**Overview of the project**

The aim of this project is to develop a blueprint for a co-created, distributed, community-based manufacturing platform in the UK with a business model to support its financial viability and scalability.

We are a team of four experienced researchers from Loughborough University, Durham University, University of Derby and Teesside University and we are successful in securing funding from the InterAct Network to scope out what is the best way to develop access to digital technologies, skills, and small-scale manufacturing (for example, 3-D printing) within communities.

This research project aims to examine what communities would like access to, in terms of digital skills and manufacturing within their community. We wish to engage with a range of stakeholders and interested parties to understand the needs of communities, for example, councils, businesses, enterprise partnerships, educators, young people, disadvantaged groups, differently abled groups etc. The longer-term aim would be to create a network of digitally enabled community-based hubs, where community needs for products, training, skills, and job opportunities were met locally. This study is the scoping exercise for the initial phase of the project, which is to understand local needs first, which will then lead to the development of a digital platform linking local needs with local solutions. Our intent is that by better understanding what communities are looking for in terms of digital skills and manufacturing, we can facilitate the creation of hubs to support these needs. Thus, to summarise, the aim of this project is to develop a blueprint for a co-created, distributed, community-based manufacturing platform in the UK with a business model to support its financial viability and scalability.

**Consent form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I confirm that I have read and understood the information related to the project |  |
| I have had sufficient time to consider the information and ask any questions I might have, and I am satisfied with the answers I have been given. |  |
| I understand who will have access to information about me and how the information will be used. |  |
| I agree to take part in the above project. |  |
| I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. |  |

**Questions for County Councils**

1. Can you briefly tell us about your role in the Council?
2. Can you tell us about the council’s priorities related to digital skills development and employment to support digitalisation efforts of manufacturers in the region?
3. Can you take us through some of the efforts which the council has already taken related to digital skills development and employment to support digitalisation efforts of manufacturers in the region?
4. What challenges has the council faced in the above efforts?
5. What support will the council need in the digital skills development and employment generation for digital manufacturing in the region?
6. Given our project’s objectives, do you have any suggestions or ideas about connecting manufacturers, digital service providers, local community and educational institutions to suit the needs of the above stakeholders? To what extent will such a platform help in achieving Council’s objectives related to skill development and employment?
7. Will you or any member of your team like to participate in a scoping workshop, platform design workshop and validation workshop which we plan to organise over the coming months?