

Final report

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Public summary

How do we move beyond good intentions to actually change practice in agricultural RD&E? This project supported ten agricultural research organisations to embed adoption thinking early on into their projects. This turned recommendations from an earlier project, [Designing the integration of extension into research projects](#), into action. By integrating extension into project design from the start, the aim of the program was to lift the impact of RD&E through better planning, delivery and evaluation.

A national Project Reference Group, made up of co-funding partners, guided the design of the program. Participating projects received tailored one-on-one coaching, engaged in a Community of Practice, and accessed webinars covering topics from survey design to AI in extension. Annual in-person gatherings built deeper learning and collaboration. The approach was hands-on and reflective, to support project leaders to grow their confidence and capability in extension.

The program has delivered over 100 coaching sessions, built a strong peer network in person, started the online community, and hosted a Maximising Research Impact webinar series. Participants reported increased confidence and more deliberate planning for impact. Cross-Research and Development Corporation collaboration has improved, and new tools are being adopted across organisations. Feedback showed positive changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and practice.

The project team has also worked to extend these learnings more widely through a practical suite of tools that will help organisations embed adoption thinking into future RD&E work. The aim is long-term, sustainable change in how we approach practice change and impact across the sector.

The project was funded through Hort Frontiers, with co-investment from AgriFutures Australia, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Dairy Australia, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Grains Research and Development Corporation, LiveCorp, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, and Wine Australia and contributions from the Australian Government.

Keywords

Agricultural extension, research impact, RD&E, agricultural innovation systems, adoption, stakeholder engagement, co-design, systems thinking, capability development, Theory of Change, Community of Practice.

Introduction

LP22001 *Research for Impact* was established to address a long-standing challenge in agricultural research and development, the gap between generating knowledge and achieving real-world adoption. The project built on the work of HA21001 *Designing the Integration of Extension into Research Projects* (the Phase 1 project), which developed seven principles for embedding adoption thinking into R&D projects from the outset of the work. LP22001 set out to put those principles into practice across a range of funding bodies and delivery partners, demonstrating their value and building the capability of researchers and extension practitioners to apply them.

The seven principles developed through Phase 1 are:

1. **Think in systems.** A system is a human construct to help us better understand how a set of elements work together to form a unified whole, often involving processes and practices. We need to be cognisant that we're working in an Agricultural Innovation System where many of the elements are interconnected and where feedback loops are important. Additionally, we're often working with multiple stakeholders along the value chain.
2. **Focus on people.** This is important because we are predominantly working with the humans in the system, even if we're studying the plants or animals. This is similar to the farmer-first approach but is wider to include all key stakeholders. Design thinking is a human-centred approach to innovation that integrates the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.
3. **Engage stakeholders** throughout the project (ideally prior to writing a funding application). This ensures the problem is well understood and defined, and that potential solutions are appropriately tested. This also provides greater ownership of the outcomes of the project, hopefully leading to widespread adoption where appropriate.
4. **Co-design wisely.** While co-design is a good principle, it should be applied appropriately; so, it's suitable for the problem to be addressed. Some projects have a focus on extending technologies and practices that have already been developed and used elsewhere, or are required by regulation (e.g., water quality practices). In this case, it is not appropriate to go into a deep co-design activity with users. It may be that such a product easily slips into the new situation, or it may need to be modified, trialled or demonstrated.
5. **Design for impact.** We're often good at planning and implementing projects, but we need to spend more time designing them for success—in this case, the adoption of R&D. To achieve this, we can use design thinking, build a theory of change, and understand the psychological drivers for change.
6. **Stay flexible** when appropriate, as these enable a collaborative approach, allowing end-users to provide feedback throughout the process. It increases flexibility, allowing the team to adapt more easily to change and minimise risk by failing fast.
7. **Communicate clearly.** Frequent and targeted two-way communication with key stakeholders will ensure everyone has a clear understanding of their roles and the project's desired outcomes and impact. Use of multiple contemporary processes such as peer-to-peer learning, social network analysis, and social media will help to empower end-users to make informed decisions about adoption. The time invested in communicating and engaging helps build trust and rapport with all stakeholders, and especially end-users.

With these principles as its foundation, the project was focused on four objectives: demonstrating the benefits of applying the principles to program and project design, delivery, and evaluation; increasing the knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and practice (KASAP) of project team members in applying them; strengthening cross-RDC collaboration; and initiating uptake of the principles by funding organisations.

The project was led by Hort Innovation, with co-investment from AgriFutures Australia, Cotton Research and Development Corporation, Dairy Australia, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Grains Research and Development Corporation, LiveCorp, NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub, and Wine Australia.

Methodology

The approach used was designed to do more than transfer knowledge. The aim was to support a change of practice. A Project Reference Group (PRG), made up of representatives from each of the co-funding organisations, guided the co-design of the program throughout the project. Eleven meetings were held over the life of the program. Together, we developed a program of coaching, peer learning, and capability development, all focused on the work being undertaken in the projects of participating co-funders. Each organisation nominated one or more projects as the practical context for the work. The list of projects is below.

1. AgriFutures Australia: Australian goat fibre extension and industry development program
2. Cotton Research and Development Corporation: Measuring evapotranspiration from canopy temperature
3. Dairy Australia: Farm environmental tracker D&E
4. Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub: Designing tangible pathways to enhance adoption and impact using an agrivoltaics project as a case study
5. Fisheries Research and Development Corporation: Circular economy (case study)
6. Grains Research and Development Corporation: Development and extension to realise the system benefits and economic potential of mungbean in northern farming systems
7. Hort Innovation: AS22002 Narrow orchard systems for future climates
8. Hort Innovation: MU21007 Pest and disease management for the Australian mushroom industry
9. Hort Innovation: Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative
10. LiveCorp: Interpreting animal welfare
11. NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development: Improved investment decision-making for integrated pest and disease management research and extension opportunities in the citrus industry
12. Wine Australia: Wine production and quality projects, impact process (case study)

The foundation of the program was coaching for each of the 12 project leaders, primarily delivered online. Most of these were one-on-one sessions, although the project leaders would share information with other project team members as appropriate. A total of 150 coaching discussions were held over the course of the program. An overview is provided in **Table 1**. The number of coaching sessions varied depending on need and availability of the project leaders.

An initial in-person two-day gathering was held at the start of the project in 2024, followed by annual forums in 2025 and 2026. These forums built connections between project leaders and co-funders and included dedicated time for reflection on project progress, lessons and implications for future RDC practice. These two-day forums also included a separate session for the co-funders, where there was focused reflection on the project, progress and lessons.

Bi-monthly project online project leaders' meetings also helped develop a Community of Practice amongst the cohort. These meetings enabled peer-to-peer learning and problem solving. Each project was encouraged to provide a deep dive overview on the work, so that the rest of the group could understand what was involved in each project, and consider aspects they could integrate into their own projects.

Table 1. Project coaching meetings

Project	Coaching sessions #
Australian goat fibre extension	7
Measuring evapotranspiration	6
Farm environmental tracker D&E	25
Agrivoltaics	4
Circular economy	13
Mungbean in northern farming systems	7
Narrow orchard systems	15
Pest and disease management for mushrooms	16
Plant Biosecurity Research Initiative	13
Interpreting animal welfare	18
Improved investment decision-making	17
Wine production and quality projects	11
Total	150

A structured capability development program was delivered alongside these meetings in the intervening months. This began with a Training Needs Analysis to determine the capability requirements of the group. This was used, along with feedback and ideas from the project leaders' meetings, to deliver the Maximising Research Impact (MRI) webinars. These webinars covered a variety of topics over the life of the program. The full list is outlined below. Most of the eleven webinars were delivered by the project team, though some invited guests presented on relevant topics particularly towards the end of the program.

1. Designing for impact
2. Designing surveys
3. Stakeholder engagement
4. Adult learning
5. Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for greater impact
6. Co-design (with Jo Eady)
7. Developing an extension strategy
8. Bridging the adoption gap (with Oscar Montes)
9. Co-design (with Claire Dennerley, one of the project leaders)
10. Introduction to behavioural science (with James West)
11. Conducting research and development (with Callum Eastwood)

Results and discussion

Principles

Over the course of the work a range of tools suitable for being able to put the principles into practice were identified. The following provide an overview of these. More details are provided in the legacy document, *Maximising impact handbook: Making the most of agricultural research, development and extension activities*.

1

Think in systems. A system is a human construct to help us better understand how a set of elements work together to form a unified whole, often involving processes and practices. We need to be cognisant that we're working in an Agricultural Innovation System where many of the elements are interconnected and where feedback loops are important. Additionally, we're often working with multiple stakeholders along the value chain.

2

Focus on people. This is important because we are predominantly working with the humans in the system, even if we're studying the plants or animals. This is similar to the farmer-first approach but is wider to include all key stakeholders. Design thinking is a human-centred approach to innovation that integrates the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.

3

Engage stakeholders. Do so throughout the project (ideally prior to writing a funding application). This ensures the problem is well understood and defined, and that potential solutions are appropriately tested with end-users. This also provides greater ownership of the outcomes of the project, hopefully leading to widespread adoption where appropriate.

4

Co-design wisely. While co-design is a good principle, it should be applied appropriately; so, it's suitable for the problem being addressed. Some projects have a focus where they are extending technologies and practices that have already been developed and used elsewhere, or are required by regulation (e.g., water quality practices). In this case, it is not appropriate to go into a deep co-design activity with end-users. It may be that such a product easily slips into the new situation, or it may need to be modified, trialled or demonstrated.

5

Design for impact. We're often good at planning and implementing projects, but we need to spend more time designing them for success - in this case, the adoption of R&D. To achieve this, we can use design thinking, build a theory of change, and understand the psychological drivers for change.

6

Stay flexible. When appropriate, as these enable a collaborative approach, allowing end-users to provide feedback throughout the process. It increases flexibility, allowing the team to adapt more easily to change and minimise risk by failing-fast.

7

Communicate clearly. Frequent and targeted two-way communication with key stakeholders will ensure everyone has a clear understanding of their roles and the project's desired outcomes and impact. Use of multiple contemporary processes such as peer-to-peer learning, social network analysis, and social media will help to empower end-users to make informed decisions about adoption. The time invested in communicating and engaging helps build trust and rapport with all stakeholders, and especially end-users.

Project leaders

Project leaders rated the project highly for its overall usefulness. At the start, in 2023, most of the project leaders were not clear on the purpose of the Research for Impact work (giving a rating for **4.8** on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not useful and 10 is very useful). However, project leaders reported that, over time, they learned helpful tools to assist their projects, with the project team creating an environment that motivated contribution. The average rating for the usefulness of project leader meetings where they could share and learn from each other was **7.9**.

Project leaders felt that the project equipped them with tangible tools like pre-mortems, survey design, and co-design methods. The tailored one-on-one coaching sessions were valued for providing specific solutions for individual projects. As one participant noted, the support and facilitation provided by the project team consistently left them feeling “invigorated and a bit wiser”.

Project leaders reported making a variety of practical, strategic, and process-oriented changes to both their current and future projects as a direct result of participating in the program. Project leaders highlighted the ability to manage risk and project variability by using pre-mortems. For one project leader this was so useful that they were able to “pull the pin” on a project in the scoping stage because the process helped them realise they could not justify proceeding. Project leaders also appreciated the systems thinking framework and prompting. This was useful to help ensure they were able to cover all the bases in terms of external factors when planning future projects.

