



# *Grant Proposal Writing for Early Career Researchers and Early Career Ocean Professionals – Do's and Don't's.*

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# To Cover:

- What types of grants
  - Example of a call
- Overview from start to end
- The proposal structure
  - PERT and Gantt diagrams
- Partnerships, networks
- Organisation and roles of partners
- Budgets
- Outputs and Outcomes



EN

**Horizon Europe**

**Work Programme 2025**

*9. Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and  
Environment*

*(European Commission Decision C(2025) 2779 of 14 May 2025)*

# Types of Grant Proposals

**Speculative** (within a theme or very general – *you come up with the idea and try to get it funded*)

versus

**Responsive** grants (well-defined and less general – *you are responding to a given call or a request from a government body, industry, etc.*)

## Different types of grants

- If EU, then Innovation Action, or Research and Innovation;
- Cost Action only paying T&S; may require matched funding (30% for IA, more for INTERREG)
- National, regional and industry grants – dedicated to tasks and outcomes
- Science foundations (often national) – speculative grants

| Call: Supporting the implementation of the Restore our Ocean and Waters Mission |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Specific conditions                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Expected EU contribution per project                                            | The Commission estimates that an EU contribution of around EUR 13.50 million would allow these outcomes to be addressed appropriately. Nonetheless, this does not preclude submission and selection of a proposal requesting different amounts.       |
| Indicative budget                                                               | The total indicative budget for the topic is EUR 13.50 million.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Type of Action                                                                  | Innovation Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Other conditions                                                                | The proposed actions should implement their activities in at least [6] islands, aiming for an equal distribution across the following lighthouses <sup>161</sup> of the Mission Ocean and Waters: Baltic/North Sea, Atlantic/Artic and Mediterranean. |
| Evaluation Procedure                                                            | The evaluation committee might be composed partially by representatives of EU institutions                                                                                                                                                            |

Expected Outcome: This topic aims at directly engaging and supporting islands<sup>162</sup> and their managing public authorities in demonstrating and accelerating the transitions needed for

What an EU Horizon Europe call looks like – the starting point:

achieving one or several objectives of the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”. The participation of relevant island managing authorities<sup>163</sup> as full partners of the consortium is strongly encouraged.

Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes:

- Measurable, quantifiable, verifiable and ambitious progress towards reaching one or several interlinked objectives and targets of the Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”, as set out in the Mission Implementation Plan<sup>164</sup> through implementation of effective and well-managed place-based and people-centred actions.
- Involvement and increased readiness of islands in testing, deploying and upscaling systemic innovative solutions for restoring islands, incl. by strengthening synergies with their own programmes and resources.
- Increased number of islands taking concrete measures to protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, prevent and eliminate pollution of our ocean, seas and waters, and make the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular.
- Increased resilience of island communities to extreme climate events and sea-level rise.
- Public and private investment is encouraged and leveraged on islands to protect, conserve and restore degraded ecosystems.

*The draft will be circulated perhaps up to a year in advance of being published and then the deadline will be perhaps 3-4 months after the call is published, hence consortia are started during the draft call stage; if possible you should lobby national contact points with ideas for the call*

## Topic: HORIZON-MISS-2025-03-OCEAN-04: Restoring Ocean and Waters in Regions

**EXAMPLE** of a Call Summary *(To show that they expect a lot from you, yet you can get also a lot from it)*

Total indicative budget: EUR 15.00 million for 1 project.

Type of Action: Innovation Actions, though needed field applied research (tests) can be performed.

Consortium: At least [4] regional authorities from different Member States/Associated Countries as partners

At least [1] in Atlantic and Arctic, Baltic and North Sea, Danube and Black Sea, Mediterranean

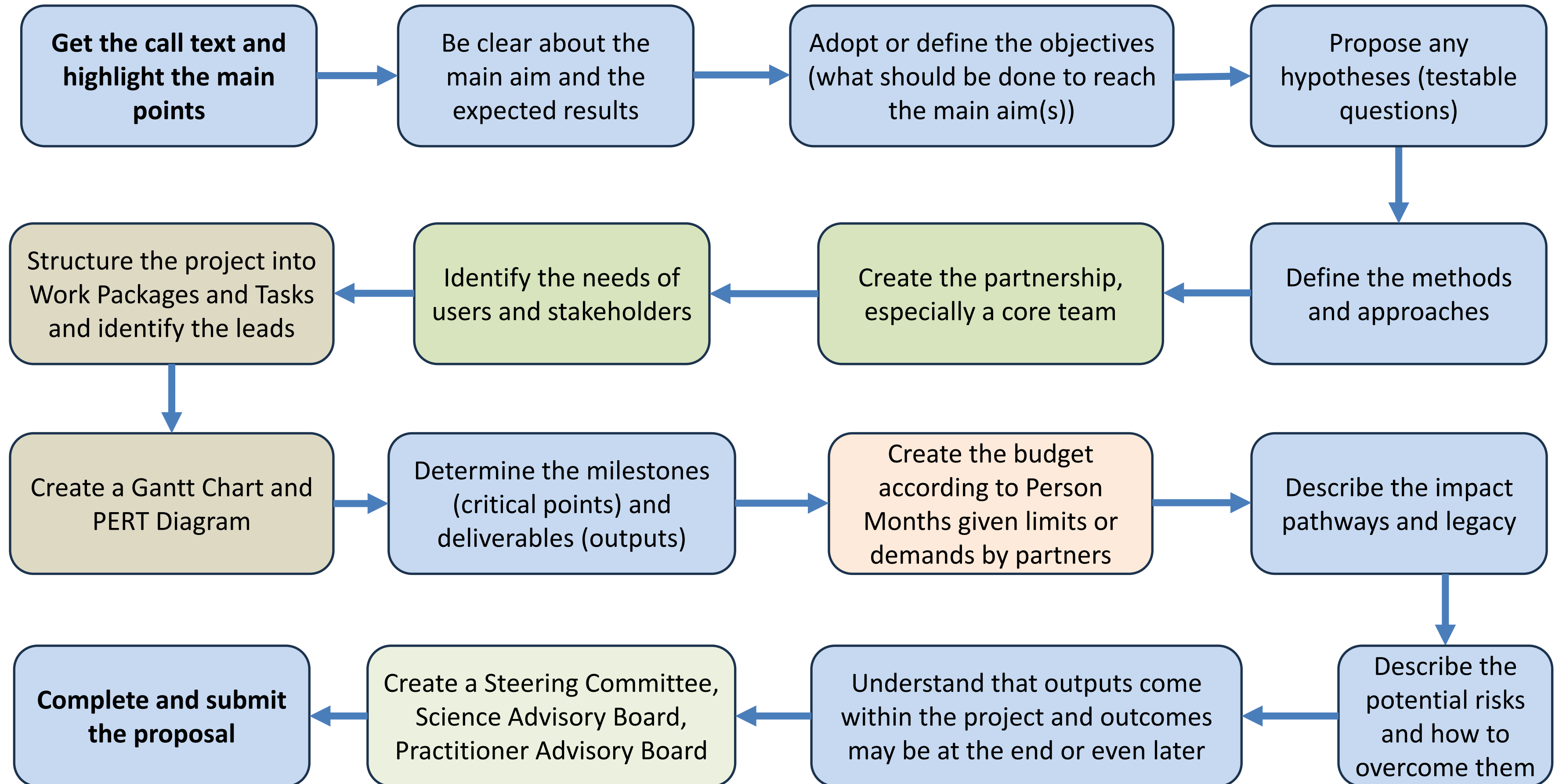
Demonstration activities: In each basin in at least 2 regions.

