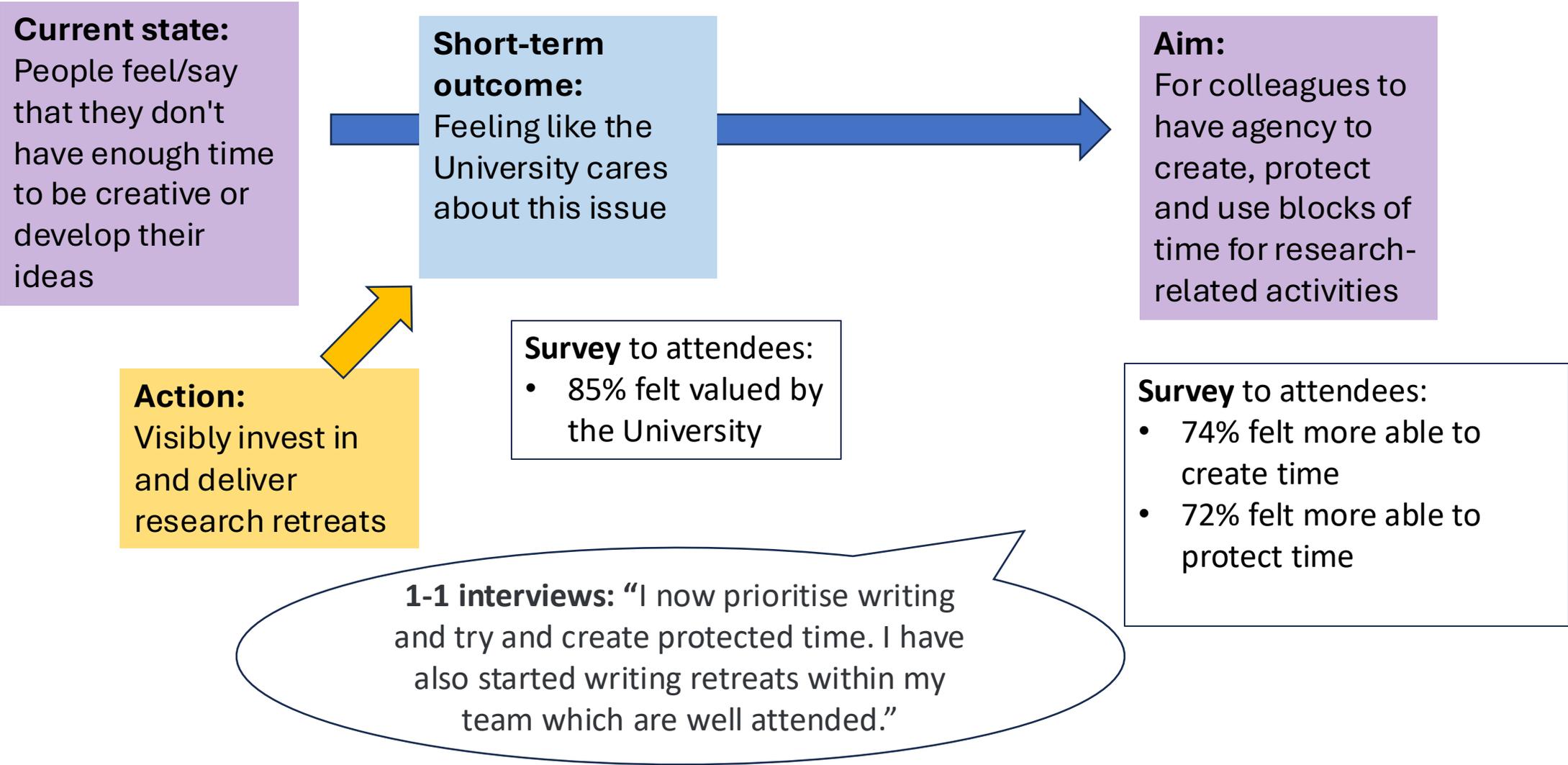
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Evaluating projects using Theory of Change



3

Evaluating projects using Theory of Change



3 Evaluating **projects**

- ✓ **Helps track** changes that you expect to see over time
- ✓ **Increase confidence** change is happening as a direct result of actions
- ✓ Plans can be **adapted**, as based on outcomes, not outputs

- ✗ Method may require **training**
- ✗ Evaluation takes **time** too
- ✗ Can feel **complicated**



Reflections

- There are **lots of ways** to evaluate research culture – depends what you want to evaluate for
- **REF 2029** may use a different set of indicators – could this steer us away from meaningful evaluation, or create a ‘mini-industry’?
- Can we avoid ‘over-assessment’ – could a **maturity framework** work well?



Happy to connect

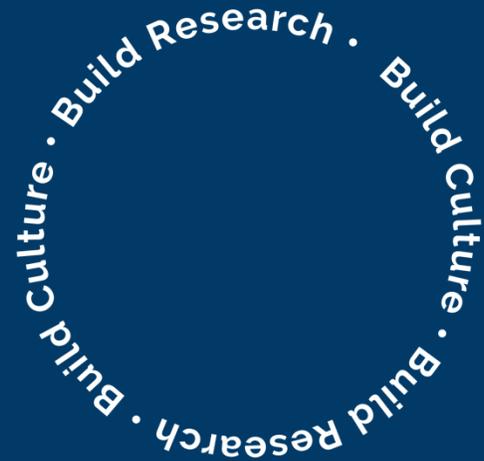
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Blogs on developing KPIs:



www.ncl.ac.uk/research/culture



Together, let's shape our
culture for research

