Aspect

Aspect Learning Gain Report 2021

Insights and learnings from the Aspect programme, on behalf of the Aspect Network members

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Acronyms

ARC	Aspect Research Commercialisation Accelerator
ASAP	Aspect Student Accelerator Programme
ASPECT	A Social Sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation
BNW	Brave New World
CCF	Research England's Connecting Capability Fund
CHASS	Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
CoP	Community of Practice
ECR	Early Career Researcher
EoI	Expression of Interest
E&I	Ecosystem Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystem.
ENT CoP	Student Entrepreneurship Community of Practice
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIF	Higher Education Innovation Fund
HE-BCI Survey	HE Business and Community Interaction Survey
IAA	Impact Acceleration Account
IP	Intellectual Property
KE Comms CoP	Knowledge Exchange & Communications Community of Practice
KE	Knowledge Exchange
KEF	Knowledge Exchange Framework
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KTP	Knowledge Transfer Partnership
LSE	The London School of Economics and Political Science
M4C	Methods for Change
OG	Operations Group
RC CoP	Research Commercialisation Community of Practice
REF	Research Excellence Framework
R&D	Research & Development
SG	Steering Group
SHAPE	Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy
SocSci	Social sciences
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths
SUCCESS	Seeding University Collaboration for Commercialisation and Enterprise in Social Sciences
TTO	Technology Transfer Office
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation

Foreword

It does not seem just 12 months since we shared Aspect's 2020 Learning Report. The Aspect Network membership has continued to grow, with 24 members at last count, all contributing knowledge and sharing good practice in innovation, entrepreneurship and the commercialisation of social sciences. Aspect's Festival2021 proved to be the perfect platform to share the work of our communities of practice, and highlight the impact and value that the social sciences can bring to society.

As Aspect 1.0 comes to a close, I am delighted to share our Learning Gain report 2021, bringing together three years of insight and good practice on behalf of the Aspect Network members. In this report we focus on the insights gained across the programme, addressing the questions our proposal asked when we submitted it to Research England answering the first Connecting Capability Fund call. That proposal highlighted the challenges of improving academic engagement, building industry engagement, and improving institutional capacity and skills within the Aspect's members and more widely. Since joining the network, the majority of members have seen increased awareness and activity from their academics interested in pursuing social sciences innovation, with just under half of all members reporting increased innovation pipelines.

Aspect-funded projects have also driven changes within member institutions. Building on SUCCESS from 2020, ARC (Aspect's Research Commercialisation Accelerator) has supported 28 potential ventures including social enterprises and for-profit business, products, and services. In delivering ARC and ASAP (Aspects Student Accelerator Programme), extensive insight has been gained into how universities and research institutions can best support commercialisation pathways and tailor entrepreneurship training for social scientists. ABaCuSS has focused on intrapreneurship, whilst Zinc is establishing an increasing impactful network of business engaged social sciences researchers as it continues to tackle society's greatest challenges. These and the many Aspect-funded projects highlighted in this report have provided invaluable insights and given us multiple examples of innovative and collaborative ways to enhance the impact of social sciences research through business engagement and commercialisation. Our Communities of Practice have also completed four Aspect toolkits: for research commercialisation (including an Ed Tech Hub), entrepreneurship, business engagement and KE communications – providing good practice and guidance which I'm sure will prove invaluable, and are available to all via the Aspect Website.

These and many other amazing outputs from the Aspect programme are the reason why the network has continued to expand in 2021, and why Aspect succeeded in its bid for CCF funding into 2023. Aspect 2.0 will allow the network to expand to include all SHAPE subjects by 2022, and to connect with the MedTech SuperConnector to pilot combined social sciences and STEM opportunities in 2023. I very much look forward to continuing the journey that Aspect has taken us on, changing the way the social sciences are supported across universities and how they are viewed by all our stakeholders.

I hope you find this report informative, insightful, and inspiring as we complete our first three years.

With best wishes,

Professor Julia Black CBE FBA

Aspect Chair

Strategic Director of Innovation, London School of Economics and Political Science

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Aspect Network has produced this annual report to (i) summarise our current knowledge of good practice in social sciences commercialisation across all Aspect Communities of Practice (CoPs), (ii) demonstrate the gains made via the Aspect programme, and (iii) inform planning of future Aspect initiatives. Data for this report comes from an all-member survey, interviews with selected members, and insights from the funded activities. This annual report sits alongside the Aspect Learning Report 2020[1], which focused on early learnings from Aspect, and complements the Aspect Toolkit, which details how-to guidance generated by the members and CoPs. The audience for this report is the Aspect Steering Group (SG), Operations Group (OG), Brokers, and CoP members from the seven founding members and (at present) 15 associate members, Research England, the Aspect Advisory Board and the broader public.

[1] The Aspect Communities of Practice include: Research Commercialisation, Business Engagement, Student Entrepreneurship, and KE Communications. More details on the members and activities for each CoP can be found on the Aspect website. https://aspect.ac.uk/communities-of-practice/

Overview of Aspect Year Three Activity – August 2020 to July 2021

In its first year, the Aspect consortium focused on establishing the foundations of the programme, to ensure productive working relationships across the membership and develop a collaborative and ambitious programme of activity. In year two, priorities included the launch a funding scheme for collaborative projects, the launch an Associate Membership model to extend the network benefits to more institutions, and increasing engagement with the social sciences innovation community via a newsletter, annual event, and development of assets for the website. In its final year of Wave 1 CCF funding, the focus has been on the delivery of the funded projects, dissemination of the learnings and resources, production of good practice toolkits, and sustainability planning for the next phase of Aspect.

The three pillars of the Aspect programme are: The Aspect Network (including CoPs and funded projects), the LSE Technology Transfer Office (TTO), and the Zinc company builder. As of July 2021, 17 funded collaborative projects had been completed, and six members had undertaken funded internal initiatives. The LSE TTO and Zinc activities have served as test cases for how to support social sciences innovation, and have fed learnings back into Aspect members and toolkit production.

Learnings from the Aspect programme have been disseminated via approximately 200 resources, articles, case studies, videos, webinars, podcasts, and reports published on the Aspect website; summaries of project-specific learnings are also shared in the Appendix to this report. The Aspect Toolkit materials bring together good practice from each CoP, providing practical tips and tools, and serving as a front door to the resources published on the website.

Aspect's third annual event, the AspectFestival21, was again hosted virtually, attracting 1,777 attendees across all platforms, the largest number yet. The Aspect newsletter circulation has also grown significantly, now reaching over 1,100 people, and website and social media engagement also continues to grow, demonstrating Aspect's reach into the wider community. Membership now stands at UK 24 universities, and Zinc, with several conversations still ongoing.

Defining social sciences commercialisation

The social sciences encompass a broad range of academic disciplines that aim to "[shed] new light on human behaviour". Social sciences commercialisation can include both the creation of ventures, services or products (i) by innovators with a background in the social sciences, or (ii) by multi-disciplinary teams with businesses models and processes are rooted in social sciences.

There is a misconception that all opportunities that come out of the social sciences are social enterprises; this can be misleading for both innovation teams and academics. Social sciences, social impact and social enterprise are three different things, and the differences should be communicated and broadcast more widely.

Benefits and challenges of social sciences commercialisation

Articulating the benefits of social sciences commercialisation is important to members as they seek to increase academic engagement, institutional buy-in, and upskill professional services teams. Several of the benefits identified by members are not unique to social sciences, rather they are benefits of commercialisation that cut across disciplines. Other more unique benefits of social sciences commercialisation are: (i) the human-centred and adaptable nature of social sciences research, which makes its potential for social impact intrinsically stronger, and (ii) helping to raise the profile of the social sciences and providing visible evidence of its importance.

A 2005 report by Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) identified six interconnected challenges for the commercialisation process in these disciplines, which can be clustered into three themes: Academic Engagement, Industry Engagement, and Institutional Capacity and Skills. Members report an improvement across all CHASS challenges since the start of Aspect. All but one of the positive reasons for change were attributed to Aspect and its efforts in raising awareness, building capacity, and generating insights (namely via CoPs, ARC, and toolkit/resources).

There are still challenges outstanding for those who wish to support social sciences commercialisation. These include: (i) the general need to increase awareness, understanding, and visibility of the opportunities and potential for commercialisation of social sciences research, within institutions but also with industry and funders; (ii) the challenging nature of social sciences commercialisation, due to a lack of well-trodden paths but also due to the nature of some social sciences business models; and (iii) a lack of academic time, incentives and motivations, as well as the need to adapt incentives and funding to accommodate inherent differences. Addressing these challenges sits at the heart of Aspect's plans for follow-on funding period.

Building a social sciences innovation portfolio

Members' portfolios range in size from 2 to 20 social sciences innovation projects. Nearly half the members have seen an increase in the pipeline for social sciences projects, whilst all have seen increases in activity and awareness of social sciences innovation. Drivers for the growth in members' portfolios include: Aspect funding for dedicated posts, the Aspect accelerator programmes (ARC and ASAP), and greater awareness driven by Aspect. Members aim to expand their portfolios to include more cross-disciplinary projects and innovations from the SHAPE[2] disciplines in the future.

The data suggests that there is no one right number of social sciences innovations – the size of members' portfolios should be contextualised to the local Entrepreneurship and Innovation (E&I) ecosystem, the capacity that exists to develop a pipeline of potential innovations, and the stage the institution is at in its journey to support this activity. The data provides a useful baseline (and range) for Aspect members and the wider ecosystem to compare against going forward.

Understanding the profile of social sciences innovation projects

Nearly two-thirds of members noticed certain disciplines make up a larger portion of their social sciences innovation portfolio, and just under half of respondents agreed they see trends in the industries or business areas where the innovations are being applied. Collectively, members named 16 disciplines and 10 different sectors that appear more commonly in their portfolios, showing the range of potential opportunities for social sciences. Some common themes included: health, education, environment/climate, professional services, and digital. Institutions new to supporting social sciences innovations – and who may be limited in their capacity – may wish to look to more common disciplines and sectors when starting to build relationships with academics and businesses.

Insights are emerging regarding the 'typical' commercialisation pathways for the social sciences. An analysis by the ARC/SUCCESS accelerator programme found venture types were split 52 to 48% products to services, whilst social verses for-profit ventures were also split 52 to 48%. Social sciences commercialisation often starts through consultancy, which over time may scale to a service-based business or potentially a product. Intellectual Property (IP) is less likely to be 'detachable', meaning licenses are less common than in STEM, but also that commercialisation requires increased involvement from the inventors and professional support services. Knowledge-, people-, and data-based innovations are common amongst social sciences, meaning innovation support teams must be more inventive with business models and think 'outside the box' regarding how social sciences research can be commercialised.

Measuring the impact and success of social sciences commercialisation

Traditional innovation metrics are applicable to social sciences, but only if adjusted to account for differences in the ways social sciences innovations are commercialised and the maturity of the innovation project pipeline. Suggestions for applying traditional metrics include: (i) use traditional metrics but adjust your expectations for their values; (ii) view this as a journey, and measure engagement as well; and (iii) measure your own progress, rather than comparing yourself with others. New measures are also needed to reflect accurately the nuances of the social sciences commercialisation process, as well as the wide range of impacts (not just commercial) it can achieve. Suggestions from members include measures of culture change, engagement, and impact.

[2] Social sciences, Humanities, and the Arts, for People and the Economy

Applying good practice in social sciences innovation

Learnings from the funded projects, the LSE commercialisation office and Zinc venture-builder, and member surveys and interviews highlight good practice in social sciences innovation. This complements the Aspect Toolkit, the main repository of good practice developed by Aspect's CoPs.

- **Communicating and engaging with academics.** Social scientists tend to have different motivations to STEM entrepreneurs and this needs to be reflected in how professional services teams communicate with them. This includes using different terminology and showcasing the breadth of ways academics can engage in commercialisation, raising awareness of different opportunities and pathways.
- **Starting the commercialisation process.** Start the conversation about social sciences commercialisation early: innovation offices may need to spend more time with academics shaping ideas from an early stage.
- **Identifying the route to market.** Social sciences commercialisation pathways might look different to STEM, and professional services and academics should be open-minded and aware of the possibilities. In particular, many (although not all) social sciences innovations and ventures tend to be people- or knowledge-based, requiring more of the academic's time and expertise for commercialisation (compared to patents or 'widgets', for example).
- **Leveraging your network.** Often there are fewer social sciences projects than STEM projects in universities' commercialisation pipelines. Working with other universities provides a bigger dataset from which to draw conclusions, and allows good practice to be shared to solve common challenges.
- **Building capacity and skills within support teams.** The role of research commercialisation professional support in the social sciences is much more one of 'co-production' than in STEM. Support teams need more time to work with social sciences academics, may be doing different kinds of tasks than they would normally, and require institutional support to enable this.
- **Integrating support teams.** An integrated model that brings together members of the innovation teams with those involved with the research development procurement at an earlier stage is important. The offerings should be framed around supporting the academic as a team, rather than siloed pathways. Specialist support may need to be brought in, for example, to support contracts and due diligence.
- **Tailoring entrepreneurship training.** Traditional accelerator models can work as a model for the social sciences, with key additional training topics and skill building sessions introducing participants and innovation teams to the multiple pathways available for social sciences ventures. Innovation teams will benefit from upskilling in these differences to ensure they are positioned to mentor and guide researchers and entrepreneurs on their journey to market.

Building institutional capacity and network effects

Aspect has provided members with a 'mandate', financial resources, and the benefits of a shared knowledge base that has enabled them to build internal capacity amongst their professional services team, and focus on social sciences research commercialisation in a way that they had not been able to before. For some, this built on momentum that was already in place. For others this provided an opportunity to "embed social sciences from the beginning", including it in job descriptions for new support staff or the design of new of innovation offerings, for example. Specific collaborative projects and CoPs' activities were mentioned as contributing to institutional capacity development. These projects not only fostered collaboration and exchange between members and their peers, but also between academics and their peers. Members are now seeing the influence of Aspect within other networks both within and outside their organisations.

Aspect's plans for the future

Follow-on funding from Research England and ESRC has been awarded to Aspect to enable the membership to further mobilise the learnings presented in this report and to embed good practice within Aspect and more widely. Beginning in October 2021, the programme will focus on four core objectives, which will enable: an extension of the Wave 1 activity towards more ambitious outcomes, expansion of the reach of the collaboration, and realisation of the further potential from the original CCF project scope.

These ambitions will be delivered through a programme of funded projects and schemes, including: new collaborative funded projects, a 24-month extension of Methods for Change, and two additional runs of the ARC Accelerator. Members have highlighted their ambitions to make academic engagement the top priority for the continued success of Aspect, and later in year two, will also expand the programme to include all SHAPE disciplines, and to pilot greater interdisciplinary collaborations through a partnership with the MedTech SuperConnector (MTSC).

1 Introduction

1.1 About This Report

This Aspect Learning Gain report summarises the learnings and insights generated by the network for its members, Research England, and the broader public. This report sits alongside the Aspect Learning Report 2020, which focused on early learnings from Aspect's collaborative projects, the establishment of the LSE Innovation Office, and Zinc. (Executive summaries from the 2019 and 2020 Learning Reports can be read in Appendix 9.4 and 9.5.)

In communicating the insights gained into social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship, this new report complements the Aspect Toolkit, which details good practice and 'how-to' guidance generated by the members' CoPs.

Information for this report was gathered through:

- An online **survey** completed by representatives from across the membership (Steering Group, Operations Group, Brokers and CoP) reflecting on changes in their organisations since joining Aspect, how the programme has supported the membership in addressing the CHASS[3] Challenges, how members viewed impact and success in social sciences commercialisation, how members' social sciences innovation project portfolios had changed since joining Aspect, and views on the capacity building and network benefits of Aspect.
- A series of **Interviews** with those members who had been part of Aspect for more than one year (founder members and those named in the extension funding application), digging deeper into the survey results, with a particular focus on changes in institutional capacity, network effects, social sciences innovation pipelines and measuring success.
- A **review of outputs, outcomes** and **learnings** from funded activities (collaborative projects, the LSE Technology Transfer Office (TTO), and activities supported by Zinc) and the insights generated from each.

For the purposes of this report, the term 'social sciences innovation' is used to reference the full spectrum of innovation activities within higher education institutions (HEIs), including research commercialisation, business engagement and consultancy, student enterprise, entrepreneurship, and other aspects of commercially-oriented knowledge exchange (KE).

Insights regarding the particular challenges of social sciences commercialisation, differences compared to STEM, and the fundamental questions that remain to be addressed are discussed in Chapter 2 of this report. Chapter 3-5 discusses members' insights on building social sciences innovation pipelines and portfolios, our understanding of how social sciences innovation projects might differ, and how we measure success. Good practice learnings and insights from the establishment of the LSE TTO, from Zinc's missions and research projects, and from the collaborative projects (listed in Table 2) are reported upon in Chapter 6 with short project learning reports included in Appendix 9.3. Chapter 7 brings together the members' insights regarding capacity building and the network effect generated from Aspect activities, concluding with reflections on the future of Aspect in Chapter 8.

[3] A 2005 report by Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) identified six interconnected challenges for the commercialisation process in these disciplines. https://www.chass.org.au/chass-publications/

1.2 About Aspect

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network of (at the time of writing) 24 organisations.[4] Aspect is driven by the understanding that social sciences research could better contribute to UK economic performance and productivity. In tackling the issue of social sciences research commercialisation, the Aspect programme seeks to raise up the whole of the innovation ecosystem that surrounds it. This includes taking research commercialisation ideas forward, highlighting the value of social sciences in companies (through both traditional business engagement and as well as programmes like Zinc), and a focus on the role of student entrepreneurs and early career researchers (ECRs) in changing culture. The original bid to Research England's Connecting Capability Fund (CCF) recognised the need to overcome barriers to better link social sciences academic expertise with businesses and the wider innovation ecosystem, exemplified by the CHASS Challenges.

Against these barriers, Aspect was established to:

1) Create new markets for social sciences research, create new businesses, develop partnerships, demonstrate value and build a commercialisation mission for the social sciences;
2) Develop a good practice led global network for social sciences research commercialisation, disseminating the good practice generated through Aspect;
3) Build the commercialisation skills of social sciences researchers, ultimately changing the nature of the relationships between businesses and academics;
4) Through the network, creating critical mass necessary to provide social sciences commercialisation support as appropriate for all partner institutions;
5) Increase engagement of academics with social sciences commercialisation, understanding better the barriers to doing so and overcoming them; and
6) In building businesses (via Zinc and other funded programmes), build better relationships with business and awareness of the value of social sciences research with industry.

Whilst the commercialisation pipeline for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) research is well established, research commercialisation within the social sciences is less well understood. Aspect's overarching purposes are to identify and disseminate best practice in social sciences commercialisation and to build a global network of institutions committed to the betterment of societies through social sciences research commercialisation. Aspect's membership at the time of this writing is listed in Table 1).

Table 1: Aspect membership as of August 2021

- **London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) – Programme Lead**
- Aberystwyth University
- University of Bristol
- University of Bath
- **Cardiff University**
- Cranfield University
- Durham University
- University of Essex
- University of Exeter
- **University of Glasgow**
- University of Greenwich
- **University of Manchester**
- University of Huddersfield
- Nottingham Trent University (NTU)
- **University of Oxford**
- Queen's University Belfast (QUB)
- University of Reading
- The Royal College of Art (RCA)
- **University of Sheffield**
- University of Surrey
- **University of Sussex**
- Teesside University
- University of York
- **Zinc**

Original founding members are represented in **bold**

1.3 The Aspect Programme

Launched in 2018 with a £5m award from Research England's CCF, the three main activities undertaken by Aspect were:

1) **Building the Aspect Network** – Forming a global network that will understand, share, and disseminate good practice of how universities are commercialising social sciences.
2) **LSE Technology Transfer Office** – Generating learnings through building a social sciences commercialisation office from scratch.
3) **Zinc** – Building capacity and systematically addressing barriers to commercialisation through mission-oriented programmes.[5]

Each of these three activities has run throughout the programme and has contributed to Aspect delivering upon a series of KPIs for Research England, detailed in Appendix 9.1.

1.3.1 Aspect Network and Funded Programme

In September 2019, Aspect launched a series of funded activities, including collaborative projects, member-led projects, case study development, and an annual event series, together supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and research commercialisation in the social sciences. Table 2 provides a list of the projects and activities that make up the Aspect programme, mapped to the 'type' and related CoP area. Figure 11 in Appendix 9.1 outlines the evolution of these programme activities from 2018-through 2021 and highlights the key initiatives through which Aspect has generated good practice and insights.

Underpinning the programme and network development has been the establishment of four professional services focused CoPs, increasingly the 'engine room' of Aspect. The CoPs cover the breadth of social sciences innovation activities, including: Business Engagement (BE CoP), Entrepreneurship (ENT CoP), Knowledge Exchange and Communications (KE Comms CoP) and Research Commercialisation (RC CoP). Members tend to be professional services and support teams, although some also include academics. The CoPs are member-led, meeting monthly or quarterly to share and exchange good practice, and convene around the programme of funded activities.

Funded projects, increased marketing, dissemination and network development, and underlying processes and systems, have enabled effective collaboration and delivery of Aspect's aims and objectives. The impact of COVID-19 since March 2020 required a rapid (and successful) pivot across the entire programme to virtual and online delivery and communication, with unexpected benefits such as greater inclusivity, but also the challenge of a reduction in face-to-face collaboration. The 2021 Annual Event (AspectFestival21), for example, was recorded, with the presentations, discussions and a new Aspect Radio all available to download from the Aspect website.

[5] From https://www.zinc.vc/ "Zinc builds new companies that solve the developed world's toughest social issues"

1.3.2 LSE Technology Transfer Office

LSE is a world-leading UK social sciences university,[6] with over 11,900 students and 3,000 staff.[7] Its mission is to undertake and apply research for the betterment of society, and to act as a convenor of the social sciences globally. Building on its established academic consulting and student enterprise offerings, LSE first started to pilot a commercialisation service in 2017 with a view to exploring the potential for commercialisation to expand social sciences research impact. Aspect's CCF funding has enabled LSE to accelerate the rollout of a full-service commercialisation office, whilst also incorporating learnings from the broader Aspect Network.

Since the start of Aspect, LSE has grown a portfolio of approximately 20 active commercialisation projects and an active pipeline of new incoming projects. The LSE Research and Innovation team have established an Intellectual Property (IP) policy and rolled our new processes tailored for supporting social sciences innovations. They have also restructured their professional services support into a more integrated team structure, bringing research contracts, consultancy, research commercialisation, and student enterprise under the same umbrella. New offerings being piloted by the commercialisation services team include: an Innovation Contracts Manager role, Ideation Workshops, a seminar series, and a new software incubator offering for social sciences innovations.

Learnings from the LSE Commercialisation Service were published in a dedicated chapter within the Aspect Learning Report 2020, and have also fed into the cross-member learnings within this report.

1.3.3 Zinc

Zinc (a spinout from LSE) was created in 2017 with the aim of testing different ways to tackle society's most important problems. Using a mission-led company-builder model, Zinc runs a 6- to 12-month, full-time programme. Cohorts consist of 70 founders, who are pre-team, pre-idea, mid-career and who join the programme full time.

Zinc has launched three missions over the last three years (improving mental health; tackling the impact of automation and globalisation; improving the quality of later life). From over 2,000 applications, 150 founders were selected to participate in the first three programmes and, to date, >40 new ventures have been created. Together they have attracted >£20m of funding,[8] blending top commercial investors and R&D grant-funders. Zinc's reach extends to an active community of ~10,000 people. Each venture-builder programme also involves a network of 100+ Visiting Fellows and executive coaches who support its entrepreneurs and ventures. Whilst all of its ventures are grounded in social science, ~65% of its currently active ventures have had input from social scientists (e.g. through: a social scientist in the founding or core team; a social scientist as a formal or informal advisor to the business; a social sciences MSc or PhD student doing a project with the venture; a social sciences organisation or research group partnering with the venture). More information about Zinc's portfolio companies and its programme of events is available on its website.[9]

As a core pillar of the Aspect programme, Zinc has been able to demonstrate and test whether a mission-led company-builder approach can address the challenges, and realise the potential, of social sciences commercial innovation. Additional benefits Zinc has gained from participating in the Aspect programme have included: (i) knowing who to go to and having relationships with Aspect members has greatly helped in facilitating partnerships between Zinc ventures and university collaborators; (ii) exposure to discussions on social sciences innovation and commercialisation has reinforced and advanced the thinking behind Zinc's approach to its R&D programmes; (iii) leveraging Aspect networks has helped to recruit people in various forms to Zinc and its ventures (e.g. founders, visiting fellows, R&D fellows), and has provided career opportunities for PhDs and postdocs.

Learnings from the Zinc activity (and its two Aspect-funded collaborative projects) were published in dedicated chapters within the Aspect Learning Report 2020, and have also fed into the cross-member learnings within this report.

[6] Ranked 2nd in the world for Social Science and Management subjects (QS World University Rankings 2020)

[7] LSE at a Glance, 20017-2018 figures, http://www.lse.ac.uk/About-LSE/LSE-at-a-glance

[8] This figure includes both investment from Zinc and external investment (grants plus commercial funds). Current ratio is 5:1 of external investment to Zinc investment. As the companies continue to raise investment, this ratio will continue to change over the coming 1-2 years.

[9] More detail about Zinc's programme and portfolio companies is available on its website. https://www.zinc.vc/about

Table 2: List of activities and projects comprising the Aspect programme (with related CoP areas and type).

Aspect Project	CoP	Knowledge Sharing	Resource Generation	Pilots/ Activities	Showcase Events	Capacity Building
Core Programme						
1. **LSE Commercialisation Service:** Building a social sciences only technology transfer function from scratch.	RC	■	■	■		■
2. **Zinc:** Trialling a mission-led company builder as a model for social sciences commercialisation.	RC/ENT	■	■	■	■	
Collaborative Funded Projects						
1. **Zinc Research Fund Prize:** Prize for a Mission 2 business & showcase event.	ENT/BE			■	■	
2. **Zinc Research Fellows:** 2 x 12-month Research Fellowships for Zinc Mission 3.	ENT			■		
3. **Research Commercialisation CoP Workshops:** Series of themed workshops to tackle research commercialisation barriers and develop a research commercialisation good practice toolkit for social sciences.	RC	■	■			
4. **SUCCESS:** Accelerator providing commercialisation support and entrepreneurship training programme for researchers' and their venture ideas.	RC	■	■	■		■
5. **KE Comms CoP Marketing Toolkit:** Development of good practice cases for social sciences commercialisation communications.	KE Comms	■	■			
6. **ABaCuSS:** Testing an intrapreneurship model for social scientists working with partner organisations. Run by Glasgow and Manchester.	BE		■	■		■
7. **Entrepreneurship Podcast & Challenge Series Events:** Creating on- and off-line conversations exploring SS innovation and skills to build socially impactful businesses.	ENT		■			
8. **Entrepreneurship CoP Workshop Series:** Themed workshops to develop entrepreneurship good practice toolkit materials.	ENT	■	■			
9. **Student Accelerator Programme (ASAP):** Following an LSE only Pilot in 2019-2020, was delivered open to all Aspect members.	ENT	■	■	■		
10. **Methods for Change:** Collation and dissemination of SocSci methodologies that are useful to industry.	BE		■	■		
11. **Ecosystem Audit:** Ecosystem Audit: Mapping to develop understanding of Ent. resources and ecosystem at partner institutions.	ENT	■	■			
12. **Be Deep Dive Projects:** Activity to priming social sciences business engagement pipeline and, via challenge led workshops and sector specific deep dives, provide learnings for the BE -CoP toolkit.	BE	■	■			■
13. **Carer Platform:** Development of a platform to analyse carer assessment data and commercialise the output into a sustainable offering.	BE			■		
14. **ARC:** building on the learnings from (project 4 in this list).	RC	■	■	■	■	

Continued on next page...

Aspect Project	CoP	Knowledge Sharing	Resource Generation	Pilots/ Activities	Showcase Events	Capacity Building
Collaborative Funded Projects... (continued)						
15. EdTech Games Hub: Funding to develop an EdTech games hub and test boardgames as a route to market for social sciences research.	RC	■		■		■
16. Internationalisation of Aspect: Positioning Aspect partners to respond to commercial opportunities from social sciences research through partnership and skills sharing with HEIs in middle income countries.	BE			■		■
17. Innovation Fellowships – Manchester: Working in partnership with Oxford, Manchester piloted its own fellowship programme with the two institutions sharing learnings and insights to inform future programmes.				■		■
Member-Led Projects (aka Advanced Distribution Projects)						
1. Cardiff: Cambrian fellowships developing the capacity of social sciences students solving 'wicked problems' through social enterprise business structures, to support students through ideation and innovation, to build a Cardiff student social enterprise 'ecosystem'; continued development of CUBiD – a SUCCESS alumni – case study to be shared, and intrapreneurship via the Parc Pilot Project – Case study to be shared.	ENT/RC		■	■		■
2. Glasgow: Seed funding scheme for activity that looks at pathways to commercialisation and industry engagement; network building activities.				■	■	
3. LSE: Funding to build its staff resources, generate leverage, and expand the LSE Generate offerings.	ENT		■	■		■
4. Manchester: Contribution to the Aspect Ed Tech Games Hub Project; Seed funding for a project to create a digital literacy toolkit for educators (DILPS).	RC/BE			■		■
5. Oxford: Competition for up to three Innovation Fellowships for Oxford social sciences researchers/academics); Working with Manchester – piloting this approach, with an aim to expansion to other Aspect partners during the extension programme.	RE/ENT			■	■	■
6. Sussex: Capacity building within Sussex; delivery of various business development initiatives; Funding to develop training and curriculum to increase social scientists' entrepreneurial skills and awareness and contribution to expanding the internationalisation project.	ENT			■		■
Other Network & Engagement Activities						
1. Activity Mapping Exercise 2019		■				
2. Annual Event 2019					■	
3. Annual Event 2020					■	
4. Annual Event Festival21					■	
5. Toolkit and Website Development			■			
6. Case Study Development			■			
7. Community of Practice Meetings and Activity		■	■			

2 Social Sciences Commercialisation: What is it and Why is it Important?

What is included in the social sciences, and what is different about commercialisation in these disciplines? What are the benefits and challenges in commercialising social sciences?

