

Partnerships for Progress

Universities, colleges and local businesses working together through technology

Existing and emerging technologies have a role in helping higher and further education (HE/FE) institutions compete for partnership and commercialisation opportunities. The universities and colleges involved in the Jisc funded [Access to Resources and Open Innovation](#) initiative (2010-2013) led partnerships with other institutions, businesses, SMEs, and local government bodies.

Establishing simple platforms and communication channels to co-develop ideas has led to cost savings and efficiency gains. Open innovation and making resources available externally brings agility to institutions to help them thrive in a competitive environment. Partnerships are often local, but successful solutions easily transfer to other contexts.

The benefits

There is a growing role for HE/FE in innovation, business growth and knowledge exploitation. Developing online platforms to share opportunities, co-create intellectual property and increase access to resources has resulted in:

enhanced access for SMEs, entrepreneurs and other external parties to knowledge, innovation and collaboration opportunities to help inform, improve, develop or sustain their business;

Retail Climate reached out to and engaged 50+ retailers across the Dyfi Biosphere as well as 16 in Exeter during development. They identified a substantial set of business opportunities for them which exist due to climate change and worked with some of them to develop case studies.

enhanced capability across the sector to provide access to online information and knowledge services for their external partners and using existing local networks;

The myKE project led a pilot involving two universities and knowledge intensive businesses on Corridor Manchester, covering some 243 hectares with a 55,000 strong workforce. For the Humber Open project, Hull College linked grant, tender and contract opportunities across the Humber Enterprise Zone, the largest in the country, including £30 Million of Regional Growth Funding.

enhanced capability to generate innovation and gain value from online marketplaces resulting in enhanced opportunities for the institution's own innovators;

Open LivIn, partnering Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores Universities, matches early-stage ideas and technologies from universities, companies and lone investors to business development expertise and funding. Their platform is now being implemented in three other institutions, and nearly 20 institutions are signed up to the Innovation Commons methodology.

Achieving online co-development of ideas is a tall order. Trust is a major issue. Engaging users early, understanding their needs and putting in safeguards to protect people, businesses and intellectual property allowed innovation to flourish.

These ‘calls to action’ are grounded in evidence. Jisc has pump-primed long term sustainable solutions, locally and nationally. The calls capture the lessons and identify points of good practice to achieve better collaboration with external partners for innovation and access to resources.

Considering these ‘calls to action’ could result in you and your institution effecting a positive change for innovation. They may involve completely new ways of doing things, turning convention upside down, revolting against institutional dogma, or taking a few risks!

Identifying and assessing new project or change opportunities:

- Is there an area or idea that could benefit from co-development with external partners?
- What could your data or ideas achieve if they were open?
- Is your theme or offer broad enough to attract a suitable audience?

Managing projects effectively to maximise value from internal institutional partnerships:

- Do you understand local processes and procedures so you can get started straight away?
- Can you commit to realise your vision and see your idea through to fruition?
- Does your team understand that change may be necessary for innovation?
- Can you convince your institutional management and gain senior support for change?
- Will the prevailing culture in your institution alter the likelihood of you effecting a change?
- Is there a change leader, someone who facilitates innovation and access to resources?

Effective use of technology and existing platforms:

- Can you adopt a platform that has already been developed to deliver your service?
- What data do you need to demonstrate which engagement activities are paying off?
- Have you analysed all the various options including existing or hybrid platforms, and aggregated solutions, as well as open source solutions (to reduce costs)?
- Can you contribute to an established repository to maximise uptake of your solution?
- Is your chosen platform or set of solutions easy to adapt and easy for the audience to use?

Effective engagement with external communities:

- How can you capitalise on the enthusiasm of key individuals to use technology effectively?
- Can you reach the widest audience with an easy to use transferable solution or platform?
- Have you planned to engage early with external communities to address their needs during system development?

Effective and innovative partnership with other HE/FE institutions:

- Do you have an idea that could benefit from co-development with another institution?
- What could your data or ideas achieve if they were open?
- Have you considered signing up to the Innovation Commons network?
- Can you use a technology or platform which has a well-established developer base and is used in other institutions?