ADOPTING HEALTHIER APPROACHES TO IMPACT

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Session

1 Impact within the sector

2 Reflections from practice:

Challenges, risks and opportunities

3 Towards healthy

Impact:

Provable effects (benefits) of research in the 'real world'

Drivers for research impact

We must: external and instrumentalised requirements such as funding or assessment

We should: broader missions, such as Sustainable Development Goals and Civic agendas

We/I want to: personal motivation, often relating to passion around the subject area, lived experience or appetite for social justice.

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

YORK U

https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

If impact were a person, it would be asking you '*how can you make the world better with your research?*'
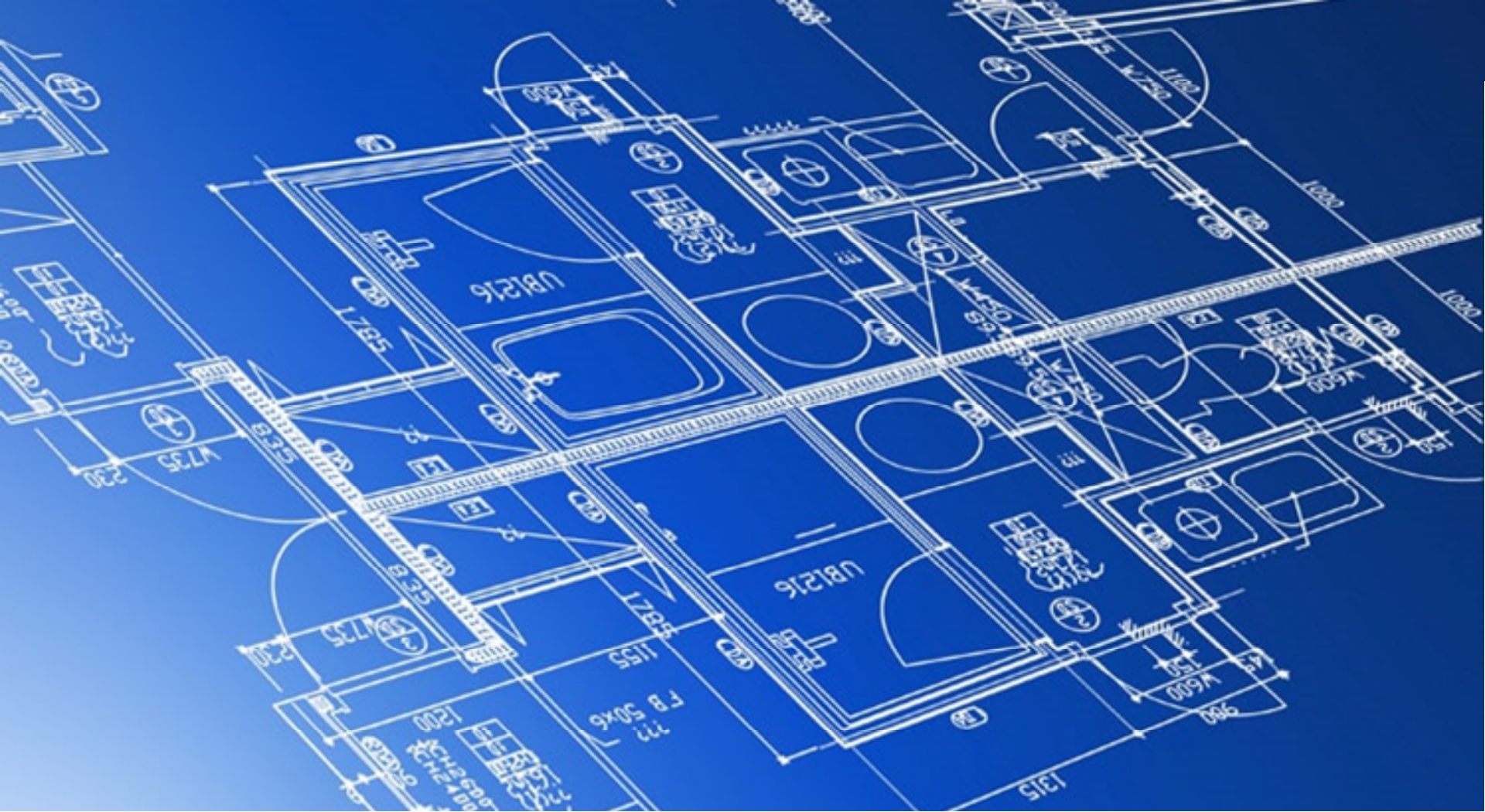
Reflections

We assess what's submitted for assessment

(I appreciate this isn't a surprise)

If we're to have healthy assessment of impact, we need healthy conditions to produce impact

We've developed a mental (and systemic) blueprint for what impact is

Who does it (*and who doesn't*)
What counts (*and what doesn't*)
What's good impact (*and what isn't*)

