

# Aspect

## Aspect Learning Report 2020

An annual summary of insights and learnings from the Aspect programme on behalf of the Aspect Network members



November 2020

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# Acronyms

<b>ASPECT</b>	'A Social Sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation'
<b>CCF</b>	Research England's Connecting Capability Fund
<b>CHASS</b>	Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>ECR</b>	Early Career Researcher
<b>Eoi</b>	Expression of Interest
<b>ENT CoP</b>	Student Entrepreneurship Community of Practice
<b>ESRC</b>	Economic and Social Research Council
<b>IP</b>	Intellectual Property
<b>KE CoP</b>	Knowledge Exchange & Communications Community of Practice
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>KE</b>	Knowledge Exchange
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>KTP</b>	Knowledge Transfer Partnership
<b>LSE</b>	The London School of Economics and Political Science
<b>OG</b>	Operations Group
<b>RC CoP</b>	Research Commercialisation Community of Practice
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research & Development
<b>SG</b>	Steering Group
<b>SHAPE</b>	Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy
<b>SS</b>	Social Sciences
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths
<b>SUCCESS</b>	'Seeding University Collaboration for Commercialisation and Enterprise in Social Sciences'
<b>TTO</b>	Technology Transfer Office
<b>UKRI</b>	UK Research and Innovation

# Foreword

**It has clearly been a challenging year for us all. However, despite the unprecedented challenges resulting from Covid-19, we are humbled by the significant amount of work that has been progressed within the Aspect programme – our members and projects have innovated and shown admirable drive and ambition, and ensured that Aspect’s important work has continued as effectively as possible.**

Midway through the Aspect programme, I am delighted to share this year’s learning report with you, which showcases some of the key learnings from the programme to date.

Aspect’s ambitious programme of activities is advancing extremely well. We have 16 funded projects that are well underway, with the aim of testing and piloting new approaches to maximising the commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research. The Seeding University Collaboration for Commercialisation and Enterprise in Social Sciences (SUCCESS) programme (a pilot enterprise and commercialisation programme designed specifically for social sciences academics) is one of our flagship projects – and with our initial cohort of entrepreneurs heading towards their pitch day in November, we are now in the process of planning for SUCCESS version two. Other large pilot programmes include ABaCuSS (testing an intrapreneurship model of embedding social scientists in businesses), Methods for Change (developing a framework for taking social science (SS) research methodologies that are useful beyond academia and making sure they are accessible and can be used in non-academics contexts) and the Aspect Student Accelerator (a four-month long training and support programme aimed at social sciences students and alumni). The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Commercialisation Service is now well established, and – as a social science only offering – it is proving to be a valuable platform for developing and testing new models of commercialisation. Zinc also continues its programme of activities, which has supported 150 founders and engaged social scientists in 65% of the currently active ventures.

Ultimately, all of this fantastic output and activity is helping to build the Aspect Network. Earlier this year, we welcomed our first Associate members to the programme – Nottingham Trent University, The Royal College of Art, The University of Bristol and The University of York. Conversations with other potential members are ongoing, from across the UK and internationally.

I very much look forward to the coming year and to continuing the great work that we have started – and to continuing to work with you, our Aspect community, to build an exciting future for social science commercialisation.

I hope you find this report to be both insightful and uplifting.

With best wishes,

**Professor Julia Black CBE FBA**

*Aspect Chair*

*Strategic Director of Innovation, London School of Economics and Political Science*



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Aspect Network has produced this annual report to inform its members and the wider public about the learnings generated by the programme. It aims to: (i) to summarise our current knowledge of good practice in social sciences commercialisation, (ii) to inform planning of Aspect initiatives, and (iii) to create the foundations for a toolkit of good practice. This annual report presents insights regarding good practice across all Aspect Communities of Practice (CoPs), as well as lessons on managing the network and plans for the future. The audience for this report is the Aspect Steering Group (SG), Operations Group (OG), and CoP members from the seven founding partners and four associate members, as well as the broader public.



## Overview of Aspect Year 2 Activity – August 2019 to July 2020

In its first year, the Aspect consortium focussed on establishing the foundations of the programme, to ensure productive working relationships across the membership and develop a collaborative and ambitious programme of activity.

In year two, the priorities were to launch the funding scheme for a larger collaborative programme of activity, launch an Associate Membership model to extend the network benefits to more institutions, engage with the social sciences innovation community via a newsletter and annual event, and continue to develop the assets for the website through which much of the good practice in the translation of social sciences research into impact in industry and third parties will be achieved.

As of July 2020, 16 collaborative projects have been funded and launched, and six members received funding for internal initiatives. The LSE Technology Transfer Office (TTO) and Zinc programme both continue to gain momentum as test cases for how to support social sciences innovation. Early learnings from the programme are starting to emerge and resources are being published on the website.

The University of Manchester hosted the first Aspect Annual Event in November 2019, to discuss opportunities for social sciences within the theme of business sustainability, with circa 100 attendees from across the UK and Europe. In response to Covid-19, our second annual event launched in September 2020 as a series of webinars, running over eight weeks. The Aspect newsletter was also launched in 2019, and the mailing list now stands at over 675. Aspect members contribute as guest editors on a bi-monthly basis sharing insights and topics of interest from their institution and the broader social sciences community. Our level of engagement on social media has increased significantly – with our total followership across LinkedIn and Twitter now at over 660 (from c. 100 in March) and total engagement (including clicks, shares and comments) increasing from a total of c. 50 in March to more than 4,300 in August. In addition, this engagement has resulted in a marked uplift in traffic to our website, with new users increasing from 190 in March to nearly 3,400 in August, and total sessions (visits) increasing from c. 360 to almost 4,700 over the same period.

Aspect membership remains open to new institutions, with a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) target of 30 additional members from UK and/or international institutions by June 2021. Four new Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) joined the Aspect Network as associate members, and conversations are underway with several more institutions and potential partner organisations.

## Programme Learnings

The three pillars of the Aspect programme are: The Aspect Network, the LSE Commercialisation Service and the Zinc company builder.

The Aspect Network's activities have included the formation of four Communities of Practice (which meet to share and exchange good practice and set the direction for the programme of activities), participation in 16 collaborative projects, six institutional initiatives, and engagement and dissemination activities. The collaborative projects ([Chapter 2](#)) span a range of activities that draw together knowledge and resources from across all partner institutions to develop good practice, resources, and expertise that can be shared with the wider community. The projects are all still ongoing, but some early insights are emerging:

- 1) Covid-19 has brought many challenges but **forcing projects to pivot online has made the programme more inclusive**. Not only are the sessions now more family friendly and flexible but the projects no longer have the geographic barrier associated with in-person participation and collaboration.
- 2) **The value of research commercialisation needs to be clearly communicated to academics**. A key barrier identified at the start of the Aspect programme was how best to engage with academics. There is still a long way to go but we have learned that aligning commercialisation with academics' own values and goals is critical, in particular framing the process in terms of research impact (mobilising research in innovative ways), research sustainability (revenue generation to ensure the project can continue not necessarily to turn a profit) and/or the associated benefits to the academics, such as access to new datasets and/or opening up new research opportunities through collaborations with businesses of all types.



- 3) **Social sciences research commercialisation requires bespoke support but can build on existing university infrastructure.** Social sciences research commercialisation comes with its own unique set of challenges, but the projects have seen success when they adapt existing infrastructure such as the lean business model canvas and/or accelerator frameworks to make them bespoke for social sciences.
- 4) **There is high demand for social sciences specific projects.** Several of Aspect's collaborative projects have been overwhelmed by the strong positive reaction from academics and other university stakeholders. This shows there is an appetite for social sciences research commercialisation and the associated ecosystem, but enabling structures need to be put in place to give researchers access to bespoke social sciences opportunities.
- 5) **Pooling resources and experience is one of the key benefits of Aspect.** The main take home message from the different projects seems to be that the opportunity to work collaboratively with other institutions and learn from the collective pool of knowledge has been hugely valuable.

The LSE Commercialisation team and Zinc are testing different models of social sciences innovation and commercialisation. The LSE team has seen keen interest from social sciences academics, and now supports a pool of nearly 60 commercialisation projects. Meanwhile, the Zinc team has run three mission-led cohorts, receiving over 2,000 applications and forming 35 ventures. Early learnings from both programmes are highlighting where there are differences in social sciences innovations, how this affects the way we support researchers to develop their innovations, and how we support ventures, businesses, public and third sector organisations to adopt and embed social sciences research outputs. Some early learnings are that social sciences commercialisation needs to be inventive with the business models it adopts and be willing to explore new markets, all of which might be unfamiliar to technology transfer offices that specialise in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) commercialisation.

## Addressing Challenges to Social Sciences Commercialisation

At a high level, Aspect has found that 'the CHASS challenges are real'.<sup>1</sup> Yet not all challenges are created equal; while members continue to find academic engagement a challenge, industry awareness of the benefits of social sciences is less of a barrier than initially thought. Using the right language – and the right mechanisms for engagement – is key. Although learnings will continue to emerge over the remainder of the funded programme, below are some early conclusions about CHASS challenges.

- 1) CHASS noted the problem of academics not having the interest or inclination or ability to engage with business. The Aspect programme is seeing good results so far – having the right mechanisms, sufficient funding, and using the right language has led to unexpectedly high interest from academics in the Aspect projects. Going forward, publicising clear examples of Social Sciences (SS) being used in businesses and roles being taken up by social scientists in businesses, and continuing to provide these real opportunities (and funding) for academics to 'test the waters', will help SS academics to better understand the transferability of their knowledge and skills.
- 2) CHASS found that in 2005, industry was unaware of the value, possibilities and limitations of social sciences research, with less spend on social sciences research and development (R&D). The good news is that the landscape appears to be changing for the better and many businesses are in fact hiring social scientists.<sup>2</sup> However, there is more to be done and HEIs will need to invest time in developing new relationships in and communicating their offerings to (potentially) different sectors than STEM. The programme is generating insights about what types of businesses or sectors see value in adopting innovations from or collaborating with social science researchers; understanding where there is demand will help HEIs and commercial teams better position their offerings.

- 3) CHASS noted that many institutions are not equipped to support social sciences commercialisation, and there is a lack of standard practice for engaging industry. Aspect aims to build that institutional capacity through its funded projects and outputs. Early learnings from projects are generating useful insights about how to adapt commercialisation processes and tools to work for social sciences. A key output from Aspect's funded projects is a set of good practice resources and guides ('toolkits') that members and other stakeholders can use to learn and embed good practice within their institutions. The majority of outputs will be disseminated from Q4 2020 through July 2021.

## Looking Ahead and Sustainability

Many of the core learnings from Aspect are still emerging and will be developed through its CoPs and the programme of funded projects, most of which are now are underway. Final reporting on the learnings from the network will commence in Q2 2021, with the production of the 'Gain Report' for Research England. Sustainability plans will be in place by the Q3 2020, and expressions of interest from potential new members continue to be received since the launch of the Associate Membership model.

Over this year, the Aspect membership have started to understand what questions need to be asked to trial solutions, develop resources, and build capacity for social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship. Over the next year, Aspect will generate answers to these questions, build and communicate good practice and, in doing so, will ensure that the sustainable Aspect Network becomes a key resource for UK and international knowledge engagement through commercialisation.

<sup>1</sup> Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) <https://www.chass.org.au/chass-publications/>

<sup>2</sup> Based on anecdotal evidence from Aspect members and trends reported in the media, including: <https://as.cornell.edu/news/tech-companies-favor-cu-social-science-grads> [https://money.cnn.com/2009/02/25/technology/tech\\_anthropologists.fortune/](https://money.cnn.com/2009/02/25/technology/tech_anthropologists.fortune/) <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/social-scientists-find-story-in-data-to-attract-more-customers/>

# Introduction

## 1.1 About This Report

The Aspect Programme has produced this annual Learning Report to provide a summary of the learnings generated by the network for its members and the broader public.

This second annual report (August 2019 – July 2020) presents a summary of the network activities to date, followed by early learnings from two pilot programmes (Zinc and the LSE TTO), the programme of collaborative funded projects, and other network activity. Learnings include good practice and insights about social sciences innovation, as well as process learnings about the management and operations of the network.

## 1.2 About Aspect

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research. While the commercialisation pipeline for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) research is well established, research commercialisation within the social sciences is less well understood. Aspect's overarching purposes are to identify and disseminate best practice in social sciences commercialisation and to build a global network of institutions committed to the betterment of societies through social sciences research commercialisation.

Launched in 2018 with a £5m award from Research England's Connecting Capability Fund (CCF), the three main activities undertaken by Aspect are:

1. Aspect Network – Form a global network that will understand, share, and disseminate good practice of how universities are commercialising social sciences.
2. LSE Technology Transfer Office – Generate learnings through building a social sciences commercialisation office from scratch.
3. Zinc – Building capacity and systematically addressing barriers to commercialisation through a mission-oriented programme.<sup>3</sup>

Aspect has seen high interest in social sciences research commercialisation both among academics who are entering the commercialisation pipeline and from businesses who have learned about the value that social sciences research can bring to their companies. Aspect plans to continue beyond its initial three-year CCF funding, which runs through to June 30th, 2021. Network membership is open to HEIs, research institutes, business, public sector, investors, funders and other organisations who share the Aspect mission and vision. Information about membership is available on the Aspect website.<sup>4</sup> The figure in [Appendix 8.1](#) shows the structure of the Aspect Network.



<sup>3</sup> From <https://www.zinc.vc/>. "Zinc builds new companies that solve the developed world's toughest social issues"

<sup>4</sup> <https://aspect.ac.uk/about/members/>



## 1.3 Overview of 2019-2020 Activity

The three pillars of the Aspect programme are: The Aspect Network, the LSE Commercialisation Service and the Zinc company builder.

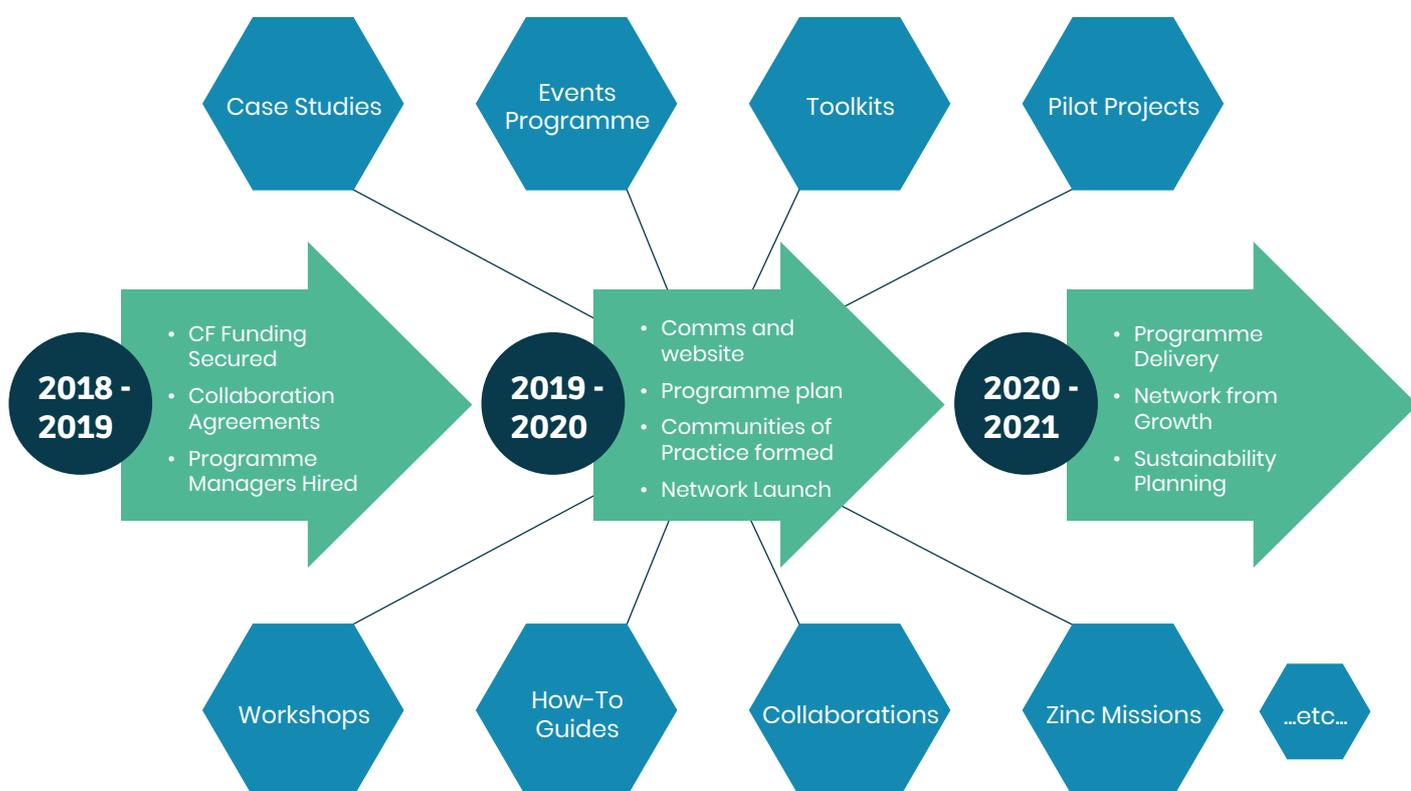
1. In September 2019, the Aspect consortium launched a programme of funded activity, including collaborative projects, member-led projects, case study development, and an annual event series. This programme, along with the activities of its Communities of Practice (CoPs), form the core engine of the Network, generating resources and insights on social sciences innovation, disseminating good practice, and providing a platform for industry, academia, and practitioners to engage with one another.
2. In addition to providing ongoing support for a growing pool of social scientists within their innovation pipeline, the LSE team implemented a new IP policy, rolled out tools and processes to support the commercialisation process, led a series of seminars to acquaint academics and staff with commercialisation concepts and skills, and established the in-house commercialisation office team, including the Head of Innovation and Innovation Project Management.
3. Zinc supported two cohorts during the year, with the final group (Mission 3) still active.

