



Learning, employability and wellbeing in the post-pandemic age

Join the Cities of Learning Leadership Programme 2022



In partnership



NAVIGATOR

REAL IDEAS

FUTURE LEARNERS CREATORS

Cities of Learning (CoL) is an innovative programme supporting place-based leaders (in towns, cities and regions) to increase the visibility and impact of learning, development and work opportunities in their community.

The RSA is offering two subsidised placements to join the 2022 Cities of Learning Leadership programme. We are particularly interested to hear from potential leaders in towns, cities and regions in the North of England, Scotland and Wales.

This is a 12-month programme to support places to diagnose local needs, convene impact networks, establish scalable badging and pathways and develop skills as a Cities of Learning lead. Participants will benefit from access to a community of practice through the wider Cities of Learning network.

How to apply

The process is competitive. We are looking to work with individuals, organisations or networks that have the potential to become Cities of Learning leads and anchor the programme in their place.

We encourage all places interested in applying to read this booklet thoroughly and to book onto the events to support you with your application.



[Application Form](#)

[Deadline for submission: 26 November 2021](#)

What is Cities of Learning?

Cities of Learning is a place-based innovation that uses digital badges to badge, map and connect opportunities to learn new skills and pursue your ambitions in the place you call home.

The Cities of Learning Leadership programme supports place-based leaders to enhance local learning opportunities in ways that respond to their community's social, cultural and economic priorities.

Our aim is to activate powerful networks of employers, schools, colleges, training providers and informal educators who are committed to develop learning opportunities outside formal qualifications and new career pathways. By convening local organisations and leaders with a shared strategy and tools to support learner progression, Cities of Learning amplifies local provision to better respond to the priorities of place.

We use digital badging to map diverse learning opportunities into meaningful pathways and to help learners to articulate and demonstrate their skills in a digital portfolio to use alongside their CVs.

The programme completed pilots in [Brighton and Plymouth](#) in 2020 and is now expanding across the UK. Southampton and Cambridgeshire region have recently joined the programme and we are looking to scale our approach beyond the South of England to every region and nation in the UK.

Why join?

Cities of Learning and digital badges are clearly in a strong position to respond directly to the needs of young people as well as to align with government support programme during the Coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis.”

