



National  
Co-ordinating  
Centre for  
Public Engagement

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# NCCPE Response to UPP Foundation Civic University Commission

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# INTRODUCTION

In our response to the UPP Inquiry, we want to explore several threads:

- What is a civic university?
- How do civic universities demonstrate their ‘civicness’ through their research and teaching?
- What kinds of organisational cultures support civic engagement and how can these be developed?
- What role does collaboration and partnership working play, and what have we learned about how universities can be effective partners with civil society?
- What conditions – funding, political and cultural – will help civic universities to thrive as civic institutions?

The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) has a long standing interest in supporting universities to be ‘civic’ in orientation and in practice. The NCCPE was established in 2008 by a consortium of funders, the UK HE Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and Wellcome, "To create a culture within UK higher education where public engagement is formalised and embedded as a valued and recognised activity for staff at all levels, and for students". The centre is hosted by the University of the West of England and the University of Bristol. <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/about-us>

Since 2008 the NCCPE has worked alongside a host of universities, including the 6 Beacons for Public Engagement (2008 – 12), to road test and codify the best ways of recognising, rewarding, and building capacity for public engagement. What is clear is that without an explicit focus on developing supportive organisational cultures, staff can feel discouraged from engaging externally; and the quality and effectiveness of that engagement can be compromised.

Key focal points for the Centre’s activity include:

- Supporting culture change: we have launched a Manifesto for Public Engagement, and a ‘Watermark’ assessment process to benchmark the effectiveness of Higher Education Institution’s (HEI’s) support and leadership of public engagement
- Galvanizing innovation: we support a network of public engagement leaders and professional staff across the UK, celebrate excellent practice through skills sharing events and awards, and offer an extensive training and development programme
- Building partnerships: we broker collaboration between universities and civil society, for instance with community organisations and the museum sector, through networking events, the development of useful tools and resources, and through awarding small development grants to help initiate projects

<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk>

## WHAT IS A CIVIC UNIVERSITY?

We understand ‘civic’ to have two overlapping meanings when applied to universities:

- Civic - the relationship between universities and the cities/ regions they exist within
- Civil - the relationship between universities and citizens / civil society

A civic university is strongly rooted in and committed to the place where it is based. It also understands itself as a 'public' institution, strongly attached to civil society, whether local or global. It goes without saying that although these aspirations appear self-evidently worthwhile, universities have often been seen to be wanting on both fronts. They are often described as 'ivory towers'; the ways in which they have been funded have often encouraged them to pursue relatively narrow and inward-looking interests; and if they chose to be 'civic' in orientation they have to be very determined to secure the resources to do so. This can result in universities using the rhetoric of being 'civic' when, in reality, their activity falls short.

A helpful analogy is to think of being a 'civic' university as an 'organic' food producer. It is a really attractive label, and one that many are keen to adopt. But the reality of being civic requires years of patient work and commitment to nurturing relationships with the world outside the university; to making far sighted and sometimes expensive commitments that do not realise immediate returns; and to displaying a profound commitment to the interests of wider society. Being a civic university is hard. We need to set high standards and expectations, but also to be realistic about what can be achieved.

Universities' civic engagement is not a new development – universities typically have a long-standing commitment to it – but a number of recent developments are strengthening that involvement, and we see this as a very welcome development. For instance:

- An increasing focus on ensuring that research is 'engaged' with society and realizes social impact, incentivised by, for instance, the Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- A growing commitment to public engagement, supported by investment in staff and by opening up facilities and resources to the community
- A growing interest in the role of universities as 'anchor institutions' and in the importance of civic leadership
- A long standing commitment to supporting student and staff volunteering
- A growing repertoire of innovative approaches to research, knowledge exchange and teaching which encourage purposeful engagement between universities and society to build powerful knowledge and skills and to realise mutual benefit

In defining a civic university, it is also helpful to step outside the world of higher education to see how other cultural organisations describe what it means to be 'civic'. A recent think piece provided this definition of the role of a civic museum:

*They are part of the civic infrastructure, where "civic" means relating to a town, especially its administration; but they are also specifically civil in nature, where "civil" means relating to ordinary citizens and their concerns. They have the ability, or at least the potential, to bridge the gap between the state and the community, between government and the governed.*

*We can think of a civic museum as being a museum with an emphasis on belonging: connecting a place, its people, and the world – their past, present and future. To be a member of the civic museum family is to have this focus. ([From The Future of Civic Museums: a think piece, Peter Latchford](#))*

What is helpful about this definition is that it focuses on the value that being civic in orientation can realise. The focus on 'bridging' and 'connecting' provides a powerful articulation on the distinctive

contribution such museums can make – and one that resonates strongly with the potential role of universities.

We find the following articulation of the civic university a very helpful one:

*The civic university can be characterised by its ability to integrate its teaching, research and engagement with the outside world in such a way that each enhances the other without diminishing their quality. Research has socio-economic impact designed in from the start and teaching has a strong community involvement with the long-term objective of widening participation in higher education and producing well-rounded citizens as graduates. In terms of institutional structure there is a soft, flexible boundary between the university and society.*

(From: [The Civic University: Universities in the Leadership and Management of Place, Goddard and Kempton 2016](#))

The same report identifies seven characteristics of a civic university:

1. *It is actively engaged with the wider world as well as the local community of the place in which it is located.*
2. *It takes a holistic approach to engagement, seeing it as institution wide activity and not confined to specific individuals or teams.*
3. *It has a strong sense of place – it recognises the extent to which its location helps to form its unique identity as an institution.*
4. *It has a sense of purpose – understanding not just what it is good at, but what it is good for.*
5. *It is willing to invest in order to have impact beyond the academy.*
6. *It is transparent and accountable to its stakeholders and the wider public.*
7. *It uses innovative methodologies such as social media and team building in its engagement activities with the world at large*

There are other rich traditions of scholarship and reflection on the role of universities in society which overlap with the work focused on the ‘civic university’ (which has a particular resonance in the UK). Work in the US and elsewhere has tended to be organised under the banner of ‘the engaged university’. A good summary of this tradition can be found in the Association of Commonwealth Universities’ consultation document, ‘Engagement as a core value of the university’, published in 2001. Again, this emphasises the need for the core activity of universities – teaching and research – to be socially engaged and to realise value in the world outside academia:

