



**Engaged Futures
August 2025**

**Catalyst Update and Call for
contributions**

What are we trying to do?

To effect change in how universities and research organisations support inclusive knowledge creation and use.

We need your help...

The presentation covers the following information

- Update on phase 2 of the Engaged Futures Programme
- Outputs from Phase 2 for comment and reflection
- Description of phase 3 and the identified 'Domains of action'

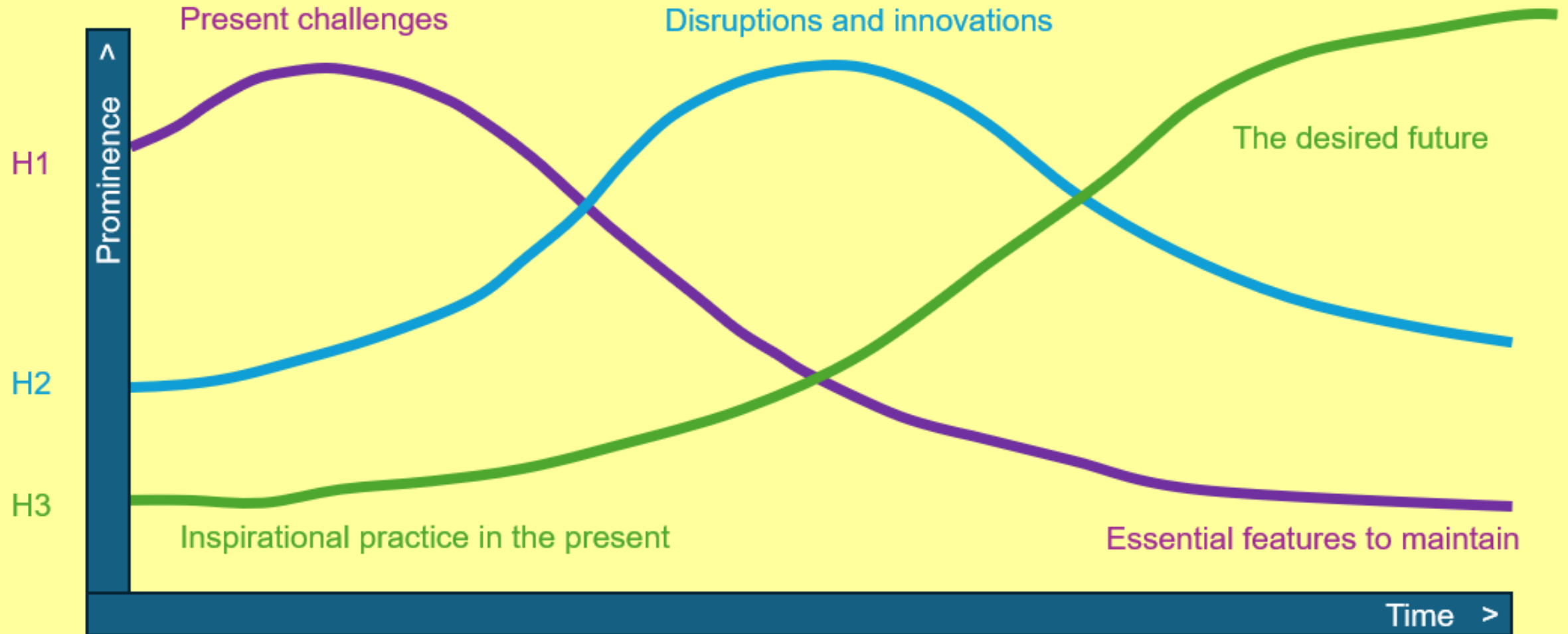
It is supported by a PDF document which includes the information shared in the presentation, and a detailed H1 and H3 map.

We then invite you to complete our short survey which invites you to:

- Share your responses to the Phase 2 outputs
- Share your interest in participating in our next event in London on the 5th November
- Identify your interest in getting involved in the Domains of Action working groups, starting later this year

Update on Phase 2

Three Horizons



People involved so far.....

