

## Resourcing our Civic Ambition: discussion paper

### Introduction

There is increasing pressure on the Higher Education sector to contribute to place-based development in the UK and to realise outcomes from which all citizens benefit.

This is most clearly signposted in the Government's Levelling Up white paper, which set UKRI a new organisational objective:



*“... to deliver economic, social, and cultural benefits from research and innovation to all of our citizens, including by developing research and innovation strengths across the UK in support of levelling up”, and “increase consideration of local growth criteria and impact in R&D fund design”.*

In tandem with this shift in priorities, there is also a major shift in the scale of investment being provided by government for Research and Innovation, from 1.74% to 2.4% of GDP (£9 billion in 2017 to £22 billion by 2026/7). The clear expectation is that at least some of this new investment will need to be allocated in ways which address geographical inequalities, and which are ‘place-sensitive’.

These shifts – to invest more money in place-sensitive ways to deliver demonstrable impact for all citizens of the UK – will require rapid, evidence-informed policy innovation, drawing on practical examples and experiences of what’s worked. Civic, public and community engagement will be key mechanisms by which universities can deliver against these expectations.

This paper provides a summary of intelligence gathered about how the higher education sector is currently organising itself to deliver on place-based priorities, through its civic engagement activity.

We take two ‘deep dives’ to inform the discussion.

- We provide a snapshot of how HEIs are currently organising themselves to deliver civic engagement activities, and of the funding sources they draw on to support that
- We step outside higher education to synthesise intelligence from other sectors about ‘what works’ in funding place-based engagement activity, to see if there are lessons there to inform future developments in HE policy

We end by offering a draft framework which we have developed to try to simplify and focus what we know about ‘what works’ in place-based engagement that delivers public benefit. We welcome feedback on this, and its potential for further development.

The paper draws on several sources of evidence:

- A mapping of current funding sources for Civic / place-based R&I and Knowledge exchange activity undertaken by the Civic University Network (included in the annex)
- A recent consultation and roundtable event with members of the CUN, to explore how they are currently resourcing their civic activity
- A recently published [NCCPE review](#) of the Public and Community Engagement and Local Growth and regeneration narratives submitted for the 2020 KEF [link to report]
- [Reviews](#) undertaken by the NCCPE of developments in place-based engagement funding in other sectors



We offer three **discussion points** in the paper: we would be interested in your reflections on the evidence we have gathered, and the implications for policy and practice.

1. Is our mapping of the current funding of civic and community engagement useful? What’s missing? How might this intelligence be used to improve future funding of this areas of work?
2. We share some lessons learned from other sectors about how to invest in place-based engagement: are there lessons learned here that might provide useful intelligence to help develop policy and practice in higher education?
3. We end with a draft framework to inform the commissioning of place-based engagement, informed by our experience of supporting work in this area. We invite your help with developing this into a useful tool to help guide our collective work in this area

**If you have comments on this paper, please email the authors, Natalie Day and Paul Manners, at [civicuniversity@shu.ac.uk](mailto:civicuniversity@shu.ac.uk).**



## DEEP DIVE 1: THE FUNDING AND DELIVERY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

To better understand how HEIs are approaching civic engagement, the CUN last year reviewed network members' strategies and approaches. We identified two broad types of 'ingredients' typically incorporated into a civic agreement or strategy:

### Civic behaviours

A civic strategy will look to achieve synergy across existing institutional policies (such as procurement, or estates), and to consider how the civic contribution of these can be enhanced, for instance by ensuring procurement practice better supports the local economy.

### Civic knowledge building

Civic agreements and strategies are not just about enhancing an HEI's 'anchor' role, as an employer, resource and investor in a city or region. They are also about maximising the intellectual contribution an HEI can make through its research, knowledge exchange and educational functions, and better tuning these to the needs and possibilities of its place.

