Public and Community Engagement and Knowledge Exchange

NCCPE briefing paper
KEF Review event, June 21st 2022
Thanks you for your interest in attending the discussion event on 21st June, to discuss the role of Public and Community Engagement (P&CE) within future Knowledge Exchange (KE) funding policy. The NCCPE was invited to convene the discussion as part of Research England’s review of Knowledge Exchange. Full details of the review can be found here. A number of other events are taking place, targeting different KE communities (including business, policy and arts and culture).

Members from the Research England KE team will join us when we meet. They have framed the purpose of the stakeholder meetings as follows:

The first stage of the KE review is an opportunity to listen to a wide range of views and stakeholders and hence we do not wish to constrain the avenues of discussion through a set of precisely designed questions that are suitable for a formal written consultation. We will consult, if appropriate, on specific changes we propose to make during the second stage of the KE Review.

This briefing paper provides you with some background to the review, and identifies the key discussion points which we intend to explore when we meet. We have also included a summary of the relevant existing policy frameworks relevant to Public and Community Engagement.

Research England have posed 28 questions which they are keen to open up for discussion. We have reviewed these, and prioritised those questions where we think there are important P&CE angles to explore. We have clustered these questions into five topics for discussion when we meet. These topics, and the P&CE ‘angles’ upon them, are listed in the table on the next slide.

You can review all 28 questions in this Padlet (an online whiteboard). You can also see how we then clustered the questions into discussion topics on this second Padlet.

This briefing paper provides a summary of each topic, and the underpinning questions, to help you prepare for the discussion.
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<td>• How can we ensure that KE policy and funding incentivises breadth and diversity of approaches to P&amp;CE, and avoids creating a ‘monoculture’?</td>
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Public engagement is ‘plumbed’ into Knowledge Exchange funding policy in a variety of ways.

What is Knowledge Exchange?
Research England’s high level description of KE is: “Universities and other higher education institutions exchanging knowledge with the wider world, in a way that contributes to society and the economy”.

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 93 (4) also provides a definition of knowledge exchange which is used in the Act to describe the powers of UKRI and RE:

“For the purposes of this Part, “knowledge exchange”, in relation to science, technology, humanities or new ideas, means a process or other activity by which knowledge is exchanged where — (a) the knowledge is in, or in connection with, science, technology, humanities or new ideas (as the case may be), and (b) the exchange contributes, or is likely to contribute, (whether directly or indirectly) to an economic or social benefit in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.”

What is the place of Public and Community Engagement?
The diagram on the right summarises how Research England (RE) have defined the scope of Knowledge Exchange. Public and Community Engagement is identified as one of the 7 key domains of activity.
Key KE policy instruments and frameworks

The following are the key instruments and frameworks currently deployed by Research England to allocate funding for Knowledge Exchange. A separate background paper provides more detail of each, and of the place of public engagement within them.

**Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF)**

This is the main funding source for KE (£250M per annum currently). The fund is allocated by formula to all eligible providers. Public and Community Engagement is one of seven infrastructure categories detailed in the guidance.

**Additional strategic funding**

In 2021 Research England made available an additional £38m to support KE activity to strengthen university capacity and maximise opportunities post Covid-19 pandemic. The funding sought to strengthen existing and new partnerships through additional KE collaboration funding and KE funding for new providers.

**The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)**

The first iteration of the KEF was published in March 2021. It includes Public and Community Engagement as one of 7 ‘perspectives’ on knowledge exchange. While 5 of these perspectives are assessed using existing metrics (for instance research commercialisation income), the lack of robust available metrics for P&CE led to the decision to invite HEIs to self-assess their performance, and provide a narrative account of their activity.

**Student engagement in KE**

Research England and the Office for Students take a joint interest in encouraging HEIs to provide opportunities for students to engage in Knowledge Exchange. A joint programme was launched in 2019. in additional to the joint funding programme, RE and OfS work together to deliver the HEIF programme. DfE make a contribution to HEIF and their priorities are reflected in the guidance Research England receive, and OfS contributes to the management of the programme.

**The Concordat for the Advancement of Knowledge Exchange in HE**

The KE Concordat is a sector led initiative to support the HE sector to enhance their KE activity. It is based around 8 principles and an action planning process, with a team of evaluators working to provide feedback on these plans. The first iteration has just been completed and an evaluation is due to be published shortly.

**Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS)**

The HEBCI survey is not in the scope of the review, as a separate review is underway (led by HESA), but is an important part of the jigsaw. The annual survey collects financial and output data related to knowledge exchange, and has been running since 1999. The information currently collected includes the provision of lectures, exhibitions and other cultural activities. Research England also uses elements of the data to inform the allocation of HEIF.
Discussion points

We list below the key discussion points that we will explore when we meet.
When we meet we will begin by locating public engagement in the broad KE landscape. We will explore:

- Is P&CE intelligently framed and its contribution to KE clearly articulated in current KE policy?
- We will also explore the scope of P&CE, and consider the extent to which P&CE contributes to place and levelling up agendas, and the relationship between P&CE and Student engagement in KE.

Background information
The next 3 slides provide more background about how P&CE is framed in KE policy, and how HEIs define the scope of their activity in this area.

The relevant review questions
14. Is there a common understanding of how we define knowledge exchange? What should or should not be included in the definition?
16. Where – in the areas below - could we focus more to deliver better current Government priorities?
   a. Improving research commercialisation and working with business: in recent years, we have taken particular action to address Government priorities in this area. What more could we do to help both improve and demonstrate success?
   b. Place and levelling up.
   c. Student benefits – both through involving students in KE, and in helping their development.
17. Are our approaches appropriately aligned with other key drivers of success in KE? Including within RE, across UKRI, across the UK and with local bodies, such as with:
   a. Research funding and policy.
   b. Student/teaching related.
   c. Place and levelling up agendas.
Background information

How is P&CE defined in KE policy?

P&CE is defined as follows in KE policy:

*In HEIF, as one of 7 infrastructure categories*

Supporting the community & public engagement
E.g. Supporting public engagement in research (PER) including pilot initiatives to public engagement; Developing community and social capital including hosting participative community projects, programmes and events, working with at-risk social groups; Supporting student and staff volunteering such as voluntary services, community projects, study or work abroad programmes and young person mentoring; Supporting knowledge diffusion including public lectures, exhibitions or museum education (noting overlap with specific knowledge sharing and diffusion category); Supporting social cohesion such as hosting information hubs or working with local charities.

*In the KEF, as one of 7 Perspectives on KE*

Public and Community Engagement
Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public and communities. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit.

How do HEIs explain the scope of their P&CE activity?

The NCCPE recently completed a review of the P&CE narratives submitted to the KEF in 2021. We identified four broad types of approach, described below. Three of the approaches were focused on different approaches to engaging people with knowledge – from Sharing Knowledge (e.g., open days) to Building Knowledge Together (e.g., participatory research). The fourth approach was not focused on knowledge building, but on what we called ‘being a good neighbour’, for instance, providing access to facilities.
Public engagement as a discrete activity vs. public engagement as a cross-cutting, embedded approach to knowledge creation

When we meet we are keen to explore the value of continuing to define P&CE as a discrete and self-contained set of activities.

An alternative framing of P&CE is as a cross-cutting approach to knowledge creation, with a contribution to make to all areas of KE.

The diagram on this slide outlines how the contribution of PE to other KEF perspectives might be described.

<table>
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<th>KEF Perspective</th>
<th>Contribution of Public and Community Engagement</th>
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| Research partnerships                  | Enhancing public participation in research...  
|                                        | • By supporting the public to engage with and get involved in research, for a variety of purposes             |
| Working with business                  | Promoting social innovation...  
|                                        | • By actively involving customers, consumers and audiences in the development of new products and services  
|                                        | • Development of social enterprises and social entrepreneurship                                               |
| Working with the public and third sector| Strengthening the public sphere...  
|                                        | • By involving service users in the enhancement of public services (e.g. PPI)  
|                                        | • Animating citizen engagement with arts and culture                                                             |
| Skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship | Increasing human and social capital...  
|                                        | • By investing in community skills development and lifelong learning  
|                                        | • ‘Engaged learning’ to develop graduates’ awareness of and interaction with communities                          |
| IP and commercialisation               | Enhancing open innovation...  
|                                        | • Encouraging open source products and platforms  
|                                        | • Supporting open innovation processes                                                                       |
| Local growth and regeneration          | Place making and civic responsibility...  
|                                        | • By engaging with vulnerable or disadvantaged communities  
|                                        | • By opening up facilities for community use                                                                      |
| Public & Community Engagement          | Taking a strategic approach to maximising public benefit arising from KE  
|                                        | • By creating a KE environment that maximises high quality public and community engagement activity               |

How useful is this approach?
Public, community and civic engagement – all part of the same family?