Underpinning the programme and network development, in particular, has been the establishment of structures and processes to enable collaboration and delivery of Aspect's aims and objectives. This included the design and rollout of the Aspect Communication Plan (May 2019), Digital Media Plan and website (November 2019), the Network Membership Model (September 2019), and a process for funding project proposals from Aspect members (September 2019). The Aspect marketing manager joined the programme in March 2020, providing the focus for the network members coordinated and strategic dissemination of programme learnings. The impact of Covid-19 since March 2020 has impacted on Aspect as much as anywhere else in the knowledge exchange (KE) community, with a successful and rapid 'pivot' across the entire programme to virtual and online delivery and communication.

**Figure 1** provides an overview of Aspect's focus year-on-year, and the some of the initiatives through which Aspect has been generating learnings in Years two and three. (A summary of activities to date is listed in [Appendix 8.2](#).) **Table 1** provides a list of the projects and activities that make up the Aspect programme, mapped to the 'type' and related Community of Practice area. Although many Aspect projects are still underway or have been delayed due to Covid-19, early learnings

are emerging. Detailed learning from the individual components are presented in **Chapters 2-5**; cross-project learnings and operational insights from the programme are reported in **Chapters 6-7**. Aspect is an ideal opportunity to address some of the challenges of social sciences commercialisation, and where relevant, project learnings are aligned to themes from the CHASS challenges.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1:** Diagram showing the focus of Aspect each year and planned outputs from Year 2 onwards.



<sup>5</sup> A 2005 report by Australia's Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) identified six interconnected challenges for the commercialisation process in these disciplines: (i) the value of social sciences research is not understood by industry; (ii) there is a lack of standard practices for working with industry; (iii) there is a lack of 'business skills' among social sciences researchers; (iv) institutions are not equipped to accommodate social sciences research commercialisation; (v) incentives to undertake commercial work are lacking; (vi) industry is unaware of the possibilities and limitations of social sciences research, and industrial R&D spend on social sciences is minimal compared to industrial R&D spend on science. <https://www.chass.org.au/chass-publications/>

**Table 1:** List of activities and projects comprising the Aspect programme (with related CoP areas and type).

Aspect Project	CoP	Knowledge Sharing	Resource Generation	Pilots/ Activities	Showcase Events	Capacity Building
<b>Core Programme</b>						
<b>1. LSE Commercialisation Service:</b> Building a social science only technology transfer function from scratch.	RC					
<b>2. Zinc:</b> Trialling a mission-led company builder as a model for SS commercialisation.	RC/ENT					
<b>Collaborative Funded Projects</b>						
<b>1. Zinc Research Fund Prize:</b> Prize for a Mission 2 business & showcase event.	AC					
<b>2. Zinc Research Fellows:</b> 2 x 12-month Research Fellowships for Zinc Mission 3.	AC					
<b>3. Research Commercialisation CoP Workshops:</b> Series of themed workshops to tackle RC barriers and develop a good practice toolkit resource for the Aspect Network.	RC					
<b>4. SUCCESS:</b> Pre-accelerator providing commercialisation support and training programme for SS researchers' venture ideas.	RC					
<b>5. Comms CoP Marketing Toolkit:</b> Development of good practice cases for SS commercialisation comms.	Comms					
<b>6. ABaCuSS:</b> Testing intrapreneurship model.	BE					
<b>7. Entrepreneurship Podcast &amp; Challenge Series Events:</b> Creating on- and off-line conversations exploring SS innovation and skills to build socially impactful businesses.	ENT					
<b>7. Entrepreneurship Podcast &amp; Challenge Series Events:</b> Creating on- and off-line conversations exploring SS innovation and skills to build socially impactful businesses.	ENT					
<b>8. Entrepreneurship CoP Workshop Series:</b> Themed workshops to develop entrepreneurship good practice.	ENT					
<b>9. Student Accelerator Programme:</b> Following an LSE only Pilot in 2019-2020, this programme will extend to all Aspect members.	ENT					
<b>10. Methods for Change:</b> Collation and dissemination of SS methodologies that are useful to industry.	BE					
<b>11. Ecosystem Audit:</b> Mapping to develop understanding of ENT. resources and ecosystem at partner institutions.	ENT					
<b>12. BD Deep Dive Projects:</b> Funding to enable interactions between businesses and academics that will prime the RC pipeline as well as challenge led workshops and sector specific deep dives.	BE					
<b>13. Carer Platform:</b> Development of a platform to analyse carer assessment data and commercialise the output into a sustainable offering.	BE					
<b>14. SUCCESS Run 2:</b> Building on the learnings from SUCCESS Run 1.	RC					

Continued on next page...

Aspect Project	CoP	Knowledge Sharing	Resource Generation	Pilots/ Activities	Showcase Events	Capacity Building
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### Collaborative Funded Projects... (continued)

<b>15. EdTech Games Hub:</b> Funding to develop an EdTech games hub and test boardgames as a route to market for SS research.	RC					
<b>16. Internationalisation:</b> Positioning Aspect partners as 'preferred' organisations to respond to commercial and business opportunities from social science research through partnership and skills sharing with HEIs in middle income countries (MICs).	RC/ENT					

### Member-Led Projects (aka Advanced Distribution Projects)

<b>1. Cardiff:</b> Capacity building within Cardiff; Creating and disseminating best practice guidelines; Launching a scheme of seed-funding for new projects.						
<b>2. Glasgow:</b> Seed funding scheme for activity that looks at pathways to commercialisation and industry engagement; network building activities.						
<b>3. LSE:</b> Funding to build its staff resources, generate leverage, and expand the LSE Generate offerings.						
<b>4. Manchester:</b> Contribution to the Aspect Ed Tech Games Hub Project; Seed funding for a project to create a digital literacy toolkit for educators (DILPS).						
<b>5. Oxford:</b> Competition for up to three Innovation Fellowships (1-year post for academics); Establishing a broader academic advisory group for innovation.						
<b>6. Sussex:</b> Capacity building within Sussex; delivery of various business development initiatives; Funding to develop training and curriculum to increase social scientists' entrepreneurial skills and awareness.						

### Other Network & Engagement Activities

1. Activity Mapping Exercise 2019						
2. Annual Event 2019						
3. Annual Event 2020						
4. Case Study Development						
5. Toolkit and Website Development						

# 2

## Collaborative Projects: Early Learnings

To stimulate ideas for a programme of funded projects, and identify common needs, Aspect members participated in 'Activity Mapping Exercise' in early 2019. The aim was to enable partners to better understand what each institution was already doing, how they could work together, and where there were gaps and opportunities. A detailed analysis was shared with members in the 2019 Learning Report, showing members' activity in each CoP area, and including examples (see [Appendix 8.3](#) for an excerpt of the opportunities identified by this analysis).

Informed by this exercise, the Aspect Steering Group has run three competitive funding calls for Aspect

members, and has funded 16 collaborative projects since September 2019 (see **Figure 2**). Selection criteria considered fit with Aspect's objectives, collaboration amongst members, value for money and overall feasibility of the proposal. Six members also received funding to trial initiatives within their own institutions, via Aspect's 'advanced distribution funding' scheme.

A description of each project, plus early learnings and next steps, are shared in the following chapter (four of the projects are still too early to report learnings at this stage). A summary of cross-programme earnings can be found at the end of the report, in [Chapter 6](#).

**Figure 2:** Collaborative projects, grouped by CoP area and 'type'.

	COMMS	RC	BE	ENT	ZINC/BROADER	
Bootcamp/ Prizes		SUCCESS	BE CoP priming pipeline	Student Accelerator	Zinc M2 prizes	
Workshops		RC CoP Workshops		ENT CoP Workshops		
Resource Regeneration	Marketing Toolkit		Methods for Change	LSE - ENT Podcast & event series	ENT ecosystem audit	Zinc research fellows
Proof of Concept		Boardgame PoC		ABaCuSS (Nuffield POC)	International Aspect	
Network/ Showcasing	Pre-distribution		Carer platform industry collab.		Annual Events	

## 2.1 Knowledge Exchange & Communications

### 2.1.1 Marketing Toolkit

Social sciences research commercialisation is not well understood by industry or academics with a lack of clarity about what each group does and how they can benefit each other. This project aims to address this deficit by developing two sets of communication frameworks, focusing on: (i) internal institutional communication with academics, and (ii) external communication with industry and partners across all sectors. Together they will provide good practice cases for the communication needs associated with social science commercialisation. To date, the team have been gathering examples of communication from members. Over the next few months, the team are planning two remote workshops (one for each set) and will then develop the outputs of those workshops into a series of good practice cases.

*Early insights:*

- **Dedicated social sciences communication examples are not common** – Very few institutions have any dedicated communication material for social sciences research commercialisation or business engagement. The project has evolved from sharing good practice into generating that such practice, and the collaborative creation of resources.

*Call to action:*

If any academics, institutions or businesses have good examples of social sciences research commercialisation communication or ideas about what format would be most useful, please send them to [Paige.Mccaleb](mailto:Paige.Mccaleb) or use the Aspect [contact page](#).

Any industry partners that are interested in attending the external focused workshop, please get in touch with [Paige.Mccaleb](mailto:Paige.Mccaleb) or use the Aspect [contact page](#).



## 2.2 Research Commercialisation

### 2.2.1 SUCCESS

Social sciences projects have not historically received the same level of support and funding for entrepreneurial activity from either funders or universities as have STEM based projects. Such support includes entrepreneurial training, ideation, mentoring, practical support, access to, and feedback from, investors and access to other experienced stakeholders. SUCCESS (Seeding University Collaboration for Commercialisation and Enterprise in Social Sciences) is a project run by the Aspect Research Commercialisation CoP<sup>6</sup> that aims to pilot an enterprise and commercialisation programme designed specifically for social scientists and their research and opportunities derived from their research.

The SUCCESS Pilot launched in early 2020, taking 14 social science researchers at different stages in their career on a journey to commercialise their research through training, mentoring and access to funding opportunities. Each institutions' technology transfer representative also participated in the journey and helped share knowledge and experience across the partner institutions. Between April and November 2020, teams are developing their business ideas and conducting market validation research to use in their pitches to investors and translational collaborators (and for capital available to support their business venture) at an awards event planned for November 2020. Overall, the project is progressing well, despite the Covid-19 challenge of converting to remote delivery at short notice; planning is underway to run a follow-on second round of SUCCESS in 2021, further adapted using the learnings generated in the pilot.

*Early insights:*

- **Pivoting to online learning has made the programme more inclusive** – The bootcamp training was originally a three-day residential course in March 2020 but it pivoted at short notice to a virtual bootcamp spread over four weeks. An unexpected benefit of this was that it made the SUCCESS bootcamp and follow-on training more family friendly, flexible and inclusive.

- **Mindset, communications and networking are the three critical skills gaps** – Each participant is different, but the team have found that three skills gaps for social sciences academics are: having an entrepreneurial mindset, communicating their innovative ideas, and networking with potential customers, partners and investors. These skills allow them to gain market intelligence and get meaningful interaction with the market.
- **A lean canvas model works well for social sciences commercialisation** – The programme was designed around the Lean Canvass Business Model,<sup>7</sup> with a focus on an agile system of idea, market, solution and pivot and iteration with close engagement with the market/sector and user. Specialist lectures were provided from Social Venture investors, companies and institutions concerned with policy.

*A call to action:*

SUCCESS is continuously building its community and would encourage interested business, investors and NGO's to contact [Chris.Fellingham](mailto:Chris.Fellingham) or use the [Aspect contact page](#) to find out how they can support this initiative.



<sup>6</sup> <https://aspect.ac.uk/about/communities-of-practice/research-commercialisation/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://leanstack.com/leancanvas>

# SUCCESS PROGRAMME

Entrepreneurial skills training and **£50,000** for Social Sciences researchers to turn bright ideas into business.

Are you a social scientist with innovative research ideas that could be developed into a business or social enterprise?

The **SUCCESS** programme is a first-of-its-kind opportunity designed to help social scientists with innovative and marketable research ideas to get the training, support and funding to transform those ideas into a business or social enterprise. The programme is open to applications from social sciences researchers across the University of Oxford and beyond. Successful applicants will benefit from:

- A half-day's Business Canvas support session to build your idea (22 February 2020)
- A 3-day training bootcamp in entrepreneurial skills led by industry experts from the iCURE programme (17-19 March 2020 in Sheffield)
- Ongoing support across the summer to develop your business idea and pitching skills
- The chance to pitch in front of investors for up to £50,000 in prize money



Email [chris.fellingham@innovation.ox.ac.uk](mailto:chris.fellingham@innovation.ox.ac.uk) to find out more

SUCCESS is part of the ASPECT network; a platform for entrepreneurship and commercialisation of the Social Sciences in partnership with LSE, University of Manchester, University of Oxford, University of Sheffield, Glasgow University, University of Sussex and Cardiff University.

**Application Deadline: January 30th 2020 | Programme launch date: February 8th 2020**

## 2.2.2 RC CoP Workshop Series

The Aspect Research Commercialisation CoP have been working collaboratively to develop good, innovative, and effective practice for the commercialisation of research for the social sciences.

To date, the team have held four workshops (in Sheffield, Oxford, Cardiff and remotely). Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the workshop series was interrupted and has been re-designed for a virtual environment. Remaining sessions will all be completed remotely. Insight from these sessions and from SUCCESS will then be developed into a set of good practice resources to support social sciences research commercialisation activities across universities and other research organisations.

*Early insights:*

- **Social sciences research commercialisation is not always best achieved through spin outs** – there are multiple ways that universities can create impact through social sciences commercialisation and spinning out is not always the answer. However, nor is the only model to create a social enterprise company. Other options, such as licensing and developing consultancy-product hybrids, or models which combine open source provision with subscription or consultancy service, for example, may be viable options for social scientists and their research outputs.
- **Social enterprises experience a unique set of commercialisation challenges** – Social enterprises are an increasingly common route to impact for social sciences research, but they come with their own set of ecosystem requirements and support issues. For example, they rely heavily on being able to communicate the value of the idea but do not rely on Intellectual Property (IP) rules to protect their innovations to the same extent as STEM, or on traditional impact metrics. Social enterprises need to be financially viable, so revenue generation and the mission of the project need to be carefully balanced. Bespoke training is required on how to make a social enterprise attractive to investors. Therefore, new frameworks need to be developed to support the opportunity for academics to understand the legal structures and options available to them.

- **Social sciences research commercialisation requires enabling structures** – Multiple ecosystem elements are required to support social science innovation. In particular, the group plan to focus on:
  - *Identifying the markets for social science focussed research*, through open discussions and interaction with clients, funding, advocacy groups and university commercialisation units;
  - *Identifying the impediments to SS research commercialisation* e.g. academic career structures; the values, identity and cultures both of individual academics and universities; the need for academics to juggle multiple demands on their time and resources; lack of skills/knowledge of both researchers and technology transfer offices traditionally focused on STEM; and university structures and priorities;
  - *Recommendations to support commercialisation activities* e.g. understanding, promoting and publicising the value of SHAPE<sup>8</sup> research, standard practices across the tertiary sector, case studies, top tips, building business skills and improving industry awareness.
- **11 brains are better than one** – Working with the now 11 partners for the development of social science projects for translation to the marketplace has provided a unique environment and background of expertise that all 11 partners have access to and are benefiting from. The range of project support available and the mechanisms for translation employed by the partners have been an invaluable resource to draw from and apply to the institutions, and within the SUCCESS programme. The CoP has enabled a deep and broad sharing of ideas and experience.

*Call to action:*

If any academics or institutions are interested in finding out more about the project, please get in touch with [Chris.Fellingham](mailto:Chris.Fellingham) or use the Aspect [contact page](#).

<sup>8</sup> Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy: <https://thisisshape.org.uk/>

## 2.3 Business Engagement

### 2.3.1 Methods for Change

Social sciences research develops methodologies that are useful beyond academia and can lead to social change. For example, participatory research with young activists has enabled scholars to elucidate the everyday experiences of young political actors, and to trace the ways in which their political practices lead to social impact in local and regional contexts.<sup>9</sup> However, there are limited strategies in place to help academics ensure their methodologies can be used in non-academic contexts. This project aims to showcase those methodologies to the wider world and demonstrate to industry, policy and the third sector the benefits that social sciences research can bring to their organisations. It also aims to clarify the relationship between methodologies and social change. For example, at what point in the research process social change is envisaged - at recruitment, during fieldwork, or within the dissemination of findings? Understanding this relationship could lead to improving the potential of methodologies to cause social change in the future. Most importantly, this project is about working with academics and non-academics to help them realise the possibilities of social sciences research and improve dialogue between the two groups.

So far, the Manchester based team have developed a project framework and conducted a preliminary scoping exercise to identify suitable research methods. Over the next six months, the team will be working one-on-one with a team of academic colleagues across a range of disciplines and institutions, developing this framework, and sharing preliminary outputs through an initial report and virtual events. Overall, the project is progressing well with almost all the team in place and good engagement from the academics. The project delivery has adapted with the onset of Covid-19, cancelling face to face meetings and moving online, forcing the team to be more creative in designing engagement strategies. The team are looking forward to engaging with greater numbers of academics to ensure good coverage across a range of disciplines and hope to take part in the ESRC festival of Social Sciences in November.



#### Early insights:

- **There is high demand for this type of project from academics** – The team have been overwhelmed by the positive reaction this project has received, particularly given how stretched everyone is under the current circumstances. This niche support, working with academics to focus on communication of their methodologies (rather than the research project as a whole), appears to be an unmet need in many institutions.
- **Social science methodologies show high potential for industry application** – While this list is expected to change over the course of the project, the initial finding is that creative methodologies employed within social sciences disciplines have a large number of accessible techniques that could be applied in a non-academic setting.
- **Communication is complex** – It is challenging to disentangle methodologies from larger bodies of work so that it is the methodology, rather than the context, that takes centre stage. The team are working with academics to develop 'neat' messages to communicate, but it is challenging as it requires a new mindset for the academics.

