# TEFCE MEETING WITH THE NATIONAL COORDINATION CENTRE FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (NCCPE) - UK

Microsoft Team meeting, 11 January 2021 and 15 February 2021

Participants: Paul Manners and Sophie Duncan, NCCPE

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**MEETING CONCLUSIONS**

## **NCCPE feedback to the TEFCE Toolbox**

* After a presentation of the TEFCE Toolbox, Paul Manners and Sophie Duncan expressed their **support** for the final version of the Toolbox as a framework to support the community engagement of universities and will be happy to share information about the TEFCE Toolbox within their networks as an example of self-assessment for community engagement.
* In terms of **terminology**, it was noted that in the UK context “community engagement” is understood as having a narrower meaning that the one proposed by the TEFCE project: in the UK, community engagement would be understood as engagement with local communities and citizens, rather than the range of possible stakeholders defined in the TEFCE project. In that sense, the TEFCE project appears to be closer to what would be understood in the UK as “civic engagement”.
* One aspect of the TEFCE Toolbox was the noted by NCCPE as one that may require further discussion in its further usage: the **part of the** **TEFCE** **Toolbox Heatmap relating to “Societal Needs”.** Namely, whereas the TEFCE Toolbox as a whole presents itself as flexible and context-specific, and not espousing particular values, the “Societal Needs” section of the Heatmap presents a scale of 1 to 5 with needs of business and industry as one end of the scale, and local societal needs and “grand challenges” at another. There was an implication that one was more important than the other, given the challenges of valuing social value in equivalent ways to economic value this may undermine the great work done by institutions in partnership with local communities, The TEFCE team confirmed that in practice, a university would not need to interpret their heatmap results as necessarily (or only) strengths and weaknesses, but could justify why they chose, e.g. to engage with certain types of partners on certain types of societal needs. However, the TEFCE team accepted that this aspect of the Toolbox should be further monitored in practice, and if issues arise, other mechanisms could be used to cover this aspect of the discussion (e.g. highlighting areas of activity, but without any associated numerical scale).
* The TEFCE team confirmed that, while the TEFCE Toolbox was now finalised, it would be open to further improvements in the future (especially based on its use by 4 new universities in the follow-up “SHEFCE” project), where any potential issues could be addressed.

## **New developments in England for public engagement in HE**

* **Civic University Network:** NCCPE presented the main elements of the recently launched Civic University Network, in which it participates as a partner. Although the concept of the ‘civic university’ is clearly connected to public/community engagement, it is considered as a broader concept, that also includes elements such as economic development and regeneration, and even areas such as university public procurements policies (linking them to the local economy). For this reason, NCCPE’s role in the Civic University Network is to ensure that public/community engagement remains an important part of that process. The Civic University Network reflects a larger shift in discussion in the UK towards place-based policies and addressing regional inequalities. From a system-level perspective, the Civic University Network is still a ‘bottom-up’ initiative whose main funder is the UPP Foundation (a private foundation), although Arts Council England, Carnegie UK Trust and the Department of Education have also contributed funding. The Civic University team are currenlty developing a 'cvic index' to provide a framework for Civic Universities to define and evaluate their civic activity. The team developing this index are aware of the TEFCE project and it is informing their approach.
* **Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)**: the KEF, which is now compulsory for UK universities, measures universities’ knowledge exchange activities combining both metrics and narratives. Public/community engagement is one of the 7 dimensions covered by the KEF and NCCPE has supported the design and implementation of the KEF in this area.. The relevance of the KEF for the TEFCE project is that it confirms that a “metric-only” approach to measuring public/community engagement is unlikely to be a meaningful approach to considering an area such as public/community engagement, thus requiring context-specific narratives. The KEF could be interesting the follow-up project to TEFCE (SHEFCE) since it includes data visualisations, comparisons of university performance and narratives, and, ideally, may become a tool that the public could use to learn more about what universities are “doing for them”.
* **Knowledge Exchange Concordat:** A related, but separate tool to the KEF provides universities with a self-assessment framework that also includes action-planning and peer-assessment process. The Concordat is a voluntary process, administered by Universities UK. It is intended to be 'forward looking', wih the key output being an HEI's action plan; while the KEF is retrospective, reviewing past activity.
* **Approaches to support practitioners for community engagement:** Finally, NCCPE and the TEFCE team shared perspectives on what approaches are most likely to work to support community engagement practitioners in higher education. Whilst there is merit in the classic model of “dedicated web site + good practice repository + bi-annual conference” other ways of supporting networks and learning are also worth considering. Often the use of dedicated tools to support institutional processes bring huge value (e.g. the [EDGE Tool](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support-engagement/strategy-and-planning/edge-tool) or the TEFCE Toolbox). With the EDGE tool, this started as a self assessment tool, to encourage productive conversations and development for institutions to support engagement. It now forms the basis of the [Watermark Process](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/engage-watermark/about-engage-watermark), an external assessment of how supportive institutions are of engagement. This has proved really effective for UK institutions to both reflect on and develop their approach. Another promising approach noted by NCCPE was the organisation of the [NCCPE Academy](https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/nccpe-projects-and-services/professional-development/engage-academy), providing practitioners with more structured and interactive training and peer learning.

## **Conclusions**

The meeting concluded with NCCPE confirming its interest in continuing the conversation with the TEFCE project team about how to advance the community engagement agenda in Europe and its readiness to join the SHEFCE project as an associate partner and future international projects and networks in this area.