Integrating the social and natural sciences in boundary organizations: Lessons from Sea Grant

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Texas A&M University

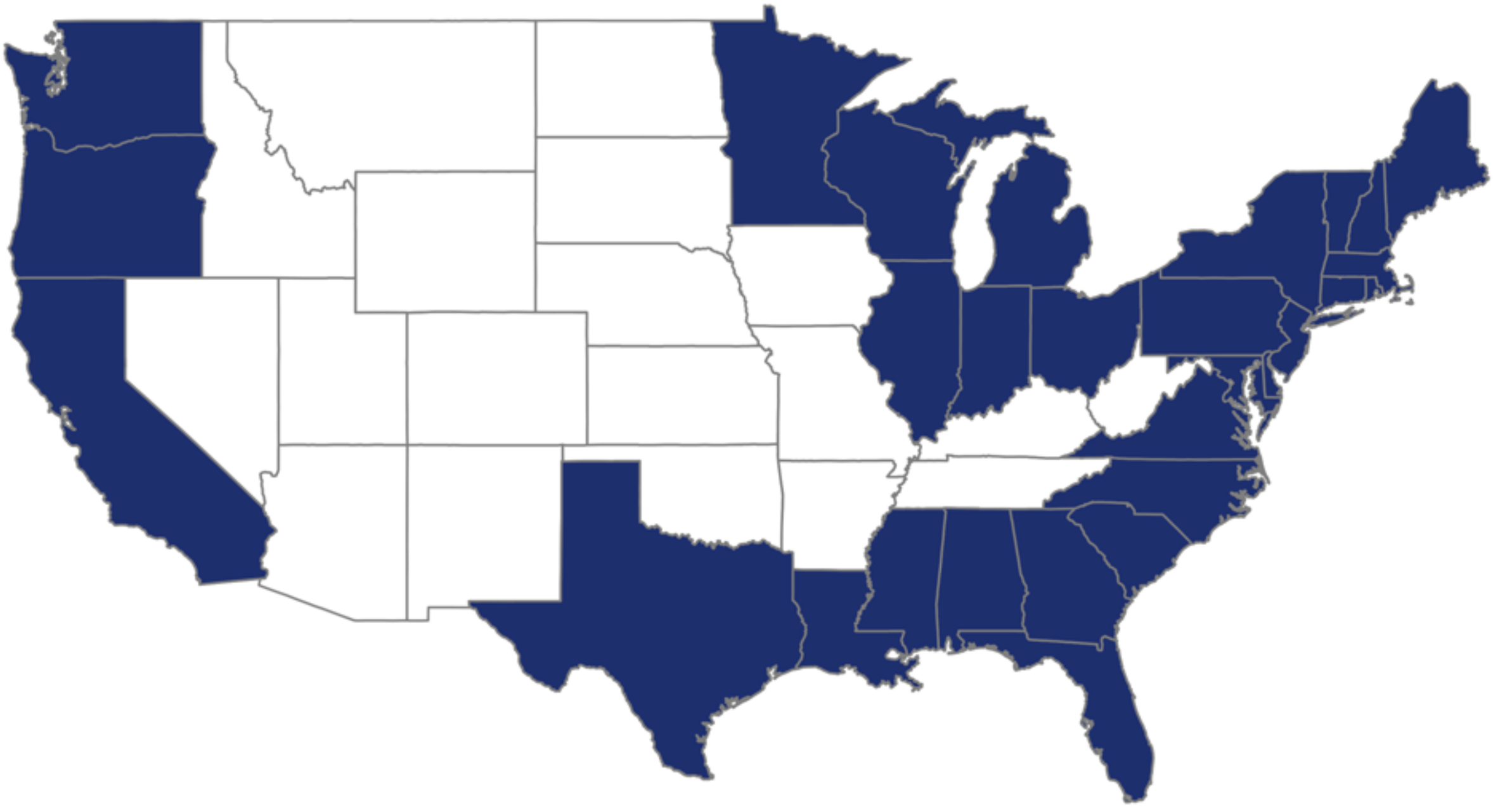
Thanks to Sea Grant Social Science Community of Practice

Sea Grant 50 YEARS

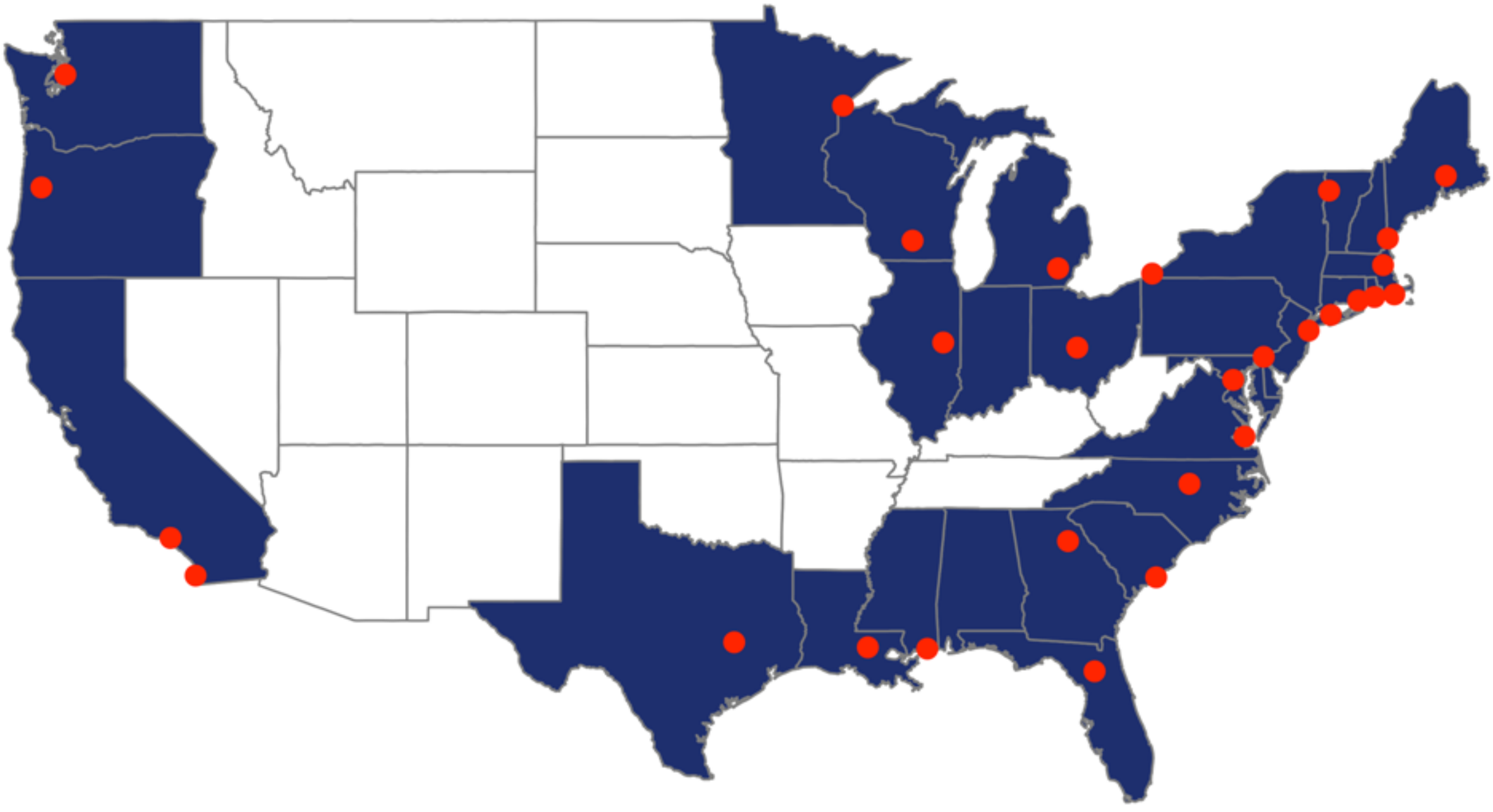
Sea Grant Texas
AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
TexasSeaGrant.org

