

UNLOCKING THE COMMUNITY CHEST

Developing leadership and
entrepreneurship through
local anchor institutions

Leadership

Entrepreneurship

Market Street

High Street

Station Road

Victoria Bridge

Fountain Place

Partnerships

Influence

Reputation

Expertise

Premises



Unlocking the Community Chest

Developing leadership and entrepreneurship through local anchor institutions

As a small business owner myself, I firmly believe that small businesses form the backbone of the UK economy. However, evidence shows that a lack of leadership and entrepreneurship capability is holding back their confidence and competitiveness, preventing them from fulfilling their potential. Equally, UKCES' latest Employer Skills Survey found that small firms are significantly less likely to provide management training than their larger counterparts.

In the UK there is an increasing focus on local communities and supporting local growth. The importance of testing local partnership approaches to demonstrate impact on engaging and upskilling small businesses was picked up on in UKCES and Centre for Cities' City Deals and Growth report last year. Subsequently, we looked to explore the role that locally based 'anchor institutions' could play in supporting their communities to prosper.

This Productivity Challenge enabled us to explore whether anchor institutions could play a more proactive role by using their influence, purchasing power, networks and supply chains to access, engage and upskill small businesses in their areas, supporting them to prosper.

We worked with 8 organisations across all 4 nations of the UK to explore what works when anchor institutions create opportunities for small firms to improve their leadership and entrepreneurship skills.

The experiences and successes of these projects, outlined in this brochure, provide examples of how other locally based institutions could offer support to local small businesses in their community and help their local economy prosper. I would encourage you to consider whether you can draw from these examples to address the skills challenges in your area.

PROJECT OUTLINES

Causeway Enterprise Agency

Micro Firm Leader Development Programme – The project tested a 'purpose driven leadership' approach to leadership development for micro firms in rural Northern Ireland.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Doncaster Leadership & Entrepreneurship Academy – The partnership developed and delivered a bespoke 4-day Leadership and Entrepreneurship programme to three cohorts over a 12-month period, aiming to unlock talent growth within the local area.

Inverness College UHI

The Catalyst Project – A programme focussed on raising entrepreneurial aspiration and developing leadership mind set was created for small firms in the Highlands and Island of Scotland.

Newcastle University Business School

Captured – The Captured project engaged large regional employers to provide support to small firm owners in the North East, who have not previously invested in management skills.

Regional Learning and Skills Partnership South West & Mid Wales

Understand, Co-produce, Influence Learning (UCIL) – The project brought together clusters of small employers to test ways of engaging with leadership support, and raising the aspiration levels of small firms in Wales to realise the benefits of such training.

St Helens Chamber

The Leadership Project – St Helens Chamber, a local anchor institution, through their Leadership Network programme created better connectivity between 12 medium sized companies and small firms due to their knowledge, relationships and reputation.

University of Sunderland

Leadership and Entrepreneurship Advancing Productivity (LEAP) – The LEAP programme was established to encourage engagement in leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship training by small firms with less than 50 employees from the cultural/creative and manufacturing sectors.

Teesside University

The Leadership Forge – The project challenged the lack of leadership development opportunities taken up by a high proportion of small firms in the Teesside area.

Julie Kenny CBE

UKCES Commissioner, August 2016



Causeway Enterprise Agency

Micro Firm Leader Development Programme

Our Solution

This project tested a 'purpose driven leadership' approach to leadership development for micro firms in rural Northern Ireland.

'Purpose driven leadership' is designed to help leaders develop a strong sense of their own individual purpose, and translate that into a clear action plan for their business

Current leadership training does not meet the needs of micro firm owners, as it focusses on training that is more suited to businesses with more complex management structures.

Causeway Enterprise Agency is an organisation with a reputation amongst small firms and through the creation of this programme it aimed to attract more small firms to leadership training and increase productivity in their local economy.

Highlights and Successes

Lead2Grow conference hosted 23rd February with 235 attendees

First successful demonstration of collaboration amongst micro firms in north west Northern Ireland

36 micro businesses participated in purpose drive leadership programme and noted the benefits to them of the programme

Purpose Driven Leadership concept helped increase confidence of 100% of participants.

