



**NATURAL CAPITAL
FORUM**

PEOPLE | NATURE | PROSPERITY

Strengthening Natural Capital Accounting Capacity in South Africa

A University-Led Collaborative Framework
for Sustainable Development

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Natural Capital Forum

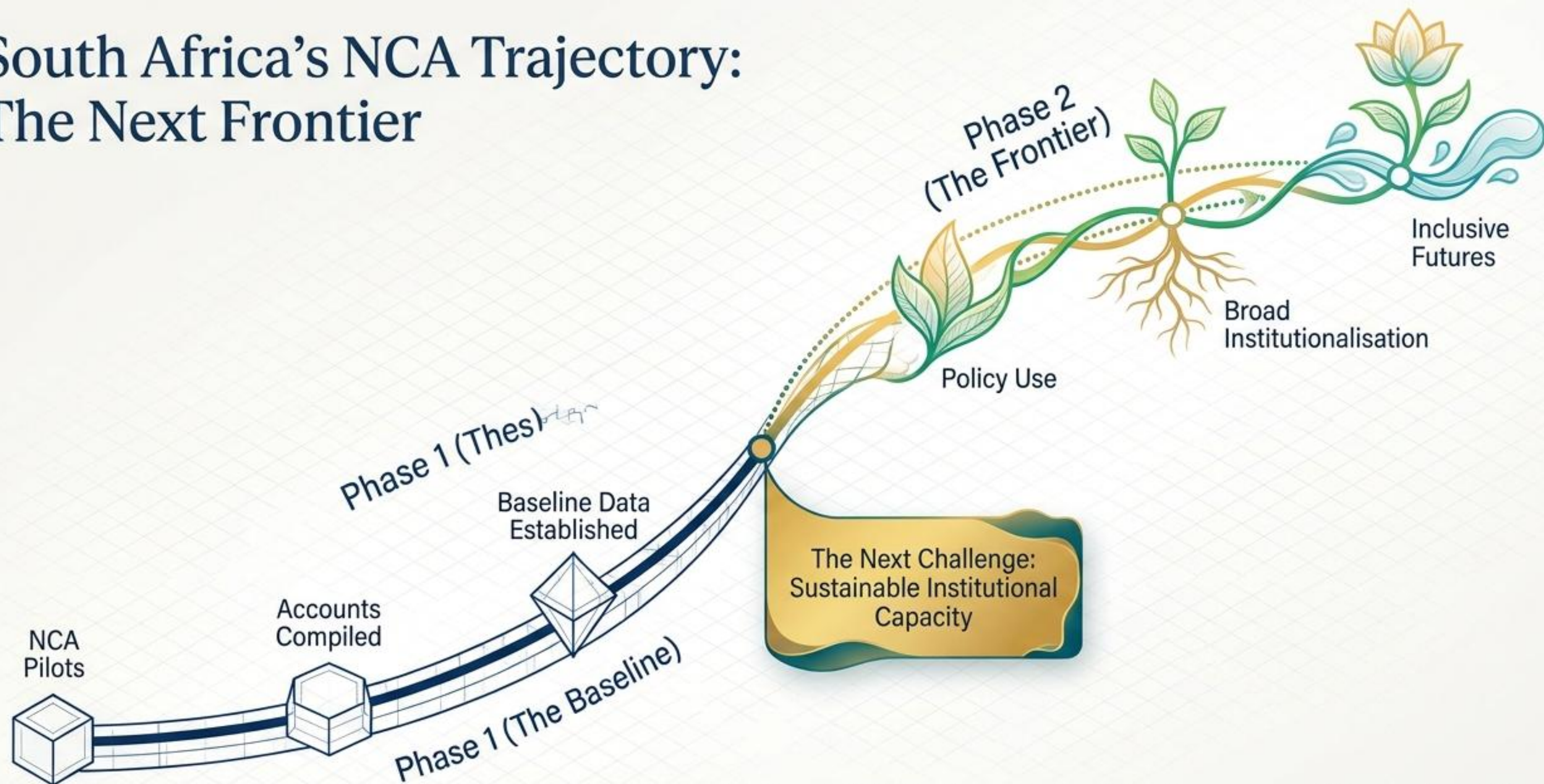
Building a sustainable future through
nature, people and prosperity