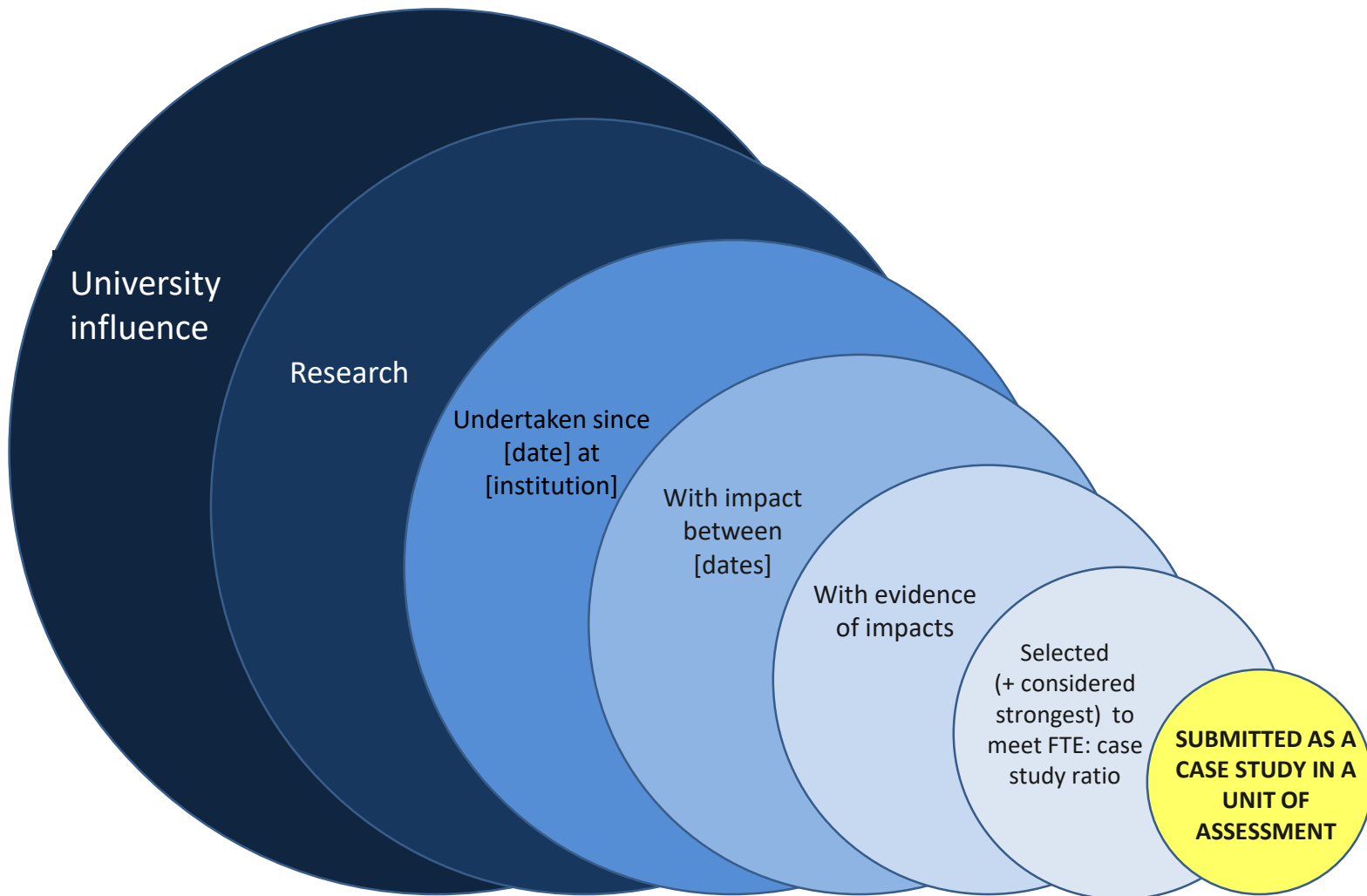*Consequences for resource allocation, staff development and the choices over what impacts we pursue.*

We've developed a mental (and systemic) blueprint for what impact is

Redraw the blueprint

We've developed a mental (and systemic) blueprint for what impact is

Selectivity produces a narrow snapshot

University influence

Research

Undertaken since [date] at [institution]

With impact between [dates]

