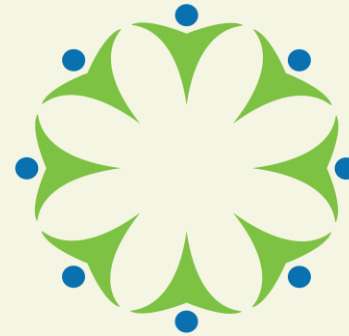


# YU response to UKRI survey on Investments in Places

September 2024



Yorkshire  
Universities

# About Yorkshire Universities



**Yorkshire Universities** (YU) is a partnership of 12 higher education institutions in Yorkshire and the Humber.

YU's mission is to maximise the contribution of higher education to the region, through collaboration, where this generates greatest impact and public benefit, and aspiration and opportunity are supported.

YU is a unique partnership based on a shared commitment to improve the economic and social prosperity and wellbeing of people and places in Yorkshire and the Humber.



# Which organisation(s) is(are) best placed to lead on research and innovation in that area?

- A **collaborative effort** - across different parts of the system in places - is required to bring together different perspectives from across HE, public sector, industry and communities. Convening regional groups, such as **Yorkshire Universities** (YU), play a valuable role in facilitating dialogue across multiple perspectives to reach shared agreement on priorities and actions.
- **Universities** - bring academic knowledge and expertise, in teaching, research, evaluation and policy, as well as a wealth of experience in supporting skills and business development. In Yorkshire, we have a strong, diverse HE partnership of 12 HEIs - working through YU - ranging from large, research-intensive, to small, specialist institutions. Each has different capabilities and assets, which, when harnessed, are evidence of a powerful and dynamic eco-system. **Universities UK's** recently published [Blueprint: Opportunity, Growth & Partnership](#) calls for universities to be critical partners in Local Growth Plans.
- **Combined & Local Authorities** - are place-makers and place-shapers. Individually and collectively, they bring strategy and policy perspectives, identifying priority areas for local and regional economies, and developing and delivering interventions where there are innovation gaps. In Yorkshire, by June 2025, we will have four MCAs at varying stages of maturity, all of which are committed to research and innovation as a means of tackling economic challenges and delivering growth.
- **Catapults (and other RTOs)** - bring specialist facilities and expertise to stimulate innovation in key sectors. E.g. in Yorkshire, the [AMRC](#) (in South Yorkshire) and the [Aura Innovation Centre](#) (Humber) are focussed on innovation challenges in key sectors with strong local supply chains.
- **Private sector** - drive the uptake of innovation into new products and services, leading to economic growth. In Yorkshire, the business community is dominated by SMEs, many of which are innovation active. The private sector is a vital part of innovation activities, but given the scale and capacity of local firms, coupled with low private sector investment in R&D in our region, many businesses are unable to lead strategically on regional innovation.



# What are the research and innovation strengths of your location?

- **Collaboration** - through YU, we bring together the perspectives and capabilities of 12 HEIs and agree collective priorities for action within a system of multi-level governance in our region. Our [MOU](#) with the Combined and Local Authorities in Yorkshire provides a framework for all regional LAs/CAs to engage strategically with the HE sector to address regional challenges. Our major policy engagement programmes, [Y-PERN](#) and [YPIP](#), funded by UKRI, provide mechanisms for HEIs to engage with policy, business and communities to deliver insights, analysis, evidence and actions designed to bring social and economic benefits to the region. YU features as a case study of successful regional HE collaboration in **Universities UK's** [Blueprint](#), which calls for university partnerships, such as YU, to be connected to and integrated with national and sectoral growth initiatives, such as the Industrial Strategy.
- **Diversity** - with a range of different types of HEI, and a mixed economy of a similar composition to the UK, as a whole, Yorkshire benefits from a rich array of research and innovation specialisms and assets. This makes our region more resilient to economic shocks and well-placed to deliver innovation that spans traditional discipline or sector boundaries - such as challenge-led R&I. However, Yorkshire's business community is dominated by SMEs, which presents a financial challenge for the region's HE sector, as identified in the **Universities UK** [Blueprint](#), in terms of meeting the costs of cross-subsidising collaborative research.
- **Place-based** - within and across Yorkshire, there is long tradition and wide experience of place-based partnerships, and joint working across different sectors to support local and regional development. Our region has recognised R&I strengths in health, advanced manufacturing, energy, bio-economy, and culture and the creative industries. A vibrant and growing financial services sector, alongside digital industries, also drive growth and employment in Yorkshire.



# What three features are most important for UKRI's Investment Strategy for Places?

- **Locally-led** - ensure that local actors, especially democratically accountable institutions, are responsible for setting the strategies and possess the tools to enable priorities for innovation in local areas, as part of a broader economic development agenda, can be delivered, and are framed around interventions that address specific local needs and draw on local strengths. This requires, over the long-term, greater **devolved / decentralised public R&I funding** to address MCA strategic priorities. For example, there is a case for more funding currently administered by Innovate UK to be devolved directly to those MCAs with the capacity and infrastructure to manage such funds. This devolved innovation funding could be harnessed and combined with other place-based funding and interventions (in areas such as business support, enterprise, skills and capital investment), as part of a single 'pot' or settlement designed to address specific local/regional priorities. Other elements of national innovation funding can play an important role in promoting cross-regional knowledge flows and encourage collaboration between local areas.
- **Flexible** - provide funding and support that can be tailored to local need and aligned to local priorities, and which values and can achieve outcomes from a diverse range of HEIs and partners. Ensure funding timeframes can be adjusted to suit local opportunities and challenges, and institutional capacity.
- **Support for a place-based innovation ecosystem** - provide funding and support that strengthens the development of the innovation eco-system, as a whole. For maximum place-based impact, UKRI should fund a range of wider support, coordination and infrastructure activities, including networks, capacity-building and investor readiness. Some investment in large-scale R&I projects will not automatically become 'sticky' in terms of regional economic impacts, and there may be a requirement for some form of initial demonstrator or pilot. Without access to associated support for the broader innovation eco-system, places with less-developed innovation infrastructure could struggle to reap the societal and economic benefits of large R&I projects. Funding and support should enable effective multi-partner working and recognise the relative strengths and unique contributions of different types of stakeholders within the ecosystem. This aligns with recommendations in **Universities UK's [Blueprint](#)**, which calls for stable and effective incentives for HE collaboration, and the consolidation and expansion of current regional innovation funding.

## Steph Morris

Associate Consultant, Yorkshire Universities

[S.Morris2@yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk](mailto:S.Morris2@yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk)

