national
co-ordinating centre
for public engagement

Culture change – embedding a culture of public engagement:

Learning from the Catalysts for Engaging the Public with Research

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Executive summary

In 2012, building on the work of the Beacons for Public Engagement, Research Councils UK (RCUK) funded 8 Catalyst universities to develop their support for public engagement with research (PER). As the funding period came to an end, the NCCPE interviewed those involved in the projects to reflect on the learning they had done, and challenges they had faced. Our interviews revealed a rich tapestry of learning about the opportunities and challenges in creating a culture that supports engagement. To help us consider the factors that supported and hindered such change we analysed the interview transcripts, and categorised the comments in order of significance. What was clear was that all of the Catalyst projects had made significant progress in developing effective support for PER. Across the projects, the following topics proved especially helpful in making sense of how to make things work.

Key enablers: factors that really helped the projects build momentum in their institutions

- Work with the grain of your institution: engagement needs to resonate with the values and culture
- Invest in a gifted team who excel at collaboration
- Ensure there is excellent senior leadership who lead by example
- Understand where you are and the change you hope to achieve
- Communicate effectively internally and externally
- Have a plan and change it: focus is vital – but embrace opportunity and be flexible
- The gift economy: generosity reaps huge rewards
- Take quick wins when you find them
- Choose your battles: it's easy to lose time and energy struggling with intractable obstacles
- Passion and enthusiasm fuel change: embrace them
- Improve systems and processes e.g. reward systems: changing architecture helps change behaviour and attitudes
- Talk about quality: raise expectations and exemplify and celebrate excellence
- Peer to peer support: being a part of a co-ordinated network enabled teams to learn from one another, engage with the funders, and draw on lessons learnt from the Beacons
- In addition to these factors, all the Catalysts reflected on the help RCUK had provided through funding the NCCPE to co-ordinate the network. Having an national organisation to draw on to support their culture change work was seen as a huge asset by the teams, as was the value of activities such as the co-ordination meetings, a peer support network where participants shared their challenges, and learnt together.

Factors that can help or hinder: for some these delivered very positive results, but for others proved challenging and difficult to navigate productively. It was a reminder about how important it is to understand the organisation you are trying to change

1. Institutional readiness: culture change projects need a prevailing wind. Projects can be easily blown off course by unexpected developments.
2. Reward and recognition: changing promotions criteria can be hugely time consuming, and whilst important to do, won't change deeply held values quickly. Be prepared for difficult conversations about excellence.

3. The REF: REF 2014 brought conversations about public engagement (PE) into the mainstream and offered financial incentives. But it also instrumentalised debate and threatened engagement that did not contribute to impact case studies.
4. Know your place: the teams were sited in very different areas – each location brought advantages and challenges
5. The slipperiness of culture change: addressing culture is an invitation to be creative and strategic and to implement innovative methods to shift attitudes and behaviour. However, it is difficult to measure.
6. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are hugely important. They are highly motivated – they represent the research leaders of the future – but just focussing on one group is a problematic strategy.
7. Addressing values: affecting deep seated change in culture raises profound questions about the values and purposes that should underpin research and the relationships around it. This is not always comfortable or easy to address – and can challenge vested interests.
8. Working with the funders was really important – with funder support being critical to effect change. However, at times the lack of consistency across different funders undermined the culture change being encouraged.

Key barriers and challenges – and how to tackle them

1. Institutional systems and processes: there is significant inertia and often baffling bureaucracy wrapped up here – but you have to try to get PE written into the system.
2. Language and definitions: there's a risk of navel gazing – but helping people find meaning and relevance is critical if you want them to build PER into their work.
3. Who are the public? This isn't an academic question – it's a critical conversation that you need to invest time in to frame PER's distinctive contribution.
4. Advisory groups: whilst these can help bring in new kinds of expertise and a critical perspective, teams reflected that they were often set up before the project's needs were identified, making them time consuming and demotivating. Clearly developing this function in the light of the needs of the project, and considering how to involve them effectively can address this challenge.
5. Sustainability: securing commitment and funding to sustain the work of the projects needs to begin almost as soon as you start. Without this the work will all too quickly roll back.
6. Dependency on key people is challenging. PER tends to be driven by highly motivated, reflective and enterprising individuals who build very extensive networks. Recruiting, rewarding and retaining such staff is vital - losing them can derail a project
7. Balancing priorities and managing demand: Catalysts had a 'can do' attitude that paid dividends – but needed to be careful not to prioritise short term 'busy-ness' over longer term, bigger picture activity
8. Personal cost and professional recognition: this is tough work with lots of knocks. You need to be resilient – and accept that professional recognition isn't a given.
9. Quality engagement? You have to make quality a priority, and be prepared to define what is 'good enough'; you need to distinguish meaningfully between 'quality' and 'quantity'.
10. Emergent working and flexibility: projects like these don't run on tracks – they morph and evolve. They need people who are comfortable with emergent processes, who can 'go with the flow' without losing sight of the big picture

Other influencing factors

One external factor was repeatedly identified as making or breaking their efforts to embed change: namely the wider funding regime for research, in particular how the research councils implement the assessment of Pathways to Impact (PtI). These were universally seen to provide an invitation to researchers to demonstrate how they were embedding public engagement within their research. However, the lack of consistency with which these statements are then assessed and the very variable fate of public engagement within them often undermined the value and approach to public engagement that the Catalysts sought to support. Of particular concern were three issues:

- Lack of clarity about what can be funded through PtI – and how far PE can be resourced through this route;
- Concerns about inconsistency in the review process and lack of clear guidance;
- Research council reporting processes once research projects are underway with a concern that not enough attention is paid to the PtI work, and that Research Fish is not best suited to the types of response people wanted to make.

These are important to address if the legacy of these projects is to be sustained.

What difference did the Catalyst projects make?

The interviews with the Catalyst teams provided an opportunity to reflect on the legacies and outcomes that the projects had realised. Clearly, change takes time, and the impacts of that change take a long time to be realised. All of the teams found it challenging to capture the data needed to evidence impact during the lifetime of their projects but all were really proud of what they had achieved and recognised that they had made a significant difference to the cultures of their institutions.

Clearly culture change does not have a simple start and finish point, but the following emerged as legacies the teams consistently referred to:

- **Changed processes and infrastructure**
  People described how engagement had been built into internal systems and processes in concrete ways. This included promotions criteria, appraisal processes, and including engagement in the institutional forms used to support researchers wanting to apply for funding.
- **Conceptual legacy**
  People repeatedly referred to a key legacy of the project being transformed understandings of research: expressed personally (in how people thought about their work; their freedom to think in new ways) and institutionally (in the definitions and framings built into key strategies and processes).
- **Motivation, enthusiasm and connections**
  The majority of people commented on the ways that the project had enthused people individually – but also built a 'movement', building momentum amongst groups and networks with a shared commitment to engagement.
- **Recognition of the Catalyst's contribution**
  Some interviewees took real pride and satisfaction that the contribution of the Catalyst project was recognised and valued, and identified the role it played in contributing to other institutional successes.