<sup>9</sup> Team Future, Pottinger, L. and Hall, S.M. (2017) "Have you heard that young people are RECLAIMing their future?": towards a bold, ethical and hopeful politics of Brexit and beyond', *Local Economy*, 32(3): 257-263.

- **Defining the location and scale of social change helps differentiate projects** – Almost all social sciences research is intended to enact social change of some kind. The team are finding that instead of focusing on the type of social change the methodologies are trying to catalyse, defining where the change is being levelled and at what scale (e.g. sector or group) is a useful point of difference between projects. We are interested, for example, in how research developed with local communities can be translated into national scale policy or industry recommendations, and vice versa.

**Call to action:**

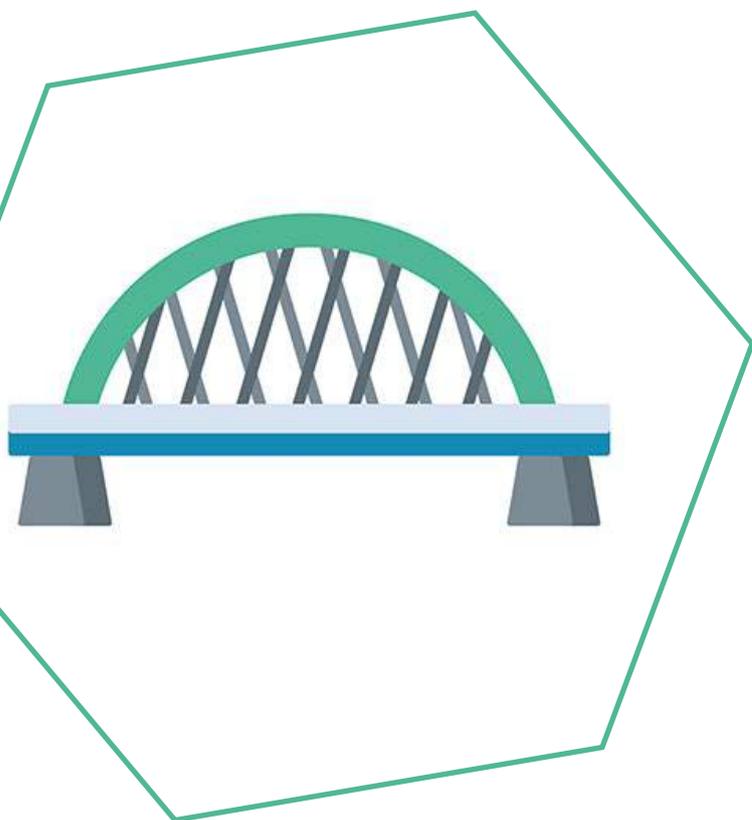
If any academics or institutions are interested in finding out more about the project, please get in touch with [Sarah Marie Hall](#) or [Laura Pottinger](#) or use the [Aspect contact page](#).



## 2.3.2 ABaCuSS

Intrapreneurship (applying entrepreneurial models and spirit within an organisation) has huge potential to drive organisational innovation and change. ABaCuSS aims to embed social sciences early career researchers and PhD students within companies for three months to test working models of intrapreneurship. Targeting of industry will be sector agnostic, although will primarily focus on sectors traditionally excluded by social scientists such as the energy sector. The programme will also help showcase the value of social sciences to industry and kickstart innovation and change in those organisations. This will develop researchers' skills and bridge the gap that ECRs face between working in academia and working in or with industry. Innovation challenges will be set by the companies with PhD students using their skillsets, as well as their research skills to solve new challenges.

ABaCuSS has had to undergo crisis innovation of its own and transfer the internships and skills training to an online platform. ABaCuSS is in a good position to launch the digital internships and the team are excited about ramping up the online content. ABaCuSS is living proof that innovation happens in the face of adversity and the team are looking forward to supporting the participants and industry partners to ensure innovative success.



### Early insights:

- **There is high demand for intrapreneurship frameworks from institutions** – There has been greater institutional buy-in for this project than originally anticipated, particularly from university leadership. This may lead to a broader rollout of this scheme with STEM learning good practice from social sciences. In particular, it is seen as a good way to showcase concrete examples of the value of social sciences to industry and the benefits it can offer e.g. data, legal, etc.
- **PhD students are keen to learn business-focused skills** – There is a strong appetite among PhD students for ABaCuSS and a chance to interact with industry, as well as to demonstrate their personal knowledge and skillsets. The intrapreneurship model offers a model to move to a more inclusive system, providing opportunities for researchers to change systems from within, and offering companies the opportunity to think innovatively about their business and business models.
- **The virtual environment is more inclusive** – The virtual environment is making things more inclusive as it removes barriers to application such as geography and non-traditional hours. This enables a greater diversity of people to come forward, particularly as people can now work from home and work in a way that suits them.
- **ABaCuSS is developing a new scheme that can support local economies** – Intrapreneurship has potential to help ECRs explore different career options but also support local economies. The team think that ABaCuSS will help drive creation of new jobs and regional R&D spend whilst also improving inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. Each internship placed within companies within Scotland will be supporting the UKRI's place-agenda, providing more resource to strengthen capacity, capability and development within the nation.

### Call to action:

If any academics or institutions are interested in finding out more about the project, please get in touch with [Paige.Mccaleb](mailto:Paige.Mccaleb) or use the Aspect [contact page](#).

## 2.4 Entrepreneurship

### 2.4.1 Ecosystem Mapping Project

Universities offer a range of entrepreneurial support services for their students. However, it is often tricky for social sciences entrepreneurs to easily find the information and support they need in 'full service' universities. This project aims to develop entrepreneurial 'roadmaps' for each Aspect institution, modelled on Oxford's existing resource<sup>10</sup>. Developing roadmaps for each institution will enable comparison of offerings between institutions and provide a chance for Aspect members to share good practice on how to support a social science focused entrepreneurial ecosystem for students. The project will capture what resources already exist and produce a matrix, to enable a review of the Aspect Network to identify opportunities to share good practice.

So far, the team have interviewed and started the mapping process with six Aspect members (LSE, Sheffield, Manchester, Cardiff, Sussex and Glasgow) and are on track to complete the project by the end of 2020, extending to some of the newly joined associate members. Inspirational case studies of social sciences entrepreneurs will also be produced to showcase existing successes from each institution.

*Early insights:*

- **Most institutions lack a specific social sciences entrepreneurship offering for their students or alumni.** Early indications are that the majority of university entrepreneurial offerings are not social sciences specific but designed to be appropriate for all students. When the analysis is complete, and we have full visibility across the offerings from all the universities, the collated data can inform discussion about whether to expand offerings focused on social sciences.
- **The majority of universities do not have a single source of information that covers all of their entrepreneurship offerings for students and alumni.** Knowledge about entrepreneurial offerings is spread throughout multiple contact points. University teams and departments seem to independently develop fantastic entrepreneurial support initiatives but lack a centralised way of communicating what is available. This means collating this information requires conversations with multiple individuals within each organisation as no single person has clarity on the full range of offerings available. This demonstrates the value of a centralised 'map' which should improve communication within institutions, as well as with social sciences students and the wider community of student entrepreneurs.

*Call to action:*

If any academics or institutions are interested in finding out more about the project or have interesting examples of entrepreneurial resources at their institution, please get in touch with [Emma Mirams](#) or use the [Aspect contact page](#).

<sup>10</sup> <https://eship.ox.ac.uk/map-eship-oxford/>

## 2.4.2 Podcast & Creative Challenge Series

This project aims to provide social science students with dedicated resources aimed at informing, inspiring and preparing them for life as an entrepreneur.

A 10-part podcast series 'Inside the Founder's Mind' is due to be released in September 2020 and includes interviews with business leaders, entrepreneurs and neuroscientists that explore in depth the entrepreneurial mindset and discusses key traits such as resilience, stamina and facing failure. The series is co-produced by student entrepreneurs.

The team will run four Creative Challenge events bringing together artists and academics whose work aligns with the Industrial Strategy challenges. The format of these events is 'in conversation with', with videos, music and audience interaction built into the live event. Originally scheduled for July and August, Covid-19 has delayed the events; however, a remote event was held in August, and plans are in place for an in-person installation in October 2020. All events will be open to the public and advertised on the Aspect website.

### *Early learnings:*

As these projects are still in development, it is too soon to report on the success and impact on social sciences entrepreneurship. Early learnings about the process are shared below.

- **Use innovative (but consistent) formats to discuss innovative topics** – The subjects being discussed in the podcast series and challenge series are 'deep' and are more powerful in an innovative format. Even so, having a common thread throughout is equally important. For example, each episode of the podcast includes a jingle, introduction, interview, and interactive activity that allows listeners to put the topic into practice.
- **Find a way to stand out** – There is a dearth of content online about entrepreneurship skills. The LSE team has chosen topics for the podcast linked to mindset and soft skills, engaged students in the process, and used a consistent and interactive format to make the series stand out from the crowd. Early feedback indicates students seem to favour detailed exploration of a topic (vs superficial), subjective, and rooted in 'science' (i.e. including statistics or data).



- **Involve student entrepreneurs from the beginning** – Students from LSE Generate<sup>11</sup> have been involved in the podcasts from the start, pitching the questions, sharing their own challenges, and even conducting the interviews. This co-development process ensures the content is impactful and helpful for students and draws out unique needs for social scientists.
- **Emphasise the quality of the interviewer** – Ensuring the student conducting the interviews is not only interested in the area, but also has the skills to do an interview has been key. In some cases, interview or media training may be helpful.
- **Covid-19 both helps and hurts engagement** – While the pandemic has increased student involvement in the podcast production, it has been harder for the challenge series. Planning and delivering something creative, adventures, and interactive is harder on Zoom, although there is an added bonus of having a wider reach by moving online.

### *Call to action:*

When the podcast series is launched (October 2020) please feel free to share the material and send feedback to [LJ Silverman](#) or use the Aspect [contact page](#). This is still a pilot project so recommendations on what issues to explore and/or how to improve future series would be very welcome. The team is also seeking recommendations for up-and-coming artists focussed on social impact, and partners to host or collaborate on the Creative Challenge events.

<sup>11</sup> <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/innovation/generate>

## 2.4.3 Aspect Student Accelerator

The first joint-University accelerator of its kind in Europe, this is a social sciences accelerator hosted by LSE to support and scale socially responsible student and alumni ventures across the entire Aspect community.

Up to 20 student/alumni teams from Aspect member institutions, all of whom are solving pressing socio-economic and environmental issues, will collaborate and develop their businesses over a six-month period. Originally conceived as taking place in a dedicated physical space, the Accelerator will be moving online. Participants will engage in a range of fortnightly training bootcamps hosted by both academics and practitioners from the Aspect Network, and complemented by tailored online resources, community outreach assignments, mentoring, workshops and a tailored speaker series. Through its bespoke programme, the Aspect Student Accelerator aims to tackle four challenges in social sciences entrepreneurship support:

- Technical Skills Gap – How to translate human-centric research into products/services?
- Business Skills Gap – How to fill a gap in business acumen amongst social scientists?
- Showcasing the value of social science research to business – How to get researchers and entrepreneurs to collaborate?
- Gender Gap – Can a social impact accelerator better attract and support female founders?

The Accelerator is being led by the LSE Generate<sup>12</sup> team, in collaboration with the Aspect Entrepreneurship CoP (ENT CoP).<sup>13</sup> Teams were selected in August, and the programme kicked off (virtually) in September 2020. The Accelerator resources as well as learnings on how to support social science enterprise will be developed and shared with Aspect members as an output from this project.



### Early learnings:

- **Sharing practice with Aspect members creates a stronger offering** – By working jointly across Aspect member universities, the Accelerator provides a unique platform for student enterprise teams to learn from and share with each other. This not only builds internal capacity, but ultimately, should produce a stronger programme that will be applicable to a broader range of universities and social sciences entrepreneurs. Being vulnerable and honest with your peers, to share both good and bad practice, has been appreciated by the ENT CoP.
- **Joint programmes require clear and more frequent communications** – The Aspect Student Accelerator brings together student entrepreneurs from 10 different universities. Each university's student enterprise team works in different ways, with different timelines and channels for sharing information with students. Identifying a clear contact point from each member, involving these stakeholders from the outset, adapting communications for different channels, recording internal planning meetings, and ensuring regular touchpoints has allowed the project team to adapt. In addition, running an informational webinar for prospective applicants has helped to reduce the quantity of email enquiries, and (hopefully) improved the quality of submissions.

<sup>12</sup> <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/innovation/generate>

<sup>13</sup> <https://aspect.ac.uk/about/communities-of-practice/entrepreneurship/>

- **Manage expectations when shifting to a remote offering** – The Covid-19 pandemic has meant the Accelerator has shifted online for the foreseeable future. The ENT CoP ran a workshop for Aspect members, to share practice in remote entrepreneurship support. While there were several useful takeaways on how to deliver similar value online, one area that may prove challenging is forming an equally strong ‘community’ with an online cohort.
- **Good practice in supporting social sciences student start-ups** – It is too early to say conclusively, but the Accelerator team expects the programme will shed light on topics such as: common business model archetypes for social sciences, team building, the need to pay attention to diversity of gender, identity and culture of participants (i.e. expectations, behaviour, etc), differences in the needs of undergraduate vs postgraduate entrepreneurs, and how to “stream” the programme to accommodate entrepreneurs at different stages.

*Call to action:*

As they build the programme, the Aspect Student Accelerator team is always looking for new mentors, business specialists, sponsors, or other partners. Contact [L.J. Silverman](#) to discuss how you can get involved or use the Aspect [contact page](#).



## 2.4.4 Zinc Research Funding Prize & Research Fellowships

Zinc received additional Aspect funding for two pilot schemes: The Research Funding Prize, and The Research Fellowships. Both schemes aim to drive engagement between social sciences academics and start-ups.

The **Research Funding Prize** was a £10k competitive award, open to Zinc’s Mission 2 businesses. To apply for the funding, ventures submitted a proposal outlining (i) how research has been embedded in their product/service, and (ii) for what the additional research funding would be used. The aim of the prize was to demonstrate the impact research funding can have in the early stages of venture building, for example, via possible ‘spin-in’ opportunities through formal collaborative partnerships.

Through this funding, one of Zinc’s ventures ‘Tandem’, whose mission is to tackle transport poverty in small towns and cities, have developed a collaborative partnership with the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen – with the majority of the funding going to these academic institutions to cover their time and input. The multi-stage research project being conducted as part of this work is producing learning for Tandem, e.g. understanding more about their customer base, and for Aspect, e.g. understanding the feasibility and value of these small-scale, early-stage collaborations. There is an additional £5K of funding which will be used to consolidate and share learning (through written reporting and/or a dissemination event).

For Mission 3, Aspect funded a **Research Fellowship programme** where a team of early career researchers (ECRs) were funded to join Zinc in-house for 12 months. Along with a public engagement funding award from the Wellcome Trust, this allowed Zinc to bring three researchers into their R&D team, full-time. Working hands-on with Zinc’s cohort of entrepreneurs, the researchers have been applying their skills in an interdisciplinary environment and building their expertise in translational research.

This programme of work provides value and learning to Aspect in two ways: first, by adding internal capacity to Zinc’s university engagement work – for example, the researchers have contributed to Aspect member institutions’ events and projects and facilitated relationships between Zinc ventures and university partners; and second, this programme of work is providing useful learning on the model of secondments and longer-term in-house roles for ECRs in ventures.

Final reports and publications from the two pilot schemes will be disseminated via open access, including events, in Q4 2020.

#### Early Learnings

- **Small pots of funding make a real difference for early stage start-ups and can catalyse relationships with universities that may lead to more formal opportunities down the line.** Despite the value (to both sides) of connecting academics with early-stage start-ups, there are a range of challenges to establishing such collaborations. In particular, start-ups rarely have the resources required to pay for academic input, or to contribute match-funding (e.g. for a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) or Innovate UK grant). There is also a visibility problem, whereby it is difficult for academics to find the right 'needle in the hay-stack' amongst the volume and fragility of early stage businesses, and it is hard for the businesses to find academics who are interested in collaboration. Once academics and businesses have established collaborations, there are a number of funding opportunities available to back them. However, there is a lack of funding on both sides (business and universities) to seed these collaborations. By providing a small amount of funding, as well as some wraparound support to facilitate 'matching' (as Zinc and Aspect have done with Tandem), ventures and universities can test and shape their potential for future large-scale collaboration.

- **Start-ups are attractive destinations to early career social scientists and can benefit from their expertise and skills.** The fellowships scheme not only provides a career development opportunity for researchers, but it also shows how social sciences can add value to early stage start-ups. Specifically Zinc startups have benefited from having in-house social science input by: (i) drawing on existing research and working with academics to prioritize areas of innovation; (ii) improving the venture's understanding of complex problems and why existing solutions do not work; (iii) applying social sciences research methods to improve the entrepreneurial processes of market validation (i.e. an experimental approach to gather insights, form hypotheses, test an idea, refine, re-test); and (iv) collaborating via academic partnerships or fellowships to co-create solutions.

#### Call to action:

Zinc's funded researchers are happy to share their experiences, and welcome invitations to contribute (e.g. at university careers events or others).

Academics looking for collaboration opportunities with Zinc ventures, or funders interested in scaling the 'proof-of-relationship' funding approach Zinc is trialling with Tandem, both can get in touch via the [Zinc website](#) or use the Aspect [contact page](#).

ECRs who want to join Zinc or its ventures on a short- or long-term basis can register interest via the [Zinc website](#).