*To maintain our essential freedoms, universities must show they are useful. The task is not so much to offer the world packages of freshly discovered knowledge as to set examples of rigorous, relevantly-focused and objective enquiry. Universities need to be part of the conscience of democratic society and students helped to gain skills not just for their working life but also to participate as citizens.*

The report identifies a clear rationale for this ‘engaged’ orientation. The business of creating and sharing knowledge, of which universities should be a dynamic part, is changing rapidly, and universities need to ‘keep up’ and find ways to ensure their specialist skills and expertise can contribute to and benefit from these wider changes in society and its orientation towards knowledge and learning:

*Increasingly, academics will accept that they share their territory with other knowledge professionals. The search for formal understanding itself, long central to the academic life, is moving rapidly beyond the borders of disciplines and their locations inside universities. Knowledge is being keenly pursued in the context of its application and in a dialogue of practice with theory through a*

*network of policy-advisers, companies, consultants, think-tanks and brokers as well as academics and indeed the wider society.*

The report provides a widely quoted summary of what civic engagement involves:

*Engagement implies strenuous, thoughtful, argumentative interaction with the non-university world in at least four spheres: setting universities' aims, purposes, and priorities; relating teaching and learning to the wider world; the back-and-forth dialogue between researchers and practitioners; and taking on wider responsibilities as neighbours and citizens.*

[\(Engagement as a Core Value for the University: A Consultation Document, ACU, 2001\).](#)

## CHALLENGES FOR THE CIVIC UNIVERSITY

Perhaps the biggest challenge we face in realising this ambition to be 'civic' and 'civil' is that there is no dedicated funding to support this activity. Universities core funding is to support student education and research. There are relatively small amounts of innovation funding that can be drawn down to invest in building capacity and infrastructure for engagement, but this is dwarfed by funding for teaching and research, making this 'civic' activity vulnerable unless it is deeply embedded in the teaching and research activity of the HEI. Later we provide examples of how this work can become embedded.

The second big challenge to take account of are the dramatic changes in civil society, which are placing significant stresses on society, and which mean that universities' efforts to play a committed part in supporting civil society are both more urgent and more difficult, given that so much of the infrastructure and investment in civil society is being eroded. It is this challenge that we will turn to first.

## THE CHALLENGES FACING CIVIL SOCIETY

There are a large number of reviews and enquiries into civil society, which provide helpful context for the UPP commission, including:

- **DCMS inquiry into the Future of Civil Society** <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/civil-society-strategy-have-your-say>
- **Civil Society Futures Inquiry** <https://civilsocietyfutures.org/>
- **Making good society: Final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland, 2010:**  
[https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2016/02/pub1455011693.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/02/pub1455011693.pdf)
- **What is the Civic Role of Arts Organisations?** <http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/>
- **The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century: report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement:**  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldcitizen/118/118.pdf>
- **NCVO's annual Civil Society Almanac which provides a useful state-of-play report each year:**  
<https://data.ncvo.org.uk/>
- **The Future of Civic Museums: a think piece, Peter Latchford**  
[https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/civic\\_museums\\_think\\_piece.pdf](https://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/civic_museums_think_piece.pdf)

The 'Ties that Bind' House of Lords report articulates a simple vision for civil society:

*‘The creation of a country in which every one of its citizens feels secure, engaged and fulfilled must be a primary objective of a successful modern democratic nation. This would be a country in which everyone feels that they belong, and to which everyone feels they can contribute’.*

The reviews and research referenced above confirm the vital role of civil society, but also raise concerns about its future. Memorably, the Carnegie Trust ‘Making Good Society’ report pointed out that civil society is less than it could be:

*‘For a century or more it has been pushed to the margins by commerce and the state, which have claimed the lion’s share of resources and power. It has been paid lip-service, but generally neglected. And it has lost ground in areas it was once strong, like finance or childhood’ (p.1)*

This theme of the pressures bearing down on civil society is picked up in the end of year one report of the [Civil Society Futures Inquiry](#). This identifies seven trends which will impact on the future of civil society:

- Social fracturing
- Personal precarity
- Environmental pressures
- Economic restructuring
- The end of the organisation
- Changing places
- Global volatility

These themes are picked up on in the Future of [Civic Museums think piece](#), which paints a vivid picture of the landscape in which universities are now working:

*‘We live in a complex and chaotic time, characterised by increased wealth, inequality and unhappiness. Our public services are shaped by cure, rather than prevention, and as a result are increasingly unaffordable. Our focus on the individual has left us feeling isolated in our communities. We are overwhelmed by information and other stimuli, and have trouble making sense of our lives. Government seems remote. Yet we know that strong relationships in society keep people well, happy, purposeful and successful. And we know that, to strengthen relationships across society, we need to strengthen democratic processes, move public services to a more inclusive model, and to invest in our cultural life. To act on this knowledge, we need a new movement, a new enlightenment’*

## NEW METHODS AND APPROACHES TO RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

So how is civic engagement becoming ‘mainstreamed’ and embedded in universities’ research endeavours? There has been a long tradition of ‘engaged’ research in higher education, going back many decades. Recently, these approaches have become more mainstream, encouraged by an increasing expectation from funders that research funding should realise social benefit, and that researchers should demonstrate accountability. We note three examples below:

- The RCUK **Connected Communities Programme**, led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, was established to explore how community and university expertise can best be combined to better understand how communities are changing, and the roles that communities might play in responding

to the problems and possibilities of the contemporary world. Since 2010, the programme has funded over 300 projects, bringing together over 700 academics and over 500 collaborating organisations on topics ranging from festivals to community food, from everyday creativity to care homes, from hyperlocal journalism to community energy. The lessons learned from the programme are described in the Creating Living Knowledge report: [https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final .pdf](https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final.pdf)

- **Social Innovation:** there are numerous examples of universities investing in social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Social innovation aims to address and improve social outcomes for people through collaboration or co-creation. The innovation may take place in the public, private or charitable sectors, or direct with user communities. One example is the HEFCE funded pilot social innovation fund in 2016-17 which funded six projects bringing together university staff and community partners to address topics such as food poverty; prejudice towards young Muslims and community building: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/sifund/>

As part of its work to support knowledge exchange, HEFCE invested approximately £5 million between 2009 and 2015 in programmes to encourage social entrepreneurship in the English higher education sector. The 2017 report, 'To what extent has the higher education sector the capacity to support social entrepreneurs?' identifies a number of areas of strength, including: outreach capabilities to build the pipeline of new social entrepreneurs; start-up support; a cadre of staff with specialist social enterprise knowledge; and expertise in building partnerships and collaboration.

