

Establishing a South Yorkshire Innovation Board

Context

- The SEP has a clear focus on innovation, but there is a significant task ahead to turn these policies into solutions that deliver our agreed vision.
- The region has some world-leading assets with increasingly well-developed plans to continue to enhance, augment and strengthen these. But these alone will not deliver the transformation South Yorkshire needs.
- There is no South Yorkshire wide strategic leadership of the 'innovation' agenda. There is also no strategic body that draws together the private sector, public bodies, research councils, funders, and organisations such as Innovate UK.

The SEP's proposition for growth has led to several interrelated missions, five of which are:

a) **Make Science (and Innovation) Work**

- i. Grow innovation and its stickiness in South Yorkshire, ensuring that entrepreneurs are supported to flourish here and increasing the number of Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs) exponentially.
- ii. Create physical clustering high growth, high value businesses across South Yorkshire.
- iii. Create business networks and networking, connected to our translational research assets wherever possible.
- iv. Improve adoption of technology by businesses and thereby improve productivity and competitiveness in the supply chains.

b) **Make Finance Work**

- i. Intervene to create the conditions that bring in the level and type of finance needed.
- ii. Enable access to a menu of private finance solutions, at scale including Angel Finance, loan finance, equity finance and venture capital for South Yorkshire.

c) **Make Skills Work**

- i. careful, deliberate and ambitious interventions that disrupt the status quo and deliver a well-equipped labour market.
- ii. revolutionise vocational and technical education to deliver the outcomes we need. This particularly important if we are to address the generational inequalities in South Yorkshire.

d) **Make land and property work**

- i. Develop solutions to our commercial and domestic property needs that offer something new and appealing to address our underlying challenges
- ii. Helps to address our sustainability challenges in the quality and energy efficiency of our property

e) **Tell a new South Yorkshire story**

- i. create a narrative that binds this and the local institutions together to achieve it, and convinces the “external world” to buy into it

To lead the development of solutions, a South Yorkshire Innovation Board will be established under the Governance of the LEP and SYMCA. The LEP has established this body and agreed its terms of reference. The Chair will be appointed by the Chair of the LEP in consultation with the Mayor. The Innovation Board would be made up of private sector (especially entrepreneurs, finance experts), academia and the public sector. The Board will be supported by the SYMCA Executive.

Terms of Reference of the SY Innovation Board

- 1) Provide the leadership to create the solutions that makes South Yorkshire the place where innovation-driven enterprises want to locate.
- 2) Provide leadership to foster a new approach to economic development in South Yorkshire centred around innovation in the missions set out above. In particular, this includes operationalising the SEP ambitions across start up, scale-up, commercialisation and the industrialisation of ideas, new supply chain opportunities, and clustering.
- 3) Lead the development of an enabling ecosystem which fosters a culture of successful innovation and ensures the necessary components are in operation and functioning well in South Yorkshire.
- 4) Harness and extend the impact of South Yorkshire’s innovation assets regionally and nationally.
- 5) Provide leadership which ensures the development of translational research and clusters in specific thematic areas where South Yorkshire has a competitive advantage. These are Sustainable Manufacturing and Engineering; Energy; Digital Technology; Health and Wellbeing and Advanced Logistics.
- 6) Ensure South Yorkshire’s innovation ecosystem system supports productivity improvements across a range of lower-paid sectors through investment, training, use of technology or adoption of improved process.
- 7) Provide leadership which ensures that inclusive outcomes are hardwired through all innovation and growth interventions. Transforming South Yorkshire’s innovation ecosystem should create opportunities for all people, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or other circumstances.
- 8) Collaborate and connect with other Innovation Boards and advice on how South Yorkshire can learn from peers.
- 9) Develop strong relations with partners, especially central Government and complementary publicly funded bodies.
- 10) Identify and promote growth opportunities for South Yorkshire.

Short to medium-term outputs

- 1) Development of a South Yorkshire Innovation narrative and secure delivery commitments from key partners, including the Government.

- 2) Oversee the development of interventions to deliver the SEP and national government objectives and inform national, regional and local investment plans.

Membership and operations

The Board will be private sector-led. It will be independent of thought and influence those who make decisions and commit investment.

The Board should include at least one of the following stakeholders: entrepreneur, risk capital, corporate, government, and university. Membership should be drawn from anchor institutions, innovative businesses in our sector specialisms, research bodies and the finance and corporate world. The Board should also strike the right balance in terms of gender, ethnic and demographic representation. Private sector representation on the Board must include both SME and big business.

Size matters and it is important that the Board does not become unwieldy. To this end, the Board should have up to nine members, but preferably no more than seven.

Board members will be appointed in their personal and professional capacity, and not as representatives of their organisations. This means that in the event of a resignation, the seat cannot automatically be passed to another within that organisation. Similarly, substitutes cannot be permitted at meetings.

Proposed Membership include:

1. Chair (with a co-chair if this can be agreed)
2. SME
3. Big business
4. Entrepreneur and (possibly) Intrapreneur (these could come from the first three above)
5. Academia (two seats)
 - a. One from the Sheffield Universities
 - b. One from Home Win
6. Finance (two seats and must include a risk capital expert)
7. MCA Chief Exec

Role of Board members

- Each board member should be given responsibility to drive change for each of the innovation areas the Board will focus on: skills, start up, scale-up, adoption, commercialisation and the industrialisation of ideas, new supply chain opportunities, and clustering.
- Provide expertise and knowledge to deliver interventions to create a high performing innovation ecosystem in South Yorkshire.
- Champion a new culture of innovation across South Yorkshire.

The Chair and the Board will need to consider the following:

- Frequency of meetings.
- Method of Operation – principles and assumptions.

- Membership - members with decision making responsibility and advisory. Including the process for new members.
- Meeting quorate requirements.
- Standard agenda items.
- Roles and responsibilities (collective and individually).

Other things to consider

- Should there be a term of office for Board members? This could be tied to the mayoralty to create the opportunity for a new mayor to revise it. The negative of this approach is that it gives the impression of being public sector driven.
- Do we have a LEP representative on the Board? doesn't have to be the LEP Chair or one of the usual suspects. There are advantages and disadvantages of having a LEP Board member involved. The pros are that there would be less room for disagreement, and it is an opportunity to ensure alignment with the MCA's agenda. The cons are that it could have the look of the same old story, it may seem to MCA/LEP dominated, and feedback from the Synergy report is that MCA/LEP driven boards are not popular with entrepreneurs and businesses.
- There will be a resource implication for this. The Board should be driven by the private sector and they should feel like they have ownership and responsibility for delivery. Nevertheless, a secretariat role will be needed. How do we plan to resource this? The Innovation Project Director is the most obvious MCA Exec Officer lead.