

Regional Partnerships and Engagement

A Partnerships First Approach

FOREWORD

At UWE Bristol, our role as an anchor institution has never mattered more. The region is facing profound economic, social and environmental shifts, and the way we respond, with our partners, will shape the future of the West of England.

This framework sets out how we will deepen that responsibility. Our track record shows what we can achieve when we work alongside employers, Further Education partners, the VCSE sector and our communities. But the next phase requires us to go further: to be more deliberate in how we convene, more consistent in how we collaborate, and more accountable for the impact we create together.

Being an anchor institution means using our expertise, our campuses and our networks in service of place. It means strengthening skills pathways, supporting innovation, widening participation, and ensuring our research and enterprise activity is connected to real need. It also means listening carefully to our partners and communities and shaping solutions with them.

Through RISE, and with the development of the National Centre for Skills and Simulation, we have an opportunity to bring together skills, research, innovation and enterprise in a way that supports inclusive growth across the region. This framework provides the structure to do that with clarity and purpose.

Our commitment is simple: to work openly, collaboratively and with long-term intent, so that the benefits of education, skills and innovation are felt across all parts of our region. Partnership is not an add on to this mission, it is how we deliver it.



Jo Midgley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, UWE Bristol



Professor Marc Griffiths, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Regional Partnerships, Engagement and Innovation

IN SERVICE TO OUR REGION

As the anchor institution for the West of England, UWE Bristol stands ready to transform futures through economic, social, environmental and cultural impact. We are the go-to talent solution for the region, driving the ambitions of the new Industrial Strategy and ensuring inclusive, sustainable growth. Our campuses, staff and students are our key assets, a true living lab to deliver real world solutions. We are a university with a can-do mindset, working in genuine partnership with others to deliver prosperity for all.

Our regional call to action: RISE with us through the power of partnerships and purposeful engagement

RESEARCH

Deliver place-based, connected research with purpose

Embedding research excellence within our regional businesses, organisations and all growth sectors to address real-world challenges through practice-lead research and accelerate innovation.

Connect applied research through community engagement and impact at regional, national and international levels

Empowering partners and diverse communities through collaborative, co-designed research that enhances wellbeing, tackles inequalities such as race, socio-economic and disability, and drives social justice.

INNOVATION

Embed and accelerate innovation and enterprise

Promote support for large organisations, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and micro businesses with collaborative Research and Development (R&D), incubation, and innovation labs, launching our National Centre for Skills and Simulation (NCSS) as part of our innovation and enterprise campus, catalysing new products, services, and social ventures.

SKILLS

Lead on future-ready skills for regional growth

Expand degree apprenticeships, bootcamps, and micro-credentials across sectors and connecting with the regional Industrial Strategy priorities, healthcare and education, Voluntary, Charities and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations/public sector, businesses and ensuring employer-led, agile provision for emerging and future workforce needs.

Position UWE Bristol as a regional skills hub

Provide the expertise and resources through facilities to enable a regional innovation ecosystem to grow. Enabling talent development, micro-credentials, and rapid adoption to meet industrial strategy goals, mapping directly into and across the tertiary education and skills agenda.

Strengthening education pathways with Further Education partners

Convene, integrate and embed Further Education partnerships to create seamless lifelong learning journeys and a robust and future facing regional skills pipeline, which meets the needs of the region and the future economy.

ENTERPRISE

Embed an enterprise mindset across UWE Bristol, through curricula and support for businesses

Equip all students, graduates and staff with the entrepreneurial skills needed to thrive, start ventures, be change-makers and contribute to an inclusive regional economy.

Continue to create the conditions for a skills 'Enterprise Engine' which brings our enterprise support for students, staff, alumni and communities into a common framework through the University's Enterprise Zone (UEZ).

Deliver new regional income through enterprise

Scale up engagement with employers, SMEs, and VCSE organisations to power economic development and community-led enterprise whilst providing support for start-ups and spin outs.

Focus on continuing to create an environment for business creation and acceleration linking into the UEZ, Launch Space and Student Ventures.



OUR APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIPS IS

- **Aligned with Strategy 2030.**

- Fully realising our mission of Transforming Futures by embedding RISE across everything we do.
- Ensuring all partnership activity demonstrably contributes to institutional priorities, delivering measurable outcomes across research, skills, innovation, and enterprise.

- **In service of our region**

- Continue to enable sustainable and good economic growth, social progress, and cultural vibrancy. Mapping our activity to the regional combined authority regional growth plans is vital to the future success of this regional framework and wider business activity.
- Taking a place-based approach that targets local needs and opportunities, ensuring our reach extends into underserved communities, priority growth zones, and areas of low participation

- **Delivered in partnership**

- Partnerships is our superpower, and we will leverage our existing offer (ie UEZ, Education and Research offer) to convene, co-create and collaborate with multiple stakeholders at all levels, including larger employers, SMEs and start-ups, Further Education Colleges, VCSE organisations, regional leaders and communities.
- Strengthening long-term, strategic relationships that go beyond transactional engagement, enabling deeper collaboration, shared ownership, and collective impact across the regional ecosystem.

- **Enabled through a can-do and collaborative mindset**

- Continuing to seize opportunities with developing confidence, agility, and the courage to lead change.
- Empowering staff, partners, and communities to co-create solutions, fostering a culture of openness, innovation, and shared responsibility for delivering meaningful impact at scale.

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A DEEPER DIVE | WE RISE IN PARTNERSHIP

OUR VISION

Being recognised as the anchor institution at the heart of the West of England's regional growth, civic life, and skills ecosystem. Embedded in the Strategy 2030 objectives, our regional mission is to transform futures through Research, Innovation, Skills and Enterprise (RISE), delivering inclusive, sustainable growth (eg improved access to Higher Education, progression outcomes, community wealth-building) that meets the needs of employers, communities, and the broader economy. Our vision is an opportunity for communities and organisations to shape and co-create our ways of working as equal partners.