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2018/entrepreneurs/>

- **Patient and Public Involvement in research:** there is an increasing commitment to involving the public more actively in health and social care research. Such work provides a powerful example of how people from across civil society can be brought together, with common purpose, to develop better quality services and decision making. INVOLVE define public involvement in research as research being carried out 'with' or 'by' members of the public rather than 'to', 'about' or 'for' them. This includes, for example, working with research funders to prioritise research topics, offering advice as members of a project steering group, commenting on and developing research materials, undertaking interviews with research participants. When using the term 'public' they include patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services as well as people from organisations that represent people who use services. <http://www.invo.org.uk/>

## THE ROLE OF STUDENTS AND SUPPORT FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE CURRICULUM

There are also numerous examples of universities embracing civic engagement as part of student experience and learning.

One is by providing opportunities for students to participate in volunteering; another is through student participation in the democratic process through the students' union, or by being exposed to social issues such as sustainability. There are also numerous ways in which students are being introduced to social issues through the curriculum. Finally, universities make a significant contribution through their work to support Widening Participation. We look at these areas in turn and provide a snapshot of current activity.

## Student volunteering

We would like to highlight the contribution made by university students through the extensive support for volunteering across the sector. Highlights include:

- Student volunteering week, **led by the UK Student Volunteering Network in partnership with Student Hubs, the National Union of Students and the #iwill campaign.** In 2017 students and staff from 60 Higher and Further Education Institutions led 298 events. **Student Hubs**, who provide all sorts of ways for students to engage with social and environmental challenges during their time at university, strongly focused on social action: <https://www.studenthubs.org/>. Their 2017 impact report revealed that 36% of the volunteers they worked with had not been involved in social action before, and 94% of the students they worked with improved their ability to work with others to make change.
- **The Brilliant Club**, founded in 2011 by two teachers who became involved in university access through their work in inner-city schools. As classroom teachers, they recognised the barriers that students from under-represented backgrounds face in accessing university. It began with a grassroots project which utilised the expertise and passion of PhD students who delivered programmes of academic enrichment to small groups of pupils. This year, The Brilliant Club will work with more than 10,000 pupils across England and Wales, making it the largest university access programme for secondary schools in the UK.

Research into student volunteering by the National Union of Students and NCVO in 2014 discovered:

### ***Contribution of student volunteers***

- Over 725,000 students currently volunteer –31 per cent of the higher education student population.
- Students volunteer on average for 44 hours a year, based on an average 32 week term.
- Student volunteering contributes £175million per year to the UK economy

### ***Motivations***

- Some 78 per cent of students who volunteer indicated that they do so to improve things/help people.
- Developing skills was highlighted by 66 per cent of student volunteers as one of their main motivations for volunteering.

### ***Barriers***

- The majority (69 per cent) of students who do not currently volunteer said that the major barrier for them was not having enough time – either due to the pressures of study, paid work, family commitments or involvement in other activities.
- Some 18 per cent of all students said they did not think they could afford to do more volunteering than their current levels.

### ***Moving forward***

- Forty per cent of students said that education institutions linking volunteering opportunities to their course or academic qualification would encourage them to do more volunteering.
- A third of students said they would like to see more one-off opportunities to encourage them to volunteer

## **[The Student Volunteering Landscape](#)**

## Embedding active citizenship in the curriculum and encouraging reflective citizens

Many universities are striving to support students to not just act but also reflect on their activity. This can be both outside and inside the formal curriculum. Many institutions provide a framework for development by defining the **attributes** that they want the higher education experience they offer to instil within their students. These attributes identify academic and personal transferable skills that the higher education experience allows students to develop. These can be applied in many contexts, including within teaching, learning and research and in employment and work, as well as in relation to society and how students contribute to society and develop citizenship skills. We provide three examples below of how universities are supporting this kind of reflective practice.

### ***Abertay University: Active Citizenship***

Abertay was the first Scottish university to develop a set of graduate attributes in 2007, and in 2015 it undertook a fundamental review, developing a widely praised four dimensional conceptual framework, encompassing intellectual, professional, personal and active citizenship skills. Each dimension has a series of qualitative descriptors. For 'Active Citizen', the Abertay Attributes state that Abertay will foster individuals to:

- deploy their skills and learning to make a real contribution to society locally, nationally and internationally
- be inclusive, globally conscientious, socially respectful and self-reflective
- maintain and continuously develop awareness of their civic, ethical and environmental responsibilities

<https://abertaytle.wordpress.com/2015/08/28/abertay-attributes-defining-our-values-and-distinctiveness/>

### ***The Plymouth University Compass***

The Plymouth Compass was designed to help students to navigate their way through their *whole* university experience, in both the taught curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The Compass identifies key attributes in four broad areas of life - academic, civic, professional, and personal. Students are offered opportunities to practice and develop these attributes, helping them gain experiences, improve skills, and build networks for life beyond graduation. One of the key attributes is the sustainable and global citizen, which includes change leadership.

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/plymouth-university-compass>

### ***Engaged Learning***

The University of Bristol is typical of many universities who are seeking to work in productive partnership with the local community. One way of achieving this is offering opportunities for students to work with local organisations as part of their degree. This is often called Engaged Learning. It offers the opportunity for students to work on a real world issue and gain knowledge from the local community. Partners find the projects beneficial through:

- Providing answers to questions they may not have the time or resource to answer themselves
- Providing a different perspective on their work
- Being able to feed experience into the academic world
- Some students continuing working with the organisation in a voluntary capacity.

