

# VALUING & EMBEDDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY: GROUP 1 AND 2



## REMIT OF THE GROUP

Strategies to embed civic activity within Higher Education by:

- **Leveraging** existing knowledge about **culture change** in **public engagement**.
- Securing institutional buy-in,
- **Shaping** the **narrative** on **civic** work as **essential**.
- Approaches to **building alliances** across **departments, faculties** and **partnerships**.
- **Training** and supporting **staff** to undertake **civic** work.
- How to **embed civic** activity in **staff** roles.
- Ensuring **meaningful implementation** of strategic commitments.
- **Develop** and **operationalise** high level **civic agreements**.

## KEY CHALLENGES

- Keeping **civic** activity on the **priority** list in times of **change**, e.g. senior leadership transition, restructuring programmes.
- Determining **what** qualifies as a **civic** activity e.g. a check list
- Establishing processes for **prioritising civic** activities.
- Translating **enthusiasm** into strategic **delivery** plans.
- Finding **allies** across departments and **uniting approaches** to create a **whole-university commitment** to civic activity.
- **Managing expectations** around what the university or partnership can deliver.
- Translating **strategic** commitments into meaningful **actions** through coordination and accountability.



# VALUING & EMBEDDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY: GROUP 1 AND 2

## EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

### Future Ambition Civic Agreement

- Between University of Bath, Bath Spa University. North East Somerset Council and Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust.
- De-centers the Universities.

Focussing on:

- How they can make a difference to the well-being of the region, e.g. how they work together and behave.
- Thematic areas e.g. Opportunity for all, creativity and culture.

It took roughly 4 years to finalise the agreement.

[futureambitionbath.com](https://futureambitionbath.com)

### Plymouth Civic Engagement Agreement

- High-level agreement between University of Plymouth, Babcock International, Plymouth City Council and the University Hospitals Trust.

Focussing on:

- Inclusive employment opportunities.
- Strengthening Local supply chains.
- Community cohesion and well-being.
- Net-zero and sustainability.

Developed from the Large Anchor Social Value Collaboration with The Plymouth Charter.

[plymouthcharter.co.uk](https://plymouthcharter.co.uk)

## TACTICS AND QUICK WINS

- Find **allies** across your organisation and partnership.
- Understand your spheres of **control** and **influence** and develop influencing action plans.
- Map **strategic priorities** across **partner** organisations and present **opportunities** and **alignment** to **senior leaders**.
- Acknowledge civic work requires relational ways of working; it can be complex and slow. **Work at the speed of trust.**

## WAYS FORWARD

- Outline a **criteria** or checklist to identify **civic** activities; a '**civic test**'.
- Develop case studies to **showcase** ways of **embedding civic** activity into **research, teaching** and **operations**.
- Develop clear **processes** for **gathering** and **sharing civic** activities across the organisation.
- Develop **civic narratives** to institutional **KPIs** relating to sector-wide benchmarking e.g. REF, KEF, TEF and graduate outcomes.



# INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE CIVIC AGENDA



## REMIT OF THE GROUP

Enhancing **curriculum-based learning**, volunteering, engagement and citizenship through creating meaningful **connections** between **students**, **universities**, and **community** partners.

Align **student** and **community needs**, ensuring **mutual benefit** in community-based learning and volunteering and **building capacity** within both universities and communities to **support** and scale up **community-engaged learning**.

Integrating civic **engagement** into **teaching** and **learning**, coordinating student involvement across institutions and **measuring** and **articulating** the **impact** of **student participation** on communities.

## KEY CHALLENGES

- **Student engagement and motivation** - overcoming apathy and competing priorities.
- **Balancing university, student and community needs** - ensuring engagement opportunities meet academic timelines while respecting the capacity of community partners.
- **Building a sense of place and belonging** - strengthening student connections to local communities.
- **Sustaining partnerships** - preventing damage to long-term relationships caused by misaligned expectations or uncoordinated programmes.
- **Equity and accessibility** - ensuring all students can participate in community engagement without burdening partners with disengaged or unprepared students.



# INVOLVING STUDENTS IN THE CIVIC AGENDA

## EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

### S-L/CEL Network



The UK Service-Learning/Community Engaged Learning Network was established to advance the integration of community partnerships into teaching.

### The Plymouth Compass



The Plymouth Compass is a framework of 'future-facing' attributes that help students to navigate their whole university experience.

## INNOVATION FUNDING PROJECTS

- The **ImpactLab** Social Sciences Clinic at **Teesside University** is a service designed to bring together students, staff, and external organisations to address pressing social, economic, and community challenges.
- The **Student Empowerment Report** for the **Universities Partnership** (University of Leicester, Loughborough University, and De Montfort University alongside local councils) explores opportunities to increase student participation in civic life delivering strategic and operational recommendations focused on student community engagement.