CEA have learned more about their role as an Anchor Institution in the region, specifically:

- Recognition by regional and government based organisation (e.g. DEL and InvestNI) of the relationship and reputation we hold with local micro companies.
- Word of mouth endorsement of the programme by employers in the area has further underlined our track record of success to local stakeholders (e.g. Council and Chamber) in delivering high quality tailored and meaningful interventions with real business impact.
- Supporting future economic impact in region by starting a new conversation with everyone at the table through Lead2Grow has further underlined the importance of collaboration .

What did we achieve?

Causeway Enterprise Agency successfully brought together 235 leaders of local small and micro firms for the first time at their Lead2 Grow conference. This was the first time micro businesses in north west Northern Ireland have collaborated on leadership development.

36 business leaders participated in the Lead2Grow programme.

The learning programme used an informal individual and collective learning environment, adopting action learning approach in the delivery of training and mentoring. It helped business leaders develop their strategic thinking, by helping them identify the 'Why' of their business purpose – i.e. not just creating a plan to

get from A to B, but thinking whether B is the right destination for the business in the first place. Previous leadership programmes have focused on the acquisition of concepts, skills and behaviours. This programme helped participants stop and think about their purpose.

In addition, 2 masterclass workshops were held with a total of 95 participants, covering sales and digital marketing.

100% of participants stated they had increased willingness to participate in future leadership training, and would recommend this programme to other employers. And there was a noted improvement in confidence from participants .

“ Through the development and successful delivery of our UKCES project, The Lead2Grow Programme, Causeway Enterprise Agency (CEA) has moved into a new space of business support beyond start up to include a wider reach to more established businesses. CEA is now enabled to promote a new leadership agenda for small business (unique not only to the North West of the province but a new programme for the whole of Northern Ireland.)”

JAYNE TAGGART CEO, CAUSEWAY ENTERPRISE AGENCY

“ The programme taught me that small changes can make a big difference and taking time to identify the bottle necks in the business and then develop a new process to address the problems, has been invaluable. Lead2Grow has brought a new insight on how to lead our small business in the current economy and in doing so, exceeded all my expectations.”

KENNY BLACKSTOCK BUSINESS MANAGER, BANAH UK

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit
www.causeway-enterprise.co.uk

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC)

Doncaster Leadership & Entrepreneurship Academy

Our Solution

The partnership developed and delivered a bespoke 4-day Leadership and Entrepreneurship programme to three cohorts over a 12-month period, aiming to unlock talent growth within the local area.

The programme was built on European best practice (the 'European Business Growth Catalyst' programme) and combined with Doncaster's Leadership and Management Development Framework to tailor it for Doncaster's small firms. It took an action learning approach, with small

group workshops, exploring real world problems, peer to peer networks, 'behind the scenes' company visits and one to one 'surgeries' with local professional service providers.

The collaborative partnership seeks to help address the economic decline in Doncaster's traditional industries, reverse the lag behind regional and national performance indicators, increase the low business start-up rates and low levels of growth amongst existing businesses.

Highlights and Successes

86 businesses in total engaged in the LEAD Programme, including small firms, large employers, project partners, steering group members and intermediaries. 48 small firm leaders have completed the 4-day programme across the 3 cohorts.

11 local large employers have hosted a training session within their business premises with a further 13 senior representatives from these businesses or alternative large employer businesses presenting to small firm leaders as part of the programme. Each cohort of the LEAD programme has seen an improved retention rate amongst small firm leaders.

"I expected to be taught quite a lot but instead got out of the course practical skills. As a result of that, I have looked at some associate roles that I hadn't previously considered. I started to ask 'bigger' clients for more work which I didn't think I was brave enough to before. Looking forward to keeping in touch with people who took the course."

RACHAEL BUTLER SCAFFOLD COACHING

What did we achieve?

Almost 50 of Doncaster's small businesses took the opportunity to participate and complete the LEAD project, designed to help local firms grow.