2.1 What are the Social Sciences?

The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) defines social sciences as follows: "Social science is, in its broadest sense, the study of society and the manner in which people behave and influence the world around us".[10] The Aspect Research Commercialisation CoP has opted for a similar lens, defining social sciences "shedding new light on human behaviour".[11]

Social sciences encompass several academic disciplines, and even amongst Aspect member institutions there are differences in what is included under this umbrella term, often with some overlap between Social Sciences, Humanities, and Policy. According to The British Academy[12] "Social science is the scientific study of human beings[....] What distinguishes the social sciences from the humanities is not so much subject-matter as techniques". The British Academy further divides the social sciences into six disciplinary sections: law; economics; psychology; sociology and related subjects; anthropology and geography; political science and related subjects.

A brief review of Aspect members' social sciences schools, departments and courses (Table 3) highlights common subject areas (with one exception, psychology, only listed by one member as affiliated with social sciences), and also the range of other subjects within the discipline. Many Aspect members' social sciences faculties or departments also mention their interdisciplinary research centres and research themes; the interdisciplinary nature of, and the potential for, broad application across many areas of business and society is a distinguishing feature of social sciences research. This also creates some degree of challenge and complication for universities who wish to support their social sciences academics with commercialisation (see Chapter 2.4 for more on challenges).

[10] "What is Social Sciences?" UKRI's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Retrieved 28 July 2021. https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/what-is-social-science/#:~:text=What%20is%20social%20science%3F%20Social%20science%20is%2C%20in,people%20behave%20and%20influence%20the%20world%20around%20us.

[11] From the Aspect Research Commercialisation Toolkit, Introductory Video. https://aspect.ac.uk/toolkit/

[12] Professor Iain McLean FBA. "What is Social Sciences?". The British Academy, 20 November 2018. Retrieved 28 July 2021. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/what-social-science?gclid=CjwKCAjwh472BRAGEiwAvHVfGuy_2lM8JCc5mZ4VzUwKDDUT-tz_E-HLbnW02U_74-7h93kn8FfIsxoC3PsQAvD_BwE

Table 3: Number of departments, courses, or schools affiliated with social sciences, across the seven founding members of Aspect

Department, Course or School Subject	Count	Academic Discipline	Count
Politics/International Relations*	8	Statistics	2
Sociology*	7	Archaeology	1
Economics/Finance/Accounting*	7	Architecture	1
Law*	6	Culture	1
Management/Business	5	Global and Area Studies	1
Criminology and Justice	4	Health Policy	1
Education	4	Human and Social Data Science	1
Geography/Environment*	4	Interdisciplinary Studies	1
Anthropology*	3	Journalism Studies	1
International Development	3	Landscape Architecture	1
Philosophy	3	Mathematics	1
Social and Public Policy	3	Other	1
Social Science	3	Psychological and Behavioural Science*	1
Gender Studies	2	Science and Technology Studies	1
Government	2	Social Analytics	1
History	2	Social Work	1
Media and Communications	2	Urban Studies and Planning	1
Methods	2		

Source: Oxentia review of member websites, with subjects roughly categorised. Asterisks indicate a match to one of the six disciplines specifically mentioned by The British Academy as making up social sciences.

2.2 Defining Social Sciences Commercialisation

An inclusive definition can be useful within institutions, but focusing on the opportunity itself and the value it brings is more useful for external communications.

Aspect was established to create and provide specialist support for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.[13] Research commercialisation, focused on institution's innovation portfolios, sits at the heart of the programme and has been at the core of much of the collaborative funded activity (Chapter 1.3).

Both as a separate 'sector', and within the wider definition of commercialisation, Aspect also includes a substantial focus on 'entrepreneurship'. The entrepreneurship CoP hosted a workshop in December 2020 in an attempt to develop a common definition of what is meant by social sciences entrepreneurship, the insights from which provide a useful starting point for defining the boundaries of social sciences commercialisation. The CoP settled on the definition listed in Box 1 below.

Whilst professional services, the academic community, and funders may find it useful to categorise and promote 'social sciences opportunities', the Research Commercialisation CoP noted in one of its workshop writeups that over-emphasising 'social sciences' is not always helpful for external engagement: "not everyone outside of academia understands the breadth and value of 'social sciences' (including some of the biggest companies in the world) and whilst we wish to promote the origin of our opportunities it is not always relevant to those we want to convince to support us[....] More air-time should be given to the opportunity itself and what it can deliver which is beneficial to this audience."[15]

Box 1: Definition of social sciences entrepreneurship, from the Aspect ENT CoP

> **Social science is, in its broadest sense, the study of society and the manner in which people behave and influence the world around us. Social science entrepreneurship is the creation of ventures, services or products (i) by founders with a background in the social sciences, or (ii) by multi-disciplinary teams with businesses models and processes are rooted in social sciences.**
>
> **University teams who support social science entrepreneurship aim to encourage social sciences students and alumni to consider entrepreneurship as a means for enacting impact and change, whilst also supporting entrepreneurs from non-social science backgrounds to adopt social science methodologies into their ventures.[14]**

[13] About Aspect (webpage). https://aspect.ac.uk/about/

[14] "What's different about social science entrepreneurship?" Aspect Entrepreneurship CoP Workshop Series Writeup. December 2020. https://aspect.ac.uk/resources/whats-different-about-social-science-entrepreneurship/

[15] Outputs from this workshop have been incorporated into the Aspect Research Commercialisation Toolkit. https://aspect.ac.uk/toolkit/

2.3 Benefits of Commercialising Social Sciences

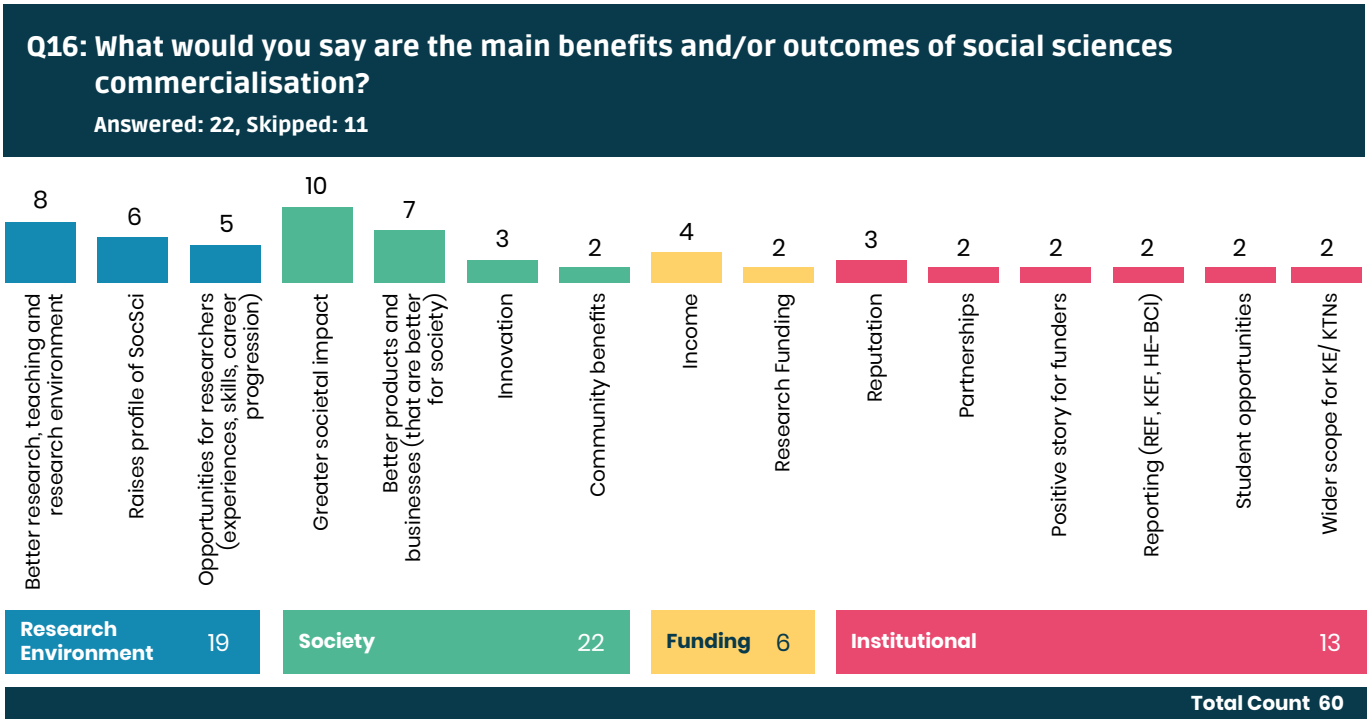
In addition to benefits such as funding, reputational value, better research, and benefits to the individual researcher, social sciences commercialisation has added potential for social impact, and can help to raise the profile of the field by providing visible evidence of its importance.

Articulating the benefits of social sciences commercialisation is important for members as they seek to increase academic engagement, institutional buy-in, and upskill professional services teams involved in the process. This topic was first explored in a Research Commercialisation CoP workshop in August 2020, the outputs from which included a list of potential benefits of social sciences commercialisation to individual academics, institutions, the wider society and businesses (Table 5). Members were also asked to list out benefits in the 2020 Member Survey (Figure 1).

Several benefits identified through these exercises are not unique to social sciences, rather they are benefits of commercialisation that cut across disciplines. These include: greater societal impact from research, generating income or further research funding, creating new opportunities for researchers, and helping institutions to fulfil socially driven missions and/or reporting to funders. Even so, responses suggest social sciences researchers and decision makers may not yet be fully aware of these benefits. The need to improve communications around this has been explored in Aspect projects such as the Marketing Toolkit and the Entrepreneurship Workshop Series[16]

Other benefits named in the survey are more unique to social sciences (Table 4). Firstly, that social sciences research can have a positive impact on businesses and their products, and through that to have a positive impact on society. Whilst other disciplines may also generate this type of impact, the "human-centred and adaptable" nature of social sciences research makes this link intrinsically stronger. Secondly, that commercialisation can help to raise the profile of social sciences as a field, providing further visible evidence of its importance and helping "connect to the mainstream". The knock-on benefits of increased visibility may include more institutional support, external funding, and greater opportunities for social sciences researchers.

Figure 1: Analysis of members' survey responses about the benefits of commercialisation



Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

[16] Outputs from these projects have been incorporated into the Aspect Toolkit. https://aspect.ac.uk/toolkit/ An overview of the Entrepreneurship Workshop Series and its outputs are also available on the project's webpage. https://aspect.ac.uk/about/aspect-funded-projects/entrepreneurship-workshop-series/

Table 4: Selected survey comments on the unique benefits of commercialising social sciences research

Raises profile of social sciences research	Makes an impact on society and businesses
• Higher profile (for research) • Opportunity for my institution to raise the profile of the SocSci research taking place both across the institution and externally. • Provides more tangible validation for the important of social sciences research, raises its profile and acts as an incentive for the Institution to support activity accordingly. • Raising profile internally • To connect social sciences to the mainstream • Awareness and support for non-STEM models, more inclusive for disciplines traditionally less engaged in these activities • Not as an afterthought of entrepreneurial pursuit; we need to prove the significant value of social sciences in solving today's big problems. • Widening participation	• […] creating products and services that are well designed and tailored and create societal benefits • Better, more socially equitable, businesses • Diversity of thought in companies • Enhanced opportunities for business • Good for organisations (which is good for society) • Grounding products on deep SocSci behavioural research will mean they are more effective and efficient. • Opportunity for evidence-based models and research to tackle industry problems • Benefits for communities. • A more comprehensive range of societal impacts

Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

Table 5: A list of benefits generated at the Research Commercialisation CoP's workshop in August 2020

Benefits to the individual:	Benefits to the institution:
• Career promotion/progression • Alternative (non-academic) career paths • Additional skills development • Raising status • Developing a portfolio (particularly relevant for ECRs) • New funding opportunities • Diversification of income and stabilising income stream as an incentive (Allows you more freedom in terms of when to release/disclose; Not being held to one stakeholder or one source of income.) • Income generation • Increasing relevance of research • Show the societal benefit that universities bring • KEF/HE-BCI for institutions • REF impact case studies • Maximising impact on a greater scale	• Reputational • Research profile • Increased research funding • Graduate/postgraduate recruitment • Staff recruitment and retention • Job creation for social sciences graduates and postgraduates beyond current opportunities (thereby impacting institutional HESA metrics in these areas)
Benefits to society:	
• e.g., policy and societal changes that may be brought about by wider implementation of new thinking	
Benefits to local/national/international businesses:	
• e.g., links to corporate social responsibility agendas and relationship building for future research opportunities	

Outputs from this workshop have been incorporated into the Aspect Research Commercialisation Toolkit. https://aspect.ac.uk/toolkit/

2.4 Challenges in Commercialising Social Sciences

Aspect has made progress against the CHASS challenges, but there is still more to be done to raise the profile of social sciences commercialisation, facilitate academic engagement, and provide an enabling environment for innovation teams to build their skills and the right support offerings.

A 2005 report by Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) identified six interconnected challenges for the commercialisation process in these disciplines. At a high-level, these can be can clustered into three themes: Academic Engagement, Industry Engagement, and Institutional Capacity and Skills (see Table 6).

Table 6: Original CHASS challenges, clustered by theme

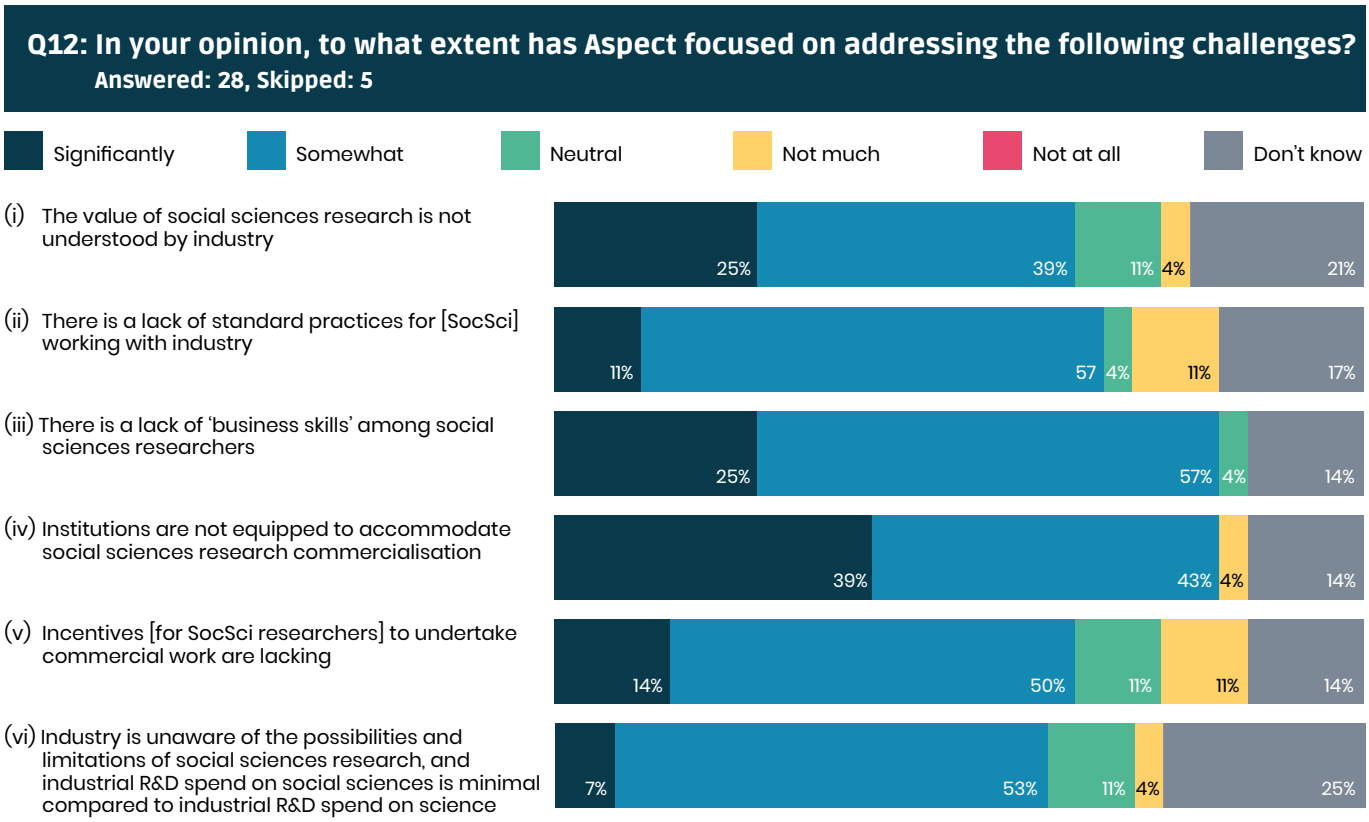
Theme	CHASS Challenges
Academic Engagement	• There is a lack of 'business skills' amongst social sciences researchers • Incentives to undertake commercial work are lacking
Industry Engagement	• The value of social sciences research is not understood by industry • Industry is unaware of the possibilities and limitations of social sciences research, and industrial R&D spend on social sciences is minimal compared to industrial R&D spend on science
Institutional Capacity and Skills	• There is a lack of standard practices for working with industry • Institutions are not equipped to accommodate social sciences research commercialisation

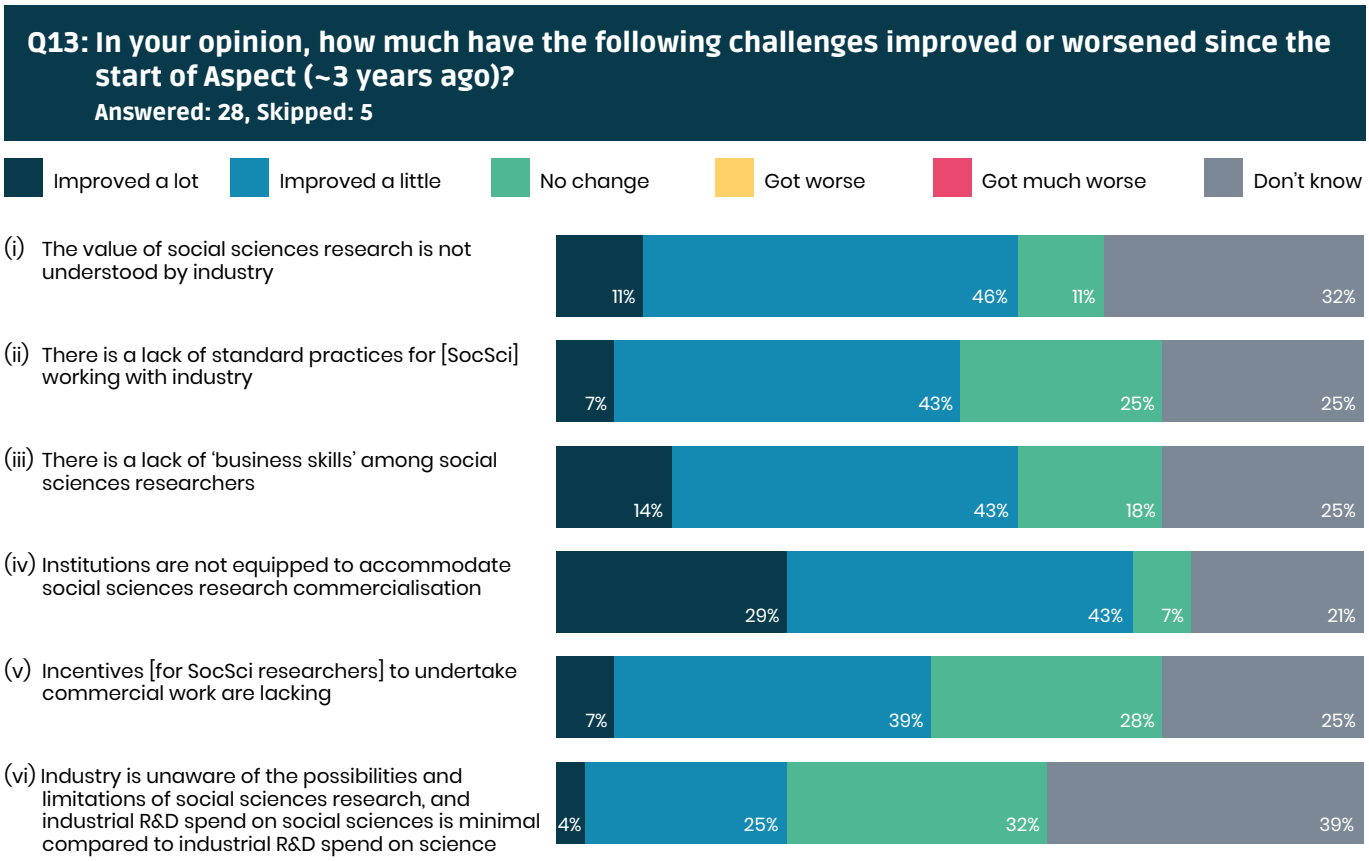
Source: Oxentia analysis

As reported in the Aspect Learning Report 2020, Aspect members recognised the validity of the CHASS challenges, with progress against the challenges included in the member survey. Members reported an improvement (somewhat or significant) across all six CHASS challenges (Figure 2). Institutional capacity and skills challenges appear to have improved the most, whilst industry engagement challenges have improved the least. The industry engagement theme was also perceived by members to be less of a focus area for Aspect compared to other challenges. Despite showing some improvement in academic engagement challenges, these also received the largest number of 'no change' responses (10.7% each, incentives for academics, and academic's business skills). This topic is a focus area for the Aspect extension period (see Chapter 8 for more on Aspect's future plans).

When asked to reflect on what these changes might be attributed to (Table 7), all but one of the positive reasons for change were attributed to Aspect, specifically: its efforts in raising awareness, building capacity and generating insights (namely via CoPs, ARC, and toolkit/resources). Respondents also noted some external factors that continue to create barriers to commercialisation, including: a persistent focus on STEM (by funders and/or within institutions), a lack of funding, and a need for greater capacity.

Figure 2: Comparing Aspect members' perceptions of the degree of Aspect focus vs degree of change for each CHASS challenge





Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

Table 7: Analysis of potential reasons for degree of change in the CHASS challenges

Q14: Thinking about your answers to the previous questions about CHASS Challenges, to what would you attribute these changes?

Sentiment	Category	Responses
POSITIVE	External circumstances	• Changing external circumstances, notably the COVID-19 pandemic which has made the importance of research and research-informed policy-making much clearer and more urgent.
	Aspect programme	• Aspect participation has helped address some of these challenges. • Work of Aspect.
	Aspect - raising awareness	• Aspect raising awareness and training researchers. • Aspect's promotion and awareness raising, and advocacy of the members. • Aspect and others are visibly active, and are raising awareness very widely, and improving best practice amongst those more closely involved.
	ARC	• ARC • The ARC accelerator as well as the ESRC ABC Funding have done a lot to address these issues, particularly helping SocSci Academics to look at their research through the lens of industry engagement. • ARC Accelerator.
	CoPs	• Efforts towards toolkit (including seminars, workshops, deep dives). • Activities of the CoPs. • The sharing of best practice within the Cop groups has significantly contributed towards this including the range of resources available on the webpage.
MIXED	Aspect - building capacity	• Aspect is beginning to build capacity, but this needs to be incorporated into taught programmes across UG and PG.
	Aspect - the amplifying power of the collective; Still need more funding;	• External funding opportunities have encouraged some researchers and private sector organisations to explore this, but the numbers are still so few and far between that it makes it hard to see the progress. However, our collective progress on this is vastly greater than it might otherwise have been if we had all been looking at this as individual institutions.
NEGATIVE	Still a focus on STEM/still need more funding	• UKRI could do more - too much 'moon shots'/STEM/Turing etc. that effectively excludes other disciplines. • Top-down attitude of STEM being of value .
	Still need to build more capacity	• There is still a need to develop and increase capacity.

Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

Despite the changes and improvements attributed to the work of Aspect, there are still challenges outstanding for those who wish to support social sciences commercialisation, as follows (see Figure 3: Analysis of members' perceptions of remaining challenges for additional analysis):

- **General need to increase awareness, understanding, and visibility of the opportunities and potential of social sciences research for commercialisation.** Respondents indicated this awareness raising needs to happen on multiple levels: with academics, within/across the institutions, with industry and investors, and the wider funding landscape.
- **Challenging nature of social sciences commercialisation.** Respondents indicated part of this is simply the newness of it and the lack of well-trodden paths, but part of this is a recognition that some social sciences business models need to be different, for example to accommodate process-driven innovations or those that need to be people-led verses investment-led. Institutional infrastructure still needs improvement according to some respondents.
- **Lack of industry awareness and funding**. In 2020, members commented that industry engagement was less of a barrier than previously thought; yet in 2021 it was one of the more commonly cited challenges along with funding. Challenges were primarily around communication – how the benefits of social sciences were perceived by industry and how the benefits of working with industry were perceived by academics. Aspect projects such as Methods for Change, ABaCuSS, the Business Engagement Deep Dives, and the Marketing Toolkit have been trialling approaches to better engage industry, and these insights will be applied during Aspect's extension period.
- **Lack of academic time, incentives, and motivations.** Issues related to incentives and motivations could be addressed by making changes within the institutions to make it more worthwhile for academics to engage, and by raising visibility of the benefits of commercialisation for academics. But lack of time may be more of a structural issue tied to the nature of social sciences research groups (i.e., often smaller than STEM, with heavier teaching loads) and the nature of social sciences innovations (i.e., more likely to be people, process, or knowledge-based verses patent or product based) that necessitate a different approach to social sciences innovation support. This was a key learning from the ARC Accelerator – that smaller numbers of junior staff are available to work with social sciences academics and that ARC and other accelerator programmes should engage more junior researchers to build the talent pool and pipeline to support SHAPE commercialisation initiatives.

Addressing these challenges sits at the heart of the Aspect extension funding, with next steps discussed in Chapter 8.

Figure 3: Analysis of members' perceptions of remaining challenges

Q14: In your view, what are the main challenges and/or differences (vs STEM) facing social sciences innovation now in 2021? (List up to 3)

Answered: 28, Skipped: 5

Category	No. of Responses
Academic Engagement	**21**
Incentives	4
Time	4
Motivations	3
Incentives (institutional)	2
Language	2
Not a priority	2
Skills & Awareness	2
Skills	1
Incentives & Time	1

Category	No. of Responses
Commercialisation Process	**22**
Funding	7
Lack of institutional infrastructure & understanding	5
Funding - Attractiveness to investors	3
Pathway to adoption challenging/ unclear/still new	3
Process challenges	2
Smaller pipeline	1
Lack pool of CEOs/EIRs	1

Category	No. of Responses
Communicating the value	**11**
Industry is unaware of value/relevance	7
Not just about money	2
Not on the national agenda	1
Articulating the value proposition	1

Category	No. of Responses
Application of SocSci Research	**7**
Broad/less obvious	3
Different/uncertain business models	2
Process focussed/via consultancy	2

Category	No. of Responses
Increasing visibility	**7**
Increase awareness/understanding	3
Increasing visibility	1
Of opportunities for SocSci Spinouts	1
Of opportunities to apply SocSci	1
Of Success	1

Total Number of Responses	**68**

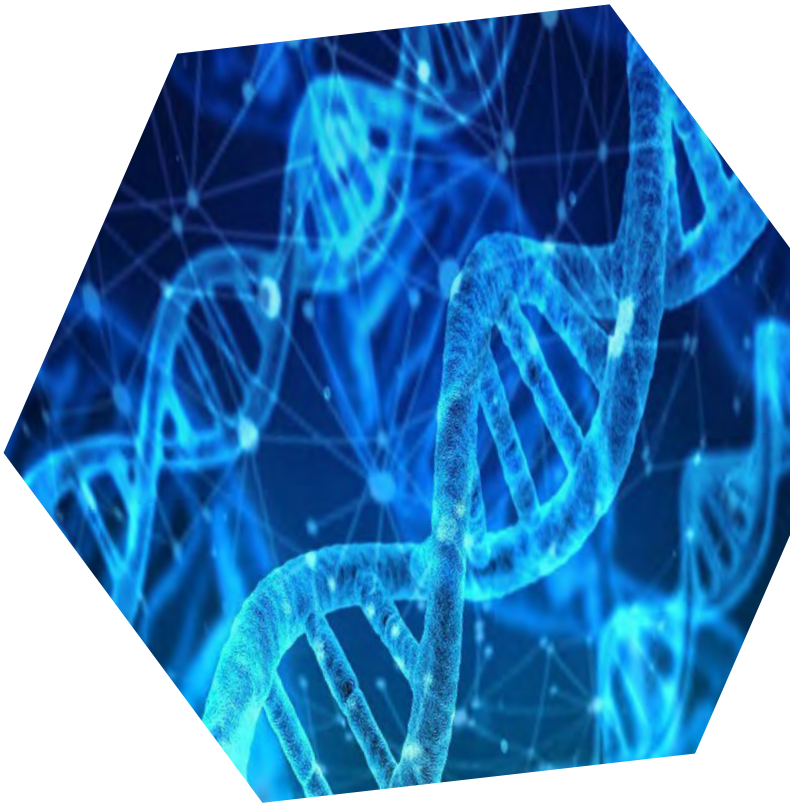
Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021. Responses have been roughly categorised on two levels, with green colour-coding highlighting the more commonly mentioned topics.

3 Building a Social Sciences Innovation Portfolio

How many social sciences projects are in members' portfolios? What changes have we seen, and what is a 'good' number? Could every university have portfolio like this?

Aspect's KPIs include achieving an increase in the scale of social sciences innovation activity within member institutions, and the wider ecosystem.[17] Building a social sciences innovation portfolio does not happen in a vacuum; it is well understood that the scale of innovation activity, and the size of one's commercialisation project portfolio, will be constrained by the quantity and quality of research inputs (the pipeline) and the existence (or lack thereof) of key elements in the entrepreneurship and innovation (E&I) ecosystem.