Another area project leaders felt was useful was thinking about the extension and adoption process. Tools and activities that highlighted the Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and Aspirations (KASA) framework, along with diagrams that show impact pathways and extension Theories of Change helped project leaders understand what was required for adoption. Project leaders felt they were able to shift towards co-design approaches and effective stakeholder engagement with farmers and funders.

Co-funders

Co-funders expressed high levels of satisfaction with the Research for Impact project, consistently giving it strong ratings (between **8.0** and **9.0**) for its progress, direction, and the value of meetings. They viewed the project not just as a training exercise for researchers, but as a critical stepping stone for driving transformational change within the Research and Development Corporation (RDC) system. Co-funders reported making, or planning to make, several strategic and practical changes to how they manage and assess projects. They advocated for better integration between themselves and the research teams to build relationships and mutual understanding.

Annual in-person forums

Three in-person forums were held, in April 2024, March 2025, and February 2026. The first and second were highly rated as a means of getting to know others (**9.4** and **8.9** consecutively). In terms of sharing and learning, the second workshop was rated most useful for this (score of **9.1**). The first and third were rated **8.1** and **7.6** respectively. The workshops were also found to be useful for better understanding and increasing confidence with the principles (**8.0** at the second, and **7.8** at the third).

Project leaders felt there was a lot of value from the networking and relationship-building that occurred, especially at these in-person forums. The opportunity to connect, share, and bounce ideas off peers helped participants feel less isolated. One participant noted that the camaraderie and joy of sharing at the meetings provided a type of “magic that needs to be bottled!”. The approach of connection before content was described as “profound”. Participants felt the forums were “fantastically well organised” and well-facilitated.

Final survey

The final survey (see Appendix for full overview) provides strong evidence that Research for Impact was useful, practical and valued by both project leaders and co-funders. The survey gathered feedback from 21 respondents: 10 project leads or team members, 7 co-funders, and 4 people who were both co-funders and project leads/team members. Overall, the project was rated **8.2/10** for usefulness in supporting participants' thinking and approach to increasing the impact of RD&E projects. Participants described the project as an opportunity "to really shift the impact of their work", and one noted that it helped frame the transition between research and extension, rather than treating them as separate silos. Another said the project gave them "a framework, structures and procedures to assist extension delivery".

Cross-RDC learning was one of the strongest themes. Respondents rated the value of learning from other RDCs and projects at **8.6/10**. They valued hearing how other industries approach similar challenges in adoption, engagement, investment design and extension delivery. One respondent said there were "so many lessons to be learnt", while another valued learning what other RDCs were trying, including "what isn't working". The shared learning helped participants broaden their thinking, compare approaches across sectors and strengthen professional relationships.

The survey also showed gains in understanding and confidence across the principles and related tools. Across the nine items assessed, the average rating was **7.4/10** for increased understanding and **6.9/10** for confidence to apply. AI recorded the highest increase in both understanding (**8.2/10**) and confidence to apply (**7.7/10**). Co-design wisely was also strong, with increased understanding of **7.9/10** and confidence of **7.0/10**, followed by Design for impact (**7.7/10** understanding; **6.8/10** confidence). Engage stakeholders was rated **7.3/10** for understanding and **7.0/10** for confidence; Stay flexible **7.3/10** and **6.9/10**; Monitoring and evaluation **7.3/10** and **6.9/10**; Communicate clearly **7.3/10** and **6.7/10**; and Focus on people **6.9/10** and **7.0/10**. Think in systems was lower, but still positive, with increased understanding of **6.8/10** and confidence to apply of **6.5/10**, suggesting it was valuable but harder for some participants to translate into practice. The usefulness of webinar topics followed a similar pattern, with Using AI for greater impact rated highest at **8.8/10**, followed by Designing surveys and Bridging the adoption gap, both at **7.7/10**.

The MRI webinars were generally rated as highly useful, with all topics scoring between **6.8 and 9.4 out of 10**. The strongest-rated session was Using Artificial Intelligence for greater impact (**9.4**), followed by Introduction to behavioural science (**9.0**), Developing an extension strategy (**8.6**), Co-design with Jo Eady (**8.5**) and Adult learning (**8.4**). Other topics, including stakeholder engagement, co-design, designing for impact and bridging the adoption gap, were also well received, while Designing surveys was the lowest-rated session at **6.8**, though still positive. Overall, **Table 2** suggests the webinars were a valuable part of the capability-building program, particularly where they provided timely, practical tools that project leaders and funders could apply directly to RD&E design, engagement and impact planning.

Table 2. Overview of the usefulness of the webinars delivered for Research for Impact

Webinar	Usefulness
Designing for impact	8.2
Designing surveys	6.8
Stakeholder engagement	8.3
Adult learning	8.4
Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for greater impact	9.4
Co-design (with Jo Eady)	8.5
Developing an extension strategy	8.6
Bridging the adoption gap (with Oscar Montes)	8.0
Co-design (with Claire Dennerley, one of the project leaders)	8.3
Introduction to behavioural science (with James West)	9.0
Conducting research and development (with Callum Eastwood)	7.9

Support mechanisms were especially valued. Face-to-face forums were rated **9.1/10**, one-on-one support **8.2/10**, Maximising Research Impact webinars **8.0/10**, and project leader online meetings **7.6/10**. One participant described face-to-face engagement as “the gold standard of learning”, while others valued one-on-one support for helping them reflect, test ideas and work through project-specific blockers. Respondents reported that changes made through the project increased their confidence in achieving better research or program outcomes, with an average rating of **7.4/10**.

The project also stimulated wider sharing and collaboration. Learnings were shared with other team members by 15 respondents, others within their organisation by 14, people in other organisations by 6, and other project leaders by 4. Collaboration results were mixed overall (**6.9/10**), but much stronger among co-funders (**9.3/10**) than project teams (**4.8/10**), reflecting the greater relevance of cross-RDC collaboration to funder roles. One respondent said the project “significantly” helped strengthen RDC relationships, while another said it had been their “main conduit to people in other RDCs”.

The online Community of Practice was less successful as an interactive space. Only 3 respondents used it often, 6 used it a couple of times, and 11 did not use it. However, it still provided a useful repository for templates, articles and missed content. Looking ahead, the strongest message was that the work should not end with the handbook. Participants wanted the principles embedded into funding guidelines, project design, coaching, mentoring and future capability-building programs.

Photos/images/other audio-visual material



Figure 1: Part of the opening sessions at the first in-person forum, Melbourne 2024. Photo: John James



Figure 2: Session including co-funders at the first in-person forum, Melbourne 2024. Photo: John James



Figure 3: Session on running a pre-mortem at the first in-person workshop, Melbourne 2024. Photo: John James



Figure 4: Group picture of the project leaders and co-funders at the second in-person workshop, Melbourne 2025.



Figure 5: Group picture of the project leaders and co-funders at the third in-person workshop, Melbourne 2026.

Outputs

The outputs from this program are provided in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Output summary

Output	Description	Detail
Maximising impact handbook: Making the most of agricultural research, development and extension activities (legacy document) 	An electronic document (PDF).	A guide for maximising impact from RD&E activities, based on the seven principles and the lessons from the program.
In-person forums	Three two-day in-person forums were held over the life of the program.	The in-person forums were used by the project team to build a Community of Practice among project leaders and co-funders. They provided an opportunity to connect, strengthen relationships, and share challenges, insights and ideas.
MRI webinars	11 Maximising research impact webinars were conducted and each was recorded.	The webinars provided project leaders and co-funders with an opportunity to explore selected topics in greater depth, with each session focused on a practical aspect of maximising impact. For each webinar, a YouTube recording and accompanying PDF presentation were created as legacy resources.
Individual coaching sessions	150 individual meetings between one of the project team and project leaders.	The coaching sessions were an opportunity to hear more about individual project needs and highlight tools and options for project leaders to use in their work.
Co-funder meetings	14 co-funder meetings were delivered.	An opportunity for co-funders to receive updates about the project's progress and to provide feedback to the delivery team.
Project leader meetings	14 project leader meetings were delivered.	The project leader meetings provided an opportunity for project leaders to explore specific projects in greater depth, share practical lessons, and learn from each other's experiences.
Community of practice	A shared space for learning together.	The online Community of Practice, hosted on Mighty Networks, provided project leaders and co-funders with a central place to access resources generated through the meetings, as well as materials created by the delivery team.

Outcomes

The Research for Impact project aimed to put the seven principles into practice across a range of funding bodies and delivery partners, demonstrating their value and building the capability of researchers, extension practitioners, and other project partners to apply them. The evaluation data reveal that the project was successful in testing these principles and confirmed their usefulness as practical guides for projects across the RD&E spectrum. Outcomes for the project are detailed in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. Outcome summary for Research for Impact

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Researchers, extension practitioners, and other stakeholders are working together to apply the principles and practices for adoption and impact of their work.	Aligns with Hort Innovation's focus on stakeholder engagement, collaboration and RD&E activities that provide industry benefit.	The project team was able to support the participants to learn from each other, apply the principles and practices for adoption and impact of their work and highlight lessons for the future.	Annual survey. Final survey.
The knowledge, attitude, skill, aspiration, and practice (KASAP) of the researchers and extension practitioners involved in the project, relating to principles and practices for adoption and impact of projects.	Aligns with building industry and delivery partner capability to improve RD&E design, delivery and adoption outcomes.	The project successfully improved the knowledge, attitude, skills, aspirations, and practices of participating researchers and extension practitioners. Rather than overwhelming researchers with abstract extension theories, the program equipped them with highly practical, immediate problem-solving tools. Researchers adopted tools like project pre-mortems to identify early risks, used Artificial Intelligence to overcome workflow bottlenecks, and implemented human-centred design principles to ensure their technologies addressed the needs of end-users.	Feedback surveys from project leader meetings. One-on-one project leader meeting notes.
Co-funding organisations and their service providers will be better able to design, deliver and evaluate RD&E projects that deliver greater impact.	Aligns with improving RDC investment effectiveness, strategic alignment and delivery of measurable outcomes for levy payers and taxpayers.	Co-funders reported developing new templates for Impact Plans, refining how they define problem statements, and planning for "plug-in" extension—bringing in specialist extension practitioners when core researchers are not suited to the task. This means the RD&E system is structurally evolving to better support practice change.	Feedback surveys from co-funder meetings.
There is increased cross-RDC collaboration in the areas of peer-to-peer learning, issue identification of common concern, and investments.	Aligns with strategic partnerships, shared learning and more coordinated investment in common RD&E priorities.	A standout benefit repeatedly highlighted by both project leaders and co-funders was the level of cross-RDC collaboration. By mixing participants from different sectors—such as dairy, cotton, horticulture, and fisheries—the project created a collaborative approach to thinking about extension and impact. Participants realised that despite the different sectors, they faced similar barriers to adoption, and they highly valued the opportunity to learn alternative problem-solving strategies from outside the usual sector.	Feedback surveys from annual forums. Feedback surveys from co-funder meetings.