With evidence of impacts

Selected (+ considered strongest) to meet FTE: case study ratio

SUBMITTED AS A CASE STUDY IN A UNIT OF ASSESSMENT

Impact unitised as Impact Case Studies

Consequences for rewards, recognition, progression, resources, and acknowledgement of impact outside of ICS
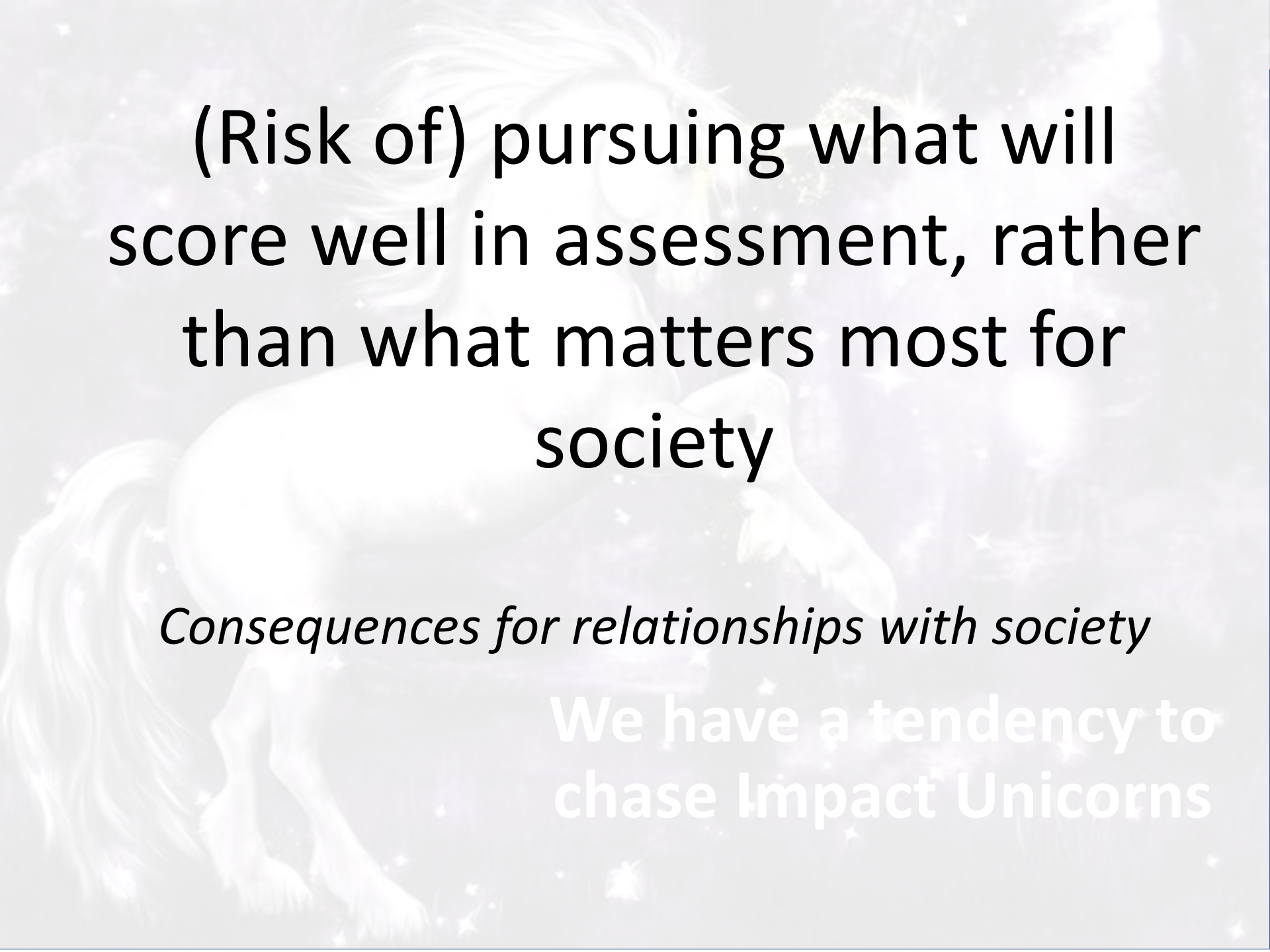
Recognise selectivity and widen what we acknowledge

https://hidden-ref.org/

We have a tendency to chase Impact Unicorns

(Risk of) pursuing what will score well in assessment, rather than what matters most for society

Consequences for relationships with society

We have a tendency to chase Impact Unicorns

Chase meaning

We have a tendency to chase Impact Unicorns

Impact case studies show the sausages, not the sausage factory

Extensive impact

◆

Neat and successful pathways

◆

Absent of challenges, dead ends or altered paths

Consequences for realistic planning, fairness of expectations, acknowledgement of competing pressures and personal sense of failure

Impact case studies show the sausages, not the sausage factory

Share what works AND what doesn't

Impact case studies show the sausages, not the sausage factory

GRIMPACT (grimpact.org)

What do we mean by assessment integrity?

NO "undue" or "unfair" influence from the applicants

Trust that the process is conducted fairly?

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Societal trust in the intentions of academics