Durban, South Africa

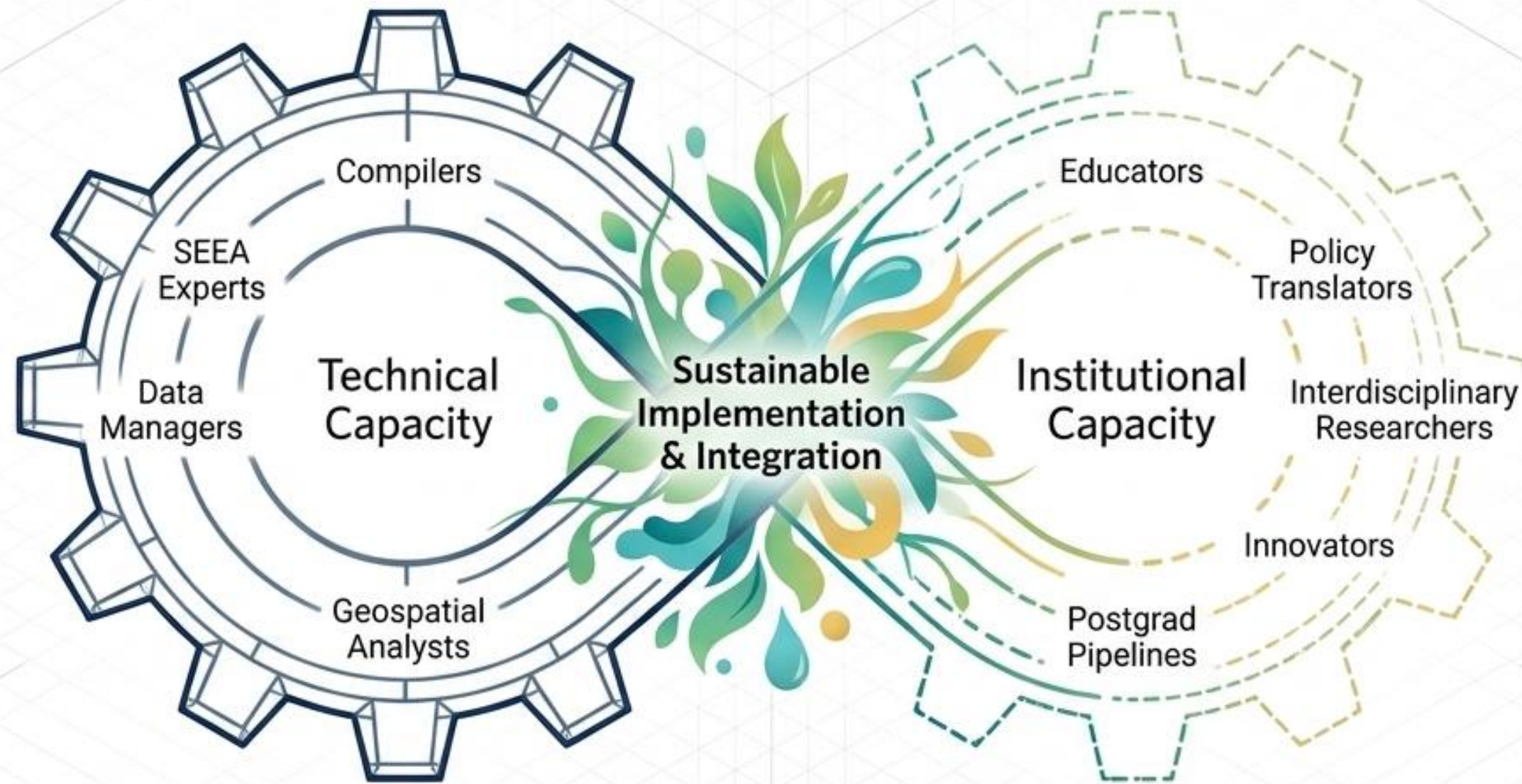


South Africa's NCA Trajectory: The Next Frontier



Six years into the National NCA Strategy, South Africa has successfully mastered the technical production of diverse accounts (water, energy, minerals, land, ecosystems). To realize the 2030 vision, we must now master the ecosystem that sustains and utilizes them.

The Sustainability Challenge is Fundamentally a Capacity Challenge



If South Africa develops accounts without developing the institutions capable of continuously reproducing, interpreting, and using NCA knowledge, institutionalisation remains fragile. We are currently under-resourced in the right loop.

Looking Outward: What Does the Global Evidence Reveal?

