

Evaluating research culture – a UK university perspective



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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?**

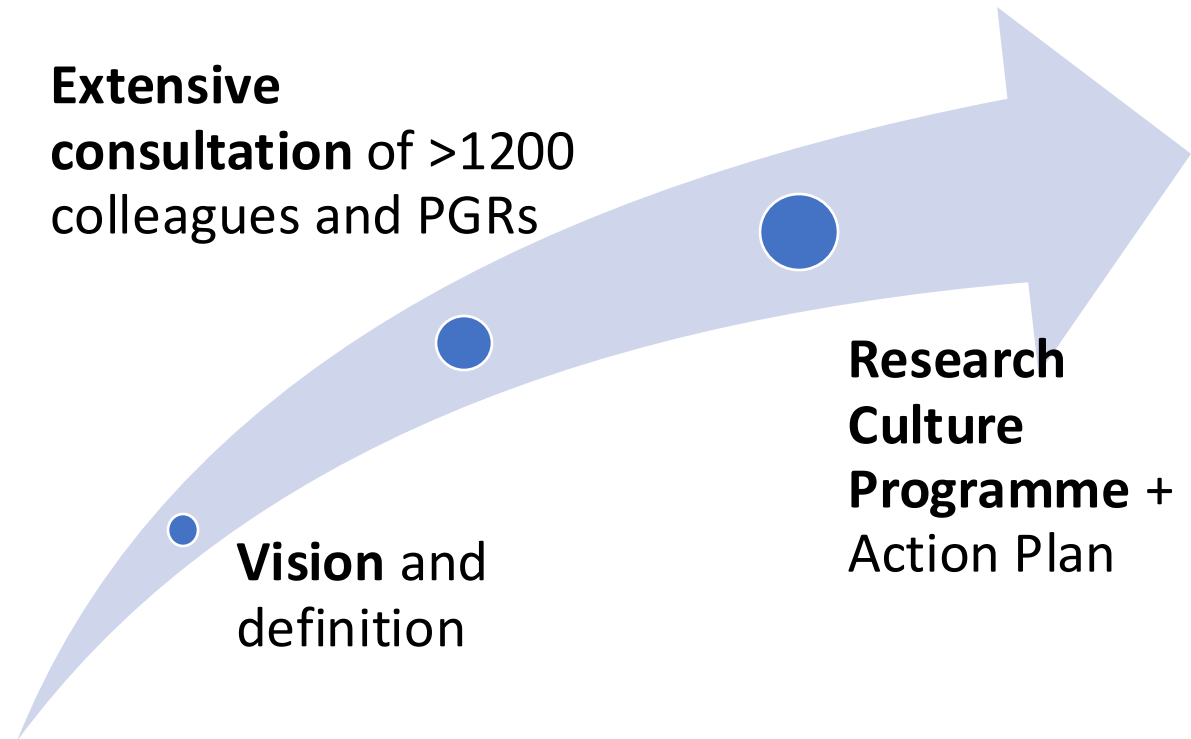
**COLLABORATION
AND COLLEGIALLY**

**FREEDOM TO GROW
AND EXPLORE**

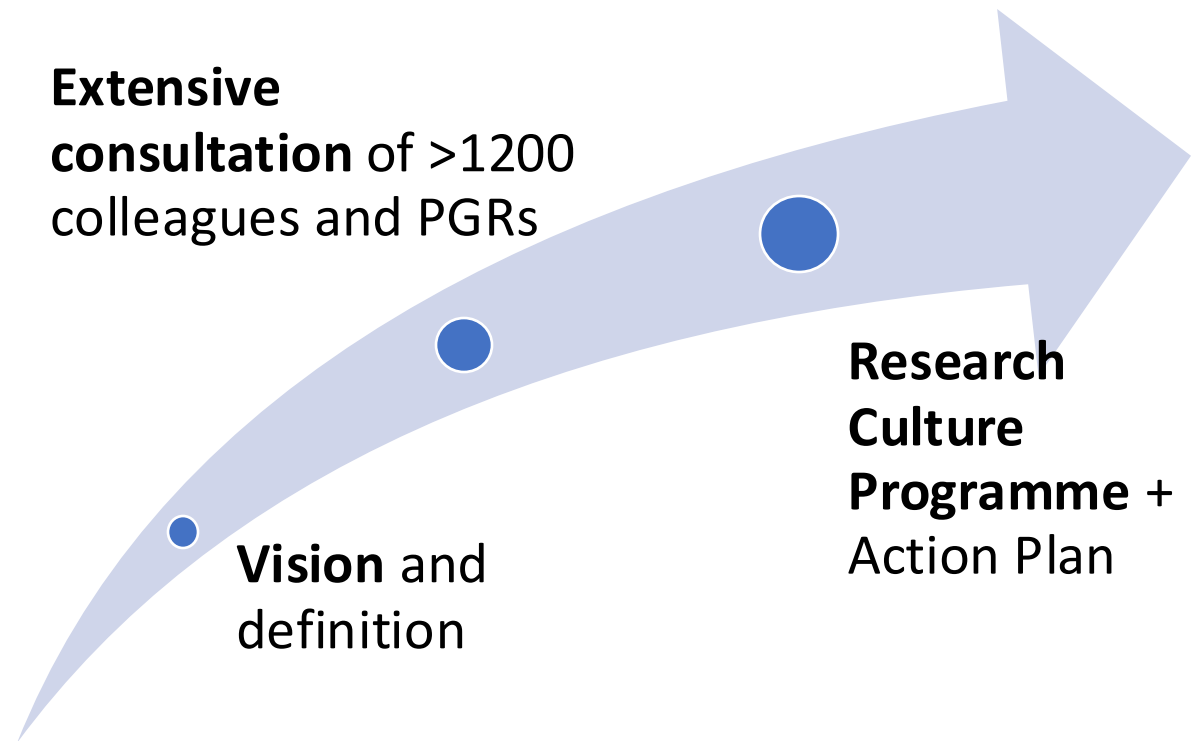
**FAIRNESS
AND INCLUSION**

**OPENNESS
AND INTEGRITY**

Research Culture at Newcastle University



