

BANFF, CANADA September 7–11, 2014

# The International School on Research Impact Assessment

## Understand the Discipline and Applications in Practice: Allocation

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September 8, 2014

Hosted by:



In partnership with:

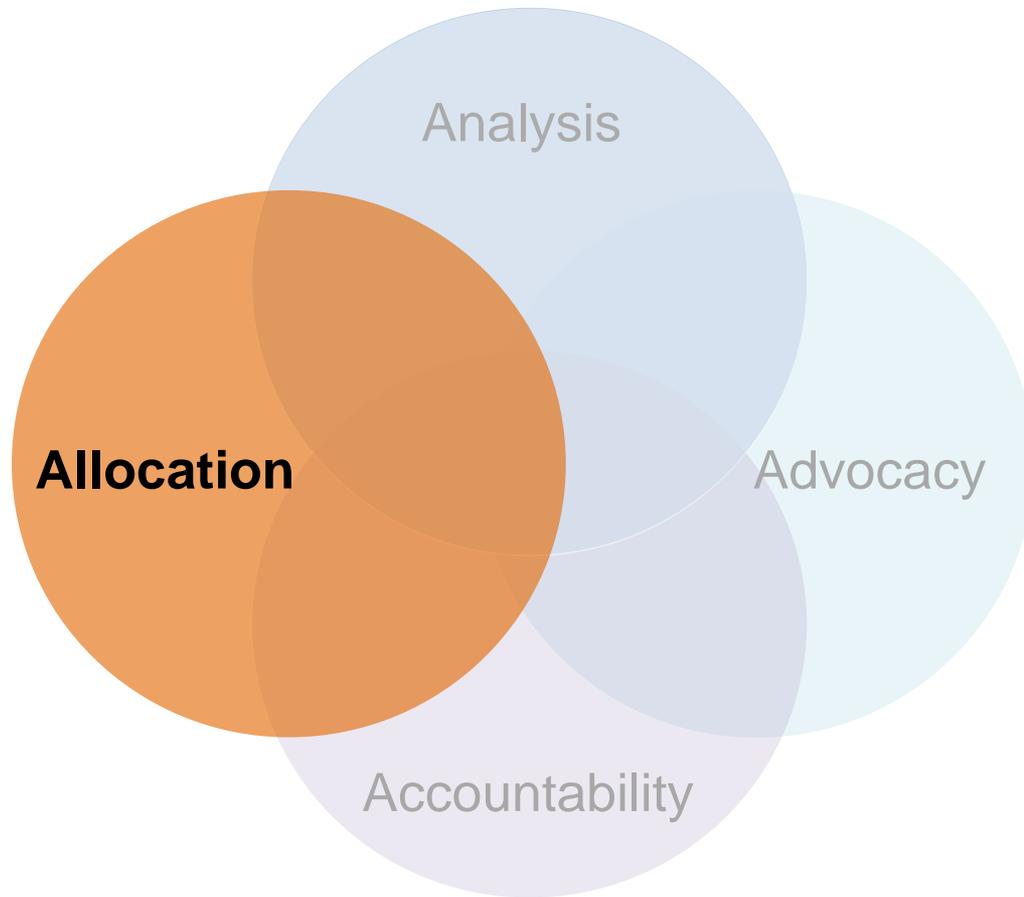


# Learning outcomes

- Be able to recall the ‘Allocation’ RIA purpose
- Be able to describe the ‘Allocation’ RIA purpose
- Know when to use an ‘Allocation’ RIA approach to best match an assessment context and considerations



# Assessment purpose





## Allocation

Making sure that funding for research is linked to an understanding of funding impacts



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# Allocation

- “To determine where best to allocate funds in the future, making the best use of a limited pot”
  - RAND Europe definition (see glossary)
- I would add:
  - “...based on the strategic goals of a funding body”





# Allocation – when to use it

- Not everyone wants to allocate based on impact
  - For example, people may want to allocate on prestige, geography, lottery, innovative concepts, etc.
- Allocation approaches are useful where you want to achieve specific impacts from funding
  - E.g. using an RIA to identify patent impacts where new IP is the desired goal of a funder
- Have tended to be used at larger scales
  - Works better with larger entities with more impacts to assess



# Allocation – how to use it

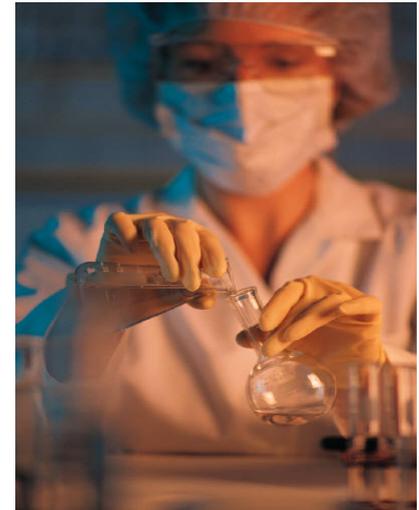


- Allocation RIAs focus on your internal strategic goals
  - Identify what your goals are and how research impacts can help to achieve those
- Allocation RIAs will tend to focus on exemplars of success
  - E.g. assessing university publications for allocation only uses best publications
- Need to be prepared for politics and unrest
  - Linking \$ to impacts is not universally popular



