

Lincoln Impact Evaluation Framework (LIEF)

NEON
ESTABLISHING EVIDENCE
AND MEASURING
IMPACT WORKING
GROUP MEETING

MARCH 11, 2020

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Higher Education Research Institute (LHERI)

Our presentation



Background



LIEF



How we used it



A LIEF-y future?



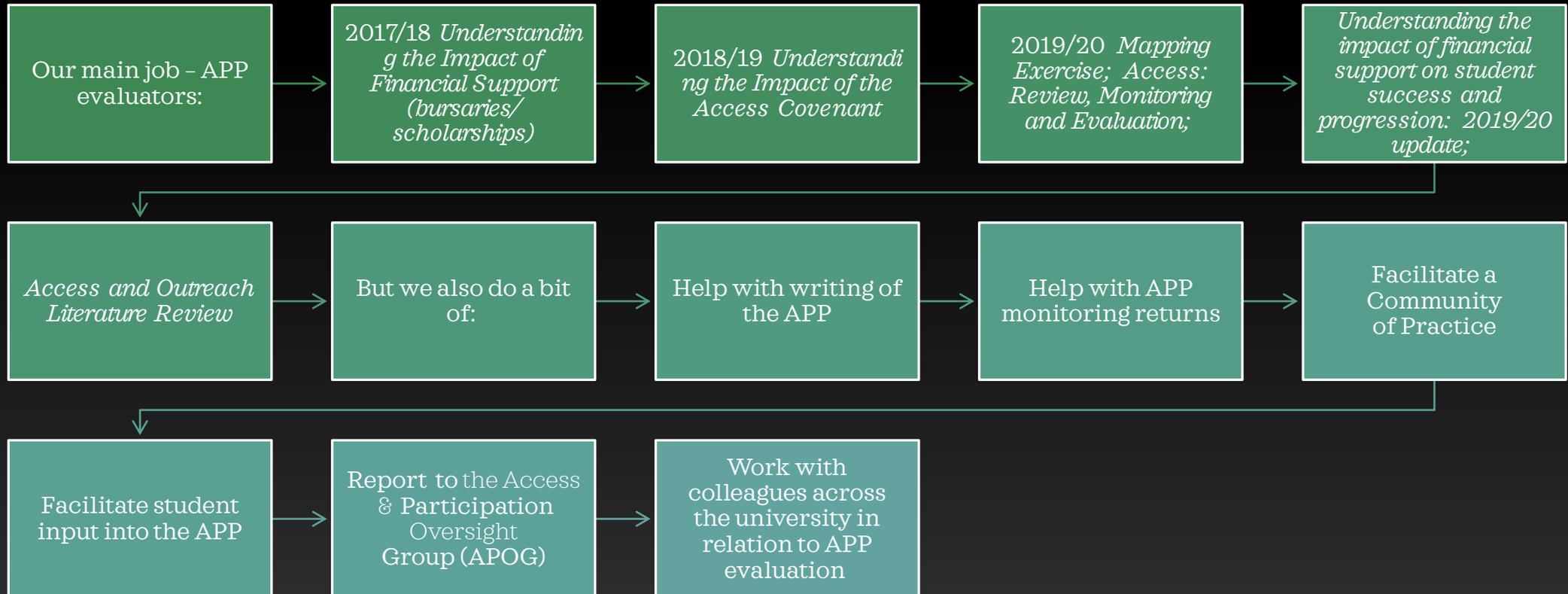
Questions

Background: access and participation at the University of Lincoln

- The University of Lincoln since 2001
- Regenerating Lincolnshire
- No widening participation unit
- *Access and Participation Plan Evaluation Project Team* - Rachel Spacey & Becky Sanderson with admin support from Bethan Everett
- Based in the Lincoln Higher Education Research Institute



The APPEP Team



LIEF (Lincoln Impact Evaluation Framework)

Available to access online (& it's free): <https://lheri.lincoln.ac.uk/lief/>

Hopefully, it will...

Create a brand for evaluation which is identifiable

Convince staff of the value of impact evaluation

Encourage colleagues to think about it when they plan projects

Make evaluation better without making it harder!