Expected Outcomes:

- Support regional authorities in carrying out restoration activities in coastal zones and riparian zones on land.
- Measurable implementation of effective and well-managed place-based and people-centred actions.
- Involvement and increased readiness of regional and local authorities for testing/upscaling innovative solutions for restoration, to make the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular, and leverage public and private investment.
- Increased resilience of coastal and riparian communities to extreme climate events and sea-level rise.
- Tools to:
  - Assess the economic, social and ecological impacts of the proposed measures,
  - Identify, test and adapt innovative solutions to restore coastal and riparian areas,
  - Encourage citizen and stakeholder involvement through active participation in restoration initiatives
  - Develop new innovative funding approaches to implement innovative solutions for restoration;
  - Monitor the effectiveness of the proposed solutions in relation to the Mission objectives and targets.

To facilitate replication of solutions, the proposals should already identify other suitable regions/areas, where solutions and approaches could be replicated. Projects should also assess potential barriers to their implementation and how these can be overcome. This would help enhancing the transferability of knowledge and experiences to other regions.

# Overview from the start to the end



# Structuring the proposal:

Adopt or define the objectives  
(what should be done to reach  
the main aim(s))

- Succinctly introduce your idea – what is the context - originality or innovation
- Briefly describe aims, objectives, methods, expected results and outcomes

Share your idea with the right partners to develop the proposal further, since you can compose it only with the right colleagues, to detail your first description, and:

- Design Work-packages – coherent parts of research/actions, each with several Tasks
  - Compose the PERT diagram and Gantt chart (example on next slides)
  - beware of ‘wish-list approach’ (nice to know vs. need to know), ‘hobby science’, always refer to the call
- Consider the most suitable time-scale (3-5 years); include up- and out-scaling
- Include sections on:
  - Impact, Innovation, Exploitation or results, Dissemination – what is the legacy
  - Milestones and Deliverables from each Work-package
  - Data Management Plan (ensure FAIR compliance) + IPR and paper authors
  - Risks to the project and how to address them
  - Gender/diversity/equality, ECR and ECOP inclusion, Health and Safety, Ethics, etc

Structure the project into  
Work Packages and Tasks  
and identify the leads

Determine the milestones  
(critical points) and  
deliverables (outputs)

Create a Gantt Chart and  
PERT Diagram

1

## Project Management

### ROWER: Restoring Oceans and Waters in European Regions

2

#### Stakeholder engagement & co-design

Stakeholder Communities

Stakeholder viewpoints

Co-creation of solutions

3

#### Review and guidelines on main approaches and tools

Protection and Restoration Practices

Governance Mechanisms

SMART Indicators

4

#### Application and testing of guidelines and approaches in Case Study Areas

Characterisation  
of CSAs

Test approaches  
for Ecology

Test approaches for  
Society and Economy

Test functionality for  
Management and Governance

5

#### Synthesis of effective Protection and Restoration solutions

Best practice solutions for  
Ecology, Society and Economy

Best practice solutions for  
Management and Governance

6

#### Blueprint for Restoration and Protection

Drafting the Blueprint DSS

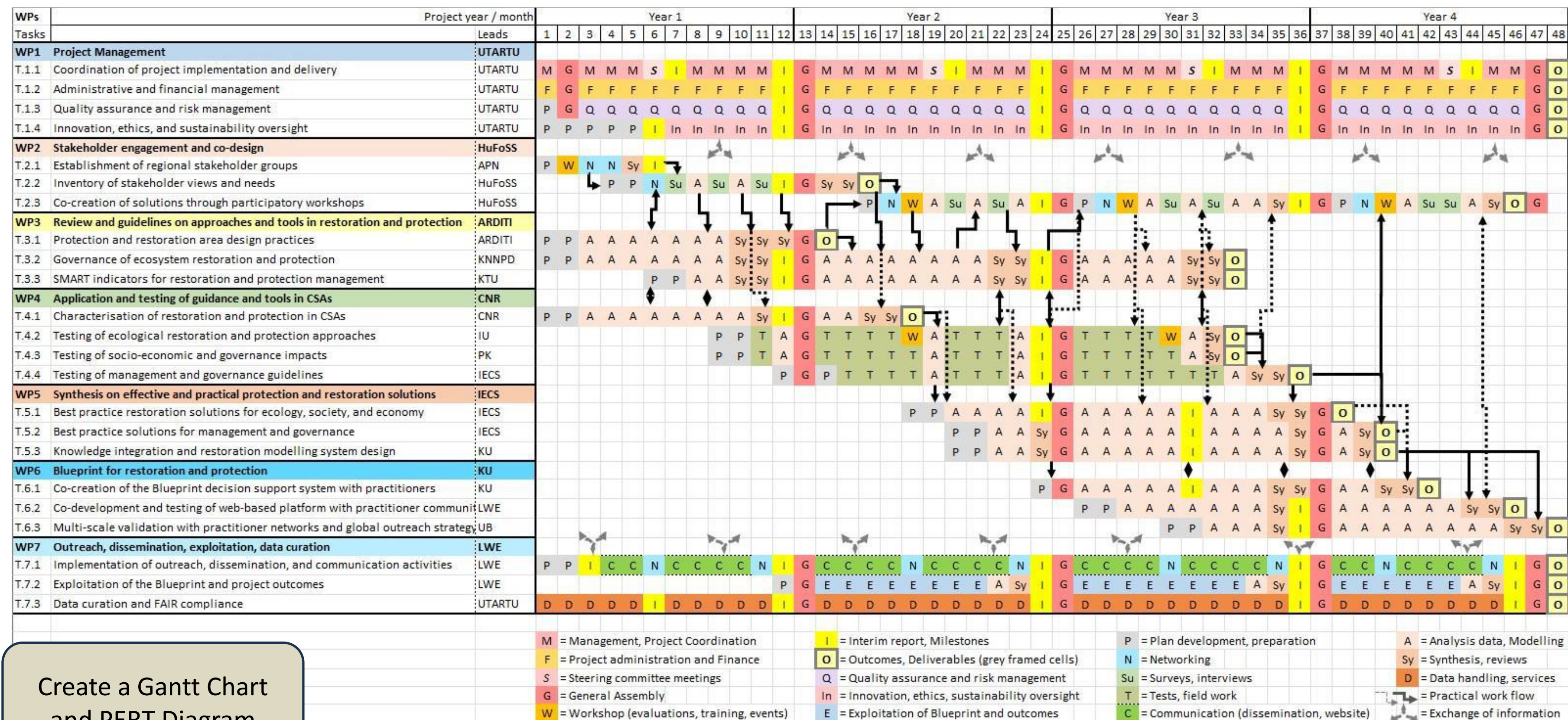
Online digital Blueprint

Upscaling and Outscaling

7

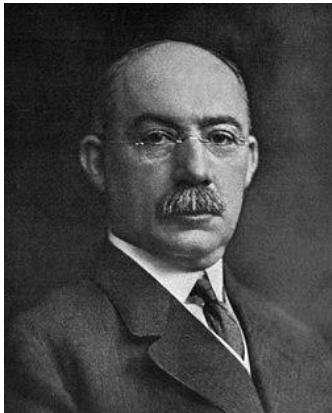
#### Outreach, Dissemination, Exploitation, Data curation

