



Research
England

Knowledge Exchange Framework Local Growth and Regeneration Narrative Template

For submission to KEF@re.ukri.org by Friday 29 May 2020

Max words: 2,000 (plus 120 word lay summary).

Local growth and regeneration narrative statement

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| Total word count (including summary of approach) | 2,120 |

Please note a word limit of 2,000 words applies across the three ‘aspects’ of this statement. The summary of approach (below) has a separate word limit of 120 words. Diagrams and images may be included, providing they can be extracted for online display and the total statement (excluding cover page) does not exceed ten pages.

Summary of approach

Summary

Please provide a short (max 120 words) summary of your approach to local growth and regeneration. This should be in the style of a ‘lay summary’ and provide a succinct and accessible overview of your approach.

[Birmingham City University's](#) approach to LGR is outlined in its [2025 Strategic Plan](#), and guided by its mission to be the ‘University for Birmingham’ through facilitating growth, innovation and productivity. The University has long-established and engrained partnerships with local and regional political, commercial and civic stakeholders to understand socio-economic needs, and to promote a position of thought leadership.

LGR activity is varied, comprising major funded programmes, capital investment, and specialist knowledge exchange, aligned to the Local Industrial Strategy’s [foundations of productivity](#). All activity is underpinned by effective partnerships to achieve strategic goals; reviewed to determine the extent to which it has addressed objectives; and shared through Open Access platforms.

Further information on BCU’s KEF strategy and activity is available [here](#).

Word count: 120

Aspect 1: Strategy

Strategic approach

Information on your strategic approach to local growth and regeneration as a means to understand your intended achievements. This should include an outline of the geographic areas that you have recognised to be strategically relevant to your institution at a local, regional, national or international level. How did you identify the strategic importance of these area(s) and how have you identified the local growth and regeneration ‘needs’ of the area(s)?

Refer to the supporting guidance document for examples of evidence you may wish to include to corroborate your narrative (pages 10 -11).

Strategy and Area

The University's [2016-2020 Strategic Plan](#) (covering the last 3 HE-BCIS years) stated a dual commitment to '*transforming Birmingham and the Region*' and '*transforming student's lives*'. This was reaffirmed in the [2018-20 Strategy Refresh](#) through the mission to be 'The University for Birmingham' through regional recognition as a collaborator supporting economic, social and cultural improvement in the city region; and '*Enabling Personal Transformation*'.

BCU's current 'University for Birmingham' mission in its [2025 Strategy](#) reflects its ongoing role as both an anchor institution in Birmingham and the wider region, but also as a civic university. This contains a clear commitment to Local Growth and Regeneration (LGR): '*We will continue to work closely with all parts of our city and region, its corporates, policy makers and its communities, to ensure that the University plays an active role in facilitating growth, innovation and productivity*'.

The University's strategic approach to LGR is embedded in the Plans of both its four faculties, and Research, Innovation and Enterprise and Employability Directorate.

In defining 'local', BCU predominantly works across 3 geographical boundaries defined by statute:

- The [Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (GBSLEP);
- The [West Midlands Combined Authority](#) (WMCA); and,
- The [Midlands Engine](#) (ME).

Whilst the University also has a significant national and [international](#) footprint, this statement maintains an intentional focus on the above 'local' approaches to LGR.

Identification of Need and Strategy Response

As a university with a strong place-based mission, BCU has long-established and engrained partnerships with local and regional political, commercial and civic stakeholders to understand socio-economic needs, and to promote a position of thought leadership. This includes representation on key advisory boards, and shaping regional Strategies and Plans, such as the Strategic Economic Plans of the [GBSLEP](#); the [WMCA](#); the [WM Local Industrial Strategy](#); and the [WMCA Regional Skills Plan](#). Most recently, BCU has worked with regional leaders in response to COVID-19 through, for example, targeted support for business resilience and recovery.

In addition to partnership, intelligence is also secured through a range of other channels and activities, including:

- Joint research and briefings with key partners such as the [Quarterly Business Report](#);
- Commissioned market research and consultation to identify areas of specific need, such as the [Tech and Digital Deep Dive](#) report;
- Faculty or School-led [Industry Advisory Boards](#) to support curriculum development, student employability and research;
- Formal partnership with other regional Institutions through bodies such as [Midlands Enterprise Universities](#), and [West Midlands Combined Universities](#) to drive productivity and growth through skills, innovation and enterprise.
- Events, such as the [Mayor's Clean Growth Challenge](#), which have brought together key stakeholders to achieve a strategic goal.