LIEF (Lincoln Impact Evaluation Framework)



Guidance document



Logic model template



Worked examples



Key terms and definitions



Examples of research tools



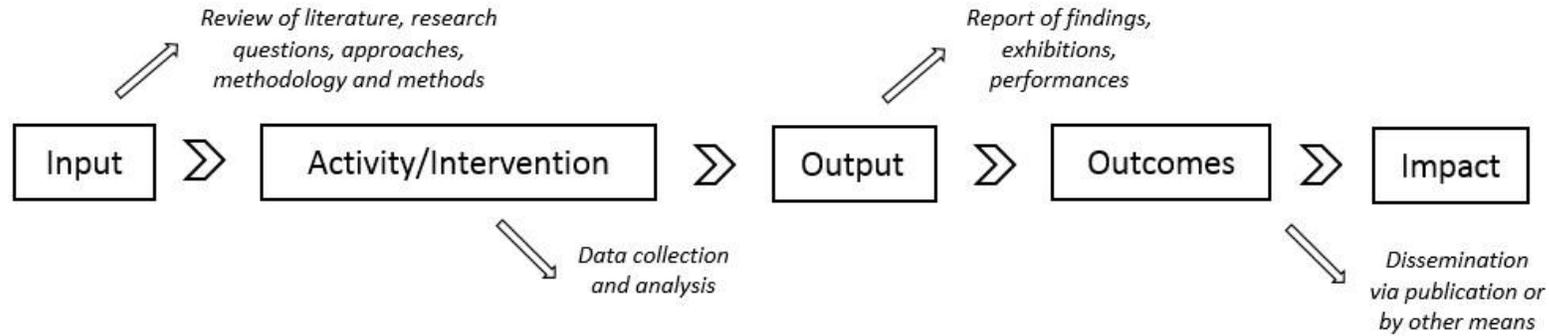
Extensive bibliography

LIEF: philosophical perspective

*...the document is written and presented from a perspective rooted in **critical** and **pragmatic realism** and the view that there exists an objective social and physical reality beyond our immediate experience and perception of the world that can be understood and manipulated for the better, benefiting all staff, students and other stakeholders in the context of the university as a whole (p.3).*

Stated purpose, intentions or scope of project including research questions

Preferred direction of thinking and working when planning (start with measurable outcome indicators/desirable impact)



Project evaluation

*Impact evaluation:
short, medium, longer-term*

Theory of Intervention (practice)

Theory of Change

Usual direction of project implementation and monitoring (need not be linear – may be developmental or iterative)



Contextual factors and assumptions including ethics

LIEF: Practical challenges and opportunities

Opportunity

Stimulates thinking

Enables a degree of self-sufficiency

Consistency of practice

Shared language

Senior management buy in

Challenge

Academic language

Culture change

Fear

Clarity of definitions

Being honest – upskill ourselves –
researchers not evaluators

Evaluation

Impact and process evaluation

Adopted the Lincoln Impact Evaluation Framework (LIEF) model

Applied retrospectively to better align the evaluation to the guidance issued by the Office for Students

Pilot the model in our work

Able to identify AC inputs, outputs, and anticipated outcomes and impacts with more clarity