Engaged Futures Catalysts

People committed to effecting change and **working with their networks** to bring in different perspectives



Engaged Futures Group

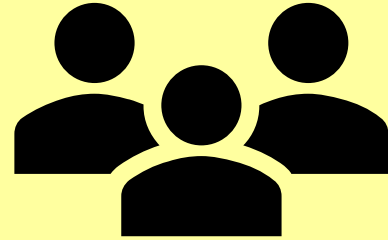
25 people from within and outside HE, sensemaking and championing engaged futures



What have we done in Phase 2

230

catalysts
recruited to work
together to effect
change

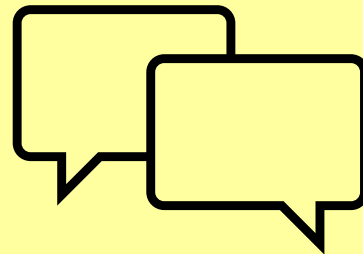


14

Hosted workshops
from small online
meetings to larger in-
person workshops

13

Catalyst
conversations to
bring in new
perspectives and
insights



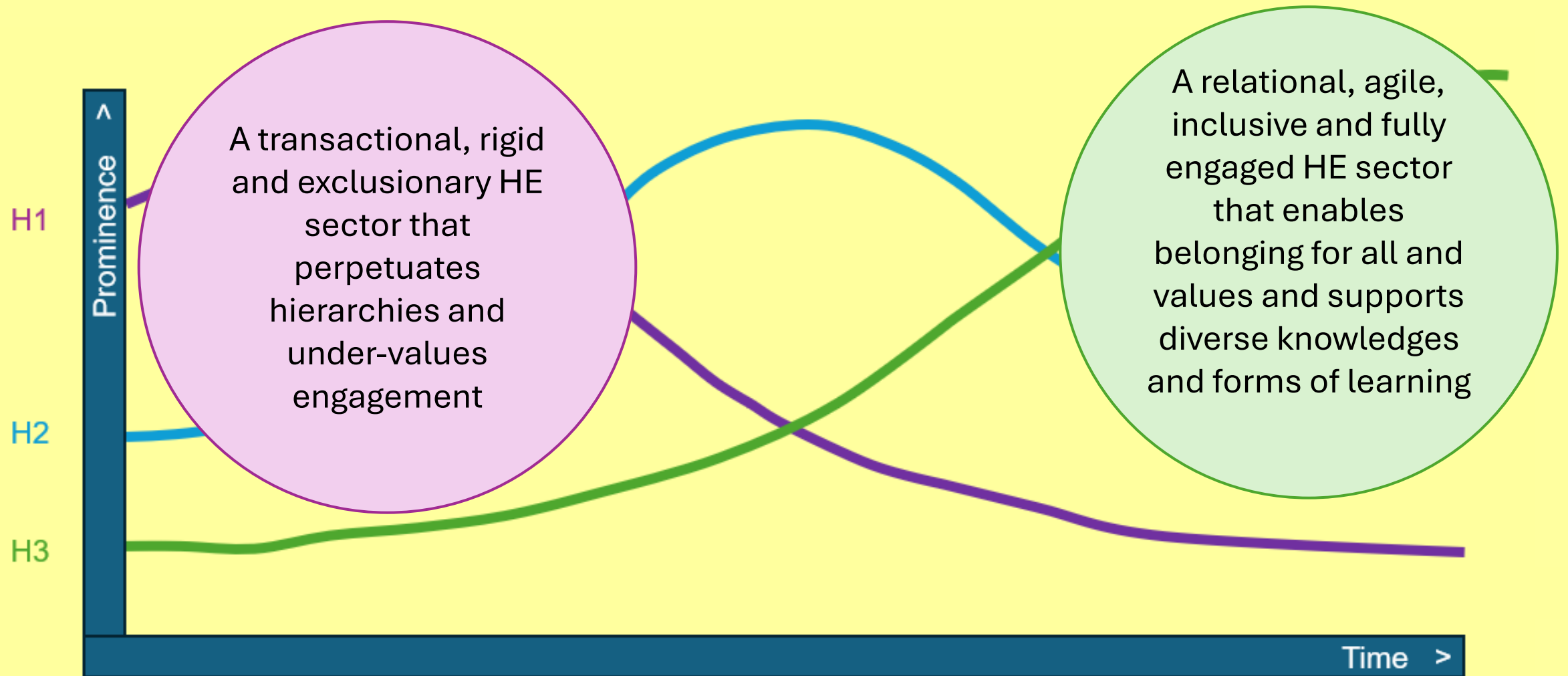
Analysed **all**
contributions to
build H1 H3 map,
and identified over
160 H2+ actors