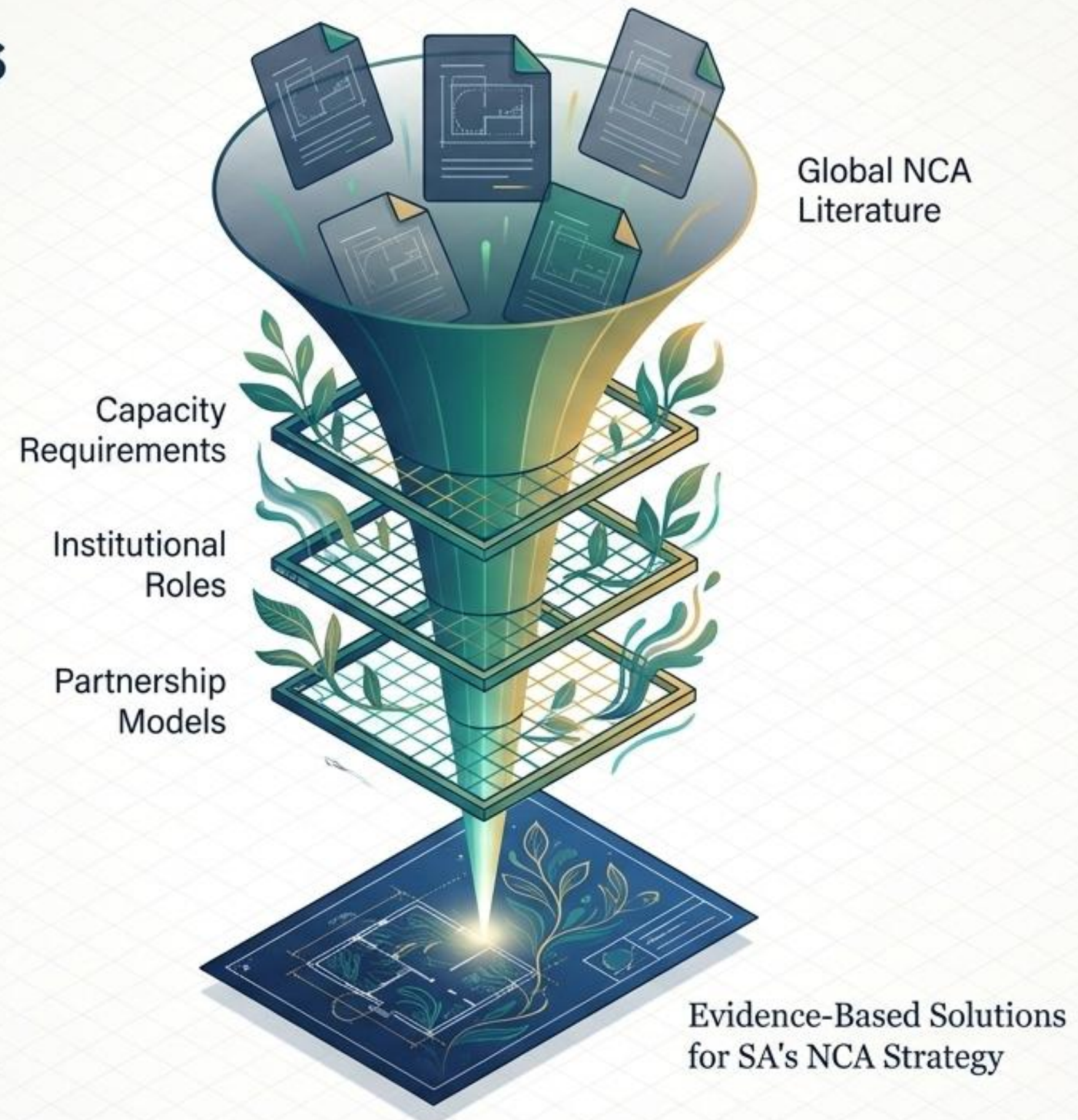
Research Focus Areas

1. How has NCA research evolved globally?

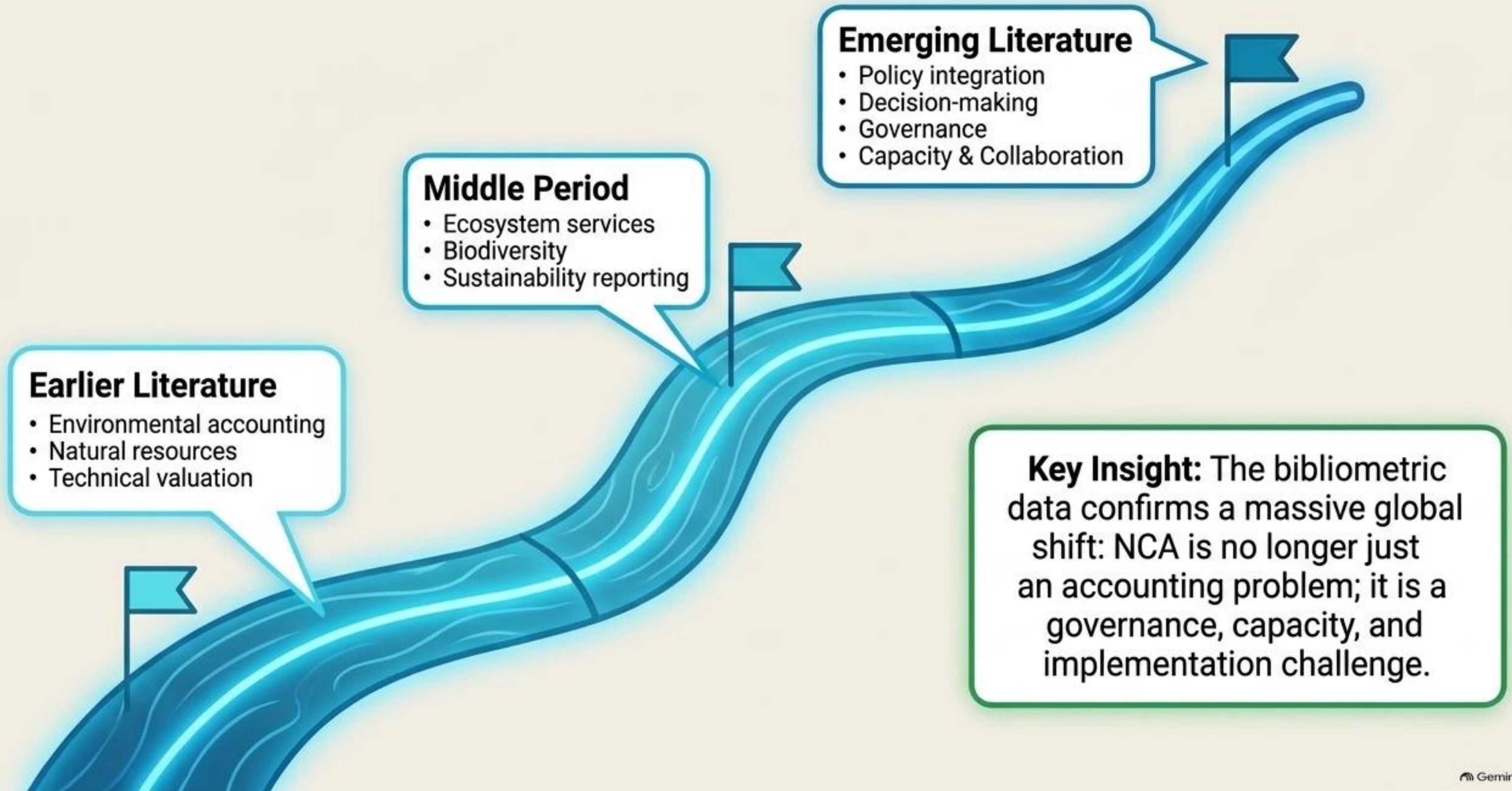
2. What structural capacity-building approaches succeed?

3. What specific roles do universities and research institutions play?

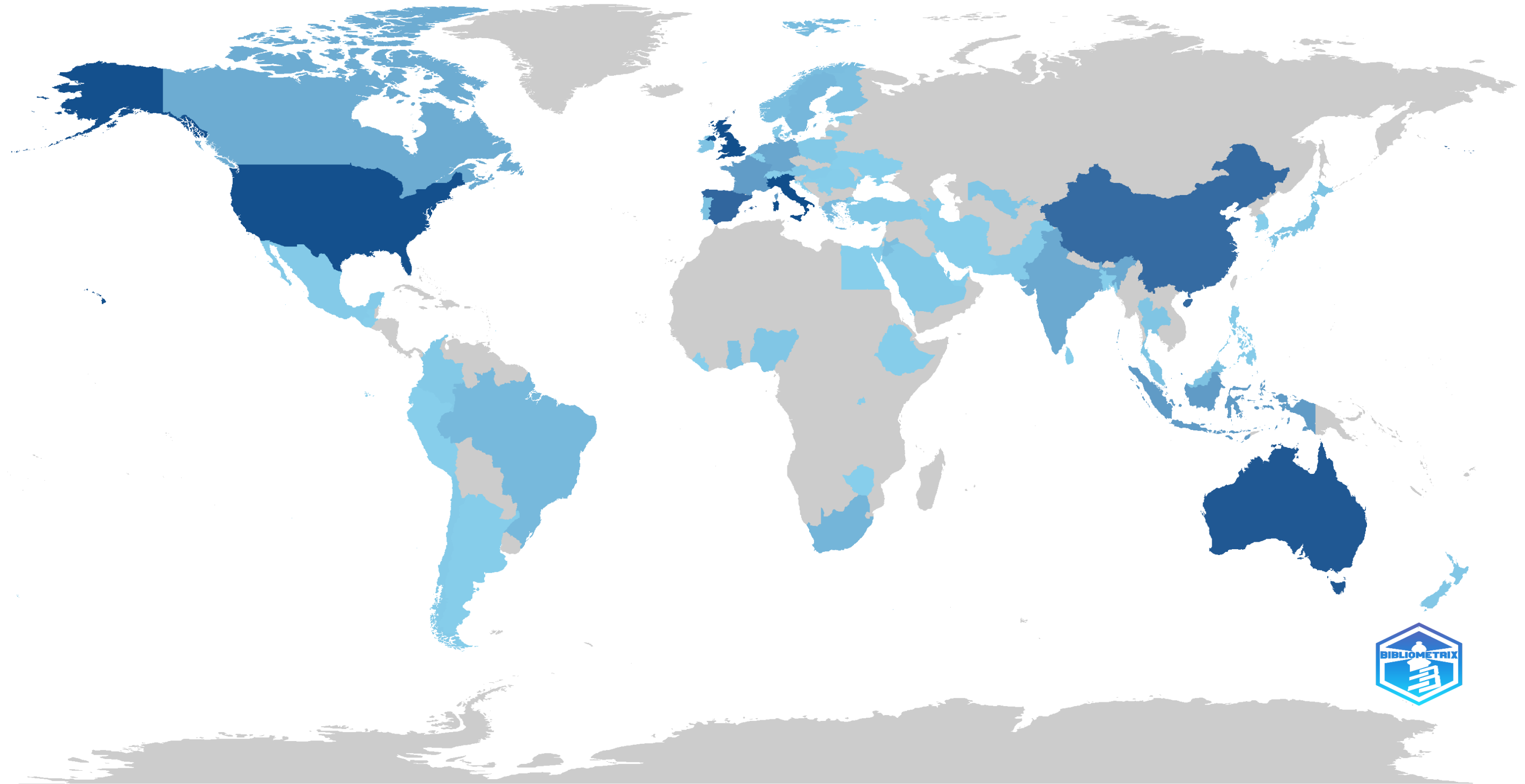
4. What forms of government-academia collaboration accelerate implementation?