In this chapter we explore the changes members have seen in the scale of their social sciences innovation activities (relative to their research pipeline), how Aspect has contributed to any gains, and what gaps remain in the E&I ecosystem. We then go on to share what the Aspect membership have learned about the 'profile' of social sciences innovation projects, their origin, applications, pathways to market, and how this may be similar or different to a 'traditional' STEM commercialisation project. Later in this report, we discuss further learnings about good practice in supporting social sciences innovation and commercialisation, and how we measure success.



[17] Aspect's KPIs for Research England include three related metrics: numbers of academics trained, number of (Zinc) start-ups established, and Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies (see Appendix 9.1 for the full list of KPIs).

3.1 Portfolio Size and Satisfaction

Members' portfolios range in size from 2 to 20 social sciences innovation projects.

Members were surveyed to ask how many social sciences innovation projects[18] were in their portfolio, their satisfaction with this number, and how much this had changed since Aspect. They were also asked how much of their institutions' research activity is from social sciences (compared to the proportion of social sciences innovations within their portfolio), and they were asked to qualify their answers with regards to the types of innovation activity they support (research commercialisation, business engagement, entrepreneurship, other). Table 8 shows their responses, colour-coded to highlight differences in the range of answers.

The estimated number of social sciences projects in members' innovation portfolios ranges from 2 to 20 (*n* = 8 institutions), whilst the estimated percentage of social sciences innovations making up their portfolios ranged from 3% to 100% (*n* = 14 institutions). Figure 4 shows the ratio of social sciences innovations versus research at member institutions, as reported in the survey. The figure highlights a general trend towards institutions with a greater percentage of social sciences research having the greater percentage of social sciences innovations within their innovation pipelines; this is not true of all institutions surveyed, highlighting the nascent stage of social sciences commercialisation in a proportion of the membership.

Even those members whose numbers are highest and have increased significantly over time only reported being 'somewhat satisfied'. The data suggests is that there is no one right number of social sciences innovations – the size of the portfolio should be contextualised to the local E&I ecosystem,[19] the capacity that exists to develop a pipeline of potential innovations, and the stage the institution is at in its journey to support this activity. The data does, however, provide a useful baseline (and range) for Aspect members and the wider ecosystem to compare against going forward.

[18] 'Innovation' in this context includes commercialisation, business engagement, consultancy, student entrepreneurship, etc.

[19] The Aspect Ecosystem Mapping Audit project provides further contextual data about what type and level of support exist within the Aspect member institutions. Summary outputs are publicly available on the Aspect website (https://aspect.ac.uk/about/aspect-funded-projects/ent-ecosystem-mapping/)

Table 8: Survey data regarding members' social sciences innovation portfolios

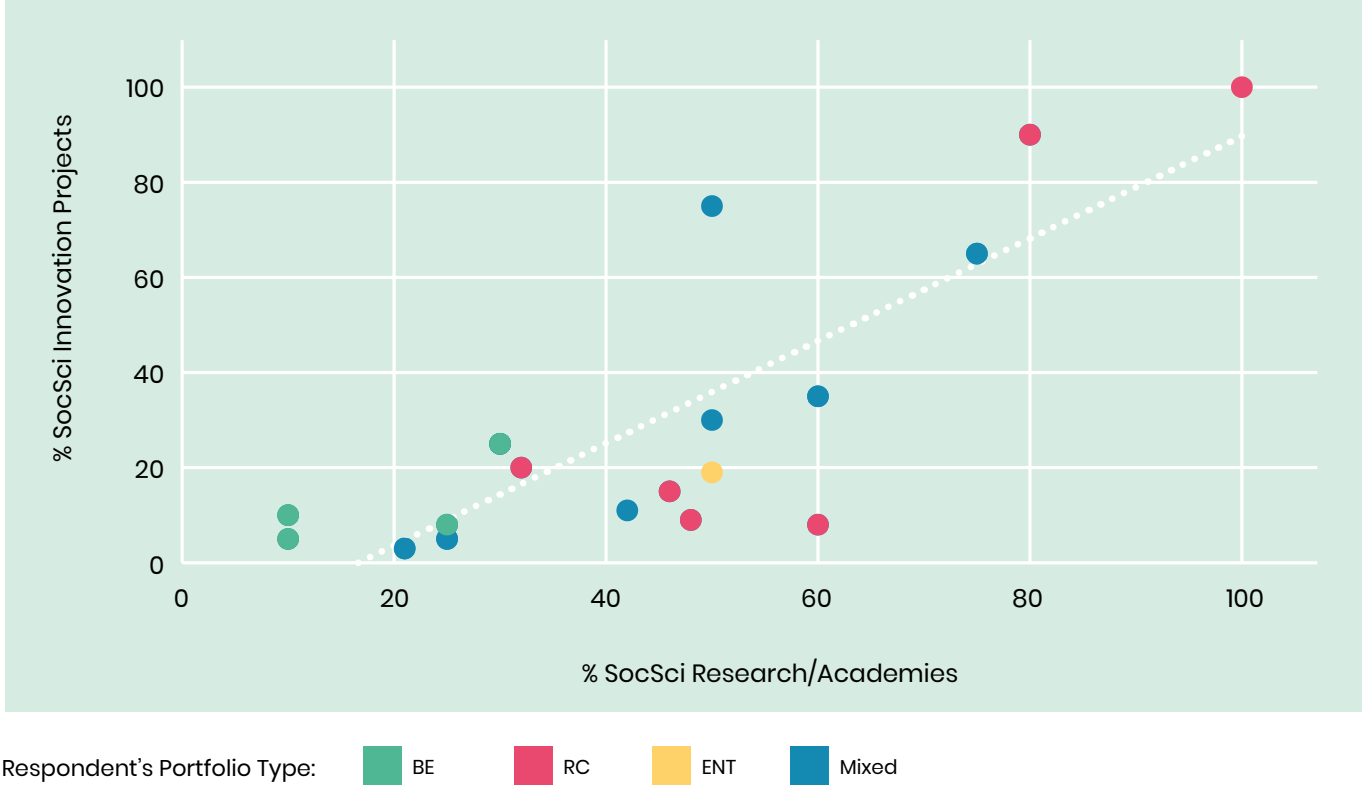
Member's Institution Identifier *	Member's Portfolio Type	Percentage of Institution's Academic Research from SocSci **	Percentage of Innovation Projects from SocSci **	Number of Innovation Projects from SocSci **	Satisfaction with number/percentage of SocSci Innovations	Change in number/ percentage of SocSci Innovations today vs pre-Aspect
L	RC, BE, ENT	42	11	4	Very satisfied	No major difference
C	RC	80	90	20	Somewhat satisfied	Increased significantly
C	RC	100	100	19	N/A	Increased significantly
C	RC, BE, ENT	100	100	20	N/A	N/A
H	RC, BE	60	35		Somewhat satisfied	Increased significantly
H	ENT	50	19		Neutral	No major difference
B	RC, BE, ENT	50	30		Somewhat satisfied	Increased somewhat
B	BE	10	10		Somewhat unsatisfied	Increased somewhat
D	ENT	30	25		Somewhat satisfied	Increased somewhat
D	RC	32	20	15	Somewhat satisfied	Increased somewhat
D	RC, BE	25	5	6	N/A	No major difference
I	RC	46	15		Somewhat satisfied	No major difference
N	BE	30	25		Somewhat satisfied	
K	RC, BE, ENT	21	3		Somewhat unsatisfied	Increased somewhat
F	RC, BE, ENT	-	-		Somewhat unsatisfied	No major difference
G	BE	10	5		Somewhat unsatisfied	No major difference
J	RC	48	9	2	Somewhat unsatisfied	No major difference
M	RC, BE	50	75	10	Somewhat unsatisfied	No major difference
E	BE	25	8		Somewhat unsatisfied	N/A
A	RC	60	8	2	Very unsatisfied	Increased somewhat
O	BE, Other	75	65			

Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

* To anonymise members, each institution was randomly assigned a letter as an identifier. The darker blue shading shows answers that come from different members within the same institution.

** Members were asked for estimates only.

Figure 4: Percentage of social sciences research vs social sciences innovations at member institutions (estimates)



Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

3.2 Degree of Change

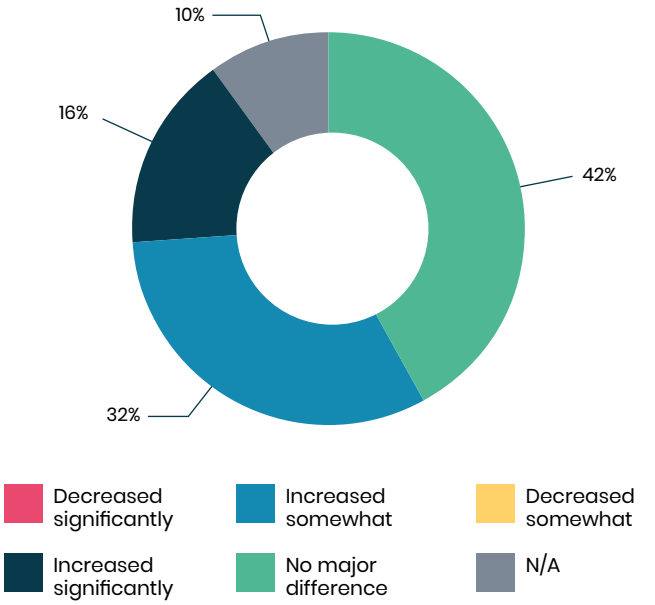
Nearly half of members have seen an increase in the numbers of projects from the social sciences, whilst all have seen increases in activity and awareness of social sciences innovation. Several members reported an increase of approximately 2–3 new social sciences innovation projects since joining Aspect.

Forty-seven percent of survey respondents noted that the size of their social sciences project portfolio had increased somewhat or significantly since the start of Aspect, whilst another 42% reported no change (Figure 5). Most of those who reported no change did not comment on why there was a lack of change; however, those who reported an increase attributed this in part to Aspect's awareness raising and the funded programme (see Chapter 3.3 for more on reasons for this change). Ten out of 12 interviewees also confirmed that they had seen their pipelines grow. Even for those interviewees who could not quantify their portfolio growth in numbers, there was a general sense that awareness and activity around social sciences commercialisation has increased. Box 2 shows selected quotes from interviewees about the changes in their portfolios.

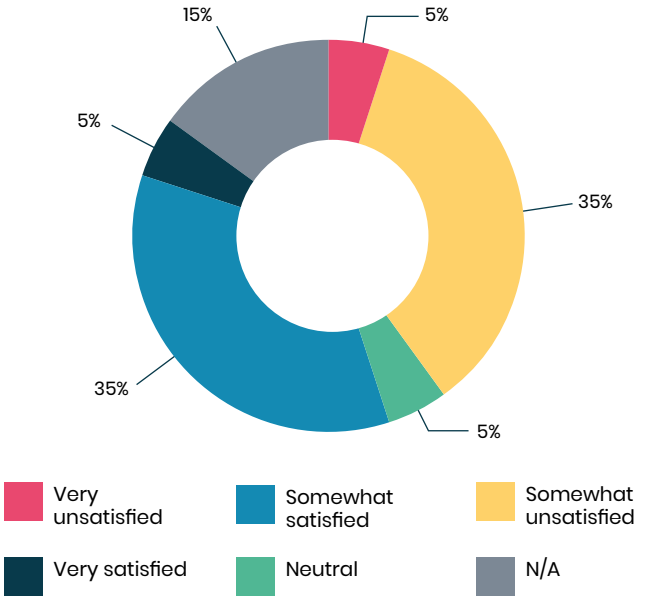
Forty percent of members reported being somewhat or very satisfied with the size of their social sciences innovation portfolio, but an equivalent number reported they were somewhat or very unsatisfied. (Figure 5). Reasons for this were not provided in the survey comments, but our speculation is two-fold: firstly, many members still feel they are early in the process of building their social sciences innovation pipeline and portfolio and have an expectation that the numbers should grow over time; secondly, many members report that academic engagement remains a challenge (as highlighted in Chapter 2). Aspect will be trialling solutions to address this challenge during the extension period (see Chapter 8 for more about the future of Aspect).

Figure 5: Members' views on their social sciences innovation portfolio size

Q25: How does the number or percentage of social sciences projects in your portfolio compare to your pre-Aspect portfolio?
Answered: 19, Skipped: 14



Q25: How satisfied are you with the number or percentage of social projects in your portfolio?
Answered: 19, Skipped: 14



Box 2: Selected quotes from members about changes in their social sciences innovation activities

"There definitely is an increase. It's still reasonably low, but it is growing - and that is the main thing."

"Our project on SUCCESS/ARC is our first social sciences spinout, and the first one to get this kind of grant funding from the university. We've gone from nothing in the portfolio (other than business engagement) to having something."

"Yes, we are seeing more projects, and could see more in the future [….] The investment in a dedicated post [and projects like ARC] has made a significant difference. Without that we would have barely been scratching the surface."

"It's hard to pin a number on it, but yes, there is definitely more activity [….] There are more eyes on social sciences innovation - it has increased awareness amongst both academics and support staff."

"Certainly, there is more activity on the ground, more coordinated activity, more follow-up, more people talking about it, more at the academic level doing things… Can't give a certain number but yes it has increased capacity and bandwidth for people. And just to get a regular person from the TTO focused on this is a big win!"

"Yes. Pipeline growing from none to two or three potential social enterprises (two or three that are really quite good)."

"Our baseline was zero… so we have grown infinitely."

"We now have quite a number of projects in the pipeline, and five or six from two to three years ago [….] In the last six to nine months there has been a big increase."

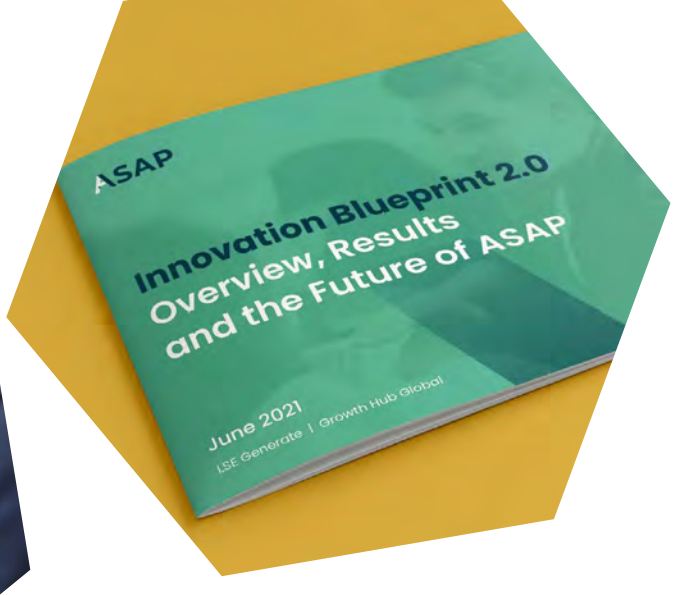
"Yes, the portfolio is much busier –not 100% sure it is as result of Aspect but it could be partly [….] There has been quite a bit of engagement following the SUCCESS and ARC calls."

"We […] have just spun out a company on psychology and done two licenses from social sciences. This has happened independently of/prior to joining Aspect, but Aspect's support could drive to more social sciences commercialisation in the future."

"The short answer is no – we do not have the community of ECRs [to support/take forward innovations]. We are only just starting to retain or grow an ECR community of academics."

"Possibly not enough time to know if there have been any changes. We have a KPI in the ESRC IAA to develop more business focused projects. That is working, but it is difficult to unpick how this has worked for Aspect."

Source: Selected Member Interviews, July 2021



3.3 Enablers of Change

Drivers for the growth in members' portfolios include external factors, along with Aspect funding for dedicated posts, and the Aspect accelerator programmes (ARC and ASAP).

Having dedicated staff with the right skills (i.e., those that extend beyond 'hard IP') was seen as a key enabler of portfolio growth. Several members noted the importance of the Aspect Broker post (and the funding and/or contribution-in-kind that accompanies it) in developing their offering and pipeline – having this dedicated focus and capacity has been critical. (See Chapter 6.4 and Chapter 7.1 for more on capacity considerations.) Others mentioned that having a better understanding of where to look for potential innovations across the university (IAA funding, for example) has helped. Some members are doing stakeholder mapping exercises, reviewing other funding pots, and conducting opportunity audits to proactively uncover even more opportunities (Box 3).

Nearly all members cited the impact of the ARC Accelerator, which has not only accelerated project opportunities, but has also highlighted to other academics (and staff) the potential of commercialisation. Two members reported this has led to an increase in queries overall, which they are now supporting outside of ARC. There was some caution in the praise for ARC, with one member commenting that the winners to date are not necessarily 'pure' social sciences innovations, rather they have applied social sciences principles in a STEM field. It could be that the nature of the investor/accelerator model is still more comfortable with these types of innovations, but it is probably too early to tell if Aspect is re-entrenching ways of doing things or simply still at the start of uncovering new innovations.

Several people noted that the growth in their portfolios could only be partially attributed to Aspect. External factors such as changes in the funding landscape – both positive changes with funding councils recognising the value of social sciences innovation, and negative changes with traditional funding sources drying up – have also encouraged social sciences academics to look towards commercialisation and business engagement as a source of funding. Aspect has arrived at a time where for members, there had already been some momentum and traction in this area within their institutions. As one member put it, Aspect has "amplified and accelerated" changes that were already in motion.

3.4 Where to Next?

Members hope to expand their portfolios to include more cross-disciplinary projects and the SHAPE disciplines.

Most members expect their social sciences innovation portfolios will continue to grow, but the work is not yet done – "we must keep making the space available for social scientists to make a difference". They also see opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaborations, and they are looking to do more to bring together social sciences and STEM academics. This includes Zinc, who will be extending their venture-building programme to include in a wider range of researchers beyond social sciences. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of these interactions, and the particular role of social sciences in fulfilling the UK's Grand Challenges.[20]

Aspect members are also starting to consider how they can start to apply the learnings from Aspect to engage more widely across the SHAPE[21] disciplines. The interest is not only driven by professional services teams – at least two members noted that other non-STEM faculties are showing interested in aims and goals of Aspect. "There is a big appetite for it. [SHAPE academics] are seeing benefit of scoping their work for others, not just government… and are seeing the benefits of impact beyond just policy." This is partly driven by funding and policy changes (e.g., REF, KEF), creating an opportunity that members can use to stimulate the pipeline.

Despite the desire to bring more SHAPE innovations into the portfolios, some members cautioned that lessons and practice generated in Aspect may not always apply to Arts and Humanities. In art and design, for example, knowledge (IP) does not stay often in the institution. Students come in with their own projects and often leave with them. Institutions wishing to support commercialisation in these disciplines may need to think differently about how they build teams and pathways to take innovations to market.

These are both topics which will be explored during the Aspect funding extension (see Chapter 8).

> **We must keep making the space available for social scientists to make a difference.**

[20] The Grand Challenges - GOV.UK https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-the-grand-challenges/industrial-strategy-the-grand-challenges

[21] SHAPE – Social sciences, humanities and the arts for people and the economy - https://thisisshape.org.uk/

Box 3: Case studies from members, showing methods of discovering potential social sciences innovations

University of Glasgow: Social Sciences Opportunity Audit

Every few years Glasgow conducts 'opportunity audits' for the STEM disciplines, rotating through various subjects/research areas in coordination with the IP & Innovation team, and external panellists to uncover potential commercial opportunities. Academics can put their work up for audit or be nominated to bring forward research to a panel who makes recommendations for the research and suggests opportunities for business engagement and commercialisation.

The social sciences research support team at Glasgow is about to embark on leading first audit in the social sciences in collaboration with our IP & innovation team and external panel members and is looking forward to see how it works. They hope to share reflections on the process with the Aspect Business Engagement and Research Commercialisation CoP members.

University of York: IAA Funding Review

Upon renewal of York's ESRC IAA in 2019, an audit of project partners revealed that levels of business engagement and commercialisation were lower than might have been expected during the period (2014-2019). The IAA steering group subsequently built in a number of stretch targets and placed a renewed focus on identifying and encouraging early-stage scoping activities. This re-positioning has reaped rewards, both in terms of increasing the volume of business partnership projects funding via the ESRC IAA (a nearly fourfold increase) and putting the institution on the front foot with respect to subsequent ESRC booster funding for business support and commercialisation.

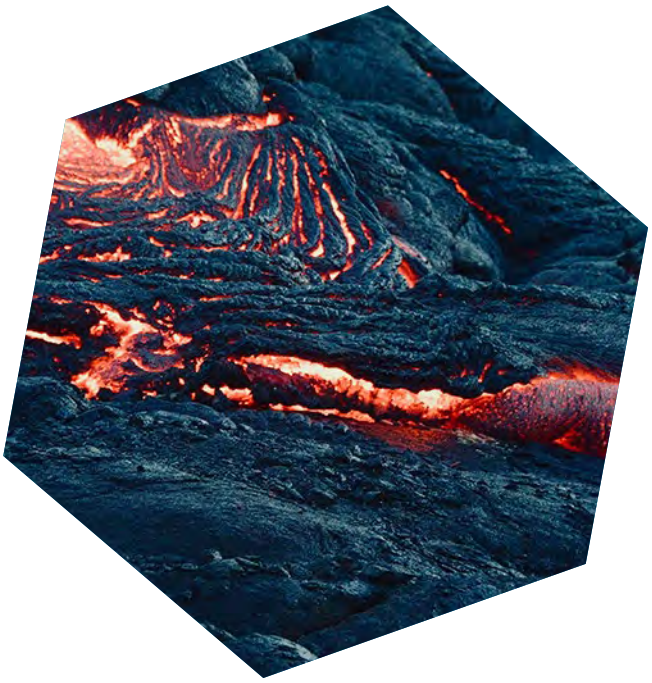
More recent scoping work, supported by the Aspect Business Engagement CoP, has led us to place an increasing focus on surfacing early-stage ideas, considering in particular how research support at the departmental level might work more closely with commercialisation/IP support at the central level. Accordingly, early success (including the winning entry to ARC 2021, and other supported projects leading to significant further investment) has led us to propose a full commercialisation audit of the social sciences, during 2021/22, as part of a wider programme of post-REF impact and knowledge exchange support.

4 Understanding the Profile of Social Sciences Innovation Projects

What do we know about where the projects and opportunities are coming from? What do social sciences innovation projects 'look like', and how might they differ from STEM?

For institutions who are new to social sciences commercialisation, it can be helpful to know where to look for potential innovations within their institutions. Furthermore, understanding their potential applications in different sectors or business areas can help to direct institutions when building networks with potential partners, or when hiring in new support staff.

This chapter shares members' feedback on where they are seeing opportunities to support social sciences innovations, and differences in the nature of social sciences innovations. This complements good practice findings on identifying a route to market, presented later in Chapter 6.3.



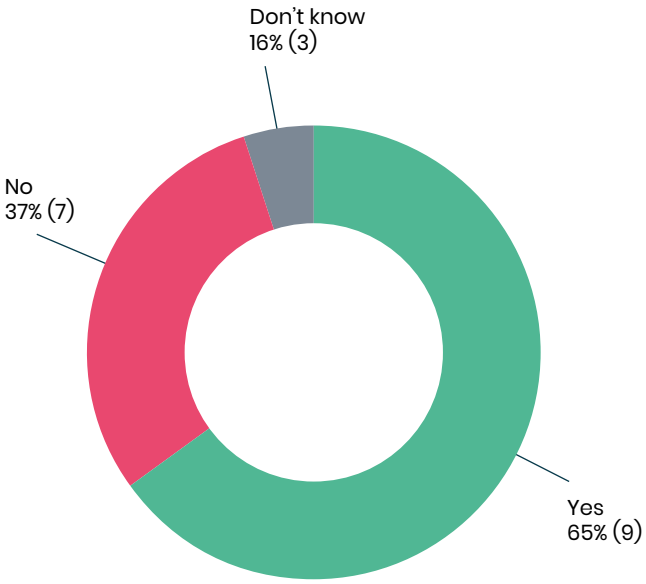
4.1 Common Disciplines and Sectors

Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents agree that certain disciplines or departments make up a larger portion of their social sciences innovation portfolio. Examples of disciplines named by more than one member include: business/management studies, education, behavioural sciences/psychology, and geography. Just under half of respondents also agree they see trends in the industries or business areas where the social sciences innovations are being applied. Health, education, environment/climate, professional services, and digital were named by at least two respondents. Other respondents noted that public, third sector and policy are still very common application areas for social sciences innovations. (See Figure 6 for the full list of named examples.)

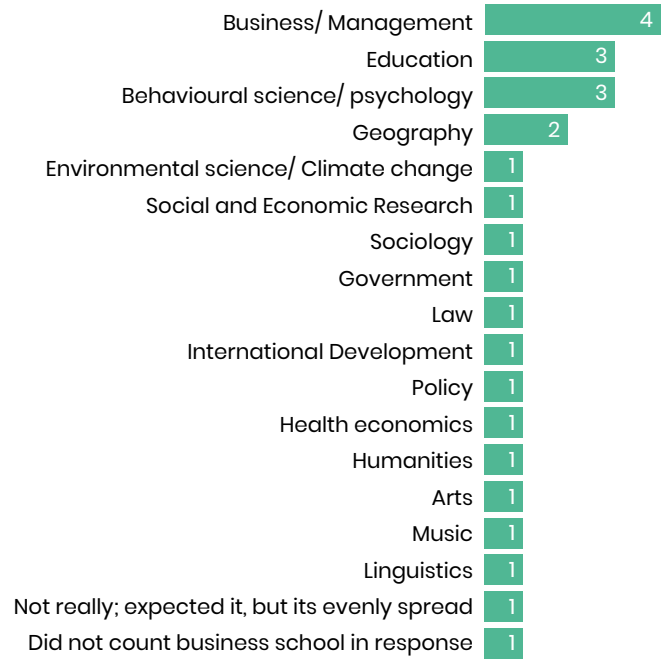
Figure 6: Members' views on sources of and applications for social sciences innovations

Q28: Source: Do certain departments/academic disciplines represent a larger portion of your social sciences portfolio?

Answered: 20, Skipped: 13

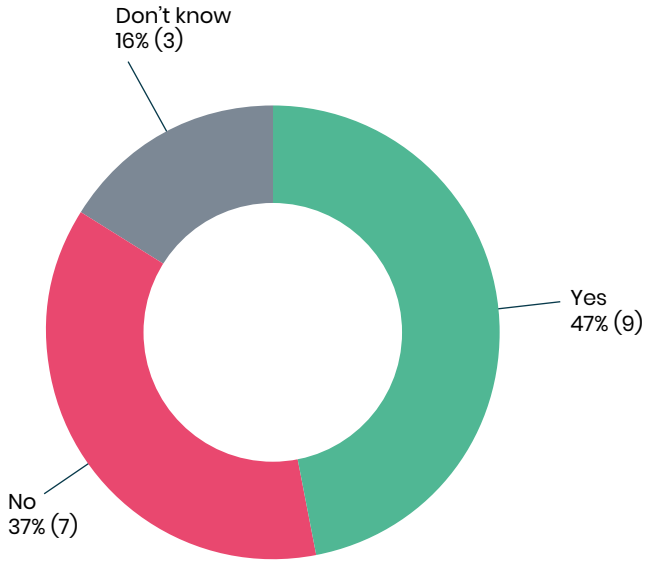


If yes, please list the top ones (*n*=12)

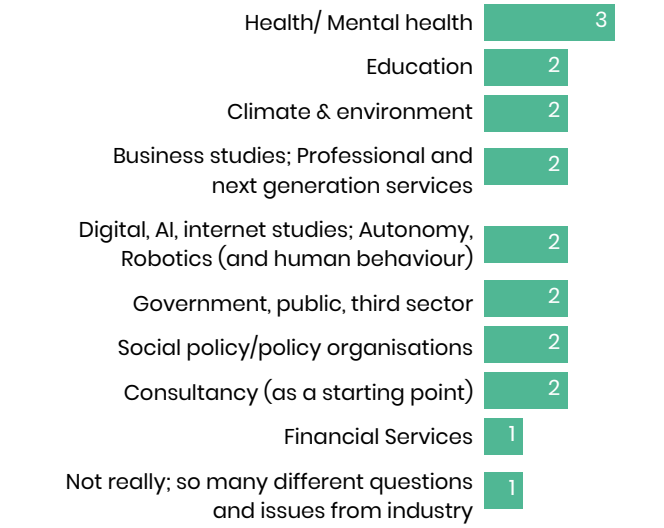


Q29: Market: Have you seen any trends or common industries/ business areas for social sciences projects in your portfolio?

Answered: 19, Skipped: 14



If yes, please list the top ones (*n*=10)



Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

An earlier analysis of the SUCCESS and ARC project portfolios highlights a focus amongst applicants on healthcare, social care, and business and professional services, alongside representation from the creative industries, and public sector applications (local government, international development, government, education/universities and politics and public affairs).[22] Equally of interest was the finding that the ventures participating in ARC were split 52 to 48% products to services, whilst social verses for profit was also split 52 to 48%.

This subject breakdown will not be news to most members. Aspect explored the topic of 'sector strengths and opportunities' in both its 2019 and 2020 Learning Reports, and via funded projects such as the Business Engagement Deep Dive, Case Study Development, and Methods for Change. The figure in Appendix 9.2 (from the 2020 Learning Report) includes a compilation of the different sectors and business themes identified as having high potential for utilising social sciences research. Understanding where there is demand will help HEIs and commercial teams better position their offerings.

The 2019 and 2020 Aspect Learning Reports also include an analysis and of 40 case studies identified by members as examples of good practice in social sciences commercialisation. The academic disciplines and sectors/themes identified in that analysis are not dissimilar to those identified in the 2021 Aspect Member Survey. There was a spread of academic disciplines represented, with hotspots in geography and the business/management schools. Quite a few projects targeted NGOs/charities as the end users, with other common sectors including healthcare, education and general business processes. Other themes included: education/physical health, improving employee welfare, adapting AI or digital technologies, adapting to globalisation, or addressing environmental or energy challenges. See Appendix 9.2.1 for more from the 2020 case study analysis. The final case studies can also be browsed the Aspect website.