Their website includes examples of current projects: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/public-engagement/public/engaged-learning/>

The University of Sheffield has made a significant investment in supporting engaged learning: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/learning-teaching/our-approach/current/engaged/publication>

In addition to these initiatives, embedding engaged learning in the curriculum has been supported through investments in Europe. For example, the Enhancing Responsible Research and Innovation through Curricula in Higher Education (EnRRICH) project sought to encourage curricula development that enabled students to respond to the research needs of society as expressed by civil society organisations. This project drew on the Science Shop model operational in many countries across Europe. Science Shops act as a broker between civil society and undergraduates, matching students to opportunities to work alongside community organisations to tackle local challenges. This 3-year project developed a range of case studies, tools, and policy briefings relevant to enhancing the civil role of universities through their teaching and research.

<https://www.livingknowledge.org/projects/enrich/>

## CULTURE CHANGE

We would also emphasise the critical importance of developing **organisational cultures** which incentivise and encourage civic and social engagement, and make it a strategic priority, rather than an 'add on'. This is exactly the challenge the NCCPE was established to address in the higher education sector. The NCCPE was founded in 2008, at a point where there was widespread perception that universities were out of touch with society; where powerful challenges were being made about the relevance of research and the accountability of researchers for their use of public money; and where issues of trust were highlighted through public unease about BSE and Genetically Modified Organisms. It was recognised that responding to these challenges required a major change in the culture of universities, to ensure staff felt supported, encouraged and recognised for the quality of their engagement beyond the university.

We have identified a set of focal points for organisations to assess the effectiveness of their strategic support for public engagement. These principles make explicit the conditions which need to be in place within organisations if their staff and volunteers are to be effectively supported to engage with others, and to contribute to a thriving, engaged and highly interactive civil society.

We have identified three broad questions organisations need to ask of themselves to assess their support for engagement:

- Purpose: how does engagement animate your mission as an organisation? Have you embedded a commitment to public engagement in institutional mission and strategy, and do you champion that commitment at all levels?
- Process: have you invested in systems and processes that facilitate involvement, maximise impact and help to ensure quality and value for money?
- People: are you effectively involving staff, students and people outside the university and using their energy, expertise and feedback to shape your strategy and its delivery?

For each of these areas we have identified key areas where attention needs to be focussed. For instance, key areas that underpin 'purpose' include how commitment to engagement is embedded in the organisation's mission and strategies; in its leadership; and in its external and internal communications. Key processes that require attention are how this activity is recognised and rewarded; the provision of opportunities for learning and professional development; and investment in coordination and support. We have developed a self-assessment tool, known as the EDGE tool, which allows institutions to assess themselves in each of these areas and establish how effectively they are tackling them, from 'embryonic' to 'embedded': <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support-engagement/strategy-and-planning/edge-tool/introducing-edge-tool> . This enables institutions to consider where they are currently, and where they would like to be, and plan accordingly.

We recommend that the commission highlights the significant challenges and obstacles to engagement which can exist within organisational cultures, and highlights the need to address these through the kind of coordinating and developmental functions that organisations like the NCCPE provide.

## EMBEDDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Seeking opportunities to embed civic engagement in research and teaching is important. Equally so is taking a holistic view of how a university can make a civic contribution across all of its activities, to make these greater than the sum of their parts.

There are many examples of universities identifying civic engagement as a strategic priority, for instance:

- University of Manchester: <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=32801>
- Kings College London: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/strategy/Kings-strategic-vision-2029.pdf>
- Queen Mary University London: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/strategy/index.html>
- De Montfort University: <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/university-governance/strategic-framework-2015-2020.pdf>

To take one of these as an example, Queen Mary University of London has identified Public Engagement as one of its 6 aims: 'to achieve maximum impact from our academic work through public engagement and partnerships with businesses, government, charities, cultural organisations, and others in the wider community'. The University has a senior leader with responsibility for public engagement and a team of professional staff to support the delivery of the strategy. Queen Mary was the first university to undertake the NCCPE's Watermark process, and was awarded 'Gold' in recognition of their work. <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/publicengagement/>

Another example is the **University of Manchester**. Social responsibility is one of the three core strategic goals in the University of Manchester, sitting equally alongside their commitments to world-class research, and outstanding learning and student experience. Their commitment is to pursue change across five priority areas:

- Research with impact: their research is making a positive difference to society, addressing the major challenges of the 21st century.

- Socially responsible graduates: their ethical grand challenges enable their undergraduates to tackle and understand problems relating to equality and diversity, sustainability, ethics and social justice. They also encourage all Manchester students to participate in activities such as volunteering.
- Engaging our communities: their events and activities are harnessing the university's knowledge, resources and visitor attractions for the benefit of our communities.
- Responsible processes: their processes are balancing efficiency with opportunities to create social and environmental benefit.
- Environmental sustainability: their research, teaching and activities are guided by a commitment to environmental sustainability.

Their 'Measuring the Difference' impact report (2016/17) provides convincing evidence of their impact across a number of dimensions. One example is their School Governor initiative, which engages University staff and alumni in making a difference to the leadership across hundreds of state schools. The university has supported state schools with more new governors than any other UK employer. Schools where University staff are governors have also received higher than average inspection ratings, with many citing the quality of governance as being particularly notable.

<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=32801>

## SO WHAT CONDITIONS ARE NECESSARY FOR THIS KIND OF WORK TO THRIVE?

We would point to the report, 'InterAction: how can academics and the third sector work together to influence policy and practice'. This provides a useful overview of how universities, policymakers and public and third sector organisations can work together for mutual benefit. It emphasizes the vital importance of building skills, capabilities and cultures of collaboration if the promise of joined up, purposeful working is to be realised. This is exactly the function which 'bridging' organisations like the NCCPE seek to deliver.

Their key recommendations cohere around improving connectivity and brokerage – making it easier for different actors to 'find' each other, and to build productive collaborations, for instance by:

- Creating 'gateways' into universities and other organisations (which are often 'impenetrable and siloed')
- Employing specialist engagement staff to facilitate interaction
- Investing in secondments, training, tools to support partnership working, and principles / codes of practice
- Using advisory groups etc. to ensure perspectives and expertise from different areas of civil society are productively shared

They advise that HE funders should:

- Resource gateways through which third sector organisations, businesses and other publics can make contact with researchers in (what are perceived to be impenetrable) universities.
- Explore how the Research Excellence Framework can best incentivise this kind of interaction.
- Consider funding models for translation and co-creation of research
- Continue encouragement of open access to publicly-funded academic outputs.

