

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NEWS 39

Funding Futures: Tackling inequality and exclusion in the distribution of Creative Industries Research and Development (R&D) funding

The University of York's XR Stories team established the Funding Futures collective to address inequality and exclusion in research and innovation funding distribution.

The collective is a group of UK universities responsible for distributing research and development funding specifically within the creative and digital sectors. The group is united by a shared aim to bring about tangible change through inclusive practice, whether that be across the protected characteristics or in areas including career stage and geographical location.

This group of UK universities aims to drive change through inclusive practices across protected characteristics, career stages, and locations within the creative and digital sectors.

The collective grew from XR Stories' efforts toward a more inclusive creative technology sector. Recent work includes an audit of working practices for the XR Network+ project and a research review of participation barriers in research and development programmes.

On 17 April 2026, the Funding Futures group came together at The Guildhall in York for a half-day symposium designed and facilitated by XR Stories and **Ida XR Studio**. The symposium provided a forum to share case studies, perspectives and practical methods for reducing barriers to different applicant groups.

Discussions revealed a funding system under pressure where the structural conditions that shape how money is distributed are often at odds with the equity and inclusion commitments made by the funding distributors.

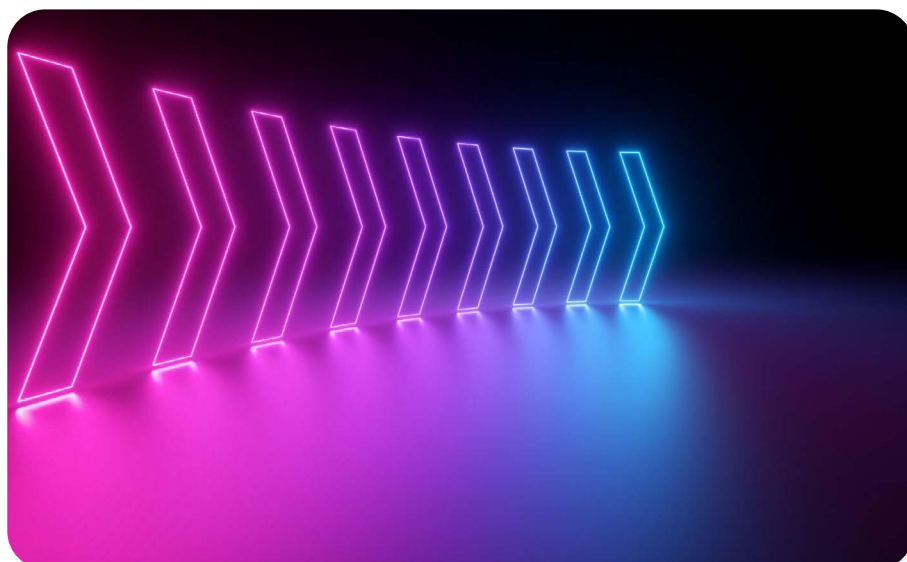
Common challenges and cross-cutting themes from the symposium are detailed in a report, '**Funding Futures: Tackling inequality and exclusion in the distribution of research and development funding in the Creative Industries**'.

The report proposes solutions to lay the foundation for future activities, including a second symposium to engage more voices and a

campaign to share findings.

Emma Brown comments: "Funding Futures is a powerful, unified voice aiming to drive meaningful funding reform and share local best practice. As part of our dissemination activities, we're seeking to influence key stakeholders including funding providers, government bodies and policymakers. In parallel, we're also looking at what practical tools and resources we can provide to support funding distributors at a local level."

Please email emma.brown@xrstories.co.uk if you would like any additional information about the Funding Futures collective.





ADLib

Accessing Disability Library

Born in Bradford Funded Project to Transform Inclusive Research and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy Review

Developed in collaboration with partners across Bradford the newly funded Born in Bradford (BiB) Projects build upon BiB's unique datasets to generate evidence that can drive real policy change and improve health, wellbeing, and social outcomes.

Dr Laura Fox (Department of Education) and Dr Edmund Coleman-Fountain (Department of Sociology) have launched a new impact project funded by the **Born in Bradford (BiB) research centre**. The Co-designing Inclusive Transitions Evidence (CITE) project aims to co-design an inclusive evidencing framework that ensures learning disabled young people, particularly non-verbal or minimally verbal communicators have a direct voice in research and policy that affects their lives.

Using Bradford Council's ongoing Review of Post 16 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Provision as a live policy case study, CITE will pilot and adapt communication-centred research tools. Working alongside BiB cohort researchers and Skills House, Bradford Council's dedicated service supporting youth transitions, the project will ensure inclusive approaches are embedded directly into local policy evaluation and data gathering.