This rich tapestry of intelligence and insight has provided BCU with clarity regarding the LGR needs of the area, which may be broadly categorised under the Local Industrial Strategy's [foundations of productivity](#), as drivers and enablers of growth. Examples of need and alignment with strategy and investment response include:

People, Skills and Employment:

- **Need:** The WM has an [employment rate](#) of 72.4% (75.6% nationally); and an above average unemployment rate (5.5%). The region also has one of the highest proportions of manufacturing employment nationally, with automotive, aerospace and rail technologies representing key sector strengths.
- **Response:** Securing £32.4m of enterprise income since 2017/18 supporting large-scale project-based interventions specifically targeted to address identified skills and employment challenges. This includes the [Graduate Re-tune](#) project which supports the acquisition of highly skilled jobs through working in partnership with bodies such as DWP and Jobcentre Plus.

Infrastructure and Environment/ Place:

- **Need:** Integrated transport networks and digital connectivity to connect the region and maximise the (inter)national reach.
- **Response:** Strategic investment in [5G](#) research, and high-profile collaborative [events](#) to demonstrate its application.

Ideas/ Innovation:

- **Need:** Levels of [business innovation](#) across the UK including the WM are low by international standards. Compared to the strongest LEP of 39 nationally, WMCA LEPs are ranked 6th, 14th and 19th against new to firm products/services and 23rd and 30th against process innovation.
- **Response:** [STEAM](#) Strategy providing a centre for innovation, creative thinking, prototyping and business development, and establishment of new STEAM Incubator.

Business Environment:

- **Need:** [GVA per head](#) in 2017 was £23,903 - £3,652 lower than the UK; and the impact of Brexit on the economy.
- **Response:** Targeted COVID-19 business support and growth Programmes through [BCU Advantage](#); and [Centre for Brexit Studies](#) to examine the impact of Brexit on business and the economy.

Word count: 741

Aspect 2: Activity

Delivering your strategy

Information on the focus of your approach and the activities delivered. How do you know it met the identified needs of the geographic areas you identified? Please focus on the last three years of activity.

Refer to the supporting guidance document for examples of evidence you may wish to include to corroborate your narrative (page 11).

LGR activity is varied, comprising major funded programmes; capital investment; and specialist knowledge exchange. All activity is underpinned by effective partnerships to achieve strategic goals, and overseen by BCU's Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation, Enterprise and Employability. The foundations of productivity have again been used as a thematic framework to exemplify activity:

People, Skills and Employment:

- **Support for Growth:** The £3.3m [Higher Level Skills Match](#) project provided local companies with access to graduates, interns and project staff with the skills businesses need to grow. It was designed *with* and *for* businesses, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in the GBSLEP area. The project represented a collaborative partnership between BCU, two other HEIs, and three local authorities.
- **Skills Gaps:** BCU is working in partnership with FE and HE providers, and leading sector employers across the GBSLEP to deliver an [Institute of Technology](#). The £10.1m GBSIoT project will develop new, industry-responsive technical education with a focus on advanced manufacturing and engineering, supporting employers to address skills gaps through access to relevant technical skills provision and local talent.

Infrastructure and Environment/ Place:

- **Regeneration:** The University has supported the regeneration of the city through investing over £120m in its campuses and facilities over the last 3 HE-BCIS years, and committing a further £90m. Activity is aligned with both the [Birmingham Development](#) and [Curzon Investment](#) Plans to underpin the impact of a planned £724m regional programme of local infrastructure.

Ideas/ Innovation:

- **STEAM:** BCU is acknowledged as an international thought-leader in STEAM - an interdisciplinary way of thinking that combines Arts with STEM skills to drive innovation. The University's [STEAMhouse](#) facility is a catalyst for new research partnerships, collaboration and engagement with business, the public and third sector; skills development; enterprise and entrepreneurship. Examples include STEAM innovation with [Balfour Beatty Vinci](#) to drive new construction methods; and a [health hack](#) with NHS England to explore how technology can improve patient interaction.
- **Citizen Engagement:** In 18/19 a major piece of pilot work to develop the 'Citizen Lab' approach using STEAM methodology applied to public reform was completed. This resulted in two [pilot projects](#) focused on School Exclusion and Unemployment. Partnerships developed with Local Authorities, Microsoft and DWP were instrumental in the success of these programmes, and in understanding how to interlink complex spaces.

Business Environment:

- **BCU Advantage:** A broad range of KE-led activities are offered through [BCU Advantage](#), the University's business support platform to assist SMEs to start, grow and innovate; underpinned by investment in a robust CRM to support longer-term sustainable engagement. In Mar-20, a dedicated [COVID business support](#) microsite was launched including access to finance; key sources of information and assistance; and a series of 15 free webinars, partnering with experts and specialists from across BCU and industry.

