



InterAct Network

Open Funding Call

2022/2023

InterAct Open Funding Call

About InterAct

The **Made Smarter Innovation (MSI)** challenge aims to help UK manufacturing become more productive and competitive through the innovation and diffusion of digital technology, and to support manufacturing to achieve Net Zero by 2050. Whilst technology is important, there are many social and economic factors that will be hugely influential in achieving these aims.

InterAct is funded by **UKRI** as an investment under the MSI challenge. InterAct seeks to “pioneer human insight for industry” and is a call to arms for academics from the social sciences to support the innovation and diffusion of digital technologies that will result in a stronger, more resilient UK manufacturing industry. Working alongside other partners within the wider Made Smarter community, the long-term vision is to build a strong, vibrant, interdisciplinary community to support the digitalisation of UK manufacturing.

InterAct is led by the co-directors Professor Jan Godsell (Loughborough University) and Professor Jill MacBryde (Strathclyde Business School) and the core research team is comprised of researchers from Loughborough, Strathclyde and Sheffield Universities. The directorship and programme will act as a conduit to curate, amplify and augment insights from the economic and social science (ESS) to support the five MSI challenge objectives to:

1. **Increase UK manufacturing sector investment in industrial digitalisation R&D and increase the innovation and diffusion of Industrial Digital Technologies (IDT).** Insights from the economic and social sciences will help manufacturing firms to assess the risk, make the business case, and provide insights on the management practices that will enable successful adoption.
2. **Increase cross-sector collaboration between UK manufacturing sectors to drive the creation of common digital solutions** by working with manufacturing firms to identify the underlying mechanisms and management practices within a specific solution and providing a forum for sharing those mechanisms with other sectors, to enable the sharing of leading practices.
3. **Increase the number of digital technology companies providing solutions for manufacturing industries** by improving the visibility of technology providers to manufacturing companies and facilitating the relationships to understand the barriers and drivers to successful technology adoption.
4. **Increase the number of collaborations between SMEs and larger, more established companies up the value chain** by facilitating the connection between SMES and larger customers and using economic and social scientists to provide insights to mediate the relationships.
5. **Increase the potential for export of UK manufacturing and digital manufacturing solutions** by understanding the economic landscape and the policy drivers that would support this ambition, in addition to the capabilities firms require to support exports.

Economic and social scientists will benefit from the creation of an inclusive community, that finds innovative ways to embed their expertise more effectively within interdisciplinary research. Successful integration of ESS with science and engineering disciplines is vital to enable successful adoption of future digital technologies.

InterAct Open Funding Call

The InterAct Open Funding Call is a single Commissioned Research call with a budget of £400,000. There will be up to eight awards. There is no minimum value for a request, but the maximum that shall be awarded to any single project is £62,500 (at 100% FEC), of which 80% will be funded by InterAct (i.e., £50,000 maximum funding for a single project). The maximum duration of any project is eight months.

This guidance document contains all the key information pertaining to the InterAct Open Funding Call, describing the types of projects, scope, ambition and impact that applicants are expected to address in their proposals.

Timetable

Opens - launch date	Wednesday 29 June 2022
Briefing webinar	Wednesday 29 June 2022, 12:00 – 13:00
Q&A follow-up session	Wednesday 6 July 2022, 12:00 – 13:00
Closing time and date for applications	Friday 9 September 2022, 12:00 (midday)
Funding decision	Wednesday 19 October 2022
Projects may start from	Monday 28 November 2022
Projects end date	Friday 28 th July 2023

Successful teams will be required to attend the InterAct Annual Conference in London in September 2023 (date to be confirmed).

Scope

Funding is available for eight projects that we believe will be of interest to the Made Smarter community.

Projects are welcomed from a broad range of economic and social sciences, that will create 'actionable insights' to support the delivery of the five MSI challenge objectives.

Potential project themes for exploration, could include, but are not limited to:

- **Innovation Ecosystem:** e.g. What is the role of IDTs in enabling an effective innovation ecosystem for the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) at the core of UK manufacturing? What are the digital challenges that are sector specific and which are more general? How relevant is a sector perspective to the future manufacturing ecosystem?
- **Resilience, productivity, and sustainability:** e.g. What is the role of digitalisation in enabling the trade-off between resilience, productivity, and sustainability within the UK manufacturing ecosystem? What is the behaviour change required to drive this change?
- **Resource efficiency and energy efficiency (REEE):** What is the empirical evidence base to demonstrate the role of REEE in achieving Net Zero by

2050? What is the role of IDTs in supporting this goal? What are the barriers and drivers to adoption?

