



Department
for Education

Civic University Network Grant: awarded under Section 70 of the Charities Act 2006

Presented to Parliament pursuant to **Section 70 of the Charities Act
2006**

January 2022



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at **Department for Education, 2 St Paul's Place, 125 Norfolk St, Sheffield, S1 2JF**

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Report by the Minister of State for Higher Education and Further Education on the use of powers under Section 70 of the Charities Act 2006 – for the year 2020-2021.

Executive summary

Section 70 of the Charities Act 2006 (the Act) sets out the powers for Ministers to give financial assistance to charitable, benevolent, or philanthropic institutions and requires that payments made under this power are reported.

In March 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) part-funded the creation of the Civic University Network (the Network) through a £50,000 grant awarded to the University Partnership Programme (UPP) Foundation¹ – a registered charity that offers grants to universities, charities and other higher education bodies.

The Civic University Network supports universities through the creation of Civic University Agreements (CUAs) – placing universities as anchor institutions within their locality to develop the economic, social, and cultural wellbeing needs of the surrounding community.

¹ <https://upp-foundation.org/>

ABOUT THE CHARITY AWARDED FUNDING

The Civic University Commission

In 2019, The UPP Foundation launched the Civic University Commission to examine the economic, social, environmental, and cultural role universities play in the towns and cities they are a part of. After finding many examples of civic activity but a lack of a strategic approach, the Commission challenged universities to re-shape their civic responsibilities in line with the real needs of their local area.

This need for robust and meaningful civic engagement led to the creation of Civic University Agreements (CUAs) – based on best practice and co-created in partnership with local government, and other institutions in the local community.² Such agreements are intended to secure and enhance the positive impact that universities can have on the wider community in their localities.

To support the creation of these CUAs, DfE part-funded the creation of the Civic University Network through a £50,000 grant awarded to the UPP Foundation on the condition of meeting all the milestones as set out in the Grant Agreement letter. The purpose of establishing the Civic University Network was to promote and share good practice amongst universities to improve the quality of CUAs and civic engagement.

Government funding helped the Network to develop as a peer-led and self-sustaining entity by:

- Increasing its visibility.
- Allowing it to develop communication across the Network.
- Allowing it to provide greater support for institutions to effectively engage with CUAs.
- Aligning its activities to government priorities.
- Allowing the Network time to transition to a financially self-sustaining subscription model. As set out in the funding overview.

Government funding contributed to helping the Network gain credibility by raising its profile in the sector. The funding also enabled the Network to strengthen its activities through creating a Network host (Sheffield Hallam University); expanding its digital infrastructure and online presence; increasing its sector presence through conferences, workshops and seminars; and enhancing support for universities to develop robust CUAs through the development of best practice guidance and tool kits.

² [Civic-University-Commission-Final-Report.pdf \(upp-foundation.org\)](#)

The aims of the Civic University Network aligned with Government priorities as outlined below:

- Universities are integral to developing skills, research and innovation that improve lives and business (including SMEs and NHS). CUAs enhance the development of Towns Deals, Levelling Up, and discussions on satellite towns.
- By working with schools and further education colleges, CUAs promote social mobility via access and participation to higher education and working with employers to improve graduate employability.
- A robust CUA draws together strands from the Industrial Strategy (i.e., Higher Education Innovation Fund, Knowledge Exchange Framework, OfS Local Graduates Employability Fund) and Local Industrial Strategies (Local Enterprise Partnerships and Skills Advisory Board), thereby enhancing their smooth delivery.

In November 2020, the aims of the Network were updated to reflect the challenges posed by COVID-19 with engagement through the CUAs reframed in three key areas:

- Employment, education, and skills – making the role of HEI's in key skills and recovery initiatives more concrete.
- Health collaboration and strengthening existing links.
- High street presence.

As of March 2021, the Network had 114 university members, with at least 63 universities having pledged to create CUAs. To date, 14 CUAs have been formalised, with 34 in development.

FUNDING OVERVIEW

The purpose of the grant was to provide seed funding for a Civic University Network to be established and to allow the creation of high quality CUAs in line with shared best practice. The Department for Education grant award for the Civic University Network totalled £50,000 for the financial year April 2020-March 2021.

The DfE provided grant funding to support the establishment of a peer led Network that would be self-governing and evolve in line with member needs. In contributing £50,000 to support the Network, the DfE required that the funding be used to support government policy aims and objectives.

Prior to the Network being fully established the UPP Foundation created and wholly funded the Civic University Commission. The Network was created with the intention of progressing the work of the Commission in the long-term. For this reason, the UPP Foundation was the sole legal entity that could receive the grant in the financial year April 2000 to March 2021.

After running a competition for a Network host in early 2020, Sheffield Hallam University was awarded £145,000 by the UPP Foundation. This funding consisted of a £50,000 donation from the UPP Foundation, £25,000 from Carnegie Trust UK³, £20,000 from the Arts Council England⁴, and the £50,000 grant funding from the DfE. Sheffield Hallam University supported in kind by providing access to space and facilities for conferences, webinars, and workshops. The DfE's contribution therefore represented just over a third of the total amount of set-up cost funding.

In March 2021, after having met all the milestones set out in the grant agreement letter, the Department made a payment of £50,000 to the UPP Foundation, as set out in Table 1 below.

After the first year of operation, it was intended that the Network be fully functional and self-sustained on a mixed funding basis, with its members contributing through subscriptions and other fees.

Grant funding from the DfE was only awarded for a period of 12 months, for 20-21, to support the Network in establishing itself. No future funding is planned.

Table 1. shows £50,000 Revenue Programme funding was granted in 2020-21 Financial Year 2

£m	Cost-centre	FY1 2019-20	FY2 2020-21	FY3 2021- 22	FY4 2022-23	FY5 2023-24
Capital						
Revenue Programme)			£50,000			
Revenue (Admin)						
Of which Staff costs						

³ [Home - Carnegie UK Trust](#)

⁴ [Arts Council England |](#)

MORE INFORMATION

Civic University Network

www.civicuniversitynetwork.co.uk

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