The KEF ‘yokes together’ Public and Community Engagement. In our thematic review, we were interested to see how HEIs framed their activity and the terminology they used.

We noted that the importance of connecting with publics and communities is now acting as a ‘big idea’ to describe the overarching ambition of many HEIs, often linked to a growing focus on ‘place’ and on their civic role.

The invitation to submit P&CE narratives has allowed HEIs to articulate their distinctive approaches to delivering on this ambition. It has also helped to highlight that there are some interesting differences in how HEIs approach ‘Public’ and ‘Community’ engagement, and two rather different orientations and approaches to engaging with citizens.

The evidence from the KEF suggests that we are currently witnessing a very productive coming together and alignment of these different traditions. It also reveals some interesting ‘blurring of boundaries’ as HEIs work out how best to frame and focus their Public and Community Engagement, and some challenges around defining the scope of P&CE.

Public engagement tends to be interpreted by the sector as activity to increase and enhance the interaction between researchers and wider society. As such, it is a relatively recent area of policy interest, and relatively narrow in its focus. It has been particularly prevalent in research intensive universities due to the strong incentives offered by research funders over the last 10 years. The NCCPE’s work has been closely associated with this area. We offer an example of this framing below:

‘Cranfield University is a specialist institution which combines a deep understanding of technology, entrepreneurship and leadership training. Cranfield actively champions public engagement with STEM subjects by using its facilities, knowledge and training’.

Community engagement speaks to a broader set of policy objectives, practices and goals, with a longer history and perhaps with greater overlap with how other sectors have sought to address the needs and interests of citizens and communities. The approach might be characterised as prioritising place-based and community-led or informed policies and practices. The NCCPE has also sought to support developments in this arena.

This community-focused orientation has gained significant traction recently with the rise of the Civic Agenda, which we have seen featuring extensively in the KEF narratives. Many HEIs incorporated community engagement into their approach to Local Growth and Regeneration. For example:

‘Coventry University Group (CUG) has a distinguished history working locally, nationally and internationally to embed collaboration and maximise results with and for partners. [ ]. Local growth and community engagement are focused on the core needs of local citizens: - health inequalities, unemployment and developing holistic and targeted community support for longer term societal advancement and inclusive growth’.
Discussion point 2: Making funding for P&CE work as hard as possible to realise results

We will explore

- Do the current ways that KE funding is awarded enable the potential of P&CE to be realised?
- How could a better integrated and coherent funding regime for P&CE be achieved?

Background information

The diagram on the next slide is an attempt to capture the different sources of funding for KE / impact / external engagement. It is clearly a complex landscape, and we are interested in your views of what features of it are working well, and where there is room for improvement.

The relevant review questions

37. Is the scope of what we fund through HEIF currently appropriate?
18. How does RE KE funding interact effectively with other sources of KE funding, e.g. from across UKRI and the wider research and innovation system? How does RE KE funding add value to HEPs own investments?
21. What value is there in providing projects funding in addition to the HEIF formula? Would more or less project funding be valuable, and focussed on what objectives?
15. What KE activities should public funding support – and what are responsibilities of others, for example, businesses and other users? What legal and regulatory and other factors are relevant? How do we ensure that HEP KE activities are sustainable?
Mapping the HE KE funding landscape

A greatly simplified representation of the sources of funding and accountability mechanisms

Key
- Sources of funding
- Monitoring and accountability & sources of good practice

Research Quality
- Research quality
- Research environment

REF
- QR income
  - REF return
  - Concordats
- Impact Acceleration Accounts
- KTPs etc

Knowledge Exchange
- KE outcomes
- KE environment

KEF
- HEIF funding
  - KE Concordat
  - HEBCIS

Students in KE

Teaching Quality
- Teaching quality
- Learning environment

TEF
- Provider statement

Impact Acceleration Accounts
Discussion point 3: The measurement & accountability challenge for P&CE

We will explore

- How can we ensure that the measures and approaches used to monitor and evaluate P&CE are as effective and useful as possible?
- How can we encourage a greater role of partners and collaborators outside HE?

Background information
The next slide summarises the key ways in which P&CE is currently monitored through various KE policy instruments.

