

Place: Partnership, Impact and Funding: A Framework for Best Practice

When we talk about Place, what do we mean? Place is a bounded location of varying size and scale. Place as we understand it is universal. There can be a value to a place, it can be where we come from, where we grow up, work, and even marry. All UK Government documentation on Place in some way addresses the question of people 'in Place'. Whether the perspective relates to economic prosperity, societal harmony, localism and devolution, or quality of life; policy relevance is crucial to the success of any Place-based funding proposal, and it is essential to consider these dimensions. A review [paper on the Place and Policy](#) has been recently published by ARMA (September 2022) helpful to all those seeking to establish the basis of both the Place-related policy relevance of research being developed and the impact accruing to it.

The role of Place in Policy stretches across all aspects of Government but we focus on three specific areas of policy here in the order of their release: the [Innovation Strategy](#), the Treasury's [Plan for Growth](#) and the [Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper](#).



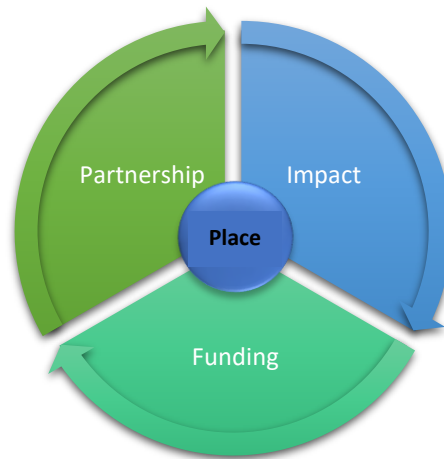
The *Innovation Strategy* set out how the UK will 'support businesses to innovate by making the most of the UK's research, development and innovation system'.

The *Plan for Growth* talks about Place thus: 'Place matters. Many people are rooted to their local area because of its civic identity and their social and family connections: over 40% of workers have only ever worked in the same local area as they were born. But there are parts of the country where people feel left behind that they are not getting fair access to jobs, wages, and skills opportunities, and that their local priorities are not being delivered on by the government.'

In February 2022, the UK Government published its *Levelling Up White Paper*, which sets out its aims for transforming the UK as a vehicle for opportunity and prosperity across and between different parts of the UK. Research and innovation investments can be a significant lever for levelling up, creating high value jobs, boosting productivity, and creating lasting social impact across the UK. Central to this agenda are 12 missions, all of which relate to Place.

The Place: Partnership, Impact, and Funding Framework

Working with others is key regardless of whether there is partnership with funders, stakeholders, or beneficiaries, it is integral to success. Any Place as a location is replete with opportunities to work with others and every Place has opportunities to do so, drawing on their individual unique heritage and culture characteristics. Every one of these has a basis in partnership, variously at a micro-economic local level to pan-regional collaboration. Partnerships are vehicles to considerable advantage when it comes to impact, especially in establishing real world need vis-a-vis associated impact. Partners can work with academics on their project design and are often able to bring additional resources and expertise to bear. This pays real dividends where partners invited to form project advisory groups, can help with advice, contacts, and expertise on what works and what does not in practice. Their advice and input into project outputs and associated outcomes is invaluable.



The three elements of partnership, impact and funding fit together in the following way:

- Partnership is integral to the success of impact, grant capture and, indeed, any submission to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Research or other activity delivered through working with others demonstrates collaboration and gives rise to activity that has a social or economic good.
- The inclusion of a strong Impact case is crucial for a proposal to succeed. Policy on Place is replete with opportunities for Impact and economic and social added value. This is especially the case with areas like innovation and Levelling Up, where there are also opportunities for policy relevance.
- Place not only has its own funding streams, such as Strength in Places, it also informs activities and posts within UKRIs (including the Innovate UK and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)’s Place Programme Directors), and other UKRI Place-related initiatives. There is also scope to apply for funding under responsive mode.

Place and Funding

As the Place agenda permeates policy, there has been an increasing imperative to address it via funding mechanisms.

UKRI Strategy for the period 2022 to 2027, entitled *UKRI Strategy 2022–2027 Transforming tomorrow together* highlights UKRI’s key role in delivering the government’s ambitions for the UK as a global leader in research and innovation, with priorities set out in the:



The strategy outlines six objectives for how UKRI will deliver on its ambitions. This includes a Place-related strategic objective: “UKRI will deliver economic, social, and cultural benefits from research and innovation to all UK citizens, including by developing research and innovation strengths across the UK in support of levelling up”.

All individual research councils have also articulated their support to the place agenda in the latest individual strategies with some such as the AHRC and Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) having created place-related leadership roles.

UKRI have released a [UKRI place toolkit](#) as part of a suite of resources, advice and approaches that teams across UKRI can use to incorporate place into their programme or activity. The resources cover different programme stages from design to delivery and evaluation, as well as providing links to external publications and context-setting.

The ESRC has created an [impact toolkit](#) for social science researchers applying for and receiving funding, but its tenets could be used more widely. This will enable you to find out how impact is defined by Research Councils and to identify the principles you should be aware of when applying for funding. You can also find advice and guidance to help you communicate your work. The Impact Toolkit goes on to discuss all factors of impact best practice and is important for optimising the impact of Place.

Place Funding and Impact Checklist

This checklist is intended to support research managers to guide the preparation of research proposals and is meant to be used to raise the quality of applications to UKRI for funding relating to Place.