The project used expert local knowledge via the involvement of large employers, local SMEs and anchor institutions to both inform the content, drive the programme and work with small firms. The additional engagement and contribution of the large employers played an important role in the success of the programme, driving recruitment and engagement rates with small firms. Equally, much of the learning took place within some of Doncaster's flagship larger firms which gave small firms an opportunity to network and learn from their best practice.

The strong collaboration between the partnership proved effective, enabling the project partners to utilise each of their strengths to contribute to the success of the programme. For example, using the strength of existing relationships with large organisations, identifying local businesses in need of support, and translating knowledge and best practice from the private sector to embed in its own practices.

Access to such development and training is so readily available within DMBC it tends to be taken for granted. As an anchor institution, DMBC felt they have a role to play to enable better navigation of support available and more ready access to programmes like this.

"It got me thinking about my goals and ambitions for the business and helped me to produce a strategy and vision. That's something I've never really thought of in the past."

LUKE HOLISTIC TECHNOLOGIES LTD

This Project in Numbers

- **44%** of businesses engaged to support the programme aims and objectives, or benefit from support without engaging onto the full programme.
- The LEAD programme has held **12** full day training sessions between November 2015 and May 2016.
- **100%** of the participants said the programme altered the way they look at their organisation.

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit

www.businessdoncaster.com/supporting-your-business/already-in-business/doncaster-leadership-entrepreneurship-academy

Inverness College UHI

The Catalyst Project

Our Solution

A programme focussed on raising entrepreneurial aspiration and developing a leadership mind set was created for small firms in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

The geographically remote nature of the Highlands and Islands impacts on access to training. To address this, the project created a programme in two formats

(face-to-face and virtual) to explore impact of online networking and value of face to face learning

The Catalyst project developed a new leadership training programme that involved experienced entrepreneurs mentoring and inspiring other small businesses.

Highlights and Successes

30% of participants rated themselves as good or excellent at seeking out new markets and opportunities at the start of the programme and this increased to 68% by the end of the programme.

41% of participants rated their ability and confidence to delegate tasks and responsibility as good or excellent at the start of the programme and this increased to 89% by the end of the programme.

46% of participants believed that their business was good or excellent at encouraging innovation and innovative solutions/thinking at the start of the programme and this increased to 79% by the end of the programme.

“ The Catalyst programme has responded to the need for more accessible entrepreneurship and leadership training across the rural and highly dispersed Highlands and Islands region of Scotland. The partnership of anchor institutions, led by Inverness College UHI delivered an innovative and impactful programme in a choice of either a face-to-face or virtual format, thus allowing many more small business leaders to take part.”

CAROL LANGSTON HEAD OF CREATE, INVERNESS COLLEGE UHI

What did we achieve?

We had 39 small firms participating in the training programme (18 on the face to face programme, 21 on the virtual programme).

The collaboration of three local anchor institutions created a new partnership which showed small firms how a large institution such as a college could be accessible to them and provide support that is more suited to their needs.

A 6 module training programme was created focussing on, for example, Mindset for growth, assessing current business models, delegation and human-centred innovative thinking to current business challenges.

Eight entrepreneurs, who had built successful businesses in the region, were recruited to act as role models. The involvement of these role models was a key factor in attracting participants and

facilitated a deeper learning experience

There was a positive impact on small business participants' mindset, entrepreneurial ambition, leadership and business skills and on relationships with anchor institutions. In particular, increases in skills and confidence in:

- Seeking new markets and opportunities
- Identifying and exploiting opportunities
- Forming opinions and influencing others
- Delegating tasks and responsibilities
- Encouraging innovation and innovative solutions/thinking
- Thinking ahead and planning strategically
- Initiate and manage change
- Ability to effectively utilise strategic business tools

“ Catalyst gives me such a valuable opportunity, which quite frankly, I have never had before, to get away from the office to help focus on my business practices with the assistance of industry professionals. Literally, every few minutes there are light bulb moments where my current practices are challenged as I learn new ways to help make my business and the way I do things work and function better. The quality of the resources and teaching has been first class and it is extremely humbling when I see how much time and effort has been put into making Catalyst happen. I've really been equipped for life and only wish I had been able to access a course like Catalyst years ago, so thank you.”