Trust that the outcomes are meaningful

Learning and restructure of evaluation based on experience
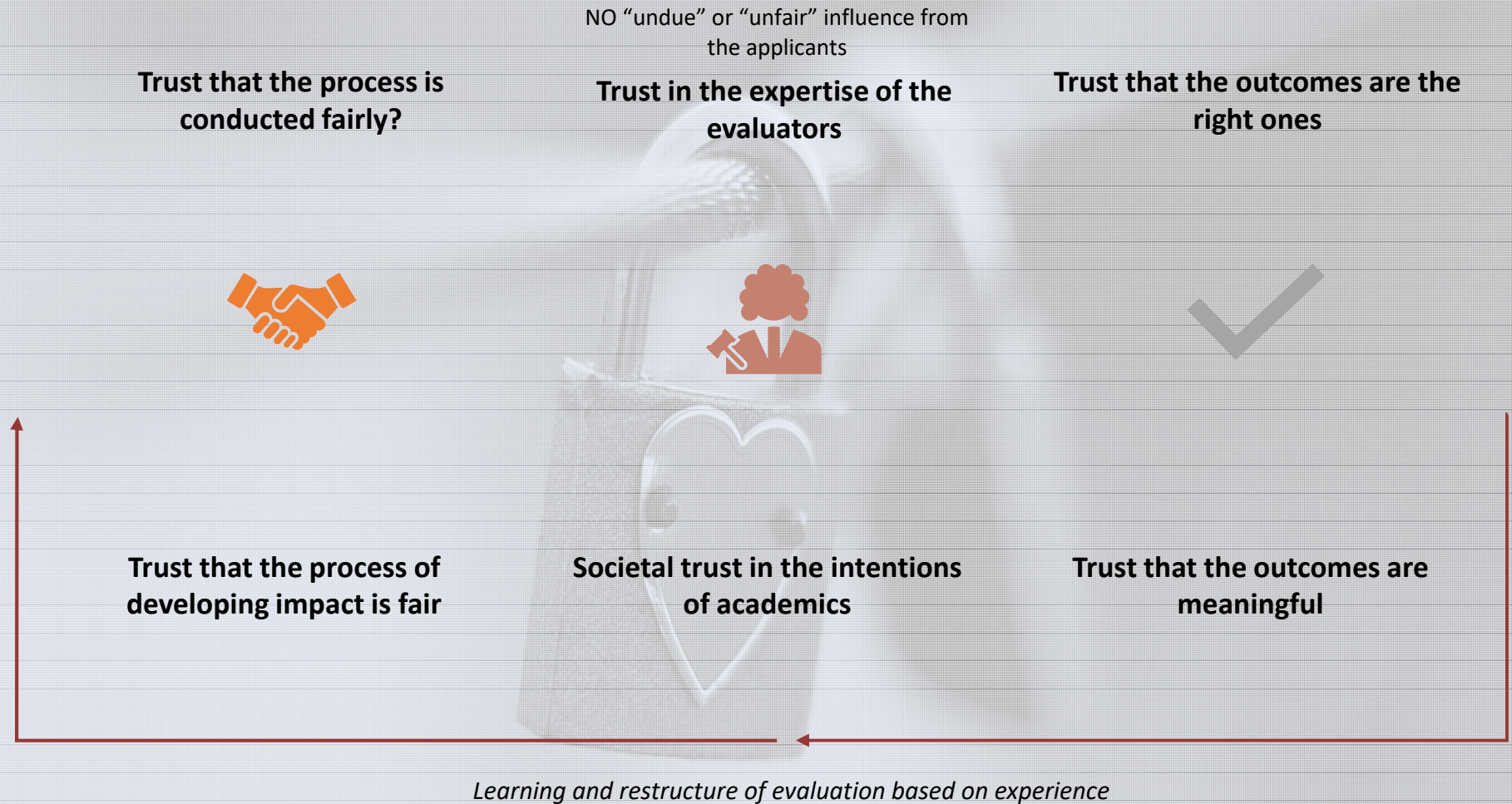
Positive evolutions

Responsible research assessment **DORA** **CoARA**

Research strategies *with* then *for* impact

Engagement and Coproduction
National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

Responsible approaches **HARNESSING THE METRIC TIDE**

Recognising wider contributions
hidden **REF**

Impact literacy*
LINCOLN IMPACT lili LITERACY INSTITUTE

Impact environment [see next slide]

Supported
Connected
Meaningful
Healthier

*See https://lili.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/ and Bayley, J.E. and Phipps, D., 2019. Building the concept of research impact literacy. *Evidence & Policy*, *15*(4), pp.597-606. https://doi.org/10.1332/174426417X15034894876108

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

5 Cs of Institutional Health (Bayley and Phipps, 2019)

✗		✓
Not valued, no space created, no strategic vision	**Commitment**	Impact valued and acknowledged (strategy, process & effort)
No skills development	**Competencies**	Skills developed Impact literate staff
Unclear or unconfident	**Clarity**	Everyone clear on what impact is and their role in it
Disconnected or singular responsibility	**Connectivity**	Teams and resources coordinated
Few or superficial links	**Coproduction**	Strong & meaningful links

Bayley J and Phipps D. **Extending the concept of research impact literacy: levels of literacy, institutional role and ethical considerations [version 1; peer review: 2 approved]** Emerald Open Research 2019, **1**:14 (https://doi.org/10.12688/emeraldopenres.13140.1)

If impact were a person, it would be asking you '*how can you make the world better with your research?*'

We need to ask ourselves, as a sector, how we can do that in a healthy way for all involved

THANK YOU

CREATING
MEANINGFUL IMPACT:

JULIE BAYLEY

CREATING
MEANINGFUL
IMPACT

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DEVELOPING
AN IMPACT-LITERATE MINDSET

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DEVELOPING
AN IMPACT-LITERATE MINDSET