Logical System for WP Design – PERT Diagram (Programme Evaluation and Review Technique)  
Showing the Work-Packages and major Tasks



Create a Gantt Chart and PERT Diagram

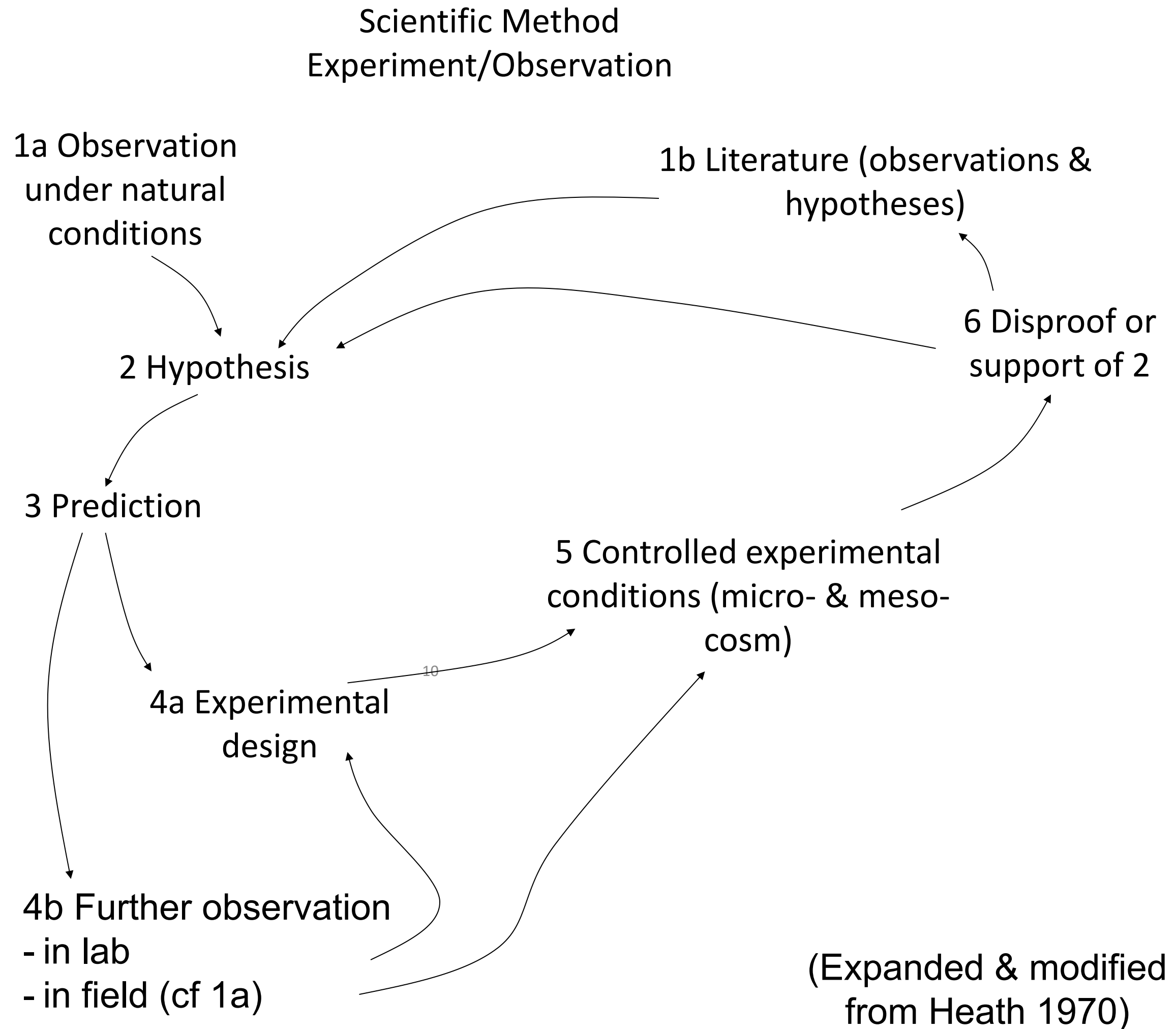
Logical System for Timescales – Gantt Diagram – dates for and links between actions, tasks and work-packages, milestones, deliverables (Henry Gantt 1910-15)