### TACTICS AND QUICK WINS

- **Offer diverse engagement opportunities** - provide a range of options such as one-off events, remote and in-person opportunities, and structured volunteering.
- **Embed civic engagement into the curriculum** - develop community-based learning modules, internships and degree-linked volunteering.
- **Create a dedicated brokerage service** - matching community need and student skills and interests.
- **Utilise word of mouth** - encourage students to advocate for involvement through testimonials and peer influence.

### NEXT STEPS

- **Strengthen student connection to place** - develop programmes that help students feel part of the local community.
- **Recognise and articulate the benefits** - show skills development, employability and personal growth to encourage participation.
- **Position civic engagement with broader priorities** - enhancing mental wellbeing, career prospects and social integration
- **Enhance inclusivity and accessibility** - opportunities are equitable that consider time and financial constraints.



# INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND PLACEMAKING



## REMIT OF THE GROUP

Understanding how **universities** can collaborate with other anchor **organisations** and **social enterprise** on **inclusive** and **sustainable** economic **growth**;

- Measuring **social impact** and **social return** on **investment** to inform policy and funding decisions.
- Enhancing **local growth**/ development **plans** by **linking** with **universities' research** expertise, **teaching** specialism, and resources.
- Addressing **barriers** to **participation** in **economic** growth, particularly for underserved communities.
- The role of large **anchor** organisations in delivering **corporate social responsibility** and how this maps to the civic agenda,

How can universities undertake **capital development** through an inclusive growth and placemaking lens?

## KEY CHALLENGES

- What are the ways of working **well** at **local** and **regional level**?
- What are the **differences** between working **regionally** and **locally**?
- How can universities work with **devolved mayors** to support regional **industrial strategies**?
- When writing **university economic impact** assessments how are **other impacts** integrated e.g. social, cultural, wellbeing?
- What does **inclusive growth** look like for local **communities** who are at risk of being 'left behind'?
- How to proactively **align** university and partnership work with central **government agendas**?
- How to **map** what is already happening in the **region**, where can we work together and bring unique expertise?



# INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND PLACEMAKING

## EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE



Enterprise Works supports social entrepreneurs from any background in York and North Yorkshire to develop the social enterprise sector.



Universities Partnership has a focus on graduate retention across the region and supports businesses to work with the universities to recruit graduates.

## INNOVATION FUNDING PROJECTS

- The **Collaborative Value Initiative** supports a two-way relationship between VCSE organisations and universities to capture social return on investment.
- A report and its findings on **Inclusive Governance** commissioned by City St. Georges, University of London and Knowledge Quarter.
- Anglia Ruskin University is developing a **volunteering programme** for people who have experienced **long-term unemployment** and will produce resources and learning for other universities to utilise.
- The Bath partnership is **mapping inclusive innovation** across the Bath and North-East Somerset area. It will give insight into the gaps and overlaps in provision. This project will develop the understanding of the potential **role** that **universities** and other civic **organisations** can play in partnership to support **inclusive innovation** within their regions.

## TACTICS AND QUICK WINS

- Use **community organising** techniques and teach them to students, academics and staff.
- Use principles of **participatory research** or asset-based community development approaches.
- Form a **coalition of the willing**.
- Read **local growth** and **skills** development **plans**, use language from them in **partnership** and **university** MOUs or **plans**.
- **Attend** local **council meetings** or read minutes to **identify areas** of shared **interest**.

## NEXT STEPS

- **Data-driven decision making:** Establish a local **data observatory** that collects and analyses outcomes from public investment, supporting policymakers to make evidence-based choices. Integrate community sense-checking of data findings.
- Support **community organisations** to **track long-term impact**, demonstrating how interventions contribute to inclusive growth. This could be integrated into engaged learning programmes.
- Create a **local innovation network** to drive locally relevant research.



# PARTNERSHIP WORKING: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY



## REMIT OF THE GROUP

Effective **approaches** to **collaboration** in partnerships, considering models such as co-creation, consultation, and structured support for forming, maintaining, and ending partnerships equitably.

Building **trust**, ensuring access, and managing expectations to foster **meaningful engagement** between organisations.

**Governance structures**, inclusivity, and mutual benefit. Methods to ensure strategic clarity and institutional commitment to create impactful, lasting partnerships.

## KEY CHALLENGES

- **Aligning different priorities and organisational structures** - navigating different organisational remits, terminology and governance models, particularly in the context of devolution.
- **Equitable access and support** - ensuring fairness in who can develop partnerships, access university collaborations, and receipt of necessary resources to support partnership development.
- **Navigating policy and governance** - keeping up with government changes, aligning with economic and local place based strategies and overcoming bureaucratic barriers.
- **Demonstrating value and securing buy-in** - making the case for investment in partnerships from universities, local authorities and business through evidence gathering and highlighting areas of strategic alignment.
- **Balancing expectations and resources** - Managing demand, capacity and mutual benefit.
- **Sustainability and long-term impact** - beyond personal connections to resourced and strategic partnerships at an organisational level.



