# Stepping Up
## to Research Leadership

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**Presented at: Vitae Researcher Development International Conference 2013**

# A question to start…

What do you see as the challenges facing aspiring research leaders in Higher Education?

# Added slide: What the audience came up with on the day

**Challenges for aspiring research leaders:**

- Team Building

- Change from solitary work to team building

- Key publications

- Developing a strategy for your research

- Developing networks*

- People management skills*

- Learning 'on the job'

- Understanding how to obtain funding*

- Establishing a track record – being BIG

- Establishing relationships

- Finding mentorship / support**

- Competition / collaboration

- Strategic planning

- Change of skills sets

- Prioritising competing tasks*

**Challenges for aspiring research leaders:**

- Unknown unknowns

- Confidence and self-efficacy *

- Managing poor performance

- Understanding higher education if from an industry background

- Unstable contracts

- Work / life balance

- Training and recognition of programme

- Is it any different to any other aspiring leader?

- Developing leadership skills

- Responsibility 'buck stops here.'

- Peer / manager balance

- What is expected of me as a research leader?

- Broader focus e.g. on policy**

- Time

# The background…

- EPSRC awards funds for 15-20 Doctoral Prize Fellows to Manchester each year (old PhD Plus)

- University required a cohort based training programme to support objectives of Scheme - i.e. to accelerate the first steps of freshly completed PhDs on the path to becoming academic research leaders

- Requirement to include additional MRC Fellows - challenge to provide content across broad constituency

- Limit on time we can take them out of research and a limited window to operate in

- Learning from EngD and Faculty Researcher Development training programmes

- Funding to support this - championed at highest level within university - they were expected to attend.

# Our strategy & approach

To provide a training experience that broadly addresses the questions:

• "What is it like to be an academic?"

• "What will I be expected to do?"

• "What professional and personal skills will I need?

Name "Stepping Up" implies (using a baseball analogy):

• stepping up to the plate

• understanding where is next base and how do I get there?

But it's also about taking the first steps, recognising the step change required – challenging the participants to think longer term and be aware of the dynamic HE landscape around them

# Our strategy & approach

## Research leadership in the broadest sense…

problem solver          decision maker          strategic shaper

key influencer          creative thinker

collaborator          communicator

Interdisciplinary          people manager

project manager

engaging          socially responsible

enterprising

teacher / advisor / supervisor / mentor / leader
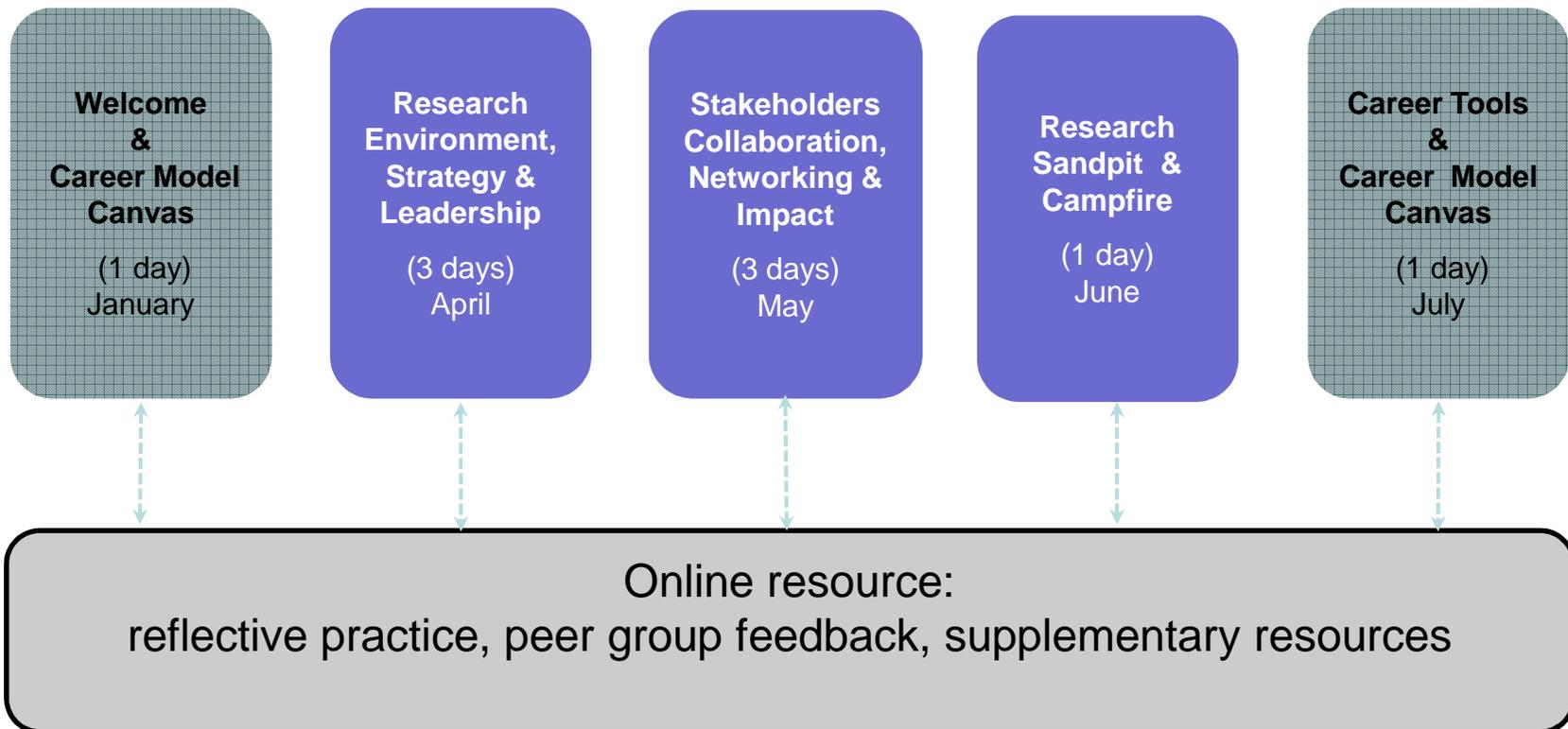
+ big ££ grants + 5* research + highly cited publications