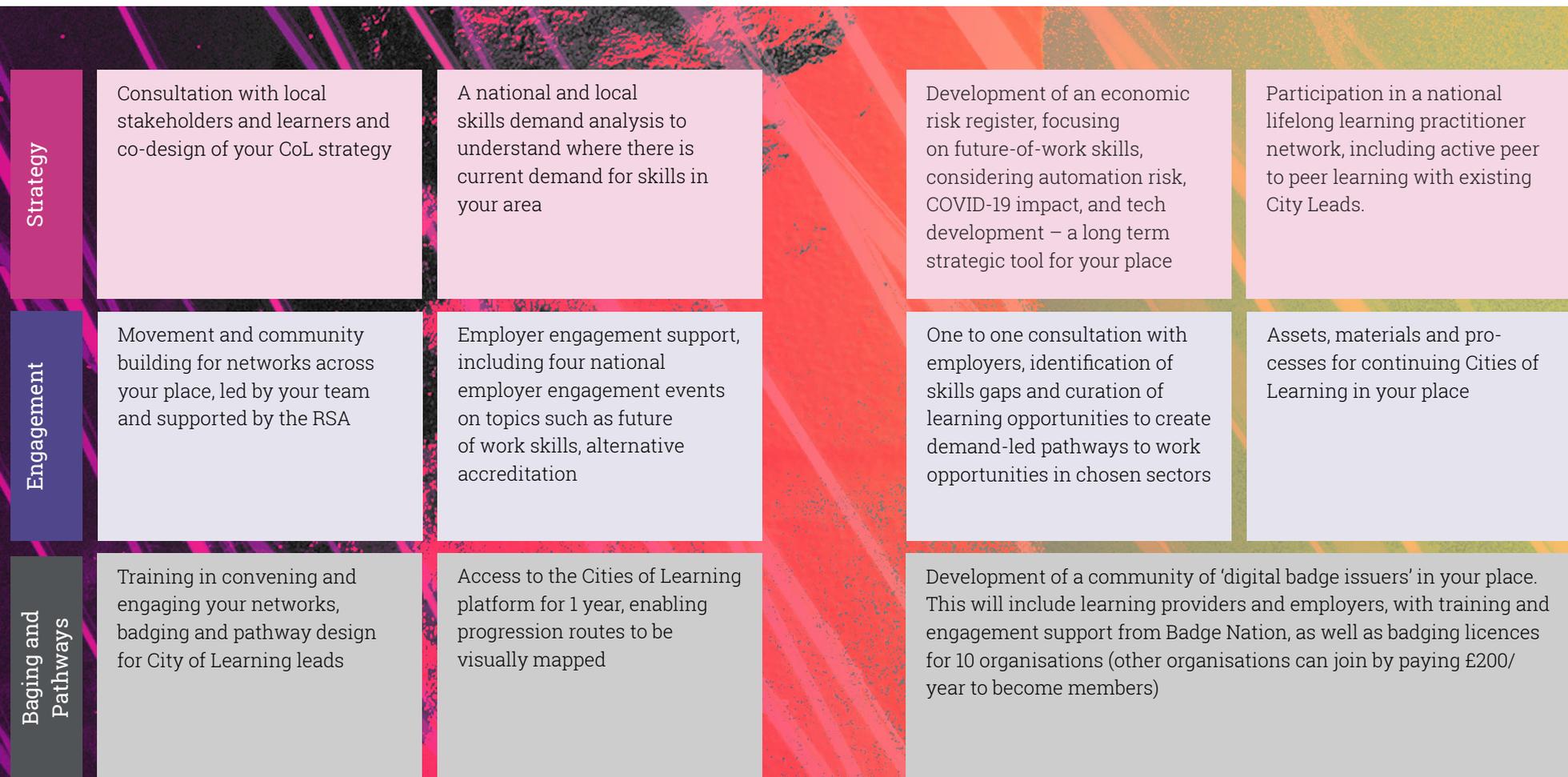
– Learning & Work Institute evaluation of Cities of Learning pilots, 2021

The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and accelerated a range of underlying issues for communities and businesses alike. Systemic challenges require a systemic response. We work with places that are affected by skills, learning and employment challenges including:

- The pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on youth unemployment and those in low paid work as whole industries have been disrupted
- The number of people aged 18-24 claiming unemployment-related benefits has risen by 290,500 from February 2020 to February 2021, an increase of 124%
- Educational disruption during the pandemic has exacerbated the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged pupils in formal education
- Skills that are highly valued by employers are not recognised by formal qualifications such as communication and problem solving
- The lack of lifelong learning opportunities is a threat to people’s wellbeing and life chances

What does it look like?

The RSA and its partners Badge Nation and Navigatr will work alongside you to engage key stakeholders in your network and provide training in the Cities of Learning approach. The programme will include:





What are the benefits of taking part?

- Our subsidised offer provides a £75,000 project opportunity for your investment of £30,000
- 12-month training and support from RSA, its digital badging and platform partners to give your team the tools to independently continue the programme
- Research and insights of Future of Work centre to help ground your programme in actionable skills data
- Peer-to-peer-learning: share your journey with the two other places due to join in 2022 and with other Cities of Learning leaders
- Membership of an emerging national network of place-based learning with leading practitioners, employers, educators and policymakers

Key attributes of a CoL lead

1. Strategic foresight

Clear and tangible goals and focus areas that have the potential for impact and can scale to support the place and its people

2. Awareness

Excellent understand of the challenges, needs, assets and energy in the place

3. Energy for change

Challenges status quo and is proactive in pushing for positive change and deepening change practice

4. Keen convenor

Ability to champion and advocate for change through developing partnerships, building and sustaining networks

5. Collaborative

Experimental and willing to work in an iterative way to test, pilot and grow a city of learning network