Background

Sea Grant states



Sea Grant main office locations

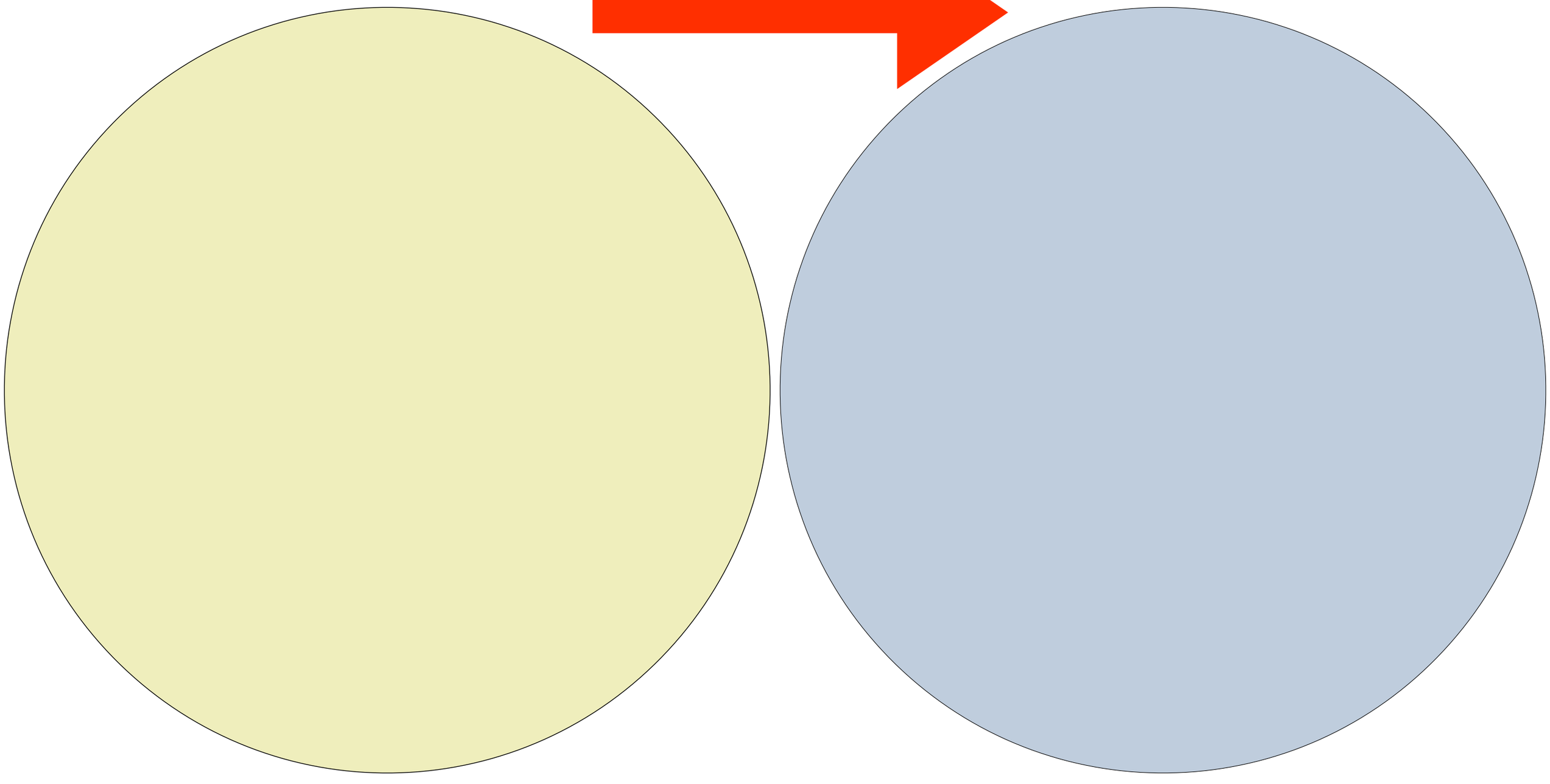


Scientists

Public

Scientists

Public



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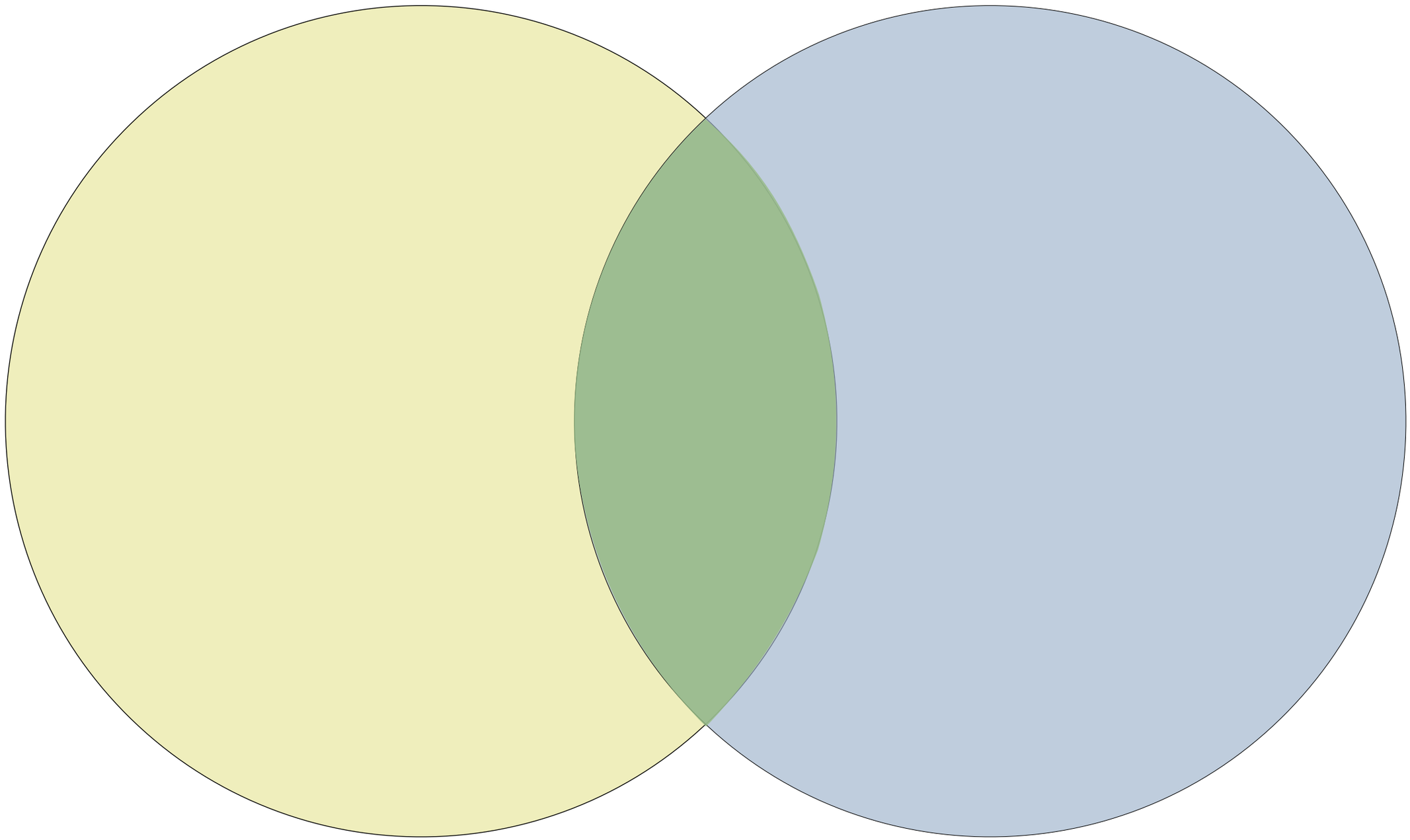