The relevant review questions

20. How should we measure and demonstrate success in KE?
19. Metrics are valuable because they can be used in a range of different ways (for example in a formula, the KEF and in spending review evidence) and at institutional and sector levels and hence may be lower burden than, for example, narratives, if well specified. Narratives can provide increased detail and nuance but have limited use particularly for sector wide evidence. Have we got the right balance of metrics and narratives in our approach?
22. KE is intended to deliver external (to HEP) economic and societal benefits. How could we strengthen the voice and influence of economic and societal beneficiaries and stakeholders in our KE policies and approaches?
Background information – monitoring & evaluating P&CE

The following are the key instruments and frameworks currently deployed by Research England to allocate funding for Knowledge Exchange. A separate background paper provides more detail of each, and of the place of public engagement within them.

**Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF)**

This is the main funding source for KE (£250M per annum currently). The fund is allocated by formula to all eligible providers. Public and Community Engagement is one of seven infrastructure categories detailed in the guidance. Institutions in receipt of an HEIF allocation are required to provide an annual monitoring statement to Research England each winter, breaking down their spend in each of the infrastructure categories and updating on their progress against their strategic objectives.

**The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)**

Public and Community Engagement is included as one of 7 ‘perspectives’ on knowledge exchange. HEIs are expected to self-assess their performance, and to provide a narrative account of their activity. The narrative template is limited to 2000 words, and has five headings: Strategy, Support, Activity, Results and Learning and Acting on Results.

The self assessment scores are used to rank HEIs alongside other HEIs in their cluster in the KEF dashboards (see an example on the right).

**The Concordat for the Advancement of Knowledge Exchange in HE**

The KE Concordat is a sector led initiative to support the HE sector to enhance their KE activity. It is based around 8 cross-cutting principles and an action planning process, with a team of evaluators working to provide feedback on these plans. Many HEIs used their KEF narratives and self-assessment scores to inform their Concordat action planning, to specify ways in which they planned to enhance their support for P&CE.

**Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS)**

The HEBCI survey is not in the scope of the review, as a separate review is underway (led by HESA). Currently, data is collected about Social, Community and Cultural Engagement with HEIs asked to return information about lectures, exhibitions and other cultural activities. They are asked to specify if the events or changeable or free, and to provide information about the academic staff days invested in these activities, and details of the number of attendees.
Discussion point 4: How P&CE can help to foreground practical action to address EDI

We will explore

• What steps could we take to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in KE?
• How can P&CE help the sector to address this?

Background information

The NCCPE’s review of the 2021 KEF P&CE narratives revealed a very dynamic and diverse set of approaches to P&CE. We highlighted a concern that the KEF framework might overly constrain the scope of that activity, by imposing too narrow a model of what excellence could and should look like (for instance, by prioritising Public Engagement with Research over more community-led approaches to knowledge creation).

We are keen to open this up for discussion, and also to ensure that we can feed in our collective learning about how to improve EDI. We argued in our recent response to the Future Research Assessment consultation that much more account should be taken of EDI in impact. We summarise our key arguments about this on the next slide.

The relevant review questions

23. What steps could we take to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in KE?
We want to highlight significant issues with how the REF treats EDI in relation to the assessment of impact and argue that major changes are required to address this, in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty which puts the onus on organisations to positively promote equality, not just avoid discrimination.

The Duty sets out that organisations need to demonstrate that they are thinking about how they can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these issues to be kept under review. Other funders have embedded these requirements, for instance, Arts Council England require their National Portfolio Organisations to develop Equality Action Plans. These action plans encompass both workforce development (‘internal’ policies and processes) and the external engagement / programming / partnership work that the organisation delivers. Inclusion has been a focus for the Heritage Community Fund for many years and in 2019 they adopted a mandatory inclusion outcome for grants and an updated Workforce Equality Statement.

This area requires urgent and systematic review. We note:

- REF Impact guidance provides no explicit guidance or expectations about EDI in relation to the beneficiaries of research, or its impact outside academia, although the definition of ‘reach’ invites information about the diversity of beneficiaries
- The KEF captures no intelligence about EDI in relation to the outcomes achieved or the communities involved and benefiting
- The KE Concordat makes passing reference to EDI, but only in very generic terms
- HEIF strategies do not require any focus on EDI in relation to the beneficiaries of KE or the partnerships that will be entered into
- UKRI’s tool to collect data about the outputs, outcomes and impacts of research, Research Fish, gathers no data about the EDI characteristics of beneficiaries or partners

Background information

The extract below is from the NCCPE’s response to the Future Research Assessment Programme consultation, submitted in May 2022. In it we identify significant gaps in how EDI is currently factored into the assessment of research impact and knowledge exchange.

