Summary Report

Priorities for research-policy collaboration

CONTEXT

An analysis of information gathered during the Shared Research-Policy Priorities Workshops held on 14th and 15th December 2020

CREATED FOR

Leeds City Council and the University of Leeds

Inside Your Summary Report

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Project Context and Workshop Methods

Introduction

Welcome to this summary of workshops that brought academics from the University of Leeds and officers from Leeds City Council together to discuss priorities for research-policy collaboration. The workshops provided an initial step in taking forward recommendations arising from the Review of Research-Policy Collaboration, which was carried out by Leeds Social Sciences Institute (LSSI).

Findings the Review are discussed in LSSI's report *Unlocking the Potential of Civic Collaboration* and associated video, which participants were asked to familiarise themselves with. The Review highlighted an impressive record of inter-organisational projects that are benefitting the city and a strong appetite for further collaborations. It also identified factors that enable and inhibit research-policy partnerships and proposed a series of recommendations for accelerating and enhancing joint working in future.

A Reference Group of senior representatives from the University and the Council is committed to taking forward the recommendations on a phased basis. Establishing shared priorities for co-produced research is a key aspect of the recommendations. Reference Group members are keen to elicit the views of researchers and local government professionals in formulating those inter-organisational priorities. Two workshops were organised as part of this process. The University and the Council have a proud history of partnerships and collaboration is more important than ever. This report will be used to help inform actions to support future research-policy projects.

Project Context	Themes & Insights	Next Steps

The Workshops

Overlap Associates were commissioned to deliver independent facilitation of the workshops and capture themes that emerged most prominently. While the virtual environment in which we are all currently working cannot replace face-to-face communications, a spirit of enthusiasm and goodwill was evident at these on-line events. There was strong consensus among professionals from the two institutions on the most urgent challenges facing the city and areas in which collaborative research can be most valuable.

Attendees: The repeat workshops saw academics and council officers from a broad range of faculties and departments come together and engage in rich discussions. On the 14th December, 30 participants attended, and, on the 15th December, we welcomed 27 participants to the discussion.

The aims of these session were:
- To bring professionals from the two organizations together to discuss what shared priorities might be around the three pillars of Leeds City Council's Best Council Plan: Health and well-being; Inclusive growth; and Climate change.
- To provide an opportunity for blue sky thinking as to what professionals may collaborate on
- Engaging with professionals from both organisations who are looking to enhance research/policy coordination
- Begin to identify common themes for future projects across research and policy agendas

Project Context   Themes & Insights   Next Steps

Framing Discussion Insights

Facilitators guided consensus-based conversations among participants, who discussed future aspirations for the city while exploring contextual realities, opportunities and contractions. Two identical sessions were delivered to increase the availability for participants. Notes from the workshops were transcribed onto 'Miro boards' by facilitators in real time.

Needs & Challenges

- Small groups responded to focus questions *"What are the societal needs facing cities like Leeds?"* and *"What are the challenges in meeting those needs?"*.
- Insights framed as "How might we…" as starting points for exploration

Research & Policy Priorities

- Professionals worked together in small groups organised broadly around the City Council's three pillars of Health and Well-being, Inclusive Growth, and Climate Change while allowing scope for cross-cutting themes to emerge.
- Small groups responded to focus questions *"What are the key Priorities for research-policy collaboration?"*

What does success look like in 2030?

- Insights from small groups were fed into larger group discussions on joint priorities for research-policy collaborations to benefit the city. Insights into shared principles and approaches on which future research-policies should be founded, which emerged during small group conversations, were also discussed.

Analysing the Information

Step #1

Notes from both days were combined, clustered by affinity, and clusters were given titles. These titles are findings.

Step #2

Next, findings are clustered by affinity and given titles. These titles are themes.

Step #3

Finally, themes are clustered using context and networked thinking. Clusters are again titled. These titles are our insights.

Themes and Insights

Health & Well-Being
Needs & Challenges

Areas of need or challenges emerging from discussions

- ***How might we*** improve equality of access and opportunity to employment, education, and basic needs?

- ***How might we*** understand and mitigate the impacts of health inequality across different demographic groups?

- ***How might we*** facilitate social and civic engagement of Leeds citizens?