# PARTNERSHIP WORKING: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY

## EXAMPLES OF TOOLS AND PRACTICE

### The Partnership Cycle



The NCCPE partnership cycle provides a useful way to explore partnership development.

### Equitable Partnerships Toolkit



The Equitable Partnerships Toolkit provides practical exercises, case studies and resources to apply your context.

## INNOVATION FUNDING PROJECTS

- **Lancaster University** and the **University of Plymouth** are developing new ways for anchor institutions to meaningfully engage with communities.
- **Edge Hill University** has used creative methods to engage communities and develop relationships between students, staff and the community.
- The **Collaborative Value Initiative** supports a two-way relationship between VCSE organisations and universities to better capture and demonstrate measures of social return on investment.
- A report and its findings on **Inclusive Governance** commissioned by City St. Georges, University of London and Knowledge Quarter was presented at a roundtable to discuss strategies for improving Board diversity.

### TACTICS AND QUICK WINS

- **Develop clear partnership strategies;** identify shared goals, mutual benefits and areas of collaboration.
- **Create equitable access** with transparent processes detailing how organisations can engage with a university.
- **Enhance governance structures;** clarify roles and separate operational and strategic decision-making.
- **Streamline processes;** develop shared systems e.g. volunteering, training and compliance.

### NEXT STEPS

- **Leverage devolution deals and other government drivers** to strengthen and justify partnership working.
- **Demonstrate impact and secure buy-in** through case studies and data to showcase the value of civic activity.
- **Strengthen cross-sector learning** from local authorities and the NHS on managing financial constraints and operational inefficiencies.
- **Use participatory funding mechanisms** to engage local VCSE organisations that promote inclusive and impactful research.



# REALISING THE VALUE OF RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FOR CIVIC BENEFIT



## REMIT OF THE GROUP

Effective **strategies and approaches** to mobilise academic research and knowledge exchange to civic challenges.

Effective **approaches** to **translate** civic **challenges** into **research** agendas and questions. Matching **academics** with relevant **civic partners** and supporting them to develop a **mutually beneficial relationships**.

Understanding the role of **professional service** staff as civic **research enablers** and the knowledge and skills this requires.

Articulating the multi-dimensional **impact** of **civic place-based research**.

## KEY CHALLENGES

Overcoming **institutional barriers** to academic civic activity:

- **Internal university processes** often **complicate** civic work.
- The **ethics** of **civic** engagement and activity are often **not integrated** into standard ethics procedures.
- A **lack** of **support** structures and advice for **civic-focused research**.

How to **translate regional challenges** into **research** agendas:

- How to distil **broad themes** into structured **research questions**.
- Aligning **research agendas** with local **policy** and **anchor** organisation's **needs**.

Sustaining **place-based networks** for **knowledge exchange**:

- **Maintaining** and **growing** regional **networks** to foster collaboration.
- How to **systematise relationship management** to facilitate **long-term** partnerships that are maintained through **staff transition** and **short-term project** funding



# REALISING THE VALUE OF RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FOR CIVIC BENEFIT

## EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE



### Research Centred on Community

The Co(l)laboratory programme has adopted a novel approach to doctoral research, based on principles of civic engagement, co-creation, and co-production. The programme will fund 50 funded PhD Research Projects and 25 Citizen Scientist Research Projects, aiming to build research capacity in the local area.

## INNOVATION FUNDING PROJECT



UAL Camberwell is trialling a **civic fellowship** focused on addressing health inequalities through the lens of insecure housing in South London, in partnership with Citizens UK and South East London Anchor System. The **fellow** was **embedded** into **Citizens UK and the South East London Anchor System**. The **fellow** will deliver a **theory of change workshop** to clarify the **impact** the partnership wants to have on local health inequalities.

The project also aims to produce a **resource** for the sector suggesting **mechanisms** for **academic** in **engagement** in **civic** priorities.

### TACTICS AND QUICK WINS

- Run **networking** or matchmaking events for **researchers** and local **community /civic organisations**.
- Establish a **community of practice** to explore **civic strategies** and support **academics** are eager to work in this way.
- Share **stories** and case studies which show the **ways** in which **academics** can **engage** with **civic** priorities.
- Identify areas of **alignment** in **anchor** organisations **strategic** plans with academic expertise.

### NEXT STEPS

- Develop a **structured** approach to growing **regional networks** for **knowledge exchange**.
- Develop **internal support** for **academics** engaging in civic work; e.g. progression routes and fellowships.
- Deliver **training** on **civic engagement** and research impact to **academic** staff.
- Identify **funding** opportunities to facilitate **academics working** with **civic partners** e.g. Impact Accelerator Accounts.