UWE Bristol has the intellectual capability, subject and research expertise, collaborative mindset and ambition and leadership capacity to be a lead player in influencing and delivering the economic and skills strategies across our region, working alongside key stakeholders and promoting practice-orientated solutions for societal challenges.

Through our interdisciplinary approach and the UEZ, we have an opportunity to create a targeted approach that provides opportunities for our learners and the agility to work in different ways with large businesses/sectors. Alongside this, we will openly, equitably and respectfully connect and engage with diverse communities and through an intersectional approach, as part of the city and region's Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise networks. This model will better inform our outreach activities, partnerships and impact evaluation.

Our foundational aim is to ensure a clear education, skills and development pathway for our partners and employers across the region, mapping into the Industrial Growth Strategy, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WEMCA) Growth Strategy and takes into account the emerging opportunities for new ways of working that crosses traditional discipline boundaries and opens opportunities for enterprise and innovation.

The WEMCA will continue to look towards UWE Bristol, Bristol and other Tertiary Education providers as the regional practice-led organisations to support the development and implementation of their response to the growth and skills needs for Skills England and the Industrial Strategy. Vocational skills, coupled with an enterprise mindset, are growth areas and vital to the sustainability of practice-led Universities in a changing policy and funding landscape.

Our campuses are places to serve the community, to enable collaboration and shared resources, and act as a living lab through co-beneficial research, bringing students, staff and community together to seek solutions to real-world problems.

The Enterprise Zone at UWE Bristol helps the University create and grow businesses in the West of England. The 134 active spin-out companies at the University generated more than £21 million in turnover in 2023/24, supporting 590 full-time equivalent jobs. Assessments of the businesses supported by Future_Space and Launch Space in the Enterprise Zone show that collectively they have added more than £230 million of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy. There is also a strong desire to increase support for social enterprise across the region, working in partnership with key stakeholders.

The **Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper** calls for a 'much more collaborative system' between Further Education Colleges and Universities. Our vision is for Deeper partnerships with Further Education partners across the region, to create greater impact, for learners, employers and communities. This includes:

- Creating deeper academic links to share best practice, enhance and align curricula to empower better pathways and progression
- To work with employers across providers and levels on skills planning together and across employer networks on KE and applied research and develop shared objectives
- Growing the UWE Bristol partnership offers across the region to supply Higher Education cold-spots and local demand
- Working together on place-based change, bringing the expertise of the University to Further Education partnerships and localities
- Collaborating on joint funding bids and projects where collaboration is material to enhancement or success
- Creating the case for government and employer investment in the region
- Creating pathways to tackle inequality and poverty and improve social mobility across the region and beyond

Measures include working together on higher technical qualifications and supporting regional economic planning. Further Education Colleges offering Higher Education are registered with the Office for Students and there is to be encouragement for gaining powers to award L4/5 qualifications. Further Education Colleges may therefore be more autonomous in collaborative systems, not relying on the Higher Education Institution as a route to funding or qualifications.

Our partnerships are led through an Integrated Approach, being inter-disciplinary as real-world challenges are not singular and are often multi-faceted, requiring an integrated ecosystem approach to solve them. This requires a triple and quadruple helix approach, working closely with industry, local/combined authorities, Government and policy makers.

Businesses are requesting an inter disciplinary system response to their questions and challenges and workforce development and upskilling are high on the list of government and business needs; often they are seen as a barrier to sustainable economic growth. There is a need to innovate and benefit from technological advances and UWE Bristol is well placed though our expertise and collaborative endeavours.



RISE BEACONS

UWE Bristol is a university rooted in and dedicated to our region.

Our strong moral compass is reflected in our RISE beacons.



**Shaping
integrated
healthcare**



**Harnessing
creativity and
technology**



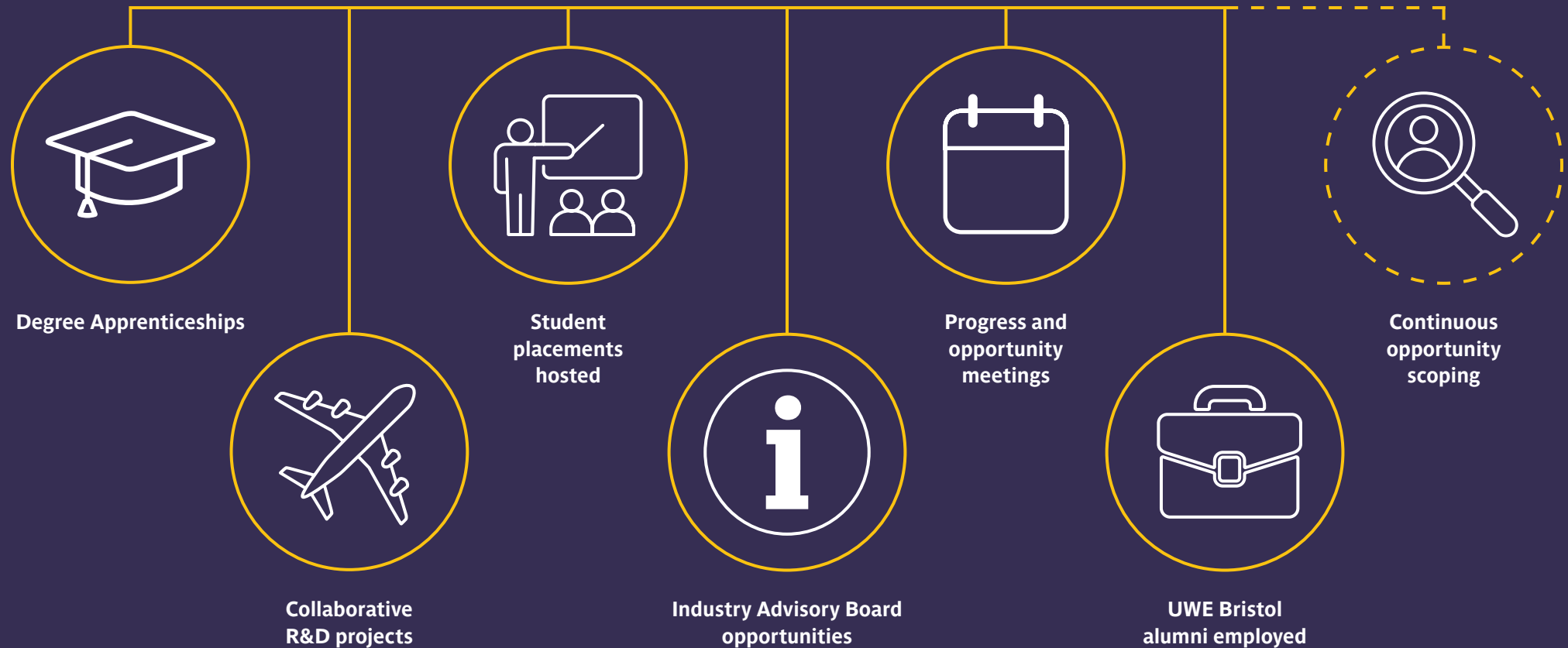
**Enriching culture,
place and
community**