The table below illustrates the kinds of activities that are typically undertaken in both of these areas:

Civic behaviours – maximising the civic contribution of the HEI	
<b>Internal facing policies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EDI</li><li>• Sustainability</li><li>• Volunteering</li></ul>	<b>External-facing 'Anchoring' activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procurement</li><li>• Community policies</li><li>• Employment</li><li>• Estates</li><li>• Social Responsibility</li><li>• Students as partners</li></ul>
Civic knowledge building – aligning research and teaching with local priorities	
<b>Education and skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Widening Participation</li><li>• Skills</li><li>• Engaged Learning / Employability</li></ul>	<b>Research, Innovation and KE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research challenges</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li><li>• Public engagement</li></ul>

*From **Civic Recipes: How HEIs are framing their civic activity** [\[link\]](#)*

## Sources of funding for Civic engagement by universities, and how these are being used

Universities can currently draw upon a wide range of different funding sources to invest in civic and place-based working. Annex 1 includes a mapping we undertook of various funding schemes that UK HEIs are currently drawing upon. These encompass skills, productivity, innovation, impact, engagement etc.

In a roundtable in December 2021, we tested this mapping of funding sources with network members, and explored what universities were doing to 'ramp up' their civic engagement.

Typically, HEIs are investing a relatively small amount of resource focused on achieving greater **strategic alignment** across existing activity: with the goal being to make the existing civic behaviours and activities greater than the sum of their parts.

## Civic strategy and leadership

The key investments universities are making to achieve this kind of strategic alignment are focused in three key areas:

### STRATEGIC SHIFTS

### EXAMPLES

1. ***Intelligence / evidence gathering to ensure activity is grounded in a robust understanding of local needs.***

Social and economic impact studies; polling and consultation with citizens.

This is being approached in a piecemeal way across the sector.

2. ***Investing in senior academic and professional leadership to galvanise and focus activity***

**Key functions:** Brokerage and partnership development; managing civic agreement development; staff development; culture change

**Where sited:** Public engagement with research / KE & Innovation; Community Development, Marketing, VC office, External Affairs / Government relations, WP and Outreach

**Team size:** varies, from none, to a single 'head of civic', to an approach where staff are integrated into existing teams (up to 3 FTE)

#### Typical roles:

- DVC Civic Engagement; PVC Engagement and Place; PVC Engagement; Chief Social Purpose Officer; PVC Partnerships and Place, VP Social responsibility; VP Innovation and Civic Engagement
- Civic Policy Officer
- Head of Civic Engagement
- Head of stakeholder relations
- Academic leads for Civic Engagement / Deans



**Jane Robinson, PVC for Engagement and Place, Newcastle University**

3. ***Investment in strategic infrastructure***

**Governance arrangements** – e.g., advisory / steering group; Civic Engagement Committee

**At the Heart of the Region**  
Our Commitments to our Communities  
Civic University Agreement



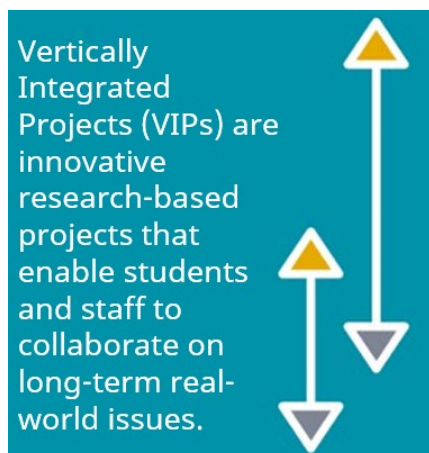
**Sheffield Hallam University's Civic University Agreement**

**Developing and managing Civic Agreements** – co-created with city partners to lay out a clear shared purpose. Examples include:

- [Sheffield Hallam University](#)
- [Universities for Nottingham](#)
- [Greater Manchester Universities](#)

There is also some investment in new civic activity, or (more often) re-alignment of existing activity