JULIE BAYLEY, UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

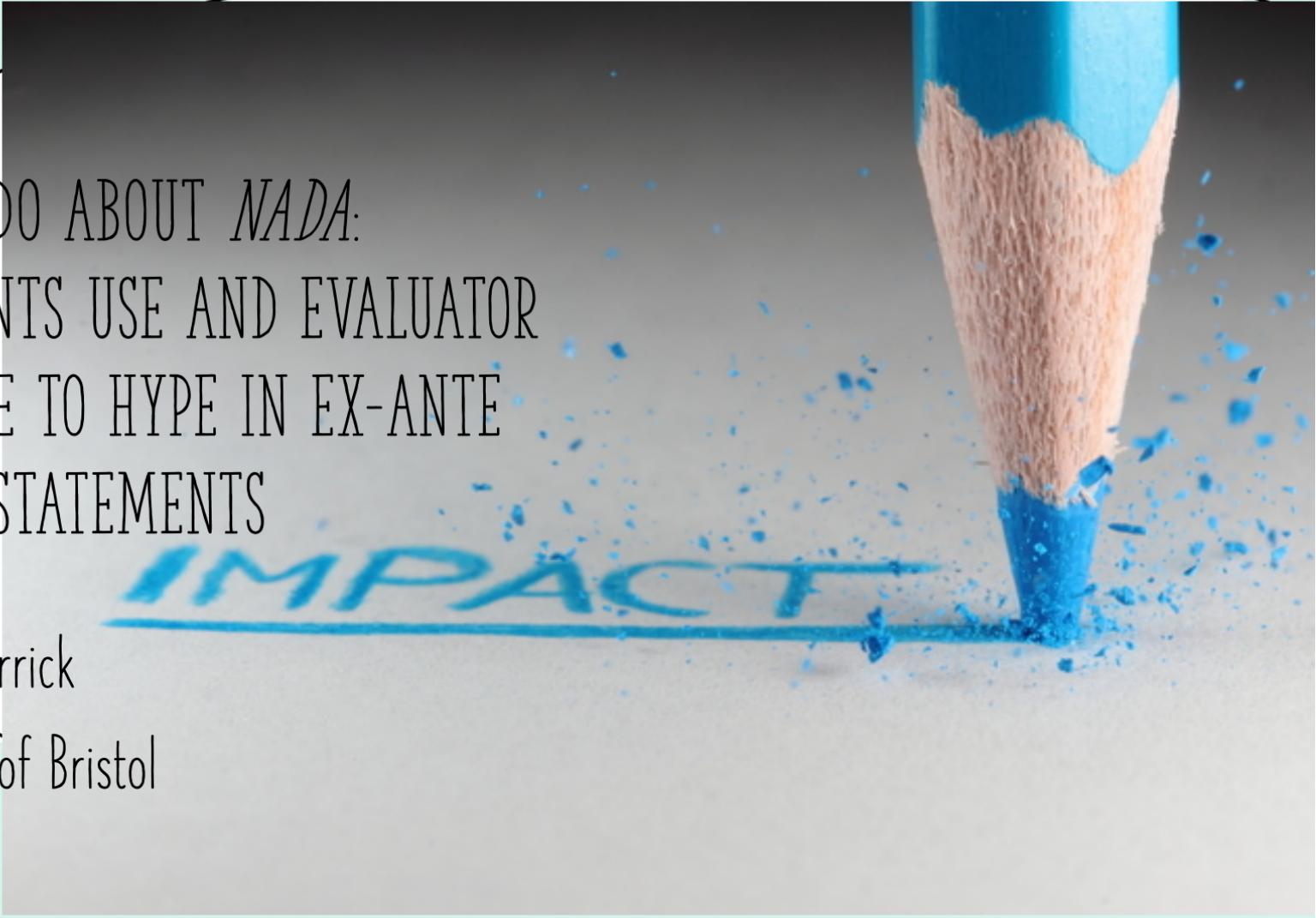AVAILABLE NOW IN PAPERBACK & EBOOK

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MUCH ADO ABOUT *NADA*: APPLICANTS USE AND EVALUATOR RESPONSE TO HYPE IN EX-ANTE IMPACT STATEMENTS

Gemma Derrick

University of Bristol

EX-ANTE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Different to ex-post impact assessment

About assessing feasibility and risk in funding a potential future

- Not about reward or recognition ||(ex-post)

More leeway for biased subjective assessment about what public 'needs' and what is 'important'

It's about risk of making the wrong decision

- Conceptualised this research work in terms of risk, uncertainty and feasibility in social impact assessment (Alexander & Faludi, 1989) and decision-making under uncertainty (Wildavsky, 1973)

HYPE LANGUAGE

Grant writing and writing for academic evaluation part of a 'high stakes' genre, and persuasive genre of writing (Myers 1990; 42).

Hype is *"use of hyperbolic and promotional language to glamorize, publicise, embroider and/or exaggerate aspects if their research"* (Millar et al. 2019)

For impact; include *"instances of language promoting any aspect of research, while recognizing a cline between modest and exaggerated promotion"* (Hyland & Jiang, 2023)

- E.g. hyperbolic terms, 'drama' words, value-laden vocabulary, positive words, and superlatives.

- 'extremely'; 'superb'; 'completely new'; 'critically important'; 'significant'; 'radical' etc

WHO CARES ABOUT HYPE?

Hyland & Feng (2023)

- Hype in language of proposals threatens the *integrity* of the assessment process.