## 2.5 Member Projects - Advanced Distribution Funding

In addition to the competitive funding calls, in September 2019 the Steering Group agreed an 'Advanced Distribution' fund as a way of 'unlocking the pipeline' of activity in support of social sciences commercialisation, business engagement, entrepreneurship and communications. The funded partners agreed that this would be in the form of a £50k distribution of funds to each Aspect partner to deliver bespoke activity addressing the range of challenges faced by the different members. The Steering Group agreed that transparency was crucial and that partners would formally account for how they used their allocation of funds against Aspect KPIs and the development of good practice.

Partners were asked to provide summaries of the activities to which this funding would contribute, with the commitment that the learnings and KPI achievements from these activities would be shared, a) across the membership (including the associate membership), b) more widely to the wider HEI community, and c) with the funders via the final year 'Gain Report'. The completion date for activities and reporting of KPIs and good practice learning is June 30th 2021.

Beginning in December 2019, funding has been distributed to all partners except Sheffield, with their agreement. The majority of activities being funded are likely to address KPI-01 – academics attending training and development events, KPI-04 – Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies – in the longer term, and KPI-07 – the amount of Leverage funding. Sussex have provided a focus on building the network – KPI-06 – new members, including international membership.

Most of the funding will be spent in 2020-21 (August 2020 through to June 2021). Learnings from these activities will contribute to the development of training and teaching materials within the individual institutions and will be shared across the partnership through case studies and good practice. Cardiff and Glasgow will use part of the allocations to support seed funding, with Oxford focusing on bringing on innovation fellows

from the research base. With the comparative (to STEM academics) lack of understanding of commercialisation and entrepreneurship a frequently heard comment among Aspect members, this is a timely and valuable contribution to communicating the potential of social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship amongst the research and academic communities.

LSE has distributed £50k across four activities, through which they: mapped out their local entrepreneurship ecosystem, using the outputs from that activity to successfully make the investment case internally at LSE for increased 'steady state' funding (£120k) for LSE Generate, their student entrepreneurship hub; increasing the Generate team's early contact time with potential and new 'entrepreneurs' (despite Covid-19); working with the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem mapping team (an ongoing Aspect funded project), turning the LSE map into a 'student navigation tool' as new students begin their personal 'start-up journeys' with Generate; and expanding the focus on the female founders to the extent that LSE Generate is the leading programme for female founders – and it has recently won the National Enterprise Educators Award for inclusive entrepreneurship). Learning outputs from these activities are being communicated through the Entrepreneurship CoP workshops, and the outputs from the Ecosystem mapping activity, including the development of a navigation tool for new entrepreneurs for specific ecosystems, and number of new case studies.

The table in [Appendix 8.4](#) summarises the activity for each Aspect member, provides outputs where they have been achieved, and lists which KPIs are likely to be contributed to through this funding. All outputs will be reported upon in the final Gain Report and in the final KPIs to Research England.

# 3

## LSE Commercialisation Service

**The establishment of a thriving research commercialisation service at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is one of three pillars of the Aspect Programme, the learnings from which are included below.**

### 3.1 Why LSE?

LSE is a globally leading UK social sciences university<sup>14</sup>, with over 11,900 students and 3,000 staff<sup>15</sup> and a mission to undertake and apply research for the betterment of society, and to act as a convenor of the social sciences globally. Building on its established academic consulting and student enterprise offerings, LSE first started to pilot a commercialisation service in 2017 with a view to exploring the potential for commercialisation to expand social sciences research impact. CCF funding has enabled LSE to accelerate the rollout of a full-service commercialisation office, while also incorporating learnings from the broader Aspect Network.

Establishing an office from scratch will generate insights on the types of commercialisation projects that are likely to come from social sciences, how these can be successfully brought to market, and the implications for designing the appropriate structures, policies, and support offering. The pilot also provides the chance to test solutions to the CHASS<sup>16</sup> challenges (see [Footnote 5](#) in Chapter 1.3).

### 3.2 Current Team Structure and Support Offerings

The commercialisation office, LSE Innovation, sits within the LSE Research and Innovation division (R&I), alongside LSE Consulting and LSE Generate (student enterprise).<sup>17</sup> The R&I is staffed by c. 50 FTE, of which five FTE are dedicated to LSE Innovation..

The commercialisation project pipeline consists of approximately 12-15 active projects at any one time, from a pool that has grown to c. 60 projects in two years, with new disclosures coming in on a weekly basis. The pipeline exceeded its original target, despite minimal proactive marketing to engage academics, highlighting what seemed to be an as yet untapped interest. A good number of projects come from the Behavioural Sciences, although there is a spread of disciplines represented. Based on the experience over the last two years, the team is increasing engagement with the academic community to bring forward more projects in specific disciplines and accelerate these through the LSE innovation system.

The commercialisation team performs a preliminary market assessment for all incoming projects to document assumptions about viability and potential markets. The approach has been tailored and adapted over the last two years, taking some learnings from traditional STEM TTO process, but modifying forms and approaches to be more suitable for social sciences innovations (i.e. considering differences in the type of IP, business model, potential applications, expectations for returns, etc.). A number of supporting policies, template agreements, and other processes, bespoke for the social sciences, have been developed.

The team structures are still evolving, further insights and learning will be shared in the Aspect Gain Report in 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Ranked 2nd in the world for Social Science and Management subjects (QS World University Rankings 2020)

<sup>15</sup> LSE at a Glance, 2007-2018 figures, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/About-LSE/LSE-at-a-glance>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.chass.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/PAP20050501TG.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> LSE Research and Innovation web site: <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/innovation>



### 3.3 What's Different About Social Science Innovations?

Several key learnings and themes are emerging:

- Many innovations are founded on data, often with a service component to the business model. To support these projects, it's important to be inventive with business models, work collaboratively with other support teams, and invest in very thorough due diligence.
- Identifying a viable end product can take more time – and often require a different path – than a traditional patent-based STEM-based project.
- A joined-up approach between service units is essential given the complexity of the due diligence processes.
- Social science innovations extend beyond the R&D product base of a company. This includes finance, business structure and human resources. These parts of the business are not as used to dealing with university research development and commercialisation as traditional STEM commercialisation and therefore the commercial teams within the business and the university need time to build their knowledge, networks and systems to work collaboratively. This is a new opportunity for commercial teams and an exciting time for the further development of the knowledge economy.
- Social scientists may have less experience of this kind of commercialisation, with fewer prior examples and role models in entrepreneurship within their department or wider institution, and often less time available due to teaching and research group structures; partnering academics with entrepreneurial students might help.
- The criteria for traditional funding routes do not always fit social sciences; LSE is trialling new solutions including via the Aspect SUCCESS programme, linking the funding to accelerator and ideation activities that will facilitate and make a difference.

The following sections discuss each of these points in more detail, outlining some of the solutions LSE is implementing.

### 3.3.1 Be inventive with business models

*Many innovations are founded on data, often with a service component to the business model.*

The LSE IP profile is predominantly non-patent based, largely copyright, know-how, data, measures, and methods. While some innovations are productised as 'widgets', many more are likely to be methodologies, algorithms, or mechanisms for analysing data (or, products or software built on the data itself). In many cases, there is potential for a service offering, alongside the core 'technology'.

One key observation is that social science innovations often lead to products or services that are not as 'standardised' as those produced by STEM innovations. Whilst a technology product like an iPhone strives to be sold to consumers across society, social science solutions may be applied to highly differentiated societal segments, served by different types of business. This reality leads to a commercialisation path that deploys consulting services alongside the core solution to fit different scenarios. The measure of commercialisation success in social sciences, therefore, is not as simple as measuring the scaling-up of product sales.

In addition, social science research is often built around data gathering and analysis of major societal trends. The end result of this may not be a tangible product rather it could be a methodology, data, databases and software for interrogation of that data; packaged together, these become the product.

The implications for this are three-fold. Firstly, the mixture of service and product offerings mean that LSE Innovation and LSE Consulting often need to take an integrated approach to supporting innovations, where in a more STEM based office the more common approach might be that a conventional licence or spin out is accompanied by a separate consulting service. The integrated team structure of the LSE R&I division enables an integrated approach.

Secondly, the prevalence of the service-based offering aligns with LSE's early thesis that one way to expand commercialisation within the social sciences would be to develop a model to scale-up academic consulting. At a lower level, consulting based on the know-how of the social science researcher may already be viable, but the format of the consulting offering needs to change to

accommodate scale and develop tangible associated assets to support a possible spin-out. The LSE team now has a model in place and continues to explore different ways to deliver this offering with individual academics or research groups.

Finally, given the evolving legislative landscape related to data rights, the social science research projects coming through the pipeline have extensive due diligence looking at contracts, terms and conditions, other agreements and methodological approach and the law. This extends beyond the commercialisation team, again reinforcing the need for a joined-up approach with the Research Contracts and LSE Consulting teams.

### 3.3.2 End products take time to evolve

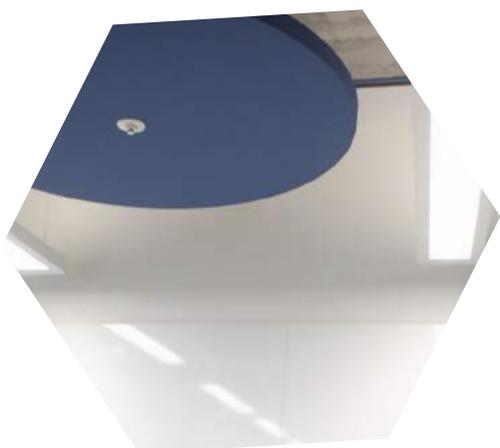
*Identifying a viable end product takes more time – and often follows a different path – than in STEM commercialisation.*

The notion that you can easily spot what is commercialisable – and what it not – is less obvious for social sciences research than for STEM, a key difference being that STEM commercialisation has a more entrenched framework and clearer funding pathways making it easier to spot likely successes. The LSE team has found that the discovery process for social science commercialisation is more convoluted – academics need more space to try out ideas, do pilot studies, go in and out of research and market testing, before they finally come to an idea of what the end product might be. At a high-level, this is no different from STEM; the nuances come from the time the process can take and implementation of these processes. In STEM commercialisation you might have a clearer product and likely buyer, with social sciences, you may need to iterate repeatedly to create a solution to a problem. Once you know what the product is, then the processes are similar, but more often than not greater invention is required as the venture is constructed.

Structurally, this has meant extended interaction and a much more integrated approach when working with the academic service units, including Consulting, Contracts, and others. This has also meant that disclosure and commercialisation to complete a preliminary market analysis to explore the potential direction for an innovation requires more intensive support than

usual for STEM projects, and extensive collaboration with the academics to understand and inform their notion of the market and customers and develop the commercialisation strategy.

The LSE team has adopted the Lean Canvas<sup>18</sup> approach and modified IP disclosure forms and has, with Aspect colleagues, established the pilot SUCCESS accelerator programme, introducing the concept of market testing early in the process (drawing on learnings from an early pilot where an LSE team took a project through the highly successful ICURE<sup>19</sup> programme).



### 3.3.3 Engaging new markets

*Commercial teams need time to build their networks within different markets, and businesses need time to become familiar with university R&D.*

Social sciences innovations can be applied in many different markets, with Aspect members noting particularly strong opportunities in finance, health, digital economy, supply chain, creative industries, energy and environment, amongst others (see [Chapters 5.2](#) and [6.2](#) for more on this analysis). Social science innovations can also often be applied to more than one market.

The LSE team noted that businesses that adopt social sciences innovations can be very different to those that engage with STEM research. In many cases, these adopters are more likely to be societal ‘change agents’ rather than commercial businesses seeking better efficiency and profits. These include, for example, public or government agencies, charities, not-for-profits and social enterprises, and think-tanks. These organisations may also be less used to working with university social science innovations and researchers. As a result, more time than is maybe typical for STEM is invested in developing new relationships and networks, but in ensuring that partners understand the way universities (and academics) work. At the same time, the university has to recognise that social sciences require different commercialisation pathways than STEM innovations and may well take extended effort. Without this care, differing expectations for timelines, deal terms, and even language can impede collaborations.

### 3.3.4 Academic engagement and the role of students

*Social scientists may have less experience of this kind of commercialisation with the heavy due diligence burden, and less time to due to teaching and research group structures; partnering academics with entrepreneurial students can help.*

The CHASS report identified two challenges to academic engagement: awareness and time.

<sup>18</sup> A one page business plan template created by Ash Maurya. It is adapted from Alex Osterwalder’s Business Model Canvas and optimized for Lean Start-ups.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.setsquared.co.uk/programme/icure-programme/>

While there was keen interest from social sciences academics at the launch of LSE service, commercialisation concepts were still quite new to them. LSE has been working collaboratively with academics to develop viable markets and products and provides training (a seminar series) to raise awareness of the opportunities for (and knowledge of) commercialisation, that they can then apply to their own sphere of research output or activity. The training required time and resource to implement, but is bearing fruit, helping to create a culture and mindset of commercial innovation. The nature of the projects in the LSE pipeline have changed over time through iteration, pivots and serious engagement with the market, facilitating and bringing forward new – and more robust – commercialisation ideas.

Despite a growing interest, many social scientists lack the time required for commercialisation activity. One reason for this may be (potentially) higher teaching loads and a different kind of workday for social scientists compared to STEM academics. Another possible factor is a difference in research group structures from those in STEM disciplines; even if the academics have large groups of students working with them, those groups are likely to include fewer PhD/Postdocs than for STEM research and greater numbers of research associates. These personnel do not necessarily fit the qualifications for much of the translational funding available in the UK, making the pathway to translate the research outputs to an innovative product much less obvious and time consuming than for STEM research.

One way LSE is tackling this issue is by taking a deliberate approach to bring together staff and students on commercialisation projects. LSE's student entrepreneur community is thriving and ranks highly in league tables – tapping into this potential could lead to new ways of building commercialisation projects. The LSE Innovation team is now working closely with LSE Generate (the student enterprise office) to explore how they can work together.

### 3.3.5 Funding gaps

*The criteria for traditional funding routes do not always fit social sciences.*

While there is funding for social sciences innovation and translation (from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and others), LSE has found that the criteria and rules within funding calls do not always map well to the nature of social science research or commercialisation. Examples of how social sciences may differ from STEM funding applicants includes:

- teaching load (the need to buy out time, and/or align structured programmes with teaching schedules);
- the size and structure of social science research groups (may lack a large pool of post docs and PhDs to free up academic time for commercialisation or research);
- the types of business models that social scientists pursue for their innovations (e.g. social ventures and hybrid models of service and product derived business);
- the types of 'products'/outputs (rarely 'widgets'; usually methods, measures, standards or services which do not have patent protection and may need different commercialisation pathways); and
- the commercial returns expected from social science projects (potentially lower, or more varied, including broader economic, social and policy returns).

Learnings from establishing LSE Innovation and from other Aspect partners informed the design and iterations of the Aspect SUCCESS accelerator ([Chapter 2.2.1](#)), a programme designed to fund and engage social scientists in the process of market validation and commercialisation. The SUCCESS application process and training programme has been developed with consideration of the specific needs and constraints of social science academics.

The LSE team is also in the process of establishing its own software incubator, taking into account the large number of data and software-based innovations in its portfolio, to provide more in-depth and collaborative support to bring to these innovations.

## 3.4 Key Messages

In addition to the points mentioned above, below are five key findings from the LSE Innovation team:

- **There are real opportunities for commercialisation from social sciences.** In the past many universities or businesses may have been unclear about these opportunities, commercialisation of social sciences is now becoming recognised as a serious and valued activity.



**You have to be as innovative and inventive in taking the opportunities to market, as [academics] are in creating those opportunities in the first place.**

**I think the SUCCESS programme has really forced institutions to look at the process and discipline and related factors in a more systematic way.**

**If I were to add one thing to the CHASS list, it would be the role of students. We are finding they may even do better at entrepreneurship at STEM... our students are incredible!**

**Given the same internal clients that we service – academics and students, and the same innovation/ entrepreneurship issues that we deal with, professional service units at LSE are coming together naturally to support our entrepreneurship agenda with a joined-up approach.**



- **It is important to be innovative in how you commercialise.** In supporting the diversity of projects through the pipeline and through the SUCCESS programme, LSE has devised a connected supporting environment for its innovation projects that is designed to be agile and lean. This approach builds on the experience and needs of the institution and the types of projects coming through, but allows for scaling, iteration and allows the team and support to be responsive.
- **It is possible to follow a disciplined and stepwise approach to social sciences commercialisation** (although it may be different to that adopted for traditional STEM derived projects). For STEM, the process of seeking funding has framed a systematic approach about how projects are managed within a university – this pressure doesn't apply as strongly, for social sciences. What is common is the need for structured approach to due diligence and risk management for the institution – a process core to any commercialisation system. The commercialisation support teams can help academics navigate these processes in a regulated and with a risk-managed approach; this will reveal insights about how to benefit the system to create future innovations.
- **The CHASS challenges are real.** The LSE pilot has demonstrated these are the right challenges, the real challenges, and they are continuing to explore ways of tackling them.
- **The benefits of a joined-up approach.** Establishing the TTO has impacted positively on cross departmental communications (research contracts, skills development, translational funding, strategic external relationships). There is a particular requirement for extensive interaction with consulting, which is not unexpected given the 'know-how' heavy nature of the pipeline.