- **A recognition of the 'slipperiness' of measuring culture change**
  It was widely recognised that culture change will always be hard to pin down – however, looked at as a whole, the projects have created a real difference in how engagement is approached and imagined in the host universities, including a widening of understanding about the nature of engagement in different disciplines, and a move away from the more didactic approaches to engagement to embrace a wider portfolio of engagement including co-production etc.

Introduction

In 2008, RCUK partnered with the UK Funding Councils and Wellcome Trust on the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative (ending in December 2011). Six Beacons were established around the UK to pilot new methods to embed public engagement within their organisations, alongside the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement which sought to support the wider sector to embed engagement into their core work. Following the Beacons initiative RCUK were keen to further support embedding of public engagement in the higher education (HE) sector and set up the Catalysts for Public Engagement with Research initiative. The funding intended to act as a catalyst for culture change within higher education institutions (HEIs) to help them embed public engagement with research within their policies, procedures and practices. Eight universities successfully applied to this fund: namely Aberdeen; Bath; Exeter; Institute of Education; Nottingham; Open University; Queen Mary University; and Sheffield. Each received 100k per year, which they match funded from their own resources, to embed a culture for public engagement with research.

The aims of the Catalysts were to create a culture within the grant holding HEIs where excellent public engagement with research is formalised and embedded through:

- strategic commitment to public engagement
- integration of public engagement into core research activities of HEIs, including measuring quality and impact of public engagement with research activities
- reward and recognition of researchers and staff involved in public engagement
- encouraging and supporting researchers and staff at all levels to become involved (e.g. by building capacity for public engagement amongst researchers)
- create networks within institutions to share good practice, celebrate their work and ensure that those involved in public engagement feel supported
- contribute to a wider network supportive of public engagement including the NCCPE, other recipient HEIs and the wider HE community
- build on experience to develop best practice that recognises the two-way nature of public engagement with research

The NCCPE was funded to support the Catalyst institutions – bringing them together into a network to learn from one another; drawing on the excellent work of the Beacons for Public Engagement; and exploring if and how the approaches taken could be adapted to different institutional contexts. The NCCPE sought to ensure that the Catalysts were supported to take advantage of and reflect on the changing landscape of higher education in developing effective support for high quality public engagement with research, and were tasked with distilling the learning from these institutions to benefit the wider sector.

The projects provided a focal point for a significant amount of activity, which RCUK are now building on through their Catalyst Seed Fund – a one year initiative to kick start culture change in 10 institutions across the UK. Recognising that culture change can take time, this initiative explores how to lay the foundations for effective engagement support, enabling institutions to catalyse their thinking and planning.

Our approach to this report

In spring and summer 2015 the NCCPE directors met key staff involved in the eight Catalyst funded institutions to find out more about what they had learnt about culture change and public engagement with research (PER), and to dig deeper into some of the challenges they had faced as institutions, teams and individuals. The intention was to create an anonymised report that would examine the challenge of embedding cultures of engagement within research involving university researchers, and how the funding and other contextual factors affected these processes. This report would enable those involved in the Catalyst projects to honestly reflect on some of the tensions inherent in this work and to share some of the more difficult aspects of the projects without undermining the success that those projects achieved.

The interviews included a range of people involved in the work of the Catalysts including the Catalyst teams responsible for the running of the project (CT); the Principal Investigator (PI); academics involved in the work of the project (A), professional service staff (PS) and senior managers (SM). Whilst the work of each Catalyst was different, there was significant commonality between the discussions.

The interview transcripts were coded, and synthesised into key topics which were then categorised as:

- Key enablers: things that really helped the project have traction
- Factors that could help or hinder depending on the context
- Key challenges: things that were really difficult to address
- Impacts from the projects

Key enablers

1. Work with the grain of the institution
'Make it fit your institution – make thoughtful choices about where it fits your mission, your strategies.' (PI)
This was important in several ways – both to frame engagement so that it fitted with the history and mission of the institution, but also to find a way to connect it into existing systems and structures e.g. business planning rounds; existing management structures. All of the Catalysts developed a distinctive 'flavour' for their approach to PER which reflected the distinguishing features, systems and values of their institutions.

2. The team
'You can't ever over-estimate the importance of having a good team' (PI)
'Pick a team leader with passion and ability to withstand the knocks' (PI).
Our interviews made it clear that delivering culture change projects requires very special characteristics within the team, including the PI. These included expertise in engagement, academic credibility, resilience, ability to engage across a range of people across the institution, confidence, humility, generosity and an understanding of culture change, including when to push and when to

hold back. All of the teams noted the importance of flexibility and responding to opportunity and serendipity.

The Catalyst teams often thought of themselves as pollinators – working across institutional silos – mobilising ideas and contacts from different places within the institution. '*We carry stories across the institution – sharing the amazing stuff people are doing'* (CT).

3. Effective Senior Leadership

Effective leadership was a critical part of effecting change. Each Catalyst project had a Principal investigator (PI) and teams reflected that leaders needed time to do this role well – which could prove a challenge. Effective leaders had authenticity, understanding the importance of PER by working with or as an engaged academic. Leaders needed to enable and celebrate effective practice; to be open to new ideas – and to be curious; to be prepared to learn; to recognise the broader engagement family that animates their and others disciplines. As one PI suggested – they needed to '*put their money where their mouth is*' by reflecting their commitment in communications, strategic plans, and action; and to have charisma and personality – able to champion engagement in a way that is in accord with the values of engagement. This was a difficult role, as one PI reflected '*Learning hard stuff is hard'*.

4. Understand where you are and what you are hoping to achieve

'*The EDGE tool was a critically useful lens for us to look at our approach to public engagement – and helped us to consider how supportive we really were, and where we had to make some progress' (PI)*
Many of the things that the Catalysts reflected on are captured in the EDGE tool[1]. This tool was developed by the NCCPE as part of the Beacons for Public Engagement project – and sought to provide a framework both to self-assess the current institutional support for public engagement and to consider what could be improved. Catalyst teams used this resource to reflect on their institution's approach to supporting engagement and to consider how to develop their work. By assessing their institution against the EDGE tool, Catalyst teams were able to consider how they might want to progress, and the key opportunities to develop more effective sustained support for engagement with research. This tool proved useful for conversations across the institution; planning activity; and assessing progress.