- ***How might we*** preserve and build "cultural capital" and cultural institutions?

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Health & Well-Being
Research & Policy Priorities

Priorities emerging from discussions

- Improve health in communities by changing embedded behaviours and utilizing digital tools

- Better leverage data to foresee needs and direct resources

- Increase individuals' commitment to health through citizen empowerment and co-production

- Investigate the effects of enduring versus emerging health and social care challenges

- Improve and maintain engagement with trauma-based support

Project Context | Themes & Insights | Next Steps

"

"We started to think about factors that influence behaviour change. If we could support communities think about what works best for them, we could tackle a lot of these health and wellbeing challenges."

Workshop Participant

Project Context   Themes & Insights   Next Steps

Needs & Challenges
Health & Well Being

Affinity Cluster

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops

Research & Policy Priorities
Health & Well-Being

Themes and Insights

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops

Inclusive Growth
Needs & Challenges

Areas of need or challenges emerging from discussions

- ***How might we*** reduce negative social behaviour and perceptions and build social cohesion?

- ***How might we*** reduce poverty, barriers to basic needs, and ensure no one is left behind?

- ***How might we*** increase public engagement and sense of ownership?

- ***How might we*** intentionally resource the public sector and infrastructure to spur economic, social, and cultural growth?

Project Context | Themes & Insights | Next Steps

Inclusive Growth
Research & Policy Priorities

Priorities emerging from discussions

- Establish metrics / baseline measurements to better understand causes, control impacts, and inform evidence based policy

- Establishing common language and shared definitions to provide clarity between researchers, policy professionals and citizens

- Examine current trends and leveraging that knowledge to plan for the future

- Solidify the roles of anchor institutions

- Ensure stakeholder engagement and research is inclusive

Project Context | Themes & Insights | Next Steps

"

"We actually have a broadening level of inequality. We are going the wrong way really."

Workshop Participant

Project Context | **Themes & Insights** | Next Steps

Needs & Challenges
Inclusive Growth

Affinity Cluster

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops

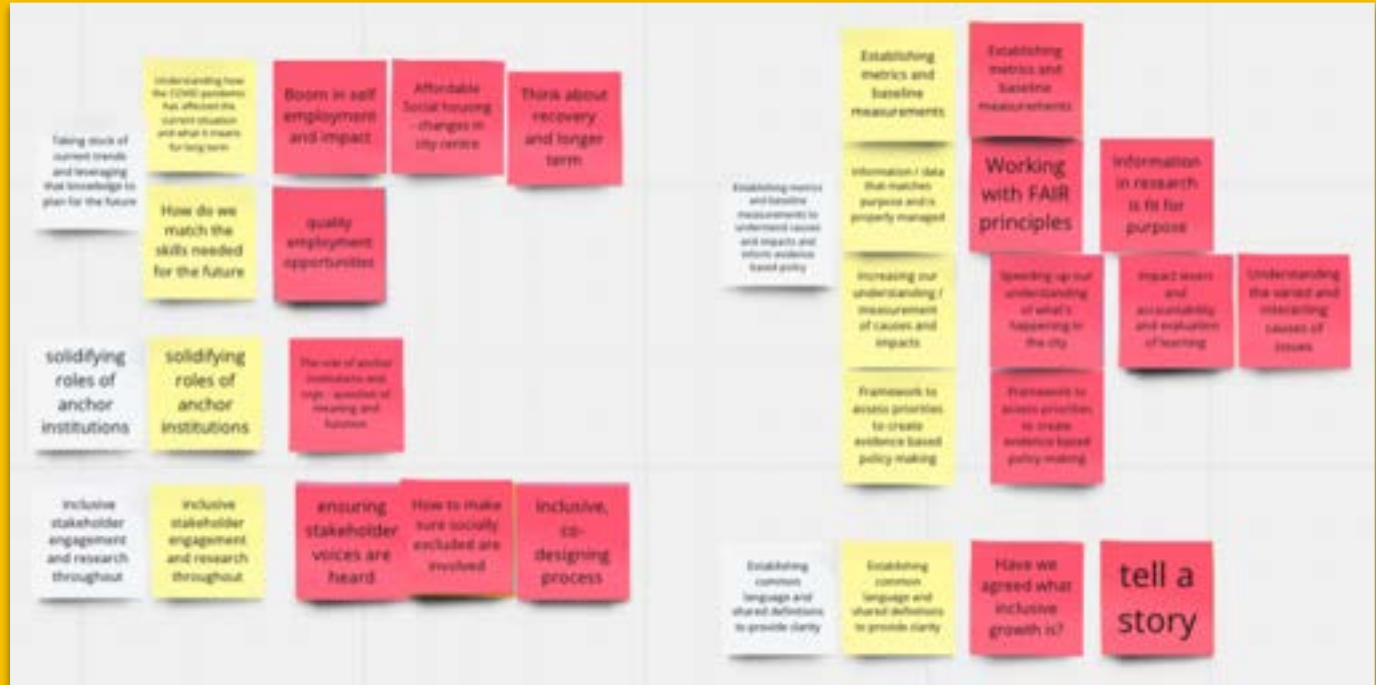Project Context | Themes & Insights | Next Steps