# 4 Zinc

**As a core pillar of the Aspect programme, Zinc has been able to demonstrate and test whether a mission-led company-builder approach can address the challenges of social science commercial innovation. The following chapter provides an overview of the Zinc programme, its activities, and the learnings emerging from this project.**

## 4.1 Background

Zinc (a spinout from LSE) was created in 2017 with the aim of testing different ways to tackle society's most important problems. Using a mission-led 'company builder' model, Zinc runs a nine-month programme, split into three phases: Match, Hatch, and Accelerate. Cohorts consist of approximately 50 founders, who are pre-team, pre-idea, mid-career and who join the programme full-time. The aims of the programme are to:

- Unlock the impact of the frustrated talent that wants to solve these problems;
- Mobilise an ecosystem around missions to find problem-led solutions, uninhibited by sectoral or disciplinary boundaries;
- Build commercial products and services that consumers and businesses want to solve their own problems; and
- Create a new approach to social science commercial innovation for early stage businesses.

Zinc has launched three missions over the last three years (improving mental health; tackling the impact of automation and globalisation; improving the quality of later life). From over 2,000 applications, 150 founders were selected to participate in the programmes, and, to date, 35 new ventures have been created. Together they have attracted £16m of funding,<sup>20</sup> blending together top commercial investors and R&D grant-funders. Zinc's reach extends to an active community of ~7,000 people and 200 organisations, plus a network of 300 Visiting Fellows and 50 executive coaches who support its ventures. More information about Zinc's portfolio companies and its programme of events is available on its website.<sup>21</sup>



<sup>20</sup> This figure includes both investment from Zinc and external investment (grants plus commercial funds). Current ratio is 5:1 of external investment to Zinc investment. As the companies continue to raise investment, this ratio will continue to change over the coming 1-2 years.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.zinc.vc/about>

## 4.2 Zinc and Aspect

Through Aspect's CCF funding, as well as VC and angel investment, Zinc has been able to begin scaling-up its R&D activity and gain greater access to global networks of social sciences research and the talented entrepreneurs to be found in institutions' student and alumni networks. Engaging with Aspect's members has helped to shape Zinc's missions, and to support the growth of the programme through access to core institutional partner business engagement, and access to wider financial partnerships (e.g. facilitating collaborations between universities and Zinc start-ups). For example, in the run-up to Zinc's third mission, to improve the quality of later life, the Zinc team spent time in Glasgow University's Dumfries campus speaking with leading academic experts in ageing and end-of-life care.

Zinc's engagement with the broader Aspect community has included the Social science start-up Showcase (May 2019), where Zinc ventures visited Aspect member the University of Sheffield to raise awareness of social sciences start-ups. During the half day event, 15 companies from Zinc's Mission 2 pitched their business idea and actively encouraged feedback and collaboration from academics, investors and regional economic representatives. The Zinc team has also shared early learnings from the portfolio and programme at Aspect CoPs and Steering Group meetings, and contributed to Aspect events (for example speaking at Oxford's Social Enterprise Training Day, participating in Glasgow University's podcast series, being an industry partner for a doctoral training event led by Sheffield University).

Zinc has worked closely with Aspect partners to facilitate connections between academics and Zinc start-ups, in several cases leading to academics becoming formal advisors and/or funded collaborating partners (e.g. Glasgow University and Tandem<sup>22</sup>). Academics from Aspect member institutions have joined Zinc's network of Visiting Fellows, contributing time to the programme through talks, workshops, and guidance.

The Zinc team also received Collaborative Project Funding from Aspect to pilot two additional activities (see [Chapter 2.4.4](#)).



## 4.3 Key Lessons

Below are five key lessons emerging from the Zinc model.

### 4.3.1 The value of being mission-led

Having missions has allowed Zinc, and its ventures, to draw on a range of disciplines in working on problems and potential solutions. Zinc is interested in disciplines that can inform an understanding of how people think, feel and behave. This includes some disciplines that would traditionally fall outside of the social sciences, such as cognitive neuroscience. Zinc is experimenting with the term 'human science' to better encapsulate its interdisciplinary approach. Its mission-led approach has also enabled Zinc to attract researchers to its ventures - as founders, hires and formal collaborators, and to mobilise a community of experts (including academics) willing to help.

### 4.3.2 What it takes to build ventures from scratch

Rather than focusing on accelerating existing ventures, Zinc set out to invest in talent and build new ventures from scratch. This has required finding founders who can work with a blank sheet of paper - identifying a problem they are passionate about solving and creating a new product or service to solve it. Social science plays a key role in these early stages, directing founders towards neglected areas, translating published research to help them understand the nature and size of their chosen problem, creating robust and ethical user research activities, optimising programmes of experimentation, and building science-research ventures that generate new knowledge.

<sup>22</sup> A Zinc start-up company from the 2<sup>nd</sup> mission

### 4.3.3 Start-ups as attractive destinations for social scientists

Start-ups are a series of experiments, providing fertile ground for new research, and can be an attractive destination to social scientists. There is plenty of competition for social scientists, however. Much of the business world, particularly the major consultancies and big tech companies, have long recognised their value and potential, and hire social science PhDs en masse. This is mirrored in the growth of behavioural science teams in local and national government. For businesses, social scientists are valued for their skills, methodologies and approaches, rather than for bringing in 'an idea'. Many of the principles underlying social science methodologies and frameworks are complementary to existing approaches that businesses are familiar with (e.g. human centred design); for social scientists, it is as much about learning a new language as it is learning new skills.

### 4.3.4 Building collaborations between start-ups, universities and funders

All of Zinc's portfolio ventures have some form of relationship with an academic partner; these range from informal advisory roles, through to formal, funded, collaborative partnerships. Zinc has often played a 'broker' role for these, facilitating relationships between researchers, founders and, in some cases, funders. Many of its ventures have attracted grant funding, allowing them to formalise academic 'spin-in' partnerships. These can be particularly productive where there is an in-house researcher in the venture, as described above. There is currently a lack of grant funding available for early-stage ventures, with most grant funding schemes prioritising those who have already demonstrated product-market fit. However, Zinc has seen an appetite for new types of funding opportunities that would better support newer ventures – this is evidenced in the work Zinc has done with the Wellcome Trust's Public Engagement Team,<sup>23</sup> and highlighted again in a separate report that Zinc has recently collaboratively produced with Innovate UK.

### 4.3.5 Commercial impact vs commercialisation

In terms of the commercial impact of social science research, Zinc's approach offers a different and complementary approach to a traditional university commercialisation process. The 'inside-out' approach within universities explores the potential to commercialise the knowledge and expertise generated from existing research. By contrast, over the last three years, Zinc has started with unsolved, complex problems, and iteratively experimented towards commercial solutions, drawing researchers, creatives, engineers, marketers, domain experts and customers into a combined process of finding a commercial solution. Research is pulled into the process, and created by it, on a needs-driven basis, regardless of disciplinary boundaries. Whilst this is an exciting opportunity for academic impact, it requires universities to embrace the difference between 'commercial impact' and 'commercialisation' in supporting their staff to participate.



<sup>23</sup> <https://bigsocietycapital.com/latest/mental-health-technology-start-ups-must-embed-better-research-practices-succeed/>

# 5 Building Engagement

**One of Aspect's four main objectives is to 'showcase the commercial potential of social sciences research', by (i) Raising the profile and significance of social sciences commercialisation in industry and society, and (ii) Inspiring researchers to consider commercialisation as a pathway to impact, and to see it as relevant to them.**

In March 2020, a Marketing and Communications Manager was hired into the Aspect team to support this aim, and to implement the broader Aspect communications and dissemination plans. Engagement activities in the last year have included:

1. Implementing thematic campaigns, each led by a different Aspect member who have taken turns to showcase and discuss issues of relevance to their institutions.
2. Increasing engagement across social media, Twitter and LinkedIn. Significant increases in followership and level of engagement over the last six months have included: growing the total number of followers across both platforms from c. 100 to over 660, with engagement (including clicks, shares and comments) increasing from a total of c. 50 in March to more than 4,300 in August 2020. This engagement has resulted in a significant increase in traffic on the Aspect website, with new users increasing from 190 in March to nearly 3,400 in August, and total sessions (visits) increasing from c. 360 to almost 4,700 over the same period.
3. Commissioning a project to develop up to 100 'case studies', telling the story and showing examples of social sciences commercialisation, business engagement and entrepreneurship. The project is underway with plans to disseminate the first batch of case studies in Q4 2020.
4. Hosting the inaugural Aspect Annual event in November 2019, at the University of Manchester, around the chosen theme of 'business sustainability'. The event was open to the public and was attended by approximately 100 people, including practitioners, academics, funders, businesses, and others. Overall, participants valued the networking opportunity and the value of having actionable insights that emerged from the sessions.
5. Planning for the 2020 Annual event (now a two-month webinar series, due to Covid-19).

This chapter provides details on the learnings from these activities, and lessons about what approaches have been successful in engaging different audiences with social sciences innovation and commercialisation.



## 5.1 Thematic Campaigns

The strategy for increasing engagement with stakeholders has centred around the creation of thematic campaigns, with original insight at their core – and, within this, the creation of a broad mix of content, created and disseminated on a regular basis (resulting in ongoing, effective engagement across Aspect’s channels, notably social media – ultimately, creating more of an ecosystem of engagement).

Rather than using academic disciplines or industry sectors, ‘themes’ focuses on the applications and/or impact areas for social science research (for example, environment, economy, productivity, etc.). The rationale for using themes to showcase the potential for social sciences, is the assumption that both businesses and academics need to ‘see themselves’ in the stories that are being told, before they are likely to engage with the content.

Although this approach is still in its infancy, it is already seeing promising results. Engagement across Twitter and LinkedIn have increased significantly – both in terms of followership and engagement. In addition, traffic to the Aspect website is growing at a healthy rate, as are subscribers to the newsletter.

Aspect’s thematic campaigns are being run on a bimonthly basis, each led by a different member institution. To date, three campaigns have been executed – with LSE, Manchester (focused on Digital Futures) and Glasgow (focused on Challenges in Changing Cities). These campaigns have included an increasingly broad mix of content types, ranging from blogs to Q&As and videos to webinars.

In terms of the key learnings emerging from the content created as part of these campaigns, it is clear that there are a number of challenges facing the commercialisation of social sciences – including that social sciences are often excluded from discussions relating to innovation and R&D; that there is a general lack of understanding of commercialisation (and incentives to commercialise) within academia; and an apparent lack of institutional support in this area.

At the same time, there appear to be many opportunities – lower barriers to entry due to the intangible nature of the ‘product’; the emergence of new challenges, notably Covid-19 (which demands a new, holistic way of thinking – and social sciences can offer tangible benefit here); and numerous case studies of successful commercialisation and entrepreneurship which provide good practice examples of, and a blue print for, what is possible. In addition, it appears that the commercialisation infrastructure is growing – the Aspect programme is one key example (and, within this, initiatives such as SUCCESS and the Aspect Student Accelerator) but it is clear that there is an increasing network of organisations that are actively supporting social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship.

In summary, it seems that green shoots are emerging but, at the same time, it is also clear there is still much to do.



## 5.2 Opportunities for Social Sciences: Case Study Analysis

Case studies are a critical mechanism for sharing insights and raising the profile of social sciences commercialisation. A number of case studies will be generated and published on the Aspect website, to achieve the following aims:

- Show examples of commercialisation or other knowledge exchange projects and/or programmes;
- Inspire academics and industry to participate in social sciences commercialisation; and business engagement, and to see it as relevant to them.
- Build capacity and share learnings ('how to') for practitioners.

As part of the 2019 Learning Report, a request was sent to the Aspect members for case studies illustrating examples of good practice social sciences commercialisation (in their view). This fielded 15 existing examples of case studies (available now on the Aspect website).<sup>24</sup> Building on this original activity, the Steering Group commissioned a project to author up to 100 new case studies from Aspect members. As a first step, Aspect members identified a longlist of approximately 40 additional potential case study projects from their institutions.

Although the case study development is still underway, a brief analysis and rough categorisation of the longlist provides insights into what academic disciplines are engaging with the university KEC teams, what market sectors/themes are showing potential interest in utilising social science research, and what routes to market are most common (see **Table 2**).

This is a limited dataset so care should be taken in extrapolating the results. However, preliminary insights from this analysis include:

- **Academic Discipline.** There is a spread of academic disciplines represented with hotspots in Geography and the Business/or Management Schools. Also, two were interdisciplinary and quite a few are still unknown.

- **CoP.** The original request from 2019 fielded more examples of business engagement projects than commercialisation projects. Most of the Aspect members acknowledged that business engagement in the social sciences has historically tended to be more developed than commercialisation, hence this spread. The longlist for case study development will address this gap, including 22 examples of commercialisation activities.
- **Commercialisation Pathway.** The commercialisation projects include a high number of consultancies as a route to market (compared to what one might expect for STEM); this aligns to learnings from the LSE Commercialisation Service project (see [Chapter 3](#)), which has found many social sciences innovations come to market through a mixture of product and service (consultancy). Business engagement mainly seems to be via research collaborations.
- **Sector.** The 2019 analysis showed that case studies tended to be industry-neutral, addressing general business processes or producing 'toolkits'. In the 2020 longlist (which has more commercialisation projects) there are quite a few projects targeting NGOs/charities as the end users. Other big industry sectors are healthcare, education and general business processes.
- **Theme.** There is a fairly even spread across the four major themes but with most falling into 'The Individual' and in particular education/physical health. In 2019, the examples focussed on four thematic areas: improving employee welfare, adapting AI or digital technologies, adapting to globalisation, or addressing environmental or energy challenges.

A more detailed description and list of the case studies can be provided to Aspect members on request. The final case studies will be disseminated on the Aspect website starting in Q4 2020.

<sup>24</sup> <https://aspect.ac.uk/case-studies/>

**Table 2:** Initial analysis of the numbers of types of case studies submitted by Aspect members (2020).

Count	Theme	Sub-Theme	Count	Academic Discipline
4	Economy	Infrastructure	7	Business School
4		Technology	7	Geography and the Environment
2		Finance	2	Law
3	Natural Environment	Sustainability	3	Education
1		Monitoring	3	International Development
2	Social Cohesion	Social policy	3	Economics
4		Governance	1	Statistics
2		Sociology	1	Architecture
2		Law	1	Sociology
4	The Individual	Physical health	1	Psychology
5		Education	8	Mixed/unknown
2		Mental health		
2		Skills		
Count	Industry/Sector		Count	Route to Market
7	General business processes (including digital marketing, training, HR, finance)		7	<b>Business Engagement</b>
3	Law		7	Research Collaboration
3	Government		<b>23</b>	<b>Research Commercialisation</b>
4	Transport/logistics/utilities		2	Social Enterprise
6	NGOs/charities		6	Spinout
5	Healthcare		8	Consultancy
6	Education		5	Licence
3	Entertainment/retail		1	Franchise
			1	Workshops/training
			<b>7</b>	<b>Entrepreneurship</b>
			7	Start up

**Aspect themes:**

The Aspect members have identified 4 thematic areas where social sciences are showing strong potential for application in real world contexts.

**Economy**

This section comprises Aspect resources relating to the topics of finance and the creation of physical assets, including areas such as manufacturing, technology, data and infrastructure.

**Natural environment**

This section comprises Aspect resources relating to how the natural environment supports human activity and how people interact with it, including areas such as conservation and sustainability.

**Social cohesion**

This section comprises Aspect resources relating to how people engage and interact with each other, and the structures and norms that influence these relationships – including areas such as law, governance, social policy and sociology.

**The individual**

This section comprises Aspect resources relating to how people interact with the world around them – at work, in education and in a social context – including areas such as physical and mental health, education and skills.

## 5.3 Aspect Annual Event 2019

The aim of Aspect's first open event was to establish the Network as a convener of good practice, inspiring collaboration, commercialisation and impact through showcasing what works. The timing of the event meant that it was too early to share insights from the Aspect programme, instead the decision was made to focus on a thematic area (business sustainability and profits from purpose), providing a platform to deep dive into a theme that holds relevance for both business and academia.

Invited speakers highlighted opportunities for social sciences to be used in the private sector, and what social scientists can gain from collaborating with industry, with breakout sessions on topical issues. The event sought to cater for the core Aspect members, other HEIs, academics, business partners, funders and policy makers. (See [Appendix 8.5](#) for a copy of the agenda.)

Below are some of the takeaways from the attendee feedback survey and from Aspect members:

- **Social enterprise vs social sciences.** Many of the business speakers were able to talk about social impact, social enterprise and sustainability, but in fact few had concrete examples of how they were applying social sciences. This could be attributed to the (known) lack of awareness amongst industry about what social sciences is, or it may be due to the misconception that social enterprise and social sciences are one and the same. This reinforces a repeating lesson seen by Aspect members, about how to communicate about and 'define' social sciences. The Marketing Toolkit project seeks to address some of these points (see [Chapter 2.1.1](#)).
- **Different events for different audiences.** Despite the desire to bring together many different audiences -- and the plan to use a theme to attract academics and businesses -- most of the attendees were practitioners from universities (i.e. teams that support commercialisation, business engagement, knowledge exchange, impact etc.) The Operations Group acknowledged that different events (and different formats of events) are likely needed to engage these different audiences, and that businesses and academics are more likely to join events locally. The concept of themed events or sector specific events was still viewed as a

worthwhile approach for the future. Hosting smaller, themed events at member institutions, will also help members to build their own networks and contacts regionally, which could have more longer-term value.

- **More examples.** Sessions showing examples of commercialisation, initiatives and/or good practice were well received by the attendees. Many attendees suggested more of this content be included in future events and were keen to know more about the learnings coming from the Aspect programme. The programme was too early at that stage to share learnings from Aspect, but the intention is to do more of this in future events.
- **Opportunities to collaborate.** Attendees also valued the opportunities to network with their peers and suggested that more (or possibly more structured) opportunities to network and discuss potential collaborations, would be welcome at future events. This highlights the desire and need for a network that enables practitioners working with the social sciences, to connect and convene.

A recap of the event and the insights shared in the sessions is available on the Aspect website.<sup>25</sup>



<sup>25</sup> <https://aspect.ac.uk/resources/aspect-event-agenda-and-slides/>

## 5.4 Aspect Annual Event 2020

Planning for the 2020 event has sought to incorporate the learnings from 2019, and input from Aspect's governing bodies (Advisory Board, Steering Group, Operations Group) (see Table 3).