Science-policy interface

Scientists

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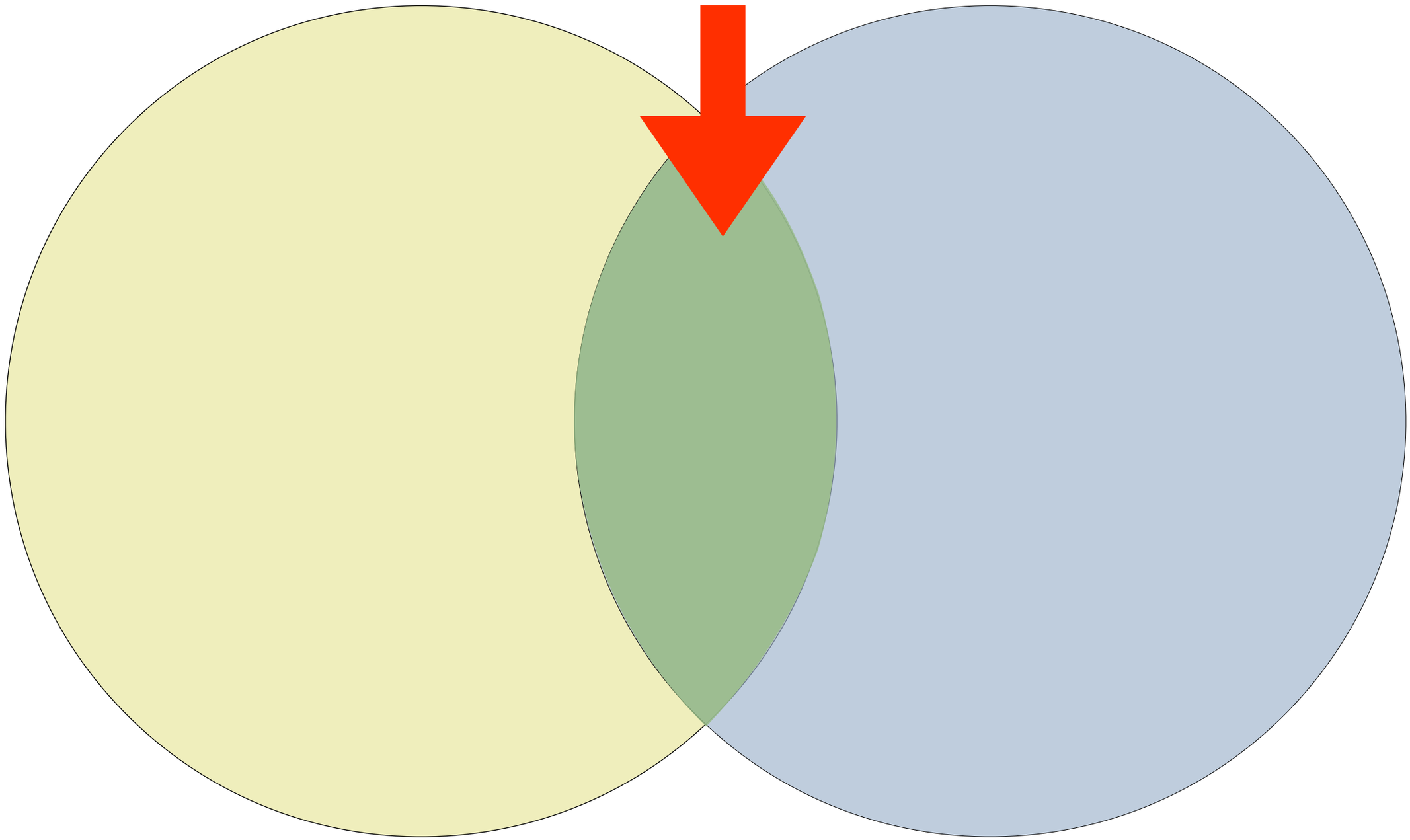
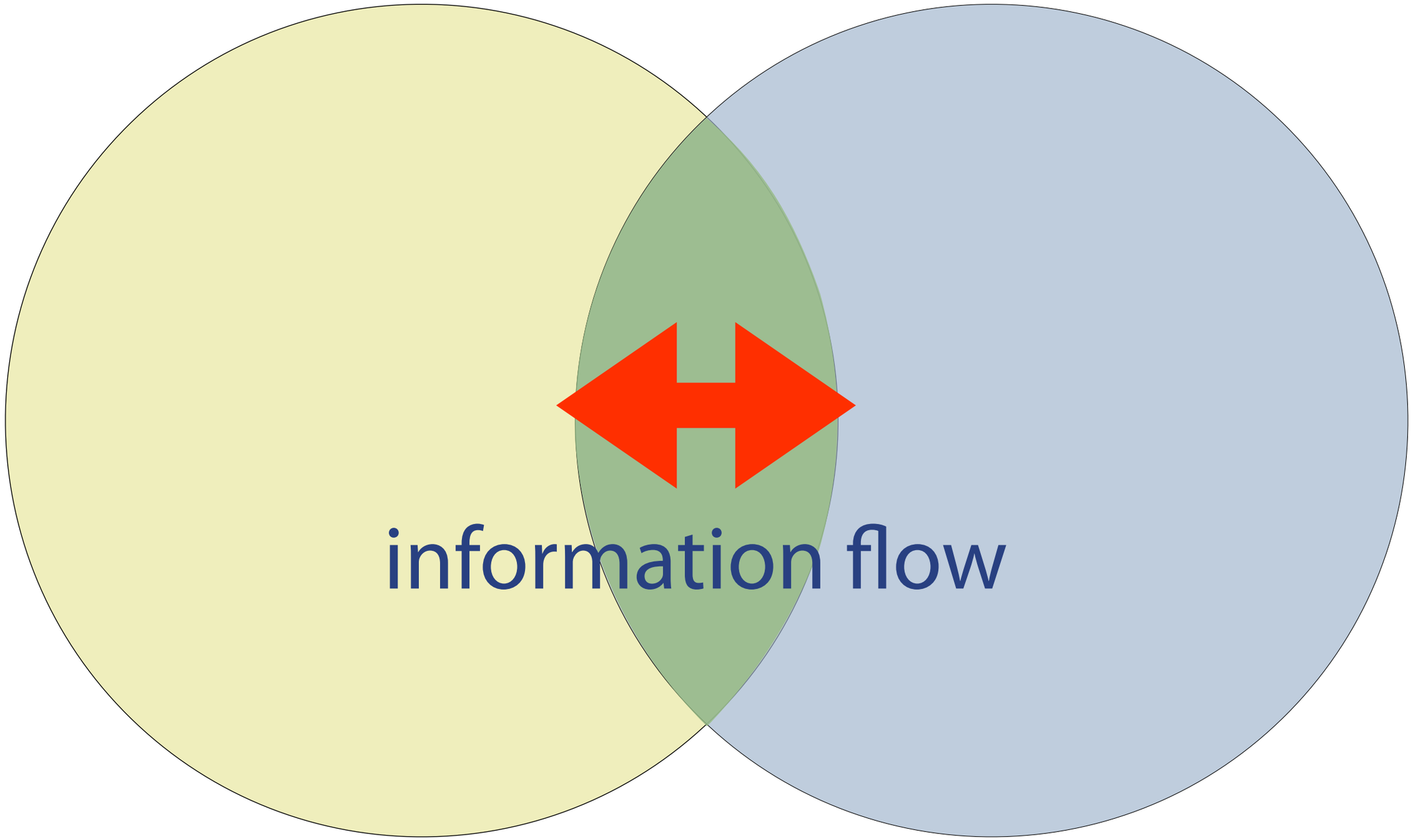