5. Communication

'*Being able to communicate what you can do in three lines inspires confidence*' (CT).
Running a culture change project can be a challenge – especially in terms of communicating what you do. This was exacerbated by the fact PER was a contested term – which meant different things to different people. Despite this, Catalyst teams developed effective ways to explain their work and why it mattered, adapting their approach to the many internal and external audiences. Many focussed on the key elements of the support they could offer, rather than the overarching culture change narrative. By having soundbites that captured the essence of their work, it was easier for people to remember what they were doing and to pass it on. As teams gained visibility and credibility within the organisation, their workloads grew accordingly. Therefore it was important for

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[1] http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support-it/self-assess-with-edge-tool

teams to be able to clearly explain their offer, so that they didn't 'over-promise' or lose focus. Catalysts were also generous and shared what they knew with others, signposting other parts of the university that could offer support. As one stated '*Don't keep it to yourself!*'

It was also important to know who to communicate with and when. Catalysts took different approaches to getting the word out – from having representatives in different faculties/ schools to developing contact databases; from supporting engagement ambassadors across their institution to embedding their messages in email communications from the vice principal. What was common to all was a mixed methodology – not assuming any one mechanism would reach everyone – and making the most of every opportunity.

6.   Have a plan and change it
'When you reach the top of the hill things move fast but you don't always know where the top of the hill is.' (CT)
Having a clear understanding of what might work within the specific institutional context is important – and then reflecting on this as you develop your understanding of what gains traction and what isn't quite fit for purpose. Reflective cycles are a critical part of a culture change story. There is a risk with this however: some Catalysts reflected that they spent too much time thinking things through and not enough time testing their ideas in practice. Learning in the doing was an important part of seeing change happen. '*Don't be invisible for too long.*' (CT).

7.   The gift economy
Many of the Catalysts talked about their generous approach to working with others. By helping other people, they were seen to be a positive part of the university landscape. As teams that got to know the institution's ways of working, they developed knowledge that was valuable to others. By being generous with their knowledge and their time, and embodying the values of engagement that they were encouraging others to embrace, the teams tended to build a lot of allies in the organisation, exemplifying why engagement matters. Whilst this had to be balanced with other work priorities, the Catalysts who developed these networks of support found a greater alignment between their work and that of others, maximising the opportunity to affect change.

8.   Quick wins
The engagement seed funds offered by some of the Catalysts were seen to be a really effective way to get started. Rather than criticise engagement activity already happening, the pilot funds enabled the Catalyst teams to demonstrate what good quality engagement could be like. It raised awareness of the project, and enabled researchers to have a go at engaging publics with their research in a supported environment. Providing opportunities for researchers to easily get involved in PER activity with appropriate support was another way of galvanising action. Another quick win could be described simply as 'being there': keeping engagement on the agenda at key meetings, and not dropping the baton. This was beautifully described as '*Acting as a post it note – remember PE*' (PI).

9.   Choose your battles
'It only takes a few successes for things to gather momentum and people to want to get involved.' (CT)

Culture change is a long term game – and is multi-faceted. Therefore it is important to decide which battles are worth fighting, and where best to direct your energy. It was recognised that this was not always easy to determine at the time, however many of the Catalysts found that in choosing to focus on the positive, the interesting, the fun, the '*making a difference*' – were key ways to mobilise people to get involved. Others found long-running struggles to shift one particular area of university policy demoralising and energy-sapping – and in retrospect wondered whether they might have used that energy more productively. By having several strands of work running in parallel, teams were able to assess where the energy was, and capitalise on that.

10. Passion and enthusiasm

'I just came from a meeting about restructuring our department and everyone said that the things that we want to see from this is that we're helping to do things that matter, and that it's fun and interesting to be part of. Because you don't want to be people that just push paper around' (SM) Catalyst funding offered an opportunity to capitalise on the existing and varied PER activity within the host institutions. It enabled teams to draw out excellent work, and engage with it in meaningful ways. This built on people's interests and passions, ensuring that the work of the Catalyst was seen as an opportunity rather than a burden. Teams suggested that this was really important - building on others' enthusiasm and not being too quick to nip ideas in the bud. This was particularly important given the 'initiative fatigue' inherent in many universities – where PER could be viewed as 'just another new thing' staff had to do. One key way of tapping into enthusiasm and passion was to offer opportunities for those really motivated by this agenda to get involved as champions.

11. Work with and develop architecture

Each Catalyst left a tangible legacy by weaving support for PER into existing structures and / or building new architecture to scaffold people's involvement. Examples included: an engagers forum / network for people interested in PER; match-making services – to connect academics and potential partners to develop projects; a PER surgery which helped academics but was also a '*great tonic for the team to keep their enthusiasm and motivation*'(CT); and platforms for engagement – supported opportunities to engage with the public which academics can access easily. Embedding PER into the existing architecture was really helpful, as it is something familiar to academic and professional service staff, and helps make PER part of the system, rather than a bolt on. Catalysts found that be taking part in the normal institutional planning cycles was a key way to get ideas adopted into the infrastructure of the institution, and ensuring it was articulated effectively in key strategic documents helped provide a useful touch stone for their work.

12. Quality engagement

There was a consensus amongst the teams that developing quality engagement was really important – from having high production values for events, to embedding engagement meaningfully into the research cycle. It was critical that as well as benefiting the public, people were able to reflect on how engagement has changed them as researchers, and what it has done for their research – to focus on the benefits that quality engagement delivers, and the revelations it can bring. One PI reflected on the need for scrutiny and 'quality control': to think long and hard about the engagement projects you invest time and resource in, their sustainability, and to develop a risk strategy for public engagement. This would look at the whole project life cycle, and the challenges of high impact

projects that were based on short term funding: considering this at the start ensured that things valued by the public were not cut short in their prime.

But what does high quality engagement look like? One academic suggested *'The best strategy for public engagement is 'shut up' – you need to listen to people.'* This was an important learning point for many staff, whose main understanding of PER was as a route to disseminating knowledge. The real challenge was helping people engage in two way dialogue – knowing when to speak and when to listen.   The Catalysts found it important to develop their own quality criteria for judging PER – which were relevant to their institution. Whilst these had common components, developing their own criteria provided an opportunity to reflect on the specific priorities for engagement important to their researchers and their institution. Common quality criteria included: being purposeful; participant understanding; mutual benefit; and evaluation.