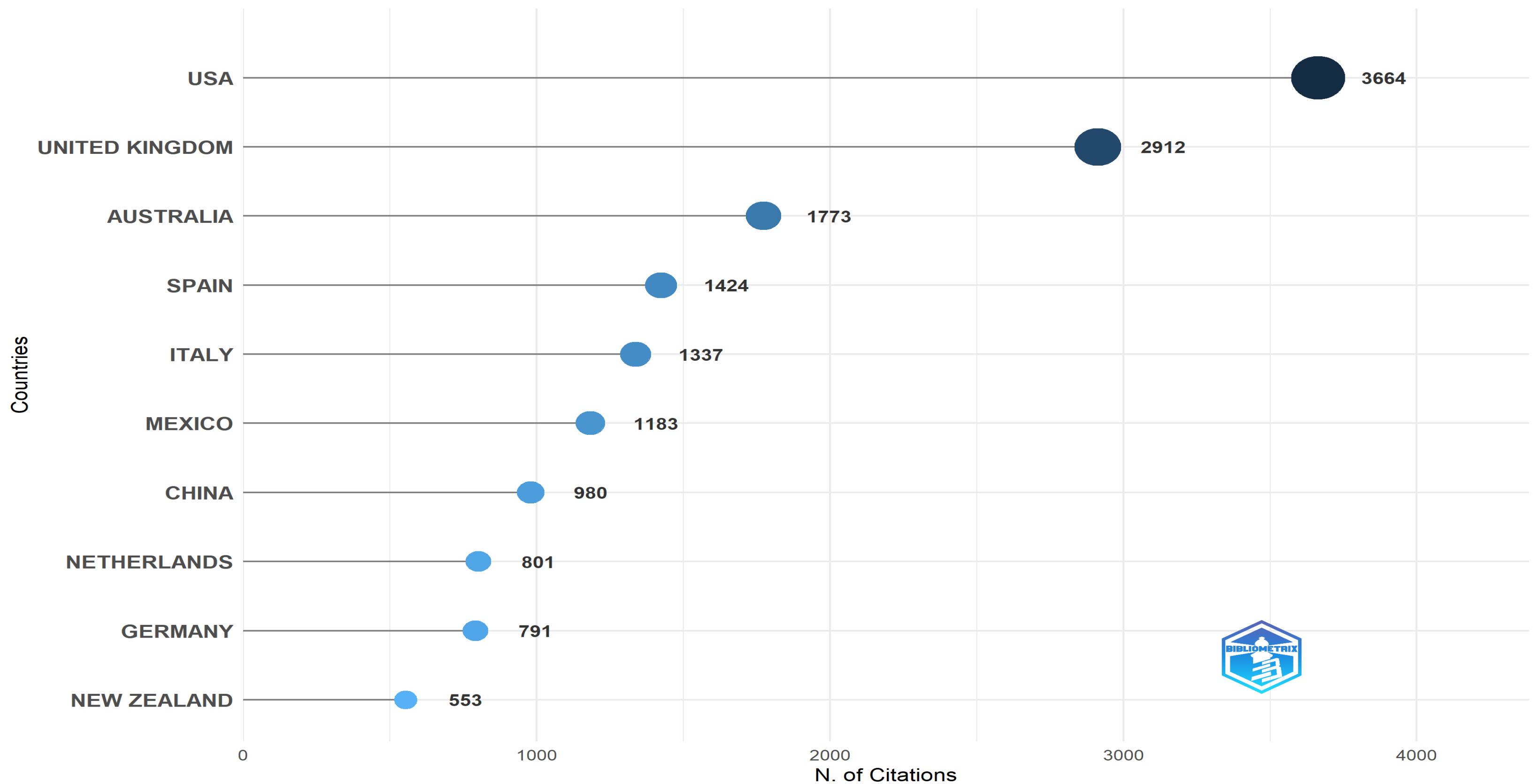
NCA research is evolving from measurement towards governance