Scientists

Public



information flow

Science-policy interface

Boundary organizations provide a bridge for and broker knowledge between the production side (universities, research institutes) and the use side (stakeholders, decision makers).

- Kirchoff, Lemos, and Dessai 2013

How can social science help navigate this boundary?

Photo: Flickr user san_drino

We used social science to find out

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Methods

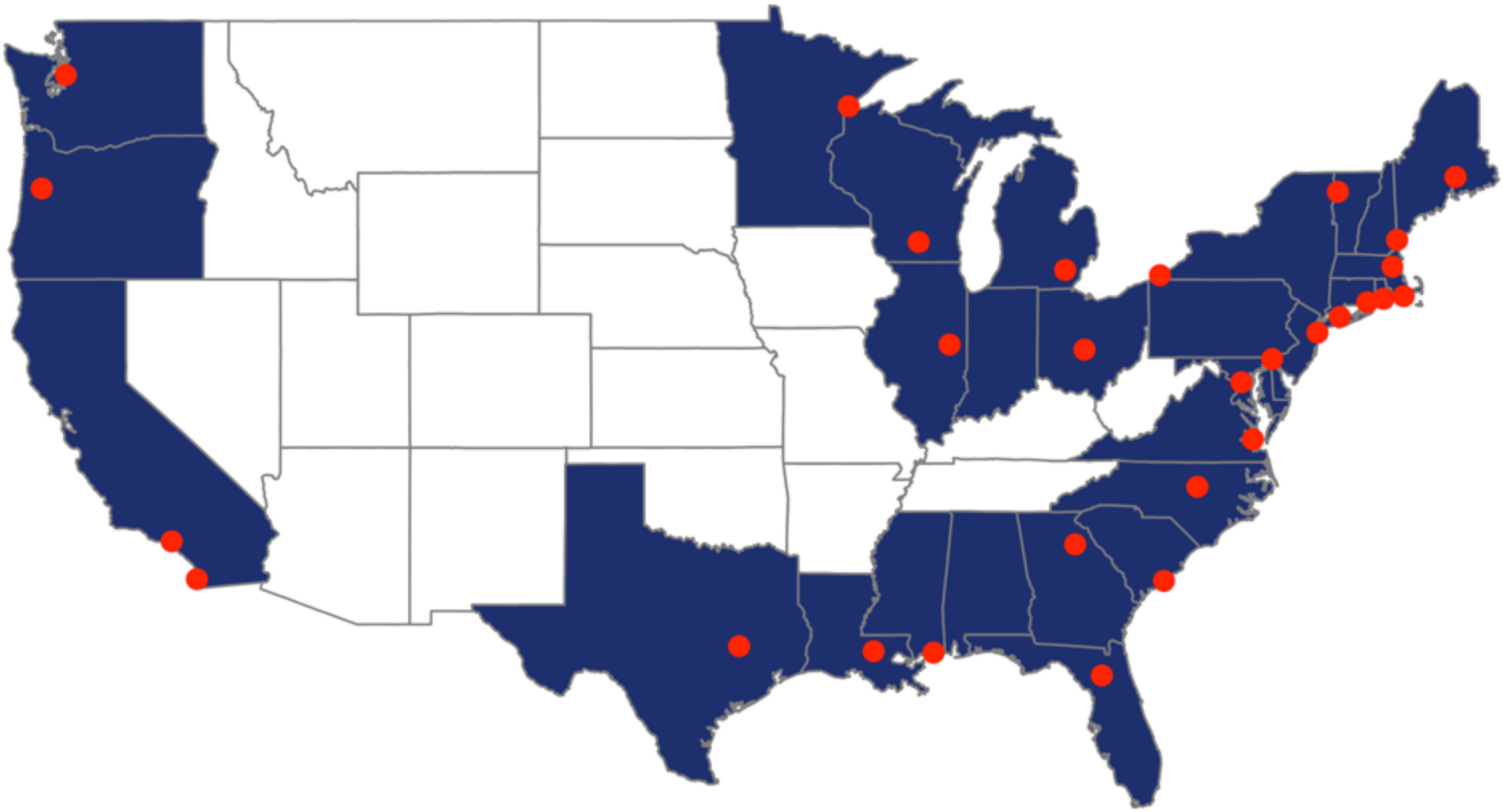
Delphi panel: systematically eliciting expert consensus

Photo: Ronny Siegel

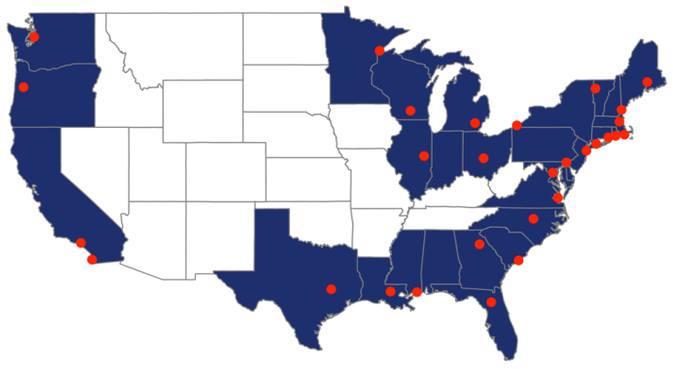
Delphi panel: systematically eliciting expert consensus

(Reporting on round 1 today)

