



**InterAct Network**

**Sandpit guidance**

## InterAct Sandpit Event

Develop solutions to accelerate the innovation and diffusion of Industrial Digital Technologies in UK manufacturing.

**Dates: 15 – 17 May 2023**

**Location: [Burleigh Court Hotel, Loughborough University, Loughborough, LE11 3GR](#)**

InterAct invites Expressions of Interest from researchers from a range of disciplines and career stages to attend our Commissioned Research Sandpit Event.

This will be held 15 – 17 May 2023, at Burleigh Court Hotel, Loughborough, Leicestershire.

There will be up to 40 places available, and all accommodation and meal costs will be covered by InterAct. Travel costs will not be covered.

A total fund of £360,000 is available for a range of projects arising from the Sandpit. The full economic cost of a single project can be up to £108,000. InterAct will fund 80% of the full economic cost (£90,000 maximum funding). The timescale for each project will be no longer than nine months.

### Sandpit Timetable

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| Opening date for expressions of interest to the Sandpit | Tuesday, 28 February 2023               |
| Closing date for expressions of interest                | Friday, 17 March 2023 at 12.00 (midday) |
| Invitations for Sandpit sent out                        | Friday, 31 March 2023                   |
| Sandpit event   | 15, 16, 17 May 2023                     |
| Deadline for project proposals arising from the Sandpit | Friday 9 June 2023                      |
| Funding announcement                                    | Friday 16 June 2023                     |
| Latest project start date                               | Monday, 4 September 2023                |

### About InterAct

InterAct is a £4.4 million, Made Smarter Innovation funded, Economic and Social Research Council-led network that aims to bring together economic and social scientists, UK manufacturers, and digital technology providers to address the human issues resulting from the diffusion of new technologies in industry.



## What is the purpose of InterAct?

Working alongside other partners within the wider [Made Smarter Innovation](#) (MSI) programme, we aim to build a strong, vibrant, interdisciplinary community where funding can be