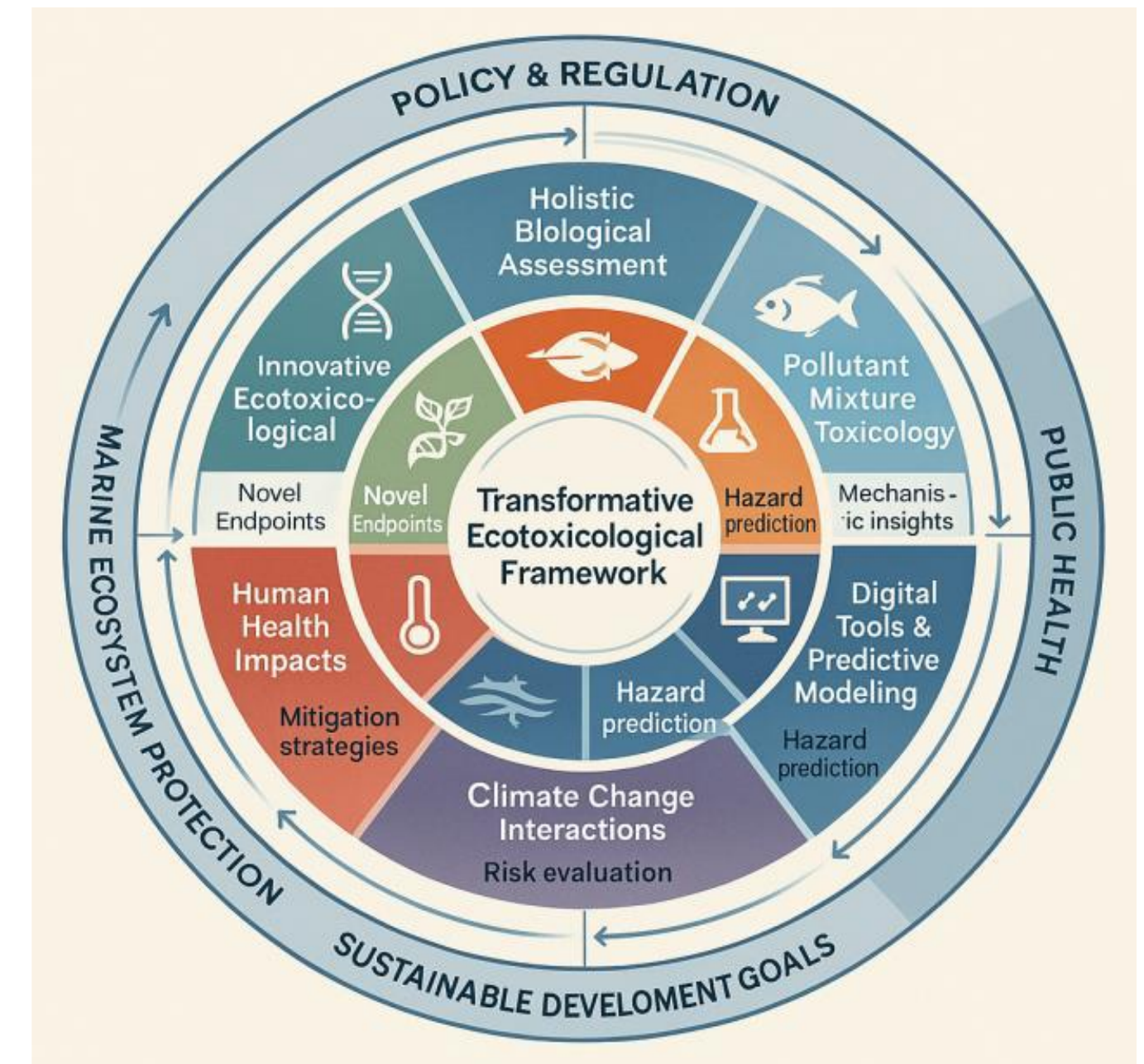
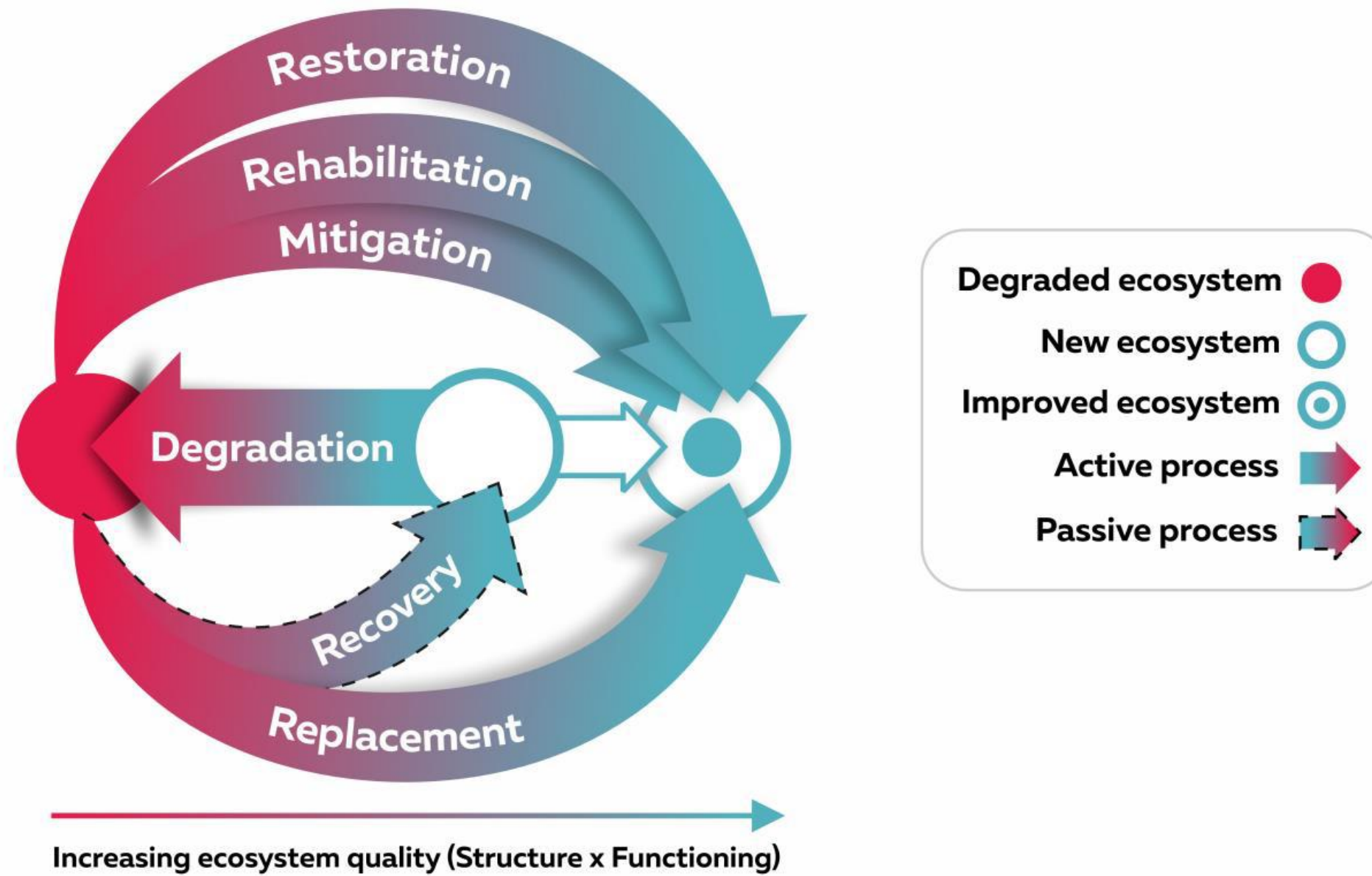
Define the methods  
and approaches

## Scientific method:

- aims, objectives, hypotheses (set hypothesis, test, reject)
- ideas from literature, experience, discussions



Use Good Graphics to  
illustrate the main concepts  
– help the reviewer:



## Partnership (Beneficiaries):

Create the partnership,  
especially a core team

- Base it around a core-team of 5-6 people to draft the main ideas
- Ensure like-minded people working together, based on reputation and knowhow but most importantly ability to work together
- Identify who has the right techniques/outlook
- The partnership grows organically but beware of it 'snowballing'
- Have '*enough*' but not '*too many*' partners
- Bring in SME, Users, Authorities, etc not just academics and researchers
  - Consider who are the stakeholders for (the outcomes of) the project
  - Use Associate Partners for breadth – not funded but may get T&S; can be from outside Europe
- Emphasise trans- and multi-disciplinarity, especially the importance of natural and social sciences
- Sub-contractors can be used for specific tasks but cannot be integral part of project management

Identify the needs of  
users and stakeholders

## Organisation and roles

| Role                              | Roles in the Project                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Principal Investigator            | Overall responsibility for the smooth and efficient running of the project; deciding partnership and budget partitioning; agreeing changes to budgets and roles; chairing the Steering Committee; main link to the funder                                                                             |
| Project Administrator             | Responsible for budgeting, consortium agreement; reporting to the funder; organising meetings across the project                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Work-package Leader (and Co-Lead) | Creating and fulfilling the WP description, tasks, milestones and deliverables within an overall framework; ensuring the coherence with the call; ensuring coherence between WPs; organising WP meetings; links to other WPs, first estimates of the WP budget; agreeing the partners (beneficiaries) |
| Task Leader                       | Creating and fulfilling the task description, milestones and deliverables, ensure coherence between tasks within the WP                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Participant in WP or Task         | Check text for tasks, ensure own budget and person moths are coherent; contribute to writing the proposal and carrying out the tasks                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Committees and Other contributors | Steering Committee (PIs, Administrator, WP leads), Practitioner Advisory Board, Science Advisory Board, Stakeholder Panels, User Inputs                                                                                                                                                               |

Create a Steering Committee,  
Science Advisory Board,  
Practitioner Advisory Board

# Budgeting:

Create the budget  
according to Person  
Months given limits or  
demands by partners

- *Personnel:*
  - PM x monthly costs, on-costs (taxes, etc), allow for inflation
  - who is eligible and who not (admin staff),
- *Other costs*
  - Travel and subsistence
  - Equipment, either hire or allow for depreciation over the lifetime of the project (hire costs may be 1% of purchase price per day)
  - Consumables, Publication open access fees, Audits
- *Overheads:* to cover well-founded laboratory equipment, e.g. computers, buildings, IT and library support, accounting, auditing, legal advice, etc.