Monitoring and evaluation

Overview of monitoring and evaluation approach

Monitoring and evaluation were built into the Research for Impact program from the beginning. A project database was established to capture evidence from multiple sources, including:

- Notes on each meeting with project leaders
- Feedback surveys from:
 - Project leader meetings
 - Webinars
 - Co-funder meetings
 - Annual forums
- Two annual surveys.

In total 42 surveys were completed. Survey results were presented back to participants at each subsequent meeting and the data used to shape the design of these. The monitoring and evaluation data also helped provide the details of the impact of the program.

Overall impact

The Research for Impact project was able to support change in how impact is designed, supported, and realised in Australian agricultural RD&E through the project leaders involved. There was good engagement from participants, as well as changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations and practice (KASAP). Participants demonstrated increased confidence in integrating extension early in project design, and funders noted improved capability in planning for impact and partnering effectively with practitioners. **Table 5** provides a summary of the impact noted by project leaders and co-funders.

Table 5. Summary of the project's impact noted by project leaders and co-funders

Key aspect	Project leaders	Co-funders
Value and benefits	• Gained practical tools to integrate extension directly into technical research. • Experienced a shift toward human-centred and systems thinking. • Overcame professional isolation through cross-industry networking and peer-to-peer problem solving. • Received highly actionable, tailored advice through 1-on-1 coaching sessions.	• Gained frameworks to drive tangible institutional changes in how projects are designed and assessed. • Upskilled their research communities, elevating the overall quality of RDC investments. • Benefited from cross-RDC collaboration and shared learning as a “brains trust”. • Gained confidence in the project's long-term legacy via the generated handbooks and tools.
Valued topics and tools	• Artificial Intelligence (AI): Used to overcome “blank page paralysis” and draft extension materials. • Project pre-mortems: Highly rated for identifying project risks early. • Adult learning and behavioural science: To navigate grower reluctance and improve workshop design. • Co-design and extension strategy: Specifically the KASA framework and visual Theories of Change.	• Systems Thinking Frameworks: Quadrant assessments and STAM models to evaluate external constraints. • Funder workflow tools: Templates for Impact Plans and problem statements. • Plug-in extension: Strategies to bring in extension experts when researchers lack the skillset. • Coaching Insights: Hearing insights from the delivery team's 1-on-1s to better understand researcher challenges.
Changes made or planned	• Project viability: Using pre-mortems to critically assess viability, including cancelling unfeasible	• Institutional culture: Introducing new official ways of working to integrate

	- projects early. - Combating survey fatigue: Co-designing single, industry-wide surveys instead of individual project surveys. - Targeted extension: Integrating KASA models and visual Theory of Change diagrams to map out activities. - AI Integration: Using AI daily for meeting reports, logic models, and planning.	- extension into R&D from the start. - Strategic design: Designing extension into funding contracts and planning for “plug-in” extension. - New templates: Implementing new templates for Impact Plans and problem statement definition. - Capacity building: Embedding resources that support delivery partner capability building.
Suggestions for improvement	- Meeting dynamics: Found that adding new groups (co-funders) halfway through a forum disrupted established group dynamics. - Need for practical depth: Wanted more hands-on tool sessions (especially for AI) and explicit research to impact case studies. - New topics requested: Wanted guidance on commercialisation, gaining scientific community buy-in, and complex economic barriers.	- Deeper integration: Strongly advocated for mixing funders and leaders fully during face-to-face forums and 1-on-1s. - Showcasing success: Wanted projects to showcase specific timelines of their adoption and summarise farm-level impacts. - Enhancing legacy materials: Suggested adding visual roadmaps, summary sections, and aligned training to the legacy handbook.
Post project ideas	- Sustaining engagement: Identified maintaining momentum and overcoming staff turnover as key challenges. - Improving the CoP: Suggested the online Community of Practice needs better interaction and a safer environment for researchers to ask simple questions. - Advocacy: Presenting their applied learnings and successful outcomes at industry events.	- Structural decoupling: Suggested the RDC system should decouple extension funding from research funding. - Professionalising extension: Pushing for extension discipline-level resources (capability matrices, standard phases). - Scaling up: Scaling the program to new researchers and endorsing the toolkit jointly across all RDCs. - Open access: Transferring the project's Intellectual Property to the public domain.

How differences among project leaders shaped outcomes

There were differences in how various project leaders and RDCs responded to and benefited from the Research for Impact program. These differences were largely driven by the scale, maturity, and specific focus of the projects, as well as the institutional readiness of the different RDCs.

Projects that were research focused often started with little end-user involvement or consideration of human-centred design. Project leaders from these types of projects benefited from learning to shift from being purely technical to incorporating the perspectives of end users (e.g., farm workers and managers) into project planning and development. Conversely, projects that were predominantly extension focused already had strong human-centred design foundations. For them, benefits came from formalising their approaches, for example, by developing a Theory of Change.

The size of the project also dictated which frameworks were most useful. Participants noted that taking a systems perspective was critical for larger, complex projects. However, for projects dealing with localised or specific issues, complete systems models were sometimes seen as less applicable, though participants still found value in borrowing individual elements of systems thinking.

The stage of the project also influenced project leaders' response. Some of the principles, for example, design for impact and communicate clearly were very important for projects where the technologies or practices were being trialled and used on-farm. In contrast, project leaders felt that for early, basic research, it was not always clear how to effectively design for impact.

How differences among co-funders shaped outcomes

There were differences between the co-funders and their RDCs as well. RDCs were at different stages in their ability to integrate the project's lessons into their business and processes. There were some examples of change. In cotton, the RDC successfully used the Research for Impact work to develop their Impact Pathway planning process and implemented a dedicated process for engagement with researchers. Other RDCs reported being in the “early days” of change, attempting to introduce new ways of working, but faced some challenges.

Despite the differences in how RDCs operate, one of the impacts of the work was the cross-pollination of ideas between RDCs. Project leaders and co-funders frequently highlighted the value of seeing different industries share common issues in project delivery and stakeholder engagement. Learning how an RDC in an entirely different field approached an extension problem often stimulated new thinking and alternative methods for participants' own projects.

Key evaluation questions

Several evaluation questions were outlined at the start of Research for Impact. These are listed below with more details provided in [Table 5](#).

1. Effectiveness. To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?
2. Relevance. How relevant was the project to the needs of intended beneficiaries?
3. Process appropriateness. How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?
4. To what extent were engagement processes appropriate to the target audience/s of the project?
5. Efficiency. What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?
6. Innovation. To what extent did the project co-design process enable innovative solutions?

Table 6. Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Continuous improvement opportunities
To what extent has the project resulted in researchers, extension practitioners, and other stakeholders working together to apply the principles and practices for adoption and impact of their work?	Strong evidence of collaborative application. The project explicitly bridged researchers and funders rather than operating in isolation. Co-funders made changes, and project leaders used some of the tools provided in their work. The cross-RDC <i>brains trust</i> collaboration was highlighted as a way of breaking down silos between industries.	Uptake was uneven across RDCs, as some are in the early stages of change. Suggested improvements include jointly endorsing the toolkit across all RDCs, scaling the program to new researcher cohorts, and formally deciding on ways of promoting the resources from this work so application doesn't remain fragmented or limited to the original cohort.
To what extent has the project increased the ability of researchers, extension practitioners, and other stakeholders to apply the principles and practices for adoption and impact of their work?	Capability building activities (webinars, coaching sessions) were highly rated by participants. There were changes in project leader KASAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations, Practices). Co-funders also reported upskilling their internal teams with new approaches (e.g. systems thinking and pre-mortem).	Project leaders wanted more than one-off introductions to different areas, asking for follow-up hands-on sessions to work through tools (e.g. AI). Requests for new topics to be covered were noted (e.g. commercialisation, scientific-community buy-in, economics of adoption) which suggest there are more capability gaps to address.

To what extent were researchers, extension practitioners, and other stakeholders involved in the design of the project and its processes?	Some change was evident. The Research for Impact team was able to be <i>open to change and flexible</i> , adapting the program as participant needs became clearer, shaping session design. Co-funders were also included as a distinct group with their own forums and their feedback used to inform activity design.	Both project leaders and co-funders wanted the opportunity for <i>more</i> co-design of the process and activities. However, involvement in this project was an add-on so opportunities were limited.
How well did the process undertaken engage researchers, extension practitioners, and other stakeholders in the project?	Engagement was rated very positively by project leaders, particularly for the coaching, and reduction in professional isolation through peer networking (<i>magic that needs to be bottled</i>). Co-funders valued the insights into project leader's challenges.	There was very poor engagement with the online Community of Practice, with many participants not using it at all. Suggestions for addressing this included: videos on adoption, making a <i>safer, simpler</i> space for questions, and a plan for the CoP beyond the end of the project. Some project leaders needed extra engagement effort (e.g., co-funders encouraging engagement).
To what extent did the project use current knowledge and experience to inform co-design of the model/ process?	The model drew on established frameworks and current practices such as behavioural science principles, adult learning theory, systems thinking, and co-design methodology. The process evolved over time based on participant feedback.	Participants wanted the work to go further in translating knowledge into applied practice, specifically more scenario-based research to impact case studies rather than high-level overviews, and a deeper exploration of complex adoption barriers (e.g., economics of adoption, grower reluctance).
To what extent did the project process enable innovative solutions through the co-design process?	Innovations emerged from the collaborative process (an example was a single industry-wide survey co-designed by project delivery leads to combat survey fatigue, described as a <i>revelatory idea</i>). A structural innovation (decoupling extension/development funding from research funding) was identified as a potential system-level opportunity.	Often innovative ideas remained aspirational rather than being implemented. Turning these into concrete co-designed outputs (rather than recommendations), available across the RDC organisations is still needed.

Recommendations

Seven recommendations from the Research for Impact work are outlined below.

1. Make the legacy resources available on the AgriFutures Australia website and on the websites of all participating RDCs.
2. Participating RDCs should actively promote the project outcomes, principles and legacy resources through their industry, delivery partner and stakeholder networks.
3. Develop and deliver a series of practical workshops based on the legacy resources to help project leaders, funders and delivery partners apply the principles in future RD&E projects.
4. RDC projects that aim to deliver industry impact should incorporate these principles into project design, development and contracting, particularly before funding is approved. This should include adequate time and resources for engaging stakeholders and end users across the RD&E continuum.
5. Participating RDCs should regroup after six months to share how they have used or embedded the principles and tools, including examples of what has worked, barriers encountered and further support needed.
6. Participating RDCs should consider using mentoring and facilitated peer learning to support groups of project deliverers, strengthen project impact, and build capacity and capability across programs, organisations and industries.
7. Each participating RDC should nominate an internal impact champion to support uptake of the principles, adapt the tools into existing project processes, and maintain momentum beyond the life of the project.

References

James, J., Bewsell, D., & Coutts, J. (2026). Maximising impact handbook: Making the most of agricultural research, development and extension activities. Prepared as part of the Research for Impact project (LP22001). Enablers of Change, Scarlatti, and Coutts J&R

Intellectual property

No project IP or commercialisation to report.