Outputs from Phase 2 for reflection and review

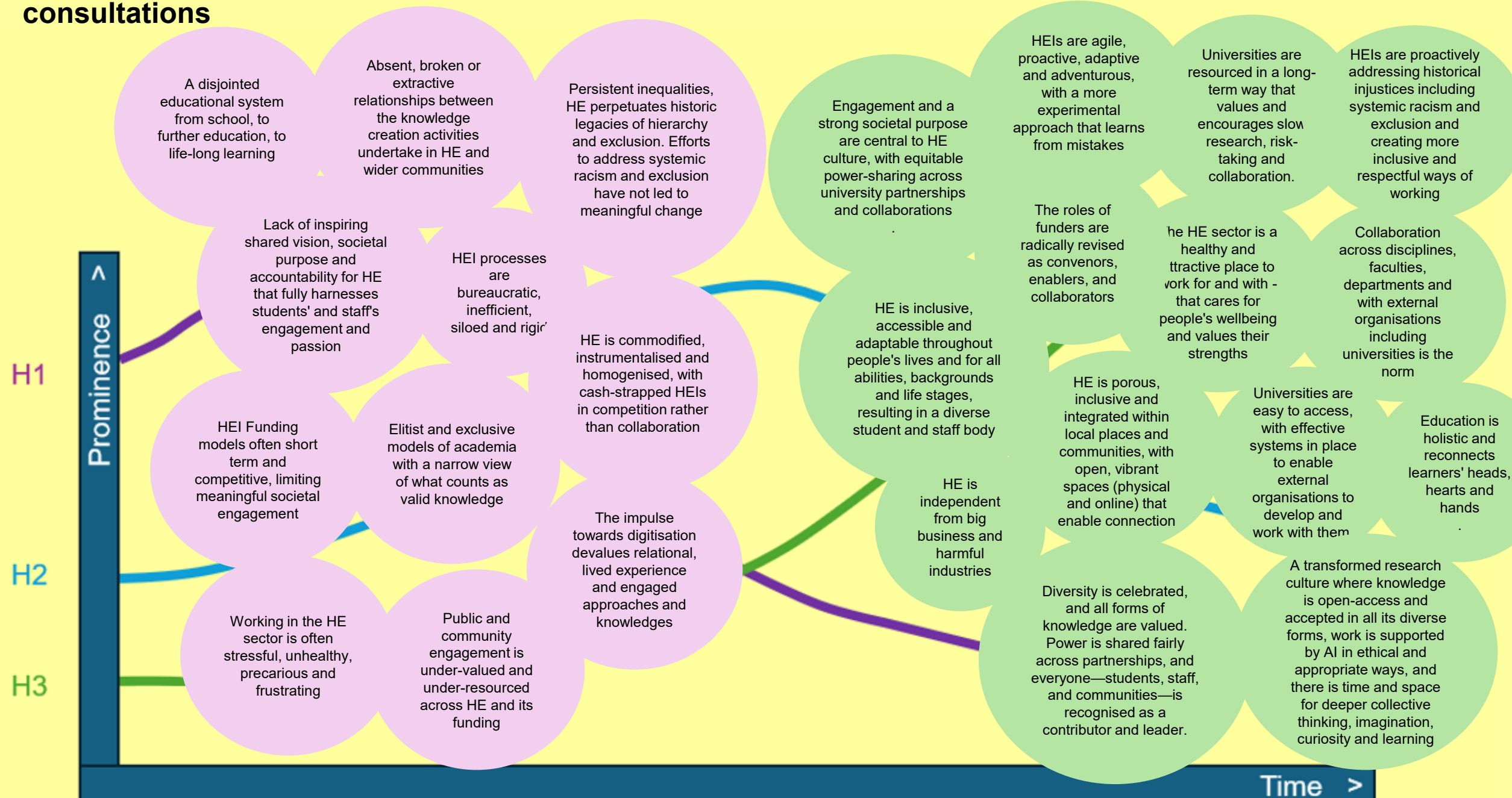
In reviewing the outputs, please tell us:

- What do you like most about the summary narrative?
- Is there anything you feel needs more emphasis or is missing from the summary narrative
- Do you feel the value contrasts adequately express the nature of the transformation needed. If not, what is the most important thing you would want to change or add?

Summary H1 and H3 map

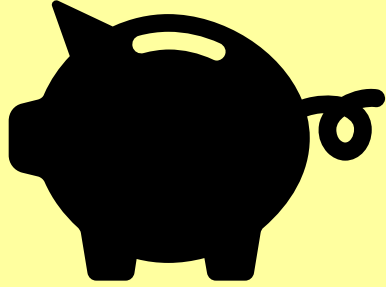


Detailed H1 and H3 map: a summary of the findings from our catalyst and engaged futures groups consultations

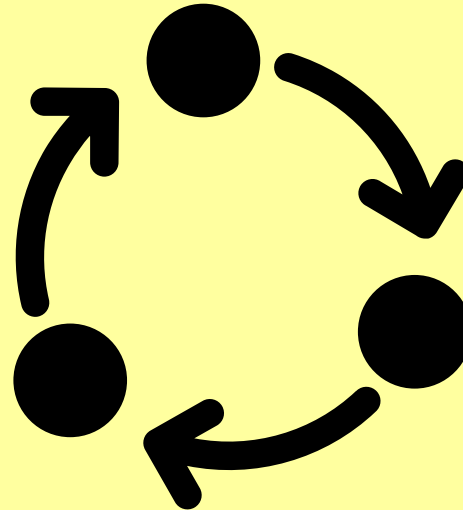


Phase 2 outputs grouping

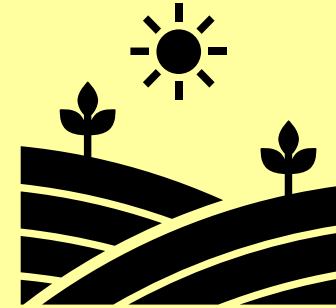
How universities are
funded and resourced