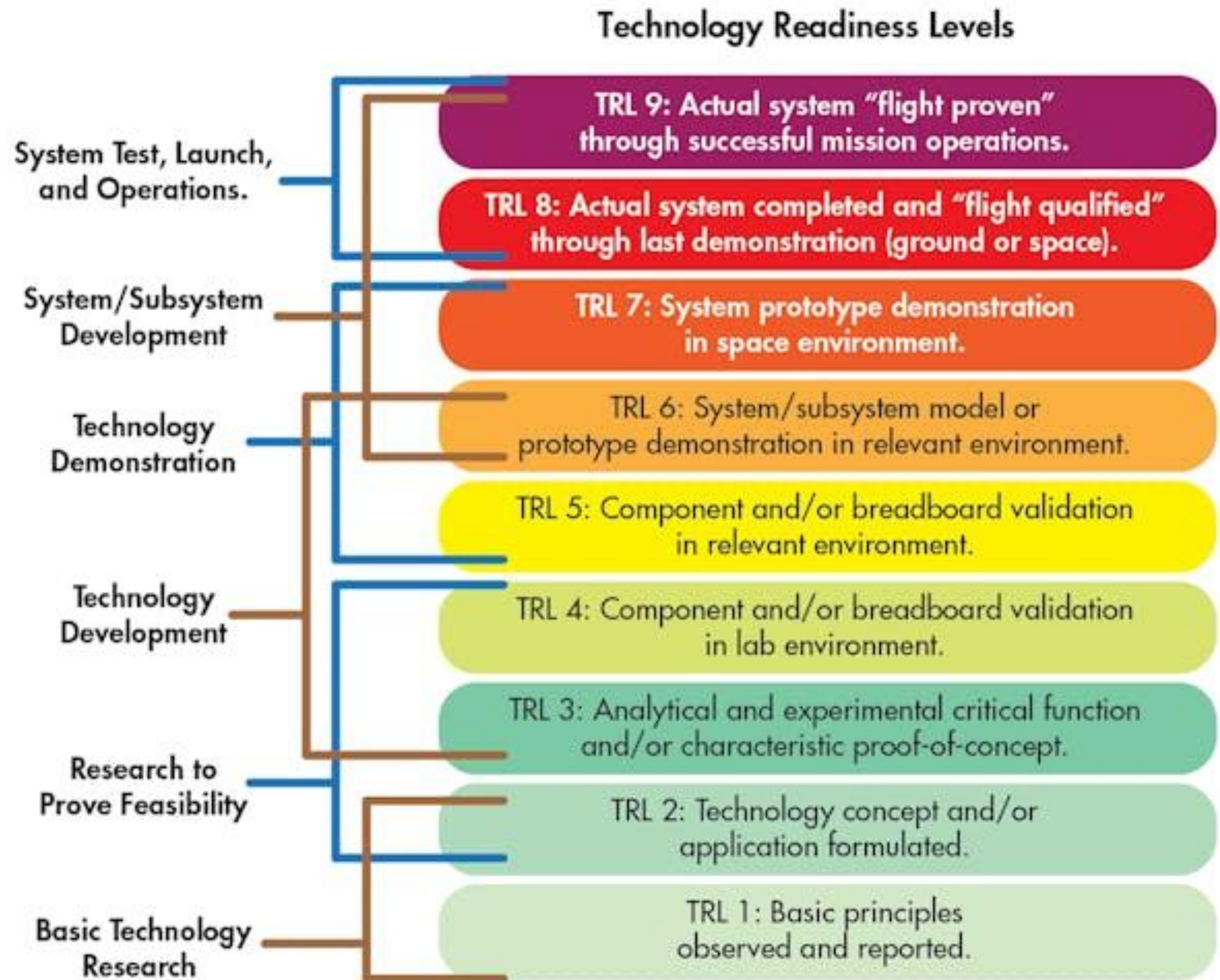
## Method of calculation:

- may be lump-sum (paid according to a task completed) or
- paid according to person months expended

Sub-contracting – for a specific task, but not allowed to be integral part of the management of the project

Understand that outputs come within the project and outcomes may be at the end or even later

If producing an output (method, approach, equipment, etc.) then the TRL should be specified either in the call or in the proposal



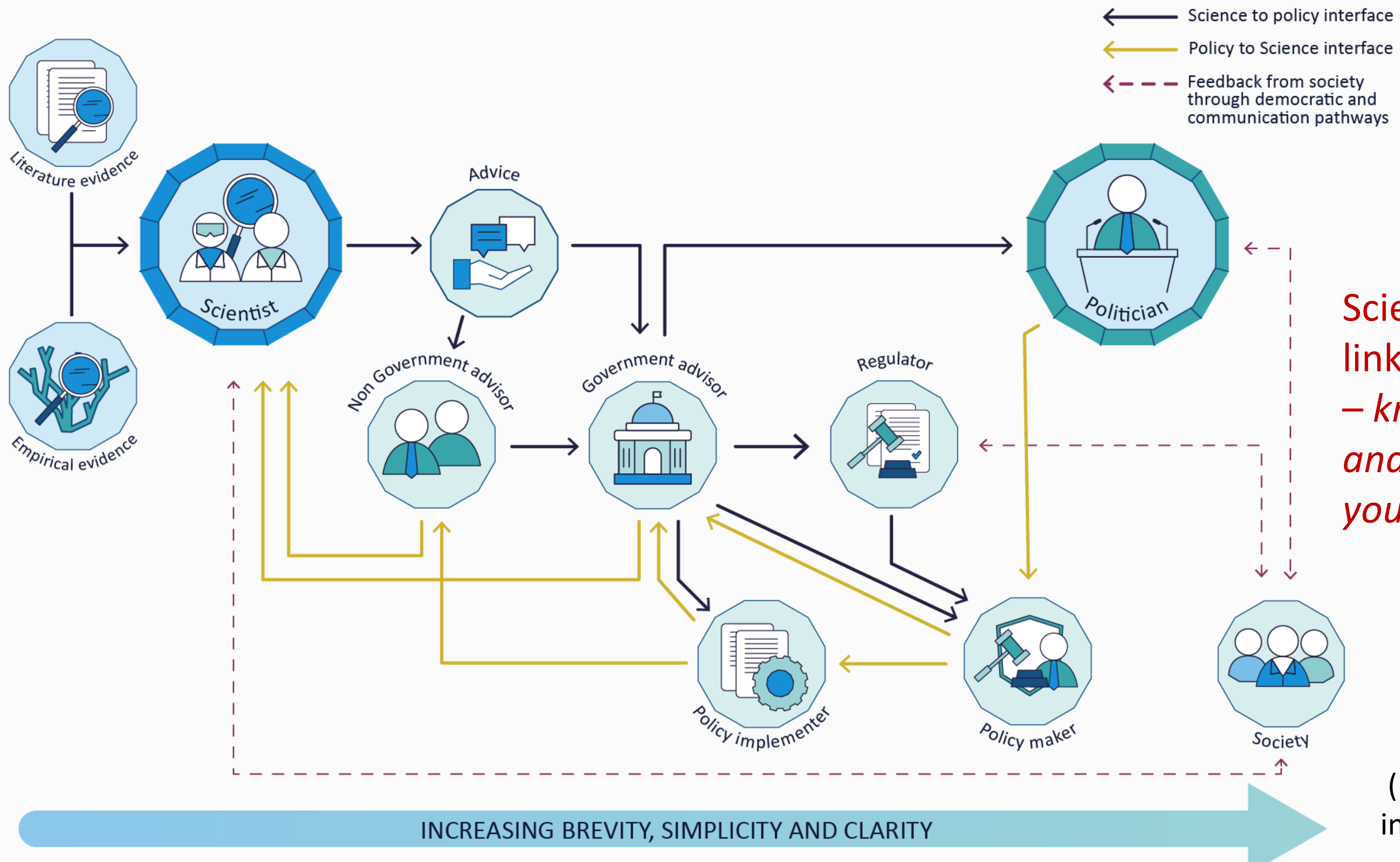
### 2.3 Summary: Key elements of the impact section