Acknowledgements

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- Josh Hixson (Wine Australia)
- Kaitlyn Annesley (LiveCorp)
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- Wine Australia (Josh Hixson, Libby Tedstone)

Appendices

M&E report

A total of 42 surveys were undertaken over the life of Research for Impact. The list of surveys is outlined below:

- LP22001 Research for Impact - Annual Survey 2024
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Behavioural science principles (18 Mar 2026)
- LP22001 Research for impact - Benchmark Survey (2023)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Bridging the Adoption Gap Webinar (17 Sep 2025)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Co-design: making with, not for Webinar (19 Nov 2025)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Connecting research and development (20 May 2026)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - PRG Meeting (25 October 2023)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Project Team Meeting (2 Nov 2023)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (15 May 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (16 July 2025)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (17 July 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (18 Sep 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (20 March 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (20 Nov 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact - Webinar (21 May 2025)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (22 May 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (22 Nov 23)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (23 July 2025)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (24 July 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (24 Sep 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (25 Mar 26)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (26 Nov 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (27 Mar 24)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (27 May 26)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (27 Nov 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact- Co-funders' Meeting (28 May 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Forum Melbourne (February 2026)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (15 Apr 26)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (16 Apr 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (16 Oct 24)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (18 Jun 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (19 Feb 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (20 Aug 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (21 Aug 24)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (21 Aug 24)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (21 Feb 24)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (22 Oct 25)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (26 Jun 24)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Project - Team Meeting (7th Dec 23)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Start-up meeting with Project Teams (19 Oct 23)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Workshop Melbourne (April 2024)
- LP22001 Research for Impact Workshop Melbourne (March 2025)

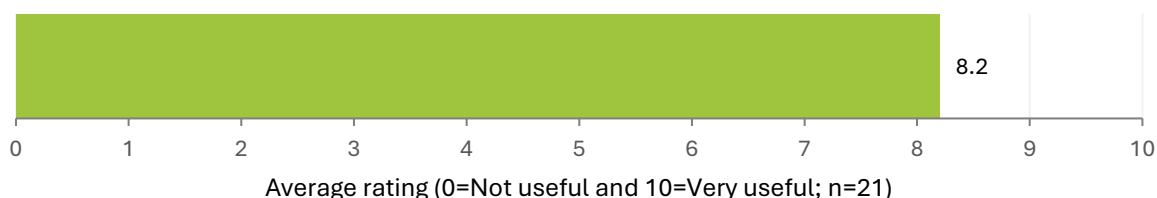
Final survey overview

The final survey for the LP22001 Research for Impact project gathered feedback from 21 total respondents, including 10 project leads/team members, 7 co-funders, and 4 who were both a co-funder and project lead/team member.

Overall usefulness of the project

The project was overall seen to be highly useful in addressing and supporting participants' thinking and approach to increasing potential impact from RD&E projects (8.2/10 avg. rating). Respondents noted that the project provided valuable frameworks, structures, and procedures that supported more deliberate thinking about designing for real-world impact. The dedicated one-on-one support from the project team was highly praised for helping teams navigate individual operational blockers, and the program was seen to have successfully assisted participants in bridging the usual silos between research and extension.

Project usefulness in addressing/supporting thinking/approach to increasing potential impact from RD&E projects



Comments

I just keep thinking what an opportunity for researchers to be involved in this project and have so much support from the project team and other participants to really shift the impact of their work. (10 rating)

My experience has been the R and E are in silos, and you simply move to E once you are finished in the R silo. This has helped frame the transitional periods. (10 rating)

The support from John was excellent - to be able to reflect on the group sessions, think about applying it in our project and then be able to speak through any blockers, ideas, uncertainties was extremely helpful. (10 rating)

The project gave me a framework, structures and procedures to assist extension delivery. (9 rating)

Overall, I found the project very useful. It supported more deliberate thinking about how to design RD&E projects for impact, particularly through concepts such as design for impact, engaging stakeholders, focusing on people and co-design. Topics such as the use of AI and structured reflection helped strengthen how research outputs are framed, interpreted and communicated in complex decision-making contexts. While impacts are still emerging, the project has positively influenced both project design and extension thinking. (8 rating)

The project was incredible for bringing an engaged audience together to discuss and ponder the challenges and opportunities for a sustained period. (8 rating)

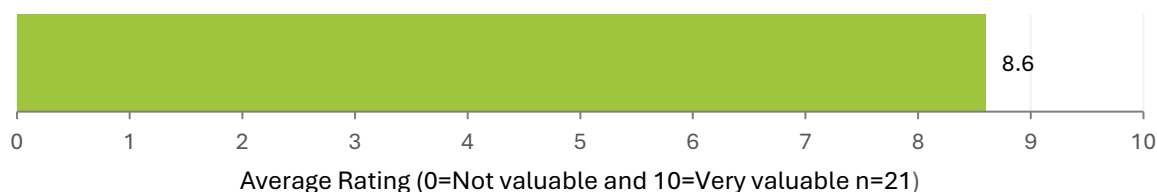
We don't usually plan for extension in our projects so it has been really valuable learning how to do this from the outset in a project. (8 rating)

Great to see momentum to bridge the gap between R&E. (7 rating)

Value of learning from other RDCs/projects

Respondents highly valued the opportunity to learn from other RDCs and projects (8.6/10 avg. rating). Interacting across different RDCs provided broad cross-sector perspectives on investment expectations and allowed participants to share common operational hardships, learn from each other's successful approaches, and build stronger professional networks. While the shared practical examples effectively stimulated new extension thinking, a few respondents noted that acute workplace time constraints occasionally limited how much they could fully absorb from their peers.

Value of learning from other RDCs/projects



Comments:

Because it's such a small industry - it has been invaluable interacting with 'pure' researchers who must contend with issues on both sides of the fence - identifying an industry issue, applying for funding, developing an output to solve the issue and then working to convince the end-user and other stakeholders to accept and adopt the new technology. [The specific project] is in a different position. Growers approach us with the issue, wanting a (rapid and inexpensive) solution. By the time the project becomes involved, the grower has exhausted his/her knowledge and the problem is well entrenched and affecting their bottom line significantly. We respond to a pressing need and produce resources specific to that need then adapt them to release to industry. (10 rating)

So many lessons to be learnt from what others have been trying and approaches that have been successful, and ones that can be learnt from. (10 rating)

The peer to peer learning, the different perspectives, the way different RDCs struggled to apply new thinking and improve old practices was something that would have taken more time and effort than I had available. (10 rating)

I learnt a lot from the other RDCs about how they do business and what they are trying (and what isn't working for them!). It was nice to be able to share the hardships and hear about successes. (9 rating)

Seeing real-life examples was stimulating for our own thinking about how to approach extension. (9 rating)

Because of the cross-RDC participation it provided a wide perspective on the types of investment that occur and the expectations and outcomes that are sought (8 rating)

I wish I could have had the time to dedicate to this project as I probably didn't learn as much as I could have. However I have stronger relationships with the other RDC extension people and the conversations at our Face-to-Face meetings, particularly the last one was amazing! (8 rating)

Learning from other RDCs and their projects provided useful perspectives on how different organisations approach impact, adoption and extension challenges. The opportunity to hear practical examples and reflect across sectors helped broaden thinking, validate shared challenges, and identify ideas that could be adapted to other RD&E contexts. (8 rating)

Always great to learn what others are going and connect. (7 rating)

Understanding and use of principles

Respondents had increased their understanding of and confidence to use all the principles covered by the project – providing average ratings of increased understanding between 6.8 (Think in Systems) to 8.2 (AI); and increased confidence to use in projects/programs between 6.5 (Think in Systems) to 7.7 (AI). Comments highlighted that artificial intelligence is widely used as a routine time-saving tool for ideation, transcription, and qualitative data synthesis, while co-design was identified as a powerful concept for early project conception rather than final implementation. Respondents also noted that frameworks like the principles around ‘design for impact’ and ‘thinking in systems’ successfully shifted focus onto human end-users and holistic farming structures, though actual implementation was more difficult in practice (e.g. RDC contracting frameworks that restrict flexibility).

Comments:

AI (artificial Intelligence)

Adoption of AI has so far been limited, given the potential scope for this technology in extension delivery. AI has been a great time saver in terms of generating meeting reports from transcripts and I use it to get a broad outlook on new topics, and to give me a kick up the backside when the blank page stares back at me. I do have plans before the project finishes to use it to narrate short tool box videos and to create some useful 'podcasts' of specific topics. My dabbling hasn't resulted in anything concrete yet. LP22001 has given me ideas and specific apps to use to create some appropriate IPDM and P&D training resources

AI used ALL the time, for as many routine things as possible.

Have been using it for ideation to see if AI can help us deliver impactful extension

I now have a better understanding of what AI can do to assist me through I know there is still a lot to learn in this space.

Supported more efficient synthesis and interpretation of qualitative information, especially during activities such as a pre-mortem.

This is the start of a pretty long journey with lots of unintended consequences to be surfaced.

We have been trialling the use of AI as a time-saving tool for coding and acquiring technical specifications. We haven't used it for extension applications yet.

Co-design wisely

In these closing months of [the project], the concept of co-design isn't one that we consider. We are pretty much in the implementation and evaluation phase where the cooperative inputs have been distilled into a delivery industry needs and appreciates. However, if I was beginning a new project, this concept would be a significant player in the project development

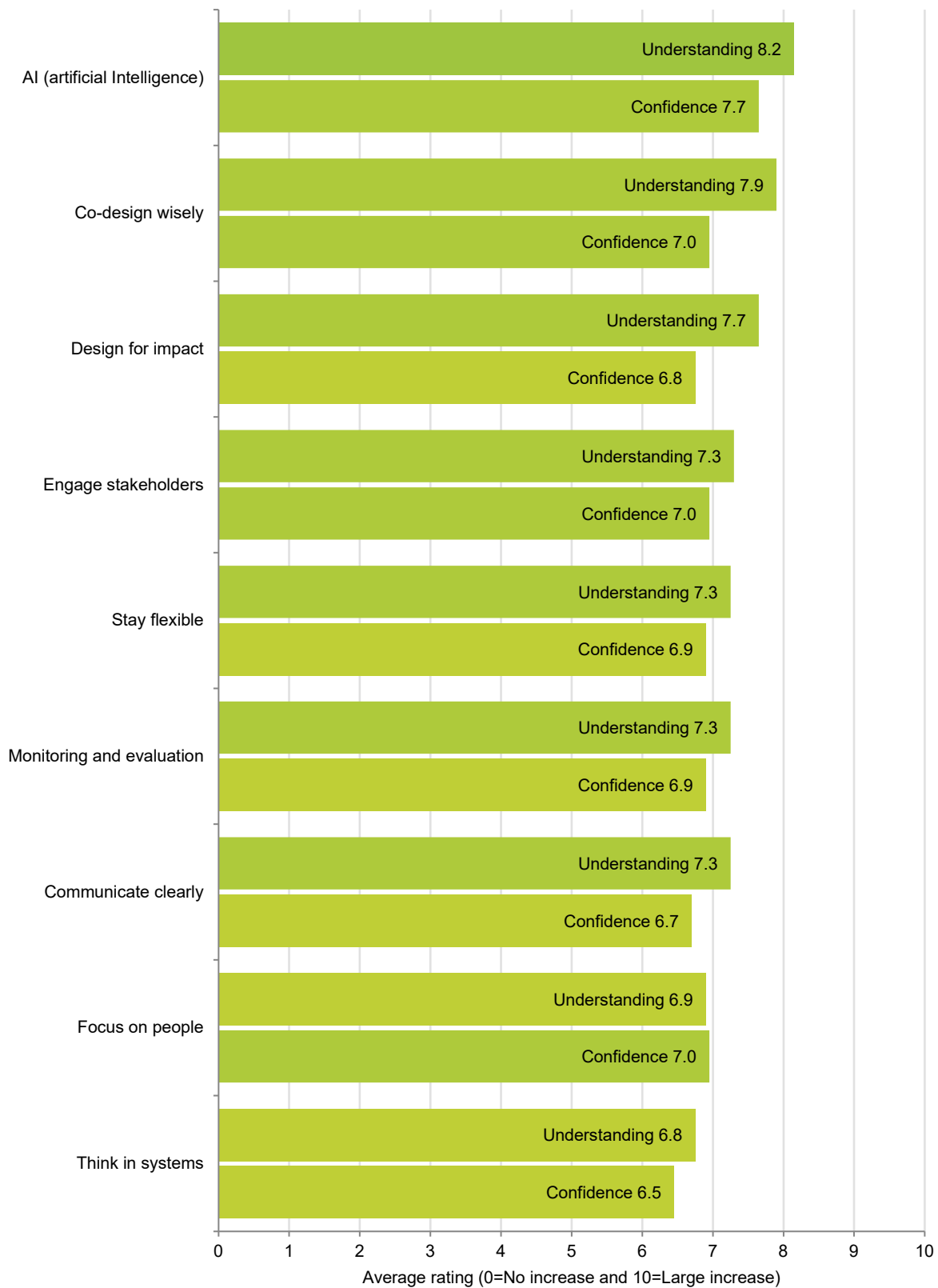
This principle informed how perspectives were tested and refined throughout the project.

