Unlocking the Potential of Civic Collaboration:
A review of research-policy engagement between the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council

WEBINAR 10th DECEMBER 2020
Current context

- The imperative to collaborate is stronger than ever.
- Local government needs robust evidence on which to make policy decisions and shape services in challenging circumstances.
- The impact agenda and the Research Excellence Framework.
- Covid-19, Brexit and devolution are prompting dramatic changes.

We’ve got no choice but to collaborate... whether it’s health, climate, economy, citizenship... we need to understand the best evidence in terms of the recovery plan from Covid... how you protect communities and shape the economy for the future. The connections will be ever more important.

Interviewee #26/LCC
An impressive record

• **118** research collaboration projects since 2015
• **£38m+** associated external funding
• **45** projects are currently live
• Projects very in size and type
• Numerous topics covered include: child poverty; trees; parks; flood alleviation; adult care; health inequality, low carbon economy....
Aims and methods

Aims:
- Gauge the nature and extent of existing research collaboration.
- Understand what enables and inhibits this.
- Propose measures for accelerating and enhancing research collaboration.

Mixed-methods approach to data collection:
- A mapping exercise;
- An on-line survey involving 147 academics and council officers;
- Interviews with 33 key professionals
## Project Timeline

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- **Initiation**: April – June 2020
- **Activation**: July – Sept 2020
- **Consolidation**: Oct – Dec 2020
- **Expansion**: Jan – June 2021

**Reference Group Meetings**

**Priorities Workshops**

**Report Published**
Benefits of collaboration identified by survey respondents (n=147)

- Looking at things in a different way
- Co-producing better solutions
- Access to knowledge to inform policy
- Driving innovation
- Access to data analysis skills
- Demonstrating Impact
- Access to further data
- Access to resources/funds
- Learning from best practice
- Meeting commitments for the city
- Access to broader range of participants
Relationships between University Schools/Institutes and Council Services/Functions
Building on success

- There is a wealth of experience to build upon with effective collaborations addressing wide-ranging issues.

- For example, clusters of activity in climate change and culture show what can be achieved.

- The survey and interviews helped identify ‘what works’ for research collaboration and where obstacles lie, while highlighting rich potential for further partnerships.
Enablers identified by survey respondents (n=147)

- **Pre-existing Relationships**: 73.26%
- **Closely Aligned Objectives**: 53.49%
- **Resources in Kind**: 27.91%
- **External Funding**: 26.74%
- **Internal Funding**: 26.74%
- **Other (Please Specify)**: 16.28%
- **Training**: 2.33%
Understanding the barriers

• Navigation and absence of strategic co-ordination were significant barriers

• 75% of survey respondents who had not collaborated previously (n=59) cited ‘not knowing who to contact’ as a barrier

• ‘Lack of time’ was the principal barrier cited by 47% respondents who have worked collaboratively (n=88)

• Differences in priorities, cultures, timescales among academics and council officers were highlighted during the survey and interviews

• Excessive bureaucracy, lack of resources and data sharing were common issues
Supporting and sustaining collaboration

*The only way you increase understanding is ultimately by bringing people together... to work through shared strategic priorities.*

Interviewee#26/LCC

*Both parties need to be prepared to have difficult conversations when necessary if collaboration is to be meaningful.*

Interviewee#6/UoL

*Some sort of formal agreement where there's set procedures...might speed up data sharing.*

Interviewee#26/UoL
Recommendations

Recommendations are based on findings from the Review:

- Develop a joint research-policy collaboration strategy
- Appoint collaboration ‘champions’ in both organisations
- Co-design research priorities
- Organisational infrastructure to support research-policy collaborations
- Optimise data analysis
- Foster inter-organisational relations
- Draw on existing and new resources for seedcorn funding
- Fully embed impact and engagement among academic staff
- Consider a ‘civic collaboration hub’
- Expand living lab opportunities on the campus and in the city
- Build research clauses into council procurement
Report

• The report has received widespread support

• Leaders from the University and Council are committed to implementing the Recommendations and have developed an Action Plan

• The Full Report and Summary are available at: https://lssi.leeds.ac.uk/partnerships/review-of-collaborative-working/
Next steps

- A joint Reference Group has been set up with senior representation from both organisations

- An Action Plan has been developed to take forward the Recommendations on a phased basis

- Initial actions include: identifying shared priorities for co-produced research; appointment of collaboration champions; joint training events; and a working group on data sharing

- Principles for fostering bi-lateral research collaboration are readily applicable to working with a broader range of partners from all sectors in the city region
Resources to support civic research engagement are available within the University of Leeds from:

• **ESRC Impact Acceleration Account** managed by LSSI – contact Hannah Crow: h.e.crow@leeds.ac.uk
  - [https://lssi.leeds.ac.uk/esrc-iaa/](https://lssi.leeds.ac.uk/esrc-iaa/)

• **Other Translational Research Funding** managed by Research & Innovation Service (RIS) – contact Steph Morris: s.morris2@leeds.ac.uk
  - [https://ris.leeds.ac.uk/funding-opportunities/innovation-funding/translational-funding/](https://ris.leeds.ac.uk/funding-opportunities/innovation-funding/translational-funding/)

• **Policy Leeds** – contact Juliet Jopson: s.j.jopson@leeds.ac.uk
  - [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/130600/policy_leeds](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/130600/policy_leeds)
Thanks to

• Everybody at the University and the Council who took part in the survey, interviews and helped with the mapping

• Members of the Collaboration Review Reference Group

• The Review was supported by funding from Research England, the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account and LSSI
The future of civic collaboration depends on the appetite and willingness of colleagues to engage in research partnerships and avail themselves of the opportunities afforded to do so.

We welcome your feedback, questions and comments.