What can we take from this? Institutions who are still starting to support social sciences innovations – and who may be limited in their capacity – may wish to look to more common disciplines/sectors when starting to build relationships with academics/businesses. This might be useful, for example, if there is a need to prioritise or tailor your engagement strategies, or when hiring for a professional services support role (i.e., does the individual have networks or expertise that align with these more common areas?) However, this should not be taken as a hard and fast rule. One respondent noted that they expected to see a stronger number of innovations from disciplines like business, law, accounting, and economics, but in reality their portfolio was relatively evenly spread across schools.

[22] From 28 projects to have taken part in SUCCESS and ARC to date

4.2 Differences in Social Sciences Innovations

Social sciences innovation projects need more early shaping and support and may require different approaches to building a team and/or business model around the idea.

As reported in the 2020 Aspect Learning Report, there are several differences in the nature of social sciences research, teaching, and innovation ideas (compared to STEM), which may influence how commercialisation needs to be supported. These include:

- Teaching load (the need to buy out time, and/or align structured programmes with teaching schedules);
- The size and structure of social sciences research groups (may lack a large pool of post docs and PhDs to free up academic time for commercialisation or research);
- The types of business models that social scientists pursue for their innovations (e.g., social ventures and hybrid models of service and product derived business);
- The types of 'products'/outputs (rarely 'widgets'; usually methods, measures, standards or services which do not have patent protection and may need different commercialisation pathways; often starting from consultancy); and
- The commercial returns expected from social sciences projects (potentially lower, or more varied, including broader economic, social and policy returns).

These factors will have an influence on the design of funding calls and the structure and approach taken by professional services teams in supporting social sciences innovation.

The 2021 Aspect Members Survey and Interviews also picked up on these points. The most commonly mentioned distinction between social sciences commercialisation and STEM was a lack of academic time and the structure of their research groups (see also Chapter 2.4 on challenges). Members have acknowledged that this has a significant impact on how they build teams around social sciences innovations, when the academics have less time to take the idea forward on their own, yet the idea is often intrinsically linked to them as an individual (i.e., consulting services).

The time issue also affects the professional services teams. Not only may they need to spend more time helping academics to move an innovation to market, but members note they also need to provide more early shaping and support to develop the ideas. One reason for this is the wider range of potential applications for social sciences innovations. The final 'product' is not always obvious, and innovation projects can sometimes take a more winding path to market (i.e., moving back and forth from consultancy, to research, to a service business or product as the innovation evolves). Another potential reason is the newness of it – STEM-based commercialisation has been happening for decades, but it is still relatively new to many social scientists. This also means it can take more time for the support teams to identify and build new relationships within social sciences faculties, as well as more time for the academics to acclimate to the concept of commercialisation.

Box 4: Social business model archetypes, from the ASAP project

ASAP: Social Business Model Innovation

Social enterprise business model theory is in its infancy and there is very limited research on the interplay between a theory of change and profit generation. Early-stage social businesses create unique combinations of activities not found in traditional business strategy to sustain their mission and impact. The Aspect Student Accelerator (ASAP) pilot provided grassroot insights into how social start-ups are commercialising at the very early stages.

Founders created social business models that could be broadly categorised into 3 main archetypes that signalled how their start-ups were creating competitive advantage: Technology and Data, Operational Model, Customer and product innovation. Ideally, founders with deep knowledge in one archetype were able to seek out complementary strengths from team members and advisors in at least one other area to sustain their mission and impact.

The ASAP Social Business Model Innovation Report combines case studies from early and later stage social entrepreneurs in each of the three social business model archetypes. This report provides a starting blueprint for early-stage social businesses. It also provides a foundation for HEIs to more effectively design programs and support commercialisation pathways tailored to their social entrepreneurs. Read more learnings from the ASAP in Appendix 9.3.3.

4.3 Where to Next?

Members will be applying learnings from funded projects during the extension period.

Several Aspect funded projects have been piloting ways to address the time and resource gap. ARC and ABaCuSS, for example, have focussed on upskilling ECRs and students who will then be in a better position to partner with academics on their innovations. Zinc has taken a different approach, funding fellowships for social scientists to collaborate on the innovations within with existing start-up companies. The Zinc and ABaCuSS teams have also been comparing and contrasting notes for joint learnings, and they are assessing if and how the programmes might intersect in the future.[23]

Other Aspect projects like Methods for Change and the Business Engagement Deep Dives have sought to generate insights on the applications for social sciences, which can help institutions as they identify opportunities and develop routes-to-market for their social sciences innovation projects. ASAP has conducted a review of business model archetypes amongst the student ventures on their accelerators, and they have used this to inform how they tailor both the curriculum and mentoring support provided in the programme (Box 4).

Members are also trialling their own methods for early identification and support of social scientists, including LSE's Ideation Workshops, and Glasgow's Discovery Days programme (Box 5) – both of which provide training and a space for academics to explore their ideas. Several other members including LSE, Oxford, and York are moving to a more 'joined-up' professional services support offering, forging closer working links between teams involved in the spectrum of innovation and impact activities (i.e., business engagement, research contracts, impact teams, commercialisation, student enterprise, etc.) (see Box 7 in Chapter 6).

Applying these insights from the funded programme to build infrastructure and capacity within member institutions will be another a focus area for the Aspect extension period.

[23] More details on learnings from these funded projects can be read in Appendix 9.3. Outputs from the projects are available on the Funded Projects webpage, or within the Aspect Toolkit.

Box 5: Case studies from members, showing how they are engaging academics in the ideation process

LSE: Ideation Workshops

LSE has conducted several Ideation Workshops to introduce the first few steps of a commercialisation project. Whilst a formal planning tool – the Lean Canvas – was introduced, the focus was on the identification of target customers, their pain points, the proposed product/solution, and differentiated advantages. In practicing to explain and present the building blocks of a Lean Canvas on such topics, academic participants learned the skills in idea generation and a critical assessment of their own entrepreneurial ideas in a systematic and iteratively improving process. We have found the process to be very helpful in setting the direction and getting our academic entrepreneurs into a common framework that provides a standard language and perspectives.

University of Glasgow: Discovery Days

The Discovery Days model is a mechanism to stimulate ideas for joint projects with the private sector. These projects could be centred around a research bid, impact and KE, commercial opportunity or business engagement. Run over 1-2 days, the programme includes workshops, training, and invited speakers, providing a very hands-on way for academics to explore their ideas with potential partners or stakeholders.

Glasgow notes that in the SHAPE disciplines, it can take a longer time to move from the ideation stage to actual commercialisation and impact, and this model has proved helpful both in uncovering new ideas, and in creating a foundation for longer term relationships between academics and the social sciences research support team. Aspect members keen to know more are invited to contact Paige Mccaleb (Paige.Mccaleb@glasgow.ac.uk). We are happy for members to come and observe as we kick these off again in a post-COVID environment (they really do work best in person), or we can give advice on running something similar.

5 Measuring the Impact and Success of Social Sciences Commercialisation

Are the measures used for traditional STEM commercialisation applicable to the social sciences? How might measures evolve over time as members develop their support offerings? Are members making changes to their KPIs or metrics in light of new learnings from Aspect (or elsewhere)? What metrics and success measures have been proposed so far?

A lack of awareness about the value and opportunities for social sciences commercialisation and innovation – amongst academics, HEIs, and industry – was identified by members as one of the persisting challenges facing social sciences commercialisation (Chapter 2.4). Tackling this issue starts with better articulation of the benefits to these parties and others (Chapter 2.3) and proactive communication and awareness raising (i.e., through larger Aspect programmes as well as individual member initiatives). But communications can only go so far – the activities of commercialisation teams (and the involvement of academics in these activities) will be constrained by how well they align with internal and external measures of success (and the funding and institutional support that comes with that).

Do social sciences innovations require different metrics and measures of success? This question was first raised in February 2021, during a public webinar hosted by the Aspect network. In a Q&A format, Aspect members and invited guests held a discussion around the very active debate on 'how the value and success of social sciences commercialisation should be measured'.[24] The webinar explored the question of why a different approach to measurement of impact is so important to the social sciences, the importance of identifying the right metrics to better communicate economic impact, and it enabled a discussion of the range of metrics that might be used.

The topic was raised again in the 2021 Aspect Member Survey and Interviews, conducted for this report. This chapter shares members' views on 'traditional' innovation metrics, and their fit with social sciences. We then discuss the nuances of measuring success and impact from social sciences innovations, including some early suggestions for how institutions might adapt or expand their definitions of (and metrics for) success.

[24] LSE SG Chair Julia Black was joined by Professor Sir Ian Diamond, the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, Professor Susana Mourato from LSE, Professor Nic Beech of Middlesex University, and Professor Stephan Chambers, also from LSE.

5.1 Applying 'Traditional' Metrics

Traditional innovation metrics are applicable to social sciences, but only if adjusted to account for differences in the ways social sciences innovations are commercialised and the maturity of the innovation project pipeline.

The success of members' social sciences innovations is often measured against metrics set out in funders' reporting frameworks (e.g., IAA, HEIF, REF, KEF, and the HE-BCI survey). Typically, these metrics and KPIs relate to commercial outputs (e.g., number of partnerships, disclosures, licences, spinouts, funding raised by spinouts, etc.) and income to the university (e.g., licensing revenues, equity stake, partnership income, external funding leveraged, etc.) There was a sense amongst members that "most university innovation teams are [ultimately] assessed on effectiveness of income generation".

Upon reflection, the majority of Aspect members agreed that these types of metrics are relevant for the social sciences. However, most feel they do not offer a complete picture of a team's performance and success and must be judged in context. The following suggestions for applying traditional metrics emerged from the member feedback:

1) **Use traditional metrics but adjust your expectations for their values.** Whilst the traditional metrics themselves are useful and often applicable to social sciences, the value of the figures we report may be different compared to STEM. In the short term, social sciences innovation numbers will be lower as institutions scale up their innovation activities with this discipline. But even in the longer term, the numbers are likely to look different for social sciences (see Chapter 6.3, which discusses differences observed in routes to market, business models, and commercial considerations for social sciences innovation projects.)
2) **View this as a journey, and measure engagement as well.** Institutions need to recognise that building a pipeline and later a portfolio of social sciences innovation projects takes time. In the early days, academic engagement measures are likely to be your most relevant metrics – these serve as a proxy for what will (eventually) translate into the harder income and outputs numbers that most teams are measured against. Figure 7 shows one view of social sciences commercialisation pipeline development.
3) **Measure your own progress, rather than comparing yourself with others.** As noted in Chapter 3.1, there is a wide range in the numbers of projects within members' social sciences innovation portfolios, and an institution's 'numbers' will depend on a multitude of factors, including your starting point, the type and quality of research at the institution, and the capacity and funding available to the innovation teams to support this activity. Success is about seeing an increase over time – not absolute numbers and benchmarks.

> **Our metric... is that we've gone from nothing in the portfolio (other than Business Engagement) to having something! The bar is low – the bar is that 'someone has tried it'. And we moved from an attitude of suspicion from academics to an openness...**
>
> **Aspect member**

Figure 7: A framework for thinking about the processes needed to grow (and measure) a social sciences commercialisation pipeline

1 Nascent	2 Seeding	3 Towards a Critical Mass	4 Building a Scaleable, Repeatable Process
• On average there is little to no awareness of research commercialisation amongst social science academics or Early Career Researchers (ECRs) at the university.	• Early awareness has been established but there is little to no active interest in research commercialisation.	• Strong awareness and an active and increasing interest in research commercialisation has been established amongst social science academics and ECRs at the university.	• In this relatively mature stage, successful research commercialisation has taken place and a model for social science research commercialisation is emerging.

Source: 'Stimulating the Social Sciences Pipeline' Aspect Research Commercialisation CoP Workshop Series, 2021.

Workshop outputs are published in the Aspect Toolkit

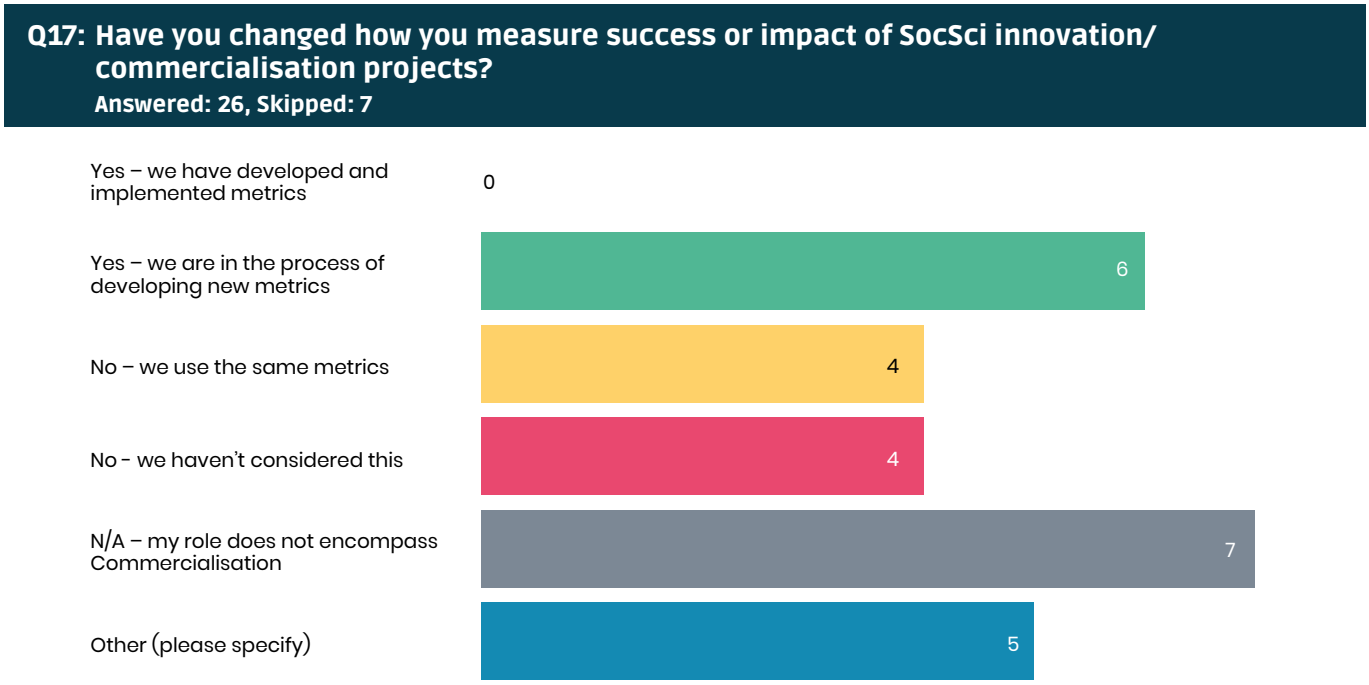
5.2 Identifying New Metrics

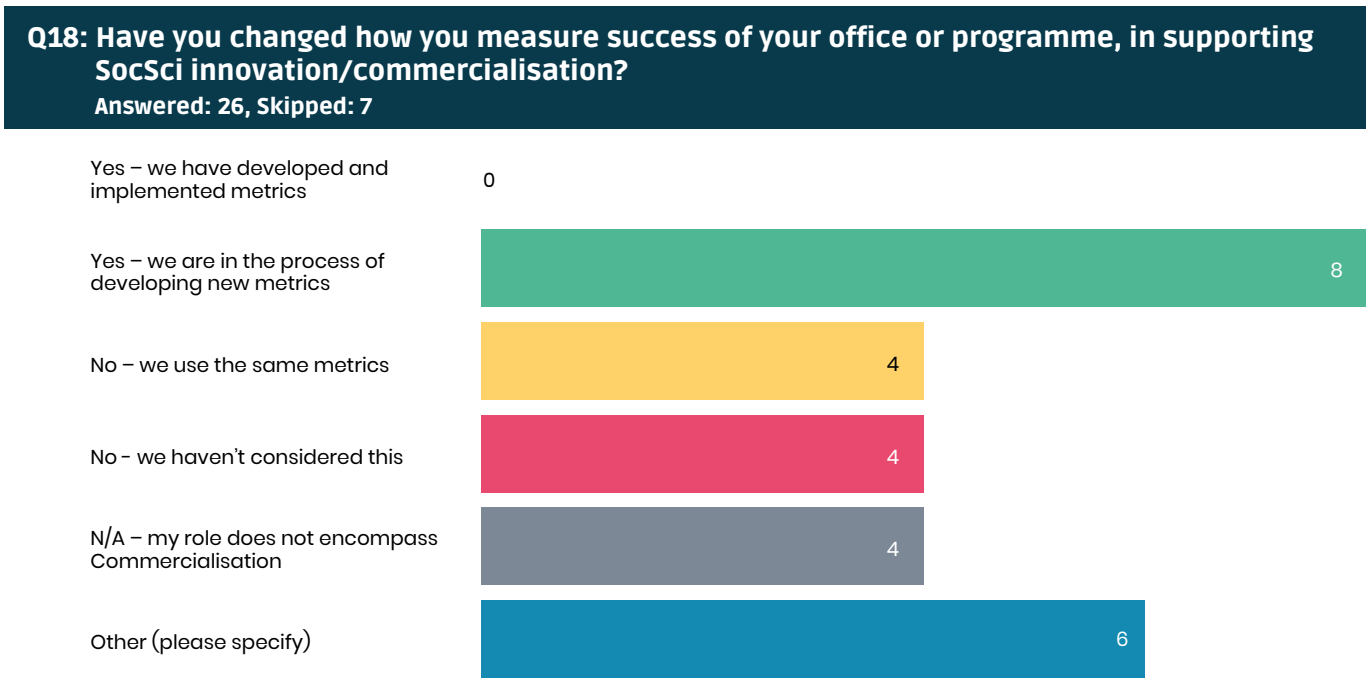
New measures are needed to accurately reflect the nuances of the social sciences commercialisation process, as well as the wide range of impacts (not just commercial) it can achieve.

Whilst agreeing that traditional KPIs and metrics are useful in monitoring social sciences innovation projects and teams, half (*n*=8) of members involved in research commercialisation reported they are changing or plan to change how they measure success and/or impact of social sciences commercialisation projects and/or offices. The other half (*n*=8) of survey respondents engaged in commercialisation have decided to keep the same metrics in place or have not yet considered this question (Figure 8).

Table 9 provides suggestions from members on the types of metrics that could be used for social sciences innovations. Four themes can be seen in the suggestions: measures related to culture change, academic and partner engagement, traditional commercialisation outcomes, and social impact.

Figure 8: Survey responses regarding changes to impact and/or success measures





Other (responses)

- Not yet but planning to
- Not considered yet - but we do plan to include
- New member
- The metrics were introduced as part of my role creation where we moved from income-focused to a hybrid/ mosaic metric model
- We will look at more ways to incorporate social business models in training and support, but not sure of social science specific offering/metrics
- We do not offer STEM, so no comparator

Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

Table 9: Survey responses regarding changes to impact and/or success measures

Q19: What KPIs or other success measures would you suggest are useful to for SocSci commercialisation?	
Types of Measures	**Compiled Survey Responses (*n*=10) and Interview Responses (*n*=4)**
External Engagement	• Co-operative activities between researchers and wider industry and third sector • Touch points between social sciences researchers and industry • Quality of partnerships/partnerships working well (not just income)
Internal Engagement	• Understanding the pipeline in some way - how are students engaged, how are early career researchers engaged, and how to be more inclusive • Number of entrepreneurial academics assisted/coached • More academics attending innovation events • Number of projects in development/Number of academics and staff engaged in these projects • More academics having invested time in developing entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial ideas • Number of queries from academics
Culture Change	• Institutional awareness of timeframes • Academics being confident and having the knowledge and skills to take a commercialisation route if their research lends itself to it • Confidence and skill development amongst academics • The fact that it happens at all is a key KPI and a recognition of (so-called) longer-term soft measures, such as cultural changes/shifts in thinking, better engagement, job satisfaction/enjoyment rather than numbers all the time • Academics are more 'curious' about innovation • Satisfaction of academics (happy and motivated academics)
Tech Transfer Outcomes (measured as progress)	• Increase in number of incoming innovation disclosures • Increase in number of spinouts and number of licensing agreements • All the numbers are to be measured against yourself to measure progress from year to year - not as a way to measure against peer institutions, which is fraught with problems • There is a temptation to use alternative measures for social sciences commercialisation. I would resist this. We need to use the same measures as STEM (spin-outs, licensing revenues, etc) but add to these better social metrics (i.e., do not focus on social metrics only).
Social Impact	• Social Return on Investment • Asset Based Community Development • Capital Literacy • Social impact (TBD how to best measure this) • Impact/Difference made • Maybe success measures closely allied to REF Impact measures, or perhaps derived from the KPIs identified for relevant sectoral funding programmes (e.g., ESRC IAAs, etc.) • Impact metric based on whatever the venture does

Source: Aspect Member Survey and Interviews, July 2021

5.3 Where to Next?

Members should start tracking culture change and engagement alongside (early) commercial outcomes, whilst also looking to develop a model for evaluating and reporting on social impact.

Some of metrics and indicators suggested by members are already established and can be easily tracked. For these, the key changes needed are recognition of these metrics by funders and institutions, and the need to measure one's own progress against internal targets. For other suggested metrics, however, there is still work to be done to define what the right metrics should be, and to develop models for measuring them. Suggested topics to explore in the Aspect extension period, include:

1) **Adjust KPIs to balance income expectations against other impact metrics.** It will be necessary to develop metrics (or proxy measures) to quantify and qualify social benefit and social contributions, and balance this against income expectations (which may be lower for social sciences innovations). The view of Aspect members is that the development of these metrics should be led by the people 'on the ground'. As one Aspect member notes: "There is a tendency to measure things like an equity stake, funding raised etc… but our projects are likely to be things that change policy or change society and have an effect on the world… [The metrics] have to be contextualised - the currency we are dealing in with the social sciences is 'difference' once its translated and out in the real world. [At this stage] the people doing this job need to have the freedom to say what is important to measure for social sciences."

2) **Develop a methodology for quantitatively measuring (and communicating) the non-commercial impact from commercialisation/ innovation.** Having invested three years in understanding the profile of social sciences innovations, Aspect members are now in a position to develop a framework for conducting impact evaluations (i.e., a theory of change model), and for best communicating the impact to policy makers or other influencers. One member notes that whilst case studies are valuable, we need to move towards quantitative as well as qualitative messaging if we hope to get the attention of key stakeholders.

3) **Consider how, and if, the insights about social sciences metrics apply to other SHAPE disciplines.** Whilst the social sciences does have some similarities to the other SHAPE disciplines, 'theories of change' for subjects like Arts & Design, for example, are likely to look different. We may find this to be true for other SHAPE disciplines as well, and this would benefit from further exploration and consideration during the extension period.

Aspect funded projects such as the Research Commercialisation Toolkit, and the ASAP's alumni engagement initiative, have started to touch on some of these topics - outputs from their investigations can be found on the Aspect website. The next phase of the Aspect programme could provide a platform to explore these topics further, benefiting from collaboration across the consortium to create standard, shared models and measures aligned to the points identified above.

Box 6: Case studies from members, showing how they are refining their success measures

The University Of Sheffield.

University of Sheffield: Taking a Continuous Improvement Approach to Identify Metrics

The Sheffield IP and Impact Team (Commercialisation) is currently exploring new ways measure success and assess potential internal investment opportunities, looking beyond 'traditional' measures such as those used in REF and KEF. The team has started building questions into projects to capture things that could become potential metrics, and identify what might be worthwhile outcomes and impacts to record. This approach is based on iterative 'design-thinking' from both the perspective of the 'product' we are attempting to develop and from the perspective of any business we engage with and their sentiment/experience of working with HEI.

What do all sides learn? How can we do better in our delivery of commercialisation support? This 'continuous improvement' approach seeks to learn from each commercialisation project such that the next time a similar project arises, the blockers to engagement are gone. We have learned so far that there is a difference in 'pace' often: academics are used to research projects that may last up two-thirds of the year, but business wishes to move far swifter than that. This is an observation of culture within two environments that may affect how success is achieved and measured. The next step for Sheffield is to deliver training on design-thinking for academics, which will provide them with an insight into product development prior to embarking on their commercialisation journey.

6 Applying 'Good Practice' in Social Sciences Innovation

What are the key things you need to keep in mind when you are setting up a social sciences commercialisation or innovation support office? Are there differences compared to STEM? What have members found works well, or what things have they needed to adapt?

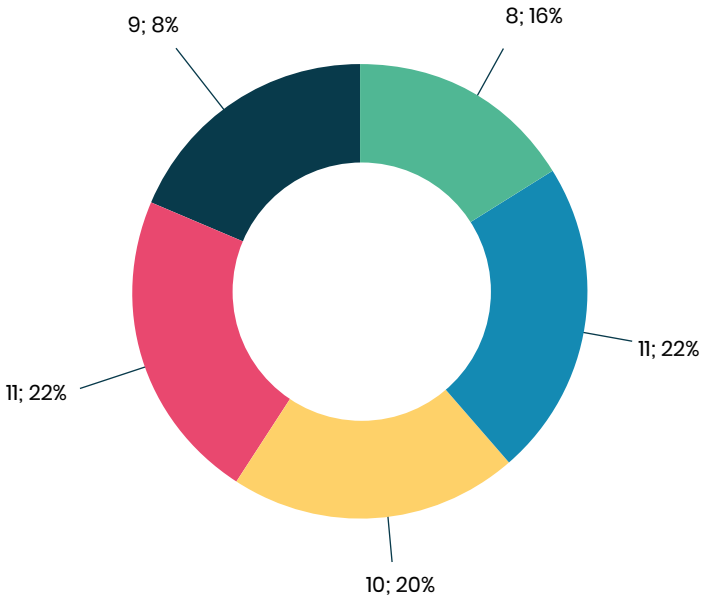
Survey respondents were asked to provide 'top tips' when considering increasing or establishing a social sciences innovation[25] support function based on their learnings from participating in the Aspect programme. Whilst some suggestions to improve support functions were not all that different to how STEM support functions are structured or executed, members did note several key nuances that are important to consider for the social sciences. Their responses can be loosely categorised into (i) tips on getting the most from the network and learnings from one's peers, and (ii) tips for supporting social sciences innovation activities including communications, practice, and resource and team structures (Figure 9).

This chapter builds on these themes, adding in further insights from the 2021 Aspect Member Interviews, funded projects (see detailed summaries of each project in Appendix 9.3), and learnings from the LSE commercialisation office and Zinc venture-builder (reported in the Aspect Learning Report 2020 - see Chapter 1.3 for an overview of LSE and Zinc activities). This chapter complements the Aspect Toolkit, which is the main repository of good practice developed by Aspect's CoPs.

[25] Innovation in this context includes the breadth of activities (research commercialisation, entrepreneurship, business engagement, etc.)

Figure 9: Analysis of members' suggested tips for social sciences innovation support

Q10: Imagine you are advising someone who is considering increasing or establishing a social sciences Innovation* support function..... Reflecting on what you have learned or gained from your participation in Aspect, what top 3 tips would you give them?
Answered: 20, Skipped: 13



Q10: Top Tips

Respondents could list up to three. Answers have been grouped into categories.

- Aspect Lessons
- Communications
- Networking
- Practice
- Resource

Category	Sub-category	Total 49
Getting the most from the network		
Aspect lessons	Admin tips	2
	Apply learnings locally	2
	Share comms widely	1
	Participate in (specific) activities	3
Networking	Join networks	4
	Learn from what others have done	6
Supporting SocSci innovation		
Communication & Engagement	Consider academic motivations/ needs	5
	Value of Case studies	2
	Consider Language	4
Practice	Tips on how to commercialise	6
	Remember not one size fits all	3
	Use links to entrepreneurship	2
Resource	Find funding	2
	Have patience, it takes time	4
	Dedicated staff	3

Source: Aspect Member Survey, July 2021

* Innovation in this context includes the breadth of activities (research commercialisation, entrepreneurship, business engagement, etc.)

6.1 Communicating and Engaging with Academics

Social scientists have different motivations to STEM entrepreneurs and this needs to be reflected in how universities communicate with them.

Use alternative terms that resonate with social scientist's values. Nearly all members noted traditional terms like 'commercialisation' or even 'innovation' tend to put people off. Support teams need to understand the right terminology when introducing academics to the various pathways and options available to them. If academics feel like the support team speaks their language, they are more likely to build long-term relationships and establish trust. Members are using alternative terms to attract social scientists to commercialisation, including:

- 'Private sector engagement' rather than 'business or industry engagement' (since social sciences academics are likely familiar with public and third sector engagement);
- 'Impact through commercial markets' (which includes a range of things from collaborations with businesses through to starting your own venture);
- 'Applying your research methods'.

The topic of language was also explored in the Entrepreneurship CoP Workshop series and the Marketing Toolkit. Outputs from these projects can be found online in the Aspect Toolkit.

Institutions will benefit from exploring and communicating the complex relationship between topics such as commercial success and social impact. Many universities use social impact and social enterprise as concepts to attract more social scientists who may be wary of 'pure' commercialisation. Whilst this can help stimulate the pipeline and interest, social sciences, social impact and social enterprise are three different things, and the differences should be communicated and broadcast more widely. Furthermore, there is a misconception that all opportunities that come out of the social sciences are social enterprises; this can be misleading for both innovation teams and academics.

Another misconception is that academics have to choose commercial success or social impact. In fact, the models piloted through ARC, ASAP and Zinc team highlight that you can have social impact through commercial innovation (Appendix 9.3.2 and 9.3.3). It is important to use more inclusive terminology that will draw people in and consider various possible options for commercialisation success.

Showcase the breadth of ways academics can engage in commercialisation to raise awareness of different opportunities and pathways. Individual universities have fewer social sciences ventures and opportunities to showcase, and social sciences academics have fewer peer success stories to relate to when compared to STEM academics. The hesitancy of social sciences academics to engage may in part be because academics might not understand the variety of opportunities that exist – innovation teams have a role to play in showcasing what it can look like to work with industry including people, projects, and examples.