| SPECIFIC NEEDS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | EXPECTED RESULTS (see also Table 2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | D & E & C MEASURES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Recover historical losses of nature in Europe and ensuring 30% is protected by 2030.</li> <li>– Efficient, effective tools for a systematic approach to restoration and conservation across land–sea continua.</li> <li>– Coordinating multiple conservation designations and harmonising passive and active restoration.</li> <li>– Overcoming sectoral, fragmented approaches to management, governance, monitoring, assessment, and reporting.</li> <li>– Increasing stakeholder and citizen participation.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a stakeholder-adopted, flexible, effective, and efficient Blueprint accompanied by a Scalability Plan (&gt;10 scenarios analysed) and implemented through a Digital Twin (&gt;15 simulations) tested in 13 CSAs.</li> <li>– FAQ and decision trees guide users (PA managers, restoration advisers, policy implementers, practitioners) to the most effective solution to their immediate challenges, providing detailed but practitioner-ready easy-to-understand guidance and ensuring connectivity, coherence and equivalence in natural, societal, and governance terms across borders.</li> <li>– &gt;50 FAIR datasets &amp; services, validated indicators.</li> <li>– &gt;20 practitioner-ready guidance and decision trees.</li> <li>– &gt;5,000 km<sup>2</sup> of marine, coastal, estuarine, riparian ecosystems covered with restoration activities.</li> <li>– ≥18 authorities, &gt;200 overall stakeholders engaged</li> <li>– &gt;20 peer-reviewed Open Access publications</li> <li>– &gt;1,000 citizen science participants.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Dissemination through policy briefs, factsheets, and templates for restoration actions, publicly available via project website, press releases, webinars, widely-cited OA publications, and relevant practitioner networks.</li> <li>– Competent authorities &amp; MPA managers use Blueprint/Digital Twin for options appraisal, RBMP/MSP alignment and permitting; municipalities &amp; operators access NbS specs and O&amp;M playbooks; investors &amp; regional funds receive briefs on costs/benefits, risks, KPIs; NGOs &amp; SMEs reuse open tools/datasets, co-host pilots; scientific community gets FAIR data, open code/methods; citizens &amp; schools join monitoring, use simple dashboards.</li> <li>– Exploitation ensured by practitioners' uptake of Blueprint, Scalability Plan, and Digital Twin, wider stakeholders, training sessions, large networks of project partners including PA management &amp; governance organisations.</li> <li>– Uptake through Technology Transfer Trainings; regional alignment workshops; online "Blueprint Clinics"; CSA Open Days, citizen-science events; final stakeholder conference; EU Green Week / Ocean Decade.</li> <li>– Communication: Co-created with stakeholders using best practice methods, the Blueprint, Scalability Plan and Digital Twin will be readily disseminated to practitioners, planners, managers, conservation bodies, and governors.</li> </ul> |
| TARGET GROUPS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | OUTCOMES (see also Table 2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | IMPACTS (see also Table 2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Policy implementers, advisors, conservation and restoration managers, national and international authorities, consultees for marine planning / impact assessment.</li> <li>– NGOs, SMEs, industry in conservation and restoration.</li> <li>– Scientific community.</li> <li>– The general public, the media, and secondary and higher education for increasing ocean literacy in restoration and conservation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A well-defined, defensible, and practical Blueprint with decision trees, templates, and indicators for RBMP/MSP/PA plans based on stakeholder input.</li> <li>– Scalability Plan with replication packs and procurement-ready specs; capacity built via training-of-trainers, helpdesk, and a community portal.</li> <li>– Digital Twin screens options, compares costs/benefits, stress-tests climate/permitting scenarios, and exports maps/data for WFD/MSFD</li> <li>– Strong uptake of Blueprint, Scalability Plan, and Digital Twin.</li> <li>– Increased ability to tackle causes and consequences of pressures impacting conservation and restoration.</li> <li>– Citizen contributions to actions and monitoring.</li> <li>– EU as leader in marine conservation &amp; restoration.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved, cost-effective, efficient management of conservation and restoration in Europe using up- and out-scalable methods; protecting, maintaining, and restoring biodiversity, ecosystem structure, functioning, and natural capital; safeguarding blue economy and socio-economic benefits.</li> <li>– Ensuring the participation of all actors in restoration and conservation.</li> <li>– Long-Term Sustainability &amp; Governance Framework builds project pipelines, CAPEX/OPEX models, and routes to LIFE/ERDF/regional fund investor-facing briefs from the Digital Twin (cost-effectiveness, risk, KPIs) de-risk public/private investment; partnerships with authorities/operators embed restoration in multi-year budgets and green bonds.</li> <li>– A greater contribution and lead role by the EU and its member states and associates on global initiatives such as implementing the SDGs, the UN Decades of the Oceans for Sustainability and of Ecosystem Restoration, and the UNEP GEMS Oceans assessment and management frameworks.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

