

# Developing a systematic approach to stakeholder engagement



The University of Cumbria was keen to ensure that its key stakeholders and influencers were fully informed about its strengths, strategic priorities and the contribution it makes to the region.

In order to maximise the investment Cumbria had already made in this area, SUMS was asked to assist in the identification and delivery of a systematic approach to enhancing perceptions of the university's reputation.

The team analysed previous studies undertaken by Cumbria and cross-referenced the findings from these against examples of good practice in both the UK and overseas. SUMS then facilitated workshops with a range of academic and professional services staff to identify and prioritise Cumbria's external stakeholders against a spectrum ranging from 'Nice to have' through to 'Business Critical'. The workshops included a deep-dive into the rationale for stronger relationships with key stakeholders along with the scale of opportunity, potential challenges and, most importantly, the actions needed to make strengthened and mutually beneficial relationships a reality.

Outputs from the assignment included graphical stakeholder maps, a gap analysis of desired strength of relationships vs the reality, and an opportunities schedule. SUMS also proposed a suite of fifteen recommendations spanning strategy, tactics and operations. These ranged from the renewal of relationships that were of particular strategic importance through to a revised approach for mobilising top academic staff to publish original research news features.

By bringing staff together into a creative and safe environment it was possible to really get underneath the resources the university was spending on its relationships and where those resources were and weren't delivering value. The staff at Cumbria also generated some exciting ideas for how to renew and strengthen relationships with those partners who could positively impact their strategic objectives.

**David Becker**  
SUMS Consultant

SUMS went above and beyond to provide subsequent support to workshop participants. The best practice recommendations have been taken forward and embedded in communications plans. I have also incorporated the approach into strategic planning and stakeholder engagement events.

**Sandra Booth**  
Pro Vice-Chancellor for Enterprise,  
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