"We assume that writers feel that the value of these types will not be immediately apparent to assessors and so require some additional finessing to persuade them."

"...our work offers empirical evidence, in the form of academic rhetorical practices, which supports what may be a decline in engagement with values of integrity and objectivity."

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ASSESSMENT INTEGRITY?

Trust that the process is conducted fairly?

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Learning and restructure of evaluation based on experience

RESEARCH DESIGN

First stage – Linguistic analysis of impact sections in proposals (proposal analytics)	How do applicants frame their proposals for greater success? • Genre writing (Hyland, 2006; Millar, 2019) and persuasive genre (Myers, 1990) • Language patterns serve as credibility markers (Mitra, Wright & Gilbert, 2017; Toma & D'Angelo, 2015
Second stage – Observations of panel deliberations	How do panelists respond to and navigate the characteristics of proposals? **How do panelists REACT to credibility markers and aspects of persuasion in proposals?** • How do they reason this markers differently towards consensus?

CRITERIA

*"Bleeding of criteria" is possible in this assessment process and was observed in Stage 2.

Excellence
- The extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, novel, and goes beyond the state-of-the-art;
- The quality of the proposed R&D activities.

Impact
- Potential outcomes and impact of the proposed research and innovation;
- Communication and exploitation.

Implementation
- The quality of the project manager and project group;
- The quality of the project organisation and management

Source: https://www.forskningsradet.no/en/processing-grant-applications/processing-applications/processing-of-grant-applications/

SELECTION OF PANELS IN SSH
N=409

2019 - FIRST YEAR OF EX-ANTE IMPACT
SECTIONS AT RCN (N=409)

2022 - 4 YEARS OF IMPACT SECTIONS AT RCN
(N= 407)

	Established	Fluid
Social sciences	Political science	Welfare & living conditions
Humanities	History	Aesthetic studies

2019 OPENING SENTENCES

SETS THE PARAMETERS AND DISPLAYS AN UNDERSTANDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES ON THE CRITERIA.

FIRST TIME OF NEW CRITERION OF RCN SO REFLECTS GENERAL ANIMOSITY/ACCEPTANCE OF IMPACT 'BEYOND ACADEMIA'

- Stubbornly against Impact beyond academia;

"The target audience for the project is the scientific community, and it should and will aim primarily for academic excellence". H-E-302212

- More balanced

"The proposed project will have impact at different levels, not only by offering new scientific knowledge, but also have an impact on society as well as an economic impact." SS-F-301666

CHARACTERISTICS OF IMPACT PROPOSALS

Inspirations

LINGUISTIC OR ILLUSTRATIVE TOOLS THAT EVOKED A WIDER NON-ACADEMIC RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT WITHOUT NECESSARILY LINKING DIRECTLY TO THE PROJECT ITSELF.

Promises

CLAIMS THAT THE RESEARCH WOULD HAVE IMPACTS FOR SPECIFIC USERS THAT DID NOT ALLOW FOR THE POSSIBILITIES THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE DELIVERED.

Qualifiers

CLAIMS THAT GROUNDED INSPIRATIONS INTO CONTEXTS AND SOFTENED PROMISES AS ASPIRATIONS TO BE WORKED TOWARDS WITH THE NECESSARY CAPACITY TO DELIVER THAT.

INSPIRATION

Linguistic or illustrative tools that evoke a wider, non-academic relevant to the project within necessarily linking directly to the project.

- Usually acted to elicit an emotive response.

- Lots of children imagery

> *"Challenges related to elder care are a global concern in the context of aging societies."*
> *SS-F-300983*