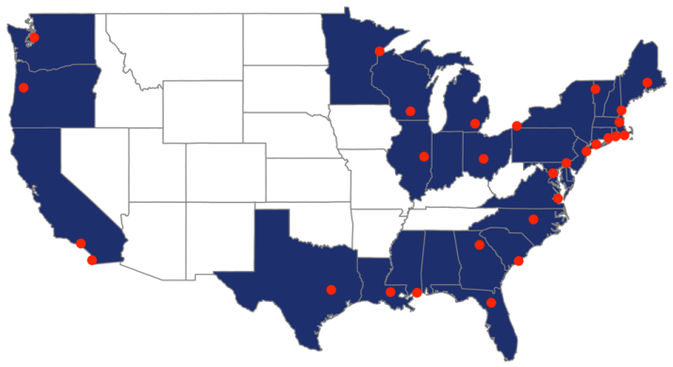
Photo: Ronny Siegel



Delphi panel round 1

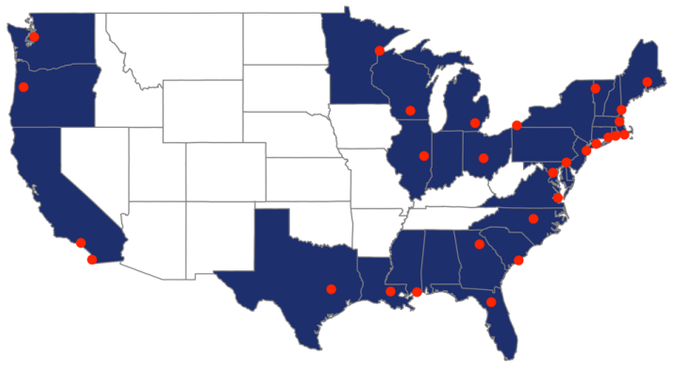


Surveyed directors & 1–3 staff at each program

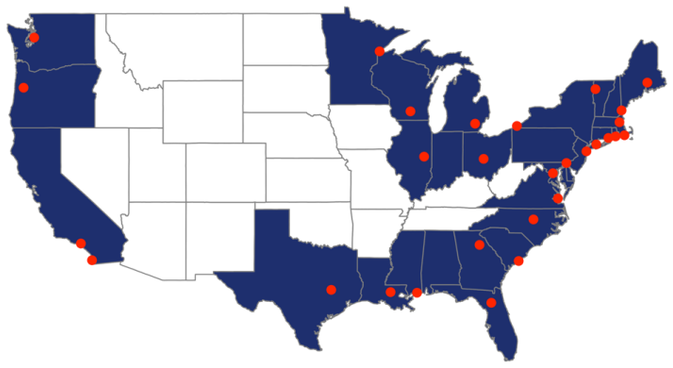


62% response rate

Delphi panel round 1



Inductive coding of open-ended responses



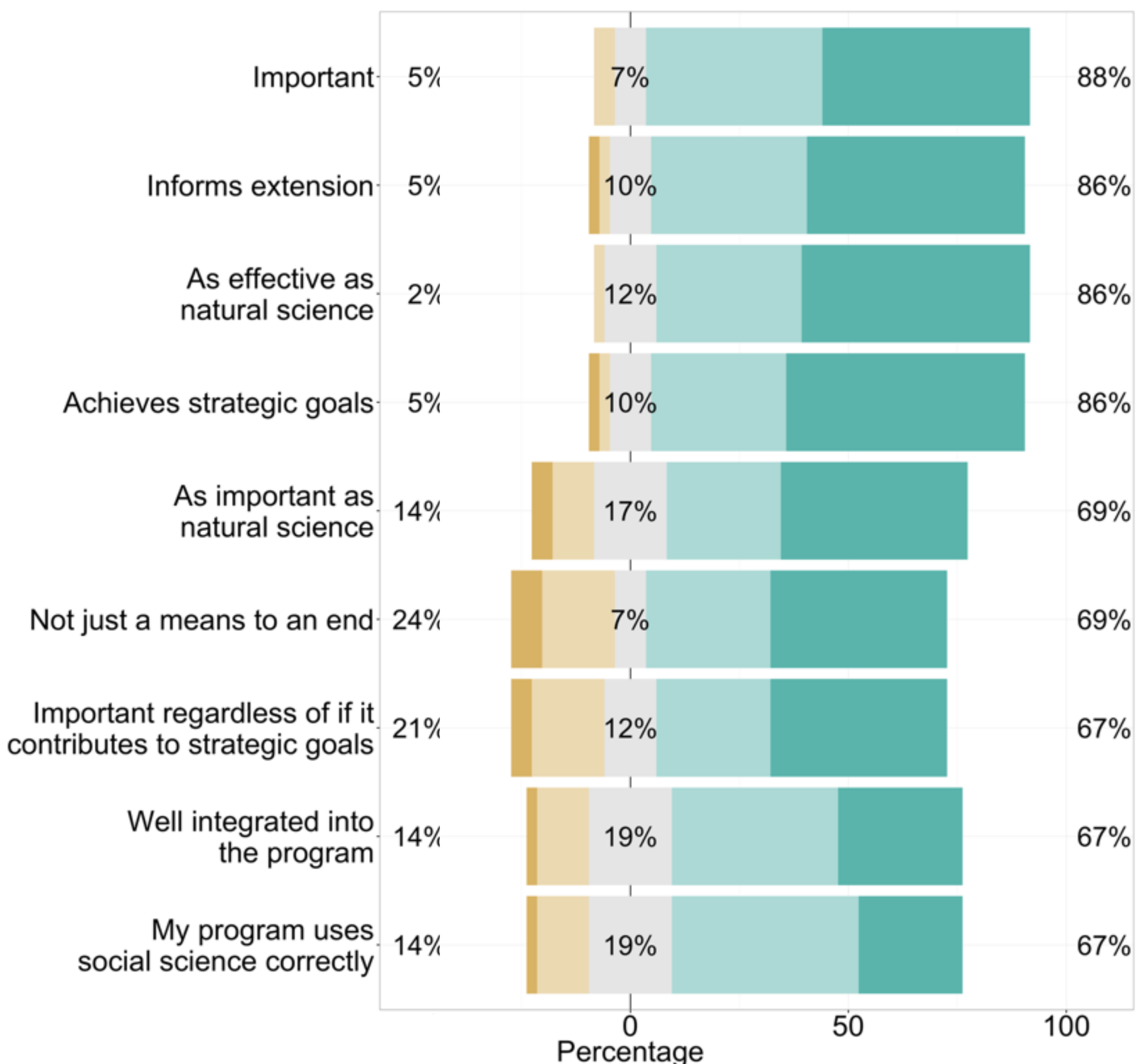
3 topics to discuss today

1. What are attitudes toward social science at Sea Grant?

2. What is a successful social science project at Sea Grant?

3. What factors promote or hinder successful social science at Sea Grant?

1. What are attitudes toward social science at Sea Grant?


Important
5%
7%
88%
Informs extension
5%
10%
86%
As effective as natural science
2%
12%
86%
Achieves strategic goals
5%
10%
86%
As important as natural science
14%
17%
69%
Not just a means to an end
24%
7%
69%
Important regardless of if it contributes to strategic goals
21%
12%
67%
Well integrated into the program
14%
19%
67%
My program uses social science correctly
14%
19%
67%
0
50
100
Percentage