Research & Policy Priorities
Inclusive Growth

Themes and Insights

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops

Project Context | Themes & Insights | Next Steps

Climate Change
Needs & Challenges

Areas of need or challenges emerging from discussions

- ***How might we*** mitigate our vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change?

- ***How might we*** sustain and improve air quality?

- ***How might we*** reduce energy poverty?

- ***How might we*** meet sustainability objectives as we build back from COVID?

Project Context | Themes & Insights | Next Steps

Climate Change
Research & Policy Priorities

Priorities emerging from discussions

- Supporting and guiding transition to a low carbon economy
- Develop / investigate new business, taxation, and finance models
- Rethink how we apply research to practice
- Rethink how we measure and create value
- Forming plans for climate change resilience

Project Context Themes & Insights Next Steps

"

"Our discussion highlighted the need to think about the new underpinnings of a feasible and robust low carbon economy, in Leeds."

Workshop Participant

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Needs & Challenges
Climate Change

Affinity Cluster

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops
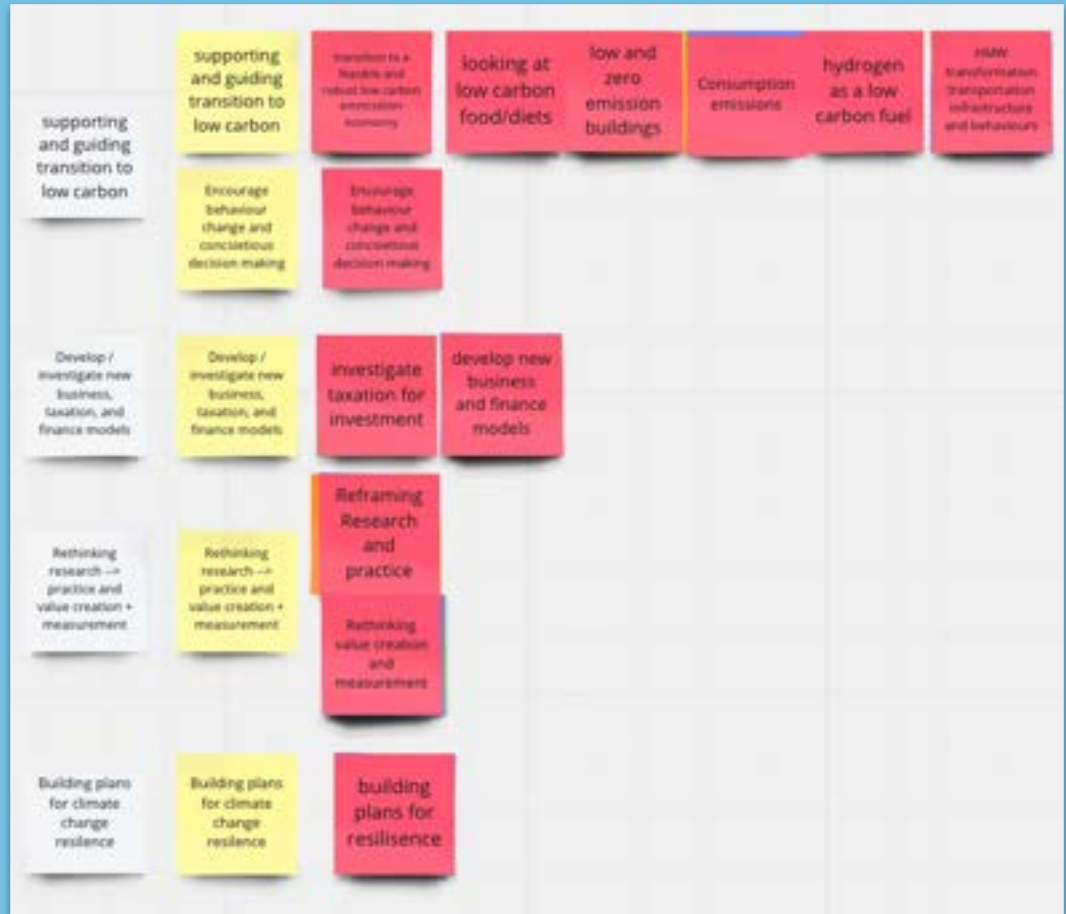