This was probably more about NOT co-designing where it wasn't required. As opposed to "everything should be co-designed", but recognising that where clear knowledge and input had already been sought, there may not be a need for more co-design.

Understand that co-design is more than engaging with stakeholders in the design process!

Understanding what co-design is has helped my own development but has not heavily affected the project.

Impact of project on increased understanding of principles and confidence applying to projects



Design for impact

Integrating the Impact Statement into the project application phase. This puts the emphasis and focus on the people who are to be the end users in future.

Love the tools of post-mortems, as well as the ToC and impact statements

On a very small scale, on-farm resolution may require a change to procedure or schedule which often results in push-back (too much work, can't do two things at once, that's my lunch hour etc etc). Unknowingly (until LP22001), we have been applying the 'pre-mortem' approach of 'what is the worst that could happen?'. An estimate of potential yield increase usually smooths the way forward. Generally, the impacts are small but many, as all on-farm processes are interrelated and changes snowball along the production line. So the resolution in itself is the design for impact...

Pre-mortems undertaken to help identify risks in extension activities.

This project has underpinned the [organisation's] Impact Pathway planning process, from a two page guide to an AI enabled process built into the project management process.

Used to ensure the project focused not only on generating evidence, but on how that evidence would be interpreted and used by decision-makers.

We have changed some of the deliverables of the project to reflect where we are making the most impact.

We still don't do this well and is an area that needs to be addressed early in our projects.

Engage stakeholders

Incorporating the farm managers and (especially) the farm workers in the development of our tech.

Our dealings with stakeholders beyond the individual farm's gate are very limited - we interact with the grower and immediate key staff as the end-users rather than external industry stakeholders in resolving issues. We may consult suppliers as part of our 'lines of investigation' approach and we would adapt a farm interaction to distribute to industry as a case study in the industry journal. A list of stakeholders is required by [the funder] in an early milestone so we have identified potential stakeholders - we just don't need to interact with them. We do not mean to 'silo' these people, but growers will not be forthcoming if their problems are going to be widely known.

This principle helped shape project framing and communication to reflect the needs of regulators, industry and practitioners operating in complex welfare and policy contexts.

Using the skills and tools available I have increase stakeholder engagement.

Utilising agronomists/consultants in different areas to undertake trials after discussing what the issues are for them or their growers. Limited success in actually engaging them in the trials.

We have built the IAP2 model into our Impact Pathway model. We use the Effective Engagement Books 1, 2 and 3 (Vic DELWP) and the MSP Guide (Wageningen UR) as reference texts to flesh out the practical application of the IAP2 model. This has challenged us to shift our focus from activities that generate nice numbers (farmers attending, increased awareness etc) to activities that build trust, transparency, the sharing of power and ultimately more impact.

We use these principles in our extension planning.

Stay flexible

I am able to be flexible given the nature of the extension project. The funders struggle more with this.

I think the breadth of tools/techniques has allowed me to be aware on where projects/initiatives can go and why, but sometimes the RDC system locks us into a structure too rigidly.

Similar to think in systems, I feel staying flexible is a skill that I have a reasonable high aptitude for.

This remains difficult in our projects due to how the contracts are set out. But including flexibility/optional pathways in future contracts is something we are presently discussing.

We are fortunate in the delivery of the [project] that we have maximum flexibility, although it was a fight to achieve it as [the funder] were heavily against 'consultation' in project delivery. But [the project] would not be able to perform without flexibility - milestone criteria are 'loose' and non-specific, allowing us to approach any topic that arises and removing the burden of providing blocks of work at specific times. Again, because of the nature of the project, we do not conform to the formal concept, but dip in and out as required.

Monitoring and evaluation

Consider what the evidence of "success" looks like.

Definitely clearer on designing with this focus at the front. Previously I considered this an 'extension issue', but now including the progression of technological maturity into research projects as a simple form of monitoring and evaluation.

I understand the importance and how to implement M & E, getting responses is the issue.

M & E have always been important to [the funder] so we are very conscious of gathering all sorts of feedback such as workshop exit surveys, anecdotal comments and personal remarks and relating them back to our end-of-project outcomes to show how the project is progressing towards the end goal...

Communicate clearly

Communication is and always has been the cornerstone of [the project] and a communications plan is an early requirement of [the funder's] project reporting. We rely on a range of outputs depending on the information that needs to be distributed and we have established a contact list composed of farm managers, owners, growers and farm P&D staff who get the information delivered directly. Because English is a second or third language to a vast majority of farm workers throughout Australia, relevant outputs such as 'how to' videos must be understandable to all staff so are short on speech and text and high in self-explanatory imagery (still need to work on this).

Know what I need to do but execution can be the issue!

Looking at ways to improve team meeting to be sure they are valuable to all participants

Realising the importance, I have stepped up my communication game.

Similar to the other two "low" response questions.

Focus on people

Helped shape project framing and communication to reflect the needs of regulators, industry and practitioners operating in complex welfare and policy contexts.

In addressing [industry] P&D issues, resolution must be immediate or the farm goes out of business. There isn't scope to develop new technologies; we must adapt the limited tools available to the situation. Because the grower is in difficulty, they are very open about the situation and their pain points are identified early - the difficulties are often reflected by staff who become despondent and start making rash and uninformed decisions out of desperation. We would call the key farm personnel together and brainstorm possible solutions - we refer to this as defining lines of investigation - which often involves looking to see if staff do exactly as they say they do, either face-to-face or by video if we are working remote. Once a management strategy is decided it is implemented and reviewed in a follow up meeting and modified if necessary. [The project] deals directly with a limited number of people so the full concept of 'focus on people' is never considered. We are dealing with the immediacy of the 'here and now' rather than developing a research plan over a number of years involving a wider cohort of stakeholders. I guess we follow the concept through until we don't need to any more...

Project required that we develop the trials in a participatory approach, so the focus has always been on the end users being involved in the design.

We have been using the problem statement with researchers to be sure it's clear what the problem is, a very important step to be sure it's something the grower actually need and can use in their farming system.

We have tended to be too technical focussed and now try (sometimes) to consider the human users of the tech.

Think in systems

Already understand and apply this principle.

I believe I was not yet enrolled in the program when this topic was covered. Hence my limited understanding of the principle.

I think this is often done intuitively, but I like the template to show clearly who we could be working with and their potential contributions. I will definitely be using this in R, D & E project development.

It has made me think broader than I had been previously. Implementing has been low as the project was already developed.

Just to clarify my response I feel I came in with a reasonably high knowledge of thinking in systems.

More critically assess external or affected factors in how a project will move. One example is to consider the beneficiaries of a replaced technology as a stakeholder due to their influence over the successful transition from one technology to another.

The project focused more on tools and rules of thumb to manage the issues that systems present. There is much more depth of understanding to be explored with systems interaction, although the perceived need is limited due to most people preferencing linear thinking to systems thinking.

The project very much hinges on how [the crop] fit into the farming system, so we are thinking farming systems. This includes who needs to be educated (target audience) as this varies between operations (growers directly, agronomists/advisors).

These questions are hard to answer as a co-funder. Across the board the work and project reinforced the direction being taken in our business. Not necessarily giving more confidence but more a signal in the directions we are taking. I would be keen to understand how the [industry] project responded to this.

This is the first time I have become aware of the systems approach. Because we are generally working with a specific grower on a specific issue in a specific location, complete models are not applicable, but certainly applying elements of different systems has been beneficial. I have found that the challenges we deal with are obvious (to us) and are often complex. Each step of the [crop] production cycle from sourcing and storage of compost ingredients, composting, pasteurization, filling and casing, growing and harvesting all present unique influences on pest and disease expression and are mostly interrelated.

We now try to explicitly describe how our tech development will complement and/or integrate with other farming systems.

Barriers to applying principles

A common challenge was project timing, as many projects were already well underway or past their initial design phase when they became involved in the LP22001 project, leaving minimal opportunity to implement early-stage concepts like co-design. Additionally, widespread time poverty, limited scheduling capacity, and the inherent rigidity of the broader RDC funding systems restricted some projects' ability to properly document processes or dynamically alter their existing project milestones.

Barriers to applying principles

In some ways, a change of role removed me from directly managing extension practitioners in the cotton industry, but also allowed me the time and thinking space to explore issues more deeply.

[The project] is structured in such a way that we respond directly to a farm IPDM or P&D issue and resolve it with the tools available. Developing a research program and project proposal are not in the scope. LP22001 has greatly enlightened me on the concepts and principles applying to maximising research impact, reflected in the high scores for 'increased understanding'. Given the nature of [the project], the opportunities to apply them fully do not arise although part principles are applied as needed and in an informal, unstructured way. If I was to develop a new project, these principles would be closely adhered to.

My project was already well underway before I started to learn these principles, so I missed the opportunity to apply many of them that are most relevant early in the project (like co-design etc.).

My role in the project was heavily focused on engagement with stakeholders, and management of the project partners who were delivering the guts of the project. I have not had the opportunity to apply in any great amount the principles of project design and monitoring and evaluation.

My time to think broader than what was right in front of me at the time. Looking back, many of the principles would have been better address earlier in my project so I could enhance the outcomes. My understanding of some such as thinking in systems also limited my usage of this principle.

Nothing in particular, just the relevance of each one to the particular project.

Probably not working specifically on something that aligned at the time.

Sometimes the time required to implement, sometimes the rigidity of the RDC system.

Taking time to properly understand the principle and then work out how to apply it, therefore impacting confidence levels.

The stage of the project and my scheduling capacity: the project was past design and up to delivery for the most part of my involvement. The subsequent result of having to redesign solutions away from delivery-as-designed happened when I had limited capacity to work on this project (higher priorities).