2. What is a successful social science project at Sea Grant?

programming
knowledge
groups
something
adaptation
improve
people
andor
data
target
know
communities
good
make
behavior
impacts
allows
change
able
valuable
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define
inform
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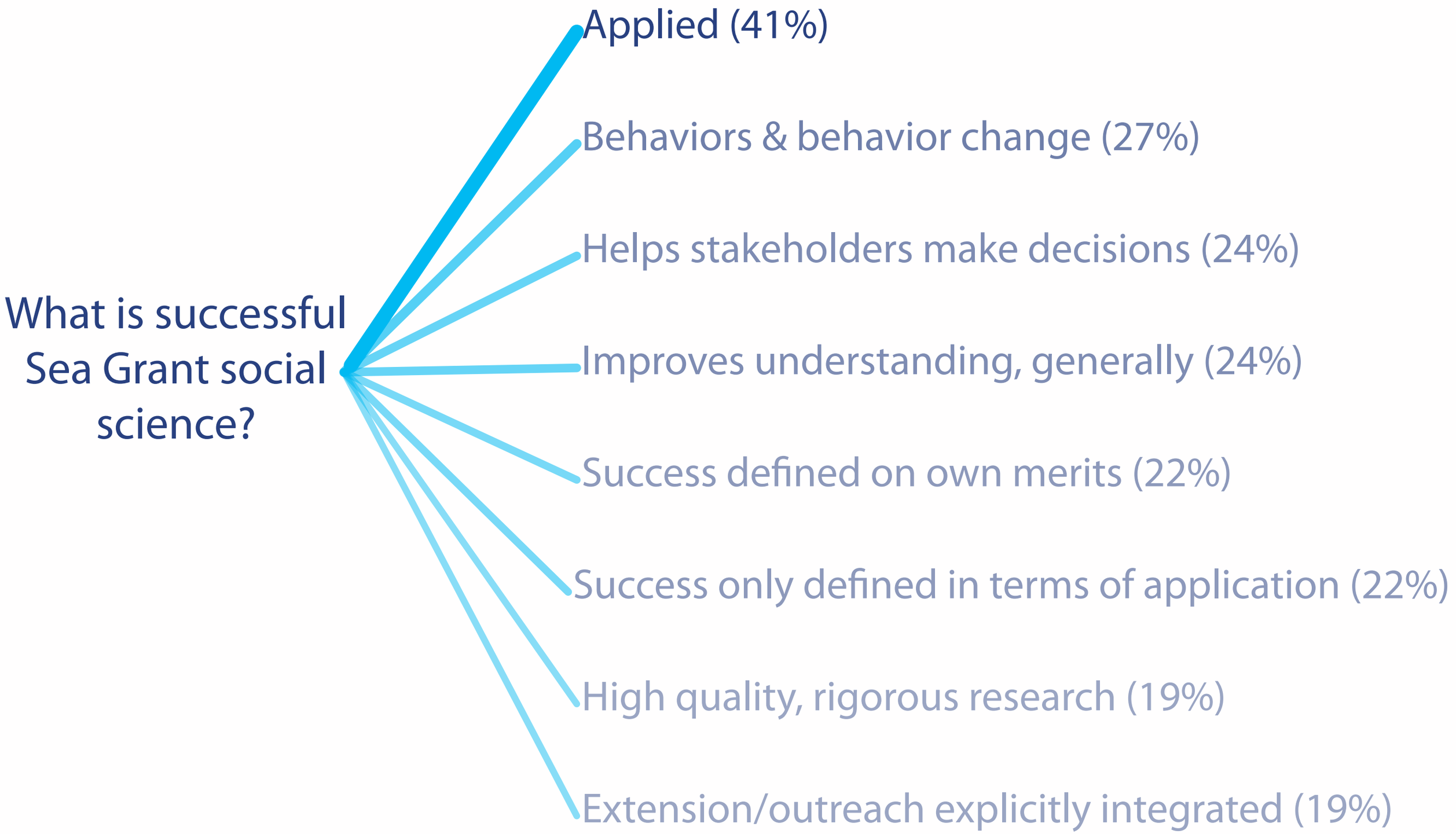
What is successful Sea Grant social science?
Applied (41%)
Behaviors & behavior change (27%)
Helps stakeholders make decisions (24%)
Improves understanding, generally (24%)
Success defined on own merits (22%)
Success only defined in terms of application (22%)
High quality, rigorous research (19%)
Extension/outreach explicitly integrated (19%)

3a. What factors promote successful social science at Sea Grant?

understand
value
focus
dont
use
access
partners
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conduct
working
group
also
funding
andor
capacity
trained
tools
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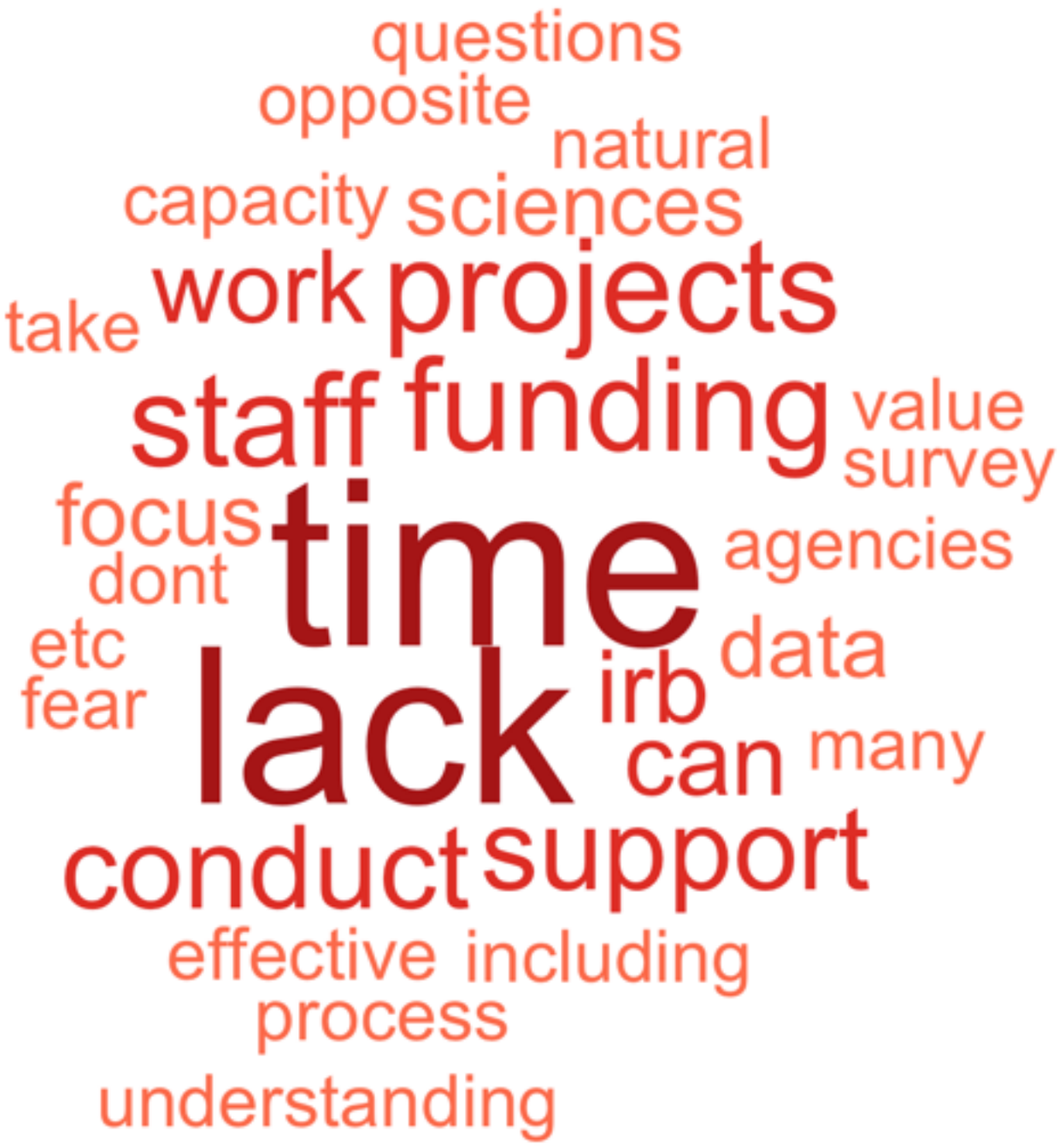
What factors lead to successful social science at Sea Grant?
Adequate funding (35%)
Expertise available (32%)
Stakeholder partnerships (26%)
Leadership buy-in (24%)
Good project design & response (21%)
Addresses relevant questions (21%)

3b. What are some barriers that hinder social science at Sea Grant?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What are barriers to successful social science at Sea Grant?