**Securing a green,
resilient future**

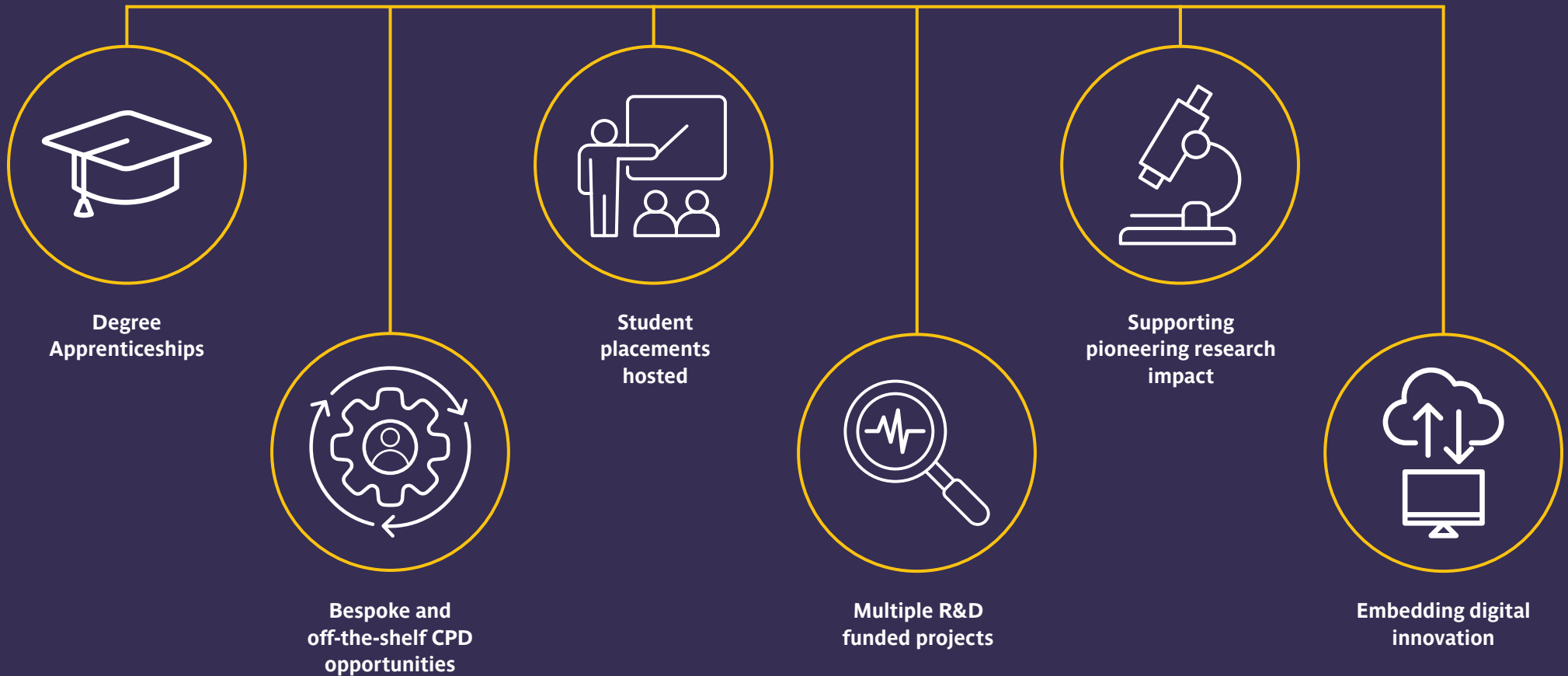
CASE STUDY: HARNESSING CREATIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY

Highlighting UWE Bristol as trusted skills, training and research partner.



CASE STUDY: SHAPING INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE

Highlighting UWE Bristol as trusted skills, training and research partner.



CASE STUDY: ENRICHING CULTURE, PLACE AND COMMUNITY

Highlighting how UWE Bristol supports our communities.



CASE STUDY: SECURING A GREEN, RESILIENT FUTURE

Highlighting how UWE Bristol influences regional and national policy.

AIR QUALITY

UWE Bristol academics have made contributions to an influential Government report on the measurement of air pollution.