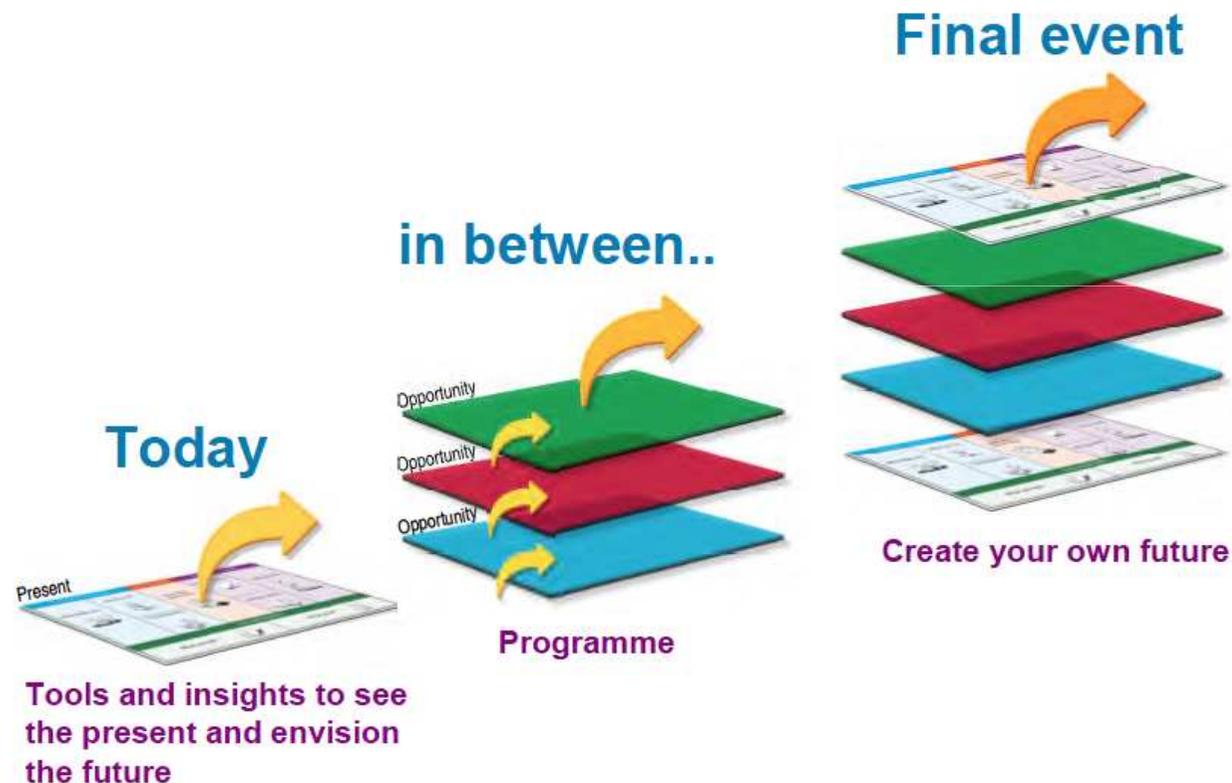# Our strategy & approach

## Our guiding principles

- Aspirational
- Inspirational
- Experiential
- Reflective
- Holistic
- Community

# The programme: design & content
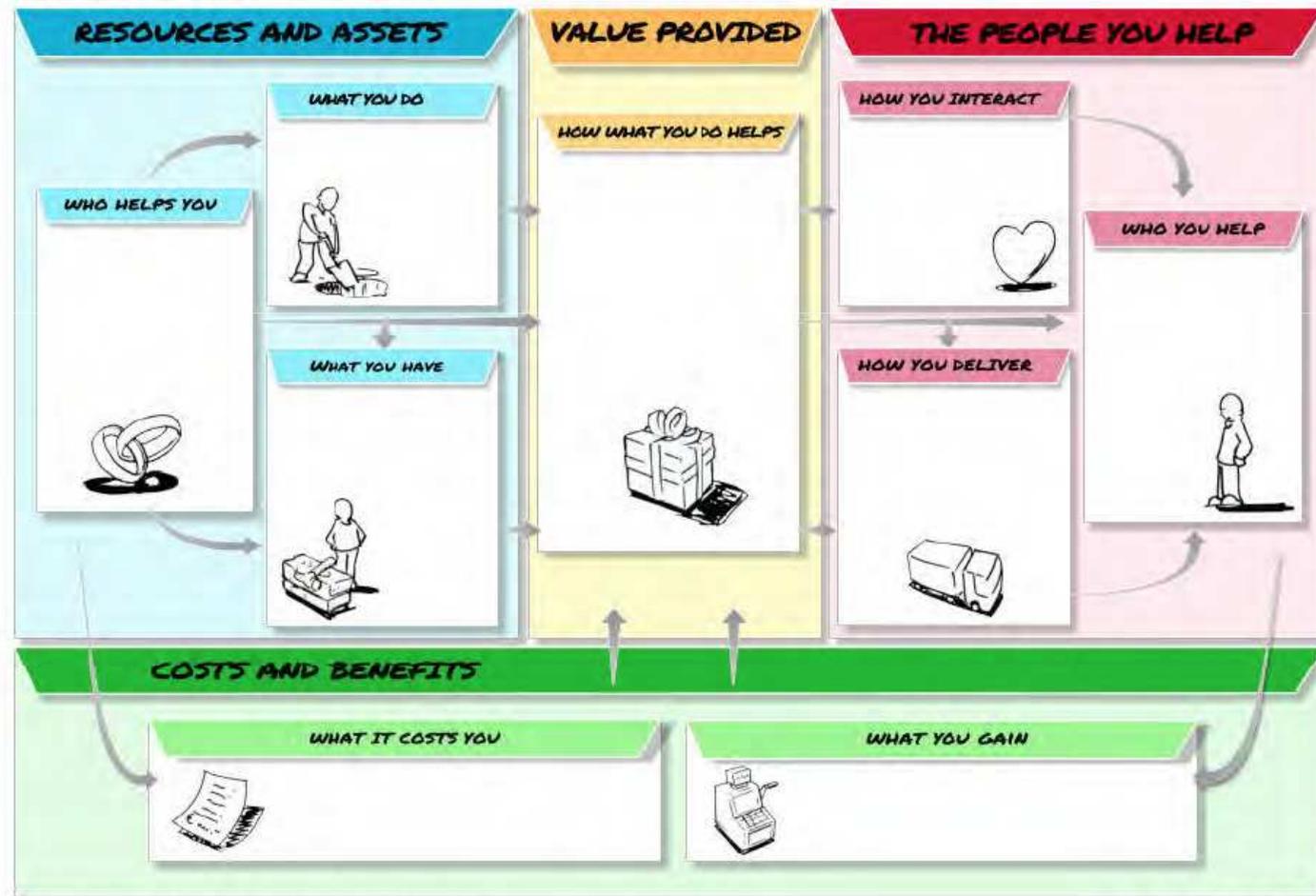
Programme of 5 themed workshops

| Welcome & Career Model Canvas (1 day) January | Research Environment, Strategy & Leadership (3 days) April | Stakeholders Collaboration, Networking & Impact (3 days) May | Research Sandpit & Campfire (1 day) June | Career Tools & Career Model Canvas (1 day) July |