Understanding the Impact of the Access Covenant

Background

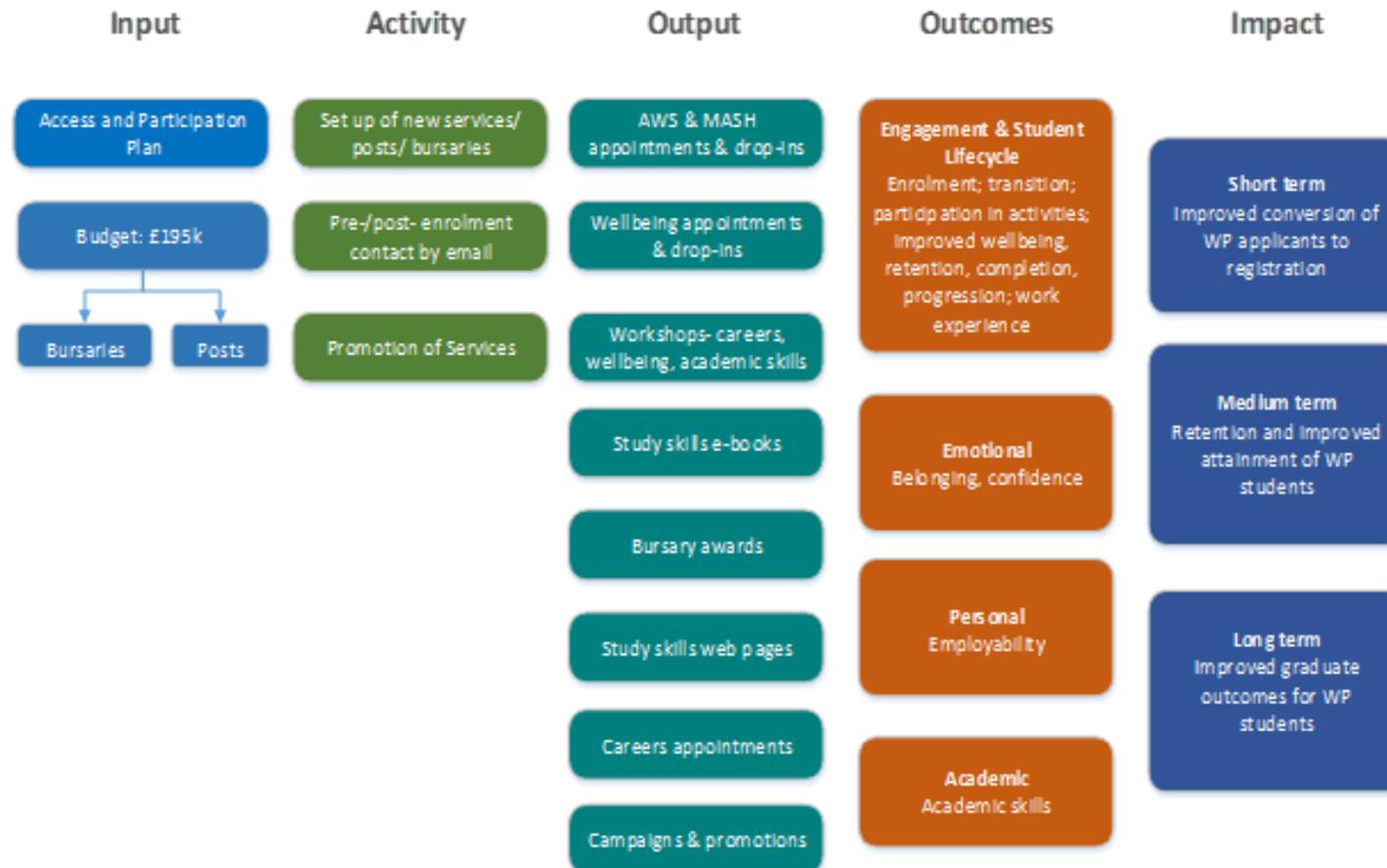
First detailed in the University of Lincoln's *Access Agreement 2017/18*

Number of interventions to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds including **posts** across some professional services at the university and **financial support** in the form of financial assistance funds with detailed eligibility criteria

"A particular emphasis on students from rural, coastal and dispersed communities in South Lincolnshire"

Tasked with evaluating the AC as part of the university's commitment to evaluation of its access and participation work.

Using LIEF in the AC evaluation



Mixed- methods



Online survey of students
(378 responses after cleaning)



Interviews with staff employed
directly through AC and those
indirectly involved (12)



Biographical interviews with students who
identified with at least one characteristic
of disadvantage (pilot + 9)

Findings

Students had good awareness of the services

Students did not always choose to access the services even when they identified a need to do so

Services accessed were viewed positively

Students linked accessing the services to several positive outcomes including improved **confidence** and **participation**, better assignment **results** & ability to **continue** their studies

Limited evidence of targeting of services to specific student groups

Targeting – is it that controversial?

Data collection was inconsistent between services

Hard to state with confidence that services were accessed by student groups they were intended to help

Conclusions and Recommendations

Demonstrated the commitment of AC staff to delivering impactful support to UoL students

Not always possible to demonstrate the full impact of the AC upon the students

Having support in place, and raising awareness of it was shown to reassure students, even if they did not access it

When students access AC services, engagement outcomes such as participation, retention and completion improved

- 1. Bring together university employees working in support of the Access Covenant*
- 2. Undertake further work on understanding and addressing the hidden barriers to accessing AC services and interventions which some students may experience*
- 3. Students should be involved in the creation and evaluation of the services designed to support them*

The value of LIEF to the AC evaluation

Demonstrating it can be used (even retrospectively)

Putting the value back in evaluation!

Communication tool – participatory – working with colleagues to populate the model

Transparent

Freely available

Helps colleagues think about their programmes/interventions not just evaluating them

How other colleagues are using LIEF

Careers and Employability (progression activity)

Lincoln First Year

Uni Connect (NCOP)

Lincoln Equality of Attainment Project

Being built into funding applications

It's in the APP 2020/21-2024/25!

'move beyond feedback and satisfaction measures to determine outcomes and impacts in accordance with the OfS 'Standards of Evidence' (APP 2020/21-2024/25, p. 20).

Get in touch

If you would like to know more about LIEF please get in touch:

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