#IMP-ACT-IA\$#

## Impact Table – Example of Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication

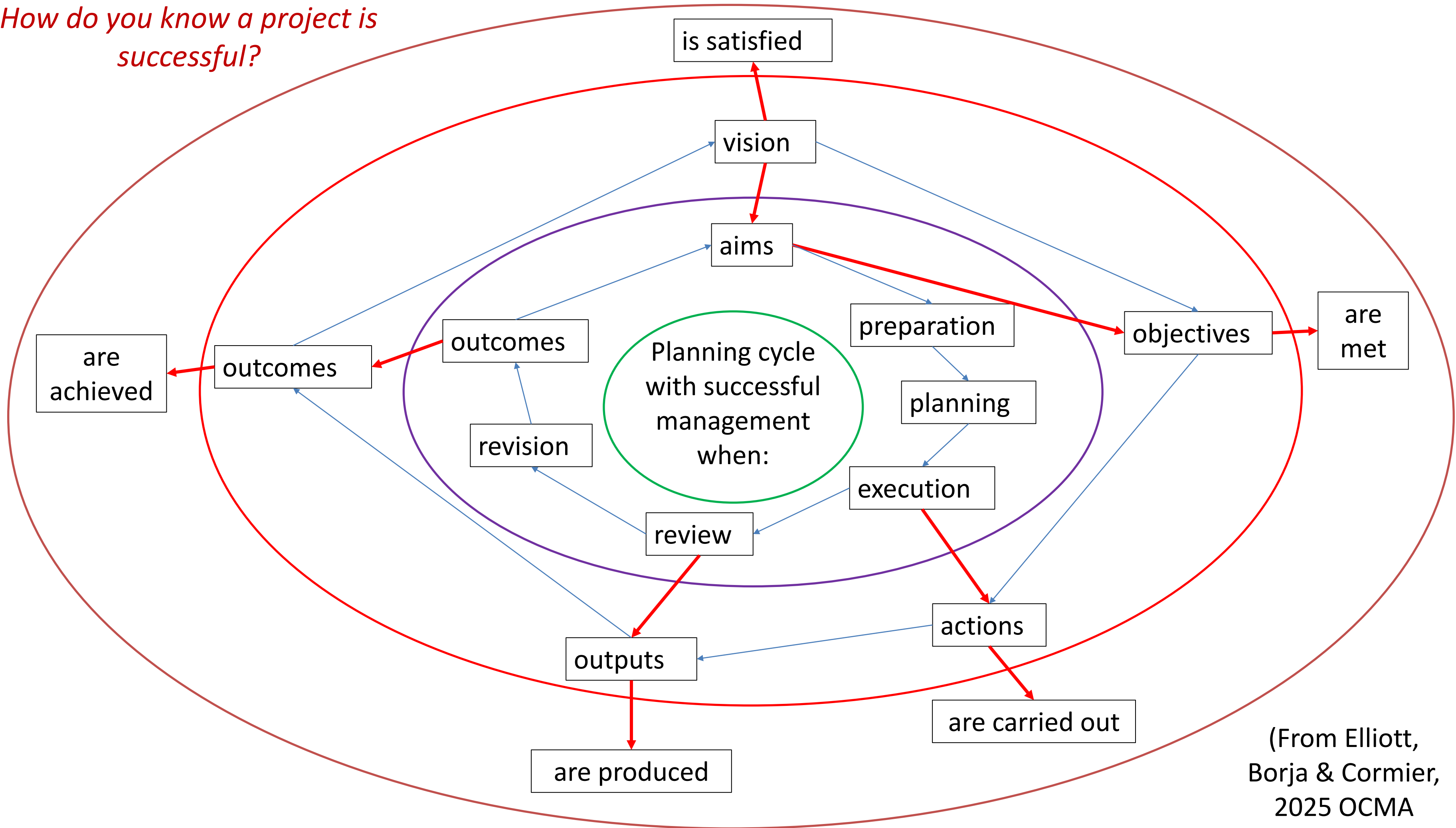
Describe the impact pathways and legacy



Science-policy linkages and roles – *know your role and the user of your findings*

(Borja, Elliott et al., in press)

How do you know a project is successful?



(From Elliott, Borja & Cormier, 2025 OCMA)

# Lessons Learned:

- *“The only sure-fire way of not failing is not trying!”*
- *“You have to be in it to win it!”*
- *“S/he who dares, wins!”*
- *“Work with like-minds!”*
- Create the right partnership
- Involve everyone while still having good overall direction and control
- Have a good administrator who knows the budget restrictions
- Understand the nature of the call and main aim and stick to it
- Be prepared for everyone wanting a bigger budget than they can have – *‘cut the coat according to the cloth!’*
- Get inside information
- While some projects are *'by researchers for researchers'*, most are *'by researchers (in conjunction with stakeholders) for practitioners'*.

**Complete and submit  
the proposal**



**“I suppose I’ll be the one  
to mention the elephant in the room.”**

**“How come it’s always the old,  
bald-headed guy with glasses in  
cartoons?”**



**HuFoSS**  
For a sustainable future

# Thank you!

Email addresses:

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HorizonEurope Projects:

GES4SEAS (led by AZTI, Spain)

MarinePlan (led by TI, Germany)