Lack of funding (40%)

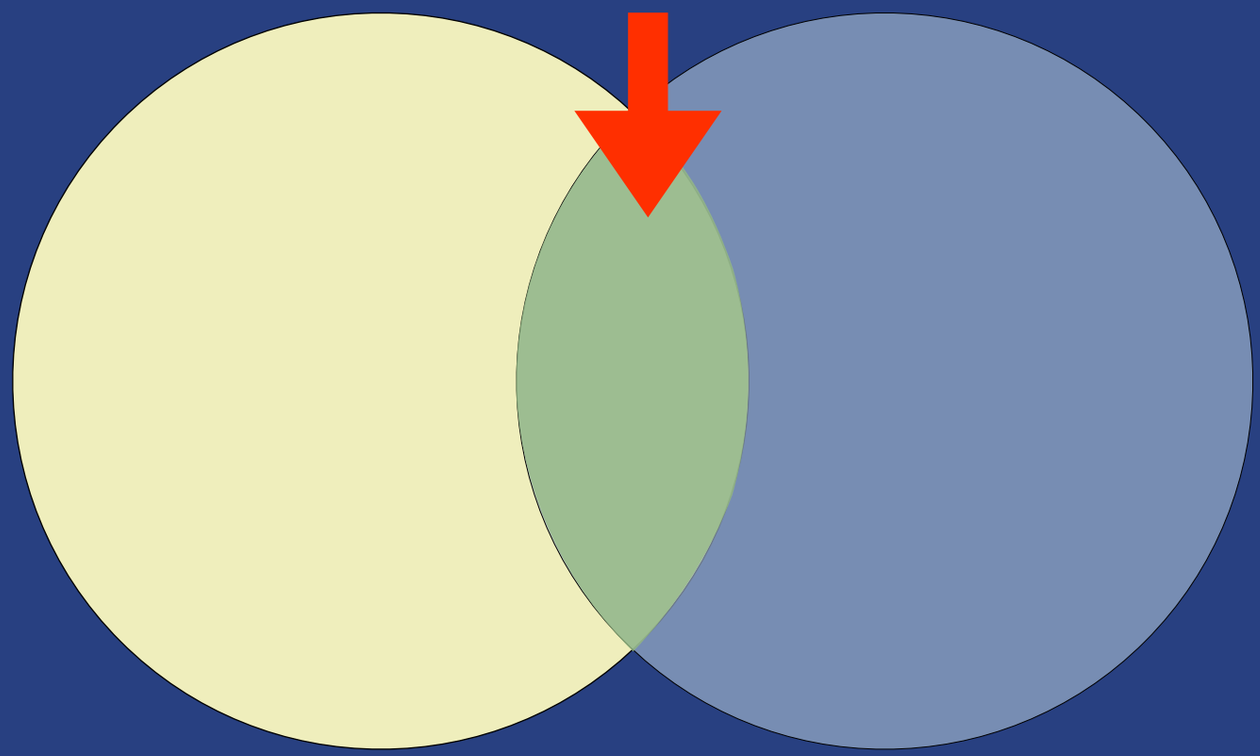
Lack of staff or time (37%)

Social science not respected (27%)

Poor project design (23%)

IRB/Bureaucracy (20%)

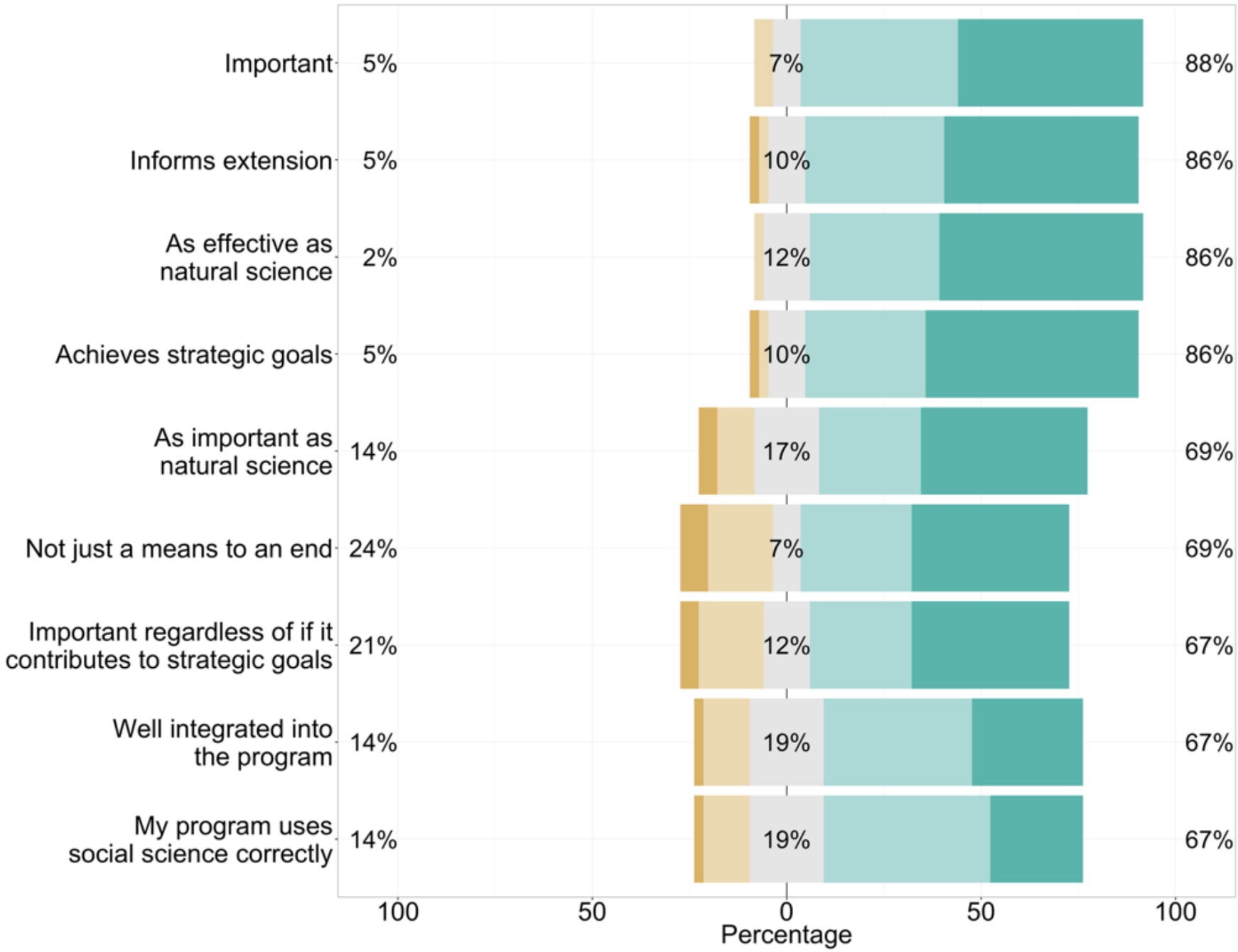
Conclusions: What does this mean for social science research at boundary organizations?