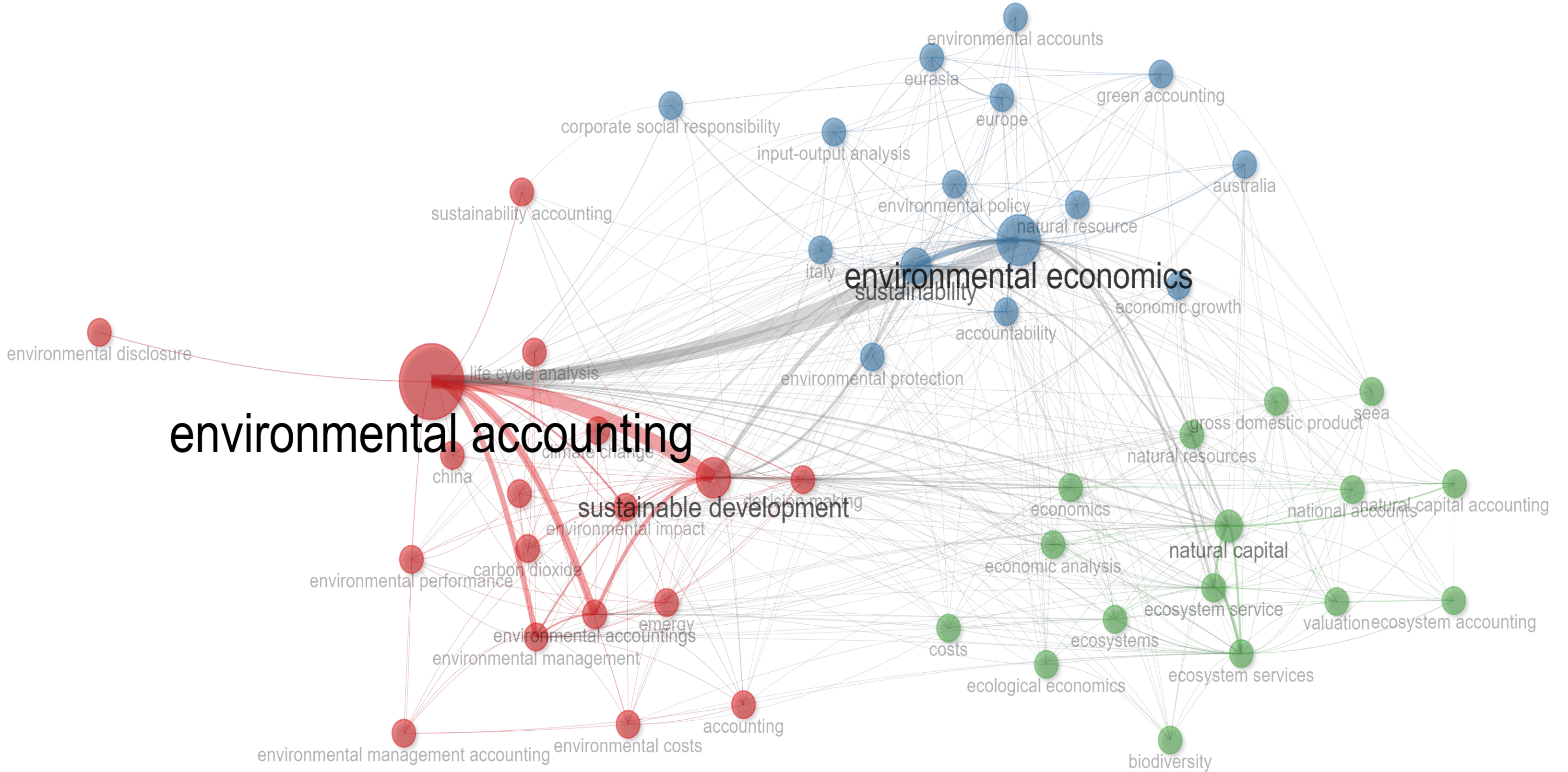
Country Scientific Production



Most Cited Countries

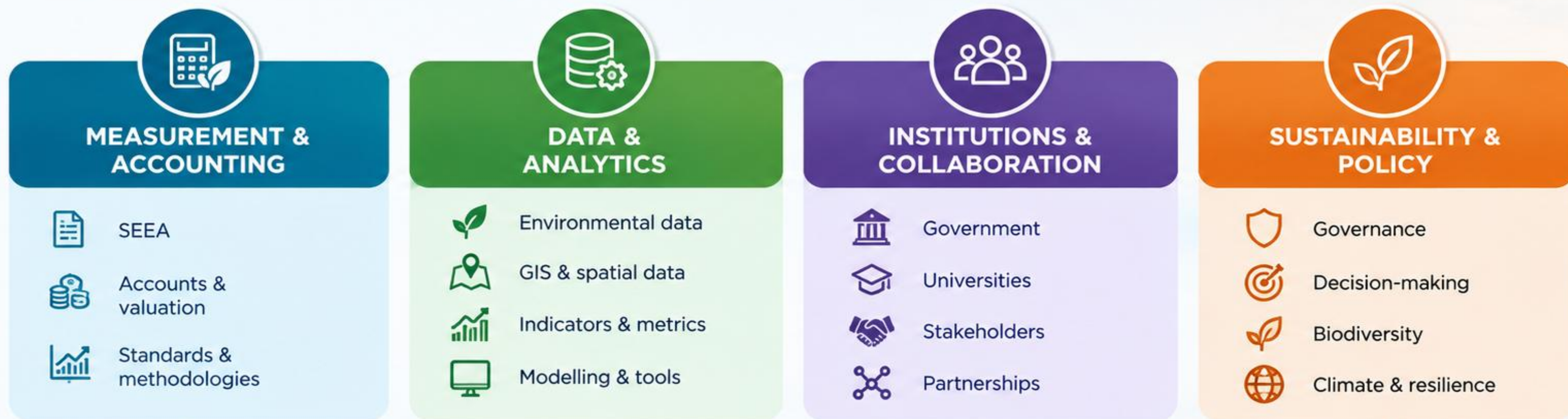


environmental accounting



The Literature Points to Four Dimensions of NCA Capacity

Global research shows that successful Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) requires more than technical skills — it needs a combination of measurement, data, institutions and policy.



 **NCA INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**
BETTER DATA | STRONGER INSTITUTIONS | INFORMED DECISIONS | SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES



**Research &
modelling**



**Education &
student pipeline**



**UNIVERSITY-BASED
SUSTAINABILITY CENTRE**



INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE

Economics • Science • Engineering • Law • Data



**RESEARCH + EDUCATION +
STUDENT DEVELOPMENT +
EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT**



**POLICY + RESOURCE MANAGEMENT +
SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTIONS**



**Data, methods &
measurement**



**Policy & stakeholder
engagement**

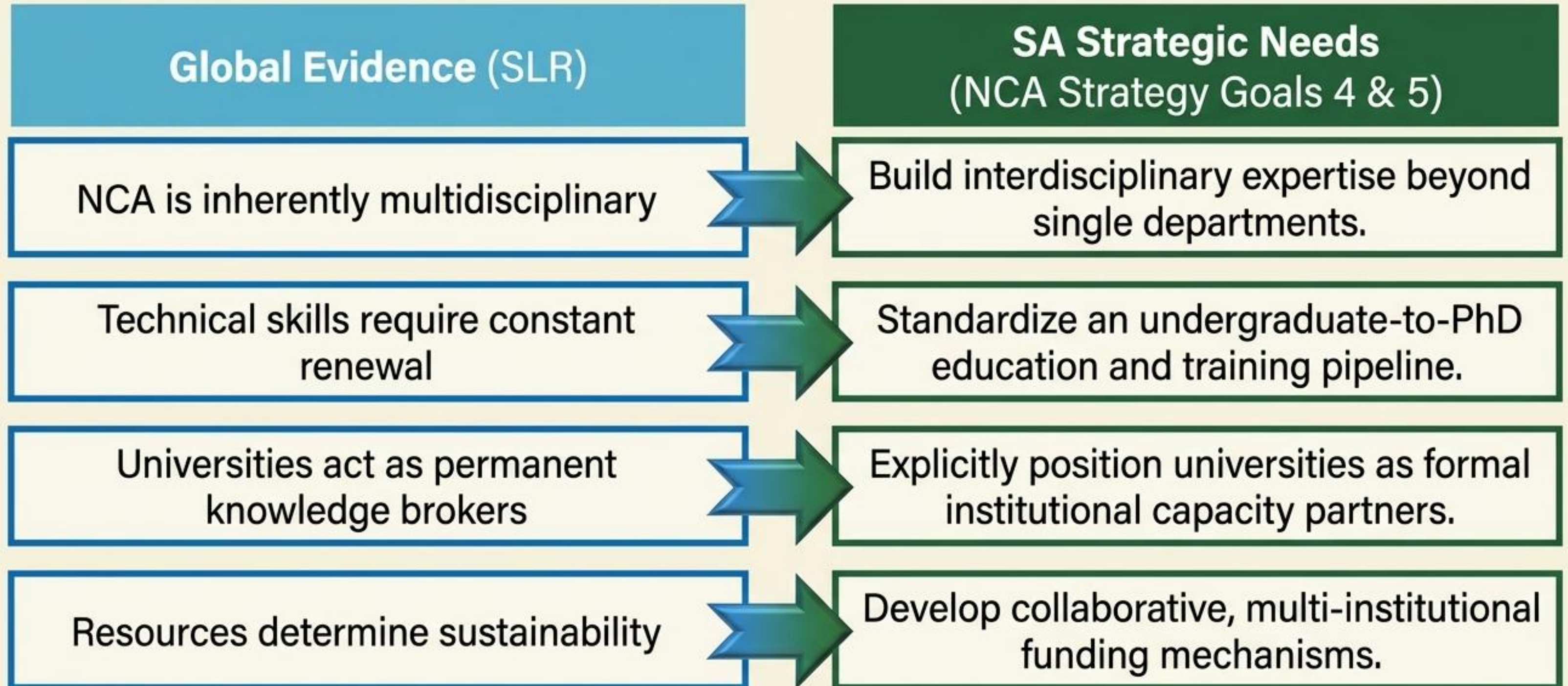
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A closely similar model: a dedicated university platform connects interdisciplinary research, education, methods and external engagement to sustainability and resource-management challenges.

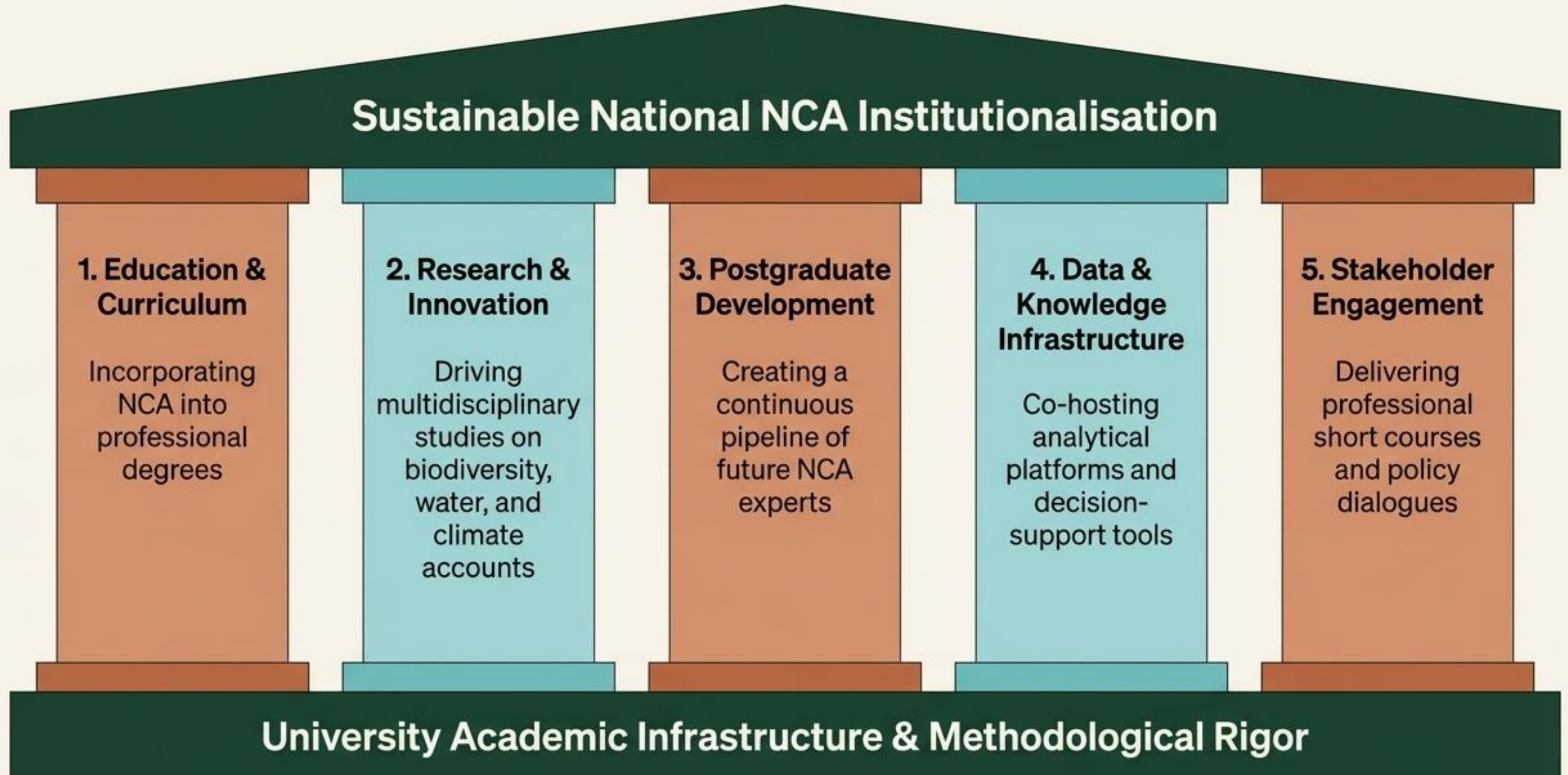


Relevance for South Africa: Universities can provide platforms linking NCA research, skills development, data/innovation and policy engagement.

