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FRAMEWORK FOR DISCUSSING THE VALUE AND IMPACT OF METHODS

*For constructive dialogue between practitioners
and project stakeholders.*

*Anyone working with KEMs will recognise the following questions: What is the impact of using particular KEMs?
To what extent would a different approach or methodology have led to a different outcome? How does a
particular method contribute to the objectives of a (commissioned) project?*

*These are relevant questions sometimes asked by parties involved as clients, funders or collaboration partners.
The rationale is clear: is the method worth the investment in effort, expertise and means?*

*However, the answer to these questions is complex. Value and impact take many forms, and numbers alone
rarely capture them. This raises a practical challenge: how to have a constructive conversation about the
value and impact of a method or approach with project partners?*

In response to this, the KEMs programme, together with the wider KEM network, has spent the past year exploring how value and impact are understood within innovation projects. Through interactive **breakout sessions** during various KEM events and, more substantially, through **ten in-depth exploratory interviews** with practitioners and their clients, we examined how (expectations about) the impact of methods played a role in the projects they carried out.

From these conversations, we observed that the valuation and perceived impact of methods manifest in different ways and at various moments throughout a project. These moments can help practitioners and other stakeholders structure their discussions about the approach when designing, executing, and evaluating a project. We have not (yet) gone so far as to attempt to make the actual impact of KEMs measurable. What we can say, however, is that in practice for many projects knowledge about actual impact is indeed desired, but often not the primary way stakeholders value an approach. When assessing whether the use of a KEM is worth the investment, stakeholders often point to forms of value that extend beyond the intended project results or predefined impact.

A PROGRAMME FOR KEY ENABLING METHODOLOGIES

CLICKNL considers the KEMs an important knowledge field for mission-driven innovation and transitions. Through the KEMs programme, CLICKNL brings together researchers, practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders to share and develop knowledge about methods. Currently, the programme, together with the KEM network, focuses on strengthening the practical use, application and impact of KEMs.

[READ MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAMME](#)

Key insights

The conducted interviews resulted in a number of insights:

1. Trust and value perception are closely linked

Collaborations between parties require trust in the approach and methods used. Trust in a project develops when you can clearly explain the value and use of the approach and methods to each other. If partners fail to do so, trust can be compromised, with all the consequences that entails for the project's launch or progress.

2. Values are contextual and may shift over time

The value of a method is not fixed: it evolves as the project unfolds and as the context changes. New knowledge and insights, shifting priorities, or emerging constraints can all reshape what stakeholders consider valuable at a given moment.

3. Value is multiple

Value can emerge in different forms and on different levels at the same time: from individual learning or professional growth, to improved collaboration between organisations, to broader system-level insights or change.

4. Expected value ≠ experienced value

These multiple, shifting values make it difficult to define the actual value of an approach upfront or capture it as a single, stable concept at the start of a project. As

a result, the value of a method is often found in things other than anticipated at the start of the project. And sometimes it emerges in ways that differ from what the practitioner or 'changemaker' expected.

5. Value is relational

Valuation of methods arises through interaction, in the conversations and collaboration of the parties involved (and sometimes also the unexpected outsider). There is indeed a need for ways to measure the impact of methods, and that's desirable from an objective perspective. But for a project to run smoothly, it's even more important that those involved understand the value each attaches to the approach and methods being used. This requires alignment of interests of the involved stakeholders.

6. Value is shaped by stakeholder interests

The value of a method may be perceived differently depending on the interests and position of each stakeholder. What counts as 'impact' for one party may be something entirely different for another. These perceptions are shaped by organisational context, professional priorities, and financing structures. As a result, the value of a method is not universal but filtered through the specific lens of those involved. Therefore, it is always important to be aware of (shifting) stakeholder interests within the context of your project.

THE FRAMEWORK

Based on these insights, we offer the following framework for conversation, intended to streamline and guide discussions about the value and impact of methods. This framework is not intended as a validated model, but as a practical guide to help practitioners and stakeholders articulate what they value, when, and why. It highlights recurring domains in which we found value is often experienced in practice, and invites further reflection, refinement, and research. In our conversations with practitioners, we found that discussing these forms of value throughout the project strengthens alignment and is worth building into the process from the start.

INSTRUCTIONS

The framework consists of three steps, which you can use individually or together with your stakeholders:

- Determine relevance:** For each of the nine domains, assess whether you find it relevant for your project.
- Formulate value:** For each relevant domain, describe the (potential) value of the approach or method as you see it. To help you, we offer example questions for each domain.
- Explain why:** Briefly explain why this value is important in the context of your project.

Project-related value and impact

Addressed (societal) challenge

The extent to which the method contributes to understanding, reframing, or making progress on the systemic or societal challenge at hand.

- How does this approach help us understand, address or solve the core challenge differently?

Development of new products and services

The contribution of the method to designing, testing, or refining concrete products, services, or interventions.

- How does the method influence the relevance, usability, or quality of what is being developed?

Policy and regulation

The degree to which a method or approach generates insights or pathways that inform or shape policy, governance, or regulatory decisions.

- What regulatory insights arise from this approach?

Knowledge development

The value created through new insights, evidence, or understanding about the problem, context, or system.

- What new knowledge will emerge from this approach?

Other forms of value and impact

People-related value and impact

Stakeholders: organisation and collaboration

The effect of the method or approach on how stakeholders organise themselves, communicate, and work together.

- How does this approach affect collaboration and alignment between stakeholders?
- What changes in ways of working or interaction emerge?

Stakeholder interests

The alignment or negotiation of diverse stakeholder interests, motivations, and expectations throughout the project.

- How do the project interests of the different stakeholders shape their valuation of the (outcomes) of a method or approach?
- Where do interests align or diverge, and what does that mean for the (approach of the) project?

Skills, expertise and other learning effects

The development of capabilities, confidence, and practical skills with regard to the approach among the people involved in the project.

- What skills or expertise do participants develop through this process?
- How might these learning effects influence future work or decision-making?

Insights and mindset

The shifts in understanding, attitudes, assumptions, or problem framing that occur during the project.

- What new perspectives or insights emerge from the methods or approach for the people involved?

[DOWNLOAD THE A3 WORKSHEET HERE](#)