# Allocation – approaches and methods

- Allocation RIA doesn't prescribe evaluation approaches – but does tend towards summative evaluation of those seeking funding
- Many methods are available to Allocation RIAs, these commonly include:
  - Bibliometrics
  - Data mining
  - Peer review
  - Questionnaires



# Allocation – pros and cons

## Pros

- Provides a way to link impacts to funding
- Can allow funding to mirror strategy based on evidence
- Clear message to stakeholders over expectations for funding

## Cons

- Debate over what impacts should decide \$
- Debate over reliability of RIA in relation to \$
- Perverse incentives
- Political backlash
- Changing priorities can change RIA approach
- Prospective nature of allocation



# Case example: arc

- While arc did not directly engage in allocation based on their RIAs, the work they did does allow for future approaches to allocation based on impacts
  - arc have a traditionally small cohort of researchers
  - Repeat grants are common
  - Knowing impacts of existing researchers can allow future approaches to disbursement of funding if wished.



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# Case example: Dept. Health R&D (NIHR)

- One aspect of RIA used in allocation of funding for hospital-university collaborative research and for ‘close to patient’ researchers
- Use of bibliometric analysis as a precursor to decision making (in short-listing)
- Value of RIA for organizations vs. individuals in allocation



# Case example: Research excellence framework (REF - UK)

- The primary purpose of the REF is to produce assessment outcomes for institutions
  - To inform the selective allocation of research funding to HEIs, with effect from 2015-16
  - To provide accountability for public investment in research and produces evidence of the benefits of this investment
  - To provide benchmarking information
- Based on expert review of institution submissions
- 20% of score is based on 'Impact'
  - Criteria for assessing impacts are 'reach' and 'significance'



# Case Example: Excellence in research for Australia (ERA)



- No link to impact, solely on research outputs
- Measures involved include:
  - Research quality (publishing profile, citation analysis, peer review, research income)
  - Research volume and activity (total research outputs, research income)
  - Research application (commercialization income, other applied measures)
  - Recognition (esteem measures)
- Along with allocation of some funding through the Sustainable Research Excellence in Universities initiative, ERA also used for:
  - 2014–16 mission-based compacts between the Australian Government and institutions
  - Minimum standards for higher education research and research training

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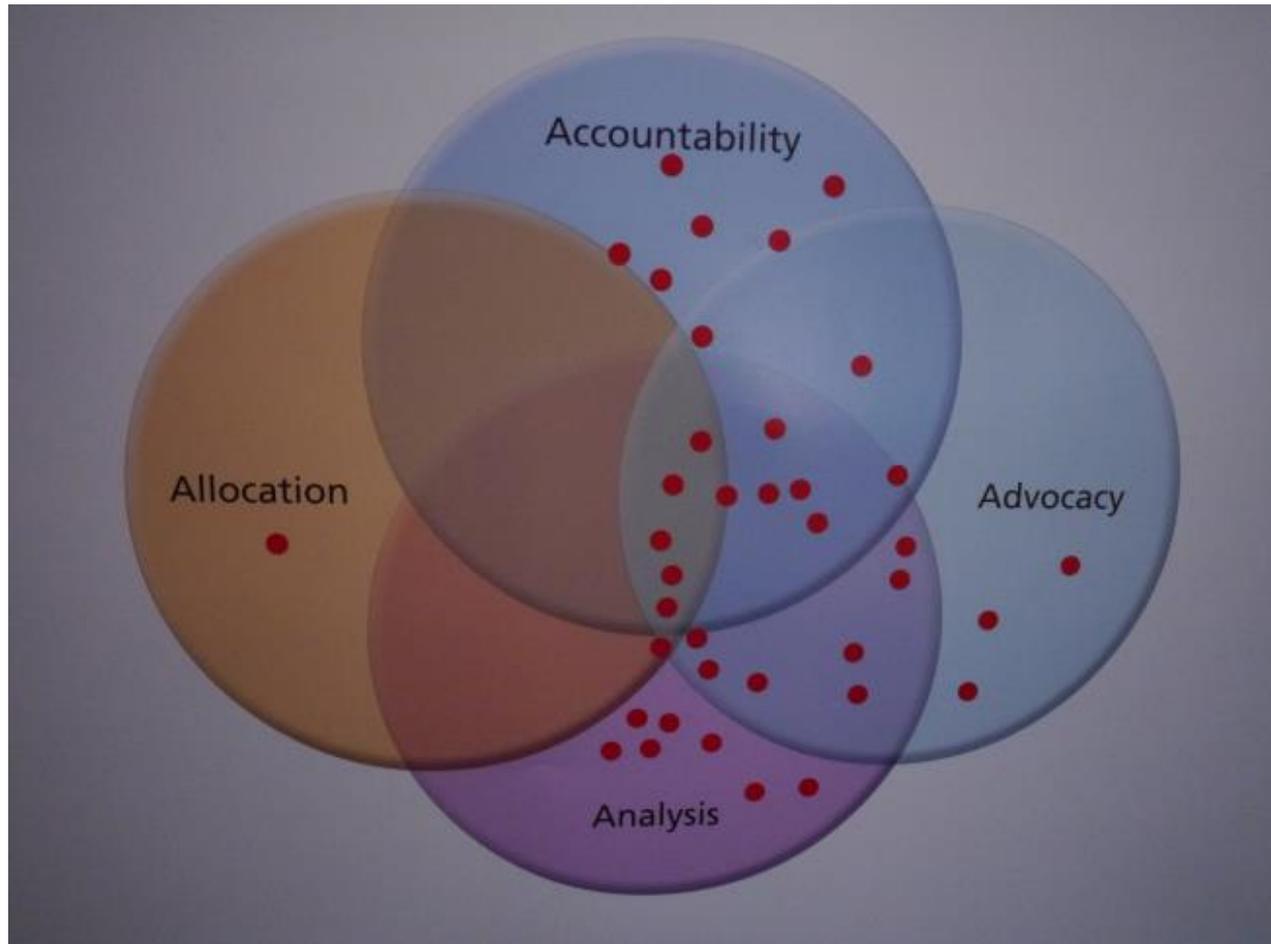