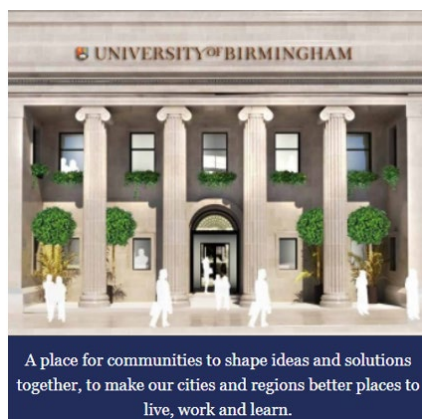
### 1. Re-aligning existing activity



The University of Bath's [VIPs](#)

- **Re-aligning research and teaching to deliver civic outcomes, e.g.:**
  - **Developing Civic themes** (e.g., tackling poverty and social exclusion)
  - **Vertically Integrated Projects** (innovative research and applied learning projects that enable inter-disciplinary, multi-level teams of students to work with academics on long-term real-world projects.)
- **Bringing other 'social purpose' functions under the civic umbrella**
  - E.g., volunteering; WP and Outreach; Planning and procurement

### 2. Investing in new civic projects and platforms



The University of Birmingham's [Exchange](#) hub, in the city centre

- **Externally funded or co-funded partnership projects**
  - Major capital investments (e.g., [University of Birmingham's Exchange building](#))
  - City-wide programmes (e.g., [City of Culture](#))
  - Externally funded research partnerships (for instance, to address health inequalities)
- **Evidence hubs** for local area (e.g., [West Midlands Redi](#))
- **Partnership programmes / platforms, e.g.**
  - Cross-sector [Leadership development programmes](#)

## The overlaps between civic, public and community engagement

*'We are trying to take a cohesive and coherent approach to resourcing which looks across PCE, Policy engagement and Civic/place-based engagement - so the potential silos/confusion are overcome' (University Civic Engagement lead).*

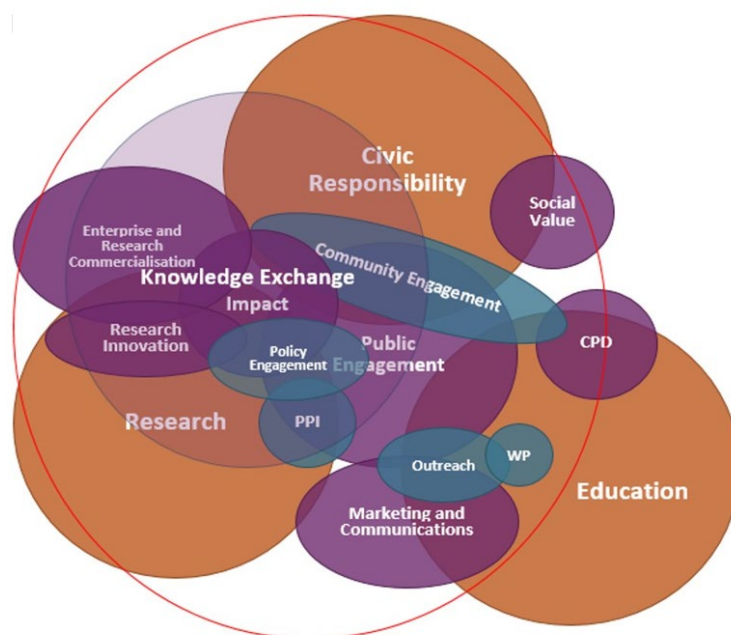
There is significant overlap between university civic, public and community engagement. This intersection was a key reason for the NCCPE partnering with Sheffield Hallam University in their bid to host the CUN, in order to maximise the synergy between these different areas of external engagement.

In practice we have discovered that many of the staff involved in leading civic engagement have long standing expertise in public engagement, and in a number of cases university leads for public engagement have had their portfolio extended to include civic engagement (or vice versa).