Research Culture at Newcastle University



Top Priority Projects

Behaviour Matters

Reimagining Leadership

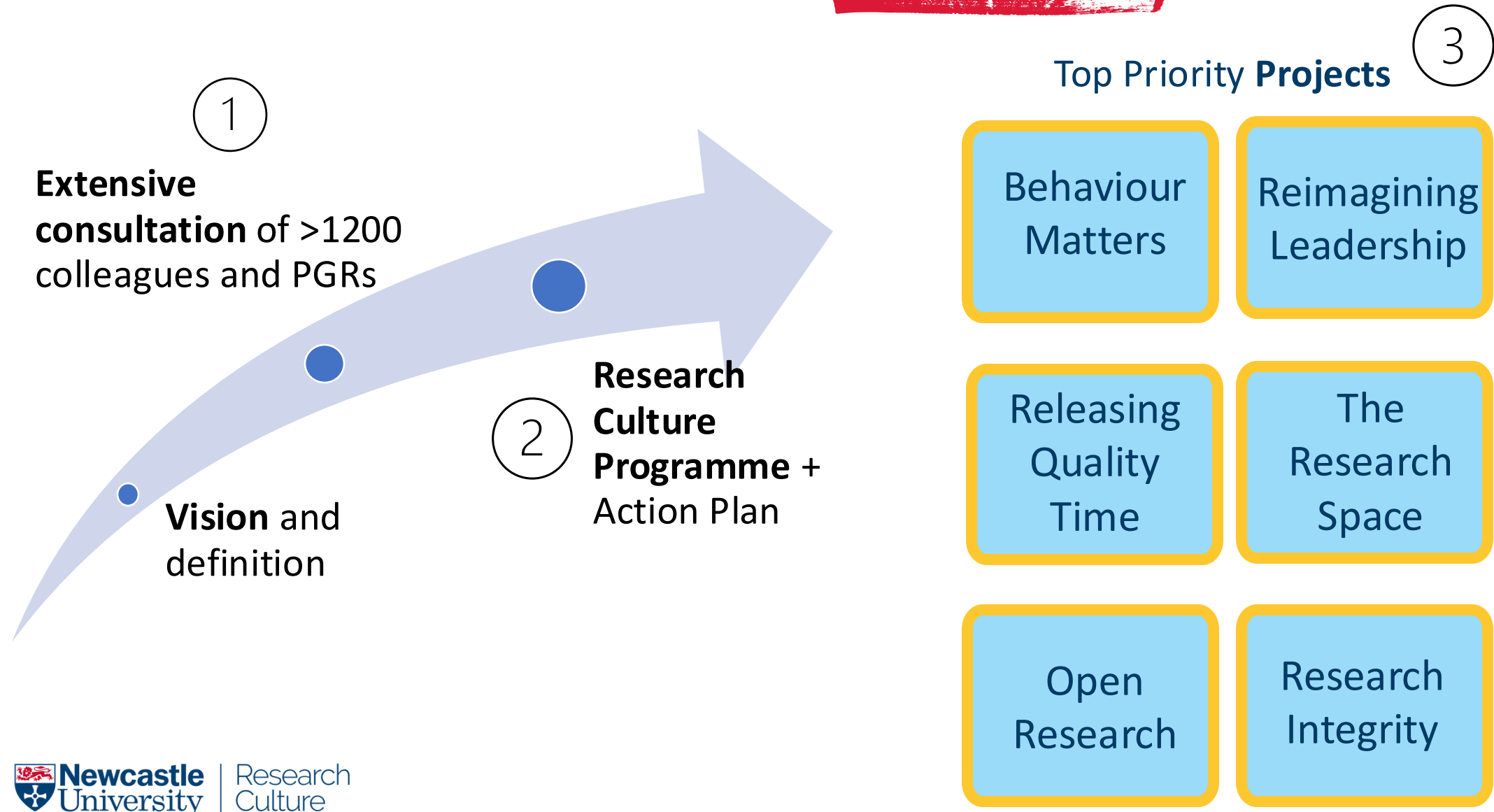
Releasing Quality Time

The Research Space

Open Research

Research Integrity

Research Culture at Newcastle University



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**'



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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