A key learning has been to recognise the need to host different types of events for different audiences. While this has an impact on budget and planning time, members agreed that hosting a main event, accompanied by a 'festival' of smaller events would best achieve Aspect's engagement aims. The main event would be targeted at sharing good practice with support teams at HEIs, while the 'festival' was envisioned as a programme of business focused events, with each institution to host a business targeted event using a framework (e.g. roundtable, workshop, conference) and theme that is most relevant to their academics and industry contacts.

As a result of Covid-19, however, the Aspect team was forced to rethink the approach to this year's Annual Event. Although a challenge, it also presented an opportunity to run a broader programme of activity. Rather than an in-person one day event. Instead, this year's event became a two-month schedule of webinars (across September and October), generating engagement over a longer period of time (helping to raise Aspect's profile in a more significant way as a result).

The webinar format has allowed the Aspect team to deploy the festival concept in a different way. It will enable the team to test engagement with difference audiences (academics/researchers, KE and commercialisation professionals, and industry) – seeing what topics and messaging gets traction – while also showcasing the breath of learnings from the Aspect programme.

**Table 3:** Summary of learnings and guidance used in planning the Aspect Annual Event 2020.

Event Planning Considerations: What have we learned and how can this be applied?	
Topics	Audience Engagement
<p><b>Programme learnings</b> – Include outputs from Aspect funded projects, LSE and Zinc.</p>	<p><b>Sector Focus</b> – To achieve high level dialogue with business, events would need to be sector focussed. The event could focus on bringing HEIs and business together around themes and investigate how to best scale up SS commercialisation and its outputs for/with businesses.</p> <p><b>Practitioner Benefits</b> – HEI support staff are a primary beneficiary and user of the learnings from Aspect and can benefit from membership. The event could be aimed at those wanting to join or make use of the network in the future and share/show the value that Aspect has already created.</p>
<p><b>Focus on benefits</b> – businesses benefiting from social sciences (SS) research and academics whose research has had impact and benefited society through commercialisation.</p>	
<p><b>Funding</b> – Potentially explore what investment for social sciences (SS) looks like (of interest to businesses).</p>	
<p><b>Collaboration</b> – Provide time to network and/or a platform to discuss potential collaborations.</p>	
<p><b>Examples</b> – Include practical or explicit examples of social sciences research commercialisation.</p>	
Potential Options	
<p>One large in-person event focussed on engaging academics and businesses in a sector.</p>	
<p>One large in-person event focussed on practitioners, with series of smaller thematic events to engage industry and academics locally at member institutions.</p>	

The overarching theme of the event series is: Building prosperity and wellbeing through social science innovation, which reflects the core message of Aspect. Within this, the strategy was to create two 'tracks' of sessions – thematic and operational/training sessions, with the thematic sessions reflecting one or more of the four core Aspect themes of Economy; The individual; Social cohesion; and Natural environment.

Each session is to be led by one member, collaborating with others as appropriate, with members on average leading one thematic and one operational/training session within the series. The series is comprised of ten thematic and nine operational/training sessions, plus two 'plenary' style sessions (one at the start and another at the end of the series, which take more of an overarching, strategic focus). See [Appendix 8.6](#) for the session schedule.

It is anticipated that the sessions will provide the following types of insights for the audience, in relation to social science commercialisation:

- Insights on specific sectors/themes – showing examples of how social sciences can address challenges or be applied in a specific industry context
- Real world case studies of how institutions are commercialising social sciences and of different areas of research impact
- The views of different stakeholders across the commercialisation ecosystem
- 'How to', practical sessions focused on different operational challenges within social science commercialisation and entrepreneurship

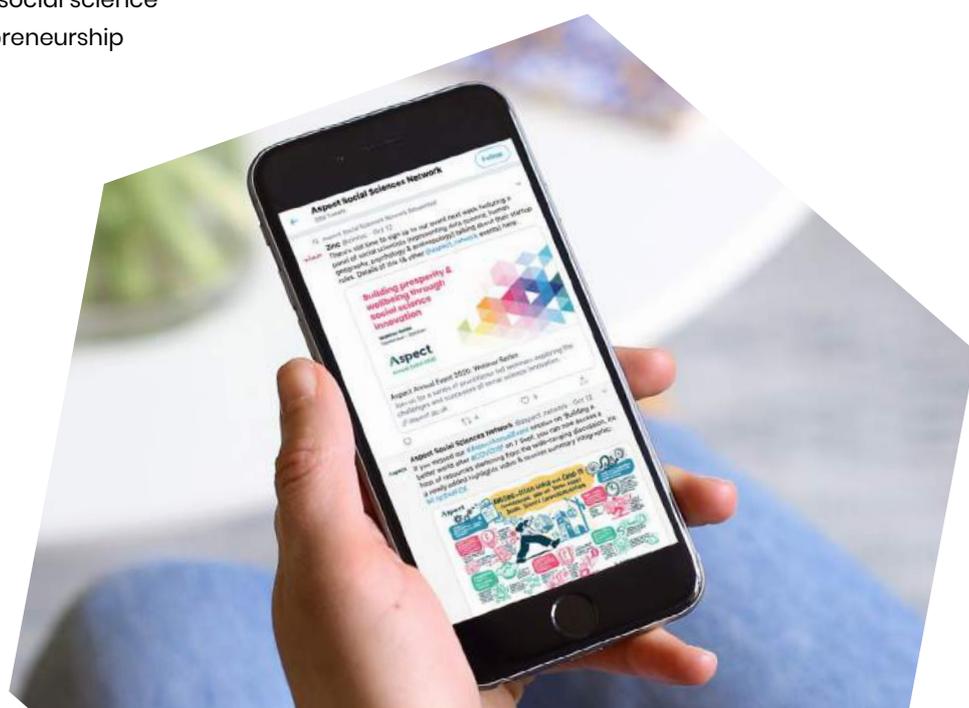
## 5.5 Plans for 2021

Engagement and communications plans for 2021 will be informed by this year's event, and it will be interesting to see what impact can result from a series of member-led events. The expectation is that the series will shed light on how to engage different audiences, who is interested, and what topics are popular. In addition to overall satisfaction and reach, the feedback surveys from the event will capture insights about how and/if the series has changed perceptions or built capacity (i.e. why they attended, whether it was relevant, and what they will do next or how they might apply the information.) Outputs from each of the sessions will be published on the Aspect website after each webinar.

The case studies project will continue, with outputs being published on a rolling basis. The newsletter and thematic campaigns will continue to the end of May 2021, with an in-person event planned closer to the summer. The agenda will be based on the engagement learnings from the 2020 events and will be guided by practice learnings coming from the funded projects.

Aspect membership remains open to new institutions, with a KPI target of 30 additional members from UK and/or international institutions by June 2021. Four new members joined the programme during 2019-20, with active conversations on-going with a number of other HEIs.

Finally, a website redesign is currently underway, to restructure the content and resources coming from the Aspect Network into a more accessible 'toolkit' format.



# 6

## Conclusions: Addressing Challenges to Social Sciences Commercialisation

As mentioned previously in this report, one of the aims of Aspect and Zinc is to uncover solutions and address barriers to social sciences commercialisation. At a high level, the Aspect project has found that ‘the CHASS challenges are real’. Yet not all challenges are created equal; while members continue to find academic engagement a challenge, industry awareness of the benefits of social sciences is actually less of a barrier than initially thought. Using the right language – and the right mechanisms for engagement – is key.

Although learnings are expected to continue to emerge over the remainder of the funded programme, below are some early conclusions about the six CHASS challenges.<sup>26</sup> The original challenges have been clustered into three sub-groups, where the findings from Aspect have overlapped: Academic Engagement, Industry Engagement, and Institutional Capacity and Skills (see **Table 4**).

**Table 4:** Original CHASS challenges, clustered by theme

Theme	CHASS Challenges
Academic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a lack of ‘business skills’ among social sciences researchers;</li><li>• Incentives to undertake commercial work are lacking.</li></ul>
Industry Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The value of social sciences research is not understood by industry;</li><li>• Industry is unaware of the possibilities and limitations of social sciences research, and industrial R&amp;D spend on social sciences is minimal compared to industrial R&amp;D spend on science.</li></ul>
Institutional Capacity and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is a lack of standard practices for working with industry;</li><li>• Institutions are not equipped to accommodate social sciences research commercialisation.</li></ul>

<sup>26</sup> A 2005 report by Australia’s Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (CHASS) identified six interconnected challenges for the commercialisation process in these disciplines. <https://www.chass.org.au/chass-publications/>

## 6.1 Academic Engagement: Lack of Skills & Incentives

*CHASS noted the problem of academics not having the interest, inclination or ability to engage with business. The Aspect programme is seeing good results so far – having the right mechanisms, sufficient funding, and using the right language are keys. Publicising clear examples of social science being used in businesses (and roles being taken up by social scientists in businesses), and providing real opportunities (and funding) for academics to ‘test the waters’ working with/in industry or on commercialisation projects, will help them to better understand the transferability of their knowledge and skills.*

The LSE team has not found that there is any lack of interest from social sciences researchers. However, they have found that it can take time, and multiple iterations of an idea, to get to a viable commercialisation opportunity. Seminars, one-to-one support, structured programmes with funding (like SUCCESS, ICURe, and others), and seed funding has helped build the skills and interest amongst the academic community at LSE.

Zinc has also found that social scientists do not tend to lack ‘business skills’ but instead that engagement with business is often hindered by a lack of familiarity with the business world’s language and context. Founders of Zinc ventures work alongside academic researchers (through having social scientists as founders on the programme, through its in-house research team,

through its network of visiting fellows, or through Zinc ventures’ university collaborations) which creates exposure and builds skills of both the business founders and social scientists. Zinc has found that much of the value in social science commercial innovation comes through iteratively applying social science knowledge, skills and expertise (e.g. methodological approach), rather than about translating a single ‘idea’. Zinc is providing a useful ‘feedback loop’ in terms of its networking with universities and outreach work, which is raising awareness of the value of social sciences commercialisation and the opportunities it presents for academics and businesses alike.

Aspect is also running four funded projects aimed at attracting and engaging social sciences academics in the commercialisation process: SUCCESS, ABaCuSS, The EdTech Games Hub, Zinc Research Fellowships). These projects have sought to provide a clear offering, with real and obvious benefit and value to researchers. ABaCuSS, for example, offers the opportunity to develop business skills, while SUCCESS offers academics both investment and professional development via training. Zinc’s two funded projects – Research Fellowships and Research Fund Prize – are also testing models for incentivising academics to collaborate with start-ups (see [Chapter 2.4.4](#)). All of these programmes provide the academics with new sources of funding, and new ways of generating impact and broadening the scope of their research. And all commercialisation and entrepreneurship activity under the Aspect banner takes into consideration social scientists’ motivations and constraints, understanding the possibility that these may be different to those of STEM academics.

The concept of how commercial and KE teams within HEIs can better communicate their offerings and value to academics (and external partners) is being explored further in Aspect’s ‘Marketing Toolkit’ project, while a second run of the SUCCESS programme is being planned and will further explore means by which social sciences academics can be better engaged. Aspect’s ‘Case Study Development’ project will also provide examples of SS commercialisation, to showcase opportunities and peak interest amongst both academics and industry.





## 6.2 Industry Engagement: Increasing R&D Spend & Communicating Value

*CHASS found that in 2005, industry was unaware of the value, possibilities and limitations of social sciences research, with less spend on social sciences R&D. The good news is that the landscape appears to be changing for the better; however, there is more to be done and HEIs will need to invest time in developing new relationships in and communicating their offerings to (potentially) different sectors than STEM.*

Aspect members note that their SS business engagement support offerings tend to be more developed than those for commercialisation. There is strong history of academic consultancy in some institutions, while others are utilising funding from Impact Acceleration Accounts (IAA)<sup>27</sup> and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)<sup>28</sup> to stimulate collaborations between social scientists and industry. Even so, SS engagement with business remains lower than perhaps for STEM disciplines, and there remain opportunities to better understand and improve the way HEIs support academics and businesses in forming productive collaborations and partnerships.

The LSE team, for example, has found that often they need to invest time in building relationships with different types of companies (or end users within those companies) than those that might be interested in or used to adopting STEM innovations (i.e. charities, public health organisations, data or IT departments, etc).

Zinc's experience, on the other hand, indicates that, for a large number of companies, businesses do understand the relevance and value of social science research,

although they may not use the specific term 'social science'. Businesses undertake extensive social sciences research (e.g. big tech, management consultancies, health corporates), which may not always be recognised by universities. Zinc's recent award to deliver the UKRI healthy aging catalyst (which will support up to 60 teams, many of which will be social sciences based) is a further sign that UKRI is recognising the role the social sciences have to play in this space.

Other Aspect projects are in the early stages of understanding how to best engage with industry. Early examples include learnings about (i) how to approach market validation (SUCCESS), (ii) the iterative nature commercial product development (LSE Commercialisation Service), and (iii) how to stimulate collaborations between social scientists and start-ups (Zinc) (see previous chapters for more detail on each project's activity).

The programme is also generating insights about what types of businesses or sectors are seeing value in adopting innovations from or collaborating with social science researchers (i.e. via Aspect's funded projects such as the 'Business Engagement Deep Dive', the 'Case Study Development', and 'Methods for Change'). The figure in [Appendix 8.7](#) lists different sectors and business themes that show high potential for utilising social sciences research. Understanding where there is demand will help HEIs and commercial teams better position their offerings.

<sup>27</sup> <https://esrc.ukri.org/collaboration/collaboration-oportunities/impact-acceleration-accounts/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/knowledge-transfer-partnerships/>

## 6.3 Building Institutional Capacity & Good Practice

*CHASS noted that many institutions are not equipped to support social sciences commercialisation, and there is a lack of standard practice for engaging industry. Aspect aims to build that institutional capacity through its programme. A key output from Aspect's funded projects is a set of good practice resources and guides ('toolkits') that members and other stakeholders can use to learn and embed good practice within their institutions. The majority of outputs will be disseminated from Q4 2020 through July 2021.*

Early learnings from the programme relate to processes and ways of working. For example, both SUCCESS and the Aspect Student Accelerator have modified their acceptance criteria (compared to the ICURE and LSE Generate pilots on which they were based). SUCCESS allows for a broader definition of impact and enables greater flexibility around the formation of project teams as they come into the programme. To work as a joint offering for Aspect members, the Student Accelerator has expanded its definition of social sciences, allowed earlier stage ideas, and has changed its communications strategy. The early learnings from the programme include operational insights about ways of working, and a better understanding of what social sciences projects look like.

For Zinc, there are two ongoing challenges related to the lack of standard practice for working with businesses. The first is visibility, that is, start-ups finding the right academic to work with and vice versa. The second is funding – making available small pots of money to allow early-stage ventures to test new relationships with academic partners. Zinc has addressed these challenges, to an extent, by playing an 'intermediary' role between academics and ventures, but there is room for more initiatives and funding to address this.

For LSE, establishing a solely social science focused commercialisation office has been a particular challenge, both because of the nature of the research pipeline and because there had never been a commercialisation office at the school. It was established using good practice commercialisation principles, which have been modified for the social sciences by, amongst other things, (i) creating more interaction between professional services units in the pathway from research contracts to consulting to commercialisation, and (ii)

modifying templates and processes to address the need for more (or different) types of due diligence for data-driven innovations.

As other Aspect members with established TTOs engage with Aspect, they are building their pipeline of social sciences innovations. Understanding what is different or unique compared to STEM commercialisation will help HEIs can tailor their practices to better support social sciences projects. Zinc's experience, for example, would also suggest that the traditional IP-based approach to commercialisation may not be a good fit for the social sciences, and not a good fit for working with early-stage start-ups (whose products are rapidly evolving). Given the nature of projects like Zinc, SUCCESS, and the Aspect Student Accelerator, a useful exercise going forward will be to compare and contrast any learnings from each, comparing differences and similarities between entrepreneur-led, academic-led and student-led venture support.

Over this year, the Aspect membership have started to understand what questions need to be asked to trial solutions, develop resources, and build capacity for social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship. Over the next year, Aspect will generate answers to these questions, build and communicate good practice and, in doing so, will ensure that the sustainable Aspect Network becomes a key resource for UK and international knowledge engagement through commercialisation.



# Sustainability: Practical Considerations for a Collaborative Network

**Many of the core learnings from Aspect will be developed through its CoPs and the programme of funded projects, most of which are now are underway with outputs planned from Q4 2020. Final reporting (the 'Gain Report' and final KPIs) on the learnings from the network will commence in Q2 2021. Sustainability plans will be in place by the Q3 2020, and expressions of interest from potential new members have continued to be received since the launch of the Associate Membership model, with ongoing discussions with six at present.**

In addition to learnings on 'good practice' in social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship, the first two years of Aspect have also generated insights on the operations of a multi-university consortium, which will be incorporated into the final year and future initiatives.

## 7.1 Building Capacity

*Ensuring projects include sufficient funding for management and administration (rather than relying solely on in-kind time) is key to building capacity across the Network.*

As a CCF project, Aspect aims to build excellence and capacity in the social sciences sector, across the country. But building is challenging when everyone has a 'day job'. Some members have found that the university hiring processes have led to delays in securing contracts for specialist roles. With Covid-19 implications making this harder still, more lead time has been needed to run some of the projects than anticipated. Many of the Aspect funded projects – originally envisioned to be operated via member's contribution in kind – have also opted to 'reprofile' some of their budgets in order to secure additional human resource to support administration and project management. Some members are using Aspect's 'Advance Distribution Funding' scheme to hire additional resource, which will enable them to contribute even more to the Aspect programme.

