Understanding the potential for sharing SHAPE commercialisation support

Interview Results

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Preface

Disclaimer

This slide deck is an output from the project **"Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts"** on terms specifically limiting Oxentia's liability. Our conclusions are the result of our professional judgment, based upon the material and information provided to us by the client and others. Use of this report by any third party for whatever purpose should not, and does not, absolve such third party from using due diligence in verifying the report's contents.

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About the Project

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), as the lead party acting on behalf of a consortium of five universities (LSE, Royal College of Art, University of Bristol, University of Leicester, University of Lancaster) successfully applied for a Connecting Capability Fund Research England Development ("CCF-RED") pilot grant for the project 'Creating the evidence base for shared TTO needs and opportunities in supporting SHAPE spinouts'.

This project seeks to establish a clear value proposition for shared Technology Transfer Office (TTO) models in SHAPE (Social Sciences, Humanities, and the Arts for People and the Economy) commercialisation. By creating a robust evidence base, it will identify how shared TTOs can best support the commercialisation needs of institutions of all sizes and disciplinary foci.

Ultimately, this initiative aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of spinout support across the sector, driving economic and social benefits through improved commercialisation pathways.

The project has four key objectives. First, it aims to engage a wide range of UK Higher Education Providers (HEPs) to deepen and formalise understanding of SHAPE commercialisation needs. Second, it seeks to establish a robust evidence base on current practices, highlighting capacity-building needs among HEPs supporting SHAPE spinouts. Third, the project will evaluate the merits of different "sharing models" for TTO functions. Lastly, it will offer evidence-based recommendations for strengthening SHAPE commercialisation, with a focus on England and relevant insights for devolved nations.

To fulfil these aims, LSE has commissioned Oxentia Ltd to support the consortium in the delivery of the project work packages:

- WP1: Literature Review
- WP2: Survey, interviews and focus groups with the UK HEP sector
- WP3: Report and development of a decision-making tool.

The outputs and findings from these activities will be disseminated by the consortium via a launch event in April 2025, and through a newly created webpage.

About this Slide Deck

- This slide deck is an output from WP2 and presents an analysis of the interview results. This was an **interim deliverable** for the project. This analysis was shared with the project partners, and their reflections and inputs have subsequently informed the findings in the final project report (downloadable from the project web page).
- Data has been anonymised in accordance with the privacy and confidentiality statement used for the interviews.
- The slide deck is structured as follows:
  - **Preface**
    - About the project
    - About this slide deck
    - Headline takeaways
  - **Overview of the process and takeaways**

  - **Findings from each section of the interviews**
    - Current Support for SHAPE
    - Gaps and Opportunities
    - Thoughts on Sharing Models
    - Enablers and Constraints
    - Final questions and wrap-up (participants' key take home messages)
  - **Discussion and reflection questions**

Headline takeaways

- The interview process uncovered a huge appetite for shared SHAPE support and facilitated deep, cathartic thinking about enablers and constraints around how a shared SHAPE TTO offering might accelerate the activity and quality of SHAPE commercialisation nationally
- It was clear from the interviews that SHAPE commercialisation, across the sector, is supported at a clearly reduced level compared to STEM, irrespective of HEP cluster. Limited resource impacted willingness to share
- There was strong indication that something is needed and strong appetite for engagement to ensure there is a tangible outcome that is fit for purpose for the coming 5-10 years, not this point in time, where the benefits of previous CCF funding are being realised.
- It is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach is not the solution and that deep understanding of sectors, markets and specialisms needs to underpin any offering.
- The interviews elucidated a need for a flexible, possibly tiered, sharing model with (free?) access to a repository of supportive content which can be expanded to (paid for?) specialist advice when needed.
- This prompted thinking around a range of model approaches/options that we have described as, Evolution, Devolution and Revolution
- A concerted, structured shared TTO offering could be a driver for a cohesive, directional and innovative national SHAPE commercialisation ecosystem in place of the current piecemeal approach where the protagonists are overstretched and underconfident.

1

Overview

Reminder: Original questions from the project bid

Current Approaches and Needs

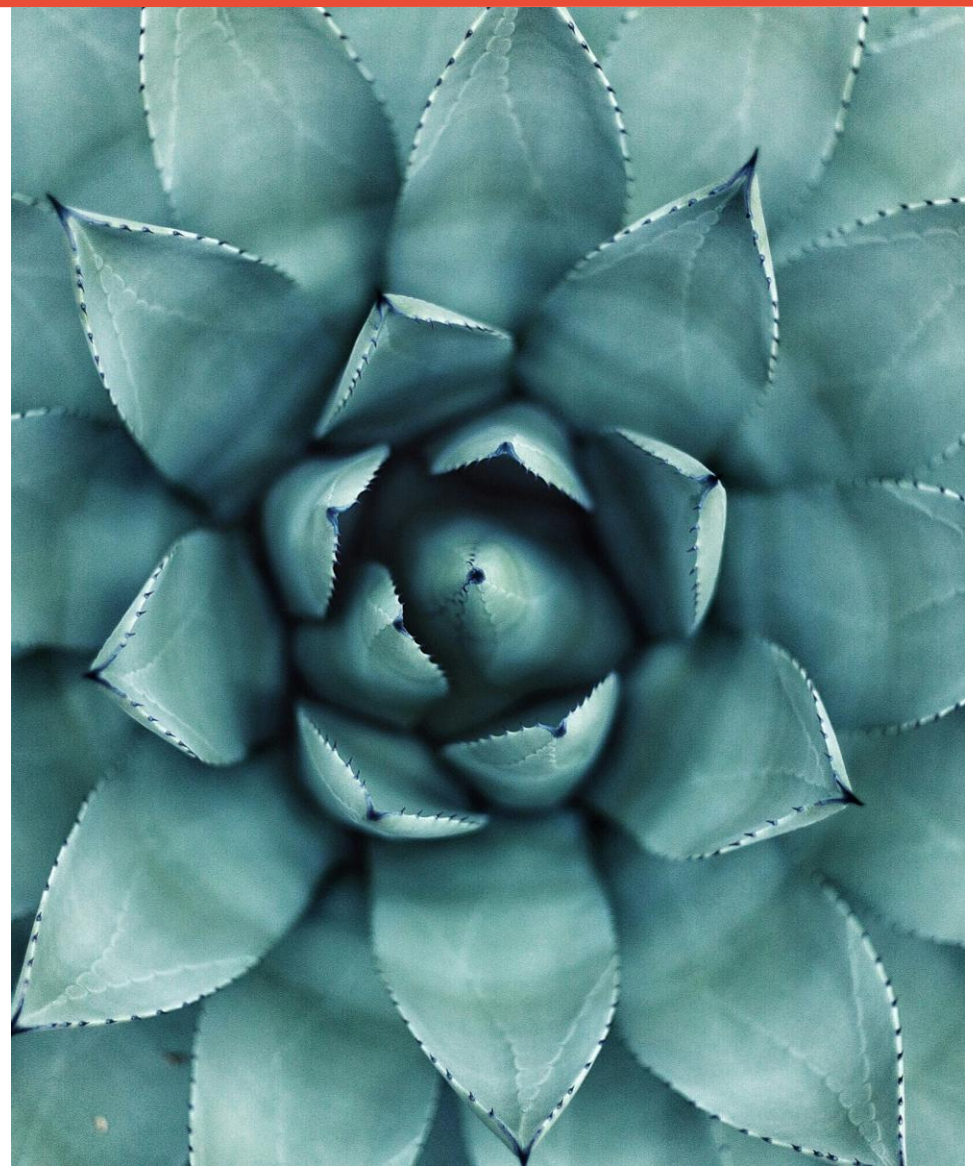
1. **What spinout support looks like** in different HEPs
2. Where HEPs feel they have significant **capacity and capability gaps** or could support the biggest gains.

Sharing Models

1. How much and what sorts of resource **larger (or better resourced) HEPs** might be willing to share to support spinout activity in smaller HEPs, and what terms and conditions and/or incentive or reward schemes would need to be in place for them to do this.
2. The most significant **challenges and benefits** that both large and small HEPs perceive in sharing TTO functions and the key factors for consideration when assessing possible TTO solutions.
3. Which model(s) of sharing a range of TTO functions are deemed feasible, viable and desirable, and what conditions would need to be met to start implementing one or more of these models.
4. Whether it is **preferable to share capacity at** regional level, by specialism, or by some other means at sector level

Reminder: Interview guide structure

1. **About you**
2. **Current Support for SHAPE**
   - Your organisation's approach to SHAPE commercialisation
   - OPTIONAL (if time allows): SHAPE differences
3. **Gaps and opportunities – What could/couldn't be shared?**
   - Gaps and needs
   - Opportunities for sharing:
4. **Thoughts on sharing models**
   - Future ability to share
   - Sharing models
5. **Enablers and constraints**
   - Past sharing experience
   - Barriers and constraints:
   - OPTIONAL (if time allows): Incentives
6. **Final questions & wrap-up**
   - Anything else
   - One key takeaway



Final Number of Interviews

- Interviewed 40 HEPs (against target of 40)
- More V and fewer E than target, but overall close to the goal
- Semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes)
- Analysis including to cluster level

	Total # HEPs		# Interviews	
KEF	**Count of HEPs**	**# = 40% of KEF cluster**	**# Target Interviews**	**# Actual Interviews**
ARTS	26	10	9	7
E	33	13	14	11
J	14	6	3	4
M	18	7	4	3
STEM	12	5	2	2
V	18	7	4	7
Grand Total	**139**	**56**	**40**	**40**

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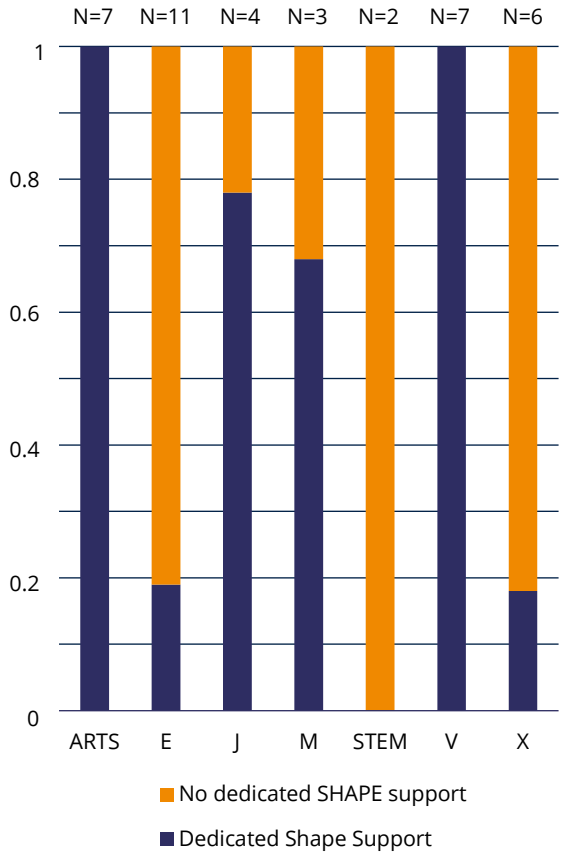
Current Support for SHAPE

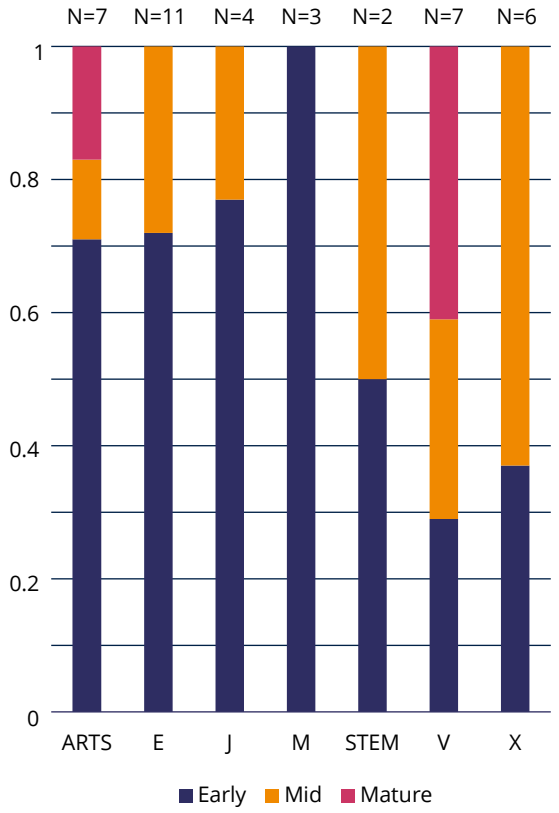
- How is commercialisation supported? How is SHAPE commercialisation currently supported?
- Any differences vs STEM? Anything specific about spinouts?
- Are there any similarities or differences between certain types of universities (Size, KEF cluster, maturity of SHAPE support, etc.)
- What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?

Approaches to SHAPE commercialisation

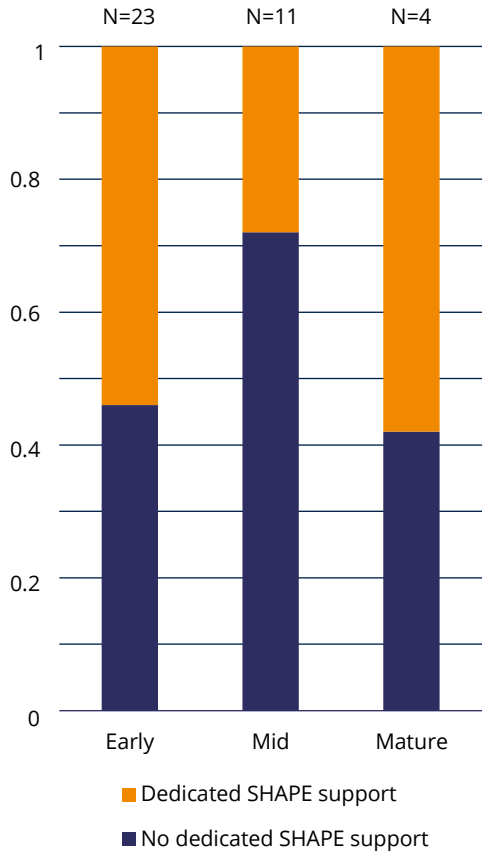
Dedicated SHAPE Commercialisation Support



SHAPE Commercialisation Maturity Level



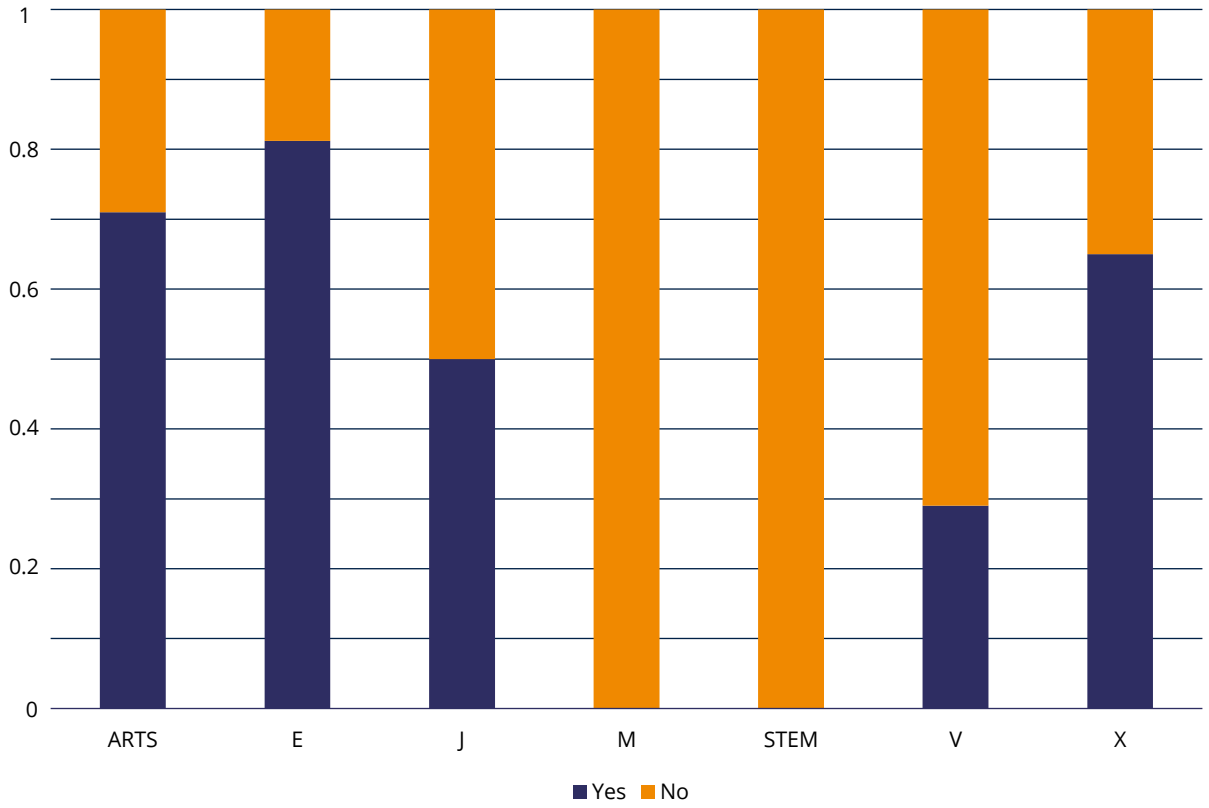
SHAPE Commercialisation Maturity Level x Dedicated SHAPE Support



- HEPs Self-described SHAPE commercialisation resources: 28 – small, 10 – medium, 2 – large….
- KEF clusters – 'Vs' tend to larger teams/resources and to view commercialisation as 'licensing and ventures'
- The majority of others – independent of cluster – had much more limited resources and viewed SHAPE commercialisation through the wider 'HE-BCI data' lens.

Approaches to SHAPE commercialisation

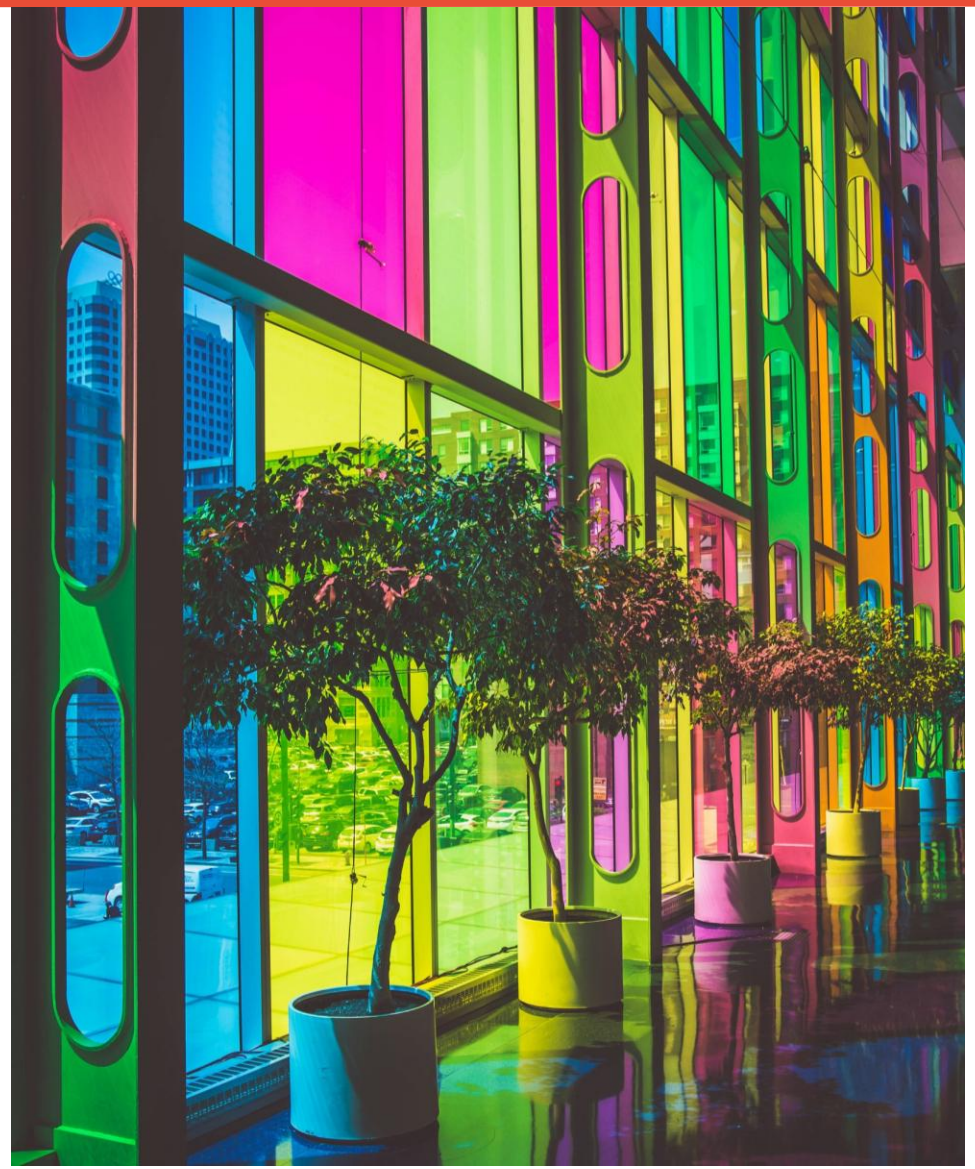
Use of External Programmes



- Heavy reliance on external programmes e.g. ARC (UKRI SHAPE Catalyst), iCURe
- Usage of external programmes to triage commercialisation opportunities by resource-strapped HEPs
- Interviewees highlighted the importance of 'internally delivered' academic mindset change, institutional trust between academics/ researchers and professional services crucial
- Many interviewees noted success in raising awareness and building their project pipelines, with a subsequent resource limitation reducing progress through pipelines

Approaches to SHAPE commercialisation

- The ‘middle and later phases ’: protecting, engaging (Value Proposition etc., understanding routes to market), nurturing via translational funding), deal making, are resource limited across the HEPs .
- SHAPE is not ‘one size fits all’. Specialist Arts HEPs, while having sometimes very small teams, are, typically, impactful, and engaged – notably with the creative economy – including digital
- More typically in APE rather than SH, practitioner academics are very active outside as well as inside their institutions, adding a layer of complexity to contractual, personal as well as institutional motivation/ability to engage.
- This is a factor for cluster E, J, M, Arts and STEM specialists compared to Cluster V, X HEPs



Q3: Shape differences

How similar or different is the support you provide for SHAPE commercialisation compared to STEM? If it is different, can you provide an example?

- 'SHAPE' projects identified as typically receiving the same support as STEM, except:
  - more nuanced conversations with academics and potential end users re routes to market/impact and business cases;
  - a 'shallower' valley of death – but harder to overcome (limited funding);
  - less obvious licensees (viewed by interviewees in part because a lack of obvious /understood routes into the public and 3rd sector 'markets';
  - greater likelihood of consultancies / spin out 'vehicles'.

- SHAPE and STEM specialists both highlighted the importance of 'mission driven accelerators/enterprise support' where interdisciplinary STEM/SHAPE projects are supported/impactful.

- Even among ARTs Cluster and Cluster E, J and M HEPs (most of which view commercialisation through the broadest possible lens and support more applied research in civic environments), most HEPs still commit substantially lower levels of support to SHAPE commercialisation than to STEM.
  - One (Cluster V) HEP commented on their 1.5 FTE support for SHAPE commercialisation– of which 1 FTE was a temporary post, that despite the sectors focus on 'impact (Ref definition – "an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia"), financial returns are the higher priority for the university and a much easier case to make.

Reflection: What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?

- HEPs are not all equal – distinct differences in maturity level of SHAPE commercialisation across HEPs.
- Much of the support on offer is not SHAPE specific.
- HEPs under intense financial pressure feel the lack of time, staff and financial resource leading them to rely on externally delivered programmes, even for triaging opportunities in some cases.
- There is an under confidence around those early in their journey leading to a desire for anonymity.
- There is a recognition of the importance of strong relationships in terms of culture and mindset change and the discovery stage of commercialisation.
- SHAPE v STEM differences highlight opportunities for reflection around Shared SHAPE TTO models.

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Gaps and opportunities

- Where are there perceived gaps or opportunities for additional support?
- Are there any similarities or differences between certain types of universities (Size, KEF cluster, maturity of SHAPE support, etc.)
- What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?

Where are there perceived gaps or opportunities for additional support?

Gap/ Need (*)	# HEP	% HEP
Funding	30	75
IP Resources	29	73
Peer Networks	27	68
Case Studies	27	68
Specialist Advice	26	65
Investor Networks/ Connections	23	58
Legal & Professional Resources	23	58
Enhanced ARC/ other acceleration	22	55
Commodifiable Activity – market reviews, IP due diligence	21	53
Appropriate Metrics	16	40
General Awareness Raising	16	40

*As semi structured interviews, not all discussions focused on all the same points of discussion

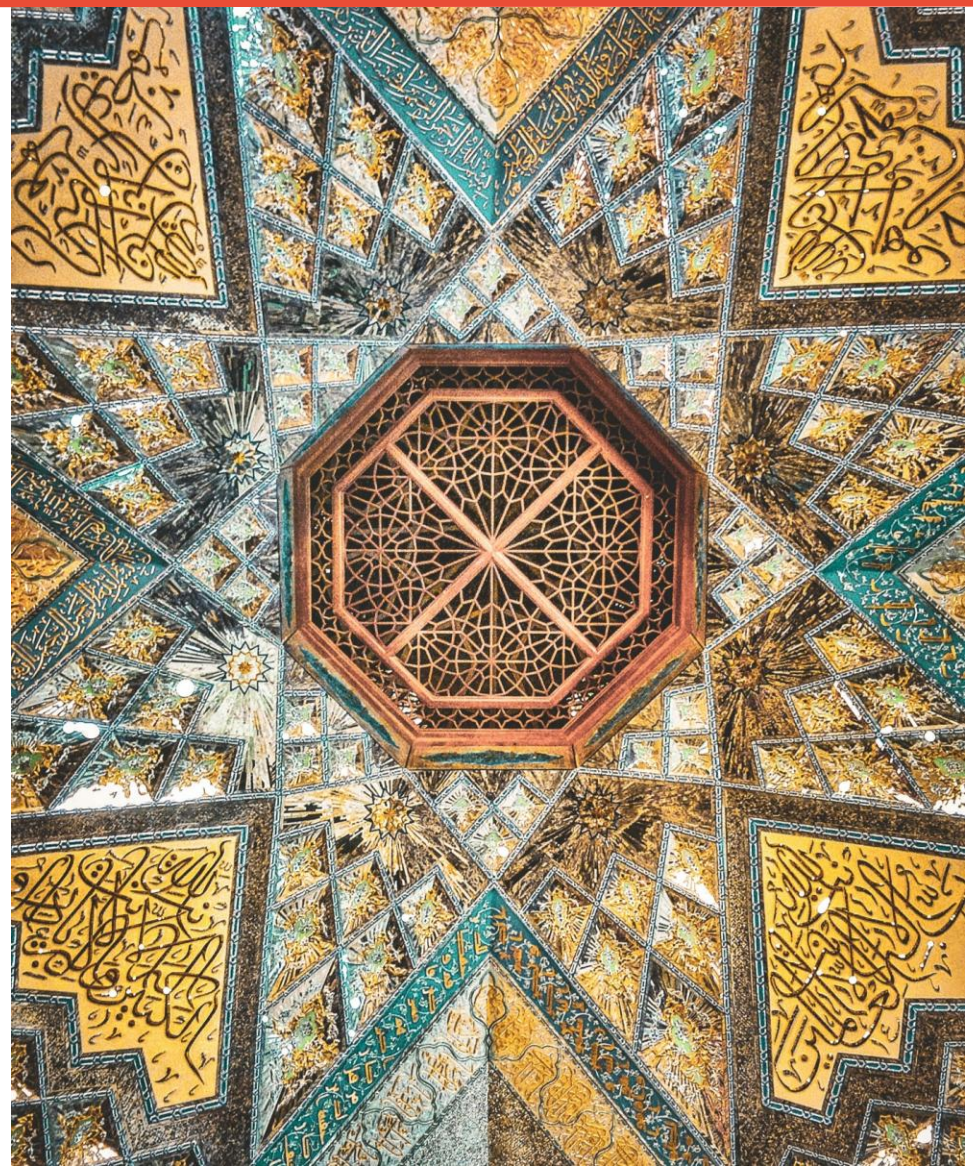
- Reflection: What does this mean for Shared TTO support?
  - Where does the appetite for change align with a Shared SHAPE TTO offering?
  - Where can existing resources be made more accessible to greater impact?

Where are there perceived gaps or opportunities for additional support?

- PoC through to PoM through to engagement with licensees, ring-fenced for SHAPE with allocation viewed through social & economic impact lens
- Often linked in answers to the desire for more SHAPE focused PoC, an extension of ARC or similar to properly "kick the tyres" re engaging with the market
- Many lower resourced HEPs asked for shared IP, legal, documentations etc., with most highlighting the need to customise for their HEP
- Shared case study library, across SHAPE (given its complexity of outputs), in a variety of formats enabling easy access and aimed at academics and professional services, and end users.
- Networks – business management and social impact/philanthropy investment
- Informed and experienced knowledge transfer / engagement resource either:
  - Human resource – consultancy or network experts (KTP adviser 'type' approach mentioned by multiple interviewees with specific reference made to the Scottish KTP Centre/Office with its additional support to Scottish HEPs).
  - Brokerage (example quoted was "Konfer for SHAPE") – noting that the end users for SHAPE research are not easily 'definable'
  - Toolkits of some kind, potentially digital, enabling decision trees of some kind
- With a couple of exceptions, a wholly outsourced model was not something the HEPs wanted, noting:
  - Early stages will only work if delivered internally by the HEPs staff
  - Lack of trust that external providers understand the HEP sector, researcher and academic mindset, process, ecosystem.
  - But expert support from IP review onwards to deal (license or spin-out/ enterprise) was popular

Are there any similarities or differences between certain types of universities
(Size, KEF cluster, maturity of SHAPE support, etc.)

- A lot of similarity across clusters – Funding; IP resources; peer networks; use of external legal support
- Some sense of ARTS, J and M coalescing around a need for basic resources (documents, checklists etc.) and admin support
- V and X have less need of legal and professional support
- **Maturity level matters far more than KEF cluster**



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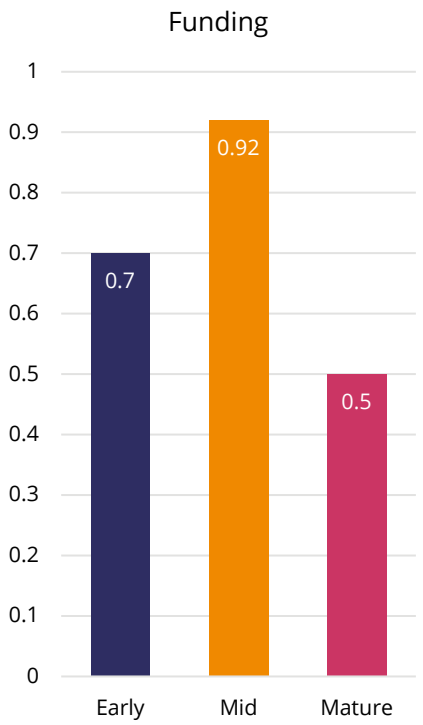

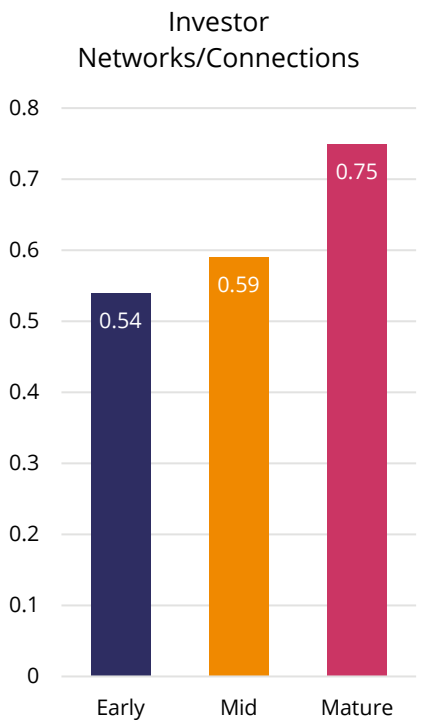

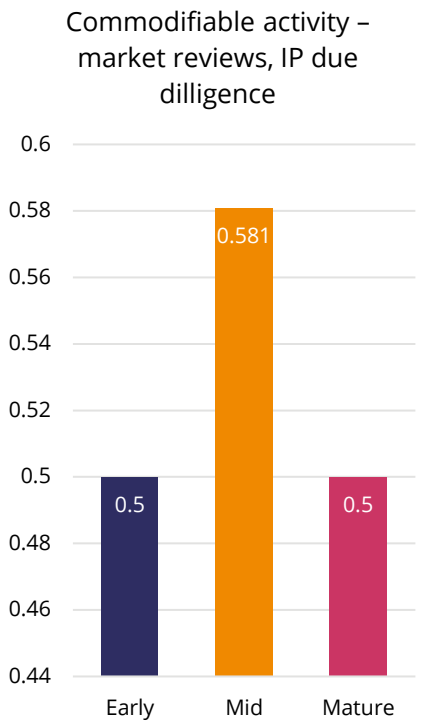

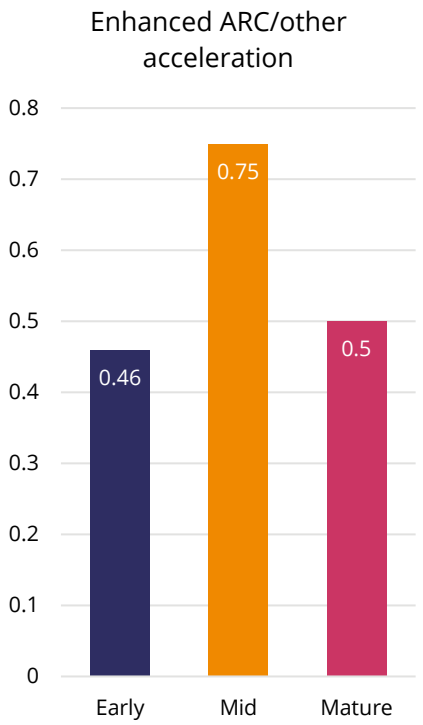

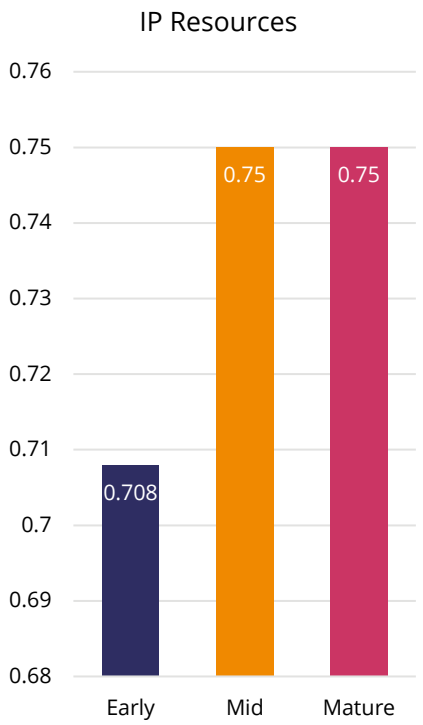

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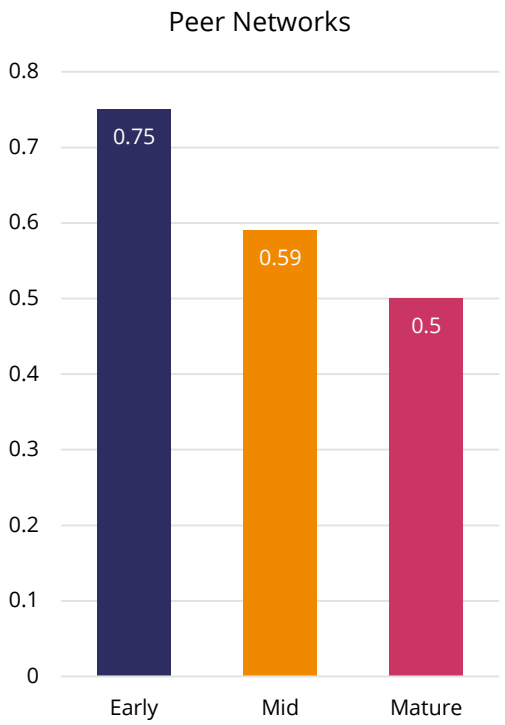

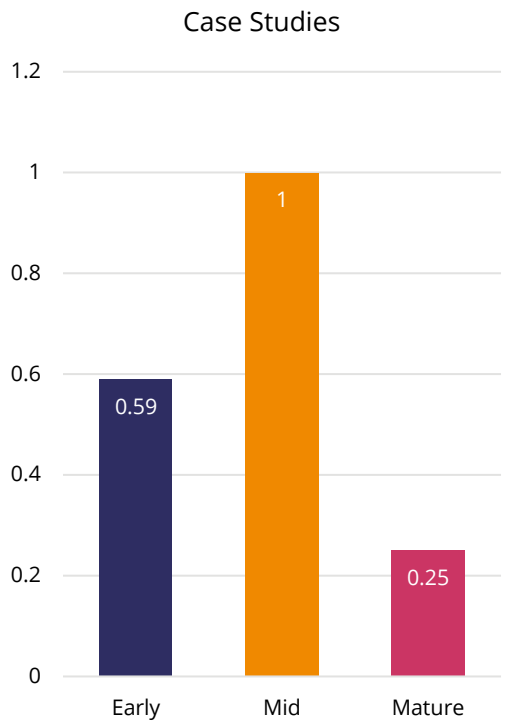

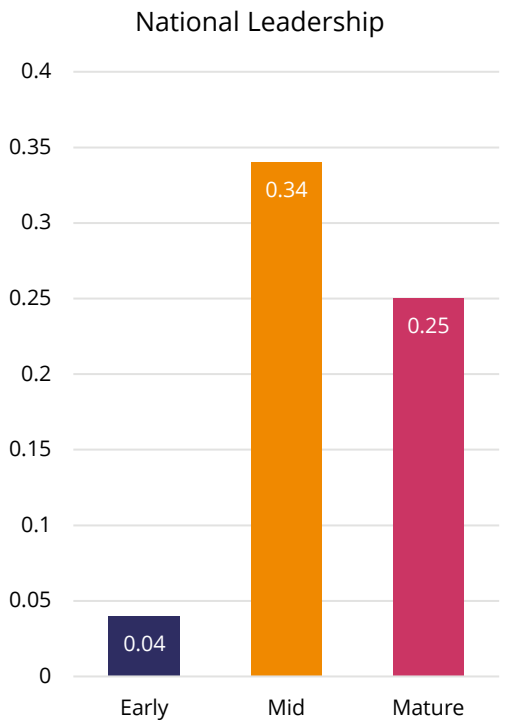

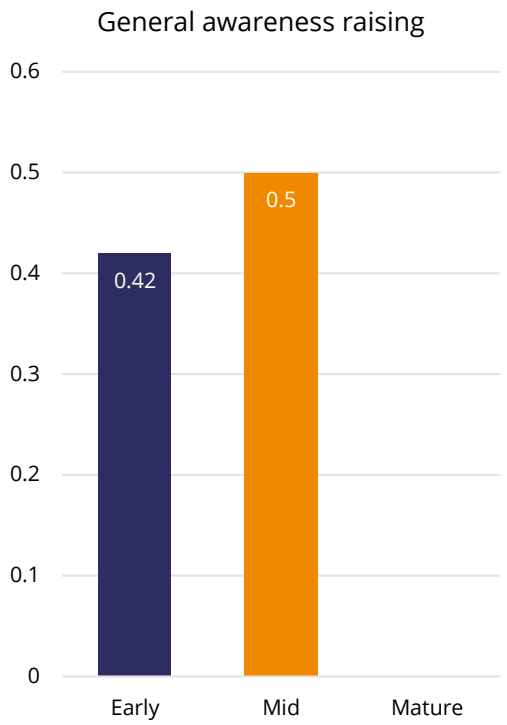

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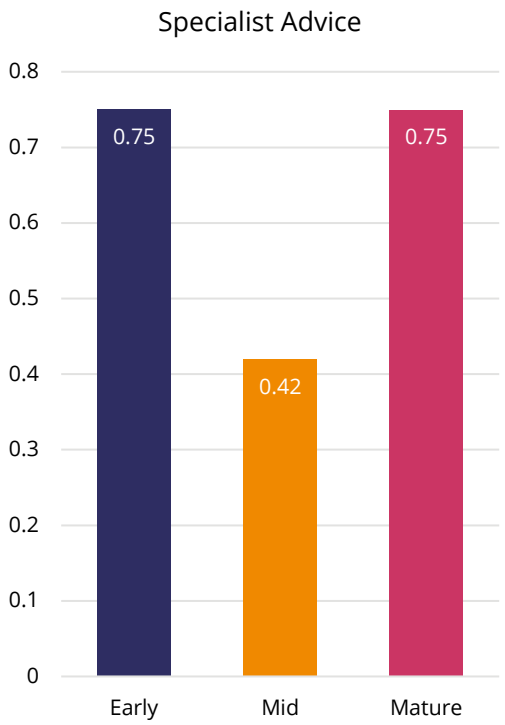
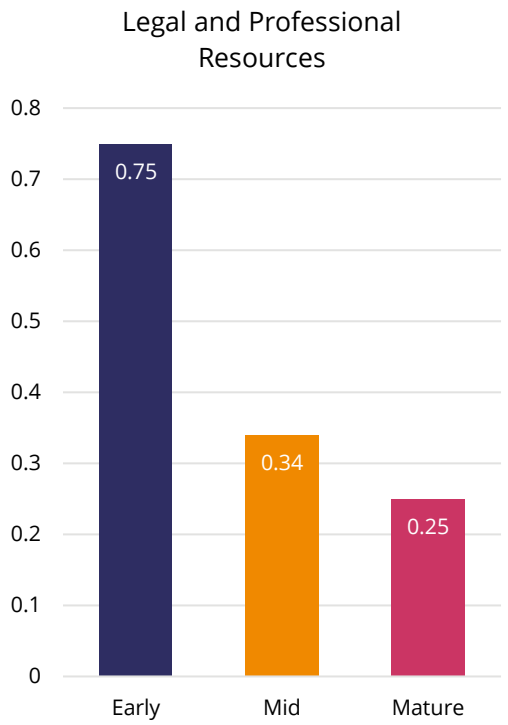
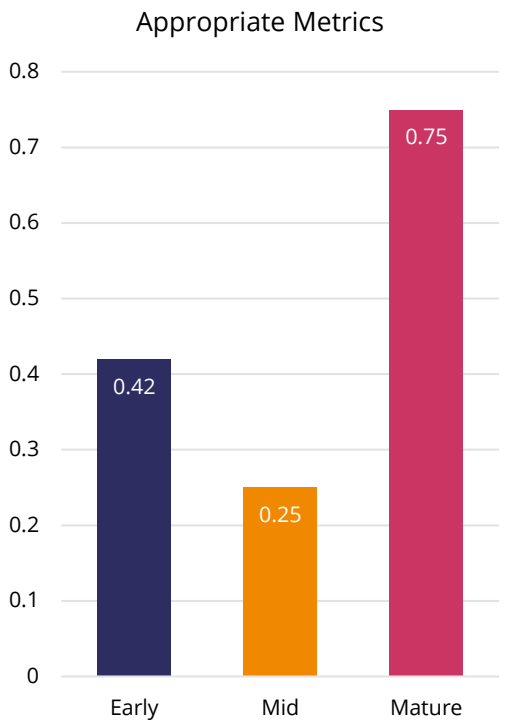
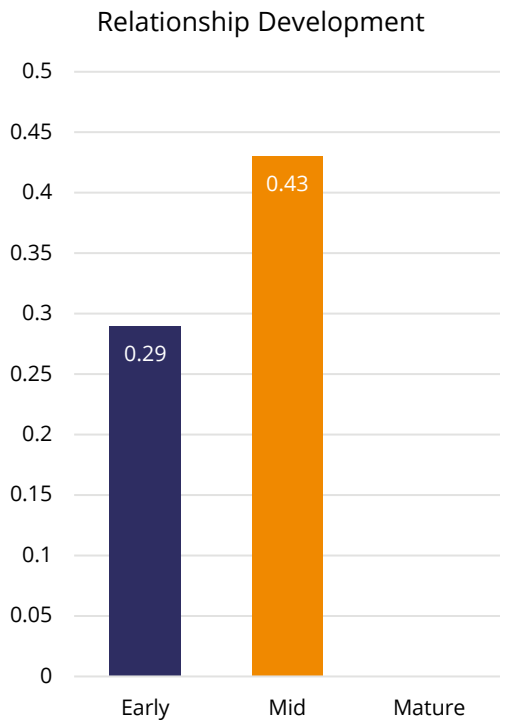








Most Benefit vs Least Benefit

Most Beneficial

- A support services 'Hub' - Policies
- Training materials for TTO staff as well as academics (potentially by discipline, SHAPE is not just one thing with one 'market')
  - Including delivery of training to HEPs
  - Including case studies in all and any format – e.g., sharing of the academic experience in person, in short form content etc.
- CoP (academic network and/or TT staff) including taking Arts and Humanities into the creative economy
- Shadowing, mentoring, secondments – sharing good practice while building the knowledge base
  - Sharing skills and knowledge
  - Entrepreneurs in Residence for SHAPE
- Knowledge based support – a cohort of advisers/consultants providing interventions across HEPs
- Multiple HEPs (across Clusters) commented that they had too many projects following awareness raising and were unable to support them, which could lower trust and interest from academics
- Triaging of opportunities - which could allow identification of potential collaborations
- Economies of scale – PoC, UKRI SHAPE Catalyst type accelerators, Incubators, consultancy 'incubator' support
- PoC funding and Accelerator programmes
- Management networks experienced in the public sector, voluntary sector, wider creative economy and in different business models
  - To include understanding of policy clients and public sector delivery (e.g. education, health, justice/crime)
- Investor networks – specific to SHAPE markets with social impact 'drive'
  - One interviewee commented on the lack of overlap/engagement between philanthropic and socially driven investors and academic founders"

Most Benefit vs Least Benefit

Least Beneficial

- Early-stage awareness raising
  - Particularly important for SHAPE academics where they may be less engaged with commercialisation
  - Mindset change may require a “slow build”, changing the culture while maintaining a focus on achieving great impact from research through the best means.
  - Best provided internally even as you use the shared materials
  - “the rarified atmosphere and elitist nature of the organisation is one of the hardest barriers to overcome”

- Early-stage project development & assessment of commercial potential
  - For both, close relationships and trust between Academic and Professional Services are vital
- Early conversations, seeding funding and early-stage support
- Geographical nuance – local, regional, national and international enabling engagement with policy makers as potential end users.
  - Civic HEPs are particularly experienced at place-based impact.

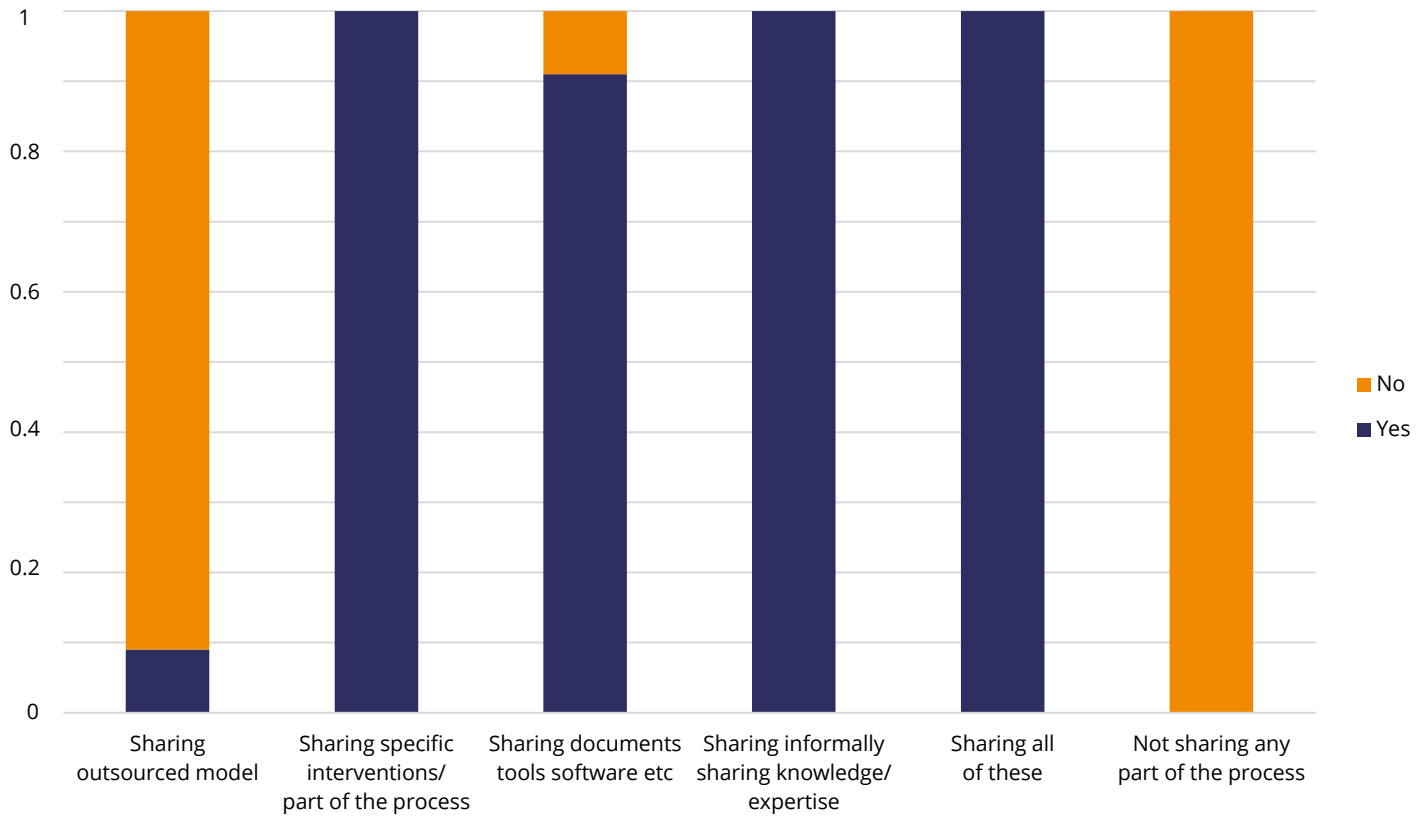
4

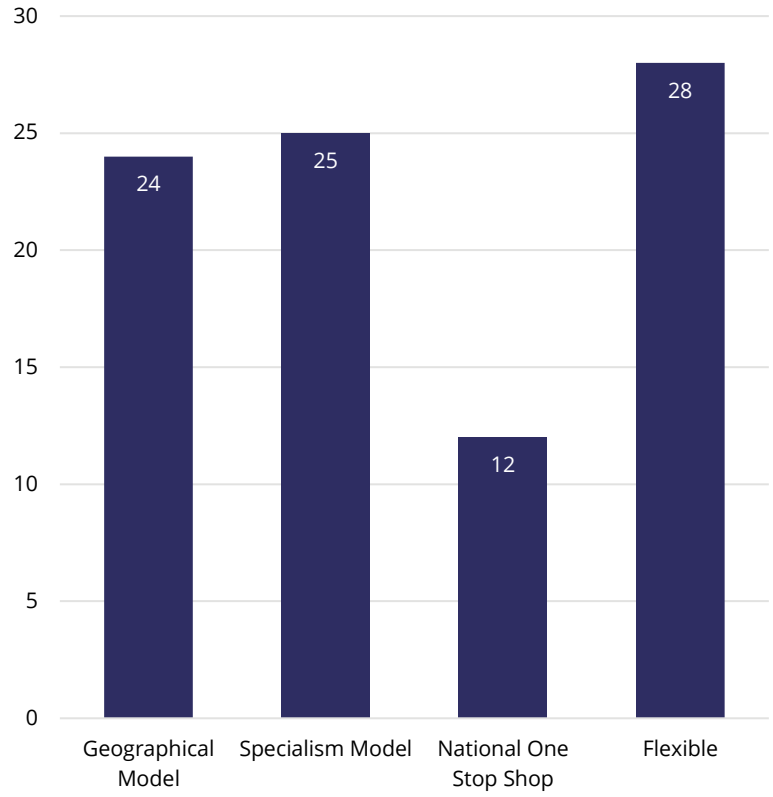
Thoughts on sharing models

- Practicalities of how it might/could it work?
- If there is a gap, could a shared TTO model address it, or something else?
- Is this about adding something to existing sharing models, or the need for a separate shared TTO for SHAPE (why or why not)?
- What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?

Models suggested by interviewees

What does this mean for a Shared TTO model?





Geographical / Regional model
(split into pros and cons as raised by interviewees)

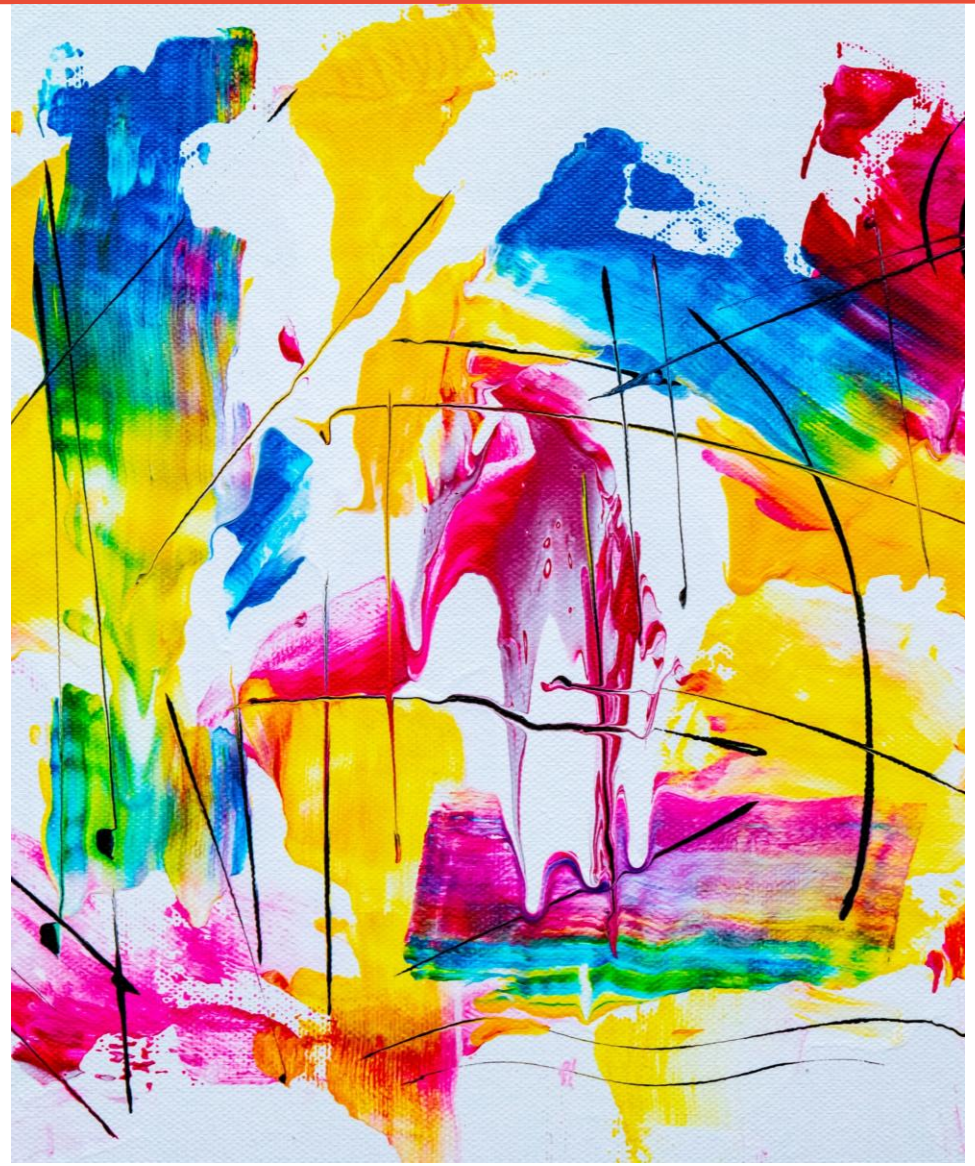
Geographical

- Support service collaboration better for earlier stages when forming relationships, with specialisms more beneficial from the academic PoV.
- Place based collaborations beneficial for place based HEPs (civic universities etc.) where peer-to-peer learning does not need to be siloed into discipline specialisms.
- Sharing model based around economic opportunities (place based and market driven)
  - With much SHAPE impact being local, geography may fit to build networks.
- Collaborations between complementary HEPs (of different clusters) with similar research base/concerns) popular for some and already happening for others
- Geography has advantages for forming relationships, and developing shared working practices and where place is important to impact (civic needs)
- Geography alone can be challenging depending on location (major metropolitan areas with Mayoral leadership very different challenges from more rural HEPs). Hubs need strong online presence in support of any geographical challenges.
- International impact HEPs tended to the view that geography would not fit their needs

Geographical / Regional model
(split into pros and cons as raised by interviewees)

Geographical

- A federated structure of regional hubs. Aligned with economic issues (likely to be regional as well as national), and potentially, aligned with the Mayoral Authority Strategies
  - Including specialist discipline and market expert support, networks of local investors and policy makers etc.
- Underpinned by the national common offering (e.g. training, policy good practice etc., PoC, expansion of UKRI SHAPE Catalyst)
- Though regional should have a large 'virtual input', negating as much as possible complexities in travel, transport and geography.



Geographical / Regional model
(split into pros and cons as raised by interviewees)

Specialism

- Geography is important but so is the recognition that SHAPE includes a huge diversity of disciplines engaging with different markets, so segmentation is also important. (Hence federated regional hubs)
- By specialism and a disciplinary lens (culture, discipline and value chain very different, even between Arts & Humanities and the social sciences). Know-how of specific markets is necessary for this to succeed. A generic programme will not work.
    - Speaks to the mixed model federated hubs with specialist sector KE advisers providing support to resource 'stretched' HEPs under financial and economic pressure who don't have the funding to bring in consultants or resource to employ TTO staff for the projects encouraged to come forward.
- Specialism of HEP 'type' – HEP remits, KEF clusters, similar markets, e.g. civic institutions – requires nuance and careful agreements when sharing with each other.
- Specialism driven by disciplines, Arts and Social Sciences / humanities may sit in different offerings. A shared service could pool capacity where additional capacity is needed to attract the market, building market penetration and networks to increase licensing opportunities in particular.
- *"Discipline model enabling local, regional, national and international collaborations with SHAPE at the heart of what they do".*
- Open these collaborations to industry and the 3rd sector

Key interview feedback

- A large appetite for a comprehensive, flexible offer delivering: policy, process, good practice guidance for the SHAPE 'markets', expert advice and connections when developing projects into value propositions and routes to markets, market testing and ARC programme type support when "kicking the tyres" and deal making.
- Some interviewees were of the view that the shared office should be provided by HEPs, rather than working with 3rd parties/external expertise. Others took the view that the expertise offered would benefit from being independent, experienced in working with and in the markets, and more accepted across the HEPs.
- Shared offering across the sector (open to all HEPs) could provide shared capacity building, economies of scale on forms, processes, policies, IP protection specific to likely SHAPE offerings – less patent more other IPRs). And market testing accelerators such as ARC (UKRI SHAPE Catalyst), with a focus on business models that work in the social impact economy.
- Case studies (very popular) with interviewees (often highlighting how they are aware that the discussion on case studies has been going on for years).
- Commentary was that there are a lot of case studies available, but they don't reflect the diversity of SHAPE disciplines, they are not in easily 'digestible' formats for the academics to engage with, and that they could be much better signposted and easier to access across the HEPs.

Funding models

Response (*)	# HEPs
Funded Model	25
Subscription Model	3
Tiered Model	2
Based on HEI size	1
Pooled Fund	1
Cluster grant format "skin-in the game"	1

* As semi structured interviews, not all discussions focused on all the same points of discussion

- Majority of those interviewed would like to see a fully funded offering in the first instance, potentially shifting funding in time. Majority of HEPs interviewed have very limited resources for SHAPE commercialisation, with many noting projects stuck in portfolios because of the lack of resource, expertise and understanding of the markets to support them.
- Very hard to make the case internally that investment in SHAPE specialist support is worthwhile to the HEP (longer-term societal and economic impact is a harder case to make to leadership).
- Size based funding model, a subscription model with funding input based on numbers of staff
- Tiered levels with some free provision but a fee structure for particular activities
- Initially it needs to be free to the HEPs
- Grant funding in a cluster format

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Enablers and constraints

- What is required for sharing SHAPE TT to work?
- What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?

Barriers and constraints

Summary of data from Survey and Interviews

Barriers and constraints	# HEPs	% HEPs Interviewed
Time	29	73
Resources	25	63
Lack of on-funding	23	58
Confidentiality	21	53
Trust	11	28
Bureaucracy	10	25
Lack of Capacity Building	8	20
Imbalance in effort v return	7	18
How useful would it be	6	15
Lack of representation	2	5
Metrics	1	3
HEP Size	1	3

*As semi structured interviews, not all discussions focused on all the same points of discussion

Enablers/incentives – from interviews

- Grant funding upfront and on-funded – "HEPs will follow the money…" Government endorsed
- Strategic Leadership and incentivisation from by policy makers, funders, HEP senior leadership: for governance, academics and TTO staff
  - *"strong mandate, advocacy and support. When established it will benefit from coherent and clear communication and PR for all stakeholders"*
- Prioritising SHAPE will incentivise broad portfolio HEPs to engage (where they are typically undervalued compared to STEM)
- Over the longer term, the potential for revenue sharing from outputs between HEP and Shared support.
- Right price point to sell to the senior leadership internally
- Good publicity which could stimulate lucrative partnerships locally and globally.
- It will need to have a clear cost / benefit case for society
- Levels of support (free access to shared templates/documents etc.), with a paid offering for consultancy or expertise case by case.
- Clarity of process, how to access, expectations, capacity to support. (All increasingly important as academic and support resources are scaled back across HEPs)
- Minimal bureaucracy, clarity of SLAs
- Packages offerings to be used – the right fit for the right region or locale
- Packages offerings to be used – the right fit for the right region or locale
- Accessible to the smaller HEPs where they have to be *"jack of all trades".*

Enablers/incentives – from interviews

- SHAPE Commercialisation advisers /experts with a deep knowledge of the SHAPE disciplines, markets and investment ecosystem (confidentiality will be key)
- Theme based meet ups
- Access to PoC funding, Accelerator funding support and experts from other HEPs – need to have mechanisms to buy out time,
- Ability to create new connections and collaborations across HEPs and between services and researchers.
- Upfront on benefits for academics and support services – Peer-to-Peer network, Case studies / success stories from other HEPs showing how these activities can impact on HEIF and other KEF metrics
- Capture the good practice / continual improvement helping incentivise academics and professional services to engage

Barriers & Constraints to a successful model: interview comments

- Lack of national leadership (consistent and strategic) and lack of messaging
- Tight ownership, legal framework needed for senior leaders to engage
- Time
- If value isn't felt quickly
- Trust
- Around funding disparity between smaller and larger HEPs
- Transparent and equitable avoiding most funding going to larger research intensive HEPs
- Needs equivalence of partners/users (particularly between research intensive and teaching intensive HEPs (cultural issues between research focused academics and practitioner academics – many of whom work in Arts, Cluster E and Cluster M HEPs)
- Academic body stronger on social justice than finance – a lack of trust in professional services and commercialisation
- Between academic body, professional services, leadership (all under huge financial pressure)

Q7 Past sharing experience - all ongoing/current

Description	Example*	Learnings
Local sharing arrangements – no external funding	ANONYMISED	Sharing between different Cluster HEPs, where academics & TTO teams gain benefit
Regional collaboration (CCF and previously ERDF)	ANONYMISED	Leadership roles shared across the membership.
Economically driven – collaborations with businesses and charities to create new ideas, products and services, jobs, and growth	ANONYMISED	Funding counts Ambitious projects take time and resource to deliver.
CCF RED Pilot collaborations involving interviewees HEPs – most of them..... e.g.	ANONYMISED	Outputs awaited but may well inform any SHAPE Shared TTO
Sector focused and funded (AHRC)	ANONYMISED	Technical specialism/expertise HEP + larger HEP infrastructure
Regional 'Profit with Purpose'	ANONYMISED	CCF funding supported the foundation of this regional investment and shared TTO support offering.
Network organisation and resource Hub	ANONYMISED	CCF funding supported the foundation of a shared hub, now with a membership model
Network organisation	ANONYMISED	Many Arts, Cluster M, J members interviewed commented on its value

* Examples have been removed to maintain the anonymity of interviewees.

- **Takeaways**
  - Keen to share & experienced
  - Multiple examples of each of these, just a few highlighted
  - Almost all the shared activity founded on external funding
  - Exception are the 'local' partnerships between HEPs
- **Reflection: What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?**
  - Learnings from the other Pilots projects will be of interest and there may be opportunities to collaborate, e.g. STAGE
  - Core funding to establish offerings can lead to sustainable models – given time.
  - Aspect (and ARC) named by some interviewees as 'working because they are viewed as independent'.
  - Guild HE engaged across policy, industry, HEPs with Arts and other specialisms

6

Final questions & wrap-up

Opportunity for interviewees to highlight what most mattered to them

Engagement with the process (1)

- "So helpful to reflect on this. So busy that rarely has space to contemplate"
- "There is a need and desire to make something like this happen. [Our HEP] is not alone in low resourcing issues etc. But if there is a way to deliver support in a more efficient and effective way for HEPs like [us] than this will be welcomed with open arms".
- "It is just what we said. More than willing and desperate to work with similar people to crack this. Just need the hands-on deck".
- "...we are super enthusiastic about shared services – they just need to see what it looks like in practice".
- "We are very collaborative. Take home is that HEIs are very open to sharing but with a relatively small team we struggle to support others unless resource implications make sense to us. But very open to looking at this and are supportive." There should be a separate SHAPE PoC fund.
- "Anything that is offered that compounds the situation is bad. Is the Shared TTO project there to help the HEIs that need it most or there to help those who are doing well do even better or more to do with driving SHAPE commercialisation more generally. What is the underlying aim?"
- "Covered it all. Great initiative to do this. Read the report on shared models in the LES".

Engagement with the process (2)

- "Fundamentally a good idea but it needs to be structured correctly and not early stage. It needs to be a symbiotic relationship and not a replacement. It needs to be viewed as not better that that but rather a part of the overall solution long-term overcome the valleys of death"
- "A lot of the conversations are hypothetical as they don't have unlimited resources. They have capacity constraints and unis like his will be similar. A shared resource needs to have something to do".
- Experience on CCF projects indicate that HEPs long-term to work together. Been on PrA courses and TenU mentoring. "Everyone is eager to network to talk outside their own institutions"
- "RE should be poised to on-fund successful pilots. There is a huge effort that goes in, startup effort dissipates - there needs to be a long-term plan if value demonstrated. Otherwise, it is a cruel experiment to not fund. Needs government backing in alignment with independent review of spinouts – less equity therefore government mentality less about universities making money than ever. <10% for SHAPE ventures if any although don't talk directly about SHAPE. Self fund office – not about this. Therefore, the reporting aligns with their pilot".
- "Accepting that they want and need support with SHAPE TTO functions. Want to collaborate and are open to all conversations".

Leadership (1)

- “notes that the UKRI/RCs tend to build things for what the situation was 5 years ago. The situation has changed from when Aspect was launched, for example, as more HEPs are looking to do more SHAPE TT/translation/commercialisation. But somehow we still design offerings aimed at 5 years ago. We need to be engaging more and building more for what is happening now and will be needed tomorrow. These are the things to focus on, so this doesn’t need to be ‘more of the same’, unless we are thinking about expansion for ARC etc.”
- “This shared offering needs to be ambitious, and talk/act in a mature fashion and be market driven (across all those markets with which SHAPE disciplines engage)”
- “SHAPE is great. It’s sad that government is prioritising subjects that don’t include creativity. It jars that the 21st century skills government talk about includes creativity but there is a mismatch in what is prioritised”.
- “design sustainability into whatever comes out of this activity”.
- “He thinks that if there is a central government decision for universities to drive innovation that RE needs to focus to unlock this (for those who don’t know how to). Not been the case that this is happening”.
- “needs to categorically articulate what best practice and what success looks like . For her HEP side, she thinks it is very much capturing where they are as an organisation as they are having to think about different ways to convert research impact to outputs and they have been operating in this space for some time”.
- “Leadership ->strategy -> tactics->giving people the time to do this impact generation. A key question is ‘how can the SHAPE shared support help the institutions to show leadership and free up the time for academics and the support services to focus on generating impact at scale”

Leadership (2)

- "The key questions to be answered are: WHY? Why share? What does UKRI want? Need to see a clear rationale to share from the top. It is a niche activity with huge national and international benefit to be gained from HEP SHAPE research; shared experience, access to enablers, better knowledge management and the knowledge network are key. In terms of public sector research knowledge, SHAPE academics are ahead of the fully private sector (speaking the same language as the public sector with better and evidenced research work)".
- "The key points they want to get across are all around that Leadership question. All this comes back to leadership. The ability of people to freelance in their organisations, working independently is largely over. The amount compliance type work is too much (REF, KEF managing etc). Capacity is just not there for this more freelance activity. There is a need for leadership, not so much operational but strategic, so that individuals know what is wanted from them on this, and consistent so that they don't receive mixed messages"
- "To be able (from this work and the funding use) to come away with having another institution to help SHAPE and drill down into what is needed – a packaging of offerings. And then to have this qualified again – for the TTOs to comment on the outcome so that we end up with a workable solution for the next 5-10 years. TTOs need to be involved in the conversation as they are at the receiving end and will end up paying as it will come out of funding".

SHAPE commercialisation in a STEM shaped world (1)

- “Biggest challenge is time for academics. Our office don’t see the ECR types coming through to be CTO types in spin outs. They are looking to create bigger, more exciting spin outs. The model that SHAPE researching and commercializing validates a societal change and the start up team works up the opportunity to deal with the opportunity”.
- “Key thing is for smaller institutions it is a capacity issue, alongside the long cultural piece. Difficult to get people to recognise the difference between STEM oriented and SHAPE. It is frustratingly different. All the same ways to do KE but the structures have nuance in delivery. ICURe and ARC different but similar. And impact can be the same but in different ways”.
- “Just to add that it is beholden on SHAPE universities not to apologise for SHAPE commercialisation. The SHAPE focused HEPs are the ones best placed to respond to the challenge. We should feel the confidence that we have in a particular type of commercialisation, demonstrating social impact, and responding the needs of the SME and micro community. They can be really confident about their ability to give back to the rest of the sector their expertise!”
- “[Our Arts focused HEP] have a more developed SHAPE pipeline than most with a STEAM approach (STEM plus ARTs)”

SHAPE commercialisation in a STEM shaped world (2)

- "There is a bit of noise at the moment about PoC funding. With the new UKRI PoC fund which does seem to include SHAPE but will that mean any SHAPE projects actually get funded when they go up against more STEM/trad investor and PoC opportunities? Does SHAPE PoC and Investment need to be ringfenced? How do you compare SHAPE and STEM". "Also something about communicating best practices and case studies back to UKRI. So more of an advocacy role for this shared resource as well as advisory".
- "Not specific to commercialisation but as one of the universities not getting HEIF there is a reason why they don't to this. When they meet GuildHE they push for funds to be made available to HEIs like theirs – there is evidence that seed funding works in terms of acceleration e.g. PoC, secondments, PER."
- "Would love to see a change in KTPs that enabled [our HEP] to really participate in them. Change to be around the partners, and the financial hoops that the partners have to overcome to take part (SMEs and charities in the sector not being flush with money). It is just not the way their industry works, small and not well funded. They work differently. That or some other model that enabled research knowledge to have impact – potentially the secondment model or something similar".

Not reinventing the wheel, economies of scale, independence

Not reinventing the wheel & economies of scale

- "IP Portfolio exploitation. Is this an opportunity to 'portfolio projects' to maximise benefits of these projects (e.g. games). They tried this but is was difficult, even as a more mature HEP."
- "Translational /PoC funding specifically for SHAPE. Noting the difference between SHAPE enterprises and STEM including the form of IP and the work that is needed in the early development phase with the academics (more needed for SHAPE)."

Independence

- "Doesn't see how shared service based on HEPs sharing their own skills, expertise and resources, can work. Needs to be removed from the institution (an external eye/overview pulling together good practice from across the HEPs. Ideally it would be someone who knows universities, knows the funding system. Someone who won't by default go looking for research funding; someone who is able to clarify that deal size may be smaller but greater number of deals in SHAPE. Someone focused on value".

Delivery (1)

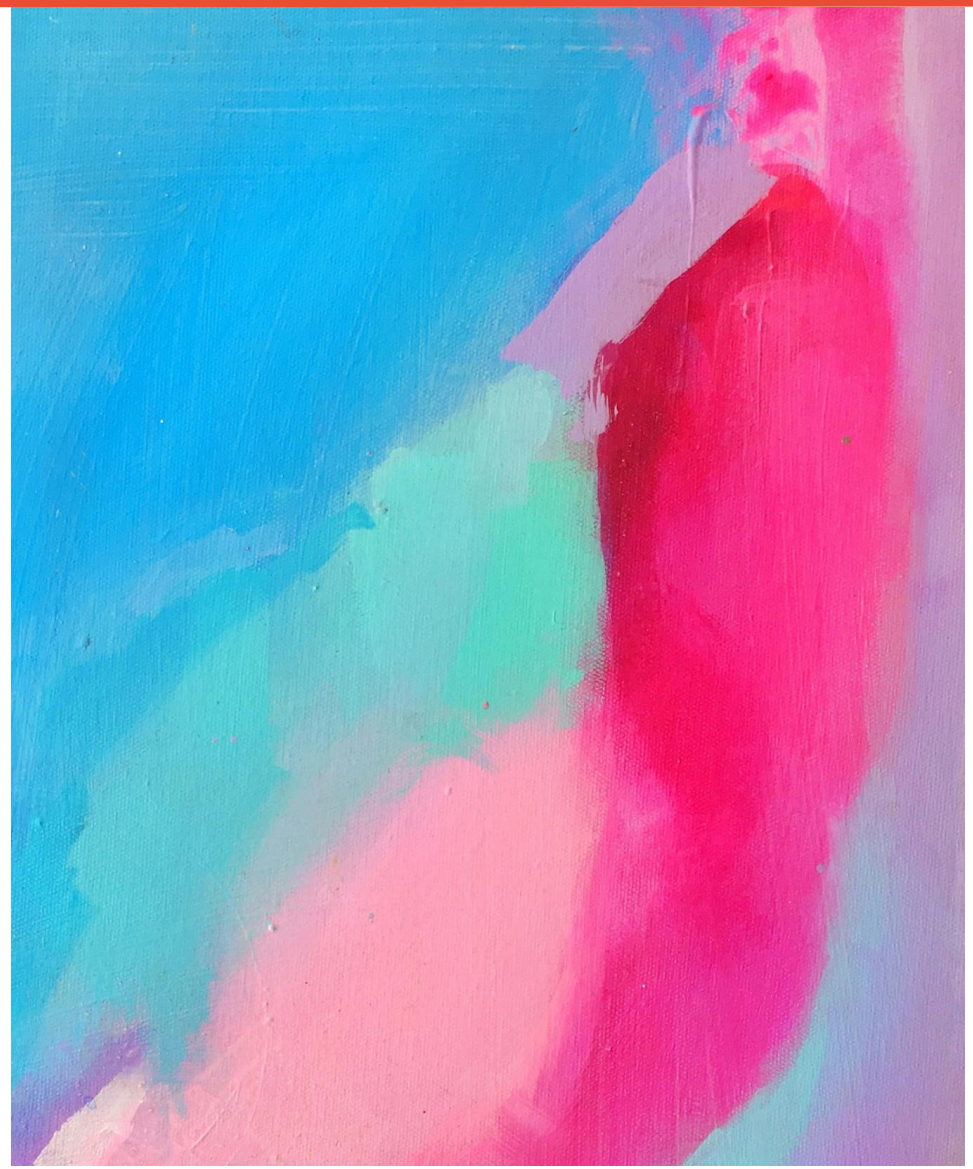
- “This is a positive thing to be sharing this knowledge. And expertise. Or maybe around the money side, PoC, Investor, and it seems more of the funding networks and business networks may need more training, education in social impact, what its for, how it can work. Etc. So that investors (and PoC funds) don’t have unrealistic expectations.”
- “The office has a broad remit and lacks commercialisation specialists. Having access to that kind of support across the process of taking a project from an idea to an output could be a huge change. And one that might increase the interest from the Faculty in what they could do in the office to help them achieve impact. However, that specialist commercialisation support has to be high level expertise (ie aligned with HEP)”.
- “It is of key importance to have better links into the end users in the public sector, NGOs, Agencies, already existing charities and CICs etc. Shared access to this market, investors, CEOs, economic and sector a real carrot for the Shared TTO to offer.”
- “The key points are the gap and need around PoC to PoM and peer to peer mentoring and the and the transparency of offering (x, y, z) and maybe an independent group running it (not HEP) providing confidence in the non-founders who may be wishing to see that they will have fair access to the offerings”.
- “Expert advise with experience. Or even some kind of interactive portal that lays out very clearly the steps. You have your thing, what the next steps are? Really basic and piecemeal and could be used by anyone on any project. Easy to work through”.

Delivery (2)

- “It will not be easy to succeed in part because the commercial drivers for SHAPE outputs achieving impact are not typically the same as the current focus on ‘growth’ in the wider economy. She is very keen to see what structure and approach will be taken to develop a provision of shared services for SHAPE commercialisation that fits with a quite complex wider HEP ecosystem and complex (untraditional) routes into impact”.
- “If some of the daily responsibilities could be more outsourced instead of doing in house, it would be great (includes the market research for example). It would be hugely beneficial to be able to better leverage resources form the wider ecosystems”.
- “It is crucial that the bottom line remains EDI – gender diversity in commercialisation is a huge barrier. It is a barrier in STEM. SHAPE is more EDI friendly than”.
- “In post 92s so much of the Arts research and education comes from practitioners who do both teaching and doing. Incentives etc. are needed. But they are already good at engagement. Are already strong. Need to convey how this works for them”.
- “Quite immature on commercialisation despite being recognised expert HEP. Anything that helps them along this process will be welcomed. They have flexibility in working with partners, but this can bring unusual risks, where in house contracts management is key. They don’t have a mandate to say No. They sit with the risk assessment with an academic body that wants freedom to operate”.
- “4 colleges at the university have a huge amount of potential. To unlock this they need the professional services that greater collaboration and sharing could bring”.

Delivery (3)

- “One size does not fit all in SHAPE. Getting the culture right is key“
- “Also, we need to stop spinning out social enterprises that simply serve to provide researchers with new models ways to do more research. It is not a good use of time or funding. You have to have a good reason to go the spin out route, kick the tyres a bit in the market. One of the reasons why more licensing would be good.”
- “Peer to peer mentoring amongst institutions. It happens in a voluntary way. So: mentoring, seconding, shadowing approach – noting that cultural differences. This is what I know, what I could do, what might we take forward quickly, measured steps not requiring the world of resources.”
- “It would also be a good model to have institutions identify another institution to buddy up with, a bit like the HEP as a post 92, but more developed and mature. Friendly and like-minded. But a bit further along”.



Impact (1)

- "It would be the wider impact that having some shared service could actually have, not just for each HEP but for the UK as a whole (e.g. the Konfer for the Creative industries to put the UK on the map). TTOs do not exist in arts universities. A foreign language."
- "A key barrier (and potential enabler) is "Why are we doing it, what is it for?" The conversations around commercialisation and impact generation have to excite people. And what they get from it or want from it won't always be money, but rather a sense of having social as well as economic impact, so the commercialisation is about enabling you to do more with your work and have a greater impact" – ARTs specialist
- "We tend to think of SHAPE as one thing. So much within SHAPE is about how to those disciplines work together so that the SHA people can work better together. Get those conversations going earlier so Arts and social sciences can talk to each other…. This is what National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange (https://ncace.ac.uk/.) has done so well. Academics are tremendously creative folk. He is an economist, he wants so see how economics can help other Social Sciences and Arts work together to have impact
- "People could look at the local interactions with the local community. [Our HEP] does not do that so much. But civic engagement is one specific route where SHAPE can have impact".

Impact (2)

- “Commercialisation and TT are a foreign language in their markets and among their academics. Societal impact, and impact investment are more likely to be understood and then taken up by the sector (where CICs and charities and the public sector dominate. It is much harder to capture wider economic benefits than in typical STEM but capturing and communicating this wider benefit should help bring in the social impact investors”.
- Huge potential for them in STEM/SHAPE collaborations (cannot separate the 2) but SHAPE IP is different. A key takeaway is that local benefit and impact is an area where SHAPE could have impact”.
- “Income as a proxy for impact doesn’t work. It’s driving so much decision making and is shortsighted. Other kinds of value as important and sometimes more important. Government holds up music for dementia as a huge innovative success, but universities can’t submit it in returns so get no reward. Universities’ roles in the greater good and civic good are undermined by the structures they need to fit in”.

7

Discussion and Reflections

Headline takeaways

- This process uncovered a huge appetite for shared SHAPE support and facilitated deep, cathartic thinking about enablers and constraints around how a shared SHAPE TTO offering might accelerate the activity and quality of SHAPE commercialisation nationally
- It was clear from the interviews that SHAPE commercialisation, across the sector, is supported at a clearly reduced level compared to STEM, irrespective of HEP cluster. Limited resource impacted willingness to share
- There was strong indication that something is needed and strong appetite for engagement to ensure there is a tangible outcome that is fit for purpose for the coming 5-10 years, not this point in time, where the benefits of previous CCF funding are being realised.
- It is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach is not the solution and that deep understanding of sectors, markets and specialisms needs to underpin any offering.
- The interviews elucidated a need for a flexible, possibly tiered, sharing model with (free?) access to a repository of supportive content which can be expanded to (paid for?) specialist advice when needed.
- This prompted thinking around a range of model approaches/options that we have described as, Evolution, Devolution and Revolution
- A concerted, structured shared TTO offering could be a driver for a cohesive, directional and innovative national SHAPE commercialisation ecosystem in place of the current piecemeal approach where the protagonists are overstretched and underconfident.

Additional points for discussion

- Your views on this engagement and these outputs?
  - Is this aligned with your thinking?
- Thoughts on the delivery models discussed?
- Thoughts on funding models discussed?
- Views of engaging with other CCF RED Pilot projects?
- How do these outputs relate to / compare with the outputs from the survey and the literature review?
- What does this mean for a shared SHAPE TTO?

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