The RCUK Urban Living Partnerships and Connected Communities programmes have also both generated rich examples and insights in this area. These projects came together to publish the report 'Universities, Cities and Communities: Co-creating Urban Living' to examine how can cities engage with their citizens to address longstanding issues and open up new possibilities? It provides case studies and recommendations for building partnerships across universities, local government, civil society and communities, and demonstrates the value of Arts and Humanities practice and research in setting new agendas. Key recommendations include:

### **For universities working at a city-scale**

- Research findings related to the city need to be made more easily, accessibly and widely available to local communities and stakeholders perhaps through publicly accessible city-focused research events as well as online.
- There is a key role for universities in developing community and civic research skills; this could be developed as part of widening participation agendas.
- Flexible, responsive and trusting partnerships with partner organisations requires long-term commitments beyond the project funding model; universities need to identify how they might support and sustain partnerships at an institutional level for the longer term.
- Arts-based and creative practice can play a critical role in building partnerships, reframing research questions and generating novel research data.
- There is a need for universities to work with local government and civil society to create opportunities to actively promote and share the research that is already happening in a local area.

### **For civil society and community organisations:**

- Have greater confidence in their own expertise and local knowledge. This means being confident to ask for sufficient resourcing to cover their involvement in projects and ensuring that partners are aware of the expertise involved in developing long-term community relationships.
- Develop a more proactive approach to contesting passive forms of citizen consultation, with the aim of challenging top-down policies and becoming active co-creators of urban services.
- Work with universities and local government to create opportunities to actively promote and share the research that is already happening in a local area.

### **For local government and city authorities:**

- Consider using more creative and arts-based methods to diversify and expand the range of participation in consultation at all stages of public policy development.
- Defend accessible and inclusive public spaces as important resources for the development of citizen voice, democracy and informal public engagement/ consultation.
- Work with universities and civil society to create opportunities to actively promote and share the research that is already happening in a local area.

# PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Partnership working recurs as a critical enabler of high quality civic engagement. The NCCPE has contributed to a variety of innovative projects set up to improve the quality of partnership working between universities and civic society and we have brought together a range of resources to support partnership working between universities and other sectors, which can be accessed here:

<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/partnership-working>

While the principle of 'working in partnership' is attractive, in reality it can be very challenging. It can be helpful to differentiate between different purposes and types of partnership working. Across the HE sector, collaborations between HEIs and civil society organisations include:

- Developing communities of practice around a particular issue or challenge (see for instance work at the University of Brighton: <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/business-services/community-partnerships/working-with-our-community/index.aspx>)
- Consultancy work
- Networks (like the Centres for Leadership in Applied Health Research, supported by NIHR: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/our-structure/infrastructure/collaborations-for-leadership-in-applied-health-research-and-care.htm>)
- Collaborative projects (for instance, participatory action research projects)

There are a range of lessons we have learned through different projects which have sought to improve the quality and impact of partnership working and collaboration between universities and different sectors. In each case, we identified barriers and productive ways to address these, and have developed a range of useful resources, which distil these lessons and provide guidance and tools for others to draw on.

## School-University Partnerships Initiative

The NCCPE co-ordinated the School-University Partnerships Initiative (SUPI) which provides an excellent example of how universities' links with schools can be strengthened.

The SUPI programme was funded by RCUK between 2012 and 2016. It was set up to encourage the establishment of long-term school-university partnerships that made a difference to school students, teachers, researchers, and research. There were four key aims:

- to inspire the next generation by bringing research into formal and informal learning contexts
- to reach secondary school students from a diversity of backgrounds and abilities
- to provide researchers with opportunities and training to engage with secondary school students
- to support secondary schools and higher education institutes to work together to create structured, strategic, sustainable and equitable mechanisms for school-university engagement

As part of the project, the NCCPE produced a literature review of the factors underpinning effective school-university partnerships. This review identified five critical characteristics of successful partnerships. These characteristics, though focused on school-university collaboration, are more widely applicable:

- Power and control: all voices to be heard. Successful partnerships reject a hierarchical approach in which the university dominates and practitioner knowledge is devalued.

- Mind the gap - cultural differences. Successful partnerships often appear to succeed by creating a 'third space' which is separate from the culture of either institution and allows for more creative ways of working.
- The importance of leadership. Partnerships and networks are not naturally self-organising. They require strategic leaders who recognise and prioritise external working of this nature as well as distributed and shared leadership across the boundaries between the partners. Also important are the 'blended professionals' who work across institutional boundaries.
- Strategic relevance and fit. Partnerships work well when there is joined-up coherence and strategic fit. Successful partnerships are often design led and focussed on solving locally defined problems through an enquiry approach: bringing together academic research, practitioner knowledge and priorities, and commercial expertise in a sustained programme of activity. Many partnerships – particularly those focussed on widening participation - also have an extended membership from the wider community, including parents.
- Material resources: making it happen. Partnerships pose a challenge and have transaction costs - the time, energy and resources necessary to keep the partnership alive and well. Therefore funding is a crucial contributor to partnership success, but partnerships also need to develop strategies to persist in austere times.

[http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi\\_project\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_project_report_final.pdf)

SUPI sought to tackle these challenges through long term partnership working between schools and universities. The lessons learned from the programme are captured in this publication: School-University Partnerships Lessons from the RCUK-funded School-University Partnerships Initiative

[https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/nccpe\\_supi\\_lessons.pdf](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/nccpe_supi_lessons.pdf)

A key outcome from the project was the creation of the *Perspectives on Partnership* tool. Created by the NCCPE in consultation with the SUPI projects (including researchers, teachers, students, and university staff) this resource is a planning and talking tool to help schools and universities develop effective ways to work together, by considering the perspectives of all those involved.

[https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/nccpe\\_supi\\_pop\\_tool\\_0.pdf](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/nccpe_supi_pop_tool_0.pdf)

## The UK Community Partner Network

The NCCPE worked with a team of community partners to establish the UK Community partner network in 2012. It started from the recognition that:

- Partnering with universities can help organisations improve what they do and boost the impact they have.
- Community organisations have important things to contribute to what universities do.