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Institutional **KPIs**

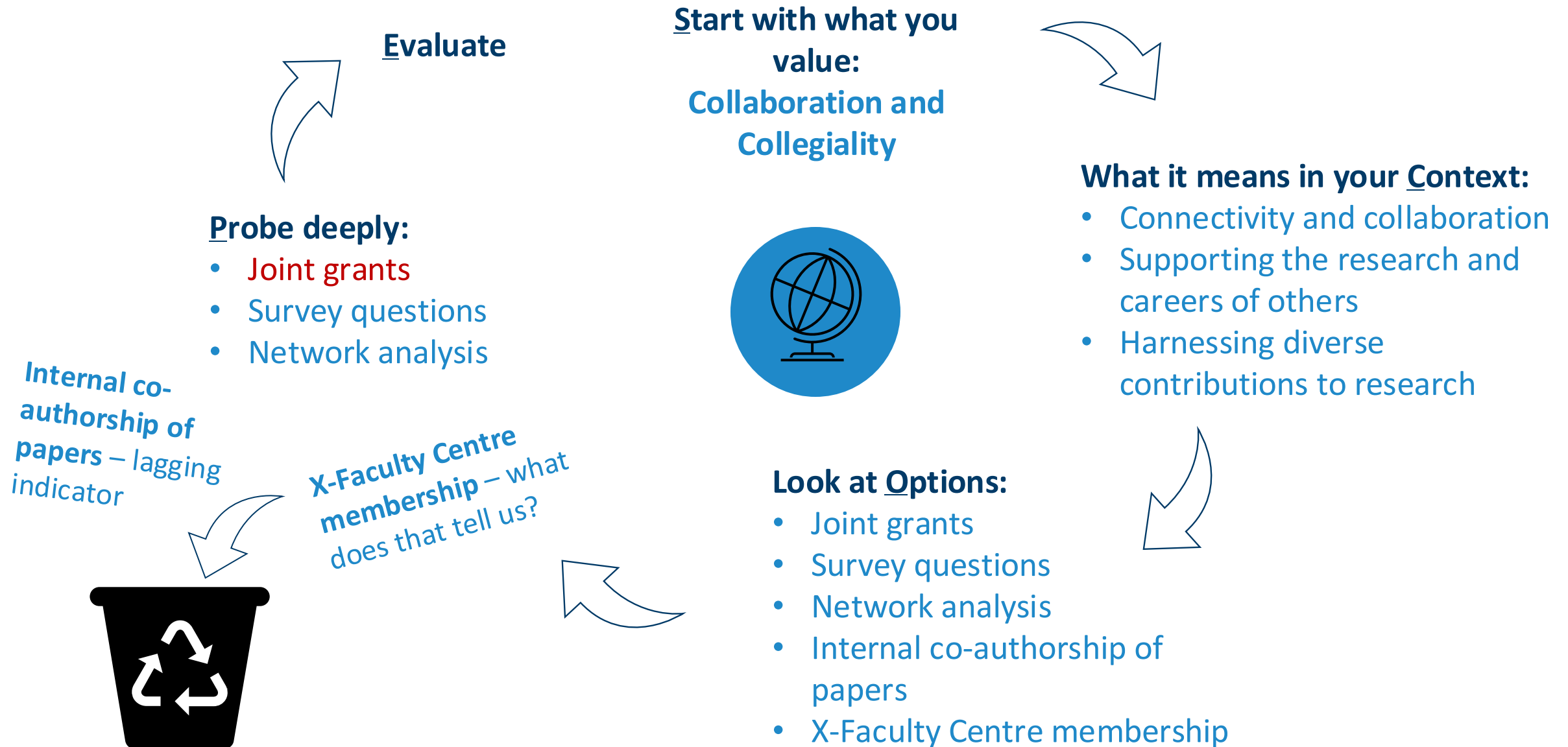
- For **annual reporting** to University Research and Innovation Committee, and University Council
- To **easily track** improvements arising from the Research Culture Programme at institutional level
- Metrics need to be **responsible and meaningful**



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



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② Institutional **KPIs**