The diagram below is an attempt to map how public, community and civic engagement overlap



In practice, the multiple sources of funding and different policy imperatives have created in many HEIs a legacy of overlapping functions which are not necessarily efficiently or proactively aligned. The diagram below represents how one HEI mapped the overlapping fields of activity. The NCCPE has extensive experience working with university leadership teams to attempt to 'untangle' and re-organise their engagement activity to realise better strategic alignment, but this is challenging and slow work.



**DISCUSSION POINT 1:**

Is our mapping of the current funding of civic and community engagement useful? What's missing? How might this intelligence be used to improve future funding of this areas of work?

Is there a role for universities to help their partners navigate these different funding streams, to maximise the synergy and alignment between them?





## DEEP DIVE 2: LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHER SECTORS: THE RISE OF PLACE-BASED PRACTICE

While the HE sector is trying to rapidly respond to the government's ambitions for greatly enhanced place-based policy and practice, help is on hand: a focus on place-based policy and practice and public and community participation has been a long-standing objective in health, cultural and community sectors, and there is much rich learning which can be harvested to inform how UKRI addresses its new 'levelling up' objective.

### Achieving Equity review

Back in 2019 the NCCPE was commissioned by the UKRI PE team to review lessons learned about place-based funding to address inequality (think Brexit and 'left-behind places' as the context for this). [The review](#) informed the launch of a new pathfinder programme, [Enhancing Place-Based Public Engagement with R&I](#) (EPPE).



#### The review explored:

- The state of the art in current thinking and sense making about 'left behind places'
- The key interventions being made, and by whom
- How HEIs / researchers might contribute to the needs of these places and support partners working there
- Potential partners or initiatives that research funders and HEIs may wish to work with in this area

The report includes lots of examples of tools and frameworks to guide investment in place-based working. One source of inspiration is Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme.



#### Arts Council England's [Creative People and Places programme](#)

Earlier in 2022, ACE published a meta-evaluation of all its place-based programmes which complements the NCCPE's review. Their review summarised lessons learned from ACE's investment of £116 million on place-based programmes that recognise arts and culture as a key component in developing places and engaging communities.



The evaluation provides a number of useful actionable insights into how such programmes have delivered economic and social outcomes, and particularly what lessons can be learned to inform future policy. It highlights five fundamental areas of impactful place-based programmes. We have highlighted below some key insights which direct relevance to the challenge of developing policy and practice in higher education

KEY LEARNING ABOUT PLACE-BASED WORKING	IMPLICATIONS FOR R&I INVESTMENT AND CAPABILITY
<p><b>1. The importance of partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The design of programmes:</b> programmes should be designed to account for different starting points in terms of the maturity of local partnerships. Where grantees have little or no pre-existing partnerships, programmes should support them to build these.</li> <li>• <b>Clarity around paid contributions:</b> programmes should be clear themselves and encourage local project leaders to be clear in distinguishing when paid roles are on offer versus roles which amount to unpaid work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need a better understanding of the capabilities and assets in different places, to allow funding to be intelligently targeted</li> <li>• Investment in capacity building and partnerships (not just activity) will be essential</li> <li>• Funding needs to be allocated outside the university to support partner involvement. One possible approach is more <b>co-commissioning</b> with other social funders committed to place-based working</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Longer timeframes to develop and deliver change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Longer programmes:</b> To maximise impact develop programmes with longer timeframes (3+ years) and which have built-in milestones that encourage regular re-evaluation of direction and aims.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer time scales need to be embraced</li> <li>• We need to experiment with new ways of ensuring reflection, learning and re-evaluation are built into grant making</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Larger projects with high-level vision goals and few specific project requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Larger grant awards:</b> Programmes should look to divide any given programme budget into a smaller number of larger grants to give grantees more control and flexibility to deliver programmes best suited the needs of their places and their partnerships.</li> <li>• <b>Promotion of local freedom:</b> encouraging grant recipients to exercise considerable freedom in deciding what is needed locally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handing over more responsibility and decision making to grant holders about how to invest in agile ways</li> <li>• Building the capability of university staff to manage this kind of flexible funding</li> <li>• Peer review needs to draw on 'local knowledge' to assess applications</li> <li>• Funders need much more local knowledge (ACE and other social funders often have regional teams)</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Better impact measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop new measures:</b> The meta-evaluation identified that broadly, all six programmes are trying to meet one of two high-level aims: getting more people involved in creativity and culture, and/or increasing the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A concerted effort to develop more meaningful approaches to impact and evaluation is required (perhaps as part of the Future Research Assessment Programme)</li> </ul>