To start with, a few key specific considerations are key:

- Ensure a detailed and granular understanding of local socio-economic conditions. Your HEI might have that knowledge but it's often not made visible.
 - Is there alignment with local plans and strategies?
 - Are there interdependencies with other local or national programmes/interventions?
- What are the expected outcomes for the target area/s?
 - Check to see if and where data is available at a spatial area level can this be presented graphically (i.e. on a map)?
 - Where impacts are significant, to what extent does the intervention align with wider strategic objectives for the relevant area/s?
 - Are there likely to be unintended negative or positive collateral effects in the target area or within wider spatial area such as nearby travel to work areas?
 - Where data is not available, can improvements be made to data collection to ensure that it can be provided in future?
- Demonstrate Place-based outcomes potentially leading to:
 - local and regional economic growth, skills development, job creation or retention
 - critical mass activities leading to increased private investment, including foreign direct investment, in a specific place
 - contributions to cluster development through knowledge diffusion, supply chain development, SME growth, generation, or growth of spin outs
- Demonstrate how regional activity will contribute to broader national benefit.
 - Assess the possibility of scaling up to cover a wider area or larger population where appropriate
 - Is there transference potential to other regions?

Other general considerations:

- Identifying and working with the right people at the right and all levels
 - Involve a broad range of disciplines and non-academic stakeholders from the relevant sector
- Build slowly and nurture the partnerships: more pots of money can come later in funding cycles as more evidence of need and demand grows.
- Expect and understand benefits of genuine collaboration, especially working across administrative borders and/or where more than one university is involved
- Planning is essential, as success will follow in-depth and appropriate planning activity, executed well; ...also have a plan in place for initial delivery
- Understand the parameters of what can and cannot be done; to be realistic about what can be achieved and to appreciate the added value of reach and significance at the appropriate scale.
- Demonstrate Equality Diversity and Inclusion considerations such as gender and ethnicity balance

Place Funding and Impact Checklist

1. Framing and Partnership with Funders

Have I considered whether my work fits with or under Place or a Place-related funding stream or call?	☐
Have I ensured that I have defined Place in a meaningful way?	☐
Is there a clear connection to policy and a policy-relevant component?	☐
Is the approach commensurate to Haldane in such a way that UKRI can fund and that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can produce added value in Westminster and Whitehall? The Haldane Principle states that, 'decisions about what to spend research funds on should be made by researchers rather than politicians'. See House of Commons - Putting Science and Engineering at the Heart of Government Policy - Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee (parliament.uk) .	☐

2. Building Partnerships

Has senior approval been sought, based on the information from the scoping stage?	☐
Is there a plan for implementation, including the desired inputs and outputs?	☐
Has a clear plan for Impact and Knowledge Exchange been developed?	☐
Have partners and stakeholders been identified?	☐

3. Delivering Impact and Performance

Have I selected the right framework for Impact (Conceptual, Instrumental, Capacity Building)? For Strength in Places, consider the impact on the individual or the business and how the university activity will enhance this	☐
How am I delivering societal Impact?	☐
How am I delivering collaboration between businesses, HEIs, and communities?	☐
What is my contribution to improved economic performance overall, specifically with regard to the following: - Improving economic performance, specifically growth - Improving job prospects - Improving Research and Innovation - Improving the health, wellbeing, and environment of individuals. These may be linked directly to the 12 pillars from the Levelling Up White Paper, for example enhancing R+D spend in the region.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4. Funding

Standard Funding Streams and Responsive Mode

Are there any eligibility issues?	☐
Are all necessary audit processes in place?	☐
Are appropriate governance and processes in place?	☐
With partners, are appropriate agreements and processes in place?	☐
Can the terms and conditions of the funding stream be met?	☐
What processes might be needed to be updated/put in place as per the requisite funding guidance?	☐

Innovation Accelerators- relevant for the regions as per the geographic limitations of the programme currently

When outlining the local governance arrangements in their plan, Partnerships may wish to consider: - Who are the key partners in the geographical region? - How will the Partnership communicate and engage with the local community? - What are the expectations for the Partnership and its role beyond the project period?	☐ ☐ ☐
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When developing their approach, Partnerships are encouraged to consider the following: • Which sectors or industries does the region currently excel in and how could this change over the next 10 to 15 years? • Which sectors or industries have been identified as emerging strengths, both established and nascent and what evidence supports this? • What are the barriers to innovation in the region? • What is already underway in the city region to address these barriers?	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Local engagement: • How will you engage with local communities to ensure that the programme is responsive to their needs and priorities? • How will you ensure that the programme involves all relevant local partners?	☐ ☐
Private sector and inward investment: • What are the opportunities to attract additional private investment to accelerate innovation in the city region? • What are the barriers to local firms investing in R&D? • How is the city region promoted, and who to? • How can you make it easier for investors to engage with and invest in the cluster?	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
National government support for the IAs - <i>as per the geographic limitations of the programme currently</i> • Which UK Government departments and/or agencies are most important in supporting the region in achieving its objectives for the IA programme? • Which UK Government departments and/or agencies are most important to addressing barriers to economic and productivity growth in the region?	☐ ☐
Maximising the local impact of research and innovation activity: • How can existing research and innovation investment and infrastructure deliver greater local economic and social benefits both within and beyond the region? • How will the IA programme support the region's wider levelling up objectives? • How will the IA programme support areas of lower productivity within or beyond the region?	☐ ☐ ☐
The planning process: • What are the anticipated benefits of the plan? • How will the plans lead to local economic and societal impact in the region? • How will the IA report against its objectives throughout the project period? • How will the IA contribution to existing region strategies be assessed? • What is the theory of change for the IA? – drafting of a high-level logic model is encouraged.	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