DAVID EGLINTON DIRECTOR, HCVF TELEVISION

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit
www.createhighland.com/catalyst.aspx

Newcastle University Business School

Captured

Our Solution

The Captured project engaged large regional employers to provide support to small firm owners in the North East, who have not previously invested in management skills.

The purpose was to utilise the skills of managers from larger firms, and see how they could support smaller firm leaders develop their skills.

This short innovative programme included three half-day workshops which facilitated 1:1 relationships between senior managers in these large firms and owners of small firms to explore key challenges facing the small firm.

The emphasis was on giving time for the small firms to reflect on their current performance and potential and to provide them with leadership skills that could be implemented in their business immediately.

“ Captured has been a great example of how Newcastle University Business School can act as a catalyst and innovator. The commitment to the programme shown by our large and small firm participants and other stakeholders has been exceptional. ”

PROFESSOR JOHN WILSON

DIRECTOR, NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

“ We don't normally attend a lot of networking events... you walk in, you feel like there's a lot of people there and it's sometimes hard to break down barriers and get to talk to people. But on the Captured project, it didn't feel like that at all... you were in a room of like-minded people and with people who were there to help you as well. So I suppose the more you put into that and the more you opened up and shared, the more you're going to get back. ”

KAREN NELSON

MANAGING DIRECTOR,
CALIBRE SECURED NETWORKS LIMITED
(SMALL FIRM PARTICIPANT)

What did we achieve?

Over 40 small firm leaders participated in the programme which gave them unique access to senior managers from large employers.

The small firm participants reported that Captured enabled them to:

- Clarify their vision for their business and its value proposition
- Focus on how they should invest their time to generate greatest impact
- Obtain external perspectives and validation
- Access resources of the larger organisations
- Make valuable new connections
- Obtain new clients and routes to market
- Increase their confidence as a leader of their business

The Business School provided the catalyst to engage 38 managers from 18 large firms to play a more active role in supporting regional economic development.

Managers from the larger firms reported that Captured gave them space to:

- Get out of their business and see what other businesses are doing
- Engage with entrepreneurial business people
- Make a difference by supporting the development of small businesses
- Return to their workplace with new perspectives
- Further develop their own management and leadership skills

This Project in Numbers

- **18** large regional employers supporting the project.
- **38** senior managers providing advice and mentoring.
- **41** small firm owners in the North East developing their management abilities and practices.

“ Like most people from the area I have a strong sense of commitment to building the region, it is in all our interests to build strong businesses so that we can develop and retain talent in the region. ”

DAVID REDPATH INFORMATION SYSTEMS DIRECTOR, HOME GROUP

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit
go.ncl.ac.uk/nubs/captured

Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLP) South West & Mid Wales

Understand, Co-produce, Influence Learning (UCIL)

Our Solution

The project brought together clusters of small employers to test ways of engaging with leadership support, and raising the aspiration levels of small firms in Wales to realise the benefits of such training.

The geography of mid and south Wales makes training often difficult to access. This programme looked at creating more effective messages to engage the interest of small firms in leadership training and

creating better provision which is led by the demands of what micro firms need.

Existing support (including Higher and Further Education) was mapped out and tested to challenge its relevance, accessibility and appropriateness for small businesses. The goal for this project was to influence the strategy and policy development of emerging and future provision including the policy decisions of Welsh Government.

Highlights and Successes

New leadership programmes have started to be developed within the region. The findings from this programme are also being used by the RLP on behalf of Welsh Government to shape the Employment and Skills Plan South West and Mid Wales (Skills Plan).