These principles are inherent in our program. I could spend more time on collecting and measuring impact. This will be a focus for me over the next 6 months as I develop a 10-year impact report.

Time. Principles are great and on our project team most of us actually use them without realising we are (good extension skills anyway from years of experience) so documenting all of the process isn't happening.

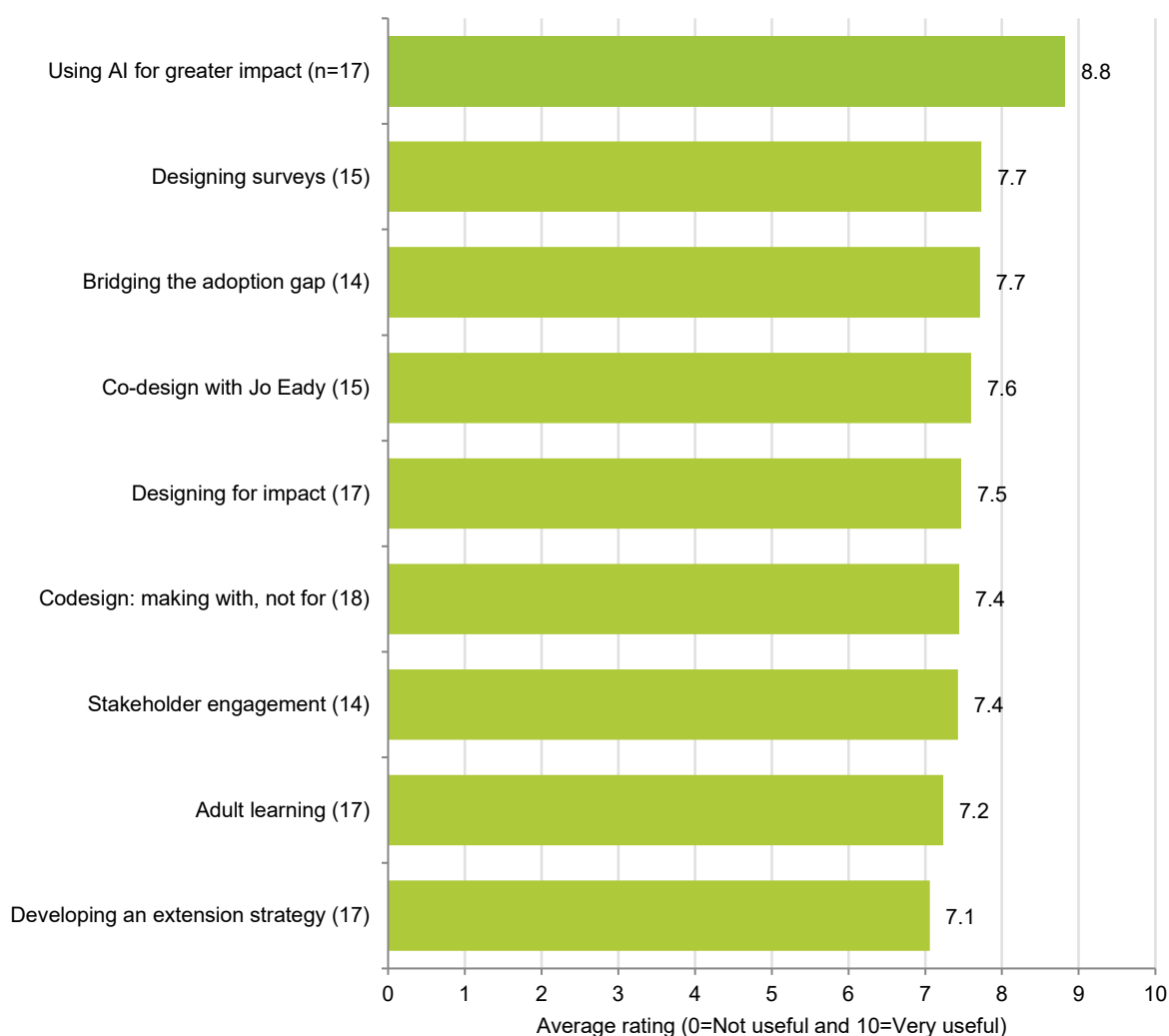
Timing and capacity. Also, some of this applies to others across the org, not me personally.

Was not present for this session so feel my answers would not clearly reflect the work done on the day.

Usefulness of webinars

All webinar topics were on average rated highly useful in terms of increasing understanding and use of specific principles – average ratings ranged from 7.1 for ‘Developing an extension strategy’ to 8.8 for ‘Using AI for greater impact’. The webinars were described as a crucial component of the project that effectively illustrated practical, real-life research-to-extension scenarios, risks, and operational solutions. However, many respondents encountered scheduling conflicts that prevented them from attending the sessions in real time. Those who had to watch the recorded versions later noted that they unfortunately missed out on the highly interactive and thought-provoking live breakout group discussions.

Usefulness of webinar topics in increasing understanding/use of principles



Comments

Missed the chats in some that I watched back. The group discussions were sometimes the most thought provoking.

MRIs brought practical experiences from real-life research-to-extension situations and illustrated problems that could be encountered but also the solutions and work arounds that are possible and that were effective in a practical sense.

My apologies. I only got to one of these and therefore largely a N/A for me.

N/A is linked to those I wasn't available for in real time and didn't link/listen back to.

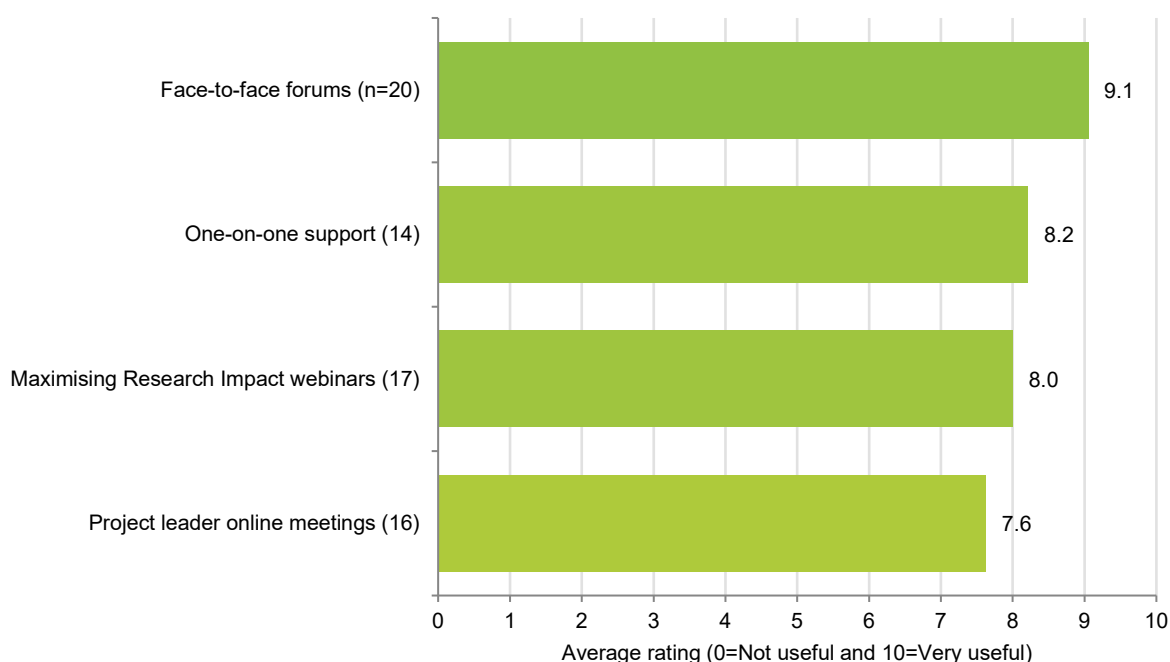
Unfortunately I didn't make it to many of the webinars. However, the topics covered are so useful and I really looking forward to going back through the webinars. The webinars were a crucial part of the project.

Was not involved in the project during these.

Usefulness of support

All types of project support were highly rated in terms of their usefulness in helping participants apply principles and approaches to their projects – average ratings ranged from 7.6 for the 'Project leader online meetings' to 9.1 for the 'Face-to-face forums'. Comments highlighted the usefulness of the face-to-face engagement – particularly at the forums and one-on-one mentoring.

Usefulness of support in terms of applying principles and approaches



Comments

All formats were excellent and helpful. I appreciated the 1:1 support most, but it would have been less highly ranked if I didn't have the webinars and online meetings.

Breaking out of my silo by interacting with others in a similar field but in different situations has been invaluable. I still feel as though a pure extension project [it] was not the best fit for the idea driving LP22001, but I am very glad to have been involved. It was also beneficial to interact with fellow deliverers in the different forums as each offered a unique environment for information transfer

Definitely the F2F was the gold standard of learning. The 1-on-1 were good, but usually limited by my prior thought in the lead up.

My meetings with Denise and Vaughan were always the highlight of each month.

On reflection, I think this element could be offered as needed rather than scheduled.

Only involved in the last face to face forum which was very engaging and covered great content.

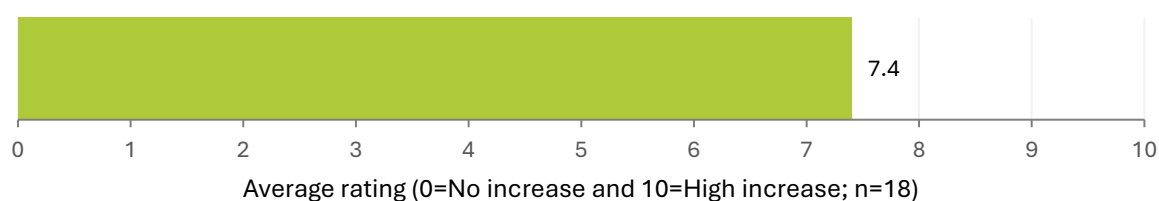
Particularly liked the timeline slide. Great reminder as to where we're at.

Webinars were great when I was able to attend, but didn't take time to listen back!

