

From hidden impact to lasting change

Co-creating narratives and engaging communities in fundamental research

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Why INCAS?

Recognising impact is particularly challenging in fundamental research, where pathways are long, non-linear and difficult to attribute. INCAS explored whether impact narratives, complemented by responsible and context-sensitive indicators, can provide a fairer and more accurate way to identify and communicate diverse research contributions.



**One-year institutional pilot
funded through
CoARA Boost Cascade Funding**

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Institutional co-creation

- Impact Taskforce with 30+ representatives across research and support functions
- 6 meetings on impact definitions, evaluation processes, quality indicators and workflow design
- Cross-institutional, participatory governance

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Impact Narratives Open Call

- Internal call for researchers and technical staff
- Guiding questions, examples and evaluation criteria provided
- 21 narratives received from different profiles and disciplines
- Each eligible narrative independently reviewed, with criterion-based feedback provided to all applicants.

**Qualitative framework aligned
with CoARA and responsible
research assessment principles**

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Community engagement & capacity building

- Impact training and awareness-raising activities, complemented by a dedicated research culture dialogue event
- Engagement embedded in existing community events, including programme data seminars, faculty meetings and the postdoc retreat
- Impact Pizza session with 40+ early-career researchers
- Training session for 30+ first-year PhD candidates
- Impact Narrative awards presented at the institutional Christmas dinner

Community engagement

A distinctive series of posters supported INCAS dissemination and community engagement. Their consistent visual identity and provocative messages were designed to attract attention, challenge assumptions and open conversations on research culture, assessment and impact.



What did the pilot show?



Participants could describe the relevance of their work, but found it harder to identify stakeholders, articulate pathways to impact and choose meaningful indicators



The exercise encouraged reflection beyond conventional academic outputs



Applicants considered the process useful for future funding applications and professional development



Structured feedback and practical guidance were highly valued



Learning was the main motivation for applying

21 Narratives received

3 reviewers per eligible narrative

100% interest in further training on impact

75% changed how they thought about their research impact

From pilot to institutional change

- ✓ Impact training incorporated into doctoral onboarding
- ✓ Second edition of the Impact Narratives Open Call launching
- ✓ Internal funding calls revised to include pathways to impact and context-sensitive indicators
- ✓ Recruitment, promotion and appraisal criteria under review to better recognise qualitative and impact-related contributions
- ✓ More systematic tracking of non-traditional outputs: datasets, software, protocols, models, training uptake, stakeholder engagement and reuse
- ✓ Possible evolution of the Impact Taskforce into a more permanent societal advisory body
- ✓ A dedicated team on research quality is testing and evaluating new approaches for institutional awareness of research impact and assessment reform

Beyond CRG



INCAS has strengthened CRG's visibility as an active contributor to research assessment reform. Its concepts, methods and lessons have been shared through partner institutions and networks, while exchanges with funders are contributing to wider reflections on integrating impact into regional funding and evaluation practices.

“INCAS shows how narrative approaches can make long-term and often overlooked contributions more visible, while supporting qualitative assessment, participatory governance and meaningful organisational change.”



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