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

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



Evaluating projects

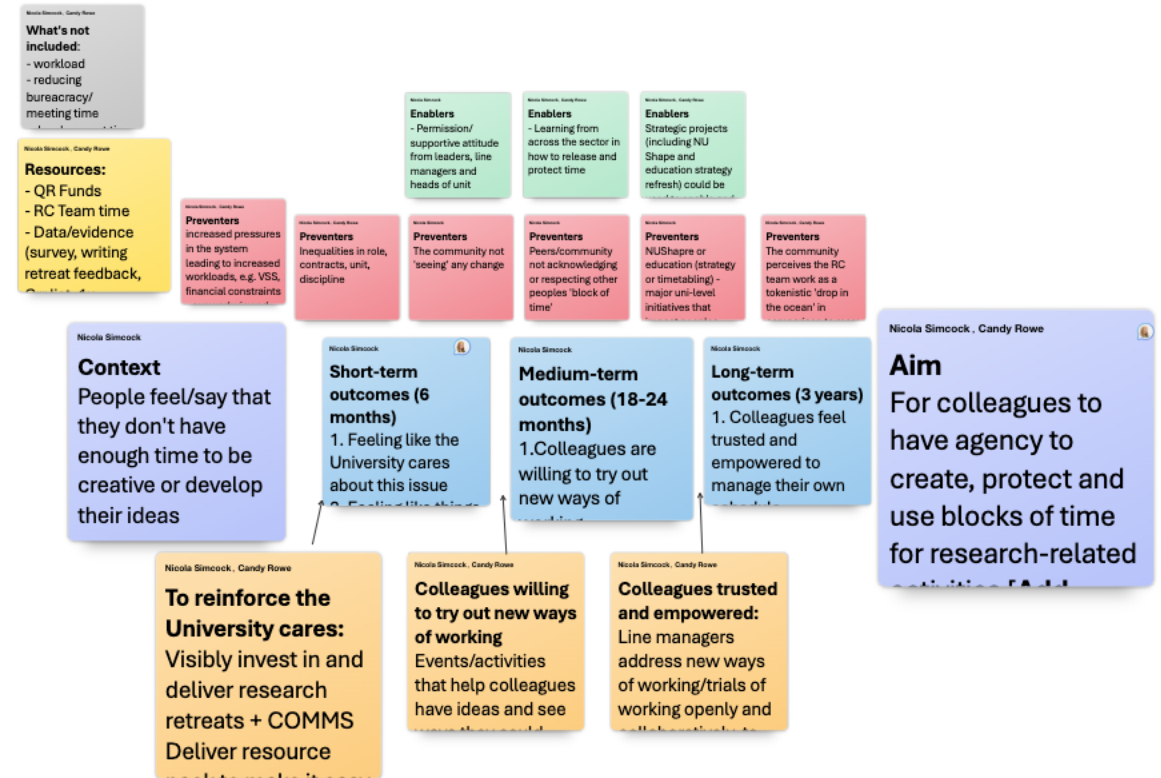
- For understanding the **direct impact** of the actions taken
- For **team learning** what works and what doesn't – where we invest our time and resources
- For reporting **successes** and **progress** with our community – increase confidence and engagement



