Evaluation of Leading Places Phase 2 Programme

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HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

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Aims and objectives of Leading Places

"To build and transfer best practice in collaborative leadership between local authorities, universities and other local anchor institutions. In many places formal and informal relations already exist between universities and their civic partners. But common institutional barriers and related challenges often make working in partnership harder."

| Local partnership	Project Theme(s)
Bedford: The University of Bedfordshire and Bedford Council are working together to help deliver improvements in mental health through sporting activity. The goal is to design a specific intervention to achieve this using sport to improve mental health and exploit university and council joint capabilities.	**Physical Activity and Mental Health**
Hull: The aim of this project is to build on recent successes around culture, and to identify a new city-level model for achieving greater inclusive growth in Hull based on closer collaboration between the University of Hull, Hull City Council and the NHS.	**Inclusive Growth**
Keele: £17.5m of investment, supported by Keele University, local authorities and local businesses, is contributing towards the relocation of Keele Business School to create a new business innovation and leadership centre. Leading Places is helping local partners implement the plan for the centre.	**Business Innovation and Leadership**
Nottingham: In Leading Places, the city council and two universities are promoting Nottingham as a city-scale test-bed for new approaches to health, energy, transport and housing tech. The aim is to create the space for major new ideas to be tested in the city.	**Smart Cities**
Shropshire: The focus of this project is innovation in digital health, encompassing care providers and care-tech creators. The aim is to help the NHS identify and indicate what the sector needs in terms of new innovation around data and communications.	**Digital Health**
Tees Valley: Many firms have the potential to grow, but not necessarily the means to expand. Tees Valley Combined Authority and Teesside University are jointly-devising a new business scale up programme for up to 100 firms in Tees Valley.	**Business Scale-Ups**
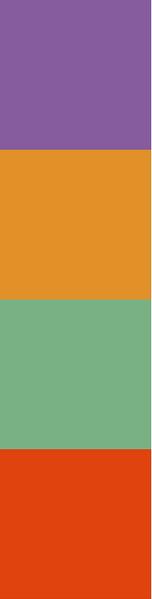
Achievements

- The projects have aligned with and contributed towards implementation of local economic, public health and environmental strategies

- Provided concrete examples of place-based collaborations (important in context of future local industrial strategies)

- Catalyst for 'inter-disciplinary' and applied forms of research

- Provided space for places to identify new types of investment interventions

- Encouraged the creation of communities of practice

- LP2 has had status (places keen to be part of a national programme)

- Kept momentum and progression going inside local partnerships

- Persuaded new partners of the merits of 'action-learning'

- LP2 has made real progress and built upon the pilot LP1 initiative
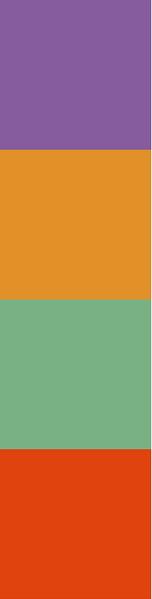
Challenges

- Some partnerships have been challenged by the timescales, but overall the timings of the programme have been fine
- Mixed opportunities for review, but certainly greater recognition of value of reflection vis-à-vis LP1
- Local capacity, especially project management and co-ordination, is dependent upon commitment of certain individuals
- Facilitation could, at times, be more 'challenging' and more direct to local partnerships
- Increase the flexibility over the facilitation resource is used locally
- Pitching activity and events to the appropriate people
- How will the 'programme' be taken forward?
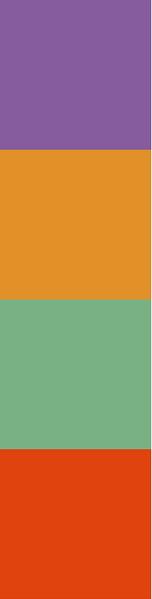
Recommendations

1. The LGA and other national actors should promote LP as a distinct and innovative contribution to implementing local industrial strategies

2. Immediate emphasis should be placed on marketing and communicating individual LP2 case studies as examples of good practice

3. The scope, scale and timescales of the LP 'concept' should be extended – bringing it together with complementary learning and developmental 'Growth Academy-type' approaches

4. National resources earmarked for supporting industrial strategy and place-based development should support LP-type future activity

5. In any future LP-type activity, local partnerships should have the flexibility to determine what projects are chosen and how they fit with local priorities and strategies

6. Systemic, institutional support within local partnerships should complement and support personal capacity and commitment – consideration should be given as to how best to incentivise greater engagement and participation
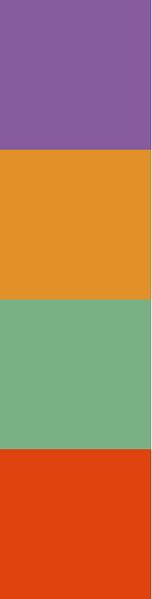
Conclusions

- LP has been a valuable mechanism for local institutions and actors to work across sector and organisational boundaries on particular place-based issues/challenges

- Aligns with and supports place-based industrial policy and strategy

- Fits within the core responsibilities and activities of universities, local authorities and other civic anchor institutions – but is not always recognised…

- Place-based collaboration is not a given. Requires leadership, vision, support and individual and institutional investment

- Place-based collaboration can stimulate and nurture new forms of innovation, resilience, long-term stability and effective civic leadership