CITIZEN SCIENCE

They covered microplastics, including the development of analysis techniques to assess microplastics in the air, and community/citizen approaches.

THE IMPACT

UWE Bristol research is shaping the future of the UK's air quality research.

STRATEGY 2030 ALIGNMENT

The regional strategy will directly support Strategy 2030's core themes:

- Future-Ready Graduates: Developing a regionally responsive curriculum that includes upskilling, degree apprenticeships, and lifelong learning.
- Research with Impact: Embedding place-based research, innovation labs, and industry collaboration across the Western Innovation Arc.
- Inclusion and Social Justice: Prioritising outreach to cold spots, underrepresented groups, and communities not currently engaged in HE.
- Sustainability: Driving regional solutions for net zero, green jobs, and sustainable growth.

Our Existing Platforms: Building on Proven Strengths:

- UWE Bristol's regional partnerships are underpinned by a set of established, high-performing platforms that already deliver significant impact for businesses, partners, and the wider economy. These assets form the foundation of our RISE approach and provide clear, accessible entry points into our ecosystem.
- Future_Space (UEZ) serves as the front door for SMEs and start-ups, offering incubation, business support, and pathways into innovation, research, and growth.
- The BRL provides world-class research and development capability, enabling businesses to collaborate on advanced technologies, automation, and applied innovation.
- Launch Space and Student Ventures support student and graduate enterprise, nurturing entrepreneurial talent and creating new ventures that contribute to the regional economy.
- Together, these platforms demonstrate UWE Bristol's proven ability to deliver innovation, enterprise, and business growth at scale. The development of new initiatives, including the NCSS, will build on and connect these strengths, rather than replace or duplicate them, ensuring a coherent and recognisable offer to partners.



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SKILLS AND SIMULATION (NCSS)

A DEDICATED SKILLS AND TALENT ENGINE FOR REGIONAL GROWTH:

The NCSS will serve as the core skills delivery engine for workforce transformation, skills development, and talent pipelines within UWE Bristol's regional RISE framework. Its role is to enable employers, public sector partners, and communities to access the future-ready skills and training required for long-term economic growth and societal impact. The NCSS will be the beating heart of UWE Bristol's regional framework, alongside our UEZ, also offering new and innovative models of education and skills delivery for employers and wider organisations.



A CLEAR AND DISTINCT ROLE WITHIN THE UWE BRISTOL ECOSYSTEM:

To ensure clarity for partners and maximise the effectiveness of UWE Bristol's regional offer, the NCSS has a clearly defined and focused purpose:

- Embed regional employer demand into education and skills provision, supporting inclusive economic growth by providing access for all communities.
- Workforce transformation at scale, supporting employers to upskill, reskill, and future-proof their workforce
- Flexible and modular skills provision, including micro-credentials, degree apprenticeships, and short-course delivery aligned to employer and sector needs
- Talent pipeline development, connecting learners to regional employers through structured pathways into employment
- Simulation-led learning, enabling high-quality, practice-based education in sectors including healthcare, engineering, and professional services

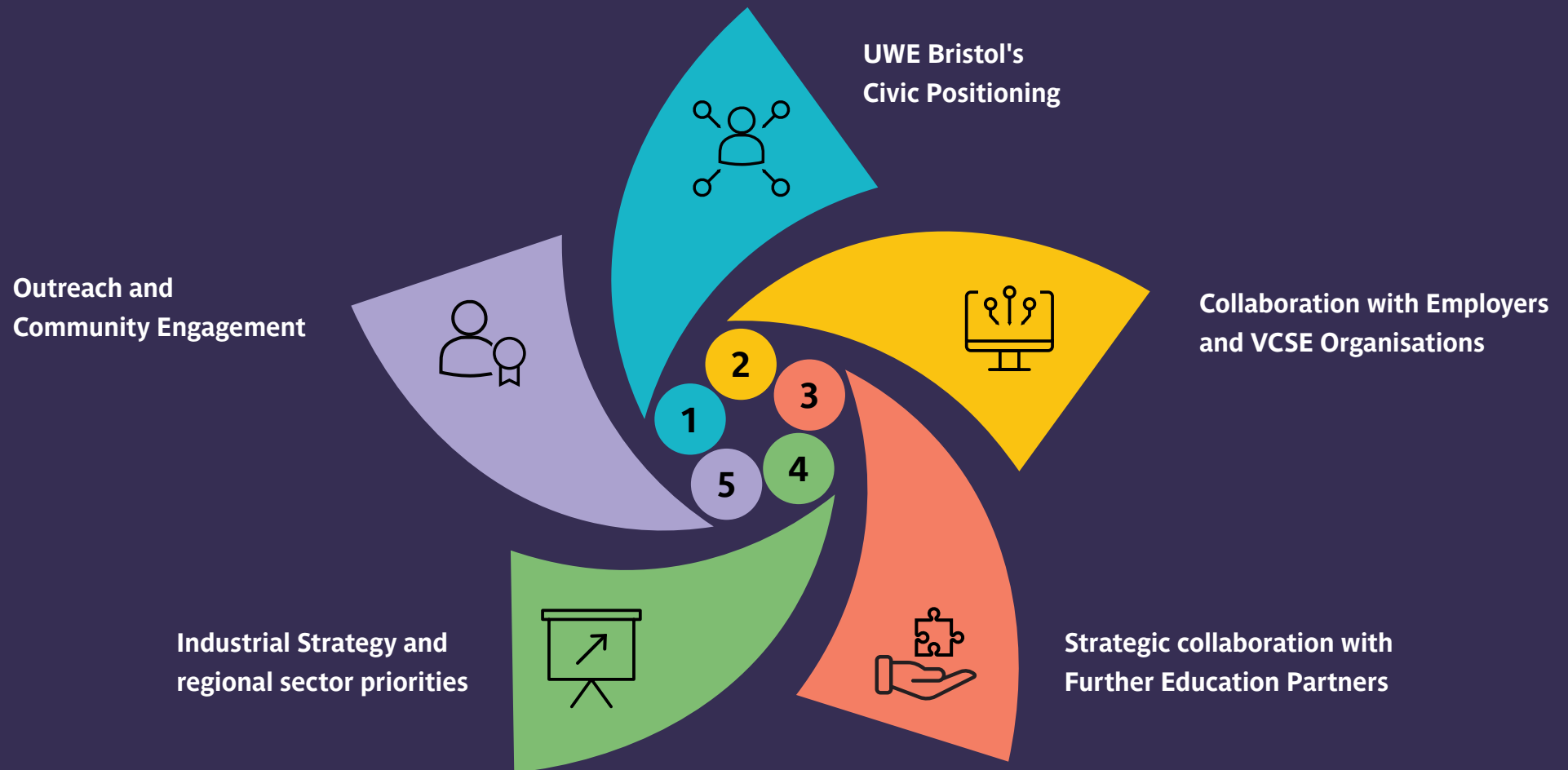
This focus positions the NCSS as a nationally significant hub for skills delivery and workforce development, aligned to regional and national Industrial Strategy priorities, complementing the University Enterprise Zone:

- The UEZ provides innovation, enterprise, and business growth support, including incubation, collaborative R&D, and scale-up environments
- The NCSS provides skills, training, and talent development, enabling individuals and organisations to access the capabilities required to innovate and grow

This distinction ensures:

- Innovation and incubation activity is anchored within the UEZ, where it is already well established
- Skills and workforce development is centralised within the NCSS, creating a clear and coherent regional skills offer

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – STRATEGIC PILLARS



STRATEGIC PILLARS INFORMING OUR APPROACH TO REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

1

UWE BRISTOL'S CIVIC POSITIONING

- UWE Bristol continues to proactively lead as a civic university, connecting policy, education, skills, and innovation to regional priorities. Coupling this approach into the regional growth plan is key, along with a continued need to understand our future business models.
- Through the NCSS, the creation of a physical and digital hub that is a welcoming space for learners, businesses, and communities would strengthen our connectivity. The creation of entities such as the Repair Cafe at our Frenchay and Bower Ashton sites as part of our commitment to developing a stronger circular economy and is supported through the MAKERS project and the Library of Things at the Frenchay Campus.
- Continue to convene partners to tackle regional inequalities in skills, health, education, and economic participation.
- Enhance and promote our visibility as a trusted partner and facilitator of regional growth, community impact, and collaborative solutions. This will be achieved through working closely with the Bristol City Council Office One City Plan and associated themes, South Gloucestershire Council One Partnership Board, WEMCA and our continued commitment through the Civic University Agreement.

2

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION WITH FURTHER EDUCATION PARTNERS

- Deepen strategic partnerships with Further Education Colleges through formal agreements and shared growth plans, aligning skills pathways and education pipelines.
- UWE Bristol to convene and lead a Regional Further Education Roundtable to coordinate education provision, mitigate internal competition, and strengthen coherent skills planning across the South-West
- Develop real time data analytics and focus areas will include co-designed curricula, joint bids, lifelong learning pathways, degree apprenticeships, micro-credentials, and CPD.
- The partnership will be proactive in shaping the regional tertiary education system as per HEPI's place-based future publication.
- Develop partnership beyond education offer into wider employer and civic collaborations in Knowledge Exchange, research and place making.

3

COLLABORATION WITH EMPLOYERS AND VCSE ORGANISATIONS

- Further strengthen our partnerships with large employers, SMEs, and the VCSE organisations to address skills gaps, promote innovation, and support social impact initiatives.
 - Through the NCSS and potential external investment, delivering:
 - Employer-led micro-credentials (including Life-Long Learning Entitlement).
 - Co-designed applied research.
 - Skills and innovation acceleration
 - Bespoke workforce development.
- UWE Bristol will continue to drive forward convening power for cross-sector collaboration, embedding civic engagement and social innovation alongside economic growth. Involving our VCSE organisations and communities to shape priorities and decision making abilities is key to our partnership ecosystem.
- Leading civic engagement through the NCSS and UWE Bristol's partnerships board, positioning UWE Bristol as a regional convenor.
- Establishing a West of England Further Education and Higher Education Partnership Framework to streamline skills pipelines, remove competition barriers, and align place-based skills provision, Knowledge Exchange and research and place-based civic spaces in Further Education partners' localities (enhancing relationships, expertise and capabilities).
- Engaging deeply with VCSE organisations through targeted upskilling, community research projects, volunteer support, leadership and citizenship and civic missions.
- Continued targeted activity across local and unitary authorities and involvement in the Bristol One City Plan and associated Themes and Boards.

4

OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Driving forward and lead regional community outreach, focusing on:
 - Increasing participation into Higher Education from low-participation areas and widening access through localised provision. We recognise that participation areas may contain multiple overlapping barriers and consideration is required to ensure future outreach strategies will account for intersectional disadvantage rather than geographic measures alone.
 - Community-driven research and co-designed social impact projects. Feeding into our future Institutional Knowledge Exchange Framework submissions and civic impact.
 - Empowering VCSE organisations with skills support, consultancy, and access to UWE Bristol's civic spaces, whilst creating the relevant conditions for authentic co-production of educational, research and innovation materials.
- Proactively build partnerships with local authorities, schools, charities, and community leaders to:
 - Enhance educational pathways.
 - Support community health and wellbeing.
 - Tackle societal challenges (housing, digital exclusion, green transition).
 - Connecting our expertise into regional place-making and wider emerging civic agendas
 - Further demonstrate our ambition to be for and of the region, with a continued commitment to outreach and positive change across diverse communities we serve.