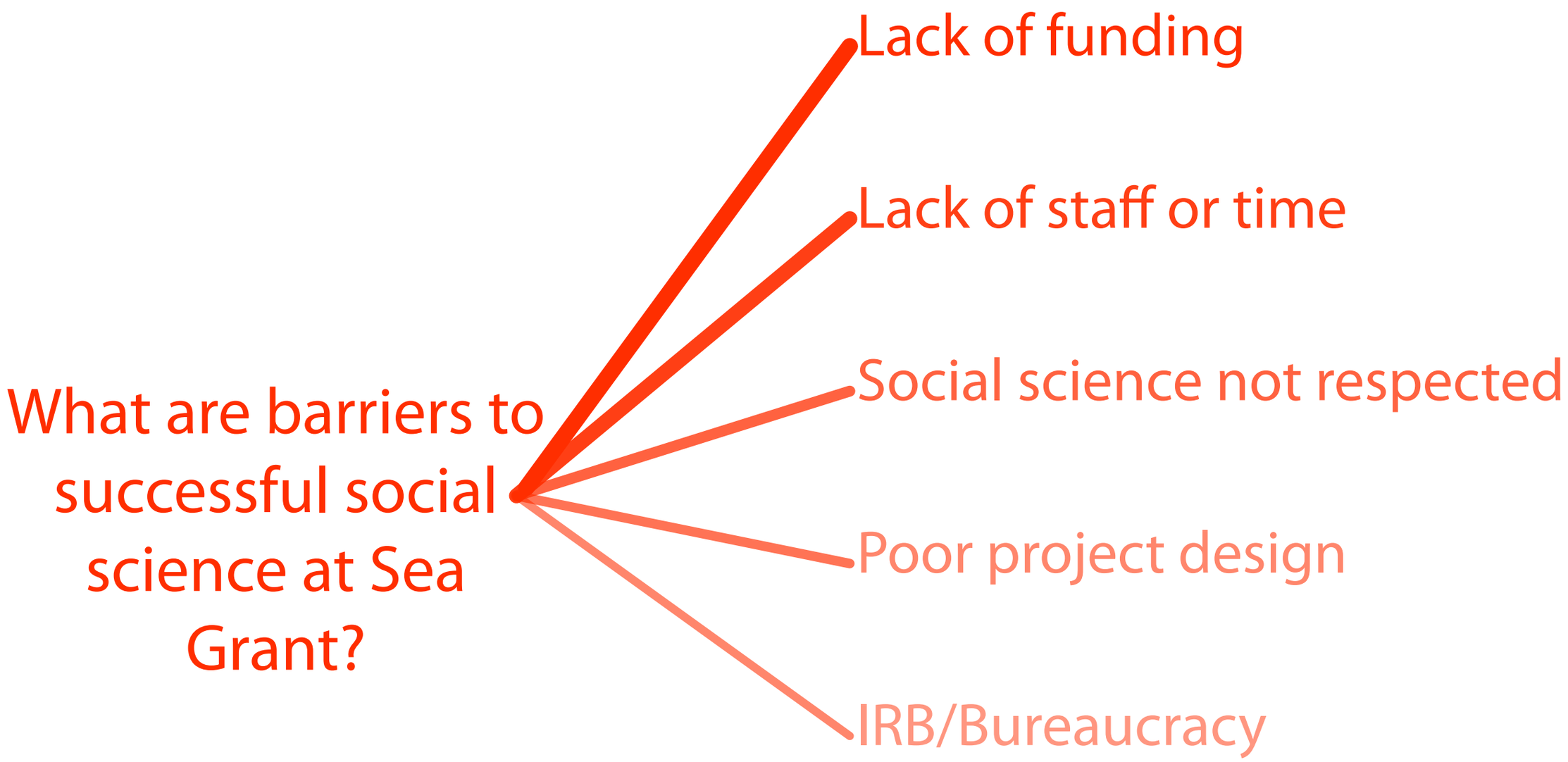
We aren’t the Oracle: applied, partner-driven research is important

(We aren’t Socrates, either)

Favorable attitudes vs. lack of buy-in



Favorable attitudes vs. lack of buy-in



2 stakeholder groups

Image: Hot Shots! Part Deux

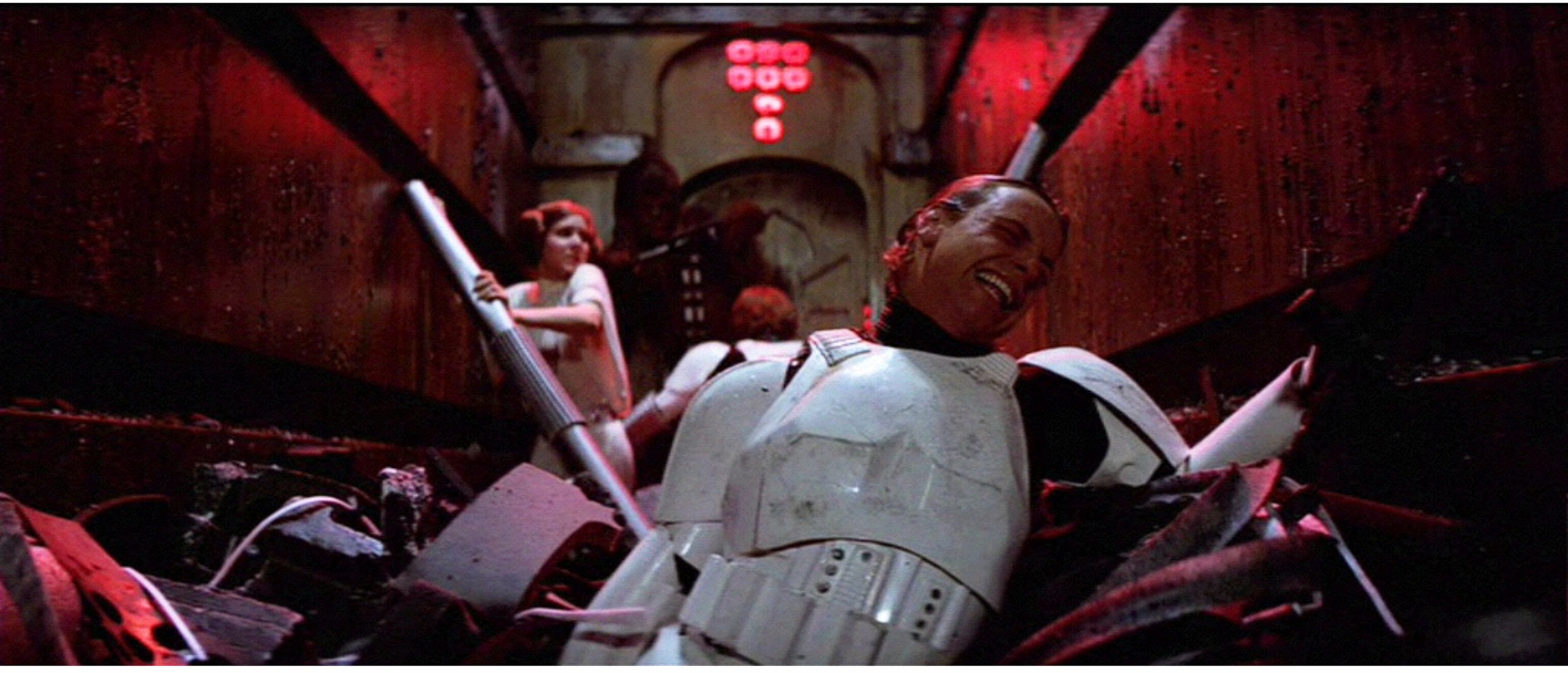


Image: Star Wars: A New Hope

Thank you.

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