

DEVELOPMENT, USE AND ASSESSMENT OF THEORIES OF CHANGE IN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Lessons learnt from CGIAR



Independent Evaluation Arrangement

CHALLENGES FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMS

DEALING WITH THE UNKNOWN

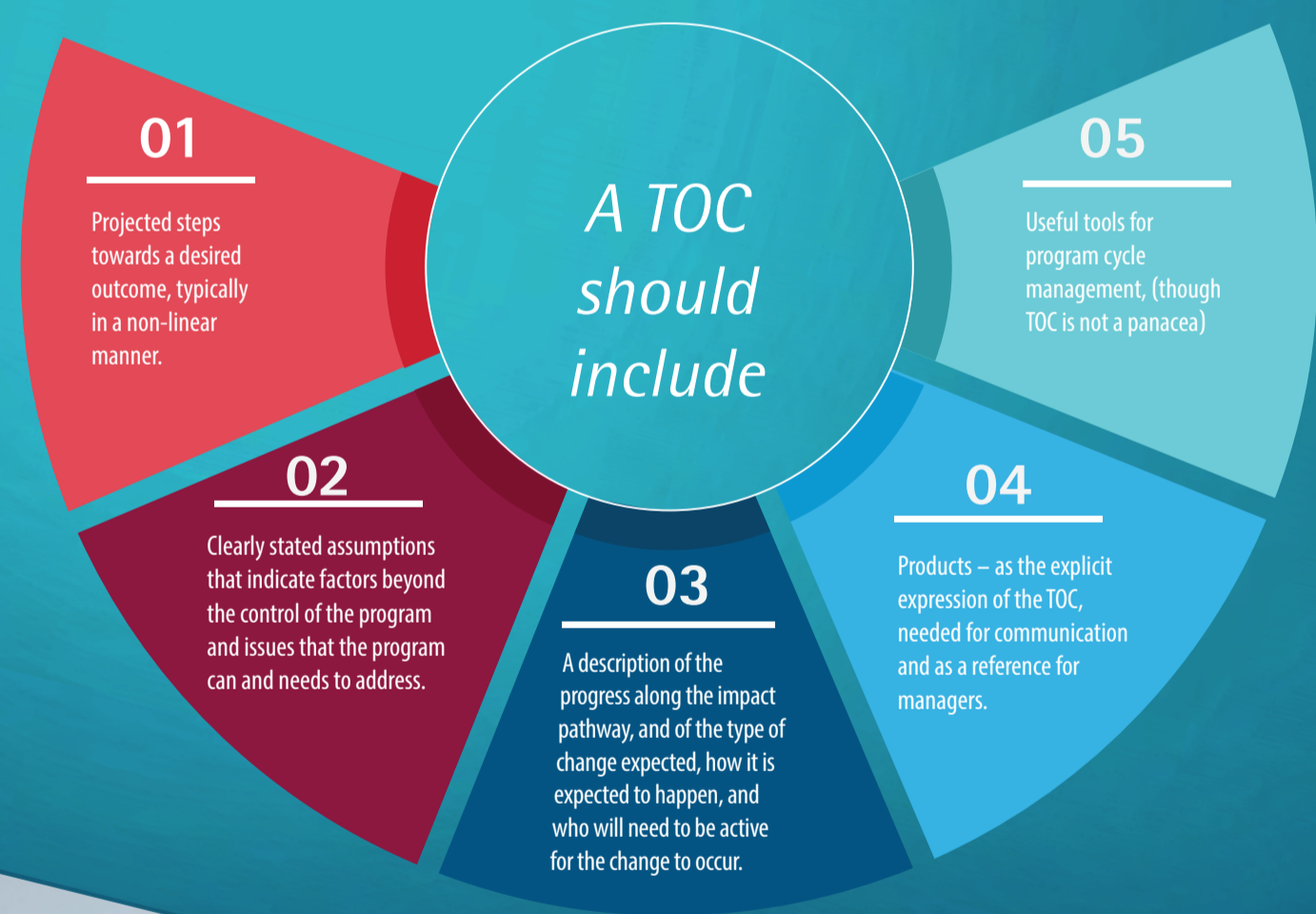
Research is inherently unpredictable – it exists to discover new information and to test hypotheses. Both the results and their timing are uncertain.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE AND NON-LINEAR PROGRESSION FROM PRODUCTION TO USE

Impact pathways for a research program start one or more steps back as compared to development programs. This adds to the uncertainty of outcomes, since the effective use of research outputs partly relies on the relationship between research organizations, development and private sector institutions and end users.

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR A GOOD TOC

- ▶ A single TOC is not sufficient for a large program, instead “nested” TOCs are needed at different scales, each developed for clearly defined purposes (research design, planning, managing, evaluating, communicating with external stakeholders).
- ▶ A research program TOC is not a prediction of impact – it is a description of what will need to be done to achieve a desired impact, and what might prevent that from happening.
- ▶ A TOC is by its nature non-static and will need to be reviewed during the life of the project. The process of developing and revising a TOC, with all necessary stakeholders, is part of the change process. Though it may be costly, a consultative process will give value for money.



USE OF TOC IN AND FOR EVALUATIONS OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

- ▶ An evaluation may include the appraisal of the TOC to assess its purpose, design and use, as well as the extent to which it supports result-based management approaches, and brings realism through proper appreciation of non-linearity and complexity.
- ▶ TOC can contribute to the design of the evaluation by framing the evaluation questions, identifying issues that may have affected progress towards outcomes, reviewing the program's progress towards impact, and identifying stakeholders.