In addition, BCU has made significant investments to maximise the impact of its LGR activity, including:

- **Human capital:** Investment in staff base including the creation of a Partnership Team and enhanced Intelligence capacity to drive new research impact, knowledge, and collaborative activity; and secondment of academic staff members to [West Midlands 5G](#) to maximise the regional technological benefits.
- **Physical capital:** Since 2017/18, BCU has secured over £17.5m capital, and invested £60m to underpin its Government-backed STEAM agenda. This led to the opening of the 20,000sq.ft Phase 1 [Innovation Centre](#) in May-18, a [Business Incubator](#) in Mar-19 capable of supporting up to 40 start-ups, and the development of a 120,000sq.ft [Phase 2](#) building due to open Sep-21.
- **Strategic investment:** Exemplified by investment in the [West Midlands National Park](#), complementing existing plans for growth, including HS2, 215,000 new homes, Coventry City of Culture 2021, and the Commonwealth Games, all of which are set to bring significant regional economic gains. The concept has since been [formally adopted](#) by the WMCA.

Word count: 628

Aspect 3: Results

Achieving and acting on results

Describe the outcomes and/or impacts of your activity. How do you communicate and act on the results?

Refer to the supporting guidance document for examples of evidence you may wish to include to corroborate your narrative (page 11).

All LGR activity undergoes some level of evaluation and review to determine the extent to which it has addressed strategic objectives, and delivered intended achievements. Assessment varies in scope and formality depending on the nature of activity, scale of intervention, and funder requirement (where applicable). At a macro level, this includes consideration of:

- **Outputs** measuring the LGR benefits delivered for target beneficiaries (individuals and businesses) and areas. For example, businesses assisted, business start-ups, or changes in the performance of targeted businesses typically evidenced via monitoring and participation data.
- **Outcomes** usually reflecting measures of socio-economic and environmental characteristics of areas or groups of people. Outcome data includes jobs created or supported, or influence on policy or practice.
- **Impacts** typically referring to the outcome change which can be attributed to the LGR intervention, economic measures such as contribution to GVA, or cultural or social impact.

Examples of outputs, outcomes and impacts against the foundations of productivity include:

- **People, Skills and Employment:** In Dec-19 the aforementioned [Higher Level Skills Match](#) project completed. Over two and half years, 328 businesses signed the SME Skills and Graduate Talent Charter and 179 businesses completed a Skills Project. A project extension has since been secured until Dec-22.
- **Infrastructure and Environment/ Place:** BCU has played a principle role in the physical regeneration of Birmingham's [Eastside District](#), and creation of the [Knowledge Hub](#), driving place-based innovation. Of specific note is the University's work in shaping the HS2 development, including engagement events with partners such as Birmingham City Council, Environment Agency, Homes England, and GBSLEP to critically review and create both a bigger vision for public realm development, and shared spatial vision and goals.
- **Ideas/ Innovation:** Since opening in May-18, [STEAMhouse Phase 1](#) has created: 73 innovative new products, 19 new to market products, 34 research collaborations; supported 65 new enterprises; and provided 257 enterprises with personalised support. Across 19/20 alone there were over 10,000 visits to the facility. Meanwhile, the [Big Data Corridor](#) project provided deep knowledge transfer to 43 regional businesses to understand the benefits of Internet of Things data, producing 7 new products to market.
- **Business Environment:** Since 2017/18 the university has formally assisted 1,425 businesses through 3 or 12 hour interventions across 11 business growth projects with a combined BCU value of £8.3m, and has actively engaged with over 2,500. Projects provided a range of support mechanisms, including skills for enterprise and entrepreneurship; and access to graduate talent through knowledge transfer.

BCU's influence on policy and practice, and support for infrastructure and innovation may be exemplified by the WM [Local Industrial Strategy's](#) inclusion of STEAMHouse; and National Centre for Universities and Business's [State of the Relationship](#) report which highlighted BCU's leading collaborations with business to support innovation and provide socio-economic benefit.

Communication and Recognition:

BCU recognises the public benefit of unrestricted access to research outputs and operates an [Open Access by Default Policy](#), ensuring products are accessible and available to all. These materials are held in the [BCU Open Access Repository](#) supporting rapid dissemination, and increased use of outputs by businesses, government, charities and the wider public.

The results of BCU LGR activity are also communicated through independent review such as the 2020 [Socio-economic Impact Report](#) which confirmed a £392m gross value added contribution to regional GDP (£532m nationally).

BCU regularly receives external recognition for its work through award. Examples over the 2019/20 HE-BCIS period include winning an [AGCAS Award](#) for working in partnership to tackle skills gaps; a [Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce](#) award for supporting business growth and innovation; and a UKRI [Knowledge Transfer Network](#) award for business impact.

Regular consultation on BCU LGR strategy and performance is held through an outsourced perception survey, which captures views from community leaders, schools and colleges, local employers, leaders from relevant professional or sector bodies, and HE representatives.

Word count: 631

Total word count across three aspects: 2,000 (max 2,000 words across no more than ten pages)