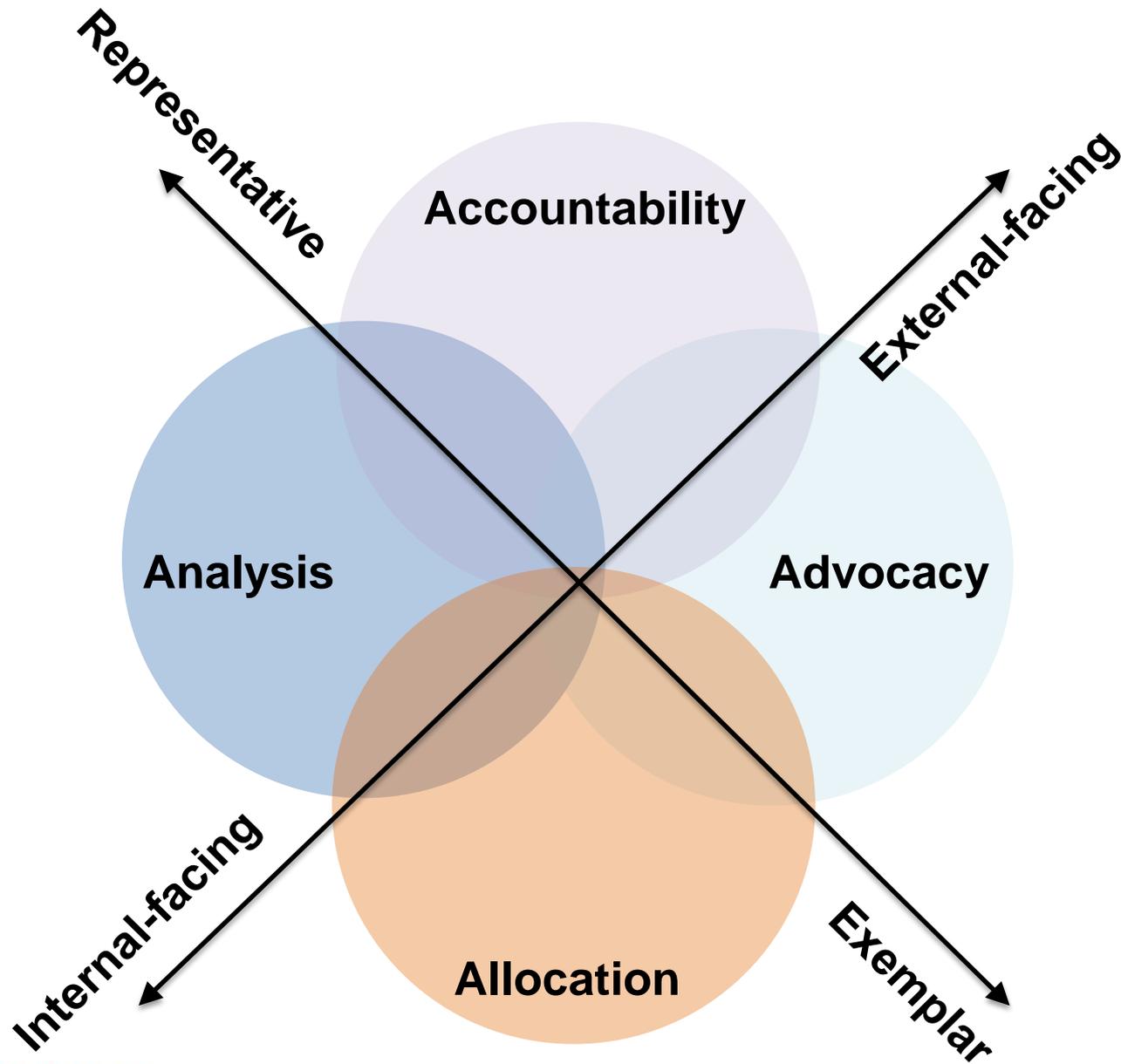
# Key messages

- Allocation can be a useful and powerful tool in linking evidence with strategy
- It can also be a dangerous tool since it is both politically and economically charged
- Allocation RIAs can use a variety of approaches but will tend to:
  - Focus on internal priorities
  - Look at larger entities for assessing impacts
  - Tend to focus on examples of best impacts



# Four As, many choices





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# Choosing between or combining together?

## Between

- Knowing if you are assessing for internal or external reasons
- Know if you are interested in representation or examples

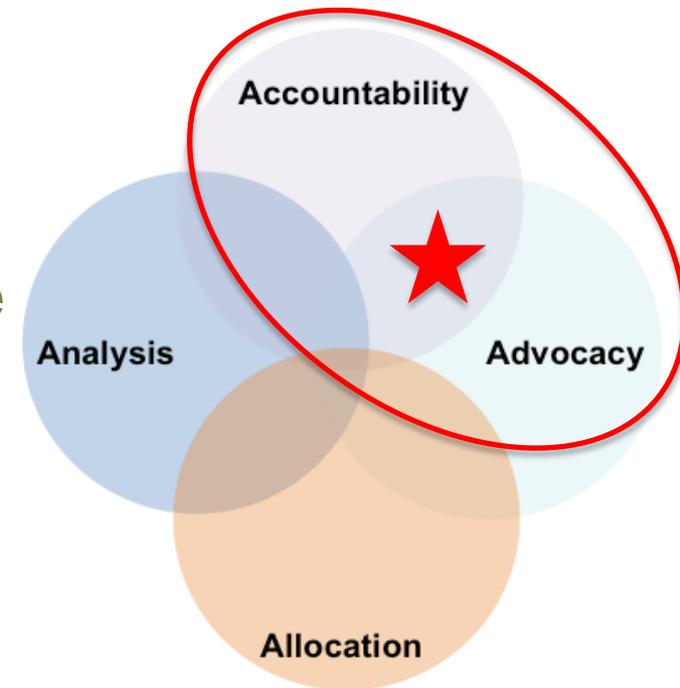
## Together

- Linking to understanding your stakeholders
- What resources will allow
- What questions do I \*need\* to answer?



# Case example - arc

- Phase 1 of arc was based on a combination of advocacy and accountability
  - arc were interested in their donors – current and future
  - Wanted an understanding of how their work aligned with donor/ stakeholder expectations
  - Shaped the assessment to ensure enough evidence to support accountability for stakeholder-desired impacts, and to identify good-news stories for donors



# Learning activity



- Individually, look at the Four A's exercise handout following this presentation
- Follow the instructions in the handout and use the sticky dots on your table
- 5 minutes



# Key messages

- Know why you are assessing research impact before choosing your 'A'(s)
  - What is the objective of the research evaluation?
- You aren't restricted to just one A, but your resources might affect how many you can assess
- Understand that different approaches will focus on different aspects, use different methods and require different data
- NB. All approaches require rigour and evidence!



# Recommended reading

## Allocation

- RAND Europe. 2012. *Impact and the Research Excellence Framework: new challenges for universities*. Cambridge, UK: RAND Europe
- Government of Australia. 2013. *Excellence in Research for Australia 2012: National Report*. Canberra, Australia: Government of Australia
- Peacock, J., L. Harvey, M. Barber, P. McFadden, W. King, T. Enright, D. Schreuder, I. Smith, J. Marceau, I. Davey, P. Clark and C. Fell. 2006. *Research Quality Framework. Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia: The Recommended RQF*. Development Advisory Group for the RQF.

## 4As

- Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. 2009. *Making an Impact: A Preferred Framework and Indicators to Measure Returns on Investment in Health Research*. Report of the Panel on the Return on Investments in Health Research, January <http://www.caahs-acss.ca/making-an-impact-a-preferred-framework-and-indicators-to-measure-returns-on-investment-inhealth-research-8/>



# Thank you!

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