Student led Green Capital Project: students as catalysts for change

Challenge: mobilise 10% of the population

How do we support students to learn to live sustainable lives?

How can students become global ambassadors for sustainable living?

How do we mobilise student creativity and energy to help transform our city?

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University roles in regional change: fostering a climate of change
How?

- **Catalyst:** Bristol European Green Capital 2015
- **PARTNERSHIP**
  - Within: whole institution approach
  - Between: all Universities and Student Unions
  - With the community - Bristol Green Partnership: >850 organisations
  - City Council and Mayor
- **Start up funding**
Aim: 100,000 hours of student action in 2015

Students engaged in 100,000 hours of city-community activity for sustainability

Volunteering, internships, placements for sustainability

Over 220 public, private sector, voluntary groups, NGOs, communities

Large and small scale, individual and collective

NOT just one year, but every year
Outcomes...

- >2500 students
- >140,000 hours
- >£1 million value
- Changing student understanding of what it means to live in a city
- Changing our city

What's the point of being in Bristol if you don't join in?

We felt they really got to understand our business and produced a brilliant business plan that is really going to help us going forward.

It gave me the belief to move to Bristol: I now sell three times as many bikes.

It has been fantastic to work with the University as well; lots of people in this area don’t go on to University or have any connections. It has really changed our perceptions.

96% of students felt that:

- Their involvement had a positive impact
- They had an enjoyable experience
- Their activity was worthwhile
- They had been useful
The Bees and Hive: open innovation

- Holistic seeing role in the whole
- All projects have a role
- Light touch – open innovation
- Accepting failure as natural
- Reduces reliance on individual relationships
- Network outlives individual projects
- Fosters big relationships
- Surfaces & shares
What have students been doing?

- **Cash**: raising £300k for local charities
- **Education**: delivering workshops to schools
- **Working with existing groups**: Designing Wildlife Corridors
- **Innovation**: Knitaversity
- **New insights**: Modern Day Slavery
- **Professional input**: NGO Business planning
- **Greening Business**: waste and energy audits, green business plans
The Change Makers

- Online brokerage platform
- “Front of house” for local organisations to engage with students
- Maintained in partnership between Universities
- Case Studies to inspire

- New permanent award created to celebrate and reward students efforts
- Two public award ceremonies a year – over 700 a year – presented by civic leaders.
External Evaluation:

“the overwhelmingly positive feedback from both students and external community partners.

It was really pleasing to see how useful the students felt, and how much community partners valued their impact and would recommend working with Bristol students to other organisations”
Transferable Lessons

✓ It works - students and the city win
✓ Fosters student understanding of the city – and the city’s understanding of students
✓ Synergies of scale / holistic view
✓ The importance of a long term and broad partnership
✓ Students don’t have the same ‘power’ baggage as ‘experts’
✓ Students bring new ideas / insights

Can we
• recognise students bring more than just muscle?
• give students space to lead?
SPACE to lead
Conclusions

Students and community can benefit

Think big and think open innovation

Fosters university - community relationships

Delivers practical change

But also challenges us to change
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