5

INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY AND REGIONAL SECTOR PRIORITIES

Industrial Sectors	UWE Bristol Regional Contribution
Advanced Manufacturing	Degree apprenticeships with Airbus, GKN, MoD; CPD; R&D partnerships; incubation via Future_Space and BRL.
Creative Industries	Expanded RISE Creative Zone; partnerships with Bristol Beacon, YTL Arena (Brabazon), Bristol's film and media sectors.
Health Life Sciences	Integrated Care Academy, CPD for NHS, joint health innovation projects, digital health research, Heath Innovation West of England. Extensive partnership working with NHS and industry organisations to design and deliver CPD, bespoke PGT and an emerging international offer. UWE Bristol has an extensive relationship with health and care partners across the region in terms of workforce and research.
Clean Energy	Green skills bootcamps, net zero research, contribution to regional energy transition.
Defence	Degree apprenticeships with Babcock and MoD; defence-focused CPD and skills pipelines, aligning with the national Defence Growth Plans.
Digital and Technologies	AI micro-credentials, Sovereign AI talent development, regional AI hubs through the creation of the NCSS.
Professional and Business Services	Skills and leadership programmes, digital transformation CPD, SME growth support through RISE.
Financial Services	Regional fintech engagement, cyber security training and partnerships with local finance clusters.
Construction	Modern methods of construction (MMC) training, degree apprenticeships, and professional upskilling across the built environment.

UWE BRISTOL'S RESPONSE TO UK INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY PRIORITIES

- **Employer-led skills provision:** Rapid expansion of micro-credentials and CPD aligned to the IS-8 sectors, including AI, green energy, and advanced manufacturing.
- **Innovation-led growth:** Development of the NCSS to compliment our existing UEZ offer as an applied innovation and enterprise hub, which offers co-location for SMEs, start-up engines, community enterprises, and large employers.
- **Civic, social and regional impact:** Promoting and advocating regional connectivity (including investment zones and key transport routes) through partnerships and local growth planning.
- **Place-based partnerships:** Deep collaboration with WEMCA (and wider regional bodies), local authorities, regional Further Education providers, Technical Excellence Colleges and IoTs and NHS employers to develop shared growth and investment plans.
- **Internationalisation:** Positioning the NCSS as a globally connected regional hub, for skills, education, research and investment, contributing to the UK's trade and export ambition in the regional Industrial Strategy sectors.
- **Clean Energy Superpower Mission:** Supporting the transition to net zero through research, training, and industry collaboration aligned to the national clean energy strategy. The transition to a low-carbon economy is driving demand for green skills across all sectors, including clean energy, sustainable construction, transport, and supply chain decarbonisation. Organisations require both technical expertise and system-level understanding to meet regulatory and market expectations.
- **Leadership and Organisational Transformation:** Across sectors, there is a growing need for leadership capability, change management, and organisational development, particularly in the context of digital transformation, workforce shortages, and new operating models. Employers are seeking practical, applied programmes that deliver immediate impact. The Brunel Centre is key to unlocking further economic growth, development and workforce modelling.
- **Artificial Intelligence adoption and Digital Leadership:** Supporting the UK's ambition to be an AI maker through local AI hubs, skills pipelines, and SME digital transformation support. Employers are seeking rapid upskilling in areas such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, cyber security, and digital transformation. There is strong demand for flexible, modular training that can be deployed quickly to support evolving technologies and business models.
- **Skills Bootcamps and Localised Training:** Rapid deployment of bootcamps in green skills, digital, leadership, and engineering to meet both regional and national workforce needs, through the creation of the NCSS.

AN INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY MODEL

University Enterprise Zone (UEZ)

Research + Innovation + Enterprise:
The UEZ provides workspace, business support, and collaborative R&D for companies seeking to innovate and grow.



Businesses, organisations and VCSE

Demand and co-creation:
At the heart of the RISE ecosystem. Through co-creation, co-design and collaboration, we ensure that all our activity directly aligns to regional priorities, delivering inclusive growth and meaningful impact.



RISE Beacons and Interdisciplinary work

Thematic integration and drivers:
Driving cross-cutting impact across UWE Bristol's priority areas, bringing together interdisciplinary expertise to address complex regional challenges.



National Centre for Skills and Simulation

Skills + Talent (Skills engine):
The NCSS provides advanced workforce training, skills development, and talent pipelines aligned to employer needs.



MARKET NEEDS INSIGHT: RESPONDING TO EMPLOYER AND REGIONAL DEMAND

UWE Bristol's regional partnerships approach is informed by a clear and evolving understanding of employer demand, sector priorities, and workforce challenges across the West of England and beyond. Businesses, public sector organisations, and partners consistently highlight the need for agile, practical, and future-focused support that directly contributes to productivity, innovation, and growth.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UWE BRISTOL'S OFFER

In response to these needs, UWE Bristol will:

- Deliver employer-led, flexible skills provision through the NCSS, aligned to priority sectors and emerging technologies
- Integrate skills, innovation, and talent pipelines, ensuring that workforce development directly supports business growth and productivity
- Focus on applied, practice-based learning, designed in partnership with employers and responsive to changing demand

STRENGTHENING OUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE

To ensure continued relevance and impact, UWE Bristol will strengthen its approach to market insight through:

- Ongoing employer engagement and sector dialogue, including partnership boards and regional networks
- Development of data-informed dashboards to track skills demand, employer needs, and partnership activity
- Regular review and adaptation of provision, ensuring alignment with regional growth plans, Industrial Strategy priorities, and emerging trends