Case studies are one way to communicate the benefits of social scientists engaging with commercialisation and entrepreneurship. They highlight the different pathways to academics and show them how others have achieved impact or commercialisation success. The Aspect membership have contributed to a library of case studies, through Aspect funded projects including: Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Audit, Aspect Case Studies Library, ARC, ASAP, and Zinc. The Methods for Change project (Appendix 9.3.9) is another model for building awareness and engagement between academics and industry. It shows potential industry partners the value of social sciences methods when they are applied and also shows the academics different ways of engaging with industry. This project is research-based and has enabled extensive engagement with academics.

> **Innovation teams have a role to play in showcasing what it can look like to work with industry including people, projects and examples.**

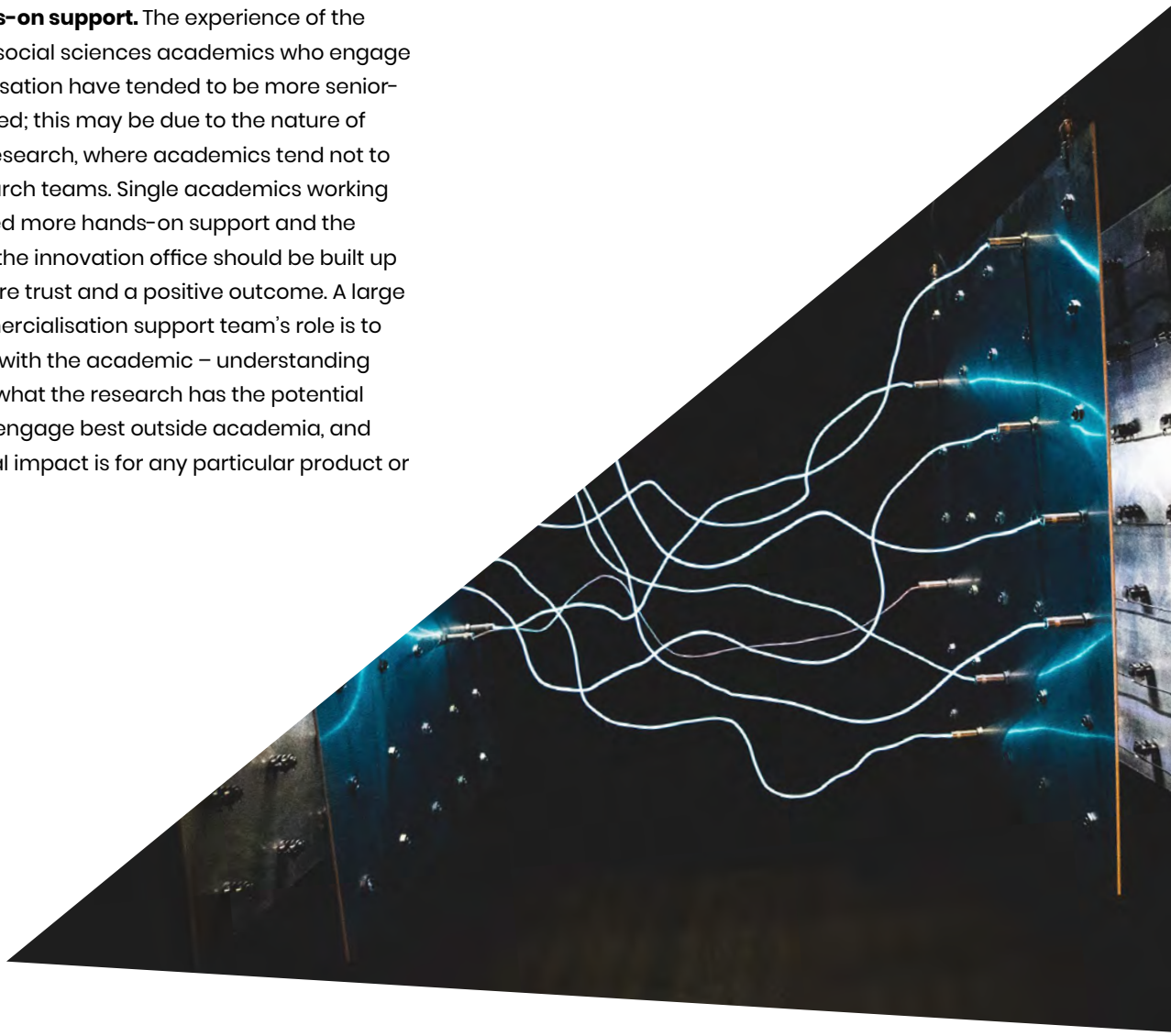
6.2 Starting the Commercialisation Process

Start the conversation about social sciences commercialisation early. There is not an established pathway in the social sciences compared to STEM and innovation offices need to spend more time shaping ideas from an early stage.

Get invited into the conversation early on to contribute to key decisions. The early stages are when the majority of mistakes tend to be made, e.g., deciding which partner to engage with, the type of legal agreement, how to disseminate/create a higher level of impact, etc. Working with the academics to start thinking about impact and possible commercialisation outcomes as early as possible will benefit the later stages of commercialisation.

Building the relationship with the academic is important – compared to STEM scientists, social scientists are more likely to work alone and may well need more hands-on support. The experience of the members is that social sciences academics who engage with commercialisation have tended to be more senior-level than expected; this may be due to the nature of social sciences research, where academics tend not to have larger research teams. Single academics working alone tend to need more hands-on support and the relationship with the innovation office should be built up over time to ensure trust and a positive outcome. A large part of the commercialisation support team's role is to develop the idea with the academic – understanding and building out what the research has the potential to be, how it can engage best outside academia, and what the potential impact is for any particular product or output.

End products take time to evolve. Identifying a viable product takes more time – and often follows a more 'winding' path than STEM commercialisation. This can lead to a more complex due diligence and disclosure process, and a 'joined-up' approach between support units is essential at the early stages. Research contracts teams, business engagement teams, consultancy units, and commercialisation teams need to work collaboratively to ensure innovators have both the right guidance and the legal/contractual freedom to explore opportunities for commercial impact. (See Chapter 6.5 for more on team models that members are trialling).



6.3 Taking Innovations to Market

Social sciences commercialisation pathways might look different to STEM and TTOs and academics should be open-minded and aware of the possibilities. In particular, many (although not all) social sciences innovations and ventures tend to be people- or knowledge-based, requiring more of the academic's time and expertise for commercialisation (compared to patents or 'widgets', for example).

The commercialisation pathway for the social sciences often starts through consultancy. Insights gained through delivering projects such as ARC have enabled members to develop their understanding of the social sciences commercialisation pathway. Opportunities often start as a consultancy; once the consultancy gains some traction, it is possible to begin to consider what scale-up might look like, and then, potentially, to consider a 'product'. This is different to STEM opportunities where the product usually comes first and is followed by a clear pathway to commercialisation.

Intellectual Property (IP) is (usually) not detachable. Social sciences commercialisation requires more involvement from the inventors and professional support services. From members' experience, there appear to be fewer 'ready to go licenses' and less clear pathways to commercialisation. ARC has taught both the professional support teams and academics involved in the programme that they might have to be a bit more patient and consider different options over a longer period of time before being able to understand a pathway to generating impact. This 'longer' process can feel quite foreign to research commercialisation professionals who have more experience of working with STEM projects and universities who frequently commercialise STEM opportunities; so specific training workshops (such as those in the ARC accelerator) in these areas might be helpful.

Social enterprises are one – but not the only - commercialisation route for social sciences. There is a misconception that all opportunities that come out of the social sciences are social enterprises. Aspect projects such as the ARC and ASAP accelerators, and the Zinc and ABaCuSS programmes have shown a breadth of different routes to impact. That said, socially driven ventures are also a viable pathway, and 'traditional' TTOs may need to tailor their offerings to support these and a wider range of ventures. The ASAP programme, for example, has identified three social business model 'archetypes' and is tailoring their offerings to better support these ventures (see Box 4, in Chapter 4).

Be inventive with business models and think 'outside the box' regarding how data- and service-based innovations can be commercialised. Many social sciences innovations are founded on data, often with a service component to the business model. To support these projects, it's important to be inventive with business models, work collaboratively with other support teams, and invest in very thorough due diligence. Much of the value social scientists can achieve though commercialisation comes from their skillsets and knowledge being applied.

The criteria for traditional funding routes do not always fit the social sciences. As mentioned in Chapter 4.2, there are some unique differences about how social sciences research teams are structured, and this can make it challenging to meet criteria for STEM-oriented funding or venture investment (i.e., criteria related to business models or financial returns, but also criteria related to time commitments and participation in funded programmes). One member is trialling a new solution – academics receiving funding for the ARC accelerator must also participate in additional ideation activities that will facilitate earlier stage discussions around how social sciences academics can secure appropriate follow-on funding.

Bring in students and ECRs to partner with academics. Several factors mean social scientists often lack time to undertake commercialisation activities. Social scientists may have less experience of this kind of commercialisation, with fewer prior examples and role models within their department or wider institution, a heavy due diligence burden, and often less time available due to teaching and research group structures. Partnering academics with entrepreneurial students might be one solution, a model demonstrated by the ARC programme. Building links between commercialisation teams and student enterprise teams can also help establish a solid foundation for the local social sciences commercialisation ecosystem.

6.4 Building Capacity and Skills within Support Teams

The role of the commercialisation support professional in the social sciences is much more one of 'co-production' than in STEM. Support teams need more time to work with social sciences academics, may be doing different kinds of tasks than they would normally, and require institutional support to enable this.

Success in social sciences commercialisation depends on the capacity and ability of the team to dedicate additional time to commercialisation. Numerous Aspect members cited the importance of dedicated people and funding – without people to do the commercialisation work, projects and activities do not happen. These dedicated individuals are also helpful in building relationships with the academics – this is key to create change, culture shift, and trust with academics.

Dedicated resource is also important to do 'developmental work' with the academics. If dedicated resource is not available, the innovation support team will not be aware of what ideas and potential projects might have been missed. It is unlikely that junior academics will approach the innovation team unsolicited to discuss a potential new project. Experience gained working with social sciences academics has highlighted just how quick they are to make decisions to work in business engagement and commercialisation; it is very important that the commercialisation support teams have the availability to respond quickly to the academic's interest.

Commercial teams also need time to build their networks within different markets, and businesses need time to become familiar with university R&D. Applications for social sciences innovations often extend into company operations, e.g., finance, business structure and human resources. These business units may not be as used to engaging with universities than are the company research departments. In these circumstances, the businesses and academics (with commercialisation support) will require more time than usual to build their relationship to better collaborate.

Innovation teams may need training. Several members mentioned that supporting social sciences commercialisation is new to many TTOs. This highlights a need for training in how to work with 'soft IP' as well as training in ideation concepts. Participating in programs like ARC is one way to upskill professional services teams, who attend the programme alongside the academics. Training workshops on traditional entrepreneurship concepts such as the business model canvas are also useful to help academics conceptualise their ideas, but academics might need more 1-1 support to understand how these types of tools can be used in the social sciences.

Leverage networks to share good practice and generate examples of commercialisation. For many institutions, the social sciences innovation pipeline is still at the 'nascent' or 'seeding' stage (see Figure 7 in Chapter 5). Often there are fewer social sciences projects than STEM projects in universities' commercialisation pipelines. Aspect members noted that social sciences commercialisation is easier if TTOs and universities are part of a wider community, enabling the academics and professional support teams to be innovative, creative, and forward thinking in their approaches, and learn from each other's mistakes and successes. Working with other universities allows good practice to be shared to solve common challenges. This point was repeatedly made in the 2021 Aspect Member Survey and Interviews. More about this 'network effect' can been found in Chapter 7.2.

> **Through the ARC project, Aspect has massively accelerated our understanding of what the social sciences commercialisation process looks like – accelerated by three years – this is a big gain. When you have a bigger data set of 40-50 ventures, [from across institutions] you can see more clearly 'where does social science commercialise?'**
>
> **Aspect member**

6.5 Integrating the Support Teams

An integrated model that brings together members of the innovation support teams with those involved with the research development and procurement at an earlier stage is important.

Frame the offering around supporting the academic as a team. One member has recently moved to this model and noted it has worked better than their previous streamed model where academics would be sent to either a policy engagement or business engagement support team. Academics are ultimately interested in advancing their research and having a wider discussion about the avenues to achieve this; having a shared support model assists academics to achieve their goals.

Add specialised roles to support due diligence. One member has created an 'Innovation Contracts' Manager role, sitting between the research facilitators and commercialisation teams. This dual view means the individual has sight of potential research and consultancy contracts, but also the needs and considerations linked to later stage commercialisation. This enables them to identify and correct potential roadblocks early in the process, and to contribute to any potential updates in the IP policy that might be needed, informed by on-the-ground practice.

Box 7: Case studies from members, showing examples of support team structures

University of Oxford: An generalised engagement support model

The University of Oxford has recently restructured how it supports engagement in the social sciences. In 2018, the Social Sciences and Humanities Divisions piloted its first shared Business Engagement (BE) team. At the same time, Social Sciences also started a separate Research Impact Facilitator team (embedded in departments and focused specifically on the development of REF impact case studies) and began hosting a University-wide Policy Engagement team. In this original model, academics could approach the team, and would be sent to the appropriate 'stream' for support (i.e., BE, Policy Engagement, Tech Transfer, Consultancy, etc). It became clear that this 'streaming' approach wasn't working. Many researchers simply want help with engaging with a range of stakeholders and the team found that pigeonholing their work as a BE, Policy or Commercial opportunity without constant cross referral to other appropriate teams was stifling the academics' interest, particularly in developing business or commercial interests. At the same time Oxford's devolved structure meant that the department-embedded Research Impact Facilitator team was received very positively and that team was able to build up strong working relationships with researchers.

In 2021, following the REF submission in March, working alongside our departmental and divisional research support teams, the Research Impact Facilitator team have been repurposed to focus on a new 'generalized engagement support' model, that puts the academic and their interest at the heart of the process. This holistic approach provides multiple points of entry for researchers. After a first meeting with an academic about their research and engagement the team now draws in second layer of expertise from the other professional services engagement teams (BE, Commercialization, Policy, Public Engagement, etc). This 'joined-up' approach supports the academic through their journey and helps to advance their research in a collaborative, 'team-based' way, ensuring that the academic gets the most appropriate advice for their research and extends the scope for engagement and impact.

LSE: Joined-up support from contracts through commercialisation

At LSE, an integrated division of research and innovation was created, because we are advocating the view that the innovation process not as a discrete step separated from our research activities. Rather, our several branches – research support and development, consulting, commercialisation, and student entrepreneurship – are designed to offer an integrated set of services to the same academics and students as our clients. For example, we now work across teams to support early identification and development of strategic research themes; our consulting and commercialisation units have worked together on several projects that produced both consultancy and commercialisation projects; we have also seen entrepreneurs benefiting from both our student entrepreneurship unit and academic commercialisation unit

University of York: Applying insights from the BE Ideas Box Project

Whilst many have called for a more 'joined up' or 'aligned' approach to social sciences business engagement, the Business Engagement Ideas Box project suggests that the pipeline for social science-grounded business engagement and commercialisation should be understood in the context of the convertibility of different forms of value (horizontal alignment), alongside a grounding within institutional mission (vertical alignment). During this pilot project led by the University of York, the team explored what an optimal support structure might look like, and generated resources and guidance on how to general structural issues within HE knowledge exchange, including prioritisation workload and misaligned support structures. Outputs from the project are available on the Aspect website.

University of Bristol: Creating a user-centric pathway for entrepreneurial support

Based on user research and stakeholder engagement across the university and in the local community, Bristol's Research and Enterprise Development (RED) team conceptualised a new pathway for accessing entrepreneurial support at the university. The concept – called 'Bristol Grid' is notable for coordinating all existing entrepreneurship support under one pathway—that is support to academics, staff and students—and creating a data-centric reporting system. The team's conceptualisation journey may prove informative for university entrepreneurship hubs that are also exploring ways to consolidate and streamline the pathway for accessing university entrepreneurship support. Read more in this writeup from the a presentation at the Aspect Entrepreneurship CoP Workshop Series.

6.6 Tailoring Entrepreneurship Training

Traditional accelerator models can work as a model for the social sciences, with key additional training topics and skill building sessions introducing participants and innovation teams to the multiple pathways available for social sciences ventures. Innovation teams will benefit from upskilling in these differences to ensure they are better positioned to mentor and guide their researchers and entrepreneurs on their journey to market.

Founders should be encouraged to embrace their social science/research backgrounds to create a new mission and lead with passion. Social scientists have an advantage in setting up start-ups due to their ability to seamlessly integrate secondary and primary research with customer insights. They are able to take these insights and large amounts of information, codify and translate them quickly to iterate their business models and improve product development. Social scientists are typically very strong in these skills, providing an opportunity to better communicate their business model making them attractive to the best-fit investors. ARC, ASAP and Zinc missions have demonstrated how social sciences accelerators can build business models and skills around the academic's expertise.

Prior entrepreneurship exposure is a factor in a social sciences founder's ability to commercialise research or build a successful social impact venture. The promotion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial culture at universities is important in driving social scientists towards these activities. Founders who are familiar with the language of entrepreneurship, the ecosystem, and challenges might feel less intimidated and more likely to participate in entrepreneurship activities. Universities should consider how they can create an inclusive entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem.

Resources for social sciences entrepreneurs should incorporate training in the 'softer skills' of entrepreneurship. Topics such as resilience, stamina, facing failure, risk taking, leadership, connectivity, and compassion were explored via Aspect funded projects, and have been particularly relevant for entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 pandemic. These topics are often overlooked in traditional accelerator programmes but were seen as important for social sciences students to encourage them into an entrepreneurial way of thinking and to show that entrepreneurship can be relevant for social scientists.

Foster an entrepreneurial mindset and skillset from the student through to the senior academic. Entrepreneurial skills and mindset not only benefit the commercialisation process, they also benefit an academic's research, and can hugely benefit students at an early stage in their career. The experience on Aspect has highlighted for members how important it is to remove any artificial separation between research and entrepreneurship, thereby highlighting how the one can positively influence the other. Fellowship programmes such as the Aspect Innovation Fellowships (Appendix 9.3.7) and Zinc Fellowships are one model Aspect has trialled to raise awareness of these opportunities amongst social sciences students and researchers.

6.7 Where to Next?

Tools and insights generated through Aspect are being shared through the Aspect Toolkits. Members will focus on applying these insights to their institutions during the extension period.

The Aspect CoPs have developed the Aspect Toolkit, containing tools and guidance on social sciences commercialisation, business engagement, entrepreneurship and communications. The toolkit is available through the website and will continue to updated during the extension period. Sitting behind the toolkit are many other resources that can be browsed via the Funded Projects and Resources pages of Aspect's website. A deeper look into good practice from the individual projects can be found in Appendix .

7 Building Institutional Capacity and Network Effects

What effect has Aspect had on members? What insights have we gained about operating a network/consortium? What is the value of a network like Aspect?

The fourth of the CHASS challenges states that "Institutions are not equipped to accommodate social sciences research commercialisation" (see Table 6 in Chapter 2.4 for the full list of challenges.) This chapter provides feedback from the membership as to how Aspect has contributed to building capacity within their institution, as well as through the network effects whereby Aspect may be viewed as having contributed to change across the membership and potentially beyond it.

The 2021 Aspect Member Survey included several questions on institutional capacity. When asked their opinion on how much had improved of worsened since the start of Aspect in 2018, 71.4% of members were of the view that institutional capacity was less of a challenge after three years of Aspect, with 7.4% seeing no change and 21.4% answering 'don't know'. Of all the CHASS challenges included in the survey question, institutional change showed the most positive response. (See Chapter 2.4 for more from this analysis).

Hour long interviews were conducted with those members who had been part of Aspect for more than one year (founder members and those named in the extension funding application). The interviews also provided an opportunity to better understand the members' views on how the Aspect programme can continue strengthening the network going forward.

> **Aspect gave a mandate for four people focused on the social sciences; without people to do the work, these projects don't get done.**
>
> **Aspect member**

7.1 Institutional Capacity

Aspect provided not only the funding, but also a 'mandate' that has been critical to building institutional capacity and change.

The impact of the collaborative project funding on building institutional capacity was highlighted by all interviewees, with the majority of those interviewed and commenting in the survey mentioning ARC (formerly 'SUCCESS') as a flagship programme. ARC was viewed as showcasing the potential value of research commercialisation to individual academics, as well as providing training and upskilling in the specifics of social sciences commercialisation for the professional services teams who accompanied ARC participants.

A key point highlighted by multiple interviewees was that ARC enabled researchers to stay in post whilst being on the programme, rather than having to leave their academic roles. Making the most of this, the University of Manchester's first participants on the SUCCESS programme then went on to inspire their colleagues as Innovation Fellows (also funded by Aspect), showing the 'knock-on' effect of the Aspect funding in further building institutional capacity (see Box 8).

Other projects highlighted as supporting institutional capacity growth included:

- Methods For Change - encouraged collaboration and relationships within and between universities and with third parties;
- Internationalisation project, which although specifically focusing activities within Sussex has built connections between academics and entrepreneurs in middle income countries;
- The Ed Tech Hub – the development of the hub resource led by Bristol, informed by the commercialisation pilot funding provided to Manchester, Glasgow and NTU, and shared across the Aspect memberships through the 'ludic labs platform' supported by LSE.

A major theme from the interviews was the importance of the financial resources from Aspect in enabling institutions to build internal capacity amongst their professional services teams, bringing in individuals who could focus solely on social sciences research commercialisation in a way that they had not been able to before.

In a number of institutions, the timing of Aspect funding becoming available, and the parallel commitment from the institution in terms of contribution-in-kind, enabled the appointment of professional services support who were able to focus on social sciences, whether research commercialisation, student entrepreneurship or business engagement (and in some cases all three), in turn being able to generate good practice for their institutions and Aspect. An example of how Aspect member university of Sussex was able to take advantage of the Aspect programme to 'embed' social science within a new entrepreneurship offering is shared in Box 8).

Aspect members with smaller professional services teams devoted to the social sciences expressed the concern that they might not have the capacity internally to take advantage of the resources Aspect has to offer academics. One of the small institutions commented that Aspect has enabled them to now make the case internally to develop their team and include the commercialisation of SHAPE subjects within their HEIF submission for the first time.

Learning over the first three years of Aspect highlighted the importance of placing academics at the heart of the process, with relevant professional support, whether business engagement, commercialisation, policy, or entrepreneurship, available to them and built around them. The Innovation Fellows pilot project (Appendix 9.3.6, and Box 8) has provided an early example of how Aspect funding could be used to catalyse greater interest and engagement from academics. The increased visibility and engagement resulting from Aspect funded projects has the potential for significant culture change - amongst academics, professional services support, and funders – and ultimately the potential for even greater impact from social sciences research commercialisation.

Box 8: Case studies from members, showing the 'knock-on effect' from funded projects in building capacity, networks, and awareness

University of Sussex: Extending the Reach of Aspect through an International Training Project

Through direct support from Aspect, the University of Sussex (UoS) team along with a number of partners has been able to deliver this project with a wide transnational impact, engagement and the establishment of a robust foundation for further development of applied social sciences across a number of countries and diverse contexts. The Internationalisation Project team aimed to build capacity and support projects to promote applied social sciences, through an initial 10-step training online programme. Over 60 social scientists and social innovators from 15 countries were engaged (with over 175 people from over 60 countries engaged across different digital structures, including researchers, research users, entrepreneurs and investors). At the end of the training participants had the opportunity to make an application for £2,000 to support the implementation and piloting of their project. Projects received are very diverse, from a multinational climate change training project through to the first dedicated health incubator in Middle East and tax education in Tanzania to a women employment project in Zimbabwe.

The UoS team has built a vibrant international ecosystem, and is now pursuing Horizon Europe (HE) opportunities. If Aspect partners are keen to explore partnership for HE submissions please feel free to contact the Aspect Team at UoS. See Appendix 9.3.8 for more about the Internationalisation project.

University of Sussex: Embedding Social Sciences in a New Entrepreneurship Programme

In 2020, the University of Sussex (UoS) set about co-creating a new entrepreneurship support offer for students and graduates at the University of Sussex. As a vision for this emerged that gave precedence to inclusivity, accessibility, flexibility and relevance, involvement in Aspect, and the consideration of the needs of social sciences students and others, helped inform our planning. We set about creating a 'friendlier' representation of business start-up, influenced by Aspect discussions on the difficult language of entrepreneurship and what makes a social sciences entrepreneur unique. While university extra-curricular entrepreneurship programmes can often be over-indexed by business students, we were pleased at the end of year one to have attracted a reflective balance of students to our offer. Aspect has been a useful reflection tool, and we aim to encourage all students to consider and develop their entrepreneurial potential, and continue to seek ways to engage from all disciplines by being both relevant and relatable. To learn more about the offering they have developed, visit http://www.sussex.ac.uk/careers/.

University of Manchester: Using a Fellowship Model to Build a Network of Engaged Academics

Building on the Aspect-funded Innovation Fellowships initiative already running at the University of Oxford, the University of Manchester piloted a local Innovation Fellows scheme, as an approach to addressing the problem of wariness among some social science academics around engaging with business and the private sector. Manchester's Business Engagement (BE) team recruited a small cohort of academics to act as 'academic champions' and advocates for business engagement, commercialisation, and entrepreneurship. The cohort would take the lead in running a programme of activities aimed at fellow researchers, with the goal of providing examples of good practice and achieving buy-in for the activity amongst their peers.

Recruiting the cohort was the first hurdle faced by the BE Team – a key lesson learnt was to "work with willing" rather than trying to build engagement too broadly and too quickly, and drawing on previous participants in the ARC programme proved valuable. Another key insight was around being clear and precise language used to describe the fellowship, as this type of funding (for an activity vs research) was unfamiliar to many of the academics.

In terms of project impact, the Fellows' activity was well received and inspired many attendees to reconsider their views. Two fellowships were awarded, who attracted 60 attendees to their events, with 262 views after the fact. For institutions seeking to replicate this model, Manchester's BE team would recommend scaling-up the initial activity, by funding more than two fellowships and having fellows run a more extensive programme of activity This initial cohort – and the peers they engage – has the potential to form a network for future innovation activities within University and across the wider Aspect network. See Appendix 9.3.7 for more about the Innovation Fellowships project.

At the end of the day, Aspect was connecting capability funded, and I think it's done that. Connecting capability on the local level and also between institutions.

Aspect member

7.2 Network Effects

Members repeatedly highlighted the value learning from their peers as a means for building institutional knowledge and skills. Individual members benefit from having institutional support and capacity to take advantage of the funded programme and network activity.

The impact of the 'network' was commented upon throughout the 2021 Aspect Member Survey and Interviews. Members noted that the collaborations facilitated by the network were particularly valuable, while also commenting on Aspect's wider leveraging power (i.e., "networks leveraging networks" and "amplifying the power of the collective").

7.2.1 Building collaborations and knowledge

Inter-institutional collaboration was facilitated through the following Aspect activities/support:

- Governance structures, with a particular focus on the CoPs as the 'engine of the machine';
- Funded projects bringing together collaborations across the membership (see above under institutional capacity); and
- Peer-learning – through workshops, events, reports, CoPs led activities in particular.

Some interviewees commented that connecting through Aspect had been very resource intensive at the beginning of the programme. They highlighted that having funding and a remit for the Aspect Broker role was key to increasing their engagement in the Aspect Programme and the benefits they had gained from doing so. Others commented on the value of Steering Group and of the Aspect Forum events, both providing a means of bringing together multiple views and experiences from members, established and new.

All those interviewed highlighted the value of the CoPs. The mix of experience across the membership – for example from those running ARC or working as part of larger teams, to those whose previous experience had all been focused on STEM – ensured that the CoPs provided opportunities for members to share good practice and learn from the good practice of others. As a specific example, through the RC CoP, LSE learnt of QUB's experience in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) and were able to reach out offline to continue the conversation. Other examples of the value gained from the CoPs include:

- **Research commercialisation** – sharing good practice of how others support social sciences commercialisation, how they respond to challenges, how they stimulate engagement and the different approaches taken to leveraging institutional research strengths "energising its members".
- **Entrepreneurship** – sharing insights regarding differences in social sciences entrepreneurship practice in across institutions and disciplines, but also providing insights where challenges were common to multiple institutions.

The value of the Research Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship workshop series – each of which were funded as projects with the intention of sharing and generating good practice (largely toolkit outputs) – was recognised by some of those interviewed. Also recognised as being valuable to maintaining the relationships within the CoPs were the regular (monthly or every two months) meetings, usually built around a focused agenda, e.g., for the RC CoP a standard agenda would include: introductions to new members, ARC, the workshop series, the toolkit development, new topics for future meetings, and any specific questions by members looking to learn from the experiences of their colleagues.

The importance of programme management in support of governance was highlighted by those interviewed, providing as it does the framework within which the members have been able to 'bond', whilst focusing on the connecting capability across the membership and building capacity through Aspect.

7.2.2 Networks leveraging networks

Insights into how other members have built networks external to their institutions, locally, nationally and internationally, in policy and/or local economies was highlighted as being of value by multiple interviewees. Cardiff provides a particularly good example of how membership of Aspect has given the team a 'voice' within the university and the wider ecosystem, supporting the representation of social sciences commercialisation at an ideal moment as SPARK is launched. SPARK is Cardiff's Social Science Research Park – with a mission is to develop innovative solutions to societal problems through collaborative research activity. Cardiff's Aspect team will all move into SPARK, providing an ideal opportunity to centre Aspect at the heart of Cardiff's activities.

The influence of Aspect within other networks was also noted, with Bristol recognising how Aspect is contributing to a UK wide (potentially international) ecosystem of social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship, enabling the translation of the social sciences into impact. The SETSquared Partnership was highlighted as an example having its own social sciences special interest group and a number of members who have now also joined Aspect.