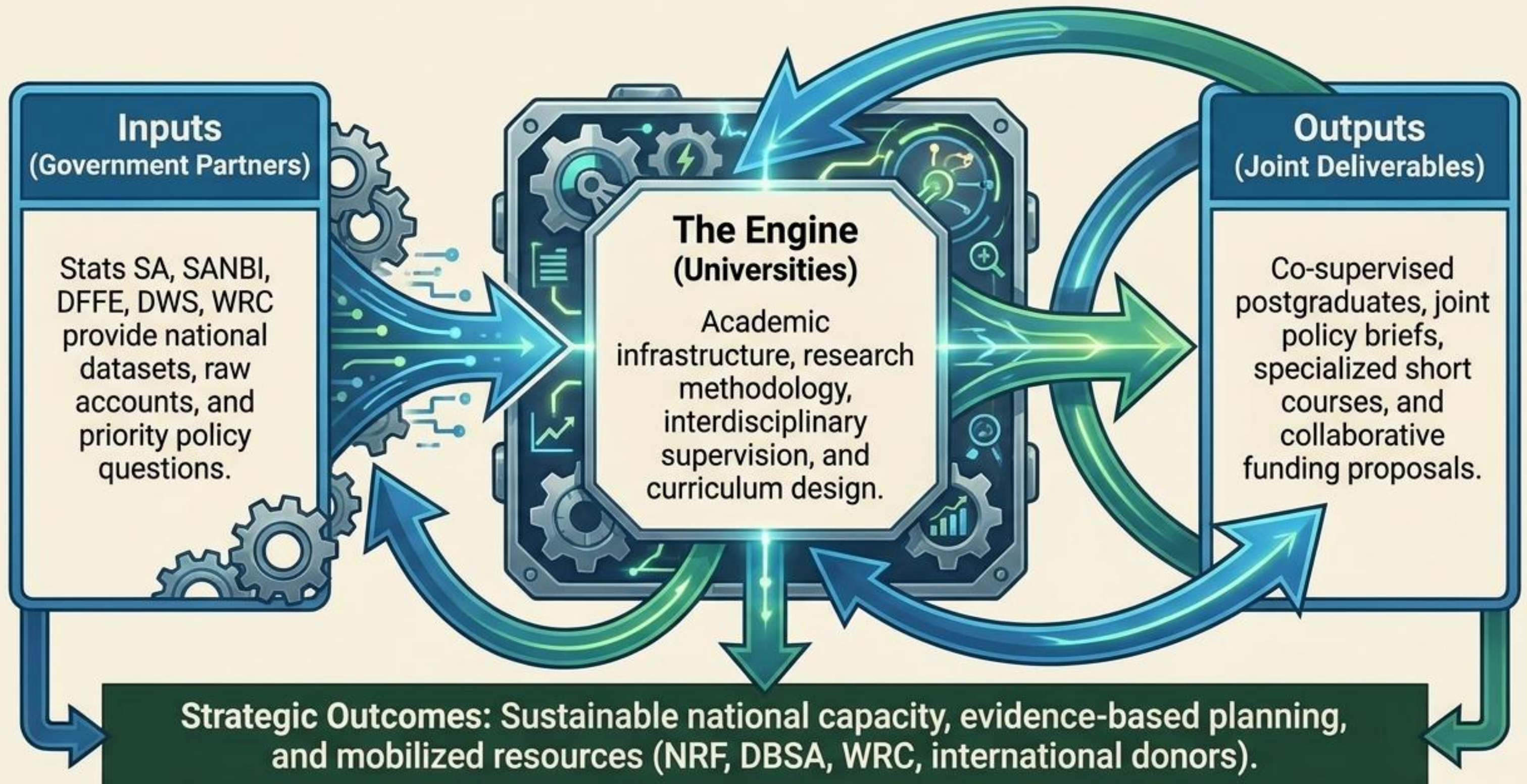
Translating global evidence directly to South African priorities



The Proposed University-Led NCA Capacity Framework

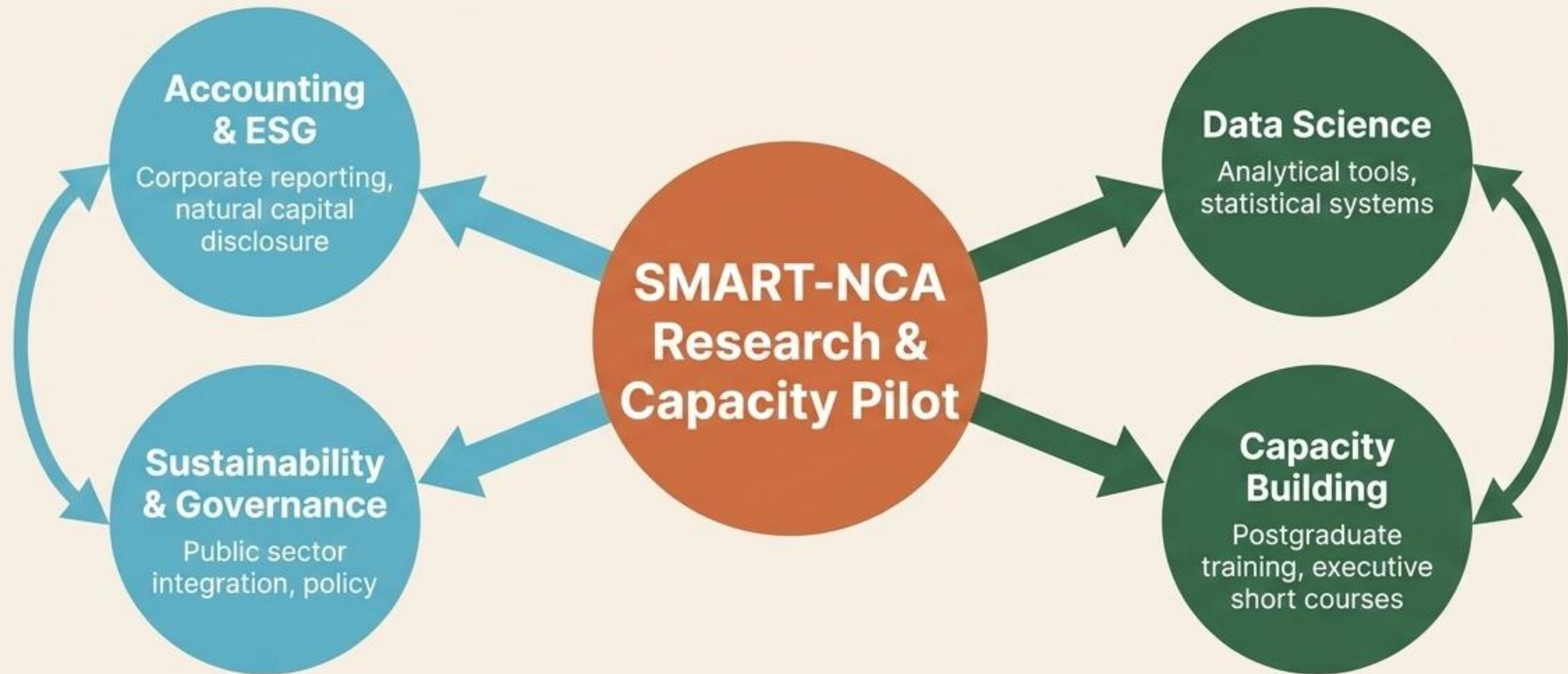


Operationalising the Model: The University-Government Engine



DUT's Readiness to Pilot: The SMART Research Group

From conceptual framework to active pilot partner.



Core Proposition: Establish a joint DUT-Government collaborative pilot to test the 5-pillar framework using existing institutional strengths.

Implications for the Updated National NCA Strategy

1. Strategic Recognition

Explicitly recognize universities as strategic, long-term capacity partners, not just occasional contractors.

2. National Network

Establish a formal National NCA Capacity-Development Network bridging state and academia.

3. Skills Pipeline

Standardize an undergraduate-to-PhD education and training pipeline for NCA professionals.

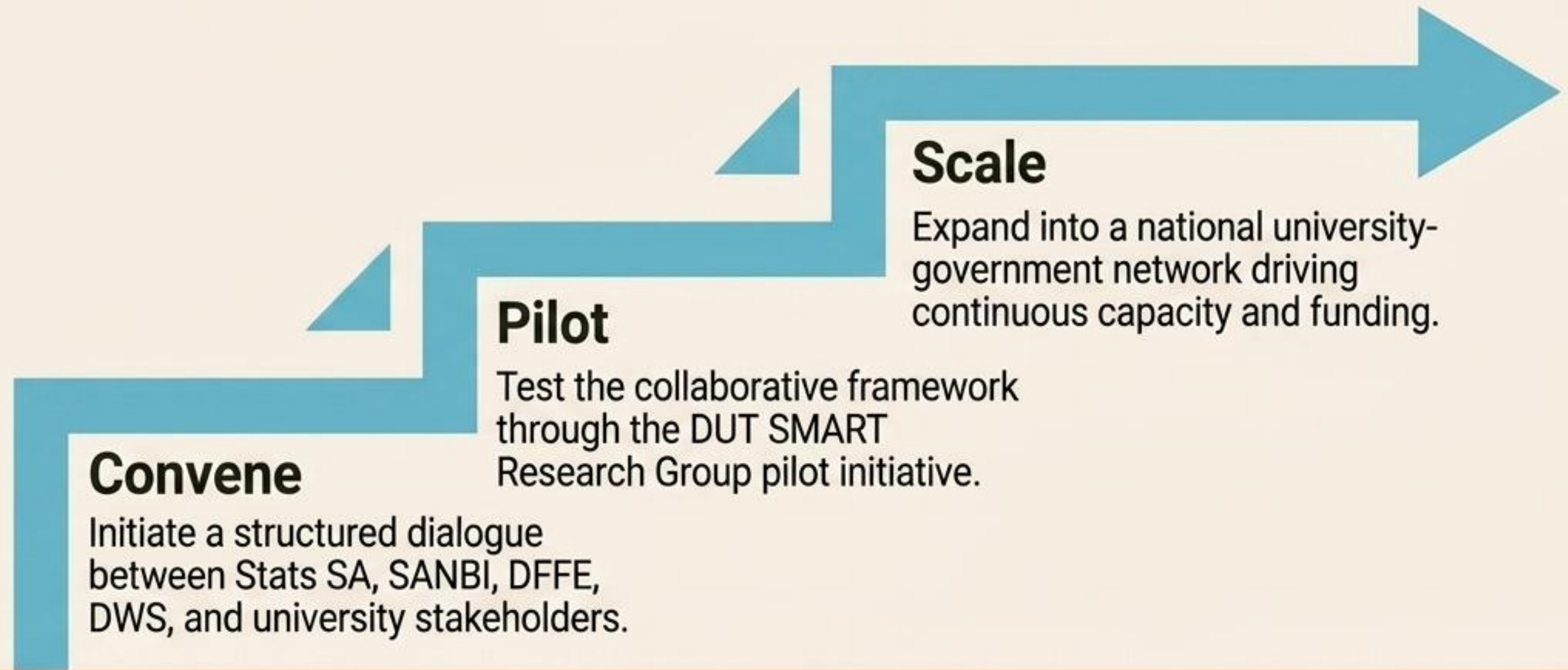
4. Collaborative Research

Launch joint research programmes targeting national priorities (water security, climate resilience, biodiversity).

5. Joint Resourcing

Coordinate joint funding proposals to external donors to scale capacity without relying solely on internal state budgets.

From Strategy to Partnership: The Way Forward



“The question is no longer whether universities should participate in Natural Capital Accounting, but how we systematically position them as permanent partners in building the institutions required to make NCA sustainable in South Africa.”