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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**



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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

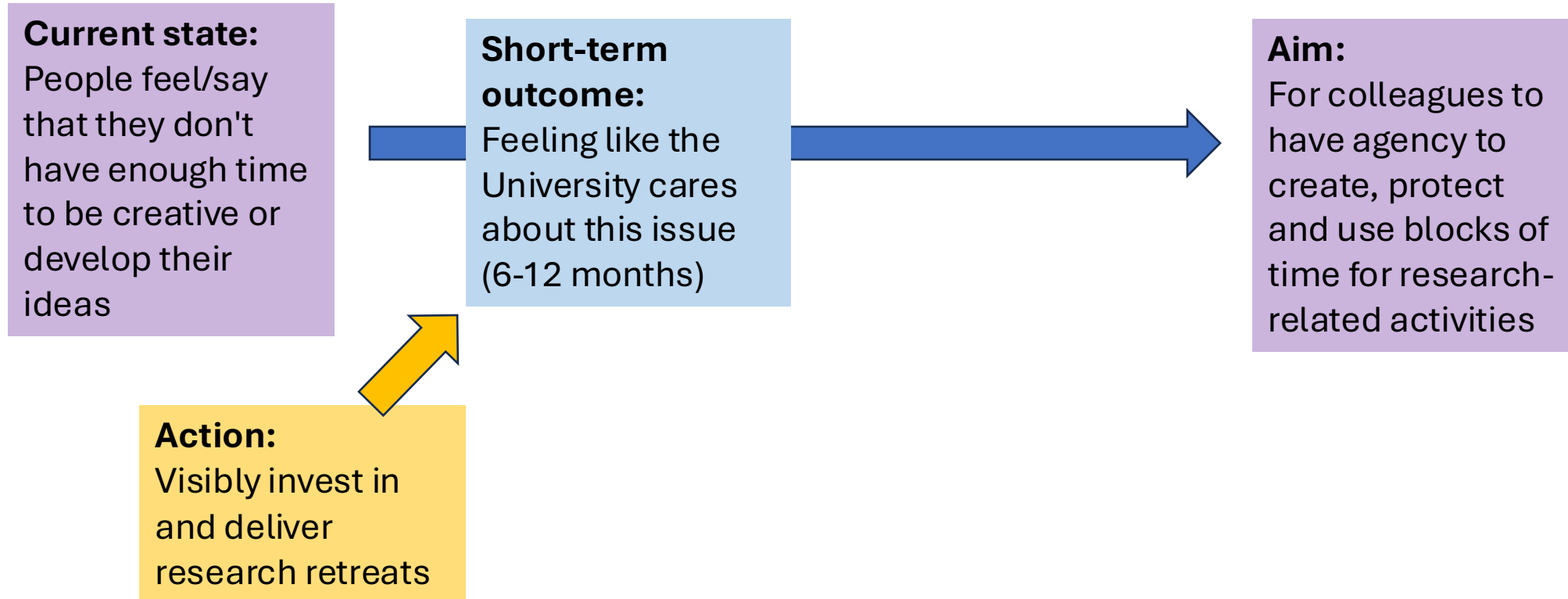


Aim:

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

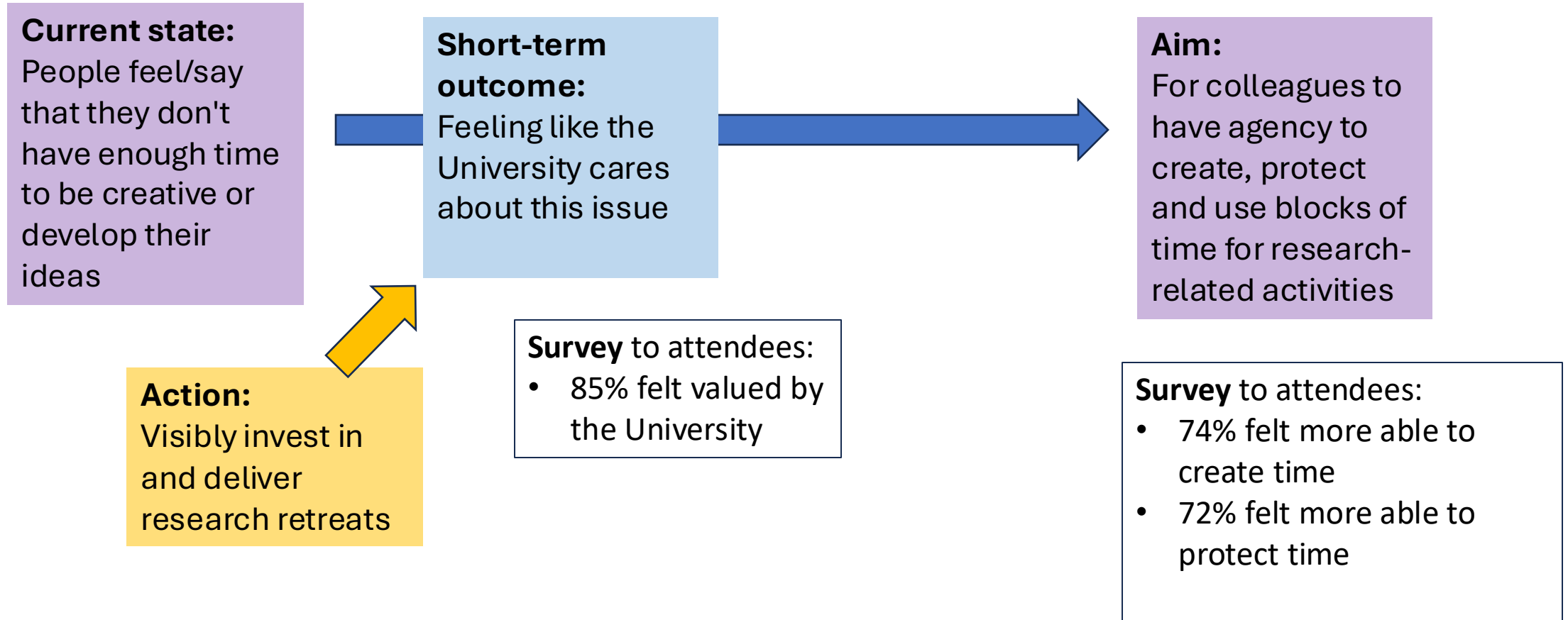
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Evaluating projects using Theory of Change