13. NCCPE
'NCCPE work led to really positive partnerships between Catalysts with lots of room for growth' (CT)

In addition to the enabling factors above, all catalysts highlighted that being part of a co-ordinated network brought real value to the projects. Many interviewees reflected on the value of having an outside organisation to support their work, and bring in learning and perspectives from elsewhere. That the projects could learn from one another, draw on the learning from the Beacons projects and have regular time to meet with the funders made a substantial contribution. The regular co-ordination meetings were particularly valued: '*Co-ordination meetings were really helpful – really beneficial. The physical environment gave a sense of different universities, and the meetings provided a good platform for sharing thoughts and ideas. It was helpful to have direct contact with RCUK at these meetings – the friendly face of funders'* (CT). NCCPE resources also proved valuable. *'The EDGE tool[2] was really helpful – and the spider diagrams helped us map progress'* (CT)

Factors that can help or hinder
This section details areas which the projects grappled with, which were often double-edged: sometimes delivering very positive results, but equally often proving challenging and difficult to navigate productively.

1.   Institutional readiness
The project needs to happen when the institution is ready to take new ways of thinking forward, when there is a prevailing wind. However this is much harder than it sounds. Even when institutions are keen to see this change, there are a range of factors to work through that enable change to happen. Whilst institutions were enthusiastic to participate in the project, some were undergoing more substantial change programmes that made it difficult for the project to gain traction. Some of the Catalysts benefitted from their institutional readiness: *'the project came at just the right time'* (SM). Without this, even with a great team of people, the initiative can lack traction. Generally, people reflected that – as a sector – higher education has a long road still to travel, so expectations should be realistic: '*Universities' grip on engagement and impact is very tentative and early stage and there is a lack of both skills and capacity'* (CT).

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[2] http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support-it/self-assess-with-edge-tool

Many of the Catalyst teams found themselves in the middle of institutional restructures. For some the '*Catalyst funding helped keep a focus on engagement – keeping it front of mind and justifying its priority despite huge institutional change*' (PI). For others, the changes meant the team did not get the leadership support they needed: '*lots of change meant the senior team could not be as involved and changes in senior leadership led to other issues too – with no one being able to put in the work that was needed, meaning the team was unsupported*' (SM).

Another Catalyst reflected that despite having an excellent plan, it was just the wrong time for it to have traction: '*It was the right idea in the wrong organisation*' (CT). This is particularly true of institutions that were facing substantial organisational change which could mean that progress was slow, as new institutional procedures were put in place. Others suggested the plans they did have were too complicated – that the plans were made '*when we were young*' and that '*Issues were much more fundamental than we first thought*' (PI), reflecting that there was an assumed knowledge base within their research community that did not prove valid and that their assumptions about their researchers' attitudes to and knowledge about public engagement weren't quite right, and that they needed to start in a different place.

Finally Catalysts often reflected on the fact that some things that worked excellently for many in the Catalyst family just didn't work well in their context – and that understanding this was a key part of targeting your effort well. Therefore there was a need to spend time looking at how the university worked, what the key drivers for academic behaviour were, the types of collaborative work the institution valued, and to what extent the engagement should focus on inspiring and informing the public, or more deliberative forms of engagement.

2. Unexpected challenges of reward and recognition

A crucial part of all the Catalysts' work was how to effectively reward and recognise academics who were engaging the public with their research. One focal point of this was to get it reflected in promotions criteria, which proved to be very time consuming. That said, nearly all of the Catalysts managed to do this, but they reflected that whilst this is definitely a step in the right direction, it should not be thought of as the destination. There was a concern that even when people are promoted for their engaged research they can still be undervalued and not considered to be 'proper' professors by their peers. However, one Catalyst reflected that '*now the changes are in place they will remain for a very long time, protecting the legacy of the project.*' A further challenge was that even with it in the promotions criteria, academics needed support to develop their engagement work.

One of the key challenges people faced was '*How do you measure excellence in engagement as part of reward and recognition – in a similar way to excellence in research*?' (CT). Several tackled this by evidencing how engagement was a critical and embedded part of excellent research, not an add-on. In addition to tackling promotions criteria, teams reflected that it was also important to build recognition of the value engagement creates – especially evidencing how it leads to higher quality research, researcher skills, and impact broadly defined.

3. The REF

For the Catalysts, the REF has proved a significant accelerant which helped move PER to centre stage. However it brought with it a range of challenges that needed to be managed. There was a consensus that understanding of impact and engagement was still relatively unsophisticated. There was also a concern that a focus on the REF would lead to people pulling back from valuable engagement that did not contribute to impact case studies.

'*REF helped and hindered in different ways – some hated it, but at least it made clear who these people were*!' (CT).

Interestingly, for some PE played an important role in creating more support for the impact agenda: '*Having PE as part of the impact agenda helped bring people on board*' (SM).

Whilst teams were looking forward to more clarity about the future shape of the REF, it was recognised that the financial return for those who had done well in the assessment of impact case studies is huge, bringing in significant resource to the institution, and that this could lead to more effective ways to support PER that led to REF-able impact. That said, one senior manager reflected on the amount of engagement professionals' time that had gone into developing impactful research and how this can be overlooked by the academics when reflecting on their engagement work. It was important to celebrate and recognise that PER is a team sport, with academics working alongside engagement experts, and partners to develop impactful research. Finally, one Catalyst reflected that their work had '*brought REF case studies into perspective and helped us understand engagement in a deeper way*'.

4. Making sense of culture change

'*Culture change is making people recognise what universities are for internally and externally*' (A)
'*Terming it culture change sets up a false dichotomy between 'old bad culture' and 'new good culture'*' (A)
'*Culture is not a singular entity–it's defined socially. Where are we starting from? It requires multiple conversations*' (A)

All of the Catalysts grappled with the idea of 'culture change' and brought very different experiences and understandings to bear. Several had academics with specialist knowledge of culture change as part of their team. All agreed that culture change is not a short term linear process and that three years was too short a time to evidence change. '*3 years is not enough time to drive culture change – we have just laid the foundations*' (CT). Most used the EDGE tool as a bench mark – and reviewed this as part of their 3 year funding cycle.

One Catalyst used a systems based approach and reflected that as it was not a top down approach it was '*unlikely many realised there was a process behind it*' (CT). They introduced the idea of '*possibility spaces*' – which bring people together and start where they are – but which have huge emergent potential. Another PI reflected '*You need to lose control, open up to challenges – which can be a tension – some like structures, others like emergence…*' There was a suggestion that rather than call them culture change projects, it would be better to call them '*engagement development' projects - how to deepen and broaden the engagement in different parts of the university*' (A).