CITE bridges Laura and Edmund's complementary research backgrounds:

- Laura (alongside Professor Kathryn Asbury) co-led research developing inclusive data collection infrastructure for learning-disabled individuals, leading to the creation of ADLib (the Accessing Disability Library). ADLib provides a free, open-access platform featuring accessible methods for researchers when standard data collection tools fall short.
- Edmund builds on his Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded study on inequalities in disabled youth transitions (conducted with colleagues in Newcastle and Glasgow). This research highlighted the complex barriers disabled young people face when moving

into adulthood, employment, or further training, emphasising the urgent need for youth voices to shape transition policy.

This combined focus will provide an important basis for developing work on learning-disabled youth transitions, particularly in the context of reforms to SEND provision and broader debates about NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people, which have tended to ignore the unique challenges faced by learning-disabled young people.

True to its ethos, CITE places co-production at its heart. Learning-disabled young people will actively co-design, trial, and evaluate the tools to ensure they meaningfully capture diverse perspectives.

CITE is ongoing until June 2027. It will deliver a best-practice framework and training toolkit that can be employed by BiB researchers and policy researchers widely. The project is supported, in the first instance, by Research Assistant Kayleigh, who brings expertise in co-production, learning disability, and inclusive methodologies.



Driving Knowledge Exchange: How the Knowledge Exchange (KE) Newsletter Champions Real-World Impact



**Knowledge
Exchange
Concordat**

As a University which combines academic excellence

with social purpose, our **Knowledge Exchange (KE) newsletters** aim to drive this mission forward and serve as a platform for celebrating research partnerships.

Our focus is on translating academic activity into tangible real-world impact. We actively demystify the pathways to successful outcomes, aiming to inform and inspire colleagues by sharing through practical tools, case studies and actionable insights.

Our approach is built on three key pillars:

- **The KE Concordat** (KEC), a national framework supporting

collaboration and knowledge sharing between universities, industry and wider stakeholders, with guiding principles that support best practice.

- **Knowledge Exchange Framework** (KEF) which allows universities to understand and improve through a range of shared measures and approaches to evaluating our activities.
- Delivering on our **Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) funding** strategy, by investing in professional support and targeted activities which deliver tangible outputs.

By reaffirming our commitment to the KE Concordat, we maintain our dedication to driving excellence and maintaining high standards across all Knowledge Exchange initiatives.

The KE newsletter thrives on showcasing just how diverse KE can be across all disciplines—from global health and scientific breakthroughs, societal impact and sustainability, collaboration and regional innovation, resources and skills training, to KE policy. We also highlight strategic industry KE via our memberships with **techUK**, **MAKEUK**, and the **Society of Chemical Industry** (SCI).

This newsletter invites you to celebrate our KE culture. Please share your Knowledge Exchange stories, insights, or local impact projects to inspire and engage colleagues across the community. To get in touch please email clare.murgatroyd@york.ac.uk.

We actively welcome suggestions regarding what you would like to see featured in future issues.

Membership Industry Events



techUK
MEMBER

Here's a taste of what's coming up with **techUK**:

10 September: The Future of Quantum, member webinar

At this **member webinar**, techUK will set out what's needed for the UK's quantum industry to thrive.

16 September: Digital Infrastructure 2035 report launch, London

A panel event marking the launch of their **Digital Infrastructure 2035 report**.

29 September: Meet the Investors, Birmingham
techUK is bringing SMEs together with leading tech funders at this **Meet the Investors event**. Ideal if you're curious about how tech businesses secure investment.

These are just a few highlights - see the **full events calendar** for everything on offer.

To find out more about supporting your external engagement please contact James Hastie, Head of Business Development.

Here's a taste of what's coming up with the **SCI**:

22 September - 23 September 2026: A Celebration of Organic Chemistry 2026

A series of lectures on the latest developments in the field of organic chemistry.

30 September - 2 October 2026: 10th SCI-RSC Symposium on GPCRs in Medicinal Chemistry

The 10th meeting in the series on GPCR drug discovery, which combines cutting edge medicinal chemistry with innovative structural biology and novel drug design approaches.

8 October 2026: Highlights in Medicinal Chemistry VI

Showcasing aspects of modern medicinal chemistry.

17 November 2026: Where science meets business 2026

Building resilient systems requires understanding the connections between science, policy, economics and industry, and recognising the trade-offs that shape long-term outcomes.