*The Interim Review of the CCF Programme<sup>29</sup> noted the importance of funding for 'people on the ground' and project management across the CCF projects. Increasing capacity to support social sciences commercialisation is an ambitious and vital task, as the learnings to date have highlighted. The effort required to affect these additions or changes to the role of the university commercialisation and entrepreneurship support should not be underestimated.*



<sup>29</sup> <https://re.ukri.org/documents/2020/interim-review-of-ccf-report/>



## 7.2 On-Boarding New Members

*A strategic refocus on new membership is required to continue to build the network in line with the sustainability plan and programme KPIs.*

Aspect aims to become a growing and self-sustaining network, and after launching the Associate Member scheme in early 2020, the consortium has already received interest from over 18 institutions and has welcomed four new members. For new members, getting up to speed on the breath of Aspect activity has been an unexpected challenge. This hurdle for new members has possibly been exacerbated by Covid-19 which has limited the chance for face to face introductions. However, this feedback also highlights just how far the consortium has come, and how much activity is underway.

While Covid-19 may have hindered some elements of the network (such as slowing the on-boarding process), moving to online working has also benefited the Network in many ways. As an example, CoPs are now able to meet more regularly, increasing the volume and frequency of exchange between members. It has also made some of the pilot projects more accessible and easier to run as joint-member programmes (reducing the travel barrier). Some of the projects have opted to continue remote operations, as it enhances the collaboration element.

## 7.3 Mobilising the Learnings

*Generating learnings, and embedding them within member institutions, requires two different approaches.*

As Aspect enters its third year, there is an opportunity build on the learnings from the first round of funded projects, and to revisit and revise pilot approaches. As an example, the Aspect Steering Group recently approved a second iteration of the SUCCESS programme (to be re-named the ARC Accelerator (or Aspect Research Commercialisation Accelerator) which will engage even more academics, and test adaptations to the programme based on learning from its first cohort.

Aspect members are also now exploring how they can apply learnings from the funded programme, within their own institutions. Given the extent of the practice under development, it is increasingly important to ensure that learnings are captured in a format that can be embedded and passed on. **Table 5** shows how Aspect funded projects tend to cluster into three categories, each of which require different approaches to best mobilise the learnings. Taking proactive steps to do so will build institutional knowledge and capacity both within and beyond the Aspect membership.

Another focus for Aspect's final year is how to increase and best support academic engagement. The funded programme is starting to produce examples of

successful commercialisation projects, and alongside that, a community of potential ‘academic champions’ in the social sciences. The timing is right to work alongside this community, applying learnings from the programme, to build academic engagement within members’ institutions.

Aspect members have worked incredibly hard to make the programme work and build strong foundations. There is still much more to do, but it’s exciting to now see how quickly the learnings can come through once the pieces are in place. Having time – and funding – to now mobilise the learnings from the programme will be critical to Aspect’s long-term impact, and will be a key consideration in the sustainability plan.

**Table 5:** Opportunities to embed learnings from funded projects.

Project Category (and selected examples)	Description	Opportunities to Embed Learnings	Next Steps
<b>Pooling of Resources</b>  Examples: SUCCESS, Methods for Change, Accelerator, Abacus	Aspect provides economies of scale to run such projects for the network in its entirety. These projects have had early traction and are demonstrating practical methods for engaging social scientists.	Identify future sources of funding – from members or external partners – to ensure the long-term sustainability of these activities for the benefit of the wider network	Sustainability plans are being finalised.  In parallel, members are already taking learnings from the programmes, to develop new initiatives within their institutions.
<b>Good Practice Generation &amp; Sharing</b>  Examples: ENT, RC, & BE Workshop Series	Mainly workshops led by CoP members, these projects mostly benefit the individuals attending, helping them to build their own skills and (hopefully) take this back to build their institutional capabilities.	Identify ways to capture the discussions and disseminate more broadly.	The Programme Team has started working with CoP workshop leads to support them in creating blog posts, ‘how to guides’, or other shareable good practice outputs from these workshops (while keeping in mind capacity constraints).
<b>Physical Resources</b>  Examples: Ecosystem Mapping, Marketing Toolkits, Creative Challenge Events, Podcast Series	These projects that are generating practical resources that can be used by members within their institutions.	Identify other opportunities to create shareable resources from the other funded projects, where this may not have been a primary output.	The Programme Team is working on a structure for the Aspect ‘toolkit’ (which will include outputs from the Workshop series), and will work with project leads to see how their programme outputs might align. For example, ‘how-to guides’ or ‘event guides’, outlining how to run the SUCCESS bootcamp, Accelerator pitch day, a Zinc showcase, or the LSE due diligence process could offer useful insights that members can apply.

# 8

## Appendix

### 8.1 Structure of the Aspect Network

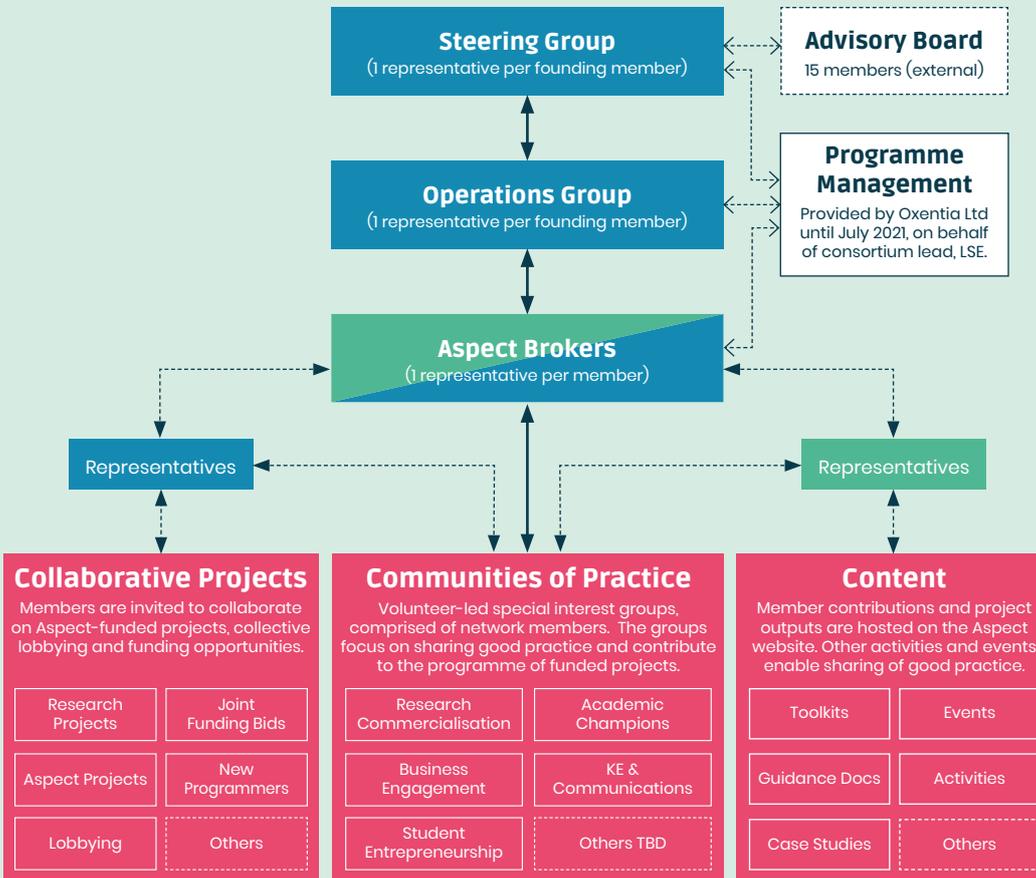
The Aspect Network was formed with seven founding members, funded by Research England’s Connecting Capabilities Fund. Founding members are responsible for governance via the Steering Group and Operations Group. In January 2020, membership was opened to other universities and research institutes from around the globe, under the Associate Membership scheme. Individuals from all Aspect members institutions are

invited to participate in the Aspect events programme, collaborative projects, and the Communities of Practice which form the heart of Aspect’s activity. Other organisations are invited to join Aspect as a partner, details of which determined on a case by case basis. More details on Aspect members and the programme are [available online](#).

**Figure 3:** Structure of the Aspect Network.

#### The Aspect Network

The Steering Group and Operations group provide governance to the Network (with input from the Advisory Board and support from the Programme Management team). All founding and associative member organisations may nominate an Aspect Broker, who serves as the key contact point. Brokers and other representatives from member institutions are invited to contribute to the network via participation in Communities of Practice, funded projects, the Aspect web platform, digital communications, activities, events, and other channels. Network Partners and Funders are being explored.



#### Founding Members

Initially comprised of 7 founding participants (the consortium). Founding members provide governance via Steering and Operations group participation. Membership will be revisited after the first 3 years of funding, as part of sustainability planning.

#### Associate Members

Open to HEIs and Research institutes from the UK and around the world. Associates sign a letter of commitment. As of August 2020, 4 associate members have been confirmed.

#### Funders

Initial funding has been provided by Research England, with contributions from the founding consortium members. Opportunities for further funding and collaborations are being explored.

**Research England**  
(Initial 3-year funding)

#### Network Partners

Partnerships with non HEIs are welcomed. Details to be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Policy Makers	Businesses
Investors	Public Sector
Funders	NGOs
Networks	Others

## 8.2 Summary of Aspect Activities to Date

**Table 6:** Summary of achievements and outputs from Aspect to date.

	Learning & Programme Management	Communications	Operations & Membership
2018-2019 – Planning Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of barriers to SS commercialisation and strengths in SS research and commercialisation amongst founding members.</li> <li>• Convening CoPs, to agree their aims and objectives and generate project proposals for funding.</li> <li>• Gathering initial examples and ideas for case studies and toolkits to promote good practice SS commercialisation / entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• Sharing insights between members about their own institutional activities, including reports from 14 events or programmes, and two studies.</li> <li>• Planning collaborative initiatives for ambitious funded activity to deliver and communicate good practice in SS commercialisation and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• Developing an agenda and agreeing the programme for the first annual meeting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications plan completed, including agreement of the mission, vision, target audiences, key messages, and outline content plan.</li> <li>• Holding website launched and approved by RE.</li> <li>• Mailing lists, document storage and communications systems achieved.</li> <li>• Contracting &amp; kicking off the branding &amp; website work (full website launch Oct/Nov 2019).</li> <li>• Expressions of Interest (EoIs) in joining the Aspect Network sought through participation in three conferences and events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance completed: OG established (meeting monthly); SG established (meeting quarterly); Advisory Board established.</li> <li>• Aspect Brokers appointed across members; member obligations being agreed.</li> <li>• Funding approvals forms established, approvals process via SG operational.</li> <li>• Network membership model under development – informed by EoI discussions.</li> <li>• CoPs established and working well together – with Team Charters under development.</li> </ul>
2019-2020 – Programme Delivery Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 collaborative project proposals and 6 institutional initiatives funded by Aspect, with early learnings shared in this report.</li> <li>• Identified and initiated the development of circa 100 case studies of social sciences commercialisation and entrepreneurship projects.</li> <li>• Convened CoPs, to share updates and exchange good practice at an annual meeting.</li> <li>• Started to publish outputs from funded projects on the Aspect website.</li> <li>• Ongoing programme delivery from Zinc (Mission 3) and LSE TTO.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full website launched, with proposal for phase 2 under development.</li> <li>• Newsletter and social media channels launched, with creation of a 'guest-editor' role to enable members to take the lead in sharing thematic insights on a bi-monthly basis.</li> <li>• Full time Marketing Manager position filled.</li> <li>• First Annual Event hosted in November 2019, with c. 100 attendees.</li> <li>• Programme agreed for second annual event, with a shift to webinars in response to Covid-19.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate Membership Model agreed for HEIs and research institutes.</li> <li>• Four new HEI members joined Aspect, with other discussions ongoing.</li> <li>• Partnership models being explored, to enable non-HEI organisations to engage with the network.</li> <li>• Formalised monitoring and reporting processes for funded programme of activity.</li> <li>• Sustainability plans in development, for continuing Aspect post-CCF funding.</li> </ul>

## 8.3 Highlights from 2019 Activity Mapping Exercise

In early 2019, members participated in an initiative to map their current activities and needs related to supporting social sciences innovation. The aim was to enable partners to better understand what each institution was already doing, how they could work together, and where there were gaps and opportunities. A detailed analysis was shared with members in the 2019 Learning Report, showing institutional activity in each CoP area, and including examples.

The analysis suggested the following opportunities for Aspect:

- **Entrepreneurship.** Members were running several initiatives to support entrepreneurial skills development and start-up idea generation (e.g. training, accelerators, bootcamps). These were often complemented by competitions and other funding opportunities to progress commercial ideas, as well as extensive hosting of networking events and speakers. Understanding how lessons from student entrepreneurship initiatives apply to Aspect's primary objective (supporting social sciences commercialisation) could be explored.
- **Research Commercialisation.** Common initiatives to raise the profile of commercialisation included competitions and funding targeted at social scientists, as well as 1-1 support for researchers. The commercialisation teams utilise different team structures and approaches, and it would be interesting to explore this further and understand the rationale and what works well. Most members are developing specific offerings for social enterprises.
- **Business Engagement.** Networking and partnership development for social sciences are encouraged and supported by all members and appear to be more established than pure commercialisation. There may be benefits to members in increasing alignment of the business engagement and commercialisation offerings.
- **Communications.** In large part, activity reported by Communications CoPs was not specific to social sciences. It will be beneficial to explore what works well and why, and how communications might be adapted for social sciences.
- **Challenges & Barriers.** Those reported by members map well to those in the 2005 CHASS report. Common challenges identified by members were related to communications and/or resources and models for supporting social sciences exploitation. A key point was that social sciences commercialisation pathways can be different to STEM, and KE and commercialisation professionals require dedicated time and resources to develop their internal capabilities and revise their processes in order to best support these different pathways.
- **Ideas for further collaboration.** There was a strong interest in more activities or events that will enable members to learn from each other, and to share examples of programmes and projects. The most common area members wished like to learn more about is building an understanding how to better engage with academics.



**Table 7:** Summary of learning outputs from Aspect members' activities and events, 2018-2019.

Institution	CoP	Event Title	Learning Output
Glasgow	BE	The <i>Gaitherin</i> Event Series	Event Case Study
Glasgow	ENT	Research Ventures in Social Science Workshop	Event Case Study
Glasgow	BE	National Rail Provider UBDC Workshop	Event Case Study
Glasgow	BE	Getting ready for Business Engagement	Event Guide (planned)
Manchester	BE	Healthy Ageing and Technology Innovation Lab	Event Guide
Manchester	RC	Social Enterprise Campus	Event Case Study
Manchester	RC & ENT	Innovation Optimiser Programme	Event Case Study
Oxford	RC & ENT	Humanities Innovation Challenge	Event Guide
Oxford	BE	Business Development in the Social Sciences and Humanities	Event Guide Case Study Video (planned)
Sheffield		Working in Partnership Showcase	Event Materials
Sheffield	BE & AC	Catching the wave - Social science and the ISCF	Event Case Study
Sheffield	BE	Business Engagement 101	Event Materials (Slides)
Sheffield (w/Zinc)	ENT	Social Science Start-up Showcase	Event Guide (planned)
<b>Event Guides</b>		<b>Event Case Studies</b>	<b>Event Materials</b>
Short overview about how the event was run, to guide members who are interesting in running a similar event.		Short summary of the programme or event, suitable for external marketing.	May include video, slides, or other collateral generated at the event.

As part of exchanging and building good practice, and to inform the programme development, members also shared examples of events at programmes run by their institutions to support social sciences innovation and commercialisation. These included workshops, showcases, training, and competitive funding. The aims and objectives of the activities included: building entrepreneurial skills (for academics and students),

raising awareness of commercialisation and business engagement, stimulating projects and partnerships, showcasing examples, and supporting the development of new project ideas (spinouts, start-ups, and research); most activities had multiple aims. **Table 7** lists the learning outputs that were shared amongst OG Members.

## 8.4 Advanced Distribution Funding Plans

In September 2019, the Steering Group agreed an ‘Advanced Distribution’ fund as a way of ‘unlocking the pipeline’ of activity in support of social sciences commercialisation, business engagement, entrepreneurship and communications. The table below summarises the activity for each Aspect member (those participating in the funding), provides outputs where they have been achieved, and lists which KPIs which are likely to be contributed to through this funding.

Aspect Partner	Benefiting KPIs
 <p><b>The University of Cardiff committed to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A portion of the funding to appoint to a part time position to fulfil ‘The Aspect broker’ role, following the departure from the University of the current Broker, co-ordinating and promoting Aspect activities across the University;</li> <li>• Developing ‘best practice’ guidance from existing examples and disseminate across the University;</li> <li>• Using the dissemination of the best practice guidelines to announce a scheme of seed-funding for new projects to encourage social sciences researchers to engage in commercialisation activities. This will have a total pot of £15k available in year with activities to promote this scheme including linking to ESRC IAA projects that have commercial potential and to SPARK workshops where commercial outcomes may be supported.</li> <li>• Cardiff will promote the scheme to researchers wishing to develop their ideas where seed funding could be used to help support the initial development of their project/idea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPI 01 – Academic attending training and development events that are part of the Programme.</li> <li>• KPI 04 – Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies.</li> <li>• KPI 07 – Amount of Leverage brought into collaborations.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>The University of Glasgow committed the funding to a number of activities outside of the other funded projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proportion of the funding will be seed funding, to fund activity that looks at pathways to commercialisation and industry engagement, supporting relationships to get off the ground.</li> <li>• This seed funding will complement IAA funds for mini projects, moving them on from point A to B, bringing new projects into the pipeline.</li> <li>• Other funds will be used to support network building more widely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPI 01 – Academic attending training and development events that are part of the Programme.</li> <li>• KPI 04 – Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies.</li> <li>• KPI07 – Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration.</li> </ul>

“ Sometimes you need a little bit of cash to get things off the ground.”