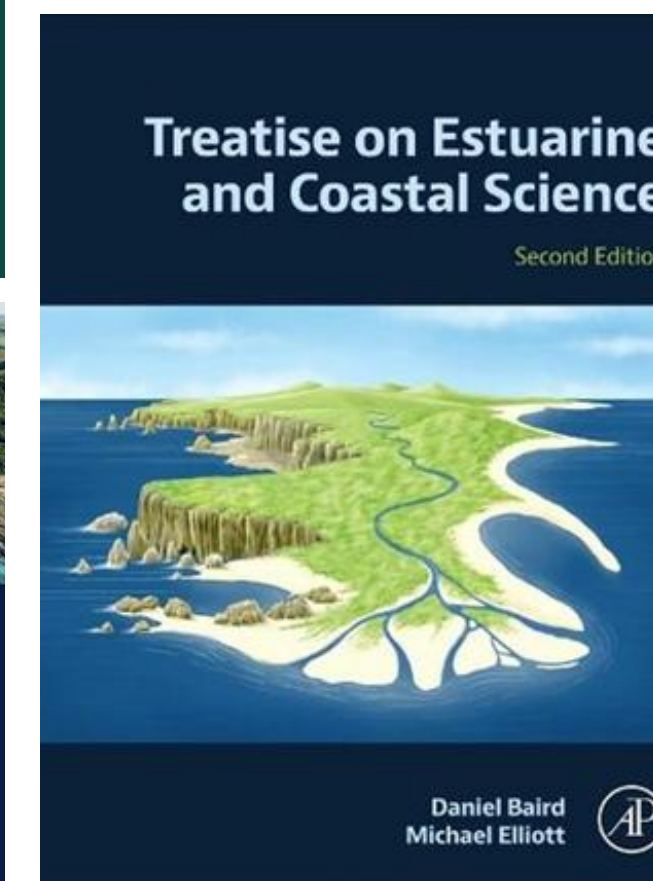
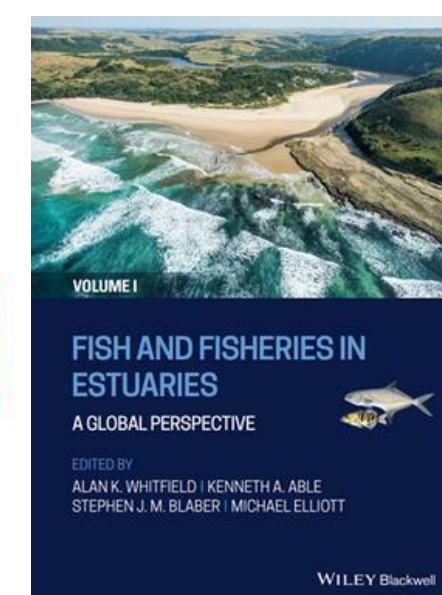
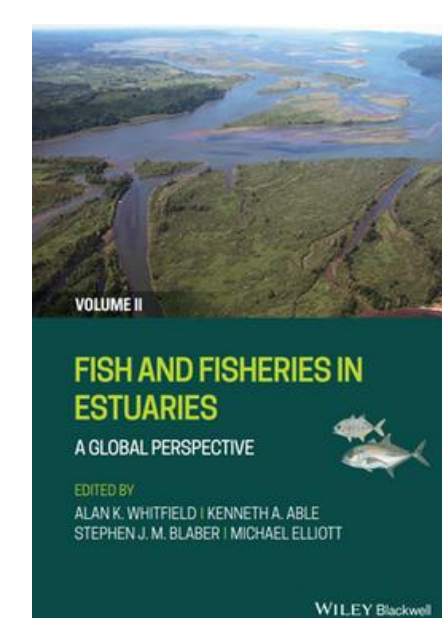
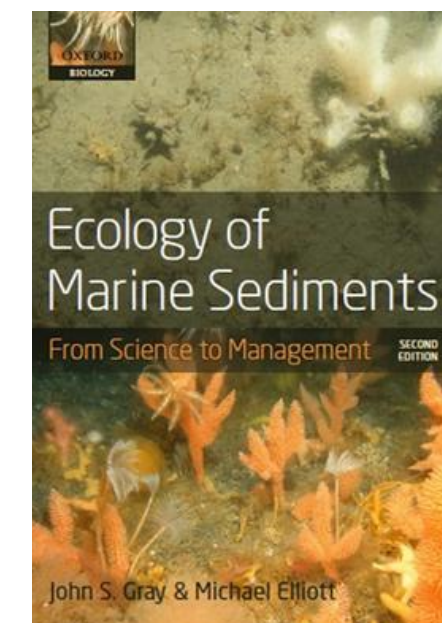
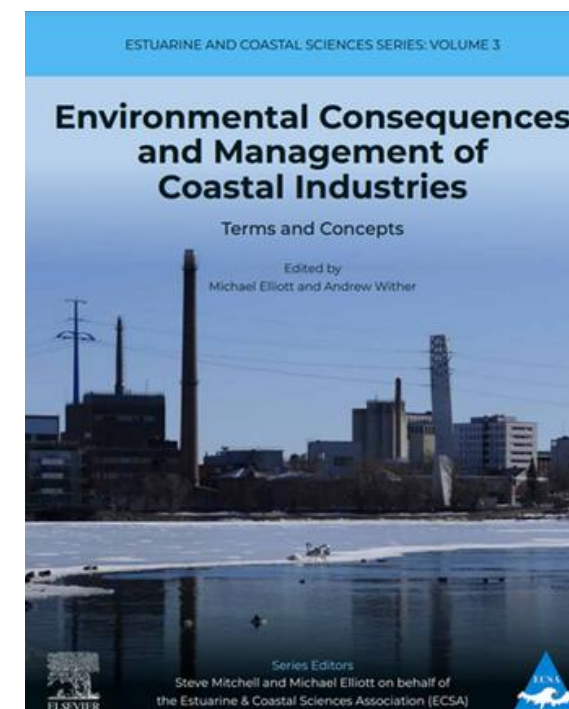
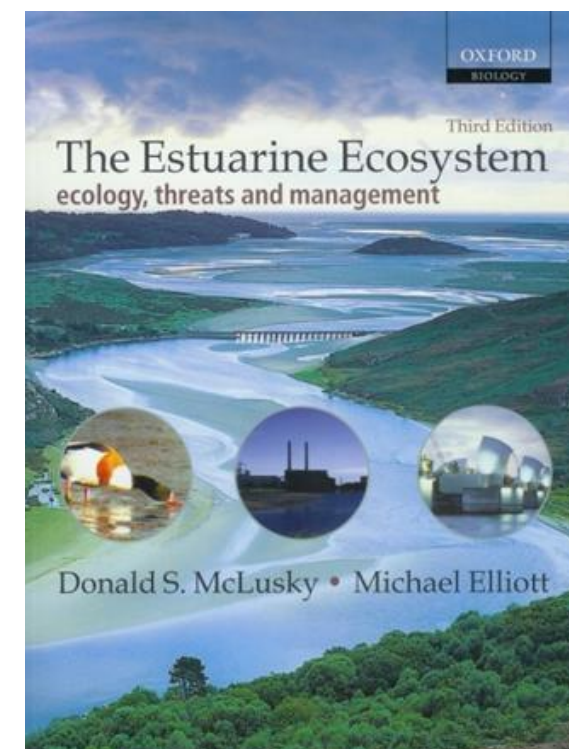
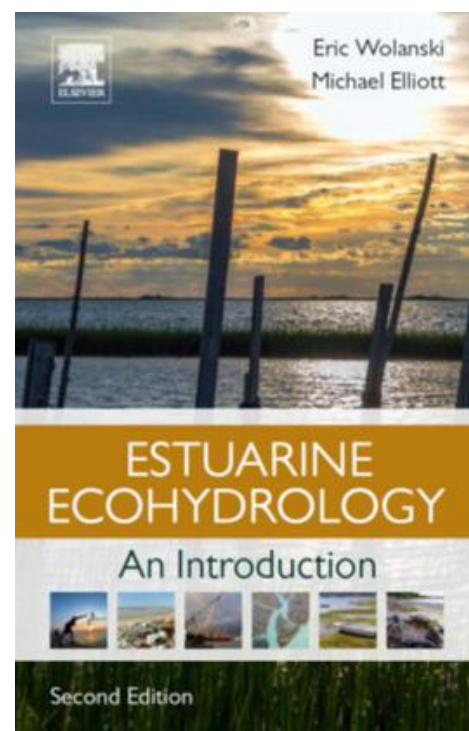
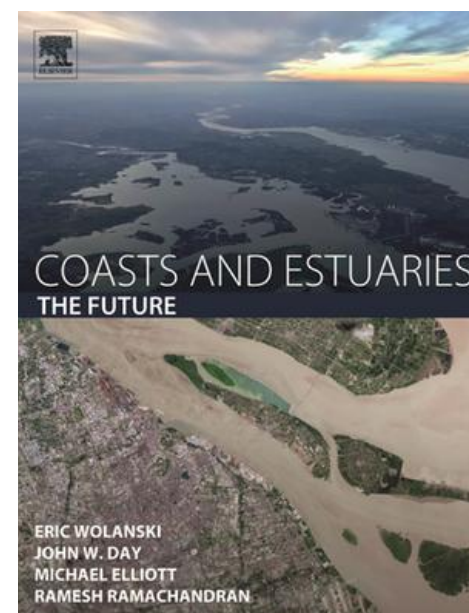
MarineSABRES (led by UCC, Ireland)

MARBEFES (led by IOPAN, Poland)

GuardIAS (led by UAegean, Greece)



**MARINE**  
SABRES



7 volumes – (March 2024)