> *Societies and states are at a crossroads in how children are treated and how their rights are respected and protected. Children's new position and their strong rights create tensions and challenge the traditional relationships between family and the state. SS-E-302042*
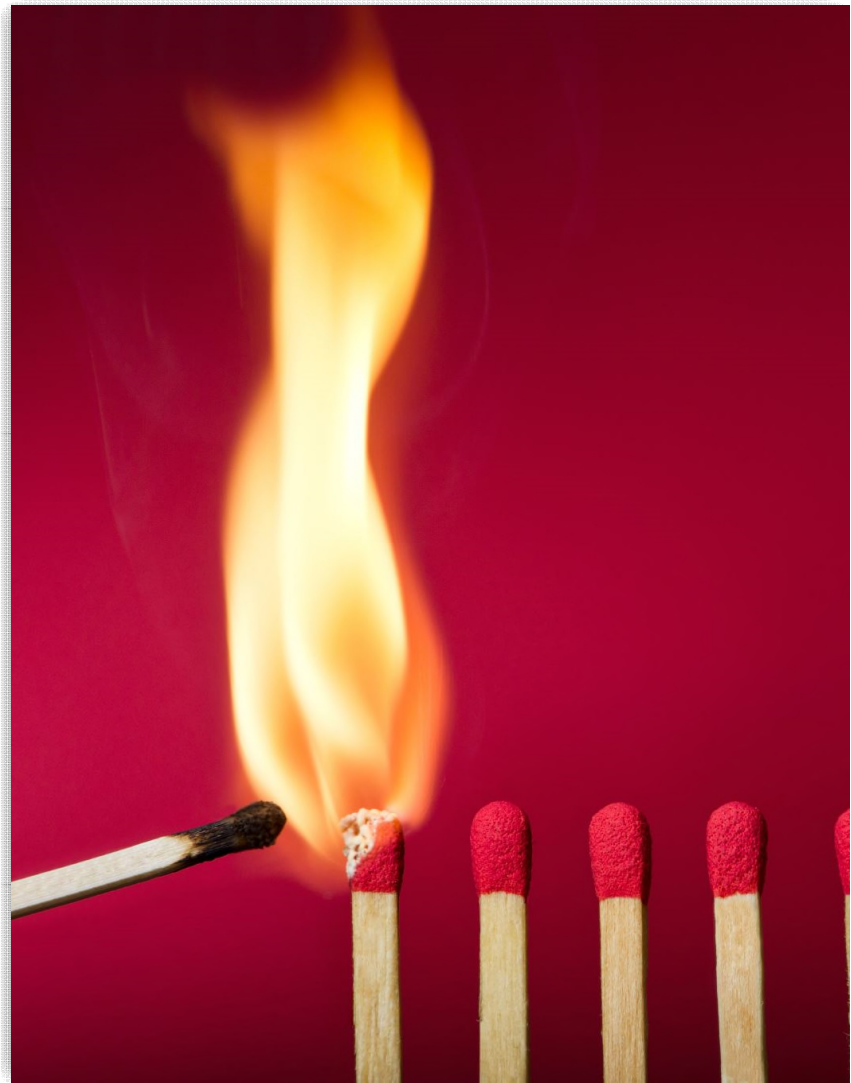
PROMISES

A creation of the idea of a future impact that is made in the absence of an impact plan

- Usually fanciful or 'ideal' in nature/ pie-in-the-sky

"We would expect insights garnered from the project to be in high demand, not least after government changes." SS-E-301566

"Findings are thus particularly relevant for the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), the Association of NGOs in Norway that promotes and facilitates voluntary work in Norway." SS-F-302257

QUALIFIERS

Claims within the proposal that ground inspirations into context and soften promises as aspirations to be worked towards, by providing evidence of the necessary capacity to deliver

- Like 'track record' for Impact

> "...the project manager (XX) has proven experience of popularizing Old Norse-Icelandic world literature to the general public, for example through the hugely popular public lecture series 'Norrøn vår' at the House of Literature in Oslo in 2016." (H-F-30326)

Qualifiers act to increase the credibility of proposals, and therefore the score
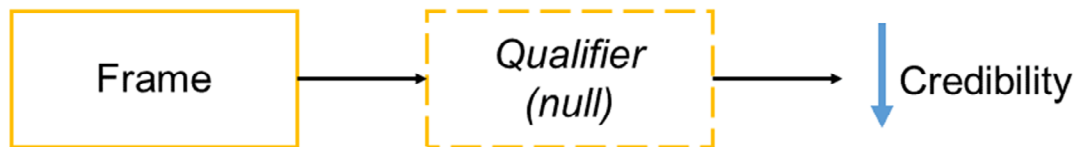
[1] Frame → Qualifier → ↑ Credibility

[2] Frame (null) → Qualifier → Credibility

[3] Frame → Qualifier (null) → ↓ Credibility

* No significant difference was found between scoring of each model for Impact.

STAGE 2: PANEL OBSERVATION

Selection of panels in SSH
- Second year of ex-ante Impact sections at RCN
- Same panel membership
- Panels conducted via Zoom. Advantages and disadvantages to this arrangement (another, separate, paper)

Disciplinary category	Name of panel	Type
Social sciences	Welfare, Culture & Society	Fluid
Humanities	History & Cultural Studies	Established
Science, Technology, Mathematics & Engineering (STEM)	Nanotechnology/Materials science	Established

Post observation interviews with Call Managers was used to validate observations and initial assessments

THE FRAME

- A form of persuasive discourse - group of linguistic tools within proposals
    - Where hype happens

- Where *inspirations* and *promises* act as a negotiation of **benefit versus risk**.

- *Inspirations* have a higher influence in panels, than reflected in (Stage 1) scores.

    - **"Credibility"** - the combined influence of qualifiers and frames within proposal that reflects the panel's orientation (scoring) to the proposal

    - **"Qualifier"** - Ground the inspiration and promise to present them as a plausible impact narrative and plan

    - In the frame;
    - Benefit/Risk - constant balance
    - Act as a qualifier (by indicating that an Impact plan is present);
    - Acts to negate inspirations present in proposals to sway evaluations.

WITHIN THE FRAME, HYPED INSPIRATION NEGATED CREDIBILITY

Hyped impact was noticed and reduced credibility and scores

- *"This impact is crazy"*

Over-promotion or excessive name dropping *"grates"*

- Lower credibility

Panels utilized inspiration to (1) negate risk; and (2) visualize benefit

Ability of proposal to INSPIRE

- Possibility of real impact that *"….lead to change"*
- Balance of risks and benefits tempers inspiration

   "I don't want to mark it down because of risk…"

- Failure to inspire, reduced credibility

Agreement was sought on scores, not reasoning for scores.