“Working with and on Challenge 5 of the UKCES Futures Programme has been an extremely positive and enlightening experience. From the inspiring team of professionals leading the programme, who understand and uphold the principles of testing and learning in the pursuit of innovation, to the energy and enthusiasm with which all of the small firms, micro businesses, partners and providers approached the challenge, the experience has been a true reflection of the power of collaboration. It would have been a far greater challenge to have achieved all that we have, without the remarkable effort and goodwill of those who participated and those who contributed and supported us. For that, we thank you all.”

KIM NEYLAND UCIL PROJECT COORDINATOR, RLP SOUTH WEST AND MID WALES

What did we achieve?

An effective collaboration between RLP and a group of small businesses in South West and Central Wales has engaged sectors significant to the Welsh economy: Creative, Food, Tourism, and Social Enterprise.

160 small firms have taken up the opportunity to advise and shape leadership and entrepreneurship programmes in Wales.

Working with clusters of employers from the same sector, created small networks which encouraged more small firms to participate due to the peer to peer nature of these networks. These smaller more local networks overcame some of the geographical barriers in SW and Central Wales by helping small firms recognise the value of leadership support and by making it more accessible.

This Project in Numbers

- **166** employers committed **959** hours engaging with and contributing to the programme, with 94% of employers wanting to be involved in future events and activities.
- **16** employer events were facilitated with partners across the region.
- **10** local training providers supported and contributed to the programme.

“Being engaged with the UCIL Project was a very positive experience for all of us at Menter Berllan Community Enterprise Hub. It gave us the chance to network with commercial and social businesses in Mid and South Wales, whom we would not otherwise have met and to impart and share skills. We've been able to contribute our own ideas of what effective learning for leadership and entrepreneurial skills could look like for Welsh businesses in future; ideally a move away from classroom course based delivery towards blended learning drawing upon practical peer support and facilitated mentoring sessions. We have thoroughly enjoyed working with everyone in the UCIL project team and look forward to continuing our relationship in the future.”

LESLEY LONG

DIRECTOR & ENTERPRISE HUB MANAGER, MENTER BERLLAN COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE HUB

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit
www.rlp.org.uk/ukces/

St Helens Chamber

The Leadership Project

Our Solution

Small firms in the St Helens region felt that they do not have the time to invest in their own skills and knowledge of management and leadership. As such, take up of existing support in these areas was low. Medium-sized firms however are more likely to take up opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

This project gave 17 small firms the opportunity to improve their leadership

and entrepreneurial skills through a series of management seminars, as well as be mentored in their development of these skills by 12 medium-sized firms in their area who had gone through a growth curve themselves and could relate to small firms' issues. It also trialled the idea of encouraging these companies to work together on a Local Economic Development project contributing to the economic growth of St Helens.

Highlights and Successes

It was great that delegates identified that the Chamber is a local, trusted and credible organisation and that this was important in their decision to join the Programme.

The Leadership/management seminars and mentoring were successful elements to the programme. Improving the confidence of the cohort.

Allowed us to understand the needs and requirements of Leaders in small firms and gave us a great insight to allow us to develop further programmes to assist these needs.

Taking our learnings from this Programme the Chamber is going to run its own Leadership Network with a new cohort small firms as closed group in the Autumn 2016. The programme will run over 6 months, with monthly seminars and mentoring opportunities.

“ I learned several new leadership techniques during the programme and would recommend the Programme content to any fellow business owners.”

ALLAN TELFER OWNER, ALL SAFE TRADES, ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR

What did we achieve?

St Helens Chamber, a local anchor institution, through their Leadership Network programme created better connectivity between 12 medium sized companies and small firms due to their knowledge, relationships and reputation. Almost all participants cited St Helen's reputation as a trusted, credible local institution as very important in their decision to join the programme.

St Helens Chamber's role as an anchor enabled them to establish effective mentor relationships. Their existing knowledge of the business community allowed them to identify owners of medium-sized businesses who would be best placed to act as mentors, because they had the skills needed by the individual mentees. Equally, their influence, reputation and existing relationships means that direct requests to known business owners for one off conversations with mentee delegates had a higher success rate.