One of the most significant challenges for culture change was the '*Evidencing, recording, counting'*. All the Catalysts found this difficult, as did the Beacons before them, as the things that can more easily be evidenced are the activities and the outcomes from these, not long term systemic change. It was widely recognised within the teams that the process can be as important as the outcome (e.g. when defining public engagement, engaging people in a process of reflection on their own practice was as significant, if not more so, than the definition that finally emerged).

Some of the Catalysts considered the limits RCUK set on how much of the grant could be invested in funding PER activities as a barrier, arguing that these activities were a key part of effecting culture change. The terms and conditions stipulated:

The grant is for culture change and the embedding of public engagement. It cannot be used to fund the actual delivery of public engagement activities. However, grant holders are encouraged to identify existing sources of funds for such activities and seek additional internal financial support, where required. Details of such funding should be provided in the annual reports.

It is interesting to note that some Catalysts felt that convening engagement took energy away from the greater challenge of changing structures. That said, looking across the Catalyst projects, small funded engagement interventions had value when they were understood as only one part of the culture change project. Whilst the RCUK stipulation was for the budget to not support public engagement events and activities which would have quickly eaten into the available budget, at the potential expense of changing institutions, the importance of this type of funding as part of a strategic culture change intervention should not be underestimated. Indeed in the follow on funding for the Catalysts, RCUK recognised the importance of this and allowed for a small proportion of grant funding to be used in this way if it was contextualised around the culture change agenda.

Several Catalysts suggested that a '*project approach to culture change isn't quite right – as these things take time, and the institution isn't static as these agendas are being influenced'* (A). Whilst all recognised the huge value of the funding they had received and the importance of this to the changes that they made, some thought that other models of funding might be explored. This included longer term investments that provided a focal point for specific change activities; investing in several projects and then encouraging them to compete for extension funding, based on the success of what had been completed to date; finding more funding for institutions who have developed support for engagement to buddy up with universities wanting to do the same; and funding more institutions to come together to share good practice and to learn from one another. Clearly such aspirations need to be contextualised around the funding cycles that RCUK and others have to adhere to. Some Catalysts felt responsible for how they had framed the project internally: '*We should have had a strategic approach to this project linked to the kind of institution we want to be – rather than think of it as a project to be managed'* (SM). The funding offered by the initiative would then be used as part of a longer term change programme, rather than a project that was time bound.

5. Where the team were sited

For some, where the Catalyst team sat in the organisation was a critical part of the potential success and traction of the project: '*There are always turf wars – it is incredibly important where you live – it influences what happens long term'* (PI). '*Where the team was sited – in my view, meant they did*

not have the purchase on the organisation that they needed to deliver the project' (A). However others suggested that they were able to make it work irrespective of where they sat. The benefits and challenges of their various locations are summarised in the table below.

Location of team	Advantages	Challenges
Marketing and communications	• Externally focussed so understand the need to engage with those outside the organisation • Well resourced • For some marketing is all about '*what stories we tell, the content we create, and the part research plays in this narrative*' (PS)	• Confusion between engagement vs marketing the university • Focus more on dissemination than collaboration
Research services	• Supports public engagement with research • Key staff working across different aspects of engagement • Focussed on supporting research and research staff • Helps 'join up' PE with other types of external research engagement	• May not engage with wider engagement agendas of institution • Lack of credibility with some academics who see this as part of the bureaucracy of their institution
Vice chancellor's office	• Senior level buy in and leadership • High profile • Gets onto agenda of key meetings	• Can feel top down • High profile, therefore if something doesn't work it has disproportionate negative impact
Distributed team (across faculties)	• Variety of perspectives • Led by academics and support staff • Ground up	• Lack of resources to facilitate change • Expectation management – once the team exists there is an assumption it has dedicated resource in terms of people and funding
Researcher development	• Links to core agenda re staff development • Supports public engagement with research	• May not engage with wider engagement agendas of institution
Academic department	• Credibility with researchers • Wealth of practical experience with engagement	• Funds buy more professional time than academic time • High staff turnover with early career researchers juggling contracts

What is clear from this table is that where the team was sited was not the main barrier to effective culture change – and that it was important not to let where you are sited undermine your culture change efforts.

6. Early Career Researchers (ECRs)

ECRs were identified by many Catalysts as a significant group to work with, with several Catalysts prioritising this group. This group often had an appetite for public engagement, and were going to be the definers of the research landscape in the future – they also have opportunities for training and development as part of their professional development. Whilst this is clearly important, focussing on one group is a problematic strategy. Focusing only on ECRs rather than engaging people across the career stages seemed too long term. '*Waiting for people to die is too long a game and not quite right!*' (PI). It was also noted that ECRs often move on to other institutions or out of academia – making the investment perhaps good for the wider system, but not so good for the host institution.

7. Addressing values

Affecting deep seated change in culture raises profound questions about the values and purposes that should underpin research. Many stated that research needed to be engaged because of the nature of research, research funding, and accountability: '*Research is not a trampoline for ego driven scientists, it is a social function.*'(A). However it was critical to be able to work with academics' motivations and values and to explore how engagement could help them. This was not always comfortable or easy work, and values sometimes clashed. In some institutions there was a culture that reinforced academics only valuing or listening to other academics – which proved a challenge to the culture change process.

8. Working with the funders

The RCUK PER team were seen to be critically important to the project. One senior manager reflected on the power of being funded by RCUK and '*how little money you need to do something if RCUK's name is associated with it.*' Teams reflected that the RCUK funding opened doors that had previously been closed.   The majority of Catalyst teams appreciated the involvement of RCUK at the co-ordination meetings '*the friendly face of the funder.*' However there were some things that proved challenging – most notably the need to evidence culture change. Input into the development of the reporting structures was valued, but for some the resulting processes were a challenge. The majority felt that there was '*Too much pressure to evidence culture change too early in the process.*' (CT).

Key challenges and potential ways forward

1. Institutional systems and processes

Getting PE embedded in institutional systems / processes can be frustrating and time consuming work, especially when the work being developed is not seen as a priority. Two examples illustrate this: the primary purpose of many university websites is to recruit students, rather than develop more effective ways to engage with the public, and they are often being redeveloped. This meant some teams took over 18 months to establish an appropriate web presence for their work – which led to a challenge in terms of establishing credibility within the institution. Several had to rely on

hybrid arrangements, using blogs and other freely available web platforms to share what they were doing. A second example relates to the challenges regarding the financial systems supporting the project – as these were not necessarily fit for the purposes outlined. Team members referenced the need to get senior manager approval for tiny spends.