A number of interviewees highlighted the importance of being able to leverage Aspect funding with other funding streams, for example Impact Accelerator Accounts (IAAs). Over the first three years of Aspect, IAA funds have been leveraged on specific projects, such as Cardiff's ARC participant support, the Sheffield Carer project. Cardiff further leveraged the good practice developed through Aspect into business development – winning the 'Help to Grow' programme for Cardiff to deliver, much of which will have a social sciences element. See Box 9 for more on both projects.

Going forward Aspect's KPIs will continue to include leveraged funding. In addition, in the second year of the extension funding, the intention is to expand Aspect into support both for SHAPE projects and through a formal partnership with the MTSC - a sister CCF to Aspect supporting the translation of MedTech innovations of which Aspect member RCA are also founder members.

Box 9: Case studies from members, showing examples of leveraging funding and networks

Cardiff University: Leveraging Aspect Experience for the 'Help to Grow' Programme

Cardiff University has been able to leverage its links with Aspect to secure further funding. Cardiff University's Aspect membership was instrumental in Cardiff Business School (from which the academic leadership of Aspect at Cardiff University has been drawn) building a successful case for reaccreditation through the Chartered Association of Business Schools' Small Business Charter. This success made Cardiff Business school eligible to become a delivery partner for 'Help to Grow', a 12-week, UK government subsidised support programme for SMEs, delivered by those leading business schools across the UK accredited by the Small Business Charter. Cardiff's involvement with Aspect enabled the Business School to demonstrate strong and growing links with other business schools, including contributing to joint initiatives aimed at encouraging innovation and enterprise in the social sciences such as the ASAP and ARC Accelerators, which have successfully engaged both students and staff from Cardiff Business School and the wider University.

University of Sheffield: Using leveraged funding to provide early stage support

The Aspect funded Carer project, is an example of how the KE team were able to support specific researchers at an early stage in their work as they developed partnerships. The Sheffield team organised a networking event for social enterprises with a social purpose, making introductions between the academic and Mobilise, a tech company started by carers through a Zinc mission. The KE team was able to support that relationship as it built, and to provide the project with funding from an ESRC IAA and Aspect.

Key findings from the project enabled Moblise to better evidence insights to inform their business offerings, and helped the academics to realise the importance of not overextending their research findings to wider communities without ensuring robust evidence gathering. Working together on this small but impactful project ensured that relationships were built providing the foundations and evidence for further discussions around expanding the study. None of that would have happened without the introduction, the funding, and ongoing relationships between the academic and the KE team at Sheffield. The project highlights the value of early-stage engagement with academics, when supporting social sciences KE.

8 Aspect's Plans for the Future

What fundamental questions are still outstanding for members? What will Aspect look like and be doing over the next few years, and how can people get involved?

8.1 Focus for the Follow-on Funding Period

Aspect will continue a collaborative programme of activity to extend the outcomes of CCF Wave 1 funding, and it will expand to include SHAPE disciplines and interdisciplinary collaborations.

The first three years of the Aspect programme have been transformational, responding to the specific challenges of commercialisation and entrepreneurship for the social sciences, building institutional and programme capacity and extending good practice beyond the original seven members to a network of (at present) 23 universities each of which has very different social sciences pipelines and portfolios.

Follow-on funding from Research England (CCF, £1.2m per year for two years (£2.4m) and ESRC (£200k dedicated to supporting non-English HEIs for two runs of the ARC programme) has been awarded to Aspect to enable the membership to further mobilise the learnings presented in this report and to embed good practice within Aspect and more widely.

Beginning in October 2021, the programme will focus on four core activities enabling an extension of the 'Wave 1' activity towards more ambitious outcomes, expansion of the reach of the collaboration, and realisation of the further potential from the original CCF project scope.

The four core activities going forward, are:

1) **Iterate & Scale Wave 1 Pilot Projects**: to build on learnings from high-impact Aspect schemes, to create a more robust offering, include more members, and gain sufficient traction to ensure sustainability.
2) **Develop New Pilots:** to apply learnings to date as Aspect trials new activities that will fill outstanding gaps identified in Wave 1 and build more robust support infrastructure for social sciences commercialisation.
3) **Extend Member Activities to Other Institutions:** to increase academic engagement by taking existing pilot projects and extending them to other institutions to test their transferability. And
4) **Create a Framework for Social Sciences Academic Engagement:** to develop model(s) for integrating research development and business development that moves beyond a simple focus on commercialising the outputs of the social sciences research.

These ambitions will be delivered through a programme of funded projects and schemes, a continued focus on ensuring Aspect becomes self-sustaining, and an expansion, in the second year of follow-on funding, to include all SHAPE disciplines, and to pilot greater interdisciplinary collaborations through a partnership with the MedTech SuperConnector.

Two runs of Aspect's Research Commercialisation Accelerator (ARC), if not more, are planned for the extension period, through which Aspect will continue to support social sciences entrepreneurs from across the membership's research base. In extending the pilot programme for ARC, insights gained over its first two runs will be further developed as ARC is established as an exemplar bespoke accelerator through which social sciences academics can develop their research-based ideas into businesses or ventures to help people, society and the economy. (See Appendix 9.3.2 for more on the learnings from ARC.)

A 24-month extension of Methods for Change (M4C) will ensure that it can extend across the newer Aspect membership, further developing its cooperative consultancy model, and extending the influence of M4C's 'how-to guides' and methods to include even more non-academic stakeholders. In common with the wider Aspect goals, the M4C team will identify synergies with SHAPE and STEM focused interdisciplinary projects and colleagues. (See Appendix 9.3.9 for learnings from M4C.)

Aspect members have highlighted their ambitions to make academic engagement the top priority for the continued success of Aspect. Follow-on funding will allow pilot projects to be extended and expanded across the membership, in support of better integration of SHAPE researchers and the outputs of their research with wider societal and economic impact.

8.2 Member Insight on Operating the Network

The administrative tasks and time required to start-up the network should not be underestimated. Having centralised support and providing mechanisms for members to build relationships is valued. There are opportunities to do more to leverage funding and engage academics.

The interviews and the survey provided an opportunity to understand better the members' views on how the Aspect network can/should continue to grow, what changes to the governance could be beneficial, and how Aspect might better realise its value as an established thought leader.

Understanding how to best communicate with and engage with academics remains a key question for many. Some members also wish to further explore how to best engage business (beyond public/third sector), and combined business development efforts across the members was suggested by multiple members. Many comments also relate to how we can better make the case and set the agenda for the value of social sciences innovation in four spheres: to academics, within HEIs, to businesses, and to funders. Developing more good practice in funding and supporting social sciences ventures was also specifically mentioned.

With regards to the operations of the network, the programme governance will need to consider approaches to ensure the sustainability of Aspect in the longer-term, what an ideal 'operating model' could be, and how Aspect can continue to reach the widest audience whilst maintaining its 'community feel'. In particular, in developing new projects going forward, it will be important understand what collaborative projects or network activities should be funded or organised to best facilitate the deepening of connections between members.

8.2.1 Accessing larger funding opportunities

Members highlighted the opportunity to increase the awareness, understanding, and visibility of Aspect in the wider innovation ecosystem, emphasising

that Aspect members are ideally placed to access larger-scale funding as the programme continues to evolve. Respondents indicated this awareness raising needs to happen on multiple levels - with academics, within/across the institutions, with industry, investors, government, and with the wider funding landscape.

8.2.2 Increasing academic engagement

Aspect members have identified academic engagement as a priority activity for the extension period. Ideas for collaborative projects have been put forward, around the idea of using funding as the initial 'hook' to attract academics. Some of the ideas being explored include (i) building on the learnings from the pilot Innovation Fellowship activity at Oxford and Manchester (see Appendix 9.3.6) to launch a shared Innovation Fellowship across the network, and (ii) providing a central pot of funding for 'pilot projects' to support them through the 'valley of death was suggested.

The view was expressed by a number of interviewees that more could be done to improve relationships between professional services and academics. An awareness of how Aspect members, e.g., CoP members, can support academics seeking to diversify income streams away from the traditional funders may help overcome barriers. One member raised the idea of having a 'buddying' system between academics and professional services support teams, so that commercialisation and entrepreneurship endeavours could be better shared.

8.3 Where to Next?

Members will be applying learnings within their own institutions, whilst collaborating on a programme of activity focussed on increasing academic engagement.

Although there is still work to be done and questions to explore, on the whole, Aspect members feel their participation in the network has been highly valuable. As the extension period starts in October 2021, members will be able to undertake new collaborative projects that will address the objectives set forth in the funding proposal (see Chapter 8.2). Two more annual events are planned, and the wider community, across universities, businesses, policy makers, in the UK and internationally, will be welcomed again to share in the learnings from the network. Sustainability planning will be a focus for the extension. Aspect welcomes queries from potential collaborators and partners, and the door remains open for new members to join.

Box 10: A few Aspect activities in numbers – 2018 to 2021

People

- 23 institutional members (and rising)
- 4 communities of Practice – sharing and creating knowledge, approaches and skills

Pilots and activities

- 17 funded projects and pilot projects (£1.75 M – projects = £5k to 240k in size)
- Aspect funded social sciences initiatives across the network
- Contribution to 3 Zinc missions – and associated businesses, investment, learning, knowledge and skills
- A bespoke Social Science Innovation Office at LSE: learnings and approaches shared.

Sharing and knowledge exchange

- Production of a good practice toolkit, case studies, and a library of resources from funded projects
- 3 Annual Events to share practice with members and the public
- 2 learning reports and a final gain report for 2021
- The Aspect website, https://aspect.ac.uk/ - an interface with the network and beyond
- Bi-monthly public newsletters and member mailing lists

9 Appendix

9.1 Aspect's KPIs and Programme Structure

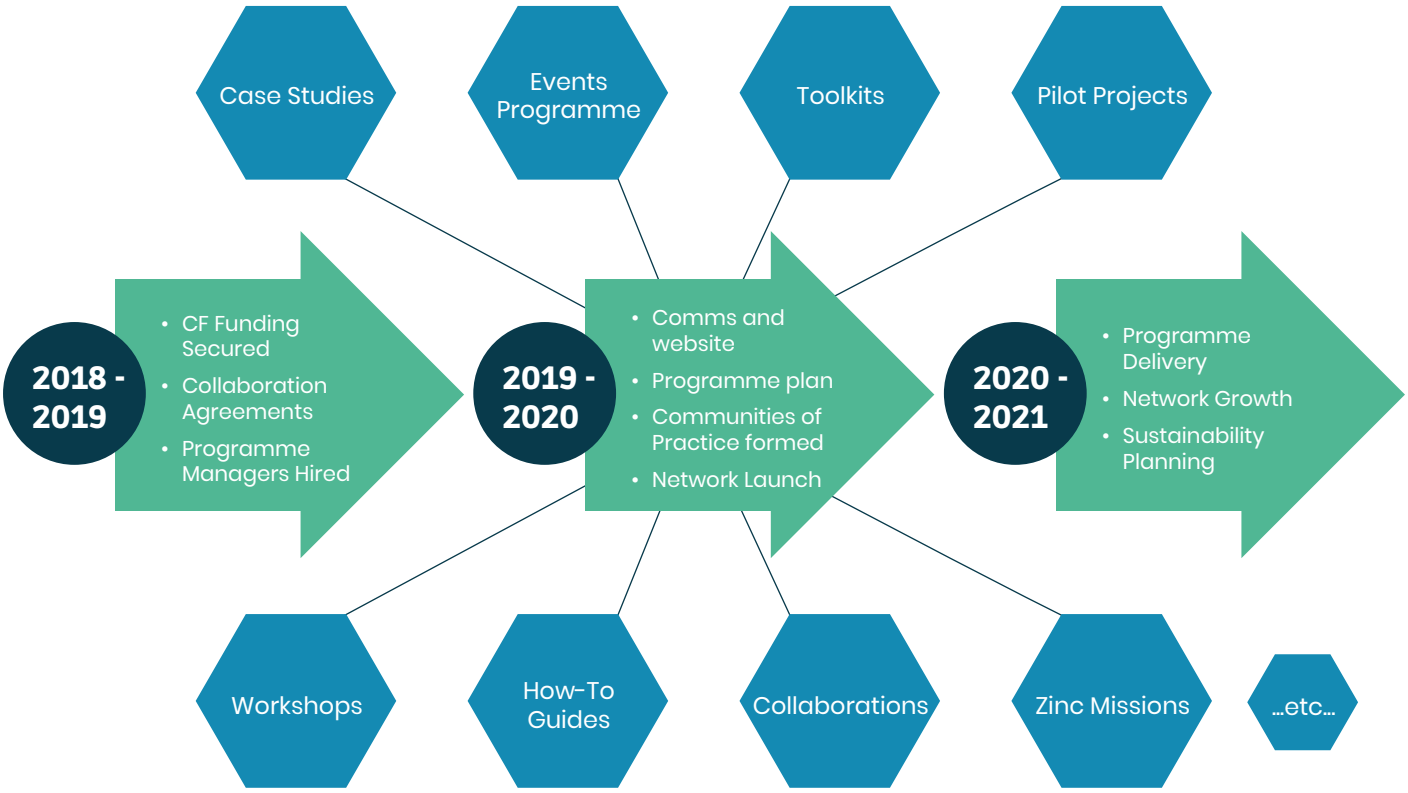
Table 10: Aspect's KPIs for the Wave 1 programme (reported annually)

KPI	2019 1 Aug '18 – 31 July '19	2020 1 Aug '19 – 31 July '20	2021 1 Aug '20 – 30th Sept '21[26]
01	100 academic social science researchers attend training & development events forming part of the Aspect programme	Min. of 240 academic SocSci researchers attend training & development events forming part of the Aspect programme	300 academic SocSci researchers attend training and development events forming part of the Aspect programme
02	Completed 2 Zinc missions	Completed 2 additional Zinc missions	Completed 2 additional Zinc missions
03	10-20 start-up companies established from cohorts 1&2, evidenced by achievement of target pre-seed and seed investment	10-20 start-up companies from Cohorts 3&4, evidenced by achievement of target pre-seed and seed investment. Survival of half the companies established from Cohorts 1 & 2	Created and initiated a sustainability plan for the Aspect programme beyond funding period, with secured funding, governance structure, and business model
04	Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies, as evidenced through academic founders, University seed fund investments and/or academic involvement in advisory boards	Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies, as evidenced through academic founders, University seed fund investments and/or academic involvement in advisory boards	Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies, as evidenced through academic founders, University seed fund investments and/or academic involvement in advisory boards
05	A first year WIP report from the learning manager, disseminated across partner institutions and business partners, the university sector and other routes	2nd year WIP report disseminated across partner institutions & business partners, the university sector, & other routes, plus creation of an initial best practice toolkit/ training set	'Learning Gain' report evaluating commercialisation skills gained through events completed by the Learning Manager[27]
06	Establishment & growth of Aspect with expression of interest from up to 5 HEIs (who are not the founding partners) in joining and/or using the Aspect platform	Establishment and growth of Aspect platform with up to 15 HEIs (who are not the founding partners) joining and/or using the Aspect platform	Establishment and growth of Aspect platform with up to 30 HEIs (who are not the founding partners) joining and/or using the Aspect platform, including 5 from outside the UK
07	Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration August-July of £915,375	Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration August-July of £915,375	Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration August-March of £610,250

[26] An extended reporting period due to COVID-19 impacts

[27] This Learning Gain Report is KPI 05 for 2021

Figure 10: Diagram showing the focus of Aspect each year and planned outputs



9.2 Opportunities for Social Sciences in Business and Society

9.2.1 Case study analysis 2020

The table on the next page is an analysis of social sciences innovation projects identified by Aspect members as having potential to be written in a 'good practice' case study. This was originally published in Chapter 5.2 of the Aspect Learning Report 2020. The finished case studies are published on the Aspect website.

Table 11: Initial analysis of the number of type of case studies submitted by Aspect members (2020).

Count	Theme	Sub-Theme
4	Economy	Infrastructure
4		Technology
2		Finance
3	Natural Environment	Sustainability
1		Monitoring
2	Social Cohesion	Social policy
4		Governance
2		Sociology
2		Law
4	The Individual	Physical health
5		Education
2		Mental health
2		Skills

Count	Industry/Sector
7	General business processes (including digital marketing, training, HR, finance)
3	Law
3	Government
4	Transport/logistics/utilities
6	NGOs/charities
5	Healthcare
6	Education
3	Entertainment/retail

Count	Academic Discipline
7	Business School
7	Geography and the Environment
2	Law
3	Education
3	International Development
3	Economics
1	Statistics
1	Architecture
1	Sociology
1	Psychology
8	Mixed/unknown

Count	Route to Market
7	**Business Engagement**
7	Research Collaboration
23	**Research Commercialisation**
2	Social Enterprise
6	Spinout
8	Consultancy
5	Licence
1	Franchise
1	Workshops/training
7	**Entrepreneurship**
7	Start up

Aspect themes:
The Aspect members have identified 4 thematic areas where social sciences are showing strong potential for application in real world contexts.

Economy
This section comprises Aspect resources relating to the topics of finance and the creation of physical assets, including areas such as manufacturing, technology, data and infrastructure.

Natural environment
This section comprises Aspect resources relating to how people interact with the world around them – at work, in education and in a social context – including areas such as physical and mental health, education and skills.

Social cohesion
This section comprises Aspect resources relating to how people engage and interact with each other, and the structures and norms that influence these relationships – including areas such as law, governance, social policy and sociology.

The individual
This section comprises Aspect resources relating to how the natural environment supports human activity and how people interact with it, including areas such as conservation and sustainability.

9.2.2 Examples from Aspect activities

The figure below is a compilation of different business and thematic areas where Aspect members are seeing opportunities for the adoption and/or application of social sciences research.

Figure 11: Opportunities for social sciences in business and society - examples from the Aspect programme (2020)

Zinc Learnings Update

January 2020

Business Area	Social Sciences Research
Digital Marketplaces	Microeconomics
Online Communities	Sociology
Social Behaviours	Anthropology
Product Engagement	Psychology
Mobility	Human Geography
User Insights	Psychology, Data Science
Trust and Acceptance	Political Science

LSE Generate ENT CoP Workshop Presentation

June 2020

- Food and Beverage
- Consumer Mobile
- CleanTech
- Health & Wellbeing
- EdTech
- Apparel & Fashion
- Enterprise

Deep Dives Project, Business Engagement CoP

July 2020

- FinTech
- Social Care
- Digital & Creative
- Legal
- Mental Health

Sector Strengths Analysis

2019 Learning Report

- Cities & Urban Living (including transport)
- Creative Industries
- Digital & Data
- Economics
- Education
- Energy & Environment
- Finance, Insurance & Risk
- Food
- Globalisation (Migration)
- Health; Healthy Ageing; Health & Wellbeing
- HR & Management
- Law & Justice
- Policy
- Productivity (Construction; Manufacturing)
- Sociology
- Sustainable development; International development

Annual Event Panning Meeting

June 2019

Ethics
- Ethics in Supply Chains
- Consumer Data Ethics
- Business Ethics

Regulation, Governance & Compliance
- Technology Adoption
- Next Generation Services
- Data Science/AI
- AI in Legal Services

Green Economy
- Energy and Climate Change
- Employment/ Organisational Design

- **Business Transformation**

(Using Social Sciences to Stay Ahead)
- Profits from Purpose
- Sustainability
- Productivity a new source economy

Lifestyle
- Behaviour Change
- Poverty/money
- Building & City Design
- Social Care
- Role of AI in Healthy Ageing

Aspect Campaign Themes

2020 - 2021

Economy
- Infrastructure
- Technology
- Finance

Social Cohesion
- Social Policy
- Governance
- Sociology
- Law

The Individual
- Physical health
- Education
- Mental health
- Skills

Natural Environment
- Sustainability
- Monitoring

Case Study Analysis

2020 Learning Report

- General Business Process (including digital, marketing, training, HR and finance)
- Law
- Government
- Transport/logistics/utilities
- NGOs/charities
- Healthcare
- Education
- Entertainment/retail

Source: Originally published in the Aspect Learning Report 2020

9.3 Project Learning Reports

Learnings from selected funded projects can be found in the individual writeups below. Project teams were interviewed to identify key learnings and next steps. The focus of the learnings for these writeups was around 'what is different for the social sciences?' as opposed to operational or administrative learnings. For mid-project and operational learnings, please reference the Aspect Learning Report 2020.

Four of the funded projects have not been reported here, since the insights and outputs from those projects have been shared directly via the Aspect Toolkit: Marketing Toolkit Project, Research Commercialisation Workshop Series and Toolkit, Entrepreneurship Workshop Series and Mini-projects, and the Business Engagement Deep Dives and Workshops. Final learnings from two projects were already published in the 2020 Report (Zinc Research Fellowships and Zinc Prize Fund), along with an overview of the Advanced Distribution projects. For a full list of the funded projects, see Table 2 in Chapter 1.3.

9.3.1 ABaCuSS Intrapreneurship Programme

Aspect members highlighted that career paths for social sciences early career researchers (ECRs) and PhD students are not necessarily linear – many will alternate between public and private research and will participate in multidisciplinary collaborations. The majority of those who do not stay in academia will likely go on to join a company from an early-stage SME to a corporate. Both groups will need a different set of skills than those taught at universities and in start-up accelerator programmes.

The ABaCuSS intrapreneurship project was designed to get PhD students and ECRs plugged into a company setting and get them innovating the learning in this new environment. The ABaCuSS project consisted of three activities:

1. **A nine-week placement in a company**. An effort was made for the students to be embedded within the company and applying social sciences methodology to a project with tangible outcomes. Two of the 7 placements were with ventures started by Zinc in their earlier venture builders.
2. **A bootcamp and additional group training sessions.** Training sessions focused on topics such as pitching and business design, and included specialist talks from industry experts.
3. **One-on-one coaching.** The coaching sessions were intentionally very broad, and students could choose to focus on their project, career progression, or academic work.

Key learnings

- The 'wraparound' support – including the bootcamp, training sessions, and 1-1 coaching was cited as extremely valuable and one of the reasons why students wanted to participate in this programme. Students cited these sessions as hugely valuable not only to their ABaCuSS project, but also other work environments and their studies. The sessions were all expertly tailored to the student's needs – including a session on 'speaking in a digital environment' that was highlighted by students as one of the most useful sessions.
- The cohort 'vibe' is important for keeping students engaged. This was particularly challenging due to COVID-19, but providing time where students could socialise and discuss challenges was useful.
- The training session on design-led thinking could have been introduced earlier on in the programme as it helped many students address challenges they were facing in their ABaCuSS projects and adapt to a new learning environment.
- Changing the programme from full-time to part-time cultivated a more inclusive programme ad encouraged more applicants from diverse backgrounds. Running a part-time programme meant that international and graduate students could participate. Graduate students in particular were excellent participants as they brought a lot of practitioner/practical experience to the programme.
- The programme offered opportunity (networking and the placement itself), resources (open-ended coaching, i.e., not limited in scope to the placement, and online learning through the portal), and training (bootcamp and skills-based training every other

week). This trifecta of opportunities, resources, and training worked well for making the students feel supported to not only complete their placement successfully, but have a holistically valuable experience aimed at growing them personally, academically and professionally. This was heavily reflected in the student feedback.

Is an intrapreneurship programme different for the social sciences verses STEM?

The training offered during the bootcamp included topics like the innovation process and pricing model guidelines – essentially a mini MBA in a week. The additional training sessions were around taking what students learned with their research background and how to apply it in a private sector area. These topics are not social sciences specific and would be relevant and useful to PhD students and ECRs from any background.

Many of the internship projects were centred around topics that students of varying backgrounds could have worked on such as transport, poverty, or women's health. However, the common factor between these projects was that they all had a social impact side to them, making them more suitable to social sciences students rather than STEM.

Next steps

The first iteration of the ABaCuSS programme has achieved positive results, with over half of the students having been asked to stay on at their internship company in some capacity. Several Aspect members have demonstrated their interest in running another iteration of this intrapreneurship programme. If Aspect members are interested in learning more, please contact Paige McCaleb at paige.mccaleb@glasgow.ac.uk.

9.3.2 Aspect Research Commercialisation (ARC) Accelerator

Social sciences, humanities, and the arts for people and economy (SHAPE) disciplines have historically not received the same level of support and funding for entrepreneurial activity as STEM based projects in terms of entrepreneurial training, ideation, mentoring, and practical support. The government programmes that are available are mostly for STEM based innovation and do not quite fit or support early stage projects with innovation potential from social sciences.

The Aspect Research Commercialisation (ARC) accelerator was designed to help social sciences academics and researchers to develop ideas based on their research into businesses or ventures to help people, society, and the economy. This is the first accelerator of this type that has existed specifically designed for the social sciences. It was acknowledged that it would be an exploration process and that one of the goals would be to identify the pain points in social sciences commercialisation and develop solutions how to solve these challenges.

Accelerator design

The ARC programme was designed according to traditional accelerator principles including core training, market validation, and pitching at the end of the programme. The programme was designed to be hands on and to build capacity amongst both the participants and KE and Innovation teams together. The KE and Innovation managers were expected to attend all sessions allowing them to have exposure to all projects and encouraging cross-disciplinary learning. A showcase was included at the end to highlight the programme's success, garner publicity to encourage investors, funders, research councils and other stakeholders to attend, and to encourage investment and support for the projects following the end of the programme.

What are the differences in an accelerator for the social sciences?

- **ARC included more training and exposure to social enterprise models compared to traditional accelerator programmes.** Often, research-led accelerator programmes tend to follow a more typical profit-led process – incorporation, raising money, maximising financial return for investors etc. Several of the entrepreneurs who participated in ARC had blended or non-profit objectives, and the ARC accelerator supported these ventures to create the most appropriate model for the chosen project.
- **Funding discussions in ARC focused on introducing academic entrepreneurs to what is different in securing investment for social sciences ventures.** Discussions with investors for the social sciences community are more likely to include impact investors and foundations, requiring a different approach for the academic entrepreneur in pitching their project. For example, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) funds have additional criteria which could make the funds a good match for social sciences ventures but require careful research to ensure the right match with the appropriate ventures, and delivering the requisite societal impact.
- **SHAPE accelerators often need to work with entrepreneurs to help them scale consultancies.** Consultancy is a viable method of commercialising research findings from the social sciences, arts and humanities. Consultancies often face scalability and bandwidth challenges. The ARC accelerator supported working with these entrepreneurs to help them find a scalable solution for a consultancy; something that is often not considered in traditional accelerator models.
- **Consider the value of the research entrepreneur.** Evidence-led, research backed ventures without patents or formal intellectual property need careful consideration to ensure that value is appropriately allocated within the entity. Significant value within the social sciences spin out community can often be found within the lead academic, and the expertise that they bring to the project. This impacts the commercialisation outcomes and accelerator training to ensure that the original inventor has the appropriate skills and knowledge to commercialise the intervention.
- **Smaller numbers of junior staff are available to work with SHAPE academics.** In addition to the senior academic, STEM research labs tend to have additional junior staff that work with the research subject matter such as students, post-doctoral researchers, and research administration staff.

These junior colleagues might be more interested in pursuing entrepreneurship as a career and often spearhead the commercialisation initiative in lieu of the senior academic. SHAPE academics tend to operate individually which can place the teams at a disadvantage when it comes to building a team for spinning out of the university. SHAPE accelerator programmes need to engage more junior SHAPE researchers to build out the talent pool and support SHAPE commercialisation initiatives, leading to greater career opportunities within the social sciences.

- **SHAPE entrepreneurs have fewer entrepreneurial colleagues to reach out to for support.** STEM academics have a wide exposure to entrepreneurship. Networks, cases studies and communities of entrepreneurial STEM ambassadors for the innovation ecosystem are in existence already, providing opportunities to learn from previous commercialisation activity. Whilst social sciences commercialisation is increasing, academics within this sphere are pioneering new ways of innovating and developing pathways. Accelerator programmes should therefore consider how to best share case studies of success in these areas.
- **Bringing in the right experts who can upskill academics entrepreneurs is critical.** Relevant training in the appropriate subject matter areas was enhanced through subject-matter experts, and also helped to build capacity within the project teams. Topics such as the basics of finance, and market validation were covered to ensure knowledge gaps were filled. Importantly, the social, economic and political value of projects was emphasised to ensure that impact was captured and could be demonstrated to funders, investors and stakeholders. Partly, this was encouraged through peer support of social sciences academics as well as highlighting appropriate language use highlighting the importance of procuring the right advisors and mentors to support SHAPE accelerator programmes.
- **Individual universities and KE and Innovation offices do not have a critical mass of SHAPE projects to support.** However, if universities join together to pool resources and support a programme like ARC, a critical mass can be achieved. This also allows academics to learn from and be motivated by their peers at other universities and create connections in the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

What's next and how can other Aspect members get involved?

The ARC programme team is actively discussing improvements to the next iteration of the accelerator including improving the networks of investors and funders as well as improving business model development training for the entrepreneurs. The procurement of more sector experts to work with the academics on topics such as how to sell to local government is also important.

The programme team also anticipates integrating more of the training content that is traditionally taught in quite a siloed manner and separate from the rest of the entrepreneurial experience. This should help the academic entrepreneurs understand how topics like IP, branding, marketing, and competitive strategy work together and influence the overall business strategy.

It is anticipated that the ARC accelerator programme will continue for two more iterations with a view to expand the number of teams that are accepted into the programme.

9.3.3 ASAP Accelerator

The problem: why do we need a social sciences accelerator?

Universities in the UK offer a wide variety of accelerator programmes for students and alumni. The majority of these accelerator programmes are generic or in some cases focussed on high-growth tech ventures. These programmes often follow a traditional way of learning about business that might not be suitable to entrepreneurs who intend to operate social impact driven ventures. Social impact challenges can be blurrier than those in tech and require bespoke support.

Members of the Entrepreneurship CoP also hypothesised that social sciences centred businesses were underserved and required different types of support than those offered in traditional accelerator programmes. Specifically, the following areas were identified as gaps that a pilot programme for social sciences entrepreneurs should address:

- Technical skills gap – how to translate human-centric research into products/services?
- Business skills gap – how to fill a gap in business acumen amongst social scientists?
- Showcasing the value of social sciences research to business – how to get researchers and entrepreneurs to collaborate?
- Gender gap – can a social impact accelerator better attract and support female founders?