A mix of technical knowledge and leadership seminars provided by St Helens Chamber were very well received by delegates as an opportunity to acquire knowledge and develop peer networks. The creation of 'networks' provided important opportunities for owners to meet and talk to other owners in similar positions to themselves, across multiple sectors, combating feelings of isolation and increasing confidence.

Mentoring provided by 12 medium sized firms was a successful element of this project, reported as a welcome opportunity with the meetings surpassing the expectations of mentees. It also led to increased collaboration and stronger networking. Equally, areas covered in the management seminars have reinforced conversations and strategies discussed in mentoring sessions underlining the effectiveness of these two elements working together.

This Project in Numbers

- **450** delegate hours of delivery time.
- **20** mentoring meetings held to date.
- **30** local businesses involved in the programme either as a delegate, mentor or supplier.

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit
www.sthelenschamber.com

University of Sunderland

Leadership and Entrepreneurship Advancing Productivity (LEAP)

Our Solution

The LEAP programme was established to encourage engagement in leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship training by small firms with less than 50 employees from the cultural/creative and manufacturing sectors.

To overcome barriers to engagement LEAP was designed in its entirety by the participating businesses.

The result was a bespoke programme which provided coaching, workshops and practical sessions. Individuals were encouraged to participate collaboratively and accessed a range of content including 'TED' style talks.

The most unique aspect of LEAP was the FabLab, which was a vital aspect of our aim to engage SMEs due to its interactive, innovative, creative and collaborative nature.

The LEAP programme has seen the University of Sunderland engage with a number of small firms who previously hadn't engaged with anchor institutions for leadership, or entrepreneurship interventions. Our approach enabled us to understand the challenges the manufacturing, creative and cultural sectors were facing. Our design days were an example of collaborative innovation, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of both business and academia, and participants were keen that we continue to run this programme.

“ Having been in leadership roles for over 20 years I have dealt with many situations; however I am always open to learning and applying new skills. The LEAP programme was both informative and thought provoking and I am gradually bringing my learning into the workplace. I will be using this to develop the skills of my team so that we continue to work as a strong unit, constantly challenging ourselves and developing leadership skills throughout the team.”

CRIS BROWN SALES AND MARKETING MANAGER, NORTHUMBERLAND TOURISM

What did we achieve?

The University of Sunderland's LEAP project offered small firms drawn from the two main sectors in this region – manufacturing and creative skills – the chance to be among the first to use the FabLab facility to co-create a leadership development programme.

During the programme 97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops would help them create new products and services, and 86% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops would help them with new ways of working.

79% of participants rated overall satisfaction of the programme as very good/excellent and 88% of participants agreed/strongly agreed that the programme exposed them to innovation and leadership, which would increase productivity or growth in their company.

88% of small firms agree that they could now introduce new working practices, which fulfils LEAP's aim to engage and inspire small firm employees.

This Project in Numbers

- **85%** of attendees agreed that the free access to the FabLab really appealed to them during the programme.
- **8 in 10** attendees of the development programme agreed that the programme would help them develop new leadership skills.
- And again, **8 in 10** attendees agreed that all sectors were interested in creating and maintaining a positive network through the programme.

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit www.sunderland.ac.uk/cape

Our Solution

The Leadership Forge project challenged the lack of leadership development opportunities taken up by a high proportion of small firms in the Teesside area.

Many owner managers of local small businesses do not see leadership development as a valid route to business growth hence the low value attributed to it.

Using a peer to peer approach to learning, Teesside University created a programme

for small firms who would not traditionally think to work with a University.

Teesside University developed a programme of experiential and shared learning via think tanks, coaching, site visits to large employers and peer learning sessions.

On completion of the programme, continuous leadership learning was maintained for cohort members, through the development of an alumni group.

Highlights and Successes

The power of peer networking was particularly strong. Advice and support provided between peers during the programme helped create a strong network of businesses

Early signs of impact show that: participants are more able to think critically and approach problems from an outcome driven basis; they have a greater understanding of their leadership style; and there has been a creation of business networks amongst participants.