Most of the Catalysts reflected how difficult it was to engage with people internally – with no one way of reaching staff – and the need for hybrid approaches. There were lots of structures and processes that needed to be navigated, and at times this felt like the most frustrating part of the Catalyst teams' role. Whilst staff in other parts of the institution could be really supportive, they, like the Catalyst teams, were often over stretched, and were serving different priorities. Some of the barriers were overcome by the authority of more senior staff: however this brings its own challenges, leads to inevitable inefficiencies and fails to nurture interest and enthusiasm.

2. **Language and definitions**
'I don't think we should spend time trying to define PE – the best way to understand something is to dance it – not define it' (SM)
'*Everyone had a framing of PE – it was important to reframe it as something that people could recognise had value, however they were making sense of it'* (CT)
For some defining PE was the biggest challenge – what it is, and what it isn't. How does it relate to other aspects of the institution's engagement agenda e.g. outreach and widening participation? Finding the right language and framing it to catch people's interest was difficult. There was a balance between how loose and open you keep the definitions without them becoming too vague and all encompassing. There was also a concern that tight definitions risk shutting people out. As one Catalyst team member pointed out '*the definition needs to be inclusive enough to encourage innovation and excellence'*. This was further compounded by the fact that terms are defined differently across funders, institutions and disciplines: '*some people's outreach is other people's engagement'* (CT). However everyone wanted to assert that engagement was not just about dissemination of research outputs – which was still a common view amongst academics. Definitions captured a wide framing of PER, which encompassed mutually beneficial engagement throughout the research cycle. For some the term public engagement proved to limit the scope and strategic ambition that evolved over the course of their projects, and they replaced it with the term 'engaged research' to describe a more holistic approach.

3. **Who are the public?**
'*It can't be a democracy, we can't engage everyone – we should be more considered in who we engage'* (SS)
'*There are a finite number of community groups and we need to manage their expectations about what research can and can't do – and how long it takes.'* (PI)
'*There is a big issue to do with the language we use to describe the people / groups we engage with* '(CT)
Building on the point about definitions above, the 'public' in public engagement is an amorphous term and led to a multitude of interpretations amongst the Catalyst teams. It was considered really important to understand who you are engaging with and why. For example, the Catalysts variously described "the public" as the local community, policy makers, social enterprises, charities, and people who lived in the same city as the university. We were left reflecting that these debates are a

necessary part of the process of change, and the breadth of the term 'public' is a useful challenge to researchers to clarify their focus. However is the term 'public engagement' now too broad to be useful? Should we be moving to more nuanced descriptions of different potential groups 'beyond academia'?

4. Advisory groups

In many of the Catalysts, advisory groups were set up at the beginning of the project, before key staff had been recruited, and these were often not as helpful as anticipated. This could be due to lack of availability / commitment of key participants; a mismatch between the knowledge and expertise provided and that which was needed (e.g. often the most helpful support was about culture change, whereas the offer was how to engage the public well); and the involvement of people who 'ought' to be there, rather than those who could actually help. Some of the groups naturally 'died away' over the course of the project, others evolved their terms of reference. There was also a mismatch between whether the groups were part of the accountability structure or critical friends of the project. With the PER Catalyst network proving to be a valuable source of help, advice and support, the need for these other spaces were diminished, and for some the challenges faced were not things that senior managers wanted to discuss with advisory boards made up of members from outside of the institution.

One Catalyst reflected 'Advisory *groups have an organisational cachet – but aren't helpful in the work*'. Whilst another reflected *'Advisory groups shape the work we do in a perfect world – but are really demotivating – no one came. It took a while to get into the rhythm of getting the best out of people*'.

5. Sustainability

The sustainability of culture change really challenged the Catalyst institutions. There were reflections on the duration of the project with several stating that four years' funding (as offered to the Beacons) would have provided a stronger foundation to build on. Interestingly all found a way to sustain their work – but the interviews highlighted how vulnerable any institutional change is, being dependent on institutional leadership, and the need to keep the messages about engagement referenced in core meetings where decisions are being made. One wryly reflected: '*it can roll back all too easily*'. Several Catalysts suggested that there was a need to fund effective engagement '*platforms*' as well as a team to support it: these platforms with tried and tested formats – created efficiencies and helped raise the quality of activity: '*We need to recognise that to do PE properly has a resource implication – we need to continue with our training and sustain professional service support*'(PI).

One PI highlighted the need to work with RCUK to sustain this work: '*it needs to be deep in [the] fabric of the institution – but when ... [funding is cut] … institutions will choose and engagement will be cut as it is still considered to be a nice to have, not an essential to excellent research. RCUK are jointly responsible with us for sustaining this activity – we need to provide compelling evidence why it matters, and why it is worth using research funding to do it.*'

Sustainability looked different for different Catalysts – several continued to invest in a Catalyst team to support their engagement work, and to continue the culture change agenda; others looked to

build it into institutional processes; while others devolved different aspects of the project to different support teams across the institution. All were required to put a business case together – but recognised that this can come with strings, which need to be considered carefully. For example, requiring the Catalyst teams to make fundraising / securing grant income a key focus for their future activity led to a concern that '*this becomes the only thing we are relevant and needed for – missing out lots of other important stuff that's not seen*' (CT). '*If we only focus on large grants, what happens to engagement in the arts and humanities subjects*?' (CT).

6. Dependency on key people

Having the right staff at the right time and holding on to them was very challenging with such short projects, especially with no definite future for the team. There was also a concern that so much depended on one or two people who know engagement and are key people across the institution – which is a challenge if they are either ill or choose to leave. '*The single connection becomes the point of failure – you need a networked model*' (PI). Suggestions of how to manage this included building a team of individuals across the institution; avoiding being the only holder of key knowledge or expertise; and ensuring that work was documented well. That said, teams felt really stretched, with little opportunity to extract and pool data on project outcomes, let alone record work. The importance of administrative support, particularly for those working alone on this agenda, was recognised as really important as was a recognition that having enough staff resource, with the right types of skill, was a key thing to consider when writing the bid, as this was difficult to address once the project was underway.

There were also challenges posed by changing senior staff: '*turnover of senior staff can also lead to change of focus which is difficult when you are running a culture change process, as it undermines the work done already*' (CT). Even without this it was suggested that to have cachet the '*Team needed to make themselves an institutional nuisance and draw in senior staff to get involved*' (SM).

7. Balancing priorities and managing demand

'*You don't know who will go on to blossom – so investing time in individuals can pay off big time but can also just be a drain on resources*' (CT)

There were several reflections on how much support for public engagement a Catalyst team can provide – and how to balance one-to-one support with other more strategic work. People reflected on the '*tyranny of the urgent*' (CT) leaving more strategically important work undone and being a '*victim of their own success*' (CT) as people began to value the support they could offer. One Catalyst was concerned that having created opportunities for academics to engage with the public – academics now had too much choice, and that it diminished the value of the opportunity. Catalysts also reflected on the challenge of finding the time to respond to increasing demand to support research proposals, and the recognition that there will be support needed throughout the research cycle of that grant if it is successful.