- **Business model innovation:** e.g. What are the future business models required to enable more resilient, productive, and sustainable consumption and production? How can IDTs contribute to their development? How do we ensure that these are digitally secure?
- **Digital technology and wellbeing:** e.g. Do IDTs support health and wellbeing of manufacturing employees by improving their job quality? How can we encourage a more inclusive and healthier workplace in the future?
- **Levelling up:** e.g. What is the role of IDTs in ensuring a more equitable manufacturing ecosystem, regionally and nationally within the UK? Are there ideal conditions for a future digital manufacturing eco system to develop in certain clusters i.e., does it matter where the digital technology is developed? How will this affect the future of work in specific sectors or regions?
- **Resilient economy:** e.g. What is the relationship between a resilient manufacturing ecosystem and a resilient economy? What role can IDTs play in improving the resilience of the UK economy?
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** e.g. How can the innovation and diffusion of IDTs enable a manufacturing ecosystem within the UK that is more equitable, diverse, and inclusive?
- **Hierarchy of MSI objectives:** e.g. What is the relationship between the five MSI objectives? Is there an objective(s) that is the key to delivery of the overall programme success?

Impact

As a minimum, outputs are most likely to be in the form of a report. Additionally, successful applicants are expected to work with the InterAct Impact Manager to complete an impact map and use more innovative outputs such as tools, proof of concept, multi-media demonstrations and other innovations to facilitate further engagement with audiences listed above.

Data is likely to be an important feature of most projects; a data management plan is required to ensure that data is appropriately curated, stored and made available for future research, where feasible.

Eligibility

- Any UK organisation that is eligible to receive UKRI funding, typically academic institutions.
- Every Open Funding Call project shall have a named Lead University/Lead Research Organisation. This organisation may apply independently or may include other Project Partners in its application.

- Funding shall be awarded only to the Lead University/Lead Research Organisation. Loughborough University will contract with the Lead University/Lead Research Organisation only. Any subsequent distribution of funding to Project Partners shall be the responsibility of the Lead University /Lead Research Organisation.
- The award holder may include other stakeholders (Project Partners) in their project team but should not exceed more than three Co-Investigators. The inclusion of Co-Investigators should be clearly justified in respect of their added value (e.g., bringing expertise from a different discipline, or a different methodology) and the duties/responsibilities they will commit to undertake as part of the project. Applicants are strongly advised not to submit proposals with multiple Co-Investigators from the same academic department, as this is unlikely to fulfil the Quality and Management Criteria.
- Each Open Funding Call project shall have a named Principal Investigator (PI). The PI shall be employed continuously by the Lead University (i.e., their post will outlast the project). The PI shall be considered the key contact for the award, taking responsibility for delivery, budget, and reporting. The PI must be from the organisation that will administer the grant. The PI will take intellectual leadership of the project and manage the research. All named investigators are responsible for ensuring that successful proposals are undertaken and completed in the manner specified.
- Any funding requested for staff shall only be awarded for named individuals, who are already in post in the organisation. The relatively short duration of the Open Funding Call projects precludes the option of making new appointments in the funding period.
- Early career researchers (ECR), (including post-doctoral researchers and new/probationary lecturers) are eligible to participate and are encouraged to do so and may act in role of PI. Where an ECR is the primary actor, it is requested that a senior individual is also included in the project to help oversee.
- Impact: in line with UKRI expectations, it is recommended that applicants should allocate approximately 10% of the requested costs for impact activities as outlined in the section 'Scope' of this document.

Eligible costs

If successful, applicants will receive 80% funding by InterAct on proposals submitted up to a maximum award of £62,500 (i.e., £50,000 maximum funding for a single project).

Applicants are advised that value for money is a criterion in the assessment, so should ensure that their request is appropriate for the scope, ambition and expected impact, and can viably be spent within the maximum eight months permitted.

- **Directly Allocated staff:** Investigators
- **Directly Incurred staff:** Researchers
- **Travel and Subsistence**
- **Other Directly Incurred costs:** project specific consumables, consultancy fees, and equipment costing less than £10,000. Applications that exceed

this will require additional justification about why this amount is appropriate and represents value for money.