PROPOSED STRATEGIC ACTIONS TO ALIGN WITH THE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

- Launch Artificial Intelligence and Digital micro-credentials aligned to national Artificial Intelligence growth zones.
- Map Future Skills Zone to cover Industrial Strategy sectors CPD and bootcamps, through the development of the NCSS.
- Formalise regional Defence and Aerospace partnership board recognising the opportunity for twin track developments in skills, education, applied research and innovation.
- Deepen Further Education partnerships through co-designed technical education pathways, and Technical Excellence College partnerships in Cyber Security, Advanced Manufacturing, Defence and Clean Energy.
- Develop place-based skills hubs aligned to local growth zones, focusing on regional developments such as Defence, Security and Advanced Manufacturing (ie Thales, Leonardo, Babcock).
- Deliver clean energy, sustainability, and net zero training linked to developments such as Agratas Gravity Smart Campus in Somerset and Portbury Docks developments in Avonmouth.
- Secure £5m new regional income through enterprise and skills activity connected through the NCSS and aligned with regional priorities.
- Continue to align with relevant networks and clusters (ie South West Life Sciences Cluster, South West Regional Defence and Security Cluster).

Regional Cluster and Site Activation:

- 1. Western Innovation Arc:** UWE Bristol is at the heart of this arc and well positioned for greater partnership working with key industries including advanced manufacturing, defence, healthcare, digital/AI and computing
- 2. Bristol and Bath Creative Cluster:** Accelerating regional creative and createch sector growth.
- 3. Agratas Gravity Innovation Zone:** Supporting regional clean energy, green logistics, and defence supply chains
- 4. Portbury and Portway:** Key logistics and transport nodes, clean energy which are connected to regional growth.
- 5. Defence and Aerospace Cluster:** Leveraging the established ecosystem around Rolls Royce, Airbus, GKN, Babcock, and the MoD.

STRENGTHENING OUR WORK WITH THE VCSE ORGANISATIONS AND FURTHER ENHANCE OUR CIVIC PRESENCE ACROSS BRISTOL AND THE SOUTH-WEST

UWE Bristol is uniquely positioned to be a civic powerhouse for Bristol, South Gloucestershire and the wider South-West, with a deep commitment to collaboration, inclusion, and regional growth. As an anchor institution, we have the opportunity and the responsibility to further develop our partnerships with the VCSE organisations, amplifying our collective ability to drive positive societal change, address inequalities, and improve lives across our diverse communities.

DEEPENING OUR CIVIC ROLE

UWE Bristol's Strategy 2030 and the establishment of the NCSS provide a timely platform to reinforce our civic mission. By embedding civic engagement across our research, education, and enterprise portfolios, we can proactively support local communities, co-create solutions to societal challenges, and help shape inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

Growing our civic footprint through:

- Place-based partnerships: Prioritising collaborative work in areas of greatest need, including South Bristol, North Bristol, and the wider West of England region.
- Outreach and accessibility: Bringing education and skills opportunities closer to communities, including through community hubs, flexible delivery, and targeted skills programmes.
- Amplifying lived experience: Ensuring that the voices of VCSE organisations, such as Voscur, CSV South Gloucestershire, Black South West Network and ensuring local communities are heard and influence university priorities and delivery models is crucial to our civic mission. This approach will ensure lived experiences informs decision-making, not just delivery, through representation in governance, priority setting processes and evaluation frameworks.

Expanding and Integrating VCSE organisations engagement:

We have an opportunity to systematically build stronger, more strategic relationships with the VCSE organisations, moving beyond transactional projects to long-term, impactful partnerships that:

- Co-design and co-deliver community-based education and skills programmes, including CPD, micro-credentials, and lifelong learning opportunities that directly benefit local people and organisations.
- Support social enterprise and VCSE organisations innovation, providing access to UWE Bristol's enterprise support, innovation spaces, and student consultancy projects to help social ventures grow and thrive.
- Address workforce and skills gaps in areas such as health and social care, creative industries, and green skills through bespoke upskilling and reskilling initiatives designed with VCSE organisational partners.
- Open up research and knowledge exchange opportunities that focus on real-world community challenges and develop practice-based solutions through collaborative research, social action projects, and citizen-led inquiry.
- Connect the above to our Further Education partners, VCSE networks to add value across the wider region.
- Develop a concordat setting out the principles of how UWE Bristol will collaborate with VCSE organisations.



THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SKILLS AND SIMULATION – A REGIONAL SKILLS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ENGINE.

The NCSS will be a critical vehicle for enhanced civic engagement and economic growth opportunities. Positioned as a collaborative hub that integrates research, innovation, skills, and enterprise with the UEZ, the NCSS will:

- Provide space for VCSE organisations to collaborate, innovate, and access support.
- Host community-driven events, skills bootcamps, and workshops that are responsive to local needs and co-delivered with partners.
- Champion inclusive growth, ensuring that underrepresented communities have genuine access to opportunities within the West of England's emerging growth sectors.
- Continue progressing our emergence as an anchor University, capitalising on our RISE activity. This approach will also support our future institutional KEF submission.

INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

To ensure the effective delivery of a fully joined-up partnership ecosystem, UWE Bristol will establish integrated governance and leadership arrangements across the NCSS and the UEZ. This will include shared oversight, aligned decision-making, and coordinated partnership engagement, ensuring that skills, innovation, research, and enterprise activity are delivered as a coherent system.

A strengthened Partnership Board and sector-led governance structures will bring together leadership across NCSS, UEZ, and wider university functions, alongside key external partners where appropriate. This approach will support:

- Clear strategic alignment and prioritisation
- Coordinated delivery across skills and innovation activity
- Stronger, more consistent relationships with employers and stakeholders

By embedding joint governance, UWE Bristol will ensure that its regional partnerships model is not only collaborative in intent, but operationally integrated in practice, reinforcing its position as a connected and responsive anchor institution.