We will be interested to explore how far you agree with the challenges we have posed, and what you think might be realistic medium and long term goals to address the gaps we have identified:
Discussion point 5: Quality Improvement and Enhancement - Incentivising excellence in P&CE

We will explore

• Do KE policy and the key KE policy / funding instruments encourage innovation and excellence in P&CE, in particular the KEF and KEC?
• Where are there ‘gaps’ or opportunities to improve the current arrangements to support quality enhancement in P&CE?
• How can we ensure that KE policy and funding incentivises breadth and diversity of approaches to P&CE, and avoids creating a ‘monoculture’?

The relevant review questions
26. How do we ensure/enable that HEPs continue to innovate in their KE activities?
33. The sector-led KE Concordat is still in a pilot phase (with a development year recently completed), but is it showing promise to provide enhanced assurance of the HE sector’s commitment to continuous improvement in KE? What are its strengths – and weaknesses – so far?
30. What purposes does KEF fulfil well? What purposes could it fulfil well - and what steps would be needed to develop the KEF to meet those purposes?
35. Could synergies and alignments between the KEF and the KE Concordat be improved?
24. We need to balance delivering Government priorities for KE with working with the grain of the specific/unique characteristics of HEPs that determine what they can optimally achieve. Do we currently strike that balance well?
25. What criteria could we apply to inform the balance between maximising measurable impact with sustaining a reasonable breadth and diversity of KE contributions – by HEPs, partners, places?
27. Do we incentivise collaboration between HEPs sufficiently? What other approaches could we use?

Background information
The next 2 slides lists the key organising principles of the KE Concordat and the KEF, and suggests how they align.
### 1. Mission
Knowledge exchange is a recognised part of the overall institutional strategy.

### 2. Policies and processes
We have clear policies on types of KE that we undertake and work with staff, students, collaborators and beneficiaries.

### 3. Engagement
We build effective relationships by having clear routes to access information and expertise in the university.

### 4. Working transparently and ethically
We make sure that our partners and beneficiaries understand the ethical and charitable regulatory environments in which our institution operates, including a commitment to inclusivity and equality, and we take steps to maximise the benefit to them within that context.

### 5. Capacity building
We ensure that our staff and students are developed and trained appropriately to understand and undertake successful KE.

### 6. Recognition and rewards
We recognise and reward the achievements of staff and students who perform high quality KE activities.

### 7. Continuous improvement
We proactively strive to share best practice with our peers and have established processes for learning from this.

### 8. Evaluating success
We undertake regular institutional and collective monitoring and review of our strengthening KE performance so that KE becomes more effective.

### Comparing the KEC and KEF
This slide places the 8 KE Concordat principles alongside the 5 Aspects in the KEF P&CE perspective.

### KEF – 5 Public & Community Engagement Aspects

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<th>ASPECT</th>
<th>Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Developing your strategy Information on your existing strategy, planning process and allocation of resources, including how you identified relevant public and community groups and their needs, and facilitated their ability to engage with the institution, as a means to help understand intended achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Practical support to deliver your strategy Provide information about the practical support you have put in place to support your public and community engagement, and recognise the work appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Delivering your strategy: activities Provide information on the focus of your approach and describe examples of the activity delivered. How do you know activities have met the identified needs of public and community groups? Please focus on the last three years of activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results and learning</td>
<td>Evidencing success Describe the outcomes and/or impacts of your activities. How have you evaluated these individual activities to ensure you understand whether they have addressed your strategic objectives – and intended achievements for public and community? To what extent have you learnt from your approach and applied this to future activity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting on results</td>
<td>Communicating and acting on the results How has the institution acted on the outcomes of activities or programmes to ensure it is meeting the wider strategic aims; to inform the development of this strategic approach; and to continuously improve outcomes and impacts for public and communities? To what extent have the results of the work been shared with the communities involved, internally in the institution, and externally?</td>
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The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) is internationally recognised for its work supporting and inspiring universities to engage with the public.

We work to change perspectives, promote innovation and nurture and celebrate excellence. We champion meaningful engagement that makes a real and valued difference to people’s lives.

The NCCPE is supported by the UK Higher Education Councils, UKRI and Wellcome and has been hosted by the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England since it was established in 2008.