

**Cities of Learning - the challenge:** COVID has shaken the foundations of our economies and accelerated the trend toward automating jobs. These seismic shifts are changing the way we work and learn and forcing our communities to grapple with a new set of acute challenges. Thousands have lost jobs and now have to retrain to take on new roles. Young people are disproportionately affected - one in three lower-paid employees lost their jobs or were furloughed, compared to one in ten top earners. Employers, 63% who reported skills shortages pre-COVID, now demand new skills from workers to help their businesses remain competitive in a rapidly changing environment.

Online, workplace and non-formal learning could play a crucial role in achieving new in-demand skills, but learning in these environments is fragmented and undocumented. Despite an abundance of learning opportunities, individuals find it difficult to understand which courses would add to their existing skills and help them navigate to desirable job destinations.

**The Solution:** Our model empowers communities to design and deliver inclusive lifelong learning that responds to local economic and social priorities. We map, badge and connect learning together into a coherent education-to-employment ecosystem. How does it work?

- Co-design a strategy with city leaders, employers and providers to connect learning together to deliver on local strategic priorities.
- Badge existing city-based activity giving individuals a portable record of achievement.
- We create pathways, and map these with employers and learning providers to signpost individuals to further learning and work opportunities via mobile friendly web-app.

**Learning Impact Outcomes:** Independent evaluators reported the programme helps: young people articulate their skills to employers, learning providers improve progression routes, local government navigate their way through the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent economic fallout. In the pilot, we:

- Worked with two cities, Brighton and Plymouth, to develop and test the model
- Engaged with 53 Schools, learning providers, employers in the programme
- Created 129 unique badges
- Tested prototype pathways

“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 and Work Institute

**Return on investment:** A new national leadership program which engages cities to develop a strategy around skills, learning and employment. Badge issuing to organisations that is both endorsed and affordable. A new web app that links badges into pathways, displays them on a map and helps learners navigate to work and training. We aim to integrate other badging platforms into the app in 2021 and implement BadgeConnect.

Our first post-pilot city, Southampton, joined our community in April 2021 there are further five UK cities in the pipeline. [CoL Navigatr app video.](#) [BadgeNation credentials video.](#)