“ My attitude towards Leadership and Management has changed massively especially when looking at each individual employee and deciding what approach will bring the best out of them. In particular, the need to be able to adapt to different situations and people in order to achieve the best out of people. I have also learnt a lot about my leadership skills and gained more confidence.”

CLAIRE RICHARDSON SPACE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION LTD

What did we achieve?

19 people from 17 different small firms participated in the Leading Growth leadership programme.

The training programme included: an overnight residential, 5 think tanks of 3-4 hour sessions, 1:1 ...coaching and site visits. The elements considered most valuable by participants were: the overnight residential, which was invaluable for the groups cohesion; coaching; and the site visits which enabled observational learning.

The programme created secondary benefits for small firms through creating

business opportunities and networks for those attending the training.

An alumni programme was delivered to 22 participants from 17 different businesses. This programme will continue beyond the lifespan of UKCES funding. Teesside University are currently recruiting for another 30 businesses from our previous Leadership & Management cohorts, to join the existing alumni group to create a network of 50 small firms and begin in September 2016.

“ My expectations were superseded. The understanding of theory, strategy and reflection within the business environment has made such an impact on me, and the way in which the company goes forward. Turnover and profit will still be important going forward, but now I understand more than I did before that the internal strategy of the business is equally important in the company's future.”

ALISON JOHNSON GCS JOHNSON LTD

This Project in Numbers

- **19** employees from small businesses in the Tees Valley area participated in the programme.
- **7** high quality coaches supported these participants.
- **5** large companies selected from the regions industries and priority sectors, provided site visits and worked closely with Teesside University to develop and deliver the programme.

What can you do?

To find out more you can visit

www.tees.ac.uk/sections/business/leading_growth.cfm

Conclusions

The purpose of this Productivity Challenge was to explore the role that anchor institutions could play in enhancing productivity in their local economy.

Through working with these eight collaborations, UKCES found that there are certain characteristics that successful anchor institutions have which allow them to make a positive contribution to their local community. These include:

- An ambition to utilise their strengths to support other firms in their local area.
- An understanding of the challenges facing their local economy and the opportunities available for businesses.
- A clarity of vision on the role they can play on the wider strategic aims for the local community/economy.
- Clarity on how helping businesses in their local community helps them achieve their own organisational goals.
- The ability to forge strong local partnerships.

UKCES found that the importance of strong partnerships with locally based institutions is critical in developing programmes which support local business. Successful partnerships built on established relationships, mutual interest and time commitment were able to offer insight and support to small firms that each partner would not have been able to offer on their own.

There were also a number of benefits for anchor institutions found through this work:

- An opportunity to tackle local skills issues and tailor to the needs of the local economy.
- Develop relationships with new public and private partners that could support the evolving devolution agenda.
- An additional market for trading expertise amongst small, ambitious businesses.
- Improving the student learning experience and outcomes by developing better knowledge of the needs of local businesses to input to course design, opportunities for work placements and graduate employment and identifying new research collaborations between business and university departments, all of which are important contributions to the Teaching Excellence Framework.

At times it can be difficult for such locally based organisations to be aware of their own strengths and their potential to influence local economic growth. It is important to raise awareness of the levers at anchor institutions' disposal – such as: the use of existing relationships to build employer networks; an active involvement in local economic strategy; the use of procurement power; access to real estate.

It is important for anchor institutions to be proactive and provide leadership themselves in their local community. This could be through forging their own role in their local economy, proactively building partnerships, or in shaping programme content.

As a result of this work, we believe that there is a huge potential for anchor institutions to work together, overcome barriers and biases and develop management skills in local small businesses.

This programme specifically focussed on the role anchor institutions could play when supporting small firms develop leadership and entrepreneurship skills. However, many of the lessons for anchor institutions would apply for business engagement schemes focused on different, local priorities.



**St Helens
Chamber**



The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is a publicly funded, industry-led organisation providing leadership on skills and employment issues across the UK. Together, our Commissioners comprise a social partnership of senior leaders of large and small employers from across industry, trade unions, the third sector, further and higher education and across all four UK nations.



www.gov.uk/ukces



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