8. Personal cost and professional recognition

Many Catalysts reflected on the personal challenges of heading up this type of project, by its nature trying to change the culture within an institution meant those leading it received a lot of knocks and needed to be resilient. Given it was a tough role for the teams it was important to try to '*make sure the slog/fun ratio is correctly balanced*.' (PI). Institutional support was a critical part of how

supported the Catalyst teams felt and the Catalyst co-ordination meetings also provided a great place to reflect on these challenges and get support. *'It is a role where you don't get much support or feedback – need to be resilient, and have places to react to lack of understanding from senior colleagues etc'* (CT)

In some institutions more could have been done to recognise the expertise of team members: *'in institutions where the academic is the 'driver' – people think that anyone else can do the other stuff – so we need to professionalise this activity….'* (CT). The Catalysts worked together to define some of the characteristics needed in this key role emphasising how, as the project develops, you need to do different kinds of work to support culture change. There was also a struggle with language in terms of what to call this role – suggestions included: brokers, business developers, producers, creators.

9. Quality engagement?

Discussion about quality emerged again and again, with a real sense that there is much more work to be done to define what is 'good enough', and to try to distinguish meaningfully between 'quality' and 'quantity'.   Whilst people agreed it was great to start engagement projects small, Catalysts talked about the challenges of scaling up and then losing the quality of the engagement. There was a feeling that the day-to-day pressure of being an academic led to a lack of creativity and limited what they felt able to attempt in terms of their engagement work. It was felt critical to be able to define what 'good' engagement looks like – as without this it is hard to have it in promotions criteria etc. As there are a range of types of engagement what looks good in one area, is different to what looks good somewhere else. Some with experience of working outside the sector were keen to draw in engagement expertise from other contexts, to help raise aspiration in what high quality engagement could look like.

As picked up later in the report, there was significant concern that the current understanding of quality engagement within the academy was not high, resulting in little understanding of the appropriateness or value of Pathways to Impact statements including in grants. This seemed a critical point to address. There was also a concern that academics needed to understand that *'engaged research in partnership is more difficult than traditional approaches to research – involves skills many people don't have – so people need to be persuaded that this leads to better research, and more interesting outcomes from that research'* (CT).

10. Emergent working and flexibility

The process of writing the Catalyst bid was considered really helpful, but it was recognised that in developing the projects lots of things changed, including the bid writers' understandings of public engagement. Securing senior managers' input into the project as it developed was a key challenge, with time allocated to this sometimes hard to secure. There was also a challenge about how much the initial assumptions made when writing the bid worked out in practice, and the need to be agile, and refocus efforts if the original plans were not leading to the change needed. For example, one Catalyst identified and recruited advocate roles to act as leaders across the institution – but discovered that the people who applied wanted to *'learn not lead'* (CT). This necessitated a change of plan, which focussed on capacity building, and building a learning network across the institution.

Other influencing factors

One external factor was repeatedly identified as making or breaking their efforts to embed change: namely the wider funding regime for research, in particular how the research councils implement the assessment of Pathways to Impact (PtI). These were universally seen to provide an invitation to researchers to demonstrate how they were embedding public engagement within their research. However, the lack of consistency with which these statements are then assessed and the very variable fate of public engagement within them often undermined the value and approach to public engagement that the Catalysts sought to support. Of particular concern were three issues:

- ***Lack of clarity about what can be funded through PtI – and how far PE can be resourced through this route***
  Catalyst teams were often brought in at the last minute just before grant proposals were being made in order to comment on the PtI statements within them. What was clear was that researchers are still unclear about the opportunities afforded by the PtI statement, and the types of engagement that could be included. This was particularly the case for researchers working on interdisciplinary projects – who voiced concerns over the different ways PtI were treated by the different Research Councils.

  Whilst Catalyst teams could do much to address this, there was a need for individual research councils to provide more support for their researchers to understand the critical value of engagement as part of this landscape, and back up the work at an institutional level by maintaining this.

- ***Concerns about a perceived inconsistency in the funding assessment process and lack of clear guidance***
  Funding speaks volumes to the research community – and whilst RCUK provided effective support for developing a culture for public engagement, and the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research was a key statement which could be drawn on, this didn't always correlate to messages inferred from the grant review process. With some councils allowing PtI statements to be resubmitted if the research proposals were successful in getting funded, researchers felt less need to ensure that the statements they included were high enough quality in the first place. Some researchers believed that PtI assessment did not affect the research bid outcome. Anecdotally there were examples of poor PtI statements, critiqued as inadequate by the institutional engagement team, which had been accepted for funding through the peer review process. Researchers were keen to have clear guidance as to how much engagement could be costed into the PtI, and often under-costed their engagement plans. Catalyst teams and their PIs were concerned that these factors seemed to undermine the work they were doing internally to develop high quality PER.

  The peer review process was recognised as being critical to a healthy research landscape – but there were concerns that PtI and engagement were not universally understood across the research community. Training peer reviewers in the value of engaged approaches to research across different disciplinary contexts, and the likely costs of different types of intervention seemed a useful way of improving engagement literacy as PtI work matures.

- ***Challenges around research council reporting processes once research projects are underway***
  There were concerns that not enough attention is paid to the PtI work once the grants had been awarded, compounded by the fact that Research Fish is not always best suited to the types of response people wanted to make. PIs in particular were concerned that even when the PtI statements are good, and the costs reasonable for the activity promised, there was very little need for researchers to evidence if and how they have done this work.

  Whilst the REF provided a mechanism for research impact to be assessed, the current reporting structures for engaged research were sadly lacking.

  Many reflected that Research Fish does not encourage effective reporting on engagement, and to help support culture change research councils should request additional reporting from research grants linked to PtI – perhaps with one in 100 being asked to supply a narrative report on what they did, and what happened as a result. Whilst additional reporting is not universally popular, there was a sense that there needed to be a way of learning from all the work funded through PtI and that this would help refine it as a tool to support engagement with research.

Legacies and impact: in their own words

Finally, we asked the teams to reflect on the legacies and impact they were most proud of. We have quoted them below under key headings.

1. **Conceptual legacy**

People repeatedly referred to a key legacy of the project being transformed understandings of research: expressed personally (in how people thought about their work; their freedom to think in new ways) and institutionally (in the definitions and framings built into key strategies and other documents).