The network set out to build resilient community university partnerships that make a difference. You can find out more about the network here: <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/connect-with-others/uk-community-partner-network>

The network has produced a variety of resources, including a set of principles that all members of such partnerships should aspire to, which are:

- Build a shared understanding of the purpose of the activity/action/project whilst recognising the differing agendas and motivations of those involved
- Recognise and respect each other's expertise

- Set out well-defined roles and responsibilities, and clear timelines for all involved
- Create an environment of transparency and honesty
- Provide timely updates and inclusion in project progress, throughout the project cycle
- Maintain open channels of communication, with nominated contacts at each organisation
- Discuss areas of difference in constructive ways
- Reflect on the partnership throughout the process and bring to the table any issues which could affect the relationship:

[http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/principles\\_of\\_practice\\_for\\_cups.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/principles_of_practice_for_cups.pdf)

## The Museum-University Partnership Initiative

The NCCPE's successful Museum-University Partnerships programme developed effective partnerships between museums and researchers, and was funded through Arts Council England's Museum Resilience Fund.

Key to the approach was a series of networking events, called MUPI match events. These events were day-long networking events, with equal numbers of museum and university staff. They brought groups of people together to network, and explore potential partnership projects, for which they could then bid for a small amount of development funding (between £100 and £1500). This funding aimed to create a space where potential partners could explore how they could work together, providing a space to discuss mutually beneficial outcomes, and ways of working. The events were carefully facilitated to ensure that there was an equal opportunity for people to participate in the event, irrespective of their organisational home, experiences of partnership, or their confidence in speaking about their work. The approach proved extremely effective at breaking down many of the barriers to museum-university engagement highlighted in the literature, and saw 70 partnerships get off the ground.

The NCCPE has now published a guide to how design and run similar Match Events:

[https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/mupi\\_match\\_event\\_guide.pdf](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/mupi_match_event_guide.pdf) .

We strongly recommend this approach as a way to maximise the potential of partnership working.

In addition, we have developed tools to support partnership development:

<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/nccpe-projects/museum-university-partnership-initiative>

## MAKING PARTNERSHIPS WORK

Drawing on all of the above projects, we have identified three broad areas which provide powerful models for the future: one is investment in brokerage and networking; another, the establishment of strategic partnerships focused on different outcome areas (economic development, health and arts and culture); the third is the incubation of innovative new methods and approaches to research. These reflect an increasing desire from universities to be 'joined up' and to play an active part in their communities, cities and regions.

## Effective brokerage & networking

Universities can be tricky organisations to navigate. This means that ‘brokerage’ – making it easier to establish contact and build collaborations – is vital. Here are three examples of how this is being done:

- Through professional staff who are skilled and proactive in building powerful partnerships. The NCCPE has established a national network of Public Engagement Professionals, a key part of whose work is to support collaborations between university staff and students and external communities: <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/professional-development/public-engagement-professionals-network>
- The Community University Partnership Programme Helpdesk: established in 2010, the CUPP Helpdesk at the University of Brighton was set up to help local community, voluntary, social enterprise and statutory organisations access the university research resources and partnership opportunities: <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/business-services/helpdesks/index.aspx>
- Through networking events: earlier we described the ‘MUPI Match’ events which the NCCPE has developed to better link museum and university staff. Many universities now routinely run their own networking events, for instance the Creating Connections events at UCL. Creating Connections is organised by the Public Engagement Unit, Volunteering Services and one or more partner organisations. It’s designed to bring UCL staff and postgrads together with social enterprises, residents’ groups, charities and other community organisations: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/projects/creating-connections>

## Strategic partnership arrangements

There are an increasing array of examples of universities working in long term strategic collaborations with key sectors:

- Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) are one obvious example. All but one of the LEPs has a university represented on the board and many sub committees are chaired by university staff. These reflect the strong commitment from HEIs to contribute to their communities. We expand on this below, the ‘Place’ section
- Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) and Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) bring together local providers of NHS services with universities, other local organisations and patient representatives, helping to improve patient outcomes locally and across the wider NHS: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/our-structure/infrastructure/collaborations-for-leadership-in-applied-health-research-and-care.htm>
- The North East Culture Partnership brings together practitioners, local authorities, universities, colleges, businesses and voluntary organisations across the North East of England to champion, promote and support the arts and heritage sectors in the region and internationally. <http://www.case4culture.org.uk/>
- In Scotland, The Scottish Third Sector Research Forum (TSRF), supported by the Scottish Government, brings together a wide range of Scottish stakeholders including academics, third sector and public sector partners <http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/our-work-partners/scottish-third-sector-research-forum/>
- Citizens’ UK and the College of Social Sciences at Birmingham University recently formed a strategic partnership, forming a diverse civil society alliance of education, community, trade union and faith-

based organisations in the city committed to using community organising to generate collective power for social change

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/socsci/partnerships/citizens-uk/index.aspx>

## FUNDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

If universities are to play an active role in their communities, this work needs to be funded. Investing in building relationships; in providing accessible routes for people outside the sector to engage with staff and students; and providing development funding to incubate new projects – all require investment.

Notwithstanding the various challenges we have identified in previous sections, it is encouraging that there already exist a number of routes by which such funding can be accessed by universities. For instance, when applying for research grants from the UK research councils, researchers are expected to submit 'Pathways to Impact' statements in which they outline who has a stake in their research, how they might benefit from it, and what activities the research team will invest in to seek to maximise that potential. Greater encouragement should be given to researchers to co-produce projects with partners and subsequently to draw down funds for these purposes. Peer reviewers of pathways to Impact statements also need more support to judge excellence in this area.

Universities are also awarded strategic 'Quality Related' (QR) funding on the basis of their contribution to the three elements of research assessed in the REF, which provides them with strategic funding to invest in such activities.