Continued on next page...

## Aspect Partner



*“LSE has high hopes and plans to use the dynamism of student enterprises (and their commitment to research foundations) as a platform for academic research to find a way out into commercial ventures.”*

**LSE through LSE Generate** committed to use the Aspect £50k funding to build its staff resources as the Generate programme continues to expand. Specifically, additional team members were brought in to focus on the following three areas:

- LSE Generate’s data analyst – was able to use a proportion of the funding to collect data on the links between the LSE social sciences entrepreneurial education offering – Generate – and student and alumni business growth and eventual success. He compiled a set of datasets and benchmarks across all areas of the programme that then formed the basis for a pitch to the Senior Management team in LSE to secure the sustainability and continued success of the programme (incl. £120k additional investment from LSE in Generate).
- As the Generate programme continues to grow to meet the demands of the LSE student and alumni community, there was a concern that the responsiveness rate to incoming queries and first-time engagement was suffering. Additional resources from the £50k was provided to the LSE Generate administrators responding to their entrepreneur’s queries and, freeing up time for the rest of the team to develop and deliver the new and existing initiatives.
- A data support analyst role has received funding to work with the ecosystem mapping project (a funded Aspect project) to develop a navigation tool for students as they come into their ‘start-up’ journey, which will enable them to develop a truly ‘personal’ entrepreneurship journey within the LSE entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- Student entrepreneurship was not a core part of the original bid, and therefore the KPIs were not well suited to it, but has been introduced and grown as part of learning from best practice (that one of the key means of kick-starting social sciences commercialisation is through LSE’s amazing social sciences students, and their commitment to commercial approaches to improving the world) – a key element of the final learning report and best practice toolkit. The funding for data analyst support from the £50k has supported the development of the female founders group at LSE, now ranked No 1 in the UK and finalists for the National Enterprise Educators Award, highlighting inclusive entrepreneurship via the social science lens.

## Benefiting KPIs

- KPI 04 – Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies.
- KPI 07– Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration

**Continued on next page...**

## Aspect Partner

MANCHESTER  
1824

The University of Manchester

### University of Manchester committed to using the funding to:

- Support the Ed Tech Hub Project, planning to allocate £25k of these funds to the Ed Tech project as a cash contribution. And
- For the remainder of the funding, to support A Digital Information Literacy Programme for Schools (DILPS): Designing an Educators Tool Kit to Counter the Consumption and Vulnerabilities to Political Misinformation among Young Adults.
- Through this project Manchester will explore how the recent findings from research on political misinformation and digital information literacy (DIL) can be transferred into the secondary education curricula by social enterprises specialising in civics education.
- Through DILPS Manchester will design a scalable and practical DIL resource for the classroom that will enable pupils to become more discerning and informed future voters. In doing so DILPS will raise the profile of current research on political misinformation and DIL among commercial providers of educational software and training resources and contribute knowledge exchange between business and social science researchers.

## Benefiting KPIs

- KPI 01 – Academic attending training and development events that are part of the Programme.
- KPI07 – Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration.



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

*Oxford is “making sure that we bring more of our academics on board with Aspect ..... make more progress with culture change around our innovation ecosystem.”*

### University of Oxford committed to:

- Holding a competition for up to three Innovation Fellows who will hold their Fellowship over the academic year 2020-21. These might be academics from within Oxford or incoming Fellows with useful external experience in the area of innovation. Funds will be used for a small stipend.
- Around this group of Innovation Leaders Oxford would also set up a broader academic advisory group for innovation, made up of those who are interested but unable to commit this much time or perhaps not at the right career stage to act as advocates.
- The three Innovation Leaders would be expected to deliver a number of things including:
  - Leadership of the broader advisory group;
  - Interaction/ networking with other academics involved in Aspect;
  - Advocacy for innovation, commercialisation, Entrepreneurship and Business Engagement within their depts. And more broadly across the University and beyond (incl. sitting on the Academic Champions CoP for Aspect);
  - Lead or front training, workshops, masterclasses (perhaps involving other speakers);
  - Act as spokesperson with PRC or other University level committees and groups;
  - Help Oxford to develop material explaining the value proposition around social sciences for businesses;

- KPI 01 – Academic attending training and development events that are part of the Programme.
- KPI07 – Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration.

**Continued on next page...**

## Aspect Partner

## Benefiting KPIs



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

- Oxford plan to hold a series of innovation events (hopefully in partnership with Nuffield College) led by its Innovation Fellows. These might involve hackathons, masterclasses or other events to be determined by the Fellows. We are planning c. six events over the course of Michaelmas and Hilary terms (to be completed by March 2021). The budget for these events will be covered by funds from Aspect.
- Organisation for the innovation events will be led by the Innovation Fellows. Admin support will be provided by a part-time Innovation Support Officer (Gd 6/7 0.5FTE) who will be recruited through TSS from October 2020–March 2021.



**Following the receipt of funding, the university of Sussex is delivering against a business development agenda:** The £50k funding has contributed to, and will continue to contribute to, a number of activities, including:

- Broker activity across the UK CoPs, and brokerage of funded projects.
- Ongoing development of international development activities including the Prosperity programme, and submissions for international eco-system transformation programmes;
- The Developing Innovative Community Empowerment (DICE) Consortium; incl. partners from across DICE countries (Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and South Africa) and 25+ other partner countries and 6 non- Aspect Universities (UAL, Sunderland, Loughborough, City, Surrey, Leeds Trinity);
- Youth@risk - a project developed with 15+ UK partners (Private providers, NGOs and Third sector, partner universities, etc.) to address the impact of COVID19 on youth across the UK;
- Development of an ECR and emerging researcher consultancy training programme;
- A programme (with ADVANCE HE) to embed entrepreneurship across the SocSci curriculum (from 09/2020 to April 2021), under Aspect, then mainstreamed with the relevant Schools and via accessing wider resources.

- KPI 01 – Academic attending training and development events that are part of the Programme.
- KPI 04 – Social science research contributions to at least 20% of start-up companies.
- KPI 06 – Establishment and growth of Aspect platform with up to 30 HEIs (who are not the founding partners) joining and/or using the Aspect platform, including 5 form outside UK.
- KPI07 – Amount of Leverage brought into collaboration.

## 8.5 Annual Event 2019 - Agenda

Below is the full agenda from Aspect's first annual event. More details on the sessions and a write-up from the day are provide on the Aspect website.

### Aspect Annual Event:

**Better Business for People and Planet – Bridging Research and Industry**

#### Date

Nov 21st 2019, 9:30-16:00 + Networking

#### Location

Manchester (Crowne Plaza – Oxford Road)

#### Website

<http://aspect.ac.uk/about/aspect-funded-projects/annual-event-2019/>

<b>9:30-10:00</b>	<b>Arrival &amp; Registration</b>
<b>10:00-10:45</b>	Opening Plenary <b>Mobilising Social Sciences to Drive Innovation</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Learn how Aspect is providing opportunities for social sciences to be used in the private sector, and what social sciences can gain from collaborating with industry. This will include insights from Julia Black and Colette Fagan followed by a Q&amp;A session.</p>	<p><b>Speakers</b></p> <p><b>Julia Black</b> <i>LSE &amp; UKRI board</i></p> <p><b>Colette Fagan</b> <i>Manchester University's Vice-president for Research</i></p> <p><b>Andrew James</b> <i>Associate Dean for Business Engagement &amp; External Relations, University of Manchester</i></p>
<b>10:45-11:10</b>	<b>Break with refreshments and time to network</b>
<b>11:10-12:30</b>	Panel Debate <b>Purpose in Practice</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Hear from industry leaders on innovations that have made a real difference to not only their business, but also to people and the planet.</p>	<p><b>Panellists</b></p> <p><b>Thomas Bouvier</b>, <i>Soaper Duper</i>.          'We believe that soap can change everything'.          No SLS/SLES, no parabens, no artificial colours, and we sell them in big, basic, some recycled, some recyclable plastic packaging at enviably competitive prices. We also support WaterAid to bring soap and water to communities who need it.</p> <p><b>John Pritchard</b>, <i>Pala Eyewear</i>          We're not there yet, but ultimately, our goal is to create a business that puts people and the planet before profits and ethical and sustainable practices at the forefront of our operations.</p> <p><b>Duncan Gray</b>, <i>Brodie</i>          Founder of International sustainability and responsible businesses consultancy. Duncan has worked in a variety of environments – from in-house roles at Mars Inc. and Compass Group, through an amazing opportunity with two charities working on London 2012, to several years consulting on sustainability strategy.</p>

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	<p><b>Teresa Hitchcock, DLA Piper</b> Teresa is a partner in DLA Piper’s Sheffield office and heads the firm’s UK Safety Health and Environment team. Outside her practice she has been heavily involved in the promotion of sustainable development and is a noted speaker at conferences on such topics as climate change law and sustainable supply chain management. She is the joint chair and member of an advisory group dealing with the move to a low carbon economy in the Sheffield City Region Local Enterprise Partnership.</p> <p><b>Chair: Mariel Vilella, Director of Global Strategy, Zero Waste Europe.</b> Mariel leads Zero Waste Europe’s work at the global level, including the management and the coordination of the network activities in collaboration with Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) members worldwide that are promoting zero waste policies and practices with special emphasis on the participation and inclusion of waste workers and communities. Mariel has training in Sociology and Communication Studies, and has broad experience in environmental issues, publications development, and research.</p>
12:30–13:00	1st Keynote Speaker
	<p><b>Helen Taylor Ecotricity and Forest Green Rovers</b> Helen will be talking about novel insights into ‘sustainability disruption’ in the clean energy market and professional football. Helen’s presentation will trace the ‘green entrepreneurial’ journey of the clean energy company Ecotricity and their sister company Forest Green Rovers Football Club.</p>
13:00–14:00	Lunch and networking
14:00–15:00	Breakout sessions
<p><b>Breakout session 1</b></p> <p>Academic and business collaborations in practice: This breakout session will feature academics and business partners from the universities of Cardiff, Glasgow and Oxford speaking on how collaboration between the private sector and academia has been mutually beneficial in translating research into real-world impact.</p>	<p><b>Panellists</b></p> <p><b>Adam Saunders</b> is Research Fellow at the Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance at the Department of Education at Oxford, which undertakes research into develop the skills of the workforce for the future economy. Adam is currently working with an interdisciplinary team led by John Armour at Oxford, alongside a group of business collaborators including Slaughter &amp; May, Allen &amp; Overy, Thomson Reuters and start-up LexSnap on an ESRC-funded project on how the legal services can exploit and adapt artificial intelligence technologies.</p> <p><b>Dr. Natalie Welden</b> is a lecturer in Environmental Science and Sustainability in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Glasgow. Natalie is an expert in microplastics and focuses her work on marine and agriculture environments. Among her current list of ambitious projects is SOPaS (Stopping Ocean Plastics at Source). This project, led by Inheriting Earth Ltd. in partnership with Beko Plc and JNDC Ltd., seeks to reduce the flow of textile derived microfibers between our washing machines and the domestic environment.</p> <p><b>Sally Good</b> is the Chief Operating Officer of Evidence to Impact, a social sciences spinout from the universities of Bristol and Cardiff. Sally has taken the company’s main product from its initial application in NHS Trusts through to its international delivery.</p>

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<p><b>Breakout session 2</b></p> <p>What does scaling up social science mean? – Explore what opportunities there are to make social science impact sustainable beyond the funding end date.</p>	<p><b>Panellists</b></p> <p><b>Joanne Tippet</b> Dr Joanne Tippet is a lecturer in Spatial Planning in the School of Environment and Development at the University of Manchester. Her ESRC funded research into participatory river basin planning led to the development of a hands-on toolkit for engagement, Ketso. She launched Ketso as a social business in 2009 and it is now in use in over 75 countries. She will discuss her experiences of starting a spin-out, the advantages and barriers, and how this has intersected with her academic work.</p> <p><b>Bruce Etherington</b> Impact manager at the University of Cardiff. Bruce manages funding schemes and associated activities to increase the impact of social science Research.</p> <p><b>Chaired by: Mel Knetsch</b> <i>Deputy Director of Impact and Innovation at ESRC.</i></p>
<p><b>15:00–15:30</b></p>	<p><b>Break with refreshments and time to network</b></p>
<p><b>15:30–16:00</b></p>	<p><b>2nd Keynote speaker</b></p>
	<p><b>Jeremy Kent Hall</b>, <i>Director for SPRU (Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex)</i></p> <p>His talk is titled 'Emerging Challenges and Unintended Consequences of Innovation: The "Eroom" Effect and Borlaug's Paradox'. He has a background in the social impacts and unanticipated outcomes of innovation and entrepreneurship, sustainable supply chains, social inclusion, strategies for sustainable development innovation and responsible management.</p> <p>The Q&amp;A and closing remarks chaired by <b>Julia Black</b>.</p>
<p><b>16:00–18:00</b></p>	<p><b>Networking and drinks reception</b></p>

## 8.6 Annual Event 2020 - Agenda

Aspect's second annual event schedule is included below, with more details on the Aspect website. The event will be run as a series of 21 online sessions, with two tracks to appeal to the breadth of audiences:

- Thematic events (each led by an Aspect member): Sessions relate to one or more of the four core Aspect themes agreed as part of the marketing strategy paper (economy, the individual, social cohesion, and natural environment) – with flexibility to select the specific focus within this broad framework;
- Operationally focused or training orientated events: Members join up to deliver these sessions as they have a broader, cross-cutting focus.

### Aspect Annual Event:

**Building prosperity and wellbeing through social science innovation**

#### Date

September 7th to October 28th, 2020

#### Location

Online

#### Website

<http://aspect.ac.uk/about/aspect-funded-projects/annual-event-2020/>

Session Date	Lead Institution	Session Title
7th September	Glasgow	Sustainability at scale: The role of social science research in building long term solutions
7th September	Plenary	Building a better world after COVID-19: Transforming how we think about social science commercialisation
9th September	LSE & Cardiff	Social science commercialisation 101
15th September	Glasgow	A practical guide to operationalising intrapreneurship within institutional frameworks
16th September	York	Could small and medium sized businesses be the key to sustaining the economy and our communities?
17th September	Bristol	FinTech: A good practice example of effective university-business engagement
22nd September	Oxford	Creating ventures during COVID-19: Challenges and opportunities
23rd September	Manchester	Driving entrepreneurship in the social sciences
24th September	Manchester	Combating misinformation online: The role and relevance of the social sciences
29th September	LSE	Data, IP and commercialisation: A strategic view
29th September	Bristol	How can social scientists engage business effectively?
30th September	Oxford	Taking poverty measurement research into the private sector
7th October	Sussex	COVID-19 and the healthy ageing challenge
8th October	Sussex	How to train social science researchers to become consultants
13th October	Cardiff	Sustainable and just food system futures
15th October	Sussex	Youth and mental health post COVID-19: Addressing the emerging youth mental health crisis
<i>wc 19th October</i>	<i>Cardiff</i>	<i>Working with external partners (TBC)</i>
21st October	Zinc	Early career social scientists: The case for working in start-ups
22nd October	Cardiff	Reducing resource use through shared access to consumer goods: Barriers and motivations
<i>wc 26th October</i>	<i>LSE</i>	<i>Building back better: Bridging gaps in the green economy</i>
28th October	Plenary	The future of social science commercialisation

## 8.7 Opportunities for Social Sciences in Business & Society

The figure below is a compilation of different business and thematic areas where Aspect members are seeing opportunities for the adoption and/or application of social sciences research.

**Figure 4:** Opportunities for social sciences in business and society (examples from the Aspect programme).

<b>Zinc Learnings Update</b>	<b>Annual Event Planning Meeting</b>																												
January 2020	June 2019																												
<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>Business Area</th> <th>Social Sciences Research</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Digital Marketplaces</td> <td>Microeconomics</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Online Communities</td> <td>Sociology</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Behaviours</td> <td>Anthropology</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Product Engagement</td> <td>Psychology</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mobility</td> <td>Human Geography</td> </tr> <tr> <td>User Insights</td> <td>Psychology, Data Science</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Trust and Acceptance</td> <td>Political Science</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Business Area	Social Sciences Research	Digital Marketplaces	Microeconomics	Online Communities	Sociology	Social Behaviours	Anthropology	Product Engagement	Psychology	Mobility	Human Geography	User Insights	Psychology, Data Science	Trust and Acceptance	Political Science	<table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ethics</th> <th>Business Transformation (Using Social Sciences to Stay Ahead)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethics in Supply Chains</li> <li>Consumer Data Ethics</li> <li>Business Ethics</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profits from Purpose</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Productivity a new source economy</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <th>Regulation, Governance &amp; Compliance</th> <th>Lifestyle</th> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology Adoption</li> <li>Next Generation Services</li> <li>Data Science/AI</li> <li>AI in Legal Services</li> </ul> </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour Change</li> <li>Poverty/money</li> <li>Building &amp; City Design</li> <li>Social Care</li> <li>Role of AI in Healthy Ageing</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <th>Green Economy</th> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy and Climate Change</li> <li>Employment/Organisational Design</li> </ul> </td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ethics	Business Transformation (Using Social Sciences to Stay Ahead)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethics in Supply Chains</li> <li>Consumer Data Ethics</li> <li>Business Ethics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profits from Purpose</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Productivity a new source economy</li> </ul>	Regulation, Governance & Compliance	Lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology Adoption</li> <li>Next Generation Services</li> <li>Data Science/AI</li> <li>AI in Legal Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour Change</li> <li>Poverty/money</li> <li>Building &amp; City Design</li> <li>Social Care</li> <li>Role of AI in Healthy Ageing</li> </ul>	Green Economy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energy and Climate Change</li> <li>Employment/Organisational Design</li> </ul>	
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# Aspect

## Transforming Society Through Social Science Innovation

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.



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