

Finalist's case study

The University of Manchester Social Responsibility

The Works – The University of Manchester's Local Employment and Skills Centres

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Unique in British higher education, The Works is a University of Manchester-led employment facility providing access to training and jobs for residents in our immediate communities that experience high levels of worklessness. Based in the community, a range of partner employers now use our two facilities to recruit local jobseekers. More than 1,600 unemployed people have been supported into work since 2011 producing £25M savings to the local economy.

Project partners

We partnered with:

- Work Solutions (a government-funded welfare to work provider)
- City South Housing Trust
- Guinness Northern Counties Housing
- Other major regional employers

Section 2 The results

The problem

To address high levels of unemployment, skills-deficits and the low numbers of local people accessing jobs in the University and increase University employees from our local community.

The approach

To address high levels of unemployment, skills-deficits and the low numbers of local people accessing jobs in the University, we partnered with two local Housing Trusts, the public sector and major private sector employers to establish physical 'one-stop-shop' employability Centers in our local wards of Moss Side and Ardwick.

These provide local residents seeking work with privileged access to training, advice and ring-fenced job opportunities - both at The University of Manchester itself and with a host of other partner employers.

The Works offers a resource area equipped with web-access, telephones and photocopiers; access to trained staff funded via Work Solutions to assist clients with job searching, applications and interview preparation; and



Profile

- UK's largest Higher Education Institution
- 40,000 students
- 11,000 staff
- Urban

a range of formal training, educational courses and programmes are provided that including 'Adult Literacy and Numeracy'; 'How to win at the application game'; 'Interview techniques' and construction, hospitality and catering 'Skills Academies'; targeted apprenticeship opportunities for young unemployed residents in key growth sectors such as construction and business administration.

Our goals

We aim to support a minimum of 375 unemployed local residents back into work each year and have significantly exceeded this this target.

Obstacles and solutions

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| A major obstacle was being viewed as an employer of choice by our local community | This was overcome by establishing a physical presence in our local community through the establishment of two centres in partnership with local housing trusts. |
| A major obstacle was giving the local community a fair chance to access jobs when they arose in the University. | Jobs up to a certain level are advertised first of all via The Works centres, meaning that members of the local community have a better opportunity to gain employment with us. |

Performance and results

Over 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 over 1,600 people were supported back into work, significantly exceeding our targets. 1,171 of these jobs were at our University, 97% of whom were unemployed. 4,100 unique visitors have also accessed the Centers.

Independent socio-economic analysis by Viewforth Consulting used Treasury Green Book shadow-pricing methodology to calculate the economic value to the local region as being £16.1 million between 2011-2013, due to the reduced costs to society of unemployment. This has increased to £25 million for the 2011-2014 period.

Rich qualitative data demonstrates how lives of individuals, their families and communities are transformed. For example, Chris, our 1,000th person to find employment via The Works, said: "I am so happy. My friends and family have noticed a real difference. I'll be getting back into a regular routine with a regular wage coming in so I can take the kids out on the weekend over the summer holidays."

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

1. Universities are major employers and can therefore play a significant role in proactively addressing unemployment in their local regions.
2. More impact can be created in addressing unemployment by partnering with other large employers.
3. Proactively establishing centres in the local community is the best way to overcome preconceptions about the types and availability of jobs in universities.

Sharing our project

The programme won the THE Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community in 2013, which helped raise initial awareness of The Works. We are engaged in active discussion with other employers via our own employer networks, the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Manchester City Council about how The Works model can be replicated in other parts of our city-region. Hull City Council, Sheffield City Council and Rochdale Council have also expressed interest in our model. We are enthused by the emphasis placed on award-winners to share successes with the wider sector. Our previous 2013 International/National Green Gown social responsibility award led us to create and disseminate a video, undertake a webinar and produce a case-study for the sector. These led to 13 more HEIs taking our advice in developing their own similar programmes.

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

We are delighted to be a Green Gown Award Finalist. Not only do we received recognition for the hard work that has contributed to the success of The Works, we also have the opportunity to share and influence other similar institutions and like-minded organisations.

Further information

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