In England, the HE Innovation Fund (HEIF) also provides vital strategic funding to invest in developing collaborative work. Currently universities are encouraged to use this to invest in a variety of mechanisms to support business and community interaction, including:

- Facilitating the research exploitation process (non-technology transfer)
- Commercialisation (technology transfer, including spin-outs and licensing)
- Skills and human capital development
- Knowledge sharing and diffusion
- Supporting the community and public engagement
- Enterprise education and entrepreneurship
- Exploiting the HEI's physical assets

This activity is tracked through the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/ke/hebci/>). The recent HEFCE report, The State of the English University Knowledge Exchange Landscape, identifies three outcome areas where universities are contributing to the health of their communities and wider society:

- **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY GROUP BENEFITS:** benefits to individuals (e.g. improved wellbeing) and communities. This encompasses direct benefits such as new facilities for community use and wider benefits such as the promotion of cultural heritage.
- **WIDER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS:** effects that accrue in the wider economy, beyond the areas in which an institution operates. The benefits can be at different spatial levels, ranging from the local level (e.g. local economic growth) to the international level.

- BUSINESS, PUBLIC AND THIRD SECTOR BENEFITS: direct benefits to partners/clients involved in knowledge exchange activities at a transactional level. Benefits to business typically concern business performance, whereas benefits to public and third sector partners are more focused on the delivery of services.

[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/The\\_state\\_of\\_the\\_english\\_university\\_KE\\_landscape/2017\\_kelandscape\\_.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/The_state_of_the_english_university_KE_landscape/2017_kelandscape_.pdf)

It is vital that this breadth continues to be encouraged (and that the funding isn't limited to commercialisation and tech transfer). HEIF is currently allocated on the basis of performance and the approval of a knowledge exchange strategy, with a number of HEIs failing to reach the cut-off point. There is a strong case to be made for this kind of innovation funding to be available to all HEIs, to provide the necessary investment in infrastructure to support productive interactions with civil society.

The recent announcement of the development of a KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework) for the university sector could provide an opportunity to consider, holistically, how the various investments in university's knowledge building activities align to generate social value (through research, knowledge exchange, teaching, widening participation and community engagement). The NCCPE's response to the recent consultation on KEF metrics expands on this, and explains how the KEF might be developed to provide such intelligence about universities' interactions with civil society. We would like to see the Commission recognising the potential of the KEF as a tool to help provide recognition of ways in which universities are contributing to civil society, not just to the economy:

[http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/kef\\_metrics\\_call\\_for\\_evidence\\_nccpe\\_response.pdf](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/kef_metrics_call_for_evidence_nccpe_response.pdf)

Lastly, we are encouraged that the newly formed UK Research and Innovation is committed to developing new approaches to support partnership working and to incentivise and encourage public engagement, as detailed in their recently launched strategic prospectus:

<https://www.ukri.org/files/about/ukri-strategy-document-pdf/?pdf=Strategic-Prospectus>

## Funding collaboration

There are some specific challenges linked to how collaborations are currently funded which require attention from the Commission. Such partnerships take time to develop; the funding that is currently available is limited; in many cases, the funding is directed at one community (e.g. to fund researchers; or to fund community organisations) but rarely at both. This can seriously limit the quality of collaborations that emerge. There is a need to invest in partnership development, to enable equitable partnerships to form, rather than just partnership delivery.

A number of recent strategic research programmes have sought to address these challenges by actively encouraging collaborative approaches, for instance by:

- Making funding available for development work and partnership development, before larger pots of money are bid for (such as the model adopted in the CUPPI programme described below)
- Ensuring that community partners' time can be costed into proposals, as Co-investigators, acknowledging their vital contribution and the need to recompense their involvement
- Encouraging the use of participatory research methods

- Ensuring that investment in vital infrastructure and capability in civil society organisations – e.g. community development workers – is maintained

We would recommend that these practical suggestions inform the Commission's final report. We provide more details of the findings and recommendations which underpin them below.

*Imagine* was a large five-year Economic and Social Research Council project (2013-17) funded through the Research Councils UK Connected Communities programme ([Grant number ES/K002686/2](#)). The project involved university researchers from a range of disciplines working together with a variety of community organisations across the United Kingdom to explore why and how people participate in civic and public life. The research has foregrounded the importance of community development, community activism, and arts and humanities approaches to civic engagement. In recent written evidence to the House of Lords Committee they made 3 key points:

- *Co-produced research is important.* *We use the term 'co-production' to describe methodologies that are collaborative, participatory and democratic and which try to access hidden or otherwise absent voices in civic life. Co-producing research has enabled us to develop methodologies that include voices and perspectives that uncover different forms of engagement, whether this be with groups of Muslim women, young people, people with complex needs or diverse groups within community settings. Community research teams are an essential part of this as they are able to set priorities that are important to them.*
- *Funding should be made available for open ended, experimental projects* *that make use of creative arts and a multiplicity of methodologies to encourage dialectical thinking. This can include groups researching hidden histories, artistic and visual understandings of engagement, including poetry, visual and relational art and approaches that rest on creating spaces for dialogue and communities of practice.*
- *Community development support is essential.* *Local authorities are cutting back but there needs to be staff supporting community projects and initiatives, regardless of whether or not there is a co-production partner such as a University.*

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/citizenship-and-civic-engagement-committee/citizenship-and-civic-engagement/written/69778.html>

These issues were also identified and addressed in two reports produced as part of the RCUK funded Connected Communities programme. The 'Universities, Cities and Communities: Co-creating Urban Living' report concluded that: 'funding for partnership building and networking alongside longer-term project-based funding is required to enable the development of sustainable and transformative research collaborations'. <https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Universities-Cities-Communities-Co-creating-Urban-Living-Spreads.pdf>

This was explored in more detail in the '**Creating Living Knowledge**' report, which identified a number of recommendations for funders, which we would like to see informing the Commission's recommendations. They include:

- Enhance the infrastructure for high quality collaborative research partnerships, for instance by investing in professional services to better support collaborative research

- Recognise that time is to collaborative research what a supercomputer is to big data, for instance by extending (the same) funding over longer time scales, and re-balancing funding for partnerships and projects
- Take explicit steps to mitigate the risk of enhancing inequalities through collaborative research, for instance by making explicit efforts to understand and address the barriers that prevent different minority groups from contributing to research projects.
- Invest in civil society's public learning infrastructure by establishing a new funding programme open to civil society organisations resourced by a combination of RCUK and the larger charitable trusts and foundations

[https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final .pdf](https://connected-communities.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Creating-Living-Knowledge.Final.pdf)

The last recommendation has now been addressed with the launch of the **Community-University Partnerships Initiative**, which is being coordinated by the NCCPE and is funded by AHRC and Power to Change, the independent trust that supports and develops community businesses in England:

<https://www.powertochange.org.uk/news/community-organisations-partner-academics-success/>

CUPI supports community organisations (including community businesses, charities, social enterprises, and voluntary organisations) and university researchers to create trusting and useful research collaborations which benefit all those involved. CUIP is an England wide initiative which if successful hopes to roll out across the UK. Up to 80 community organisations will be matched with academics through workshops in Bristol, Manchester, Newham and Birmingham in 2018.