The solution: Aspect Student Accelerator Programme

The Aspect Student Accelerator Programme (ASAP) is a pilot programme, led by the Generate team at LSE, and supported by members of the Aspect Entrepreneurship Community of Practice. ASAP focusses on supporting early-stage social sciences entrepreneurship with a diverse commercialisation programme built around the needs of social impact ventures. (NB The difference between social impact ventures and social sciences centred businesses is explored in this report.) The rationale for this impact-driven approach was that social ventures require more tailored and nuanced support than traditional accelerator programmes.

The structure and content of the accelerator programme were designed to provide specialised support to these founders and their businesses, incorporating traditional components of an accelerator (such as mentoring, bootcamps, lean canvas, peer-support), but modifying these to be more suitable for social ventures and social scientists. For example:

- Using well-defined frameworks like the theory of change and the social business model canvas as an alternative to developing 'traditional' business models.
- Incorporating learned experience from successful founders/speakers in working with founders to incorporate impact and mission into the business model from the outset.
- Providing mentors who have backgrounds in social entrepreneurship and impact investing.
- Tactical tips and insights from more mature social entrepreneurs who have scaled their ventures from the early stages during fireside chats.
- Post program coaching from an award-winning social entrepreneur to cultivate social entrepreneurial leadership.

The programme was open to teams of up to two students or alumni at Aspect member institutions. To be accepted onto the programme, founders had to be impact-driven and align with at least two UN SDGs, either through the socially-responsible running of the business or the impact created through the business processes. To ensure participants were all at a similar level, their businesses needed to be early stage (less than 2 years old, pre-seed or seed round only (up to £500k), or if idea-stage, they should have the ability to demonstrate wider stakeholder impact and be pitch ready.

ASAP successfully trained 19 social ventures from across 8 different universities. Overall ASAP provided more than £90k in funding support through stipends and awards, 150 hours in coaching and mentorship and more than 200 new connections made for entrepreneurs.

ASAP also improved confidence and skills for founders that resulted in progressing forward key impact metrics including:

- 85+ mental health kits distributed to university students in the UK by I Speak Mental Health to support student mental health at universities.
- Impagro solutions supported 10 farming communities across India with their sustainable fruit and vegetable supply chain.

Lessons learned: How is supporting social sciences and social impact ventures different to supporting STEM based businesses?

The ASAP programme highlighted several areas where bespoke support is needed to appropriately support social sciences and social impact ventures. They are outlined below.

- **Avoid 'sprinkling' impact.** Social scientists are likely drawn to entrepreneurship for different reasons than STEM. The socially driven side of start-ups is an attractive reason for founders to join. This discussion and focus needs to be embedded in the programme and business model from the outset. EDI, data ethics, and impact cannot be 'sprinkled' into different topics of an accelerator programme – they need to be across the entire supply chain and considered in every area. The accelerator programme also needs to modify the brand of social sciences entrepreneurship – impact is not just the charity and NGO sector – it is also the commercially viable sector.
- **Prior exposure to entrepreneurship is important.** Prior entrepreneurship exposure is a huge factor in a social sciences founder's ability to commercialise research or build a successful social impact venture. The promotion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial culture at universities is also important in driving social scientists towards these activities. Founders who are familiar with entrepreneurship lingo, the ecosystem, and challenges might feel less intimidated and more likely to participate in entrepreneurship activities.
- **Consider alternatives to the Silicon Valley narrative.** One of the biggest learnings identified by the ASAP programme (through speaking with alumni) is that the prevailing narrative about the silicon valley entrepreneur is not the only route. Social entrepreneurs can leverage their strengths to create their own unique entrepreneurial journeys.
- **Embrace and promote the social sciences background.** Founders should be encouraged to embrace their social science/research-lead backgrounds to create a new mission and lead with passion. Social scientists have an advantage in setting up start-ups due to their ability to seamlessly integrate secondary and primary research with customer insights. They are able to take these insights and large amounts of information, codify and translate it quickly to iterate their business model and improve product development. These are skills that are unique to social scientists and skills that can make their businesses more successful and make them more attractive to the best-fit investors. The accelerator programme can then help them to scaffold new tech and business skills around their expertise.
- **Address the technical skills gap.** Many founders were not using data to their advantage, either due to a lack of skills or a uncertainty around why they should be using it. They need to be encouraged that they have a powerful opportunity in combining data with technology and they can create a powerful business. One opportunity could be to pair up a social sciences founder with a partner who can provide coding and other technical skills. Additionally, data ethics should be discussed from the outset of the programme as it will be critical to many social sciences and social impact ventures.
- **The unique development of the business model.** In a traditional accelerator programme, founders immediately begin using tools like the Lean Canvas and the Business Model Canvas to propose a sustainable business model that they will then test and iterate over the course of the programme. On the ASAP accelerator, founders needed to first focus on their mindset, purpose, and impact that would then be embedded throughout the business.
  - A focus on the entrepreneurship mindset and leading with purpose is essential for social sciences and social impact start-ups. If a founder does not have the purpose message distilled at the beginning of their journey, it becomes more challenging to 'retro-fit' it later on.
  - Founders need to understand that this purpose and their business profit are not at odds with each other. They should focus on how they integrate profit and purpose into a successful business model. This also flows through to other areas of building their business, such as defining their customer segments and creating new routes to market.
  - Founders need to avoid the myth that 'scale equals impact' – that you need a bigger team to achieve these goals. The ASAP accelerator aimed to highlight that the configuration and optimisation of the business model was key to achieving impact rather than scale alone.

- **Unique business model archetypes.** Observations of the businesses over the course of the accelerator programme highlighted three categories based on the business model's core strength areas. These include:
  - Technology and data – start-ups that embed data-driven insights and/or technology into their processes to create competitive advantage.
  - Customer and product innovation – specific innovations in the market-facing product and/or customer insights as a competitive advantage.
  - Operational model – the operational model as the competitive advantage refers to the way in which resources, processes, and stakeholders are organised.

More information and analyses about these archetypes can be found in the ASAP social business model innovation report.

- **Build the social sciences entrepreneurship pipeline.** To ensure the long-term viability and success of programmes like the ASAP accelerator, effort should continue to focus on communicating the value of social sciences entrepreneurship and building the entrepreneurship ecosystem. This will promote a healthy pipeline of ventures and founders to support going forward. One example of this is the newly created ASAP club toolkit – a collection of resources for social sciences entrepreneurs.
- **Evaluating impact.** The impact metrics and measurement from social entrepreneurs offers a unique dimension and credibility to social ventures. It is important to teach robust methods of impact measurement, for example, using theory of change to differentiate social investors particular to potential funders in a crowded market.

Conclusions and next steps

Do UK universities need a social sciences and social impact venture specific accelerator?

Yes! The programme managers and ASAP alumni believe it is currently important to have specific accelerator programmes that support these unique founders, and for a good reason. As highlighted in the learnings section above, social ventures and social sciences based start-ups have a fundamentally different mindset that requires bespoke support across all aspects of an accelerator programme. Founders get value from the social venture angle and it also benefits the social sciences. Having an accelerator programme like ASAP helps to achieve goals like increasing engagement from the social sciences. Social scientists see and appreciate that these types of accelerator programmes are uniquely designed for them and it helps to promote and nurture their entrepreneurial mindset. Until SHAPE and STEM disciplines are fully integrated and catered for in traditional accelerator programmes, a standalone social sciences accelerator has important benefits to provide visibility to these types of ventures.

Improving programme and building a sustainable model

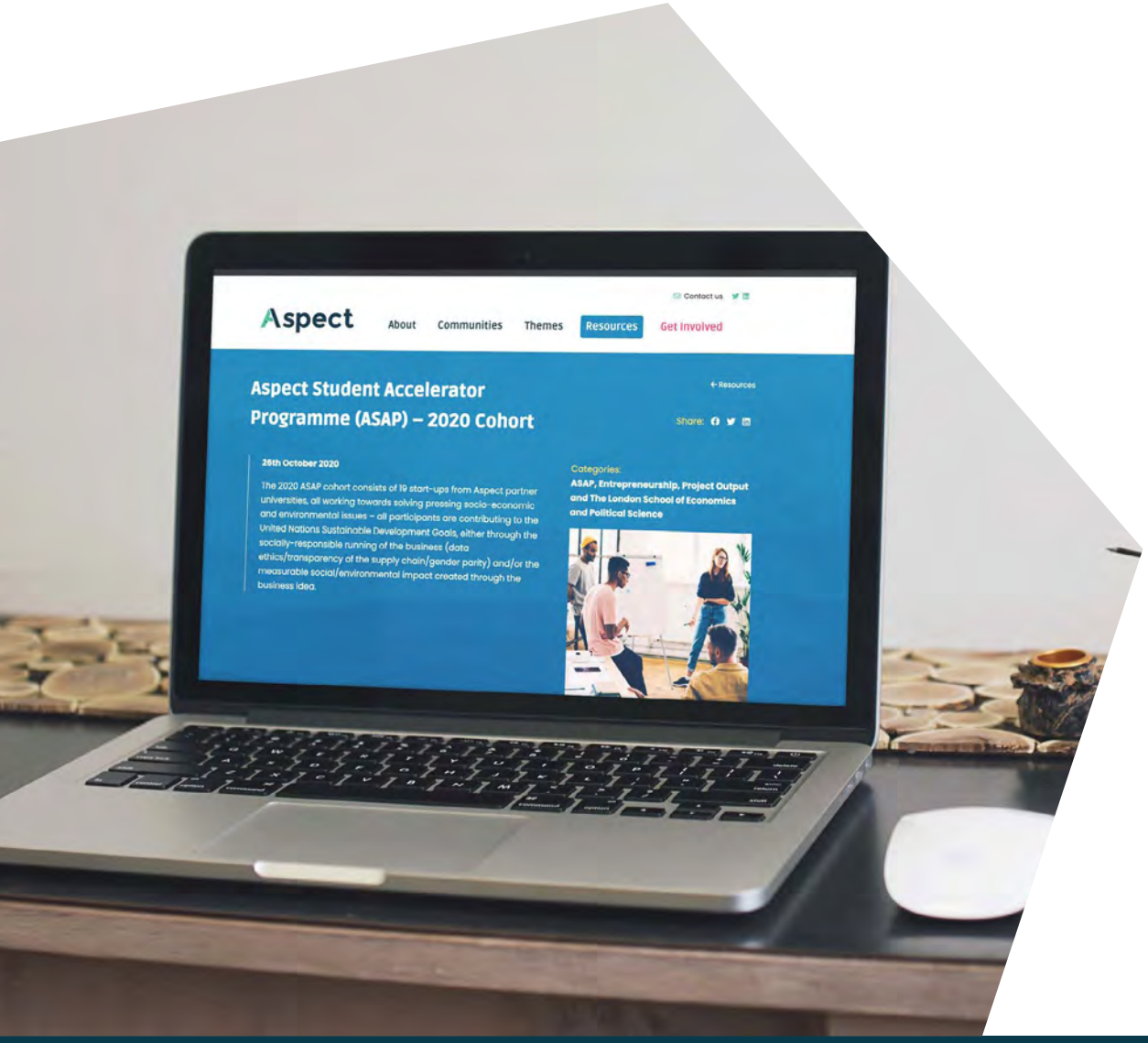
Following a successful pilot of the ASAP accelerator programme in a particularly challenging year, an ASAP 2.0 blueprint for the second UK iteration is in the works. Based on feedback from alumni and insights from the first run, the programme team are currently identifying key areas where the programme structure and content will need to be tweaked to better support founders and their ventures. The insights from this activity will be published in a report on the Aspect website. The LSE Generate team is also exploring options for funding the next iteration(s) of the programme. These include:

- **A subsidised or 'pay-to-play' version for Aspect members.** This approach will be dependent on the Aspect extension funding and interest from current aspect members.
- **A pan-European accelerator** LSE and the programme team have been approached by a number of international partners to create a pan-European accelerator programme to support social sciences and social impact ventures, based on the ASAP model. Aspect members could potentially be invited to participate.
- **Sponsorship.** The programme team will be investigating different ways to fund the programme (e.g., corporate sponsorship), with the goal to make it self-sustaining in the long run and building on the success of the pilot.

Applying the learnings

In the meantime, Aspect members can take the learnings from the ASAP programme and apply them to their own universities in a number of ways:

- **Highlight success stories.** Participating Aspect members can highlight success stories from the first iteration of the accelerator. This helps to promote a positive entrepreneurial culture and increase familiarisation with these topics for social sciences students. This will set them up for success in the future if they choose to pursue an idea of their own.
- **Use the ASAP resources.** Universities can share the ASAP club digital toolkit with incoming students to benefit as many people as possible. This publicly available digital toolkit is a targeted collection of resources – including podcasts, tools, and links – for unsuccessful applicants to the first ASAP accelerator programme. They have been designed to support interested and promising entrepreneurs to progress their ventures and perhaps apply to the programme in the future. The Power of Social Business is a new podcast exploring the unique journey of social entrepreneurs which you can download here. Upcoming publications include a mentorship toolkit to support Aspect universities with establishing mentoring programs for social ventures. Aspect Entrepreneurship CoP members can also request access to the ASAP programme resources, by contacting LJ Silverman (LJ.Silverman@lse.ac.uk) and Kajal Sanghrajka (kajal@kajallondon.com).
- **Share the learnings.** Aspect members can get involved with webinars and other events to rapidly share learnings and challenges across UK institutions. Continue to discuss these learnings within your own institution and stay in touch with the ASAP programme team.



9.3.4 The Carer Project: Sheffield and Mobilise – a Zinc start-up

Recognising the challenges faced by family carers[28] during the first COVID-19 lockdown (March-July 2020, academics from Sheffield,[29] Liverpool, and Mobilise – a Zinc Venture, wanted to know whether a virtual platform could help carers and their families as they coped with living and caring in this ongoing and evolving health crisis. Funded through Aspect and Sheffield's ESRC Impact Accelerator Account, this work provided fascinating insight into business engagement between a team of applied anthropologists, from multiple universities, and a new start up looking to use the outputs from this work as they developed their business model. The project spoke to the challenge of business engagement and communicating the value of social sciences research for industry.

The project

Carer participants socialised over 'Virtual Cuppas' hosted by a professional Carers Coach from Mobilise to facilitate discussions and help identify challenges the carers are facing and some solutions for them to consider. The team undertook vigorous analysis of unique, proprietary data to explore the carers' experiences through their use of digital technology to stay connected, access support and services from their local authority, all whilst providing each other with moral support.

The approach taken by the academics – the virtual cuppas having 'zero framing' – allowed the carers to talk about their immediate experience, demonstrating their creativity as they addressed different challenges day by day.

Project insights

Academic and business drivers were reflected in the insights gathered through this project. Mobilise were able to develop evidenced business insights to inform their approach to new commercial opportunities.
The academics realised the importance of not over extending their research findings to wider communities without ensuring robust evidence was gathered. By working together on this small but impactful project, relationships were built providing the foundations and evidence for further discussions around expanding the study.

Outputs, outcomes, and next steps

The story of how the project came about and specific insights from the work can be found here. The team are also looking to further publish peer reviewed articles.

Reflecting the intricacies of business engagement, this project highlighted the value that comes from having multiple contacts between the academic teams and the businesses they are engaging with. The academic team and Mobilise had multiple contacts – at R&D, operations and executive levels, meeting at regular intervals, sharing early and interim findings, and articulating those findings for the multiple audiences. What is important to the CEO of a business may not always be what is valued by others who benefit from the research. Although additional effort may be needed when maintaining a network of engagements across a business partner, without it, business engagement can be very difficult to progress.

[28] Carers who are not part of the official care system
[29] Project lead Matthew Lariviere is now at Bristol

9.3.5 Ecosystem Mapping Project

Project overview

Universities offer a range of entrepreneurial support services for their students. However, it is often tricky for students to easily find the information and support they need. It can be particularly challenging for social sciences entrepreneurs to find programmes and support tailored specifically for them due to a lack of a 'joined-up' approach for entrepreneurship support and confusing messaging around support designed for the social sciences. It would be beneficial to understand whether social sciences students need specific entrepreneurship support, and if so, what types of support do they need and how can universities structure their offerings accordingly?

The Entrepreneurship CoP audited eleven Aspect member institutions to outline and categorise various entrepreneurial support offerings at these universities. This project aimed to share good practice on how to support a social sciences focused entrepreneurial ecosystem for students. The primary output from the project was a master matrix of participant's entrepreneurship support offerings. Additional outputs included: guide for participants to understand how they could use the matrix to develop an ecosystem map for social sciences entrepreneurs, a suite of case studies, a digital brochure of one member's offerings (as a pilot example of how to use the matrix), and a final project report (slide deck).

The purpose of creating the master matrix was to collate all entrepreneurship offerings in one place so Aspect member institutions could review these offerings and identify common practices, but also what programmes they might be 'missing' and could be added to their portfolio. The matrix highlights that participating universities offer a wide variety of entrepreneurship support and programmes, and three common themes emerged from the audit:

1. **Offerings grow organically**. Current entrepreneurship support across universities tends to have grown organically and due to existing skills and resources at that university. The university could look to other institutions for support on how to develop new entrepreneurship programmes outside their direct skill areas.
2. **Importance of dedicated resources.** To provide the best entrepreneurship support, universities should have a dedicated resource to be aware of all entrepreneurship offerings across the university. This minimises the duplication of effort and ensures that students can be directed towards programmes and activities that are the most appropriate to them.
3. **Social sciences specific entrepreneurship support.** The majority of Aspect member institutions do not provide entrepreneurship support catered for social sciences students. Universities had neutral responses when asked whether they needed social sciences entrepreneurship offerings as they felt their existing offerings were very inclusive and open to all faculties.

Participating institutions were also guided through a series of questions to draw out examples of good practice and key learnings. Given the lack of specific support for social sciences entrepreneurship, the discussion focussed on the wider offerings.

Key Learnings

Understanding the lessons from discipline-agnostic support may help to clarify where and if there may be need for something targeted at the social sciences. Their responses and insights are below.

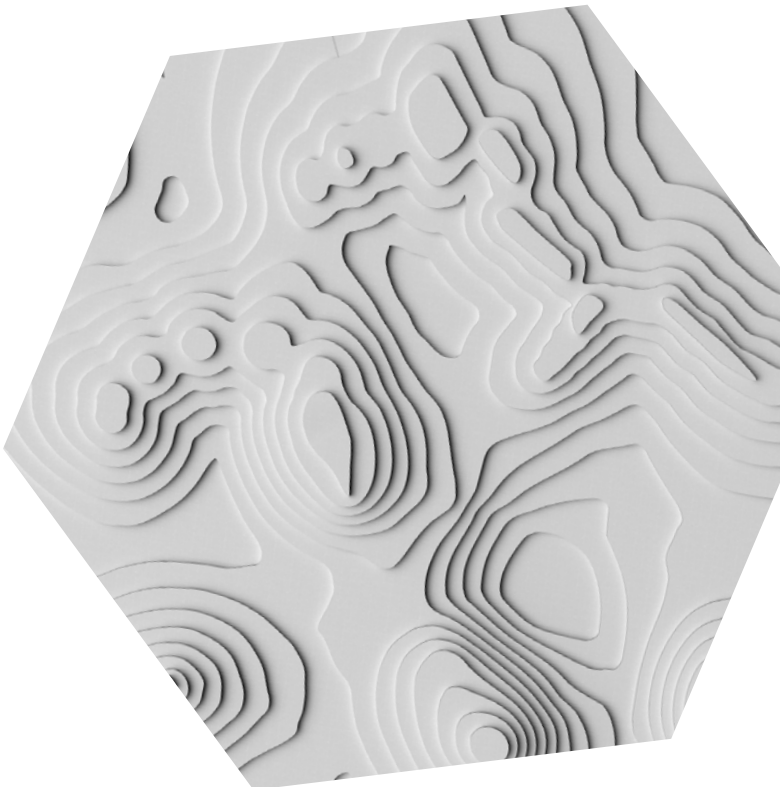
- **Exemplar programmes at other universities.** When Aspect members were asked which programmes at other universities were of interest, they all cited different options ranging from Oxford's Entrepreneurs Uncovered series and Manchester's Masood Centre's approach. These answers reflect the individual needs of the universities and the current gaps in their entrepreneurship support offerings. Member institutions commented that existing programmes at their universities had not grown due to any particular strategy, but rather organically and due to existing skills.
- **What has not worked.** Aspect members cited several lessons learned in the development of entrepreneurship programmes at their universities. The common themes included: a lack of time to centrally coordinate events and cultivate an entrepreneurship ecosystem, a duplication of efforts in different departments across the

university, many programmes can be too generic and do not necessarily provide the support that students need, too many pockets of activity around the university. The overarching theme cited is that many institutions lack a central, coordinated approach to providing entrepreneurship offerings.

- **Student and alumni feedback.** Students and alumni across most member institutions cited one-to-one support across various areas of support (networking, mentorship, business model, pitch preparation) as the most valuable offering at the university. This one-to-one support is tailored to the questions they need answered and leaves them feeling inspired and encouraged to pursue entrepreneurship.
- **Size of entrepreneurship support teams.** A wide variety of team size was found at Aspect member institutions. Teams ranged from 1 FTE to a team of 30+ FTE supporting entrepreneurship programmes and initiatives across the university. The FTE is often split across the university and within different departments. Many institutions cited the need for a central coordination resource to be the 'eyes and ears' of all of the different initiatives.
- **Funding.** Funding for entrepreneurship programmes comes from several different sources. The primary source cited is Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) funding, in addition to the Connecting Capability Fund (CCF) Santander, private and alumni donors, and the government. A significant range in funding per university for student entrepreneurship was cited which is potentially indicative of what each university has the capacity to take on. Funding awards can be transient, which leads to activities popping up for a short people of time and then disappearing with limited or no continuity.
- **Engagement with the social sciences.** Most universities cited a low (0-40%) engagement of the social sciences with existing entrepreneurship support. Social sciences students were more likely to attend general entrepreneurship programmes or activities, as opposed to activities geared towards progressing an existing business idea.

What does this project tell us about entrepreneurship offerings for the social sciences?

Universities do not believe that there are gaps around SocSci specific offerings and that existing programmes are welcoming to all disciplines. It might be true that SocSci specific offerings are not required as universities did report some level of engagement from social sciences students with existing offerings. However, they tended to engage with programmes and activities offering more generic entrepreneurship skills (e.g., traits needed to be a successful entrepreneur), not those designed to progress existing business or business ideas (e.g., lean canvas methodology, pitching training). One potential recommendation emerging from this work is that universities should consider how to make small changes to existing programmes, in order to attract in even more social sciences students. Examples of potential changes (that have been developed and trialled in other Aspect funded projects) include: 1) the addition of content about entrepreneurial skills and choosing different role models and speakers that resonate with social scientists (see the Podcast project); and 2) including more support for social enterprises and alternative business models (see ASAP project) and 3) using more inclusive language to market the support offerings that will resonate better with social scientists (see the Entrepreneurship Workshop Series writeup on Language.)



9.3.6 Educational Games

The problem: there is a limited awareness and understanding of how to commercialise board games based on social sciences research.

Many researchers in SocSci are already producing successful, engaging resources for game-based learning, but hit a roadblock when it comes to the challenge of disseminating their product beyond their own institution and generating income. Educational board games based on research are overwhelmingly STEM oriented, likely due to clear avenues to market. In SocSci, these avenues are less well-known, and any social sciences game that does get commercialised is likely by accident rather than by design.

The solution: the development of resources and tools for game-based learning in the social sciences, using real world commercialisation experience, as a case study.

The Educational Games team devised a two-phase plan to increase awareness and understanding of how to commercialise academic/university-generated games based on social sciences research.

- **Phase I** – support the commercialisation of Brave New World (BNW), a game based on law and human rights research from Manchester and Nottingham Trent University. Learnings from this process were then used to inform and develop resources for Phase II.
- **Phase II** – the development of an Ed Tech Games Hub that will provide space for a community to engage with resources and tools specifically designed to inform academics, professional services, and industry on the process of the commercialisation of board games based on social sciences research.

What did the commercialisation of BNW look like?

When this project began BNW was exclusively a physical board game; due to the challenges presented by COVID-19 of playing a board game in person, the Board Games team adapted to develop an online, digital version, to be marketed in addition to the original game. A digital version of this game offered the following benefits:

- Lower ongoing costs to maintain, despite higher initial costs in development and production.
- A potential global reach with less complexity in distribution, storage and marketing, since any number of people can download and play the game from an online source.
- Potential for easier customisation of elements or modules of the game for different purposes – e.g., the educational sector or the corporate sector.

The Board Games team is currently working with Blue Donut, initially buying in consultancy services but with a possible view towards partnership. They are also exploring 'print and play' options, hosted by university websites.

Key learnings

Several key learnings were identified in the process of finding a market opportunity for BNW. As these were developed from a single case study, observations have been kept to a macro-level to enable useful generalisations to be made to wider social sciences research.

- **Demand and interest for commercialising social sciences board games exists.** The team found that the majority of their interactions with academics, partners and the commercial world were overwhelming positive, and that collaborators and end-users alike were enthusiastic and receptive. Although commercialising board games with a social sciences research background is not as common as in the science world, there is a synergy and relationship between academia and industry that is promising for future opportunities to collaborate.
- **BNW was useful for different sectors, and adaptability is important to the commercialisation process.** When BNW started, it was envisaged that the game was going to be used to discuss human rights and equality across all sectors. This remains the case, and the team have learnt that a willingness to adapt to opportunities which present themselves is key to maximising potential for growth and income generation. There is a possible application of the game for corporate training which is being explored, alongside its core market as an educational tool.

- **Consider the importance and value of tapping into relevant networks when seeking to bridge the gap between academia and industry.** The Board Games team noted that attending trade shows can be a useful opportunity to have academics and different sectors of industry all in one place, and also that radio shows, blogs and online resources are often interested in guest material.
- **Dialogue between academics and industry needs to be managed.** Different cultures, terminology and expectations are likely to be in play, and an awareness of this helps to facilitate good communication and successful partnerships. The Hub and its resources are valuable resources in assisting with this, and the learning from BNW has been a vital element in their development.
- **Awareness around Intellectual Property (IP) and legal issues.** Commercialising board games based on social sciences research can involve intense but important conversations around what can be quite complex IP rights. Universities can help their academics who wish to engage in these opportunities by raising awareness and appropriately signposting the best resources for reference.
- **Strike the right balance between pure academic research and its potential significance.** BNW is an example based on fundamental research that touches on issues including human rights, discrimination, and inequality within contemporary society. This demonstrates that commercialisation opportunities can come from a wide range of raw research material, and academics should be encouraged to be open to exploring novel possibilities and approaches.

What's next?

The Board Games team has noted key areas for next steps:

- The team at Ludic Labs are continuing to deliver workshops to get social scientists thinking about how they can bring their research to wider audiences. For example – an upcoming workshop in Manchester around escape rooms and talking with people how they can think about designing games around their research in the real world.
- Populate the virtual Hub (Ludic Labs) with resources and tools to help academics commercialise their research into game-based learning opportunities.
- The post associated with facilitating the labs has switched over to Glasgow. The Game Hub coordinator is working on sustainability of the Hub and assessing other academic games.

How can Aspect members get involved?

Aspect members can sign up to the Ludic Labs platform through the following domain: https://www.ludiclabs.co.uk/. On the LL home page, they can download a PDF that provides guidance on best practice. The Labs launched July 1st with an attendance of 40 academics across Aspect institutions. Two workshops to be hosted by Manchester and Nottingham Trent University respectively will give attendees further opportunity to network with each other and industry vets over the platform.

9.3.7 Innovation Fellows – Pilot Projects

Challenges engaging social sciences researchers

Driving greater academic engagement with the Aspect Network was identified by the membership as an important strategic objective; in a survey of members, it was highlighted as a 'top priority'. As Aspect progressed, this engagement has faced several key challenges:

- Social sciences academics can be wary about engaging with businesses and the private sector. Unlike in STEM, the academics often do not have a product to take through the commercialisation or innovation process. Instead, their journey often involves transforming ideas, systems, thinking and knowledge into concrete offerings and impact.
- It can be difficult to transform academic knowledge and ideas into wider impact. On occasion it can be protected with IP rights, and often it contributes to an institution's consultancy offering, but practical experience of social sciences academic innovators being supported by TTOs is less widespread. This can mean that the TTO teams do not always have the SocSci research 'language' skills to best interact with SocSci academics.

In part due to these challenges, there are, compared to STEM, few SocSci academics who engage with commercialisation and innovation activities within Aspect's membership, and few examples of good practice for newcomers who might be interested. For innovation activities amongst social scientists to increase, it is critical to gain the academic's buy in.

Aspect's 'Innovation Fellows' initiative

The Innovation Fellows initiative was piloted by the Universities of Oxford and Manchester. Each university set out to recruit champions (Innovation Fellows) for social sciences innovation, who would then advocate for business engagement, innovation and entrepreneurship for the social sciences within and outside their universities. At Oxford, Early Career Researcher (ECRs) and Associate Professor level academics were targeted for recruitment to the initiative, anticipating that these individuals would be better placed to lead an exploration of innovation with their academic colleagues. Fellows for the Manchester programme were both 'graduates' of the SUCCESS pilot run. Thus the two universities between them have covered slightly different academic groups.

Each Innovation Fellow (two for each university) received an award of £5k to use for the research, impact, or engagement activity, with the requirement to report on how the award money was used at the end of the Fellowship. Fellows were expected to organise and/or lead a programme of activities, as well as participate in an Innovation Advisory group. Fellows had access to an events' budget to help them run their events, workshops and training to support the goal of developing the innovation ecosystem. They were also provided with administrative support from the division to assist with event management.

Programme activities

To date the Fellows have run the following three innovation activities:

- A discussion around different areas of innovation in the social sciences and how to articulate it.
- A discussion around available funding and how it needs to be part of your research trajectory and planning, but not the end goal. Attendees also discussed how innovation is not just something that is done as a result of completed research but is also something that can also benefit and feed into ongoing research activities.
- A panel discussion focused on social enterprises led by a Manchester social enterprise fellow. He spoke about his journey and how academics can scope ideas for how to take their research and turn it into a social enterprise.