<p>contribution of arts and culture to local economies. Existing metrics for both are often found to be blunt and imperfect, which compromises the ability to demonstrate impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no easy answers - but collaborating with other social funders could be a very productive next step</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Embedding evaluation, sharing of learning and project-sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Embedding evaluation, learning and project-sustainability</b> need to be embedded in programme delivery.</li> <li>• <b>Arts Council's role in sharing learning</b> about what works and why, to shape future investment.</li> <li>• <b>Embed development of sector skills and capacity for monitoring, evaluation and learning</b> in place-based programmes</li> <li>• <b>Direction and guidance:</b> More purposeful direction or guidance on evaluation methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant investment to support in capacity building in evaluation is required. Scoping out how to provide this kind of support is a priority</li> <li>• UKRI needs to capture and share evidence of 'what works' in place-based working</li> </ul>



#### **DISCUSSION POINT 2:**

Do these lessons provide useful intelligence to help develop policy and practice in higher education? Are there other sources you would point us to?

How might partnership with other social funders help realise joined up impact in places?

How might the challenges around developing better metrics and capacity building in evaluation be addressed?



## DEEP DIVE 3: A FRAMEWORK TO INFORM PLACE-BASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Building on all of the above, the NCCPE is developing a framework to help pinpoint the critical dynamics of place-based funding, and to help address the fact that there is not a level playing field when it comes to making decisions about investing in and developing place-based interventions.

Our intention with this is twofold:

**To help strengthen the evidence base:** the framework attempts to distil the critical factors which account for impactful place-based policy and practice (building on the evidence base that we reviewed in the Achieving Equity in Place Based Public Engagement report). As such, it provides a useful scaffold for discussion and for identifying gaps for further research and evidence gathering.

**To guide investment decisions:** we think that the framework might provide a useful tool to inform what kinds of activity are most likely to deliver results in different locations, by providing a 'scaffold' for differentiating intelligently between the capabilities and assets of different locations. It should also help applicants to frame and justify the investments they are seeking to secure.

### Three lenses on place

The framework identifies three critical lenses on the characteristics of places which impact on their readiness to absorb and deploy research and innovation funding:

- **The characteristics of place:** the assets, demography and relative deprivation
- **Partnership capability:** the 'people' based infrastructure to support collaboration
- **Delivery infrastructure:** the practical resources and infrastructure in place to support collaboration

### Three states of readiness

The framework uses a 'maturity matrix' approach to describe three states of readiness. We are considering how these might best be named (e.g., 'embryonic', 'developing', 'mature').

The draft framework is shown overleaf. It is very much work in progress.



### DISCUSSION POINT 3:

We would be interested in our views of how such a framework might be developed to help accelerate our collective progress in this area.