The project utilizes the 'matching' process piloted successfully as part of the NCCPE's Museum-University Partnership Initiative described earlier in our response, day-long networking events which facilitate partnership development.

Partnered community organisations and researchers have access to grants worth up to £1000 to fund 'thinking time' to explore a potential partnership before being able to apply for grants of up to £5000 to deliver their project. Aimed at representatives from community organisations and universities who are keen to build new longstanding partnerships, the events provide an interactive opportunity to explore research ideas and access seed corn funding. The funded partnerships might seek to: assess the value of a community business; support business development; understand community needs; develop evidence based interventions; apply research in practice etc.

<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/nccpe-projects/community-university-partnership-initiative>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

We would like to close with some final reflections on how the promise of 'civic engagement' for the university sector can most effectively be supported.

We believe that universities and their funders need to:

- Make explicit their understanding of the **trends and contextual factors** which are bearing down on civil society. A robust understanding about how civil society is changing and how it is being affected

by wider social and political forces is vital to ensure any planned interventions are sensitive to their context. The NCVO's and Third Sector Research Centre's UK Civil Society Almanac is vital in providing these forms of evidence: <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/>. The Civil Society Futures work to identify the seven key trends noted earlier provides an excellent basis.

- Identify a meaningful set of **outcome indicators** to describe what 'success' looks like. Without clear goals, it will be difficult to mobilize action and monitor success. We suggest that the Sustainable Development Goals, which the government is already committed to, could provide a meaningful way to do this. These goals include addressing poverty; health and wellbeing; quality education; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; and partnerships to achieve the goals.
- **Identify where change is most needed, and prioritise** these areas. Again, the Civil Society Futures inquiry provides a helpful steer. Through their consultation, they have identified four priority areas where people want to see change: focusing on **places**; on **belonging together**; on **reimagining work and purpose**; and on **organising**. Identifying focal points like these to mobilize and coordinate collective action will help towards achieving the goals. [https://civilsocietyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/04/CSF\\_1YearReport.pdf](https://civilsocietyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/04/CSF_1YearReport.pdf)
- **Invest in 'scaffolding'** to support collective action between agencies and organisations who want to work together to these ends. We would point to Stanford's work on 'collective impact' as a useful way of approaching this. This points to the fact that attempts to realise system wide change are often thwarted by the 'silo' mentality of different organisations. They highlight five conditions which help guarantee impact: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and the presence of backbone organizations, to provide brokerage and to scaffold collaborative action. Organisations like Citizens UK help provide such a 'backbone' function, supporting civic alliances and community organising training (<http://www.citizensuk.org/>)

## The role of government

Government can help by demonstrating how much it values the civic contribution of universities, as evidenced by the examples of activities we have outlined above.

- It could set clear expectations that all universities should invest in supporting these types of activities.
- It could seek to ensure that the role of students and the contribution of universities is factored into any broader strategic initiatives that seek to build capacity and collaboration across civil society.
- It should also monitor how its extensive reforms of higher education, and the increasing marketization of the sector, are impacting on this vital activity.

We believe that government needs to have higher expectations of the Higher Education sector and a more concerted effort across departments to support universities to play a civic role. The recent DCMS Civil Society consultation made almost no reference to universities in the framing of the consultation, which was a really striking omission. There is a strong government narrative around universities and the economy – and an assumption that HE is integral to economic growth. It would be unthinkable for a new innovation strategy not to foreground the contribution of universities and research. There should be a similar expectation of universities in relation to the future of civil society: in terms of the new knowledge they generate; the social innovation they nurture; the contribution of their people and resources to the

communities they are based in; their role in widening participation in learning and nurturing talent; and in terms of their 'backbone' role in sustaining partnerships and collaboration.

Building on the above, it would be helpful if the Commission could highlight how the civic role of universities could contribute to the Industrial Strategy. Civil society organisations have the potential to play an important role in delivery of the five foundations of the strategy (ideas; people; infrastructure; business environment; places) to address the four grand challenges (leading in AI; driving clean growth; future of mobility; ageing societies).

We also argue it is essential for the Commission to highlight issues linked to **diversity and inclusion** which impact profoundly on this area. We would point to the Common Cause research project as one example of how this area is being tackled in higher education, seeking to address the under representation of black and minority ethnic groups in higher education, particularly in the arts and humanities. In doing so, it is exploring widening participation, action on the curriculum, research and structural inequalities within the HE sector. Its objective is to explore where and how common cause can be made between change agents in universities, communities and funding bodies who are looking to create a knowledge base that fully reflects the cultures and experiences of the UK's Black and Minority Ethnic communities. It is doing so by mapping, strengthening and extending research collaborations that exist between Black and minority ethnic cultural and community organisations and academics currently working in the Arts and Humanities. <https://www.commoncauseresearch.com/>

To end on a positive note, it is an encouraging development that the newly formed UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), which oversees research and innovation funding, identifies the strategic importance of interaction with civil society and investment in public engagement in addressing these grand challenges. Their strategic prospectus identifies the need to:

- sustain strong public dialogue to ensure people are engaged and involved with research and innovation, with the issues, the opportunities and the implications
- engage with research communities, businesses, civic society and policymakers to foster strong partnerships and collaborations and ensure our investment can deliver impact.

<https://www.ukri.org/files/about/ukri-strategy-document-pdf/?pdf=Strategic-Prospectus>

The NCCPE would be delighted to contribute further to the Commission's work. Please do get in touch if you would like to discuss any of the points raised in our submission.

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