Online resource:
reflective practice, peer group feedback, supplementary resources

# The programme: design & content



**Today**

Tools and insights to see
the present and envision
the future

**in between..**

Opportunity
Opportunity
Opportunity

Programme

**Final event**

Create your own future

Present

MANCHESTER
1824

Dr. Adrian West & Sophie Brown – www.companyofmind.com

Company
of Mind

# The programme: design & content



THE CAREER MODEL CANVAS

RESOURCES AND ASSETS | VALUE PROVIDED | THE PEOPLE YOU HELP

WHO HELPS YOU | WHAT YOU DO | HOW WHAT YOU DO HELPS | HOW YOU INTERACT | WHO YOU HELP

WHAT YOU HAVE | HOW YOU DELIVER

COSTS AND BENEFITS

WHAT IT COSTS YOU | WHAT YOU GAIN

# The programme: design & content

STEPPING UP 2:

Research Environment,
Strategy & Leadership


(3 days)
April

**MASTERCLASS 1:**

Understanding the Research Environment;
Institutional Strategy; Leading Research

**CASE STUDIES:**
Establishing a research career


**MASTERCLASS 2:**
Grantsmanship & Research Fellowships

**CASE STUDIES:**
Fellowships


**SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:**

Publishing and Publications; Leadership
and Team Development; Grant/proposal
writing; Research Fellowships

# The programme: design & content

**The mini research sandpit…**

# The programme: design & content

**The campfire…**

Academics talking honestly about being an academic.

Offering sage advice about the changing HE landscape, the pressures and challenges, a touch of reality, but also a healthy dose of inspiration.

They are academics because despite everything, they love the research; the teaching; the partnerships; etc…

No presentations, no leaders, no set agenda, followed by drinks and dinner.

# What did the participants say?

**What did you find most useful?**

I hope the career canvas experiments are going to be useful. The idea of finding practical small steps to test and improve our skills is really interesting.

The importance of timeliness in applying for fellowships and indeed career planning has really hit home.

I have more understanding on different roles e.g. leadership and management and … [can turn my] knowledge into practice.

The open discussions with academics, in particular following the research sandpit, was illuminating and provided a useful insight for the future.

# What did the participants say?

**What difference has this made to you?**

It has been great to meet other people at my career stage and have the opportunity to discuss our different experiences

It has illustrated opportunities that I weren't aware of available. It has helped me to look for opportunities.

I have taken a more active and official role in supervising PhD students; I have started on a fellowship application; I have made more of an effort to network at conferences and open new collaborations.

It has raised my awareness of the research environment after the PhD, and gave me the chance to practice/acquire useful skills.

# What did the participants say?

**Suggested changes or improvements?**

I didn't really engage with the career canvas map but maybe this is because it did not speak to me.

I felt some of the speakers were talking about things which aren't necessarily as applicable to an academic career as they would be in business.

I think [the online resource] is good as it is and I would have engaged more if it weren't for other time commitments.

# Three key lessons for us

1. Making it relevant to the here and now but challenging participants to think further ahead

2. Build it and they will come – the online resource

3. More work to do on managing expectations and perceptions around skills development – 'soft' vs 'academic'

# Your thoughts…

- What approaches from Stepping Up might you incorporate in your own programmes for research leadership?

- What alternative approaches are you already using in your own programmes for research leadership?
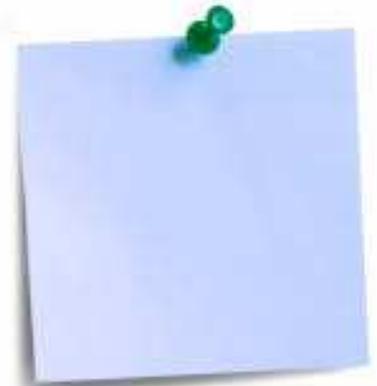
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