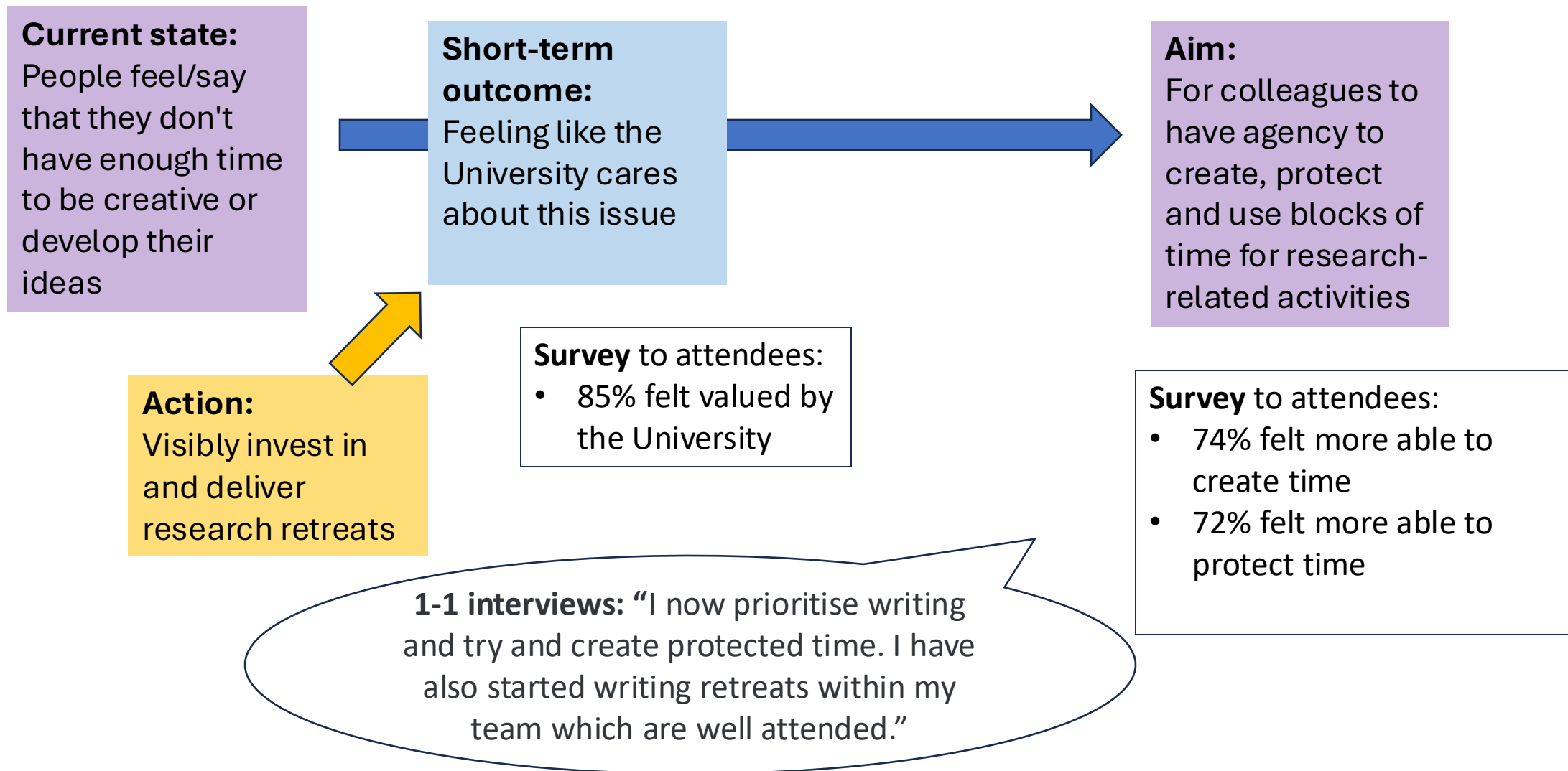
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Evaluating projects using Theory of Change



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
- X Method may require **training**
- X Evaluation takes **time** too
- X 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

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Together, let's shape our
culture for research