PARTNERSHIP FIRST | OUR OFFER

Employers and Primes

- Workforce and skills development
- R&D and specialist/expert access
- Innovation support/KTPs
- Business growth and supply chain development
- Incubation (Future_Space/UEZ)
- Strategic partnership and account management
- Talent pipeline and workforce access

SMEs

- Workforce and skills development
- Talent pipeline and recruitment
- Sector-focused support
- R&D and specialist/expert access
- Business growth and innovation support
- Bootcamps
- Single east access point:
 - Skills (NCSS)
 - Innovation and growth (UEZ)



VCSE

- Leadership and governance engagement
- Social innovation partnerships and impact
- Community-based research, innovation models, citizen-led inquiry and lived-experience-informed programme design
- Creating greater opportunities for student placements and internships
- Connection into regional networks, funding opportunities, and partnership consortia

Public sector and place-based partners

- Workforce transformation
- Policy and delivery support
- System innovation:
 - Simulation-based training (via NCSS) for complex public service challenges
- Civic and community impact:
 - Support for inclusive growth, social mobility and community resilience

HOW BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS ENGAGE WITH UWE BRISTOL | A CONNECTED PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY

To maximise the impact of our regional partnerships and ensure a seamless experience for employers, UWE Bristol provides a clear and integrated journey for businesses and organisations engaging with our RISE ecosystem. This approach ensures that partners can easily navigate our offer and access the right expertise, facilities, and support at the right time.

A SINGLE FRONT DOOR

Businesses and organisations can enter the UWE Bristol ecosystem through multiple accessible entry points, including Future_Space within the UEZ, the NCSS, employer networks, or direct enquiry. Regardless of the entry route, partners should be connected into a coordinated system designed to respond quickly and effectively to their needs.

UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS NEEDS

At the point of engagement, we undertake a structured diagnostic conversation to understand the organisation's priorities, challenges, and opportunities. This may include such as:

- Workforce skills gaps and future talent requirements
- Innovation challenges or R&D ambitions
- Growth objectives, including scale-up or diversification
- Sector-specific or system-wide transformation needs

This diagnostic phase ensures that each partnership is shaped around real-world business need, rather than institutional structures.

COORDINATED ROUTING ACROSS UWE BRISTOL

Based on an initial assessment, businesses are connected to the most appropriate part of UWE Bristol's integrated offer:

- Skills and workforce development needs are delivered through the NCSS, providing flexible training, micro-credentials, apprenticeships, and simulation-based learning.
- Innovation, research and business growth needs are supported through the UEZ, including Future_Space, the BRL, and wider research and enterprise expertise.

This clear routing ensures that partners can move seamlessly between skills development, innovation support, and enterprise growth, without duplication or fragmentation.

AN INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

For many organisations, particularly major regional employers and public sector partners needs will span multiple areas. UWE Bristol provides a joined-up approach, enabling partners to:

- Combine workforce development with applied research and innovation
- Strengthen supply chains through SME engagement and support
- Align skills provision directly with innovation and growth plans

This integrated model reflects the complexity of real-world challenges and ensures maximum impact for both partners and the region.



ONGOING RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

To support long-term, strategic partnerships, UWE Bristol provides co-ordinated relationship and account management. This includes:

- A consistent point of contact for employers
- Regular partnership reviews aligned to organisational objectives
- Access to cross-university expertise, facilities, and opportunities
- Involvement in sector boards, advisory groups, and collaborative networks

This approach moves beyond transactional engagement, fostering deep, sustained partnerships that deliver mutual benefit and long-term regional impact.

OUR PARTNERSHIP MODELS:

The development of the UWE Bristol Strategic Partnership models, with explicit representation from the VCSE organisations, will embed the civic agenda within institutional decision-making and ensure accountability for impact. This approach will further strengthen our collaborative leadership with WEMCA, local councils, and regional employers through this Board will further solidify UWE Bristol's civic positioning.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE CIVIC FUTURE:

Our long-term ambition:

- Create a sustainable, mutually beneficial ecosystem that strengthens both the university and our community partners.
- Be a regional facilitator and convener, bringing together Further Education, Higher Education, employers, policymakers, and the VCSE organisations to shape a joined-up, inclusive education and skills system.
- Showcase our civic impact through tangible metrics, powerful stories of change, and demonstrable improvements in educational access, community wellbeing, and social mobility.

Through deeper, more visible, and more inclusive partnerships with the VCSE organisations, UWE Bristol can further solidify its role as a truly civic university, shaping a future that is collaborative, compassionate, advocate for civility and is community influenced.

CONCLUSION

We have the core ingredients as a civic facing and practice orientated University to ensure a 'Partnership First' approach is at the heart of all our activities. UWE Bristol stands at the forefront of regional transformation, committed to driving inclusive, sustainable growth through research, innovation, skills, and enterprise. As an anchor institution, we will continue to harness our convening power, promote a collaborative mindset, and sector expertise to deliver tangible impact for employers, communities, and the wider economy. Our civic leadership includes being responsive, accountable, and learning from communities who can help us to achieve our common purpose and partnership goals.

The RISE Regional Partnerships Framework provides a clear roadmap for aligning our activities with Strategy 2030 and regional growth priorities, ensuring that education, skills development, and innovation are embedded across every partnership. Through the establishment of the NCSS and deeper engagement with employers, FE partners, and the VCSE organisations, we will create a dynamic ecosystem that fosters opportunity, addresses societal challenges, and accelerates economic prosperity.

Our commitment is unwavering: to lead as a civic university, championing collaboration, inclusion, and enterprise, and to shape a future where the West of England thrives through shared ambition and collective action – **Together, we RISE through a Partnership First Approach.**