Increased confidence in achieving better outcomes

On average, respondents had increased confidence that their projects would achieve better outcomes as a result of the changes they had made through applying the project's principles (7.4/10 avg. rating). The program was seen to have provided robust, structured frameworks that validated existing practices and increased long-term confidence that extension activities would remain relevant, usable, and impactful. One comment noted that *research continues to dominate investment and as a result, we keep trying to force adoption and extension activities into research-driven project structures.*

Extent changes made increased confidence in achieving better outcomes from research project or programs



	Average	Min	Max	Count (n)
Project leader/team	7.5	2	10	10
Co-funder	7.8	7	8	4
Co-funder & project leader/team	7.0	5	9	4
Overall	7.4	2	10	18

Comments

I have been fortunate that my delivery partner has worked in extension for a few decades and is highly accomplished and well respected within the industry both locally and internationally. I have transitioned from strictly research to extension delivery via [industry] farm management and exotic growing so I had not been exposed to extension at all previously. Leading this project and a previous iteration has given structure to my extension delivery and has validated the approach of my partner. I have more-or-less ridden on her reputation and expertise, but LP22001 has certainly given me the confidence that we are doing the 'right thing' even if I didn't know it at the time. LP22001 has also illustrated the fact that there is flexibility in these principles and that neither all the principles nor all their component concepts fit all projects. It has been difficult to describe how [the project] 'picks and chooses' principles and concepts in the above survey... (10 rating)

The changes made as a result of the Research for Impact project have increased confidence in achieving better outcomes, particularly by providing clearer frameworks for designing projects with impact, stakeholder use and decision-making in mind. While longer-term outcomes are still emerging, the strengthened approach to project design, engagement and reflection has improved confidence that research and extension activities are more likely to be relevant, usable and impactful. (8 rating)

Looking forward to implementing / incorporating into other project(s) / program(s)! (7 rating)

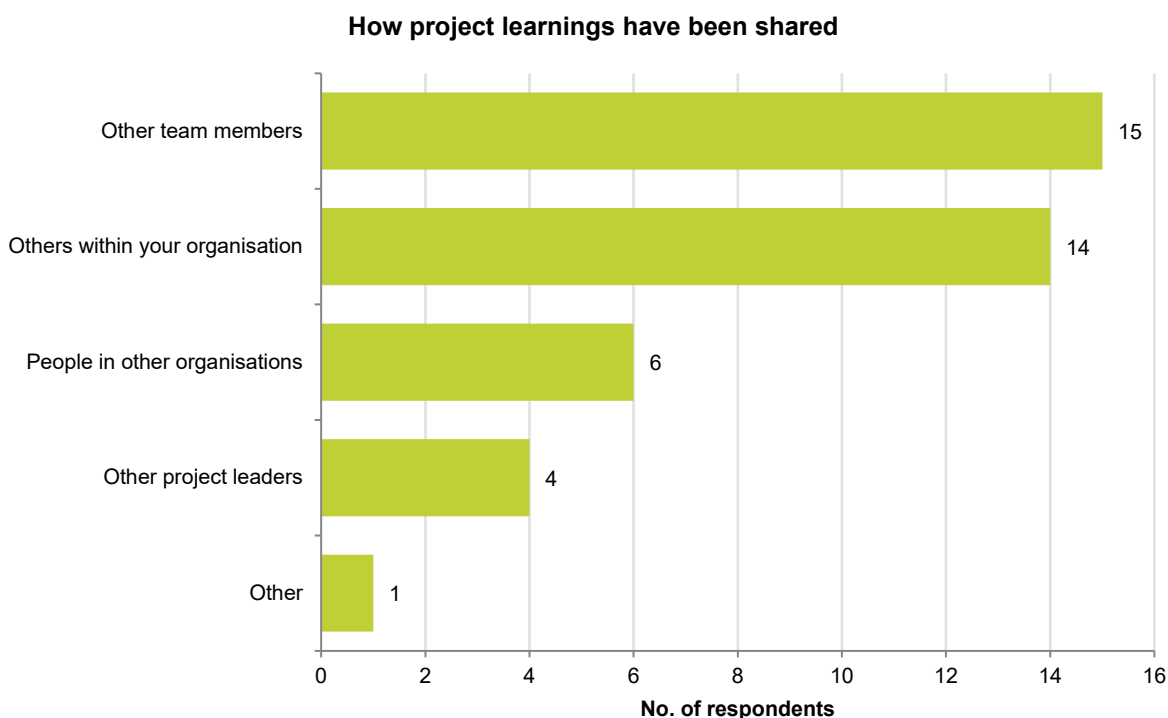
I've learned lots of new principles. Now I need to see how well I can apply them (in forthcoming projects). (6 rating)

The upskilling in this project has been valuable, but there's still a fundamental imbalance: research continues to dominate investment, while adoption receives almost none. As a result, we keep trying to force adoption and extension activities into research-driven project structures. Even if our adoption skills improve, we're still applying them in the wrong context. It's like being taught to hold a cricket bat with two hands, but then being told to bat with one hand tied behind your back. (5 rating)

I can see the potential of being engaged in a project like this alongside delivering research or supporting the design of programs. It has not yet impacted my role but is shifting how I think about extension going forward. (No rating)

Sharing of learnings

Most respondents had shared learnings from the project with other team members – sharing project resources, tools, and insights within their respective organisations. Learnings have been shared regularly during weekly team meetings, passed directly to project delivery partners, and introduced broadly to entire research programs and specific project teams. While many participants intend to further scale these insights across wider networks, a lack of dedicated time to provide sustained internal follow-up was a challenge.



Comments

I discuss lessons from this project on a regular basis at the weekly [organisation] Innovation Broker team meetings.

I gained many insights from the final face-to-face meeting and have discussed these with my organisation and other colleagues. I also intend to share key outcomes on our organisation's communication platforms going forward.

I have been sharing the relevant resources with my coworkers when they pop up.

It is funny to tell my project partner that what she is doing has a name... and to introduce her (a difficult job) to AI and convince her of the benefits...

Lots of conversations have risen as a result of this project about how we can maximise the adoption and effectiveness of the technology that we develop, rather than it sitting on the shelf at an RDC or university.

Once we have the "package of outputs" from this investment this will be shared through our networks.

The principles I have spoken to when those situations have come up. The ability to get these across will be improved with documentation for context.

Waiting for final outputs to further share and implement.

We have taken the principles of Research for Impact to a number of researchers in our organisation, to a project team and a whole Program. What's missing is the follow up and continued support and at present I don't have enough time to dedicate to this.

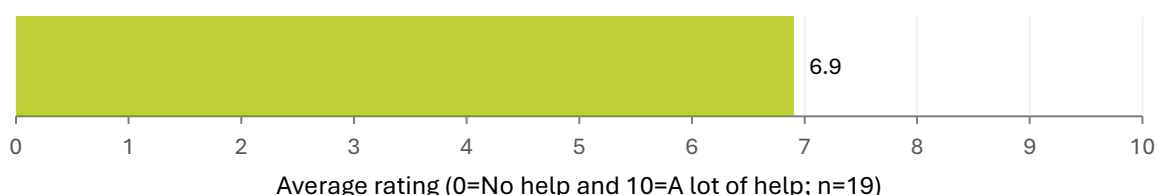
Webinar content fed back into my teams. Ideas in 1:1 proposed and actioned in the project (others within org).

When relevant, I have shared learnings with other members of my organisation as well as directly applied them to projects.

Collaboration with other RDCs/organisations

The extent to which the project helped participants better collaborate with other RDCs and organisations varied between co-funders and team members – co-funders felt the project had been a lot of help in terms of improving collaboration (9.3/10 avg. rating), while those on project teams found it less helpful (4.8/10 avg. rating). The in-person meetings were highly praised for successfully strengthening RDC networks and providing opportunities for program managers to support one another. The low scores from certain project team members reflected the isolation of operating within niche industry silos where they perceived external collaboration as structurally challenging.

Extent project helped to better collaborate with other RDCs/organisations



	Average	Min	Max	Count (n)
Project leader/team	4.8	0	8	9
Co-funder	9.3	7	10	7
Co-funder & project leader/team	8.0	7	9	3
Overall	6.9	0	10	19

Comments

Even in one meeting it has created connections and will help my role going forward in cross organisational collaborations. (10 rating)

Hugely beneficial! The project has significantly help strengthen RDC relationships, especially as a result of the in-person meetings. (10 rating)

Opened the door to engage in a targeted way. (10 rating)

The F2F meetings have resulted in a stronger network, being able to meet other program managers and build a good relationship where we can support one another. (10 rating)

It has been my main conduit to people in other RDCs. (9 rating)

Great to get to know and understand them better. (8 rating)

It has helped when in person. Following up on our ideas has been challenging. (8 rating)

It's provided connection however I wasn't in a position to utilise that connection (at that point in time - no fault of the project etc). (8 rating)

The interactions over the past 3 years have been amazing. (8 rating)

I think having this project created greater F2F opportunity to bring the RDCs together. This is critical for continued collaboration in this space. (7 rating)

We are in a bit of a silo with a very narrow focus of delivery in a unique industry that is very secretive. I don't know how collaboration would be at all possible. (0 rating)

Met people from other organisations I would not normally interact with. (No rating)

Situations most beneficial for collaboration

Respondents identified that collaboration is most beneficial when addressing multi-enterprise farming systems, as modern farm businesses are interconnected and cannot be effectively supported by an isolated RDC operating in a vacuum. Joint efforts were seen to be highly effective when organisations share identical goals, industry needs, or systemic RD&E problems, allowing a diverse group of experts to expand outcomes collectively without competing egos or hidden agendas.

Comments

All, as all too often we have farmers that are running more than one enterprise and we are naive to believe that an RDC in isolation can produce the most impactful RD&E on its own. Systems thinking is absolutely integral to enhancing farm businesses.

Face to face.

I'm struggling to think of industries/crops that would share aligned and/or allied outcomes...

In all situations. Having a number of brains on a topic helps expand possible outcomes.

Shared problems/opportunities.

Sharing of ideas, practises, provider options.

The RDCs and likely the Hubs as well need to continue to benefit from this x-rdc/entity collaboration. Future principles or frameworks (Q14) need to be driven/endorse from a joint position. This needs to be driven from the similarities in E&A and Impact Strategies.

To help overcome sticking points in project delivery.

Trying to tackle system (as in RD&E) problems together.

When everyone is looking for the same outcome - no hidden agenda or ego's that prevent sharing and collaboration.

When problems are shared by more than one.

When there is a shared need.

When we each need the expert insight of the other party to achieve a project aim.

Where there is a shared aim.

Where there is a shared goal or issue, and we can approach it and learn from different perspectives.

Whilst we may all have different goals aligned with our project, we are all working with people. This brings us together to share learnings and ideas on the process and challenges involved in the research and extension world of agriculture.

Principles to incorporate future projects

Looking ahead, participants outlined several key strategic adjustments they plan to make in future projects – e.g. incorporating co-design, user adoption planning, and stakeholder engagement from the start. Many also intended to use artificial intelligence more effectively for project delivery, apply systems thinking to drive better on-the-ground change, and adopt a unified, top-down collaborative approach across RDCs.

Comments

AI - that's a new ball game and it will improve planning / delivery.

AI, more people focus and decision making, incorporate more narrative sharing, and co-design/produce better.

Co-design/ stakeholder involvement in study design, ideally before or just after project kick off!

Future principles or frameworks (Q14) need to be driven/endorse from a joint position. This needs to be driven from the similarities in E&A and Impact Strategies. This project has been good to get the tools/principles etc revisited however I think we need to now tackle a slightly more top down approach. Particularly in light of the SERD report.

I believe they all have a place in different situations.

I would aim to incorporate all the principles, especially if I am involved from project conception.

I would utilise AI more effectively.

If I was to contemplate a new project, I would begin with co-design, approaching potential collaborators and contributors can be identified and sounded out early. This would not be possible for [funder] projects as there is a very small window from call for tenders and tender submission, although this window has increased of late.

More consideration of the end adoption/extension/user requirements during early project planning stages.

Really not sure. I thought it was a very well thought out and executed project. I'm a bit of an outlier as I didn't ever have

contact with the [industry] Researcher, as I had just taken on a new job and was on a steep learning curve with a new team, so my time to this project was not consistent unfortunately. If only I knew now, back when I went to the first F2F!

The F2F is a must. My project was limited by being the funder and the project manager, and while I got the benefits of both worlds, it would have been better to bring a relevant project participant in.

Thinking in systems is something we often tend to miss in project design and it is important to build on this to see change on the ground. Engaging stakeholders throughout is the next one we need to focus on more often - not just bring them in for a few sessions but from step 0.

Using SMART principles to write deliverables and milestones for projects.

Will look at full suite with regards to what is appropriate to particular projects.

Better incorporation of principles

To better embed the principles into future initiatives, respondents highlighted the importance of ongoing support, including coaching, mentoring, and refresher programs. It was emphasised that the principles needed to be institutionalised – e.g. writing them directly into funding guidelines and standard team development procedures at a funding level. The importance for more widespread teaching of these concepts was noted, including the development of reference manuals.

Comments

Coaching, mentoring, refresher programs.

Embed them in our development team's ways of working.

Great 'instructions' in the legacy documents.

Just knowing of their existence and how/where to apply them is of great benefit. If I was to develop a new project, I would be regularly dipping into the Community of Practice site to refresh ideas and communicate with other project leaders.

More widespread teaching of these principles. A brief hardcopy version of these principles as a future reference/reminder.

The knowledge of them and having them front of mind.

The time to understand how to incorporate these into funding guidelines, or another RDC going first and letting us copy!!

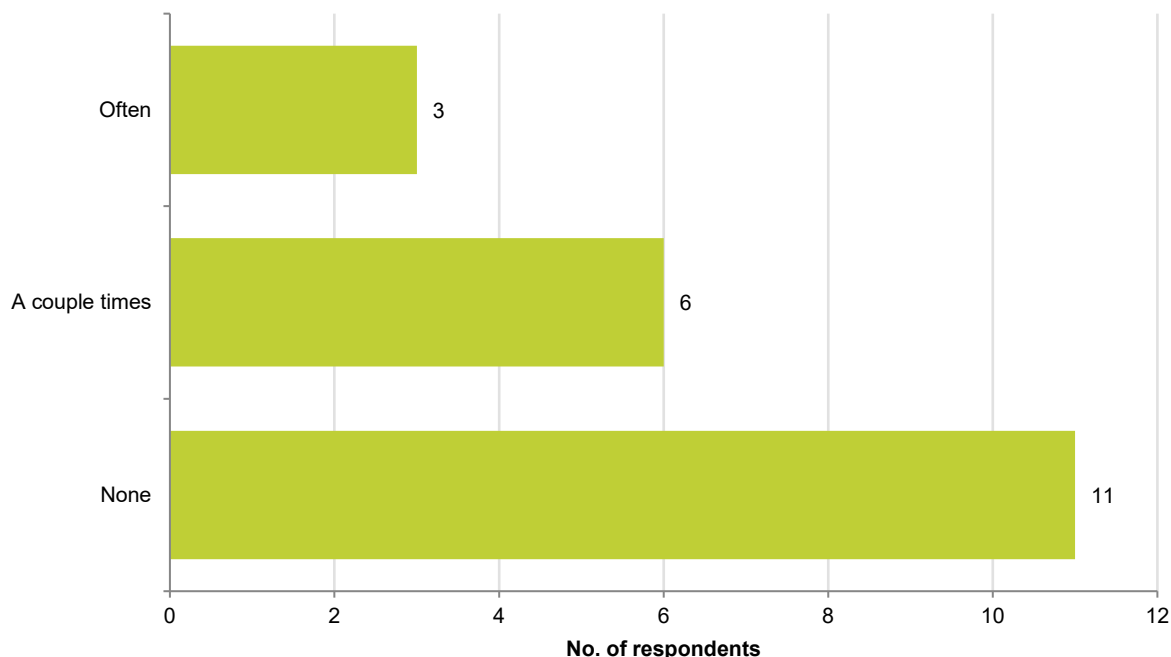
Wider understanding and support from the teams I work within.

Working these principles from a funding level and designing programs that make them possible and having skills/tools to support groups to use them.

Use and value of the CoP website

Feedback on the Community of Practice (CoP) site showed it was highly valued as a central repository for downloading templates, reading relevant articles, and catching up on missed content. However, primary barriers to its active use included password login issues, a perceived lack of interactive community discussion, and general lack of time (some forgot the resource existed entirely). Moving forward, ongoing access to a similar centralised repository was seen as valuable for future reference – particularly for early-career researchers.

Sought information or resources from the Community of Practice site



Comments

Usefulness of CoP site

Basically used it to compose and capture ideas. There was not enough interaction to benefit from the "community" aspect.

Fairly useful. I would either look there or amongst emails to find what I was looking for.

I actually found the site difficult to find information. It was probably because I didn't use it often enough and every time I went back in I forgot my password and then also navigating around it.

I found it useful to see some of the content others were reading about and considering, such as Cynefin which I picked up from there.

I went looking for a specific resource or discussion point and was able to find it.

It is fabulous to have all the resources just sitting there in one place to be able to catch up on things you missed, find the templates etc. I love it. Just a pity we are all time poor and we didn't get the input from the whole team for discussion in the chats. Love the idea, difficult to execute. Perhaps a WhatsApp group for researchers?

Really useful. There have been some great articles/topics covered that really resonate. One that has had a huge impact is "Don't nag, design". This has pretty much become my mantra. Not just in an adoption context but for all aspects of leadership.

Useful.

Reasons for not using CoP site

At the stage of this project, we have a schedule of outputs framed up and we are focussed on delivering in 'our style' as industry seems to appreciate. Even though we could benefit from the information there, I am reluctant to try and fix something that isn't broken (yet).

Honestly, I forgot about it as a useful resource. And when I did remember, I had then also forgot how to login, so it was put into the too-hard basket. I could be useful to have an email reminder now and again of what the COP site features, and what new info is available. Or maybe you were already doing that and I'm just not paying attention.

Just another place to look. Easier to find links in emails etc.

Navigating to the site and logging in is a barrier (albeit small).

New to project and don't have access.

Not front of mind - sorry :(

There probably needs to be firm commitment from the get-go by all involved that it would be utilised. Given it started halfway through, I probably just didn't get in the swing of it.

Time and ease of access - I just don't think of it. When I do think of it, it feels big and like another thing to have to do. I have used resources in another training on a password protected site, but it doesn't seem as overwhelming to have to interact with it.

Too busy at work.

Usefulness of having on-going access to similar resources going forward

As discussed between the co-funders we are working to have these resources centrally located for easy access.

Highly.

I personally would rather visit the enablers of change website, especially when sharing resources with other team members.

I struggle to engage with all of the "tools" that are available as it is (even just doing regular social media content - LinkedIn, FB - is a battle). So, I say yes but will I actually use the tools?

If I was continuing in a project management role, a resource such as this this would be very useful.

It would be great to have ongoing access. I think it is a behaviour change we need to see at all levels - not just from the grassroots using these resources but from them being embedded in our processes.

It would be helpful, but I'd prefer a hardcopy reference manual rather than a CoP.

Long term - APEN or equivalent should adopt this sort of cross-collab.

Minimal. I think I ask AI for approaches and ideas now, including references and examples where they have been applied.

Not without a significant change.

Somewhat useful. I'd like to be able to access a repository, but maybe not interact. I like the group sessions for interacting.

Useful.

Useful for future reference.

Very useful - once (early career?) researchers are initiated into the world of maximising research impact so all are aware that such material exists and is available and how it can be applied to their RD&E and future project development.

Very useful and critical - great resources.

Very useful whether that be through the platform or website resource page.

Very useful.

VERY!!!! see above.

Next steps to progress the principles

To effectively progress these impact principles post-project, respondents highlighted a need for structural funding reforms, specifically calling for a rebalanced investment strategy that better prioritises development and extension components. The importance of funding bodies embedding this thinking into standard business operations was noted, including broadening contract scopes to grant investments the flexibility to pivot and fit changing industry needs. A unified, top-down leadership approach was strongly recommended, with the Council of RDCs considered key in driving cross-sector extension, adoption, and impact strategies. To ensure research relevance, suggestions were made around mandatory early-career exposure and compulsory training for researchers.

- *Comments.*
- *Adoption of the materials by RDC teams.*
- *Adoption of the principles - identify the appropriate timing of when or how to use each one.*
- *As an organisation we are working to establish ourselves as good communicators and as such as a good extension provider. To achieve this we need to keep these principles in mind.*
- *Broader communication of the outcomes and learnings.*
- *Changes within the RD&E investment strategy. For every \$1 of research investment there should be at least \$0.5 be dedicated to the D & the E component. At the very least.*
- *Clearly define the next users of the project outputs. Assess the opportunity to resource the support of short and medium term impacts.*
- *For funding bodies to integrate this thinking into how they release funding bids and for use in developing fair and much broader contract scopes to enable projects to shift and change to fit the needs of industry.*
- *Future principles or frameworks (Q14) need to be driven/endorse from a joint position. This needs to be driven from the similarities in E&A and Impact Strategies. This project has been good to get the tools/principles etc revisited however I think we need to now tackle a slightly more top down approach. Particularly in light of the SERD report. It is important that this is seen as a joint position statement at the Council of RDCs and needs to be driven by the RDCs.*
- *I think that all researchers need to be exposed to this material early in their career. I know of a number of projects funded by the [industry] that have returned absolutely nothing to growers but have boosted researchers' publications. But it can't be just 'a book' - we can all read. The enthusiasm of John, Denise and Jeff for enabling change is the critical factor. Easy to proffer, but I don't know how this could be made to happen... even if it is just a day of mandatory attendance just to be made aware of the resources that are available to help enable research to get where it needs to go. Maybe the RDCs can introduce a requirement...*
- *I think there could be a 'teach on' component where we have a small group homework and could interact with them to share the principles/discussion and bring observations back to the group for consideration. That would spiral this valuable info out to another level.*
- *Make the training available to a wider audience in research organisations (perhaps as a Udemy or Course RA*

series that we can pay for?).

- *RDCs have to be serious about the process and provide resourcing to effectively imbed the process. Compulsory training when researchers get their funding!*
- *RDCs and other funding organisations need to see the benefit of this project and how they can incorporate the learnings into their standard business going forward. The power of building capacity in extension needs to be demonstrated.*
- *The legacy document will be a huge help and resource I will revisit often.*
- *To incorporate not just the principles, but to have a couple of tools/approaches under each that can be accessed by anyone.*

Other comments

Comments

Although I feel as though my participation in LP22001 has deprived a more deserving researcher of the opportunity to discover how to maximise research impact, I feel privileged to have been involved and have been greatly inspired by the team delivering this project.

Are there poster style tools that we could put with a quick summary of the principles? A3 size as a reminder to all around the office.

I found this survey hard to complete as a co-funder. I have tried my best to articulate it from a RDC point of view. It may come out in the final survey analysis however - although the components and touch points were positive for the [co-funder] investment. I still have a question of whether the [industry] project did result in having a greater impact or the potential for greater impact? The difficulty here is the way these projects were initially allocation to the Research for Impact project and with those that were already designed and in play it left little room for change if needed from the principles.

It's been a privilege to be part of this piece of work, and I look forward to a time when we can all do it again :).

The funding process is probably letting the system down - ability to adopt a co-design process in the early stages of planning (before funding is actually approved). Not sure what the answer is there, but working with currently funded researchers and get them adopting the principles to increase impact should mean they will take it onto their next project - continuous improvement.