Hype used to ease the evaluation - efficiency, buy-in from evaluators

CREDIBILITY → The combined influence of qualifiers and frames within proposals on the overall scoring. Proposals with a high level of credibility receive high scores

FRAME → Persuasive discourse within proposals provided by a combination of inspirations and promises

INSPIRATIONS — Linguistic or illustrative tools that evoke the sense of relevance to non-academic goals, but who's use is not linked to the proposal itself. They are designed to positively predispose the evaluator in favour of the proposal
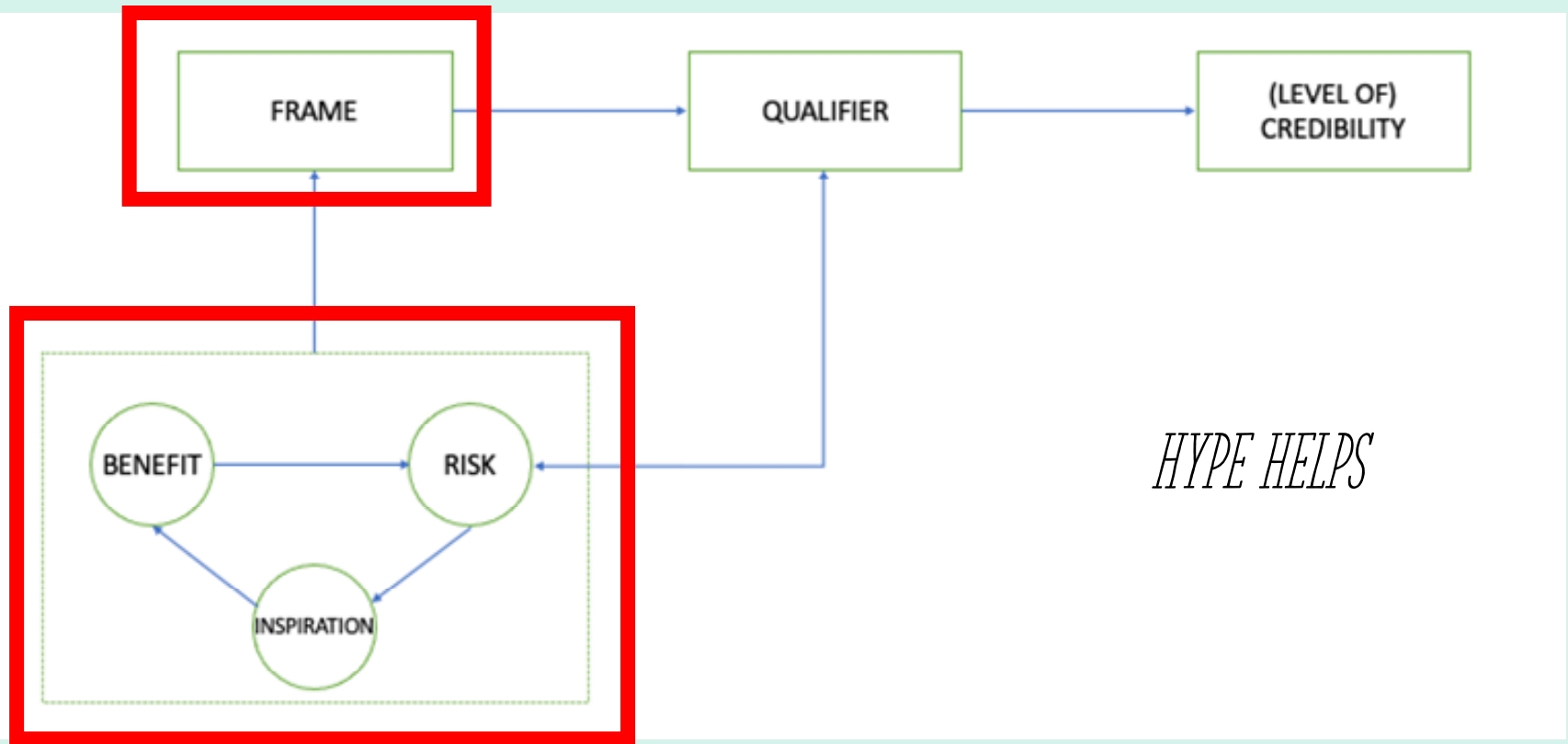
RISKS/BENEFITS — Acts as a Qualifier within the Frame to negate the over-zealous appreciation of Inspirations. Used by evaluators to weigh up potential value of impact (as a change)

QUALIFIER → Claims made by applicants within proposals that aim to add credibility to the narrative

IS HYPE NECESSARY TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS?

- Yes. Mediated within balancing of benefits and risks and to offset uncertainty
- Doesn't confused the process or risks the integrity of the evaluation
  - Mediates with promises & feasibility (frame) that panels mediate with qualifiers
  - Can act to reduce credibility - panels sensitive to over-hype
- Hype is used by applicants to communicate promise and passion.
- It is a persuasive linguistic tool (Hyland, 2008), not a risk.

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