## Place-based research and innovation funding: draft ‘maturity’ framework

Dimension	Key factors to take account of		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<b>The characteristics of place:</b> the assets, demography and relative deprivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining the assets and challenges within places (examples include the Levelling up ‘Capitals Framework’ and the Young Foundation’s London Civic Index etc)</li> <li>Measures of relative social deprivation and productivity</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low levels of ‘place capital’ in all of the key domains</li> <li>High levels of social deprivation</li> <li>Low levels of productivity</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High levels of ‘place capital’ in all of the key areas</li> <li>Very few areas of high social deprivation</li> <li>High productivity</li> </ul>
<b>Partnership capability:</b> the ‘people’ based infrastructure to support collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance arrangements</li> <li>Community voice and involvement</li> <li>Shared vision, priorities, philosophy and rationale</li> <li>Trusted relationships between partners</li> <li>Strength of collective leadership</li> <li>Monitoring, evaluation and learning in place to facilitate improvement</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little formal governance structure in place</li> <li>No consistent understanding of shared priorities</li> <li>No monitoring or evaluation in place</li> <li>Few platforms to engage and involve local citizens and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Researcher/research organisation and local partner participation in some relevant shared governance structures</li> <li>Commitment to some shared priorities which are established and reviewed together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representation embedded in shared governance and/or participation in local governance structures</li> <li>Agreed shared priorities with some areas operating at scale</li> <li>Significant investment in supporting community / citizen involvement in agenda setting</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery infrastructure:</b> the practical resources and infrastructure in place to support collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing investment in R&amp;I projects and activity</li> <li>Investment in knowledge-building infrastructure (brokerage; networks; data sharing; repositories; relationship management tools; analytical capability)</li> <li>Investment and resources allocated to supporting collaboration, e.g. training and development</li> <li>Institutional readiness in different sectors (assessed through tools like the NCCPE’s EDGE tool and the CUN Civic Impact framework)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some individual projects or commissioned consultancy underway, but programmes operate in silos</li> <li>Little or no investment in place to develop or sustain collaboration</li> <li>Very limited knowledge brokerage / engagement expertise</li> <li>Lack of joined up approach to data capture and sharing</li> <li>Low institutional readiness for engaged practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders are collaborating consistently in some areas, but the relationships are not at scale etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained activity underway across a variety of areas</li> <li>High institutional readiness for engaged practice</li> <li>etc</li> </ul>

## Annex 1: A SIMPLIFIED MAP OF FUNDING 'INPUTS' FOR UNIVERSITY CIVIC AND PLACE-BASED ACTIVITY, AND HOW THESE ARE MONITORED

	Funding inputs	Assessing environment	Assessing activity / outputs	Assessing outcomes	Describing...
<b>Widening participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WP income</li> </ul>	<b>ACCESS &amp; PARTICIPATION PLANS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic aims, objectives and targets</li> </ul>	<b>ACCESS &amp; PARTICIPATION plans</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual impact report to OfS</li> <li>OfS A&amp;P dataset</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality and focus of WP activity</li> <li>Progress against Key Performance Measures</li> </ul>
<b>Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student fee income</li> <li>DfE and OfS funding</li> </ul>	<b>TEF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning environment (Provider Statement)</li> </ul>		<b>TEF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of teaching</li> <li>Value realised for students</li> <li>Employment outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Research &amp; Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research income</li> <li>Place-based streams (e.g. Strength in Places, Research Wales Innovation Fund)</li> <li>Horizon / EC funding etc</li> </ul>	<b>REF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research Environment</li> </ul>	<b>REF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research Output Quality</li> </ul>	<b>REF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research Impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of research</li> <li>Value realised for wider society</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge exchange</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovation funding (e.g. HEIF; UIF)</li> <li>Consultancy income</li> <li>University Enterprise Zones</li> <li>Local Enterprise Partnerships etc</li> </ul>	<b>KEF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narratives</li> </ul> <b>HEIF Strategies</b> <b>KE Concordat</b>	<b>KEF</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Metrics</li> </ul> <b>HEBCIs data</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The nature, quality and impact of activity to realise societal benefit from knowledge exchange / research</li> </ul>
<b>Social responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All of the above +</li> <li>Place-based funding (e.g. UKSPF, Towns Fund)</li> <li>Philanthropy</li> <li>Support from non HE funders. E.g. Lottery funds</li> </ul>	<b>Various schemes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>THE Impact rankings</li> <li>KCL / Manchester project</li> <li>HEIs own commissioned impact reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University annual reports (charity commission reporting)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The cumulative impact of the above, plus the 'anchor' effects of the institution</li> </ul>