Key learnings

- **Communication is key to recruiting the best ambassadors.** The Innovation Fellows programme was unfamiliar to academics and the messaging around the £5k grant caused some confusion. When the programme is run again, the recommendation is to streamline the messaging to ensure that interested academics understand their suitability for the programme and the benefits of why they should apply.

- **Consider novel ways of garnering interest from academics.** The Aspect teams at Manchester and Oxford both found it challenging to attract academics to engage, speaking to the initial challenge that the Fellowships were attempting to solve. Future iterations of the Innovation Fellowships might consider engagement and communication tactics such as an information sessions or webinars to explain what Innovation can be, followed by a launch of the call, and how academics can benefit from applying, taking part and engaging with their peers.
- **COVID-19 posed a significant challenge in executing the innovation activities.** COVID-19 affected the ability of the Fellows to run their events to encourage engagement with innovation and entrepreneurship. In lieu of face to face, online events were held, but they were more 'panel discussions' compared to the planned networking and showcase events.
- **The length of the programme should be extended.** The individual Innovation Fellows all needed time to develop their own thinking around innovation and entrepreneurship, and what they mean for the social sciences. Future iterations of the programme should consider extending the time and providing initial engagement sessions to encourage the Fellows to take ownership, become innovation leaders, and begin to contribute to building cohorts of like-minded academics.

What's next and how can Aspect members get involved?

Taking the learnings from the first iteration into account, future iterations of the Innovation Fellowships will be scaled-up and will include more time and training and resources to develop academic thinking around innovation in the social sciences. The next version will ideally include Fellows from across multiple Aspect members, creating a cohort of academics exploring these ideas at their own institutions and sharing their experiences with each other as well as with the wider Aspect membership.

If other Aspect member institutions would like to get involved, please email Sam Sneddon at sam.sneddon@socsci.ox.ac.uk to find out more.

9.3.8 Internationalisation of Aspect

Project overview

The internationalisation project focused on building links between UK institutions and HEIs in middle income countries (MICs) to improve engagement with international development activity focused on applied social sciences and entrepreneurship. The project team positioned Aspect partners as 'preferred' organisations to respond to commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research through partnership and skills sharing. Through working with existing international partner networks, the project aimed to widen links and to develop social science-based research and development initiatives that address challenges whilst promoting the sharing of best practice and lessons from Aspect activities and partners. They focused on building capacity in MICs of innovators to engage with British academics. This has been challenging in the past as many institutions in MICs do not have the capacity or experience to engage with large international projects.

Capacity building in MICs was delivered in the form of a training programme based on a pilot project run at the University of Sussex. Individuals that participated in the full training programme would be eligible to apply for a £2k grant to complete pilot research in an area of their choice. Participants were originally supposed to travel to the UK to spend time with Aspect member institutions but due to COVID-19 this was unable to take place and all training was delivered virtually. The goal of the training programme was to upskill the participants in MICs so that they would be better positioned to work closely with Aspect member institutions to partner and work together on future research grant applications.

Training programme

- 25 minute Zoom sessions followed by discussion and engagement from participants.
- Topics included: project development, logical framework plan, developing a concept note, creating a risk matrix, building a budget.
- Basecamp project management and team communication application was used as an interactive platform for participants.
- Attendees commented that they would have preferred longer training sessions.

- It was challenging to target the sessions to suit all time zones, and participant's external responsibilities limited participation.

Key project learnings

- **Framing the application invitation is important in managing expectations and securing the most appropriate applications.** The project team found that the terminology – words like 'applied' social sciences research – can mean different things to different people, particularly when considering applications across different countries. Many applicants were also not aware of the competitive nature of the funding landscape and the time consuming process, which affected their expectations of the programmes and outcomes. Ensuring that the invitation text is broad and inclusive is important to set expectations and ensure applicants are aware of the nature of the programme and can accurately assess whether they should apply.
- **The registration and application process should act as a two way process and ensure buy-in from the host institution to effectively manage expectations.** One of the challenges participants faced is that they did not have enough time to dedicate to the programme, due to their existing work and personal commitments. Including some form of institutional buy-in on the application form (e.g., confirmation that the Dean supports engagement with the training programme) could be beneficial to assist in ensuring the participant has enough time to dedicate to the programme.
- **Keep the programme small and include more interactive training sessions.** All participants voiced their opinions for more training sessions and the programme team highlighted the need for more interactive and practical training sessions. For example, one training session was around how to map out a budget – skills that should be practiced and reviewed using an actual budget for a grant application, not just an example budget during a training session. This encourages participants to take ownership over their learning journey.
- **Future iterations of the programme should consider more homogeneous participant groups and targeted training to specific regions.** The project team noted that it was challenging to create a meaningful experience and useful training sessions that catered to participants from various backgrounds and countries. In future they will consider a more regionally based approach to better tailor the training material to specific needs. This will also create the opportunity for participants to strengthen ties with others in their region and build lasting relationships.

What's next and how can Aspect members get involved?

This project is currently in the early stages of Phase 2 – participants have received their grants and are working on their projects. The project team anticipates that they will link up with other Aspect partners to submit international grant applications.

Aspect member institutions can get involved by encouraging their academics to engage with grantees to potentially collaborate for a multi-institution grant application. For questions please contact Andre Mostert at a.m.mostert@sussex.ac.uk.

9.3.9 Methods for Change

The problem: there are limited strategies in place for social sciences research methodologies to be used in non-academic contexts.

Social sciences research develops methodologies that are useful beyond academia and can lead to social change. However, there are limited strategies in place to help academics ensure their methodologies can be used in non-academic contexts. This project aims to showcase those methodologies to the wider world and demonstrate to those in government, NGOs and industry, the benefits that social sciences research can bring to their organisations. It also aims to clarify the relationship between methodologies and social change; for example, at what point in the research process social change is envisaged – at recruitment, during fieldwork, or within the dissemination of findings? Understanding this relationship could lead to improving the potential of methodologies to cause social change in the future. Most importantly, this project is about working with academics and non-academics to help them realise the possibilities of social sciences research and improve dialogue between the two groups.

The solution: development of how-to guides and creative illustrations to communicate these methodologies to a non-academic audience.

The Methods for Change (M4C) team developed how-to guides and other creative outputs, and conducted outward facing activities to demonstrate the value of the social sciences research methodologies and how they can be used to create change. The resources were designed to be accessible to non-academics and were written in a jargon-free language that does not require a SocSci degree to be understood.

How were the guides and resources developed?

The M4C team interviewed 30 academic teams regarding different social sciences research methodologies. They then worked with the academics to co-produce the how-to guides that described the research method in an accessible way. The scripts were then taken and developed into various creative outputs – including cartoons, podcasts, and other visualisation methods, highlighting how creativity could be used when communicating these research methods to different audiences.

The M4C team engaged with a wide range of people across different policy areas, including government around topics of socioeconomic inequality. They interviewed them about how they are currently using SocSci methodology within their organisational practices and asked them to reflect on what they view as the current main challenges to the use of the methodology. The M4C team used this information to identify next steps for how they could best work with end users to demonstrate the benefits that SocSci research can bring to their organisations.

Key learnings

The M4C team highlighted several learning points around communicating SocSci research methodologies and how they can be integrated into practice outside of academia.

- **Talking about SocSci research methods (even with academics) is challenging.** To begin discussing research methods, they must first be disentangled from research concepts and outputs. The M4C team used creative strategies – "if this research method was an animal, what would it be?" – to get academics to directly articulate how their methodological approach (not just the research concept) can create change. The M4C team also noted that if this type of translational work is valued, then research funding and process need to reflect it in terms of time and investment.
- **Now is the time to integrate SocSci across industry.** There is a large appetite for thinking about how SocSci research methods can be used in different ways across different sectors (government, NGOs, industry). There is also demand from the academic community to better communicate how these methods can create change given the current impact agenda. Both of these demands provide an excellent opportunity to mobilise activity within this space and beyond the M4C project.
- **NGOs are keen to work with academics.** NGOs commented that these SocSci methods are helpful

and some are also being used but might have a different name for the methodology. There is a strong appetite for academics to get more involved with NGOs to offer methods and methodological support in an advisory capacity to quickly execute a tender response.

- **Industry recognises the value of SocSci research but they can do more to integrate it into their daily practice.** Key contacts in industry noted the importance of SocSci research particularly around understanding consumer behaviour. There is likely scope to use SocSci methods in greater depth to help industry understand how to develop more nuanced interventions – for example, convincing consumers to reduce water and energy consumption, in so doing helping the companies address core regulatory components of their business practices.
- **Unique opportunities are available for academics to engage with government**. A few government departments with whom the M4C team engaged identified that there are often only a small number of people applying for government tenders in areas where a diverse range of SocSci methods could be used. This could be an interesting opportunity for academics to co-produce these outcomes with government agencies and engage with the tendering process to support and expand their own research. The key challenge will be the difference in timescales and expectations between government and academia.

What's next?

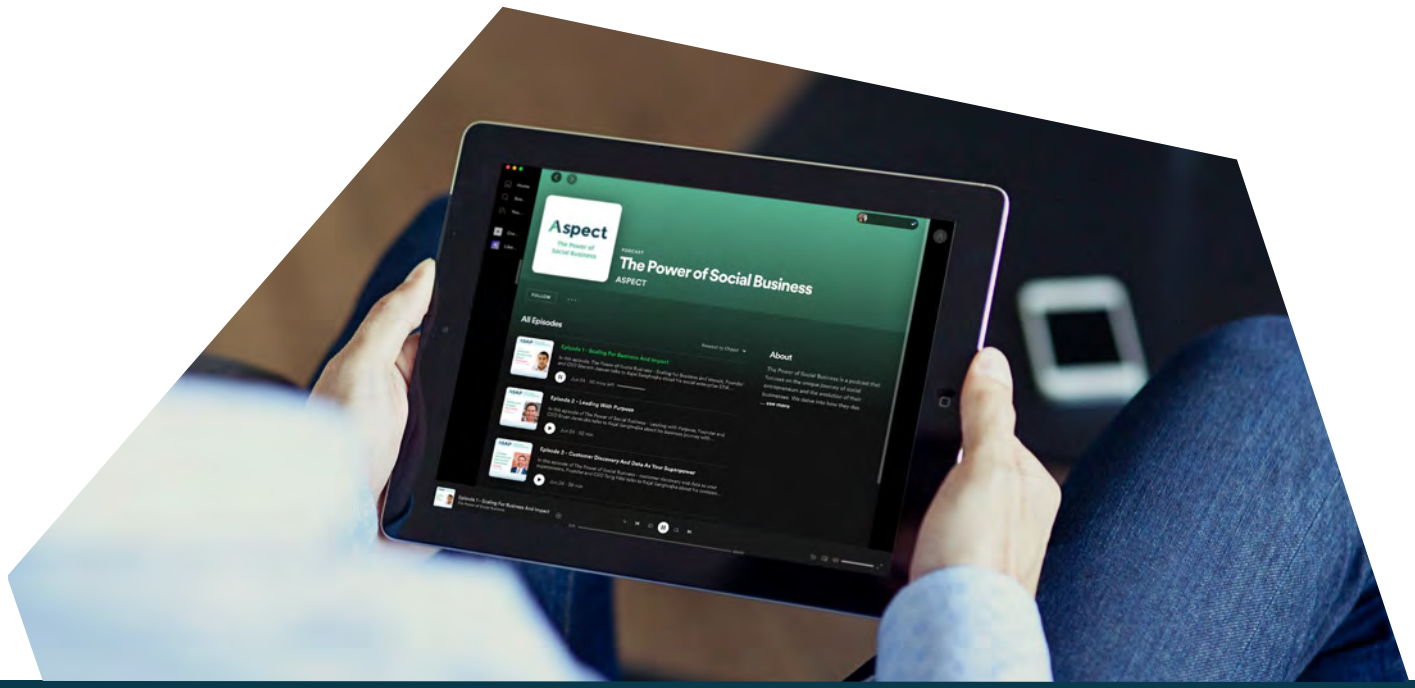
The M4C team has secured funding from Aspect to pursue a Phase 2 of the project. This will include:

- Engaging with a range of spatial, quantitative, and mixed methods to produce additional creative resources and how-to guides.
- Working with the Business Engagement CoP to build up a community of practice around academic and non-academic partnerships.
- Pursuing collaborative opportunities across the Aspect network from non-traditional funding sources.

How can other Aspect members get involved?

Aspect members can use the multiple resources available on the M4C project page as teaching resources. Given that many social sciences students will go on to work in non-academic sectors – government, NGOs, industry – educating them early about these research methodologies and their applications outside of academic will pave the way for change at a much earlier stage.

The M4C team is looking to engage with a range of 20-30 researchers across the Aspect network to create a second round of how-to guides – particularly around spatial, quantitative, and mixed methods addressing social, environmental, political, and economic societal challenges. Aspect members should get in touch with the M4C team if this is of interest.



9.3.10 Podcast Series and Creative Challenge Events

Aspect members noted that compared to their STEM counterparts, social sciences students do not engage as frequently with entrepreneurship programmes. The Entrepreneurship CoP hypothesised that this was because social sciences students lacked entrepreneurship resources geared specifically towards them. They noted that the majority of entrepreneurship resources were marketed as 'general' resources or were tailored towards STEM sectors.

The Aspect Entrepreneurship Podcast Series and Creative Challenge Workshop projects were designed to generate resources (eight recorded interviews with entrepreneurs, and four workshop events) specifically for social sciences students, with the expectation that having targeted resources would better introduce students to life as an entrepreneur. The aims and objectives of these projects were to:

- Showcase the commercial potential of social sciences research by inspiring students to consider commercialisation as a pathway to impact and relevant to them;
- Develop resources to provide a digital channel for training/informing SocSci students.

Both the Podcast and Creative Challenge Workshops aimed to look at very early stage founders and entrepreneurs and sought to create resources that might help to inform, inspire, and prepare them for the entrepreneurship journey. To achieve this, the respective activities were designed in the following ways:

- **Podcasts:** Conversations between psychologists and start-up founders were recorded to illustrate the entrepreneur's journey and bring the potential value of social sciences research in this area to light.
- **Workshops:** Bringing artists and academics together to create conversation around industry strategy challenges. These workshops aimed to inspire the social sciences students, the 'budding entrepreneurs', to consider existing problems and challenges and to start thinking about how they might create a business to solve these challenges.

How are these resources different to general/ STEM entrepreneurship resources?

The podcast series focused on the 'softer skills' of entrepreneurship and included topics such as resilience, stamina, and facing failure. Risk taking, leadership, connectivity, and compassion were also explored and were particularly relevant for entrepreneurship during the COVID-19 pandemic. These topics are often overlooked in traditional accelerator programmes but were seen as important for social sciences students to encourage them into an entrepreneurial way of thinking and to show that entrepreneurship can be relevant for social scientists.

The Creative Challenge Workshops aimed to start conversations between artists and academics to share good practice in entrepreneurship and introduce new ways of thinking to social scientists. These events took a more holistic approach to entrepreneurial learning, as opposed to a traditional lecture format. A focus on the holistic entrepreneurship approach can feel 'friendlier' to social scientists, leave them less turned off to entrepreneurship and provide groundwork to leave them inspired to where they might consider exploring it in greater depth. This approach is also better suited for social scientists as it takes the spotlight off of requiring a business or even an idea to pursue entrepreneurship and lays the groundwork for an entrepreneurial mindset that might produce a business at a later date.

Outcomes and next steps

Both the podcasts and creative challenge workshops successfully created new resources aimed to encourage social sciences students towards participating in entrepreneurship. Rather than focussing on traditional topics designed to rapidly test a business idea, these resources instead target developing and strengthening the entrepreneurial mindset and lay the groundwork for a potential future in entrepreneurship. These broad learnings should be considered for the future development of social sciences specific resources.

9.4 Aspect Learning Report 2020 – Executive Summary

The following is an excerpt from the report, published in September 2020. The full report can be found on the Aspect website: https://aspect.ac.uk/resources/aspect-learning-report-2020/

Introduction

The Aspect Network has produced this annual report to inform its members and the wider public about the learnings generated by the programme. It aims to: (i) to summarise our current knowledge of good practice in social sciences commercialisation, (ii) to inform planning of Aspect initiatives, and (iii) to create the foundations for a toolkit of good practice. This annual report presents insights regarding good practice across all Aspect Communities of Practice (CoPs), as well as lessons on managing the network and plans for the future. The audience for this report is the Aspect Steering Group (SG), Operations Group (OG), and CoP members from the seven founding partners and four associate members, as well as the broader public.

Overview of Aspect Year Two Activity – August 2019 to July 2020

In its first year, the Aspect consortium focussed on establishing the foundations of the programme, to ensure productive working relationships across the membership and develop a collaborative and ambitious programme of activity.

In year two, the priorities were to launch the funding scheme for a larger collaborative programme of activity, launch an Associate Membership model to extend the network benefits to more institutions, engage with the social sciences innovation community via a newsletter and annual event, and continue to develop the assets for the website through which much of the good practice in the translation of social sciences research into impact in industry and third parties will be achieved.

As of July 2020, 16 collaborative projects have been funded and launched, and six members received funding for internal initiatives. The LSE Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and Zinc programme both continue to gain momentum as test cases for how to support social sciences innovation. Early learnings from the programme are starting to emerge and resources are being published on the website.

The University of Manchester hosted the first Aspect Annual Event in November 2019, to discuss opportunities for social sciences within the theme of business sustainability, with circa 100 attendees from across the UK and Europe. In response to COVID-19, our second annual event launched in September 2020 as a series of webinars, running over eight weeks. The Aspect newsletter was also launched in 2019, and the mailing list now stands at over 520. Aspect members contribute as guest editors on a bi-monthly basis sharing insights and topics of interest from their institution and the broader social sciences community. Our level of engagement on social media has increased significantly – with our total followership across LinkedIn and Twitter now at over 660

(from c. 100 in March) and total engagement (including clicks, shares and comments) increasing from a total of c. 50 in March to more than 4,300 in August. In addition, this engagement has resulted in a marked uplift in traffic to our website, with new users increasing from 190 in March to nearly 3,400 in August, and total sessions (visits) increasing from c. 360 to almost 4,700 over the same period.

Aspect membership remains open to new institutions, with a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) target of 30 additional members from UK and/or international institutions by June 2021. Four new Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) joined the Aspect Network as associate members, and conversations are underway with several more institutions and potential partner organisations.

Programme Learnings

The three pillars of the Aspect programme are: The Aspect Network, the LSE Commercialisation Service and the Zinc company builder.

The Aspect Network's activities have included the formation of four Communities of Practice (which meet to share and exchange good practice and set the direction for the programme of activities), participation in 16 collaborative projects, six institutional initiatives, and engagement and dissemination activities. The collaborative projects span a range of activities that draw together knowledge and resources from across all partner institutions to develop good practice, resources, and expertise that can be shared with the wider community. The projects are all still ongoing, but some early insights are emerging:

1) COVID-19 has brought many challenges but **forcing projects to pivot online has made the programme more inclusive**. Not only are the sessions now more family friendly and flexible but the projects no longer have the geographic barrier associated with in-person participation and collaboration.

2) **The value of research commercialisation needs to be clearly communicated to academics.** A key barrier identified at the start of the Aspect programme was how best to engage with academics. There is still a long way to go but we have learned that aligning commercialisation with academics' own values and goals is critical, in particular framing the process in terms of research impact (mobilising research in innovative ways), research sustainability (revenue generation to ensure the project can continue not necessarily to turn a profit) and/or the associated benefits to the academics, such as access to new datasets and/or opening up new research opportunities through collaborations with businesses of all types.

3) **Social sciences research commercialisation requires bespoke support but can build on existing university infrastructure.** Social sciences research commercialisation comes with its own unique set of challenges, but the projects have seen success when they adapt existing infrastructure such as the lean business model canvas and/or accelerator frameworks to make them bespoke for social sciences.

4) **There is high demand for social sciences specific projects.** Several of Aspect's collaborative projects have been overwhelmed by the strong positive reaction from academics and other university stakeholders. This shows there is an appetite for social sciences research commercialisation and the associated ecosystem, but enabling structures need to be put in place to give researchers access to bespoke social sciences opportunities.

5) **Pooling resources and experience is one of the key benefits of Aspect.** The main take home message from the different projects seems to be that the opportunity to work collaboratively with other institutions and learn from the collective pool of knowledge has been hugely valuable.

The LSE Commercialisation team and Zinc are testing different models of social sciences innovation and commercialisation. The LSE team has seen keen interest from social sciences academics, and now supports a pool of nearly 60 commercialisation projects. Meanwhile, the Zinc team has run three mission-led cohorts, receiving over 2,000 applications and forming 35 ventures. Early learnings from both programmes are highlighting where there are differences in social sciences innovations, how this affects the way we support researchers to develop their innovations, and how we support ventures, businesses, public and third sector organisations to adopt and embed social sciences research outputs. Some early learnings are that social sciences commercialisation needs to be inventive with the business models it adopts and be willing to explore new markets, all of which might be unfamiliar to technology transfer offices that specialise in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) commercialisation.

Addressing Challenges to Social Sciences Commercialisation

At a high level, Aspect has found that 'the CHASS challenges are real'.[30] Yet not all challenges are created equal; whilst members continue to find academic engagement a challenge, industry awareness of the benefits of social sciences is less of a barrier than initially thought. Using the right language – and the right mechanisms for engagement – is key. Although learnings will continue to emerge over the remainder of the funded programme, below are some early conclusions about CHASS challenges.

1) CHASS noted the problem of academics not having the interest or inclination or ability to engage with business. The Aspect programme is seeing good results so far – having the right mechanisms, sufficient funding, and using the right language has led to unexpectedly high interest from academics in the Aspect projects. Going forward, publicising clear examples of social sciences (SocSci) being used in businesses and roles being taken up by social scientists in businesses, and continuing to provide these real opportunities (and funding) for academics to 'test the waters', will help SocSci academics to better understand the transferability of their knowledge and skills.

2) CHASS found that in 2005, industry was unaware of the value, possibilities and limitations of social sciences research, with less spend on social sciences research and development (R&D). The good news is that the landscape appears to be changing for the better and many businesses are in fact hiring social scientists.[31] However, there is more to be done and HEIs will need to invest time in developing new relationships in and communicating their offerings to (potentially) different sectors than STEM. The programme is generating insights about what types of businesses or sectors see value in adopting innovations from or collaborating with social sciences researchers; understanding where there is demand will help HEIs and commercial teams better position their offerings.

3) CHASS noted that many institutions are not equipped to support social sciences commercialisation, and there is a lack of standard practice for engaging industry. Aspect aims to build that institutional capacity through its funded projects and outputs. Early learnings from projects are generating useful insights about how to adapt commercialisation processes and tools to work for social sciences. A key output from Aspect's funded projects is a set of good practice resources and guides ('toolkits') that members and other stakeholders can use to learn and embed good practice within their institutions. The majority of outputs will be disseminated from Q4 2020 through July 2021.

Looking Ahead and Sustainability

Many of the core learnings from Aspect are still emerging and will be developed through its CoPs and the programme of funded projects, most of which are now are underway. Final reporting on the learnings from the network will commence in Q2 2021, with the production of the 'Gain Report' for Research England. Sustainability plans will be in place by the Q3 2020, and expressions of interest from potential new members continue to be received since the launch of the Associate Membership model.

Over this year, the Aspect membership have started to understand what questions need to be asked to trial solutions, develop resources, and build capacity for social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship. Over the next year, Aspect will generate answers to these questions, build and communicate good practice and, in doing so, will ensure that the sustainable Aspect Network becomes a key resource for UK and international knowledge engagement through commercialisation.

[30] Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) https://www.chass.org.au/chass-publications/

[31] Based on anecdotal evidence from Aspect members and trends reported in the media, including:
https://as.cornell.edu/news/tech-companies-favor-cu-social-science-grads
https://money.cnn.com/2009/02/25/technology/tech_anthropologists.fortune/
https://www.seattletimes.com/business/social-scientists-find-story-in-data-to-attract-more-customers/

9.5 Aspect Learning Report 2019 – Executive Summary

The following is an excerpt from the report, published in September 2019. Chapter references refer to the original report. The full report was circulated to the Aspect members only.

Introduction

The Aspect Programme Management team is responsible for producing an annual report for the founding members, summarising the learnings generated by the network ultimately: (i) to summarise our current knowledge of good practice in social sciences commercialisation, (ii) to inform planning of Aspect initiatives, and (iii) to create the foundations for the toolkit of best practice. This first annual report presents insights regarding good practice across all Aspect Communities of Practice (CoPs), as well as lessons on managing the network and plans for the future. The audience for this report is the Steering Group (SG), Operations Group (OG), and CoP members from the seven founding partners.

Overview of Year One Activity – up to 31st July 2019

In its first year, the Aspect consortium focussed on establishing the structures and processes to enable the collaboration to deliver the programme aims. The programme management team conducted a mapping exercise to understand the current activity landscape at members' institutions and have completed a Communications Plan. Members have been running initiatives at their own institutions, from which learnings and resources are being developed for the network, and OG members are now developing proposals for collaborative high-impact projects, for approval by the SG.

Mapping the Aspect Member Landscape

The Programme Team led an activity mapping exercise, gathering input from OG members on their current activities and needs, to enable partners to better understand what each institution is already doing, how they can work together, and where there are gaps and opportunities. Chapter 3 presents a summary of the analysis completed by the Programme Team with details in the Appendix.

Members reported a spread of activity in all CoP areas[32], although business engagement appears to be more established than pure commercialisation. The analysis shows what institutions reported the most activity in each CoP area, and includes some examples of what members are doing.

The challenges and barriers reported by members map well to those in the 2005 CHASS report. Common challenges identified by members were related to communications and/or resources and models for supporting social sciences exploitation. A key point was that social sciences commercialisation pathways can be different to STEM, and KEC professionals require dedicated time and resources to develop their internal capabilities and revise their processes in order to best support these different pathways.

Members reported which sectors and markets they perceived as having high interest and/or potential for social sciences exploitation. A rough categorisation was used to group the sectors into thematic areas. The two most commonly cited themes were: Health (including healthy aging and wellness) and Cities & Urban Living (including transport). This was followed by: Education, Digital and Data, Development, Creative Industries, and Policy (each named as sector strengths/opportunities by three members.) These insights will help in communicating the value of and applications for social sciences research, both internally and externally.

[32] The Aspect Steering Group has established five Communities of Practice (CoPs): Research Commercialisation, Business Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Communications, and Academic Champions. While each CoP has its own focus, the Steering Group have identified the overarching responsibility for all CoP's as follows, 1) to identify areas of established best practice in their respective domains; 2) to identify strategies, plans and activities to test new forms of practice; 3) to propose to the Steering Group through the Operations Group these programmes of activity; 4) working with the Aspect learning manager (or equivalent), to contribute to the development of a toolkit (or equivalent) through which Aspect will promote social science research commercialisation globally; and 4) use their networks and peers to promote the Aspect global network of excellence.

Finally, OG members contributed ideas for further collaboration, and requests for support. There is a strong interest in more activities or events that will enable members to learn from each other, and to share examples of programmes, and projects. The most common area members would like to learn more about is building an understanding how to better engage with academics.

Learning Outputs and Highlights

Over the last seven months, Aspect members have started gathering and developing resources that demonstrate current practice in social sciences innovation. In response to a request from the Programme Team (as of Spring 2019), Aspect members identified 17 existing project case studies that can be adapted and shared on the Aspect website. A rough categorisation and analysis of these case studies has provided insights into what types of exploitation activity is already underway, what market sectors/themes are showing potential interest in utilising social sciences research, and common routes to market. Insights are shared in Chapter 4.1 and case study details are listed in the Appendix.

Members have also shared their learnings from 14 events and programmes that occurred at their institutions in 2018-2019, supporting social sciences innovation. Learnings were circulated amongst the OG members via short summary reports (case studies or guides about how to run the event) and in some cases the materials used at the event were also shared. These learning outputs have typically been written for use at the host institution or for external PR and may need to be adapted prior to dissemination as part of the Aspect website. Details on the events and the related learning outputs are listed in the Appendix.

There are no commissioned reports or collaborative studies currently funded via Aspect; however, members have volunteered to share insights from studies they have done previously. These include: a) a report from Oxford on industry engagement in the social sciences; and b) a review by LSE of how the ICURe programme can be adapted to social sciences. Highlights are shared in Chapter 4.5.

Zinc and the LSE TTO are currently the only active pilot and proof of concept (PoC) projects. Funding within the Aspect grant award allows for additional PoC projects, proposals for which are being developed by the OG members. Learnings from Zinc and LSE are out of scope for this report and will be reported separately; however, some initial insights from the LSE TTO are shared in this report.

The Communications Plan identifies that talks and workshops to allow members to discuss and share good practice will be a key part of the learning process. CoP members have now started to convene more regularly, and there have been two workshop style meetings of Aspect members thus far. There have also been a series of 'show and tell' visits from the Zinc team to Aspect member institutions, to provide information about the Zinc programme to showcase stories and ideas from past participants.

The Programme Team attended conferences for KEC practitioners, to promote Aspect to potential new members (ASTP and PraxisAuril Annual Conferences). This resulted in several expressions of interest in membership of Aspect that are currently being followed up. The first annual Aspect event will be held in November to launch the network.

Next Steps

During this first year of Aspect, the Programme Team have provided support to SG, OG, and CoP members, to build the foundations of the Aspect Programme, ensure productive working relationships across the membership, and develop a collaborative and ambitious programme of activity. A reflection on the challenges and risks to Aspect operations is shared in Chapter 5. Looking forward, the short-term priorities are to develop proposals for a larger collaborative programme of activity, agree and launch the network membership model, and continue to develop assets for the website through which much of the good practice in the translation of socials sciences research into impact in industry and third parties will be achieved.

Aspect

Transforming Society Through Social Science Innovation

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.

UK Research and Innovation

Aspect is funded by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund