Edge Hill University
New to Social Enterprise/ Building Ecosystems

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Model: Find

Edge Hill University are testing the water with their approach to social entrepreneurship through a Find partnership programme, delivered through a Business School team with cross faculty champions in Health and Education. The programme had strong strategic buy-in from the University's senior management as it came at a time when the issues around enterprise support, employability skills, and the place of the University within the community were being discussed and addressed.

The University is relatively new to finding, funding and supporting social entrepreneurs and does not currently administer cash Awards and support programmes at the institution. However, long-standing relationships and good communication with internal and external partnerships, coupled with a strong team experienced in social entrepreneurship, regeneration and community development, have really enabled this programme to hit the ground running. As a result, Edge Hill has very quickly evolved in its capacity to be delivering a Find, Co-fund and Co-support model, in partnership with enhanced support from UnLtd.

Historically, there has been a focus within the University's curriculum on the importance of public services and the continued professional development for public sector workers. They also have a well-established curriculum in 'Voluntary Sector Management', all resulting in a campus which already has social entrepreneurs developing careers, enterprises and projects.

The staff team has enabled their programme to develop in a highly organic way and the concept of building an ecosystem of support for social entrepreneurs comes very naturally to this institution. In spite of a smaller Awards pot, this has enabled rapid activity to take shape with a range of viable and innovative project ideas from staff, students and graduates, across a range of themes and sectors to be found, co-funded and co-supported within the first 6 months. Through their outreach they have generated interest from 20 individuals, resulting in 7 Awards to date. The

programme at Edge Hill isn't just about making Awards. They have sought to bring together and build upon their connections with support networks and local established social entrepreneurs as part of their activity, facilitating several joint networking events as part of building their ecosystem. These were attended by local agencies, social enterprises and support agencies. This will culminate in an interactive regional event later in the summer of 2013, showcasing, championing and enabling social innovation, change and enterprise to ultimately enable what they term 'Good Business' to thrive.

Unexpected Outcomes
The unexpected outcomes and experiences that Edge Hill discovered through the delivery of the programme included;

- The capability of the Edge Hill delivery team and the wider staff community within the business school to support and assist the social entreprenuers in the development of their ideas.
- The level of interest and commitment within the staff and student body to develop enterprises and to find interesting and novel solutions to address issues within their communities
- The underlying level of interest and desire within the existing social enterprise community in the area for the University to become an engaged and active partner.

The main lessons that they've taken from the project are;

- Regardless of people's interest, they need lots of time and support to develop their ideas into something that they can deliver and get up and running. This doesn't easily fit within the academic year and so good planning by the delivery team is key.
- Early and repeated engagement with the

University is key and therefore, as they go forward, they will look to build on their emerging enterprise club to identify and develop projects.

- Projects don't develop the way the entrepreneur, or the mentors and a support team expect. Therefore, it is important to remain flexible and willing to adapt to 'facts on the ground'.
- Students in particular seemed to respond well to competitions and workshops which asked them to think about problems and propose solutions rather than just ask if they were interested in social enterprise. In future they will look to build on this, possibly by engaging with one of the other institutions that have used this process more.
- Long term they would like to develop ideas which were led by groups of staff and students with the hope that they could develop some social enterprises which could sit within the University overseen by staff but renewed each year by a new cohort of students.

Plans for the future

Their plans for the future include building on the work they've done so far with engaging in the network of local social enterprises to ensure that the University becomes a key part of the local SE ecosystem. Continuing to develop their student and graduate enterprise support programme to provide more support for those interested in Enterprise and ensuring that learning and engaging with social enterprise forms a key part of anything they develop. Bringing together those staff engaged in enterprise activity into a more coherent team and continuing to support them to develop and build the skills necessary to support student and staff enterprises.