How universities are
inclusive across all
aspects of their work
and identity



What universities are like to
work for and with



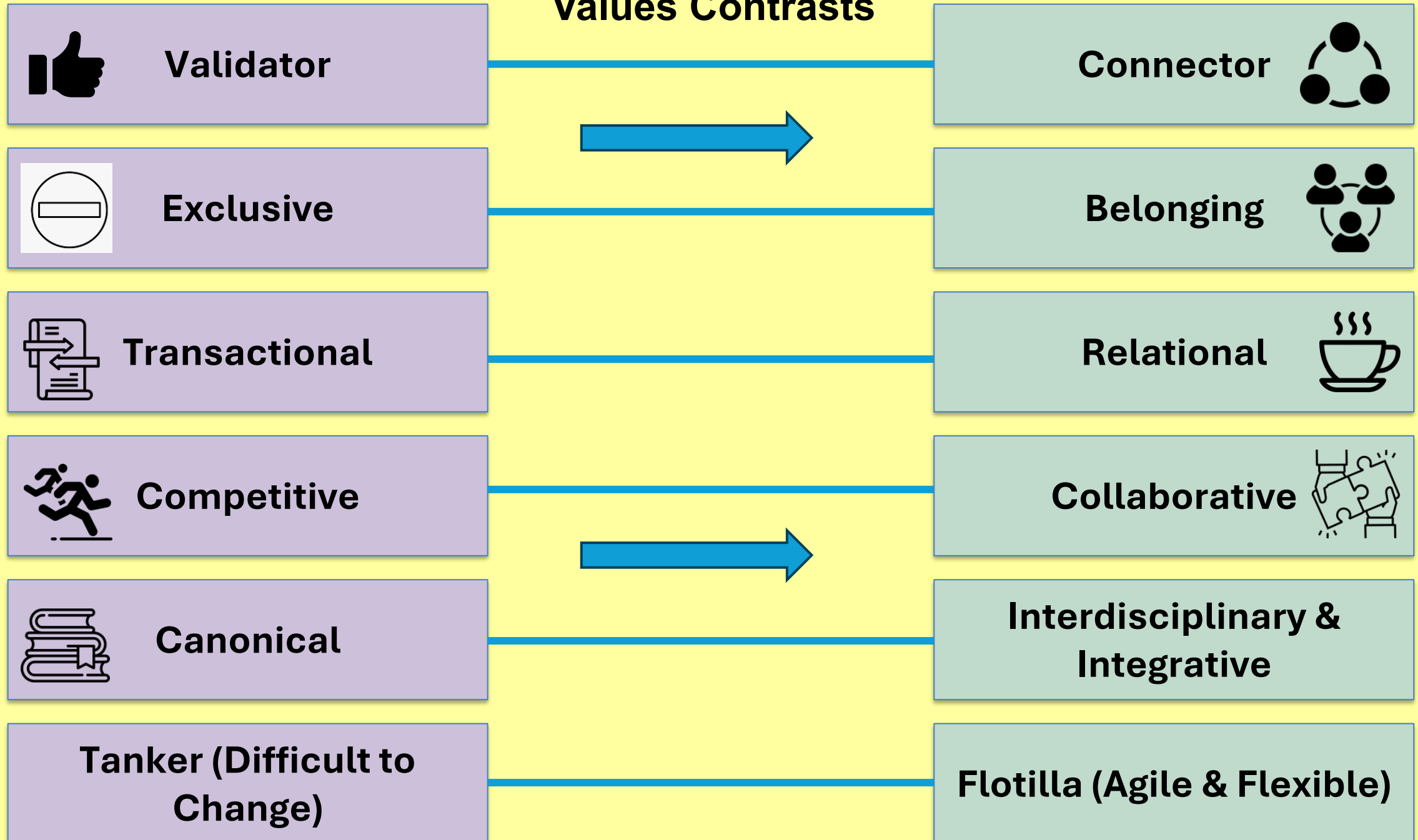
Research, teaching and
learning re-imagined



What a university is and
what it stands for



Values Contrasts



H1 and H3 summary narrative: H1 current challenges

A transactional, rigid and exclusionary HE sector that perpetuates hierarchies and fundamentally under-values engagement

HE lacks an inspiring shared vision and a clear sense of societal purpose and accountability. It operates within a fragmented educational system that disconnects school, further education and lifelong learning and often fails to connect learners' experiences or aspirations.

Societal, Public and Community Engagement is fundamentally under-valued and under-resourced. Short-termism and rigid funding criteria limit project development and enduring partnerships, and hamper community power and voice. Academic success, funding and career progression are shaped by narrow academic criteria rather than meaningful societal contribution. These issues contribute to absent, broken and extractive relationships with communities.