- **Other Directly Allocated costs:** e.g., support staff salaries, a share of the costs of departmental support staff and/or the costs of access to major research facilities.
- **Estate and Indirect costs.**

Ineligible costs

The following may not be requested under this Call:

Associated studentships

Any equipment costing £10,000 or more (including VAT)

Costs associated with International Co-Investigators

- Costs associated with UK co-investigators in business, civil society or government bodies (where this exceeds 10% of the total amount requested)

Expectations

To align with the expectations of InterAct, successful applicants shall:

- **Provide updates on progress (if requested) and comply with mid and end project requests for reporting** (both during the project and post-completion). Reporting requirements will be provided to successful teams. These shall align with UKRI templates and ResearchFish and include commentary on whether aims have been achieved, methods used, data produced, publications or other outputs, other outcomes, impact achieved and planned, problems encountered, and forward plans.
- **Attend InterAct events, as required.** This may include presentations to the InterAct Board and InterAct Annual Conference in September 2023 (date TBC).
- **Promote and amplify InterAct through their own networks.** The InterAct Communications Officer will maintain contact with successful teams and those subscribed to receive updates to ensure that important information and announcements are disseminated widely.
- In collaboration with the InterAct Impact Manager and other members of the InterAct team, develop an impact plan and agree metrics to monitor the success of the project such as (but not limited to) the number of and type of people engaged in new networks, number of events and attendees, the number publications and their reach, new connections made by type, and new research partnerships formed by type.
- Permit research outcomes and updates to be shared with the wider InterAct Network via marketing channels and communications.

UKRI has commissioned SQW, an independent research consultancy (www.sqw.co.uk), in collaboration with the survey company IFF, Frazer Nash and

the Institute for Manufacturing (University of Cambridge), to evaluate the programme. The evaluation will continue to 2025.

SQW will conduct a range of research activity for the evaluation including a survey of companies receiving funding from the programme, interviews with stakeholders and programme participants and analysis of secondary and monitoring data.

By submitting an application for this InterAct Open Funding Call, which is part of the Made Smarter Innovation programme, you agree UKRI may share your contact details with SQW. SQW may subsequently contact you to discuss your involvement with InterAct.

Any information you provide SQW will be treated in confidence and held securely. No information you provide will be attributed to you or your organisation. Aggregated and analysed responses will be used to prepare reports to UKRI. You can find SQW's privacy notice [here](#).

Assessment and Selection Process

InterAct reserves the right to reject proposals that are incomplete and that do not meet the requirements highlighted on the checklist before sending them to reviewers. The checklist can be found in the Application Form.

The award of funding to proposals will be based on an independent evaluation. All proposals will be reviewed by peer reviewers using the criteria below.

Applications which meet the required standard will be discussed at the Commissioning Panel, comprising academics, industrial and InterAct stakeholders, the InterAct co-directors and an ESRC observer.

The Commissioning Panel will make funding recommendations to InterAct. Final funding decisions require the endorsement of InterAct. **InterAct reserves the right to take a portfolio approach to the Open Funding Call grants.**

There are five Primary Criteria against which all proposals shall be assessed. Each contains three key points, as shown below. All applications shall be assessed against the same criteria, regardless of the size of request. Reviewers shall assess the size of the request solely in the *Value for Money* criterion. Proposals shall be scored against each of the five criteria on a scale of 0-3, as follows:

- 0 = sub-criteria not met
- 1 = sub-criteria partially met
- 3 = sub-criteria fully met

Scoring Criteria:

Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State clearly the aim and objectives of the research, its level of ambition, the expected addition to knowledge and describe its fit to the aims of InterAct and the Made Smarter Innovation (MSI) challenge.• Explain the need for this research and note why your approach is the most appropriate, and how it might be scalable.• Describe the problem that is to be investigated, with reference to the literature.
Rigour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe and justify the research approach/method to be taken, making clear links to which team members will be responsible for delivery.• Explain how the project engages with the idea of interdisciplinary enquiry.• State the proposed outputs and outcomes from the research, with reference to destination journals, conferences, and industry groups.
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Justify why this team is the most appropriate to deliver the project, with reference to their track record, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.• Explain (with a timetable and work package/task structure) how you will ensure you deliver the research on time, including sufficient engagement and networking as part of the programme.• Provide an account of the key risks and how you will manage these (include any risks in respect of ethics, data management, and staffing).
Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a clear justification for all resources requested.• Explain why your request is appropriate, given your review scope, ambition etc.• State how you will contribute to InterAct, making reference to your long-term plans for follow-on funding and collaboration.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the long-term effect that you expect your research to have on the InterAct agenda, and how you would expect this impact to be measured or recognised.• Set out your pathway/s to impact, including your target audience/s and beneficiaries, how you will reach them, and what change you expect to see.• Describe the potential to increase cross sector collaboration between types of academic disciplines businesses and academics and different

Grant conditions:

Successful applicants will receive a Grant Award Letter with the terms and conditions set out in the InterAct Grant Disbursement Agreement.

Applicants should make sure that these terms are acceptable to their organisation before applying for funding. The terms are not negotiable. [They can be downloaded here.](#)

Submissions:

- To download an application pack, [visit our website](#).
- The deadline for submissions is **Friday 9 September 2022 at 12.00 (midday)**
- Submissions should be sent to this email address: info@interact-hub.org

Contact:

For all enquiries about the call, please email info@interact-hub.org

