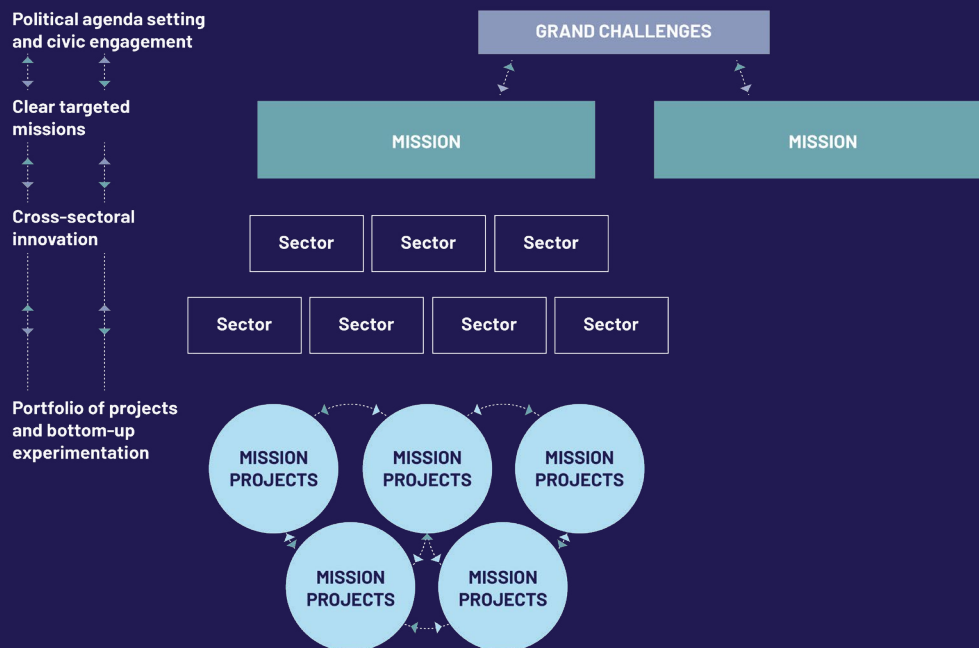


# MISSION ESSENTIALS

The Mission Essentials distills key messages from the full version Mission Guidebook: A Research Management Guide to Mission-Driven Universities.

For detailed guidance on mission-driven methodologies, refer to the [full version Mission Guidebook](#) which can be found on [missions.aau.dk](https://missions.aau.dk)



Adopted from Mazzucato & Dobb (2019), reproduced from Mission Guidebook (Pedersen et al. 2024), p. 14.

## WHY MISSIONS?

In response to entangled societal crises such as pandemics, climate change, energy transitions, mental health issues, and geopolitical instability, democracies require extensive research and innovation capabilities. Europe faces significant challenges in security, digitalization, inequality, energy, environment, and health. As emphasized by Mariana Mazzucato, governments and universities possess critical capacities to address these challenges. Missions are rapidly becoming a key driving factor for change across the international research and innovation ecosystem. The guidebook gives answers to how universities can lead missions and maximize their impact by leading mission-driven programmes.

## MISSION-DRIVEN UNIVERSITIES

Historically technological missions have been driven top-down by governments. Societal missions must involve a wider scope of stakeholders in both definition, vision, and implementation. Universities do not have the capacities of entire governments to mobilize collective action or stimulate social change. Rather, universities must break down societal challenges into work programmes that fit their purpose, research capacity, and impact horizon.

# FOUR ESSENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF UNIVERSITY MISSIONS

**Ownership:** Clear vision and ownership are essential, typically managed by a Mission Partner Board comprising a Mission Manager and interdisciplinary partners representing different research disciplines and societal sectors.

**Leadership:** Defined leadership structure is crucial, often managed by a Mission Unit responsible for execution.

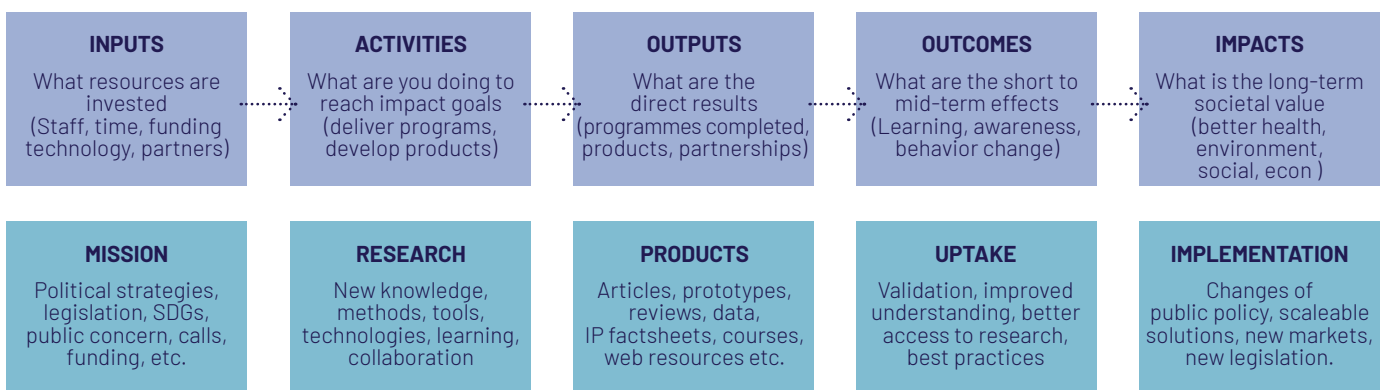
**Alignment:** Effective mission programmes require coordinated projects of varying scales and durations.

**Impact Targets:** Missions must establish discrete, actionable, and observable impact targets set by the Mission Partner Board, aligning with institutional, regional and policy priorities.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MISSION-ORIENTED RESEARCH

- 1. Be bold, inspirational and with wide societal relevance:** Missions should engage the public with ambitious and impactful actions.
- 2. Set a clear direction:** Missions need to be clearly framed, targeted, measurable, and have time-bound goals.
- 3. Be ambitious yet realistic:** Objectives should be high yet attainable, encompassing research and innovation across the value chain.
- 4. Encourage cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, and cross-actor collaboration:** Mission should be framed to enable collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and various actors.
- 5. Involve multiple, bottom-up solutions:** Missions must be open to different types of solutions and should not be achievable by a single development path or technology.

# THE AAU MISSION LOGIC MODEL



Based on the monitoring of productive interactions it is possible to construct a logic model and theory of change.

Aalborg University has identified several missions focused on complex issues like tran-

sitioning to human-centric energy systems and improving the well-being of children and youth in Denmark. Collaborating with companies, civil society, and public-sector authorities, the university leverages its tradition of creating sustainable solutions.