

Lancaster University Research and Development Centre for Global Eco-Innovation



About the project

Summary

The Centre unites the expertise, resources and global contacts of Lancaster University, the University of Liverpool and Inventya Ltd to develop eco-innovative products, processes and services in collaboration with ambitious Northwest businesses.

Project partners

Lancaster University, University of Liverpool, Inventya Ltd supporting 300 Northwest based SMEs

The results

The problem

The project was developed in response to a call to '*align university research more closely with the needs of regional business*' addressing '*the step change needed through large scale projects across HEIs, private sector research and innovation organisations and SMEs*'.

SMEs in the Northwest evidenced "*low levels of adsorptive capacity*" identified as the SMEs lack of ability to assimilate and exploit external knowledge for R&D. Thus holding back the region in terms of innovation, productivity and export potential.

The approach

To open the science base of two of the region's research intensive universities to the SME community. Project proposals were taken from the SME community, assessed and fit to academic understanding within the two universities. A team of 50 Graduate researchers and a small project management team was recruited to work full time on these SME led, product development challenges.

In addition an established private sector partner provided mentoring and support for commercialisation to the SME business partners.

Our goals

The project has a singular focus on eco-innovation – the development of new and improved products, processes and services that reduce environmental impact. This addresses key global challenges in the areas of energy, water, waste, food security and biodiversity.

Each project is SME derived and delivered through research base of the universities.

Profile

- 2x HEIs and 1 Private Company
- 50 PhD projects,
- 4 Masters by Research
100 student projects
- NW - Urban & rural

Finalist's case study

Obstacles and solutions

To recruit 50 PhD standard projects in 4 months	An extensive advertising campaign supported by a dedicated business team.
Managing the demands of ERDF funding	An experienced team and conscientious compliance arrangements
A distributed team	The opportunity to meet as a cohort to build common solutions
Changing research challenges	Committed academic supervision & great quality researchers

Performance and results

Business support: 300 SMEs assisted, 268 new jobs,

Training a generation: 80+ academics engaged in eco-innovation, 150+ students engaged in project with business, 150+ SMEs access the university knowledge base

Finance: Over £4m inward investment achieved

Environment: On track to exceed environmental targets for 2017 of: 27,000 tonnes CO₂e saved, 46,000 water saved, 55,000 tonnes diverted from landfill, 30,000 tonnes material re-used.

The future

Lessons learned

The key lessons learned are:

- Long term sustained working with business partners delivers better results and value for money than short transitory assistance.
- Collaboration between HEIs delivers benefits for all
- Solution led approaches are multi-disciplinary and not focused on a single technology.

Sharing your project

The project was launched in Manchester to an audience of 250 attendees from across the region.

The project had a stand showcasing all the projects and sharing the commercial opportunity with 12 of the businesses at the RWM (Resource and Waste Management) Exhibition in Birmingham in September 2015

An exhibition with 23 business partners was undertaken at the Innovate UK roadshow, Venturefest Manchester, to allow businesses to unlock further innovation funding. Project has been shared with the Research Councils.

11 short videos have been created showcasing projects. A booklet has been printed describing 40 projects. . 11 short case studies have been produced as A4 leaflets

A reception was held in Liverpool showcasing the project on 17th September to Council and LEP members.

As a result the project partners have projects in preparation with other HEIs across the region

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

It is fabulous recognition for the leadership shown delivering innovation & environmental benefits with SMEs.

Further information - www.cgeinnovation.org

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