

## ABSTRACT

**Presentation Type:** Oral Presentation

**Theme:** Sub-theme 1: Engagement, Co-Design, and Collaborative Partnerships for Research Impact

**Title:** Designing R&D Projects from Impact: The Role of Research Development Professionals

**Presenters, Author(s):**

HUANG, Jewel

Office of Research, University of Western Australia

### **How does the abstract align with the theme?**

This abstract discusses the role of research development professionals in bridging the gap between discovery and impact.

### **Learning outcomes:**

By designing from an impact perspective, research project and partner selection shift beyond a traditional “blue-sky” mindset, enabling more competitive proposals and delivering tangible societal and economic benefits.

### **Abstract:**

Traditional academic practice often sees researchers designing projects grounded in disciplinary expertise and intellectual curiosity, with limited consideration of downstream impact. However, as Australia’s innovation agenda increasingly prioritises purpose-driven research, a shift in mindset is essential. Enabling this transition is not straightforward and highlights the critical role of research development professionals in bridging the gap between discovery and impact.

This presentation draws on practical experience supporting researchers to reconceptualise project design through an impact-oriented lens. It begins by clarifying the distinctions between research inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact, and guiding the development of clear pathways to impact within and beyond the project lifecycle.

End-product and market analysis (e.g. TAM, SAM, SOM) are introduced as important yet underutilised elements of research design. Aligning research objectives with market needs and opportunities improves adoption and scalability while addressing value for money. As these areas are often outside researchers’ core strengths—and sometimes even for SMEs—research development professionals play an important role in guiding this analysis.

Stakeholder mapping across the value chain is also essential for effective project design and impact delivery. Identifying and engaging partners capable of advancing technologies beyond Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4 is critical for successful translation. Research development professionals facilitate these connections, often leveraging industry networks and ecosystems.

By designing from an impact perspective, research project and partner selection shift beyond a traditional “blue-sky” mindset, enabling more competitive proposals and delivering tangible societal and economic benefits.