6. Inquisitive

Drawn to unpacking questions, working through challenge and the 'how' to make change

7. Commitment

Committed to the time required for the entirety of the process and to being an active participant

Scoring criteria

1. Vision

Clearly articulates the needs, challenges and ambitions of their place

2. Leadership

Demonstrates an entrepreneurial attitude and is capable of convening networks across a place around their vision to grow their programme

3. Capacity

Committed to working in partnerships with the RSA and their local learning ecosystem to deliver the programme

4. Network

Engages and mobilises these networks towards progression routes and learner goals.

5. Energy for change

Clearly demonstrates to be able to lead change from the ground and seed new behaviours and practices

What are we asking from you?

RSA and the Cities of Learning Partners provide the support, tools and training for local leaders to establish and grow their programme – but do not provide on-the-ground delivery.

The City Lead should ideally be an existing engagement or skills role who is already doing the engagement as part of their normal role. This will help to bring down the 'additional' resource required for CoL and will help to embed the approach in your existing organisational structures. The role can be split between multiple people, as the role requires strategic, engagement and coordination input.

We estimate that the City Lead will need to spend approximately 120 days on the programme over the course of the year (c. 1/2 of a full-time job). Some of these activities will be existing engagement activity and some will be specific to the programme (while still adding value to your overall work).

Leading a Cities of Learning programme is a significant undertaking. A City Lead will be responsible for the delivering following aspects of the work:

- **Attending fortnightly update meetings** and quarterly retrospective meetings
- **Helping us to shape strategy** with the support of strategic stakeholders in place
- **Connecting us with your learning ecosystem** to invite to COL events and workshops and to participate in consultation
- **Working to engage local stakeholders** as part of your own role and constantly promote COL principles
- **Coordinating events** and community meetups
- **Organising or attending employer (or industry network) events**, allowing us access to present at these gatherings
- **Marketing the programme** to learners in your place (either directly or through learning providers)
- **Curating content and pathways** on the Cities of Learning platform
- **Picking up and carrying on Cities of Learning principle and approaches** after the end of the supported 12-months programme

Our impact

Our programme is a long-term impact intervention, so many of the benefits of the programme can be felt in the medium to long term.

During the first year of programme activity the Cities of Learning pilots showed positive direct impact.

Learners and the learning journey

- More than 2,000 participants and 53 employers took part.
- 350 learning opportunities were badged and 3,675 digital badges were issued to learners.
- 49% of learners completed more than one badge.
- Young people consistently reported the benefits of using badges as a way to articulate their skills in terms that an employer would understand.

Employability and employment

- Participating employability providers saw a 30% increase in effectiveness of their work after joining the programme – while Cities of Learning was not the only thing that caused the effectiveness, the success was partly attributed to digital badging.

- Badging was seen as useful by employers in a number of ways including retraining post-Covid. “Especially now, because of Covid, we’re looking at qualities over qualifications. We do need people with qualifications, but you’re now looking at hotel managers who could become great site managers they don’t have the qualification, but they’ve got all the right qualities” (Vistry Constuction).
- The programme was seen to be “clearly in a strong position to respond directly to the needs of young people as well as to align with government support programme during the Coronavirus pandemic and economic crisis” (Learning and Work Institute Independent Evaluation).

Improved partnership working and responsiveness

- “What’s gone well is how we’ve managed to respond to the changes in such an agile and rapid manner. I think a lot of that has been down to the relationships we have with our existing organisations that are already signed up to Cities of Learning. I think once we have a good relationship with them and open dialogue, we were open to immediately swing in and say, ‘How can we best support you and what are your struggles?’” (Rachel Carter, Brighton City Lead).

Employability and employment

- “Badges are ideal for some of our demographic who are often disengaged with education, it’s a way of accrediting learning that is outside of the mainstream which is really important” (Greater Brighton Metropolitan College).

Join our movement
to transform the future
of learning.

Together we will put
learning on the map.

Visit:

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In partnership



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