- *'As I have said things have changed: I used to see engagement as a passive process – just share research outcomes, but I now value co-creation, and see this as the defining characteristic of how we should approach research here.'* (PI)
- *'Conceptual legacy - it is difficult to assess impact – but there has been conceptual legacy – better understanding of engagement as key part of research'* (CT)
- *'To have a meeting like we had yesterday with all the leading people who manage research across the institution with the Deputy Vice Chancellor, with them saying that what we were going to put into our strategy going forward was that engaged research was just the way we do research. It seems to me quite a remarkable transformation'* (SM)
- *'Public engagement in the language of more academic staff and researchers.'* (CT)
- *'Changes in public discourse'* (SM)
- *'Created a space to think – and helped us reframe PE.'*(PI)
- *'Our really impressive legacy is very low key – we have built understanding and engagement in PER – which has informed our learning and led to a culture change.'* (SM)
- *'People say well that's a bit obvious, isn't it? That just sounds like engaging with people, you know. But it's remarkable how much it wasn't previously in the mind-set'.* (SM)

2. Changed processes and infrastructure

People described how engagement had been built into internal systems and processes in concrete ways.

- *'I think what we have done in the course of the project is try to make it feel normal so that in the documents we produced, in the future strategies we produce we just say "Well that's what we're going to do." You know it's there as part of the plan'* (SM)
- *'PER included in pre-grant submission process.'* (CT)
- *'Impact of changing promotions criteria has opened up new ways of staff developing their career.' (CT)*
- 'Promotion criteria.' (PI)
- *'Changes in how faculties build it into their business planning – a huge legacy that took 3 years.'* (CT)
- *'Better infrastructure for impact.'* (CT)
- *'Established and sustained unit recognised for professional and creative service.'* (CT)
- 'The institution has changed dramatically – public engagement is something that now happens at the start and throughout the process – co-creation has traction in the institution.' (PI)
- 'Is in the reward and recognition – yet to filter down – but that is definitely there.' (PI)
- *'Established an international journal across the network in partnership with NCCPE – this will be huge legacy of this project'* (CT)
- *'Directors prize is a big ticket item – has a big impact'* (SM)
- 'Part of researcher pipeline, PhD training as part of DTCs. Engagement at heart of life sciences initiative. Wellcome strategic award was granted as already had capability to engage with communities' (PI)
- 'PE structures e.g. PE advisory group – equivalent to other advisory boards i.e. equal status.' (PI)

3. Motivation, enthusiasm and connections

Repeatedly, people commented on the ways that the project had enthused people individually – but also built a 'movement', building momentum amongst groups and networks with a shared commitment to engagement

- *'Feels different – has opened up new possibilities'* (PI)
- *'Change in the researcher, academics who have engaged, finding a new enthusiasm for their research.'* (CT)
- *'Brought people together under common vision.'* (CT)
- *'Linking different parts of the university together.'* (CT)
- 'PhD network – just a different way of working.' (CT)
- *'We established a loose network of individuals who cared about PE – is that Culture Change? – it was a huge achievement!'* (CT)

4. Recognition of the Catalyst's contribution

Others took real pride and satisfaction that the contribution of the Catalyst project was recognised and valued, and identified the role it played in contributing to other institutional successes:

- *'Attribution to one thing is often difficult – but our new policy institute – the Catalyst funding may have influenced us getting that.'* (PI)
- *'High level awareness of events and training.'* (CT)
- *'Compare this project with the CETLs – who had 335m – the evaluation is rather good – but we have achieved more here with much less resource.'* (PI)
- *'EDGE tool improvement is our biggest legacy – with less money and time than the Beacons we have made more progress'* (CT)
- *'We've looked to publish findings to share learning'* (CT)
- *'The Research for All Journal will help create a space to reflect on engaged research across different disciplines and contexts.'* (CT)

5. A recognition of the 'slipperiness' of measuring culture change

It was widely recognised that culture change will always be hard to pin down – but that, looked at as a whole, the projects have created a real difference in how engagement is approached and imagined in the host universities:

- *'It's culture change – so it isn't about metrics of 'doing' – but more difficult to measure. You can count who is putting engagement into their research grants; number of people who have been trained; how they have used their training to engage others - but there are lots more soft impacts: in three years we wouldn't expect to see enhancement of research but we have evidence from colleagues of how it has benefitted them personally, which impacts directly onto the research and dissemination, recognition that this is part of being a great researcher, in promotion criteria, better facilities and engagement infrastructure.'* (PI)
- *'Engaged research is just the way we do research.'* (SM)
- *'We hit the grant targets – but for me it is more than hitting these targets – we wrote them when we were young. Some hit, some evolved, some we dropped. Top things for me are: Promotions criteria; Training (which has been through the teaching quality assessment); Strategy documents; and the number of impact case studies about engagement led research.'* (PI)
- *'It's embedded as long as there is someone here to remind us.'* (PI)

Conclusion

It is without doubt that RCUK funding has enabled the Catalyst institutions to deliver against programme aims to effect a culture change in how PER is supported within their institutions, and led to a range of positive outcomes. Having dedicated people working in this agenda, drawing on the learning from the Beacons, and supporting one another to learn together has been a significant catalyst for change. As people understand what quality engagement can do for research, researchers and society, interest is ignited, and more people begin to consider the processes of engaged research. RCUK's funding helped open doors for Catalyst teams, giving credibility to their work, and the active involvement of RCUK staff helped share learning across the network.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the challenges of managing a culture change project everyone reflected that they were worth doing because they had delivered unique kinds of transformational change at personal, professional and institutional scales: *'This project has been a labour of love and a*

team thing. It is the culmination of life and personal beliefs. So I am so pleased it has gone well' (PI).
'It's worth it absolutely' (PI).

However there were challenges in the research landscape that could usefully to be addressed, if a culture of PER is to be established across universities and research organisations in the UK. Unlocking the potential of PtI to build a consistent expectation that engagement will be embedded into research, and recognised for the value it brings to research and to society, is a key next step to supporting institutional efforts to develop this work.

As each institution enters the next phase of their PER work, it is interesting to see how they have addressed sustaining the work they have started. Most have retained their teams and their focus on change, some have embedded this in other parts of the institution. All had to make a business case to see their work continue and were successful in gaining traction for their approach. In the words of a former Beacon director '*Culture change is hard … you need to find ways to deliver an effective service that leads to the change you are seeking – you are a change agent*.' With such effective change agents supported through this initiative, and with the potential to stimulate more activity through the Catalyst Seed Fund programme, we are confident that the investment made in this programme will lead to lasting change in the funded institutions, as well as the sector as a whole.

The NCCPE

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