HE perpetuates historic legacies of inequality, hierarchy and exclusion. Elitist models dominate, with a narrow view of what counts as valid knowledge. Investments in addressing systemic racism, ableism and exclusion have not led to meaningful change. Perceptions of the Oxbridge model or Russell Group as the gold standard overshadows the contributions other universities.

Financially, HEIs are trapped in unsustainable, marketised funding models, competing for students and resources rather than collaborating for the public good. Institutions are often seen as profit-driven, rather than student- and community-centred.

HEI processes are bureaucratic, inefficient, siloed and rigid, with high risk aversion. Systems are complex and unfit for purpose, with reactive rather than proactive HE leadership. Disconnection between departments, disciplines, and professional services wastes time and talent.

Working in the HE sector is often stressful, unhealthy and precarious. Casual contracts, overwork, exclusionary practices, and high turnover erode stability and prevent the building of trust and collaboration. The creativity and commitment of many staff remain under-used and under-supported.

H1 and H3 summary narrative: H3 envisioned future

A relational, agile and fully engaged HE sector that enables belonging for all and diverse forms of learning

Societal Engagement and a strong public purpose are central to HE culture, with equitable power-sharing across university partnerships and collaborations. Engagement is embedded in teaching, learning, research, and career progression with well-supported engagement roles. Universities contribute to a National Knowledge Service that addresses real-world needs and creates a sense of pride in what universities do.

HE is porous, inclusive and integrated within local places and communities, with open, vibrant spaces (online and in-person) that foster connection. Accessible and adaptable for all abilities, backgrounds and life stages resulting in a diverse student and staff body. Education is holistic and reconnects learners' heads, hearts and hands.

Knowledge-building and academic practice is approached in a much more open, collaborative and inclusive way. All knowledge is open-access and accepted in all its diverse forms. People utilise AI in ethical and appropriate ways, and there is time and space for deep collective thinking, imagination, curiosity and learning. Collaboration across disciplines, services, skills, faculties, departments, universities, and external organisations is the norm. Research is sustainably resourced, with HE independent from big business and harmful industries, and guided by public good principles.

HEIs are agile, proactive, adaptive and adventurous, with a more experimental approach that learns from mistakes, and is addressing HE's historical legacies of exclusion and its impacts.

The HE sector is now a healthy place to work for and with that welcomes diversity, cares for people's wellbeing and values their strengths. Policies and services to support access (e.g. childcare, disabled student support) are strongly integrated into HE, and everyone in the sector is recognised as a leader in their own right.

This is enabled by a radical revision of HE's funding and resourcing model, enabling long-term investment in universities to enable sustained work with communities. Funders play a convening role, ensuring societal needs contribute to decision-making, and valuing all those who contribute to knowledge creation and use.

Phase 3: Five ‘Domains of Action’ to galvanise systems change

Action domain	System Function	Core Contribution to System Change
Transformational inclusion	Who	Belonging for all – ensures everyone feels a part of HE, embedding equity and belonging across all domains.
Places and spaces open to all	Where	Grounds universities in place-based engagement, ensuring relevance and responsiveness to local communities.
Stewarding the system	How	Ecosystem enablers of new ways of working through funding, policy, and infrastructure alignment.
Creating Living Knowledge	What	Reimagines the core purpose of HE as creating knowledge with and for society.
Building a Movement	Working Together	Mobilises actors across the system to align efforts and catalyse collective change



Phase 3

- Refine the domains of action (September – October 2025)
- 5th November event in London.
- Domain of action working groups set up (December 2025)
- Domain of action working groups initial planning (January – March 2026)
- The Engaged Futures action plan will be launched at the Engage Summit, on 29th – 30th April 2026
- DoA working groups continue; promotions campaign to raise awareness and stimulate action

We need your help...

We invite you to complete our short survey which invites you to:

- Share your responses to the Phase 2 outputs
- Share your interest in participating in our next event in London on the 5th November
- Share your thoughts on the current Domains of action, and your interest in getting involved in the Domains of Action working groups, starting later this year