

INSTITUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

THEORY OF CHANGE

HOW THE IES DELIVERS TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE



The institution of
environmental sciences



Foreword

The IES has developed a Theory of Change to describe the impacts that we are working towards and to articulate how our actions are helping to enact the changes needed to achieve them.

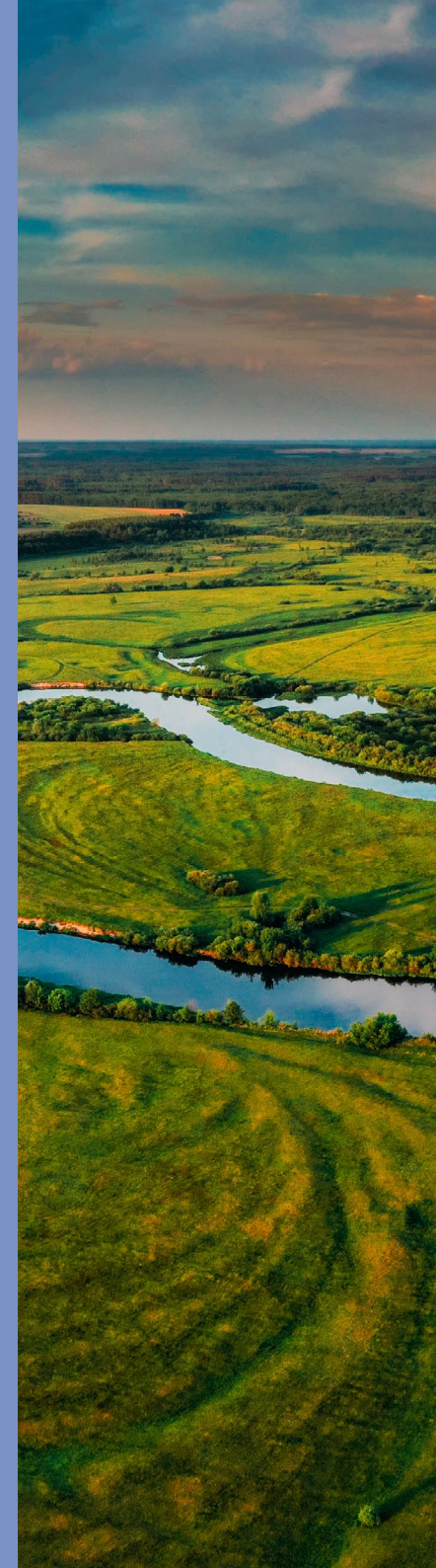
The Theory of Change illustrates the range of activities and outputs of the IES and links these to the desired outcomes, providing a framework for measuring success and highlighting gaps in delivery.

We have developed this Theory of Change to ensure that the work we do is focussed on the change we wish to see and to support continual improvement in our activities through robust measurement of impact. It will also help our members, staff, collaborative partners, funders and other stakeholders to understand the

impact that we are seeking and their role within the IES system as change-makers.

Our Theory of Change recognises that the IES is much more than just its staff: our members and collaborations with other organisations are integral to achieving our mission.

Supplementary to the Theory of Change is our Indicator Framework, which links our outcomes with relevant metrics and indicators so that we can evaluate progress towards our impact. As a science-led organisation, ensuring that our interventions and activities are supported by evidence is vital, and we will seek to act on the findings of our Indicator Framework as needed.



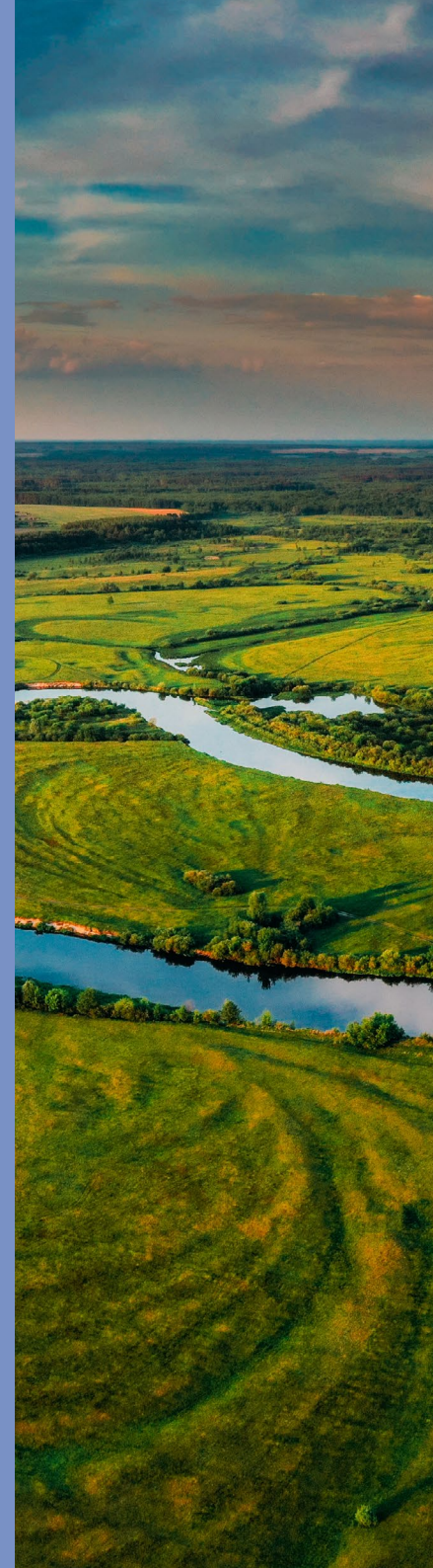
Development & Use

The Theory of Change was developed through an iterative process, with input from staff, members and other stakeholders. The IES also sought professional support in its development through the Coalition for Efficiency's *Measuring the Good* project. The Theory of Change is aligned with current IES purposes as articulated in our 2021-24 strategy.

Whilst strategy and activities change over time, the purposes of the organisation are likely to stay quite consistent. Nevertheless, we will review the Theory of Change after the publication of each new three-year strategy, and in response to evidence that emerges from the Indicator Framework.

Our Theory of Change will be a vital tool to support us in telling our story, celebrating our successes, and identifying

activities that are most impactful. It will therefore play a key role in helping us to understand how we should prioritise our work, guiding the formulation of future strategies and programmes of work.



The IES Ecosystem

As a membership body for environmental scientists, the IES operates in a system of interconnected stakeholders. Groups within the IES family and partner organisations play a fundamental role in the activities and impacts of the IES. As such, these stakeholders are highlighted as key change-makers in our Theory of Change.

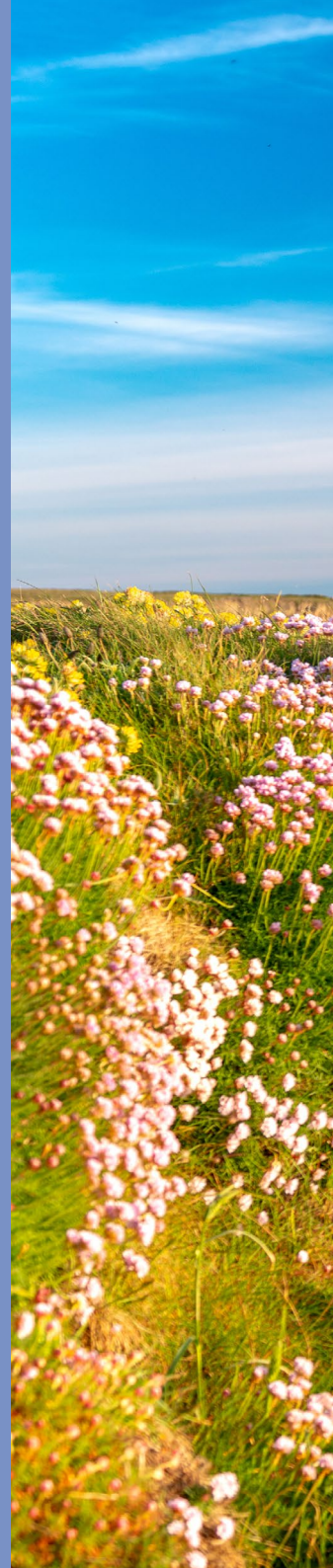
The IES strives to be member-led and operates with a collaborative ethos. Volunteers underpin the work of the IES; every year we mobilise over 500 volunteers to support our work. Key vehicles for the work of the IES volunteers are our Committees and Communities.

Within our Communities are a number of semi-autonomous organisations: the Institute for Air Quality Management (IAQM), Foundation for Water Research (FWR), and the Community for

Environmental Disciplines in Higher Education (CEDHE). This Theory of Change aims to capture the work of these Communities within the wider IES ecosystem, but where relevant complementary impact frameworks will be developed based on the specific focus of a Community and to aid in Community workplans and strategies, as well as project evaluation.

The Theory of Change is relevant to a number of stakeholders, including:

- Staff
- Volunteers
- Members
- Partner organisations
- Corporate Partners
- Funders



Underpinning Values

The Theory of Change is underpinned by the IES values of professionalism, quality assurance and responsibility, sound science, integrity and equity. Moreover, we champion systems thinking and have endeavoured to embed systems thinking approaches across our activities. We know that systemic interventions are needed for transformative change and that therefore our activities cannot be done in isolation. Developing a Theory of Change has allowed us to explore the linkages between our different activities and across different outcomes.

Our Theory of Change is rooted in the purposes outlined in the 2021-24 IES Strategy: Guiding Transformative Change. These purposes reflect the dual nature of the work of the IES – the internal focus on supporting our members, and the external focus on supporting transformative change in the environment sector and society at large.

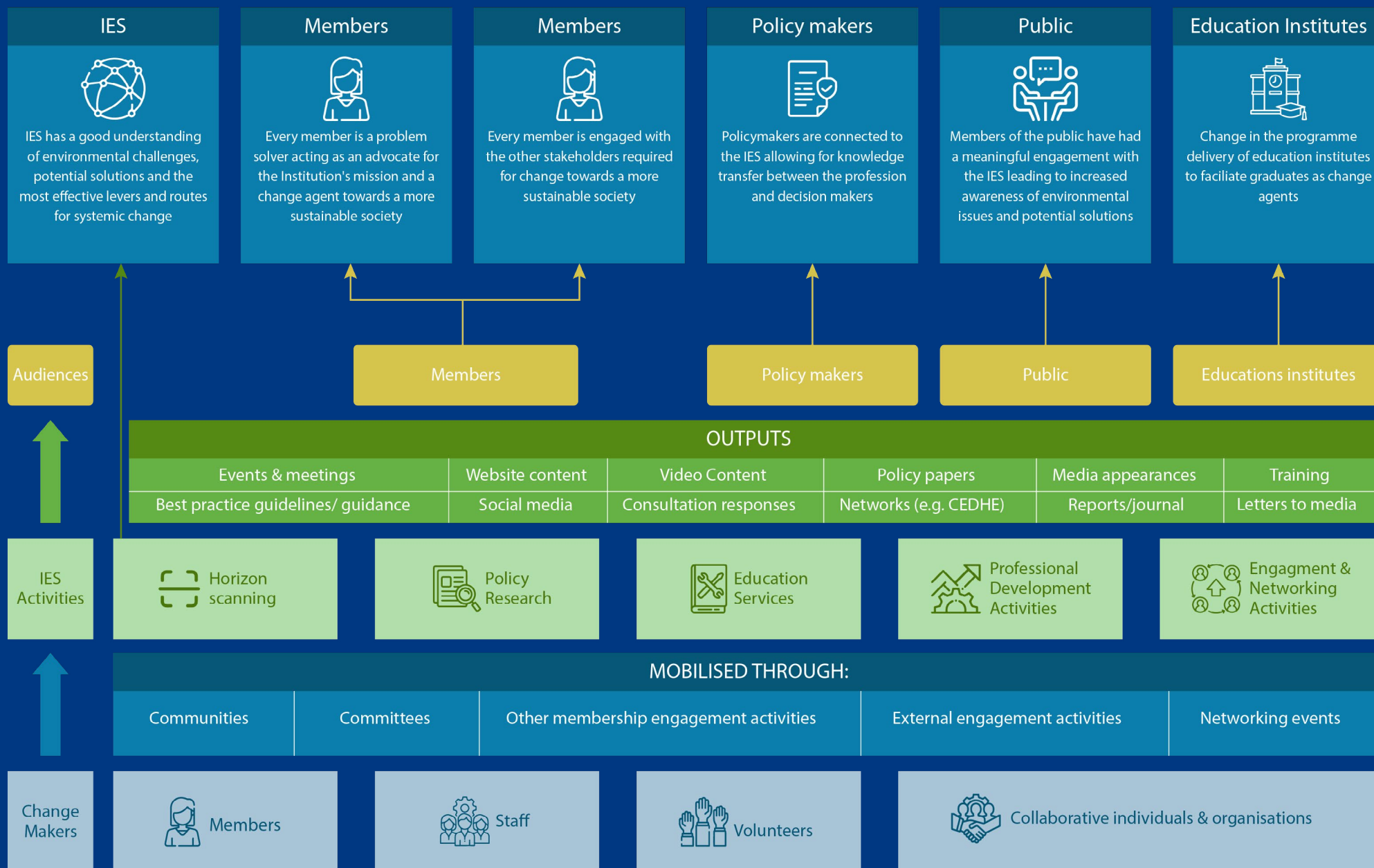
To reflect this, our Theory of Change focuses on two key impacts:

1. People have access to the relevant science to help them solve environmental challenges
2. A knowledgeable, skilled, diverse and trusted environmental profession that is engaged in the transformation to a sustainable society

These two impacts are intrinsically linked, as the environmental profession plays such a key role in helping different audiences have access to robust and relevant science. As such, although these are presented separately in the visualisations, it is with the understanding that the latter is nested within the former.



PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO THE RELEVANT SCIENCE TO HELP THEM SOLVE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES



Impact 1: The change we are seeking in the world

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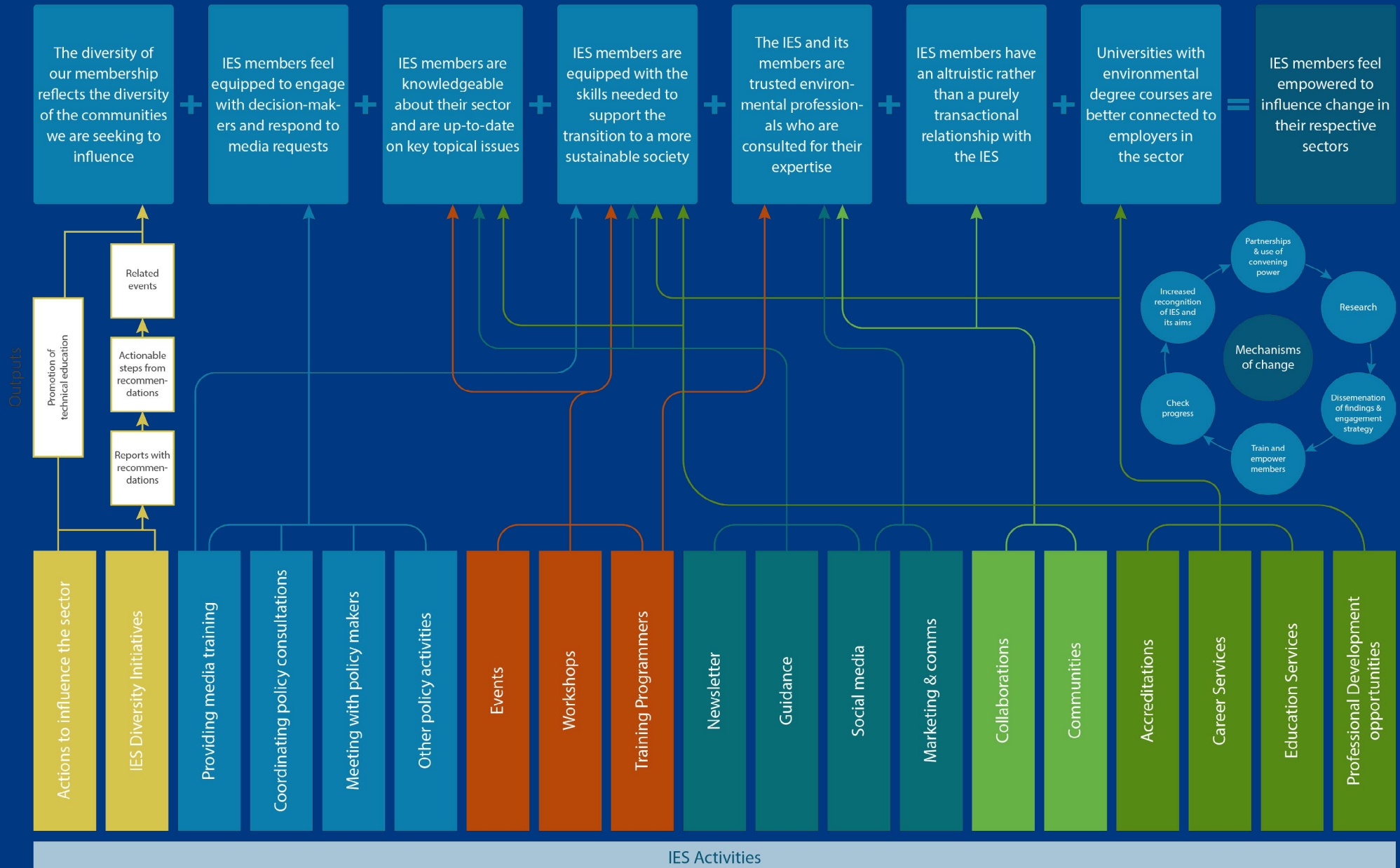
The IES fulfils its mission through Change Makers — the actions of members, staff, volunteers and collaborative partners who we mobilise through various fora.

The IES undertakes a very broad set of activities (as shown in Impact 2), but for the purpose of this Theory of Change diagram these are categorised into five areas.

1. The IES undertakes a horizon scanning exercise every three years to give us an understanding of the megatrends that might be affecting the sector and how the science, regulation, workforce and work practices are evolving. This gives us insights into the environmental challenges we should be focusing on.
2. The IES policy team undertakes research and activities to influence policy on an international, national and local scale.
3. Through CEDHE the IES administers the largest accreditation scheme of environmental programmes globally and supports our educational partners in their delivery of environmental education.
4. The IES upskills its members through professional development activities.
5. The IES convenes stakeholders for knowledge exchange and brokering, supporting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning, promoting dialogue and creating communities of practice through its engagement and networking activities.

These activities are communicated through multiple channels in the form of outputs targeting different audiences and leading to key outcomes for each audience type. This is not a one-way process: the IES and its members deepen their understanding of issues through their interaction with stakeholders. When combined, these outcomes contribute towards the impact that we are seeking in the world: for people to have access to the relevant science to help them solve environmental challenges.

A KNOWLEDGEABLE, SKILLED, DIVERSE, AND TRUSTED ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSION ARE ENGAGED IN THE TRANSFORMATION TO A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY



Impact 2: The change we are seeking in the profession

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Our purpose in relation to the workforce/profession is in creating and sustaining a knowledgeable, skilled, diverse and trusted environmental profession that is engaged in a transformation to a sustainable society.

We believe there are several outcomes we need to achieve that impact.

- We should be aiming for a diverse profession, not just for moral reasons, but also if we hope to be a trusted and effective force for change, we must reflect the diversity of the communities we are seeking to influence. Different people and cultures know different things, and approach challenges in different ways, and this must be reflected in our approach.
- IES members need to be engaged with decision-makers and the media, using scientific evidence to influence debate and steer society towards more sustainable outcomes, and acting as advocates, arbiters and honest brokers.
- IES members must remain knowledgeable in a rapidly changing sector and develop and hone the skills and behaviours to help speed up the transition. The number of activities linked to this outcome indicates that this is where the majority of our activities are focused.
- Trust in environmental science is an essential component of achieving a transition to a sustainable society. Trust takes years to build but can be lost in a day, and the IES has mechanisms to build and preserve public trust in science.
- To fulfil our pathway to impact we need our members to be involved in the delivery of our mission. This includes content creation and contribution to our journal, reports, communities, policy work, webinars and conferences, and to play a role in upskilling and sharing knowledge with others.
- The education and training sector needs to be responsive to changing skill and knowledge needs and the IES has a role in helping them towards this goal.

We believe that if we achieve these outcomes, our members will feel empowered to influence change in their respective sectors and hence feed into the pathway for Impact 1.

This is not a linear process and the Mechanisms of Change graphic illustrates the process we go through with each activity and linked outcome, to ensure our activities result in the change we are seeking.

Indicator framework

Attributing impact and identifying causal links is notoriously difficult. We have therefore developed an Indicator Framework with a suite of metrics and data collection methods to help us paint a picture of the impact of our activities and outputs, to help us understand whether they are aligned with our desired outcomes and impacts.

These indicators include a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative measures and are designed to be used in tandem; no single indicator can tell us whether or not our outcomes have been achieved. Data collection methods aligned with this Indicator Framework will be built into project delivery and will be analysed on an annual basis. Baseline data will also be collected for relevant indicators so that changes can be measured. The Framework will be amended if and when new indicators are identified.

Assumptions

The Theory of Change process hinges on a number of assumptions which may limit its effectiveness in properly representing the reality of an organisation's activities, outcomes and impacts. These include a mixture of assumptions, both known and unknown, in the following areas:

- Delivery assumptions - i.e., that the IES has the skills and resources to deliver on its activities
- Impact assumptions - i.e., that the activities listed will result in the desired outcomes and impacts as stakeholders will meaningfully engage with IES activities

- Process assumptions - i.e., that the process of putting together the Theory of Change is robust and stakeholders' views have been well-represented

The Indicator Framework will help to test these assumptions and identify any unintended consequences, and the Theory of Change will be updated as needed when and if assumptions are proved to be wrong.



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