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Research & Policy Priorities
Climate Change

Themes and Insights

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops

What does success look like in 2030?

The following themes emerged from group discussion and submission to the Zoom chat. Participants were asked to answer the question "What does success look like in 2030?"

Strong progress toward carbon neutrality targets.

New funding strategies and reduced reliance on grants.

Citizens who are more engaged in co-producing the future city they want to see.

A more healthy, more equal, and more accessible city.

Better coordination and integration of services supported by robust data sharing practices.

Shared strategy between local government and academic institutions.

Leeds seen as an example for other cities to follow.

Project Context   Themes & Insights   Next Steps

What does success look like in 2030?

Affinity Cluster

Developed from synthesis and analysis of Miro Boards at both workshops

Shared approaches for future work

The following principles and ways of working emerged repeatedly throughout the workshop discussions:

- Utilize behavioural change techniques
- Inclusivity as a key attribute of all research and solutions
- Importance of co-design to create citizen ownership and empowerment
- Focus on co-produced and interdisciplinary approaches in addressing city issues
- The importance of both 'big data' and insights from qualitative research in decision making
- Equality of opportunity and access for all Leeds citizens
- University of Leeds and Leeds City Council working collaboratively to their strengths
- The need for support / training / resources for decision makers

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Where do we go from here?

Review Reference Group Action Plan

The Collaboration Review Reference Group is chaired by Professor Nick Plant, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation at the University of Leeds.

Membership includes senior managers from the University and Leeds City Council.

The Reference Group has developed an Action Plan for implementing recommendations arising from the Review on a phased basis. Plans for accelerating and enhancing research collaboration include:

- a series of joint events
- an inter-organisational strategy for research collaboration
- a working party on improved data-sharing
- an on-line research collaboration forum
- expansion of 'living lab' opportunities across the city and campus

Researchers and council officers will be updated on activities as the Action Plan is taken forward.

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Building on Shared Priorities

Determining shared priorities is crucial in building on existing strengths and developing effective approaches to future research partnerships. Capturing the opinions expressed by academics and council officers during the workshops is an important initial step in the Reference Group's plans for taking forward recommendations from the *Review* of research collaboration. This report will be used by Reference Group members a part of a process to inform agreement on priorities for future research-policy partnerships and underpin support for further civic collaboration.

The research-policy priorities discussed during the workshops will be especially useful in deciding focus areas for joint events, which forms a key aspect of the Reference Group Action Plan.

LSSI will be overseeing delivery of resources and events in the coming months, which will bring staff from the two organisations together. These will aim to:

- foster mutual understanding of academic and policy contexts and demands
- consider how shared principles and methodological approaches can work in practice
- facilitate detailed conversations around themes for co-produced research to address complex challenges facing the city-region

Researchers and council officers will be invited to take part in these sessions.

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to all those professionals from the University of Leeds and Leeds City Council who took part in the workshops.

The workshops on 14th and 15th December were organised by LSSI and delivered by Overlap Associations with funding from Research England's SPF QR fund.

Contact

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Better is absolutely possible.

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