



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Lancashire Innovation Board

Private and Confidential: NO

Date: Monday, 5 September 2022

North West Innovation Board Chairs

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Executive Summary

This report sets out the initial findings and recommendations from a meeting between the Chairs of the three formal Innovation Boards which operate in the region and their LEP Innovation leads to consider potential areas of collaboration.

Recommendations

1. To consider the themes identified in this report and feedback on what has been included and identify whether there are any gaps or any distinctive connections between the themes and the collaboration principles
2. To support further work from officers and wider partners to collect relevant data and organise engagement through a series of workshops to develop the framework of themes and joint activities leading to a report outlining investable regional propositions to be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

Background and Advice

(Prepared by Matt Wright)

The current climate for innovation policy, along with the challenges facing business, require both local and regional actions to maximise opportunities for economic development. Progress has been made in local areas but further impact could be realised with a greater understanding of complementarity in the North West around innovation.

In the wake of the UK Innovation Strategy and Levelling Up agenda the policy and funding landscape for innovation is in a period of transition, which presents a number of key challenges and opportunities including:



- further devolution and changes to the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs);
- the replacement of European Structural and Investment Fund funding with new UK Government schemes such as the UK Social Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Innovation Accelerators;
- the greater involvement of bodies like Innovate UK in co-creating Place based strategy;
- the challenges of levelling-up in practice (to the North, across the North, within Regions);
- a trend of regionalisation of some of the Research Councils and interest in and facilitation of clusters (that naturally don't have hard county borders) and
- the importance of collaboration, R&D and productivity to future business success.

The development of Local Industrial Strategies, Innovation Plans and Science and Innovation Audits have helped local geographies to define their local priorities but also highlighted intra-regional issues and considerations of complementarity or scale.

Discussions through bodies such as the NP11 Innovation Group have made progress in considering high level strengths across the North as a whole but this remains a large diverse area and a deeper understanding would be advantageous within defined regions like the North West to make discussions more beneficial with Government and bodies like the NP11.

There are three formally constituted Innovation Boards in the North West (Manchester, Liverpool and Lancashire) that involve the key stakeholders referred to in this report ie Innovate UK, universities, local government and the private sector. These are a practical starting point to better understand the innovation agenda across the region as it is applied to business but the work proposed will also include engagement with Cheshire and Cumbria LEP Innovation Leads.

Considerations

The Innovation Lead at Lancashire LEP in discussion with the Chair of the Innovation Board proposed a meeting of the three chairs of the NW Innovation Boards and this was facilitated on the 17th June 2022.

The meeting enabled each Chair to describe the challenges and priorities in their area and consider the benefits to be gained from areas of overlap or opportunity as well as start to define the next stages for further joint engagement. The meeting was also attended by the three LEP Innovation Leads who are also members of the NP11 Innovation Group.

The following key issues were identified by the Chairs

- The need for a shared regional narrative and influencing approach to government and for inward investment, with these being based on a solid understanding of innovation capabilities and issues in each patch, tied through to other bodies such as the North-West Business Leadership Team (NWBLT)



- Strong agreement that there appeared to be key strengths around materials, cyber, life sciences, nuclear and manufacturing; enabled by the natural asset base (eg parts of the region are clean energy providers and others big customers) and ambitions to join up around connectivity and infrastructure

The Chairs asked the three local Innovation Leads to consider in more detail where a framework of priorities and themes might lay prior to further discussion and input from the members of individual Innovation Boards in autumn 2022.

By reference to work undertaken to date on local innovation strategies and a follow up meeting of the Innovation Leads to consider potential areas of complementarity, an initial list was drawn up as shown in the Collaboration Framework set out in this report along with elements of further work required to structure those themes and principles of collaboration.

It is proposed that the additional work required would set out the supporting evidence base, help define an overarching theme and connecting sub-themes through stakeholder engagement around specialisations and identification of priorities for potential investable propositions.

Consideration should also be given as to how to resource this, initial elements could be done “in-house” across the authorities to collect existing datasets and evidence, followed by asking NWBLT to run two to three workshops and write up a report.

Paper
N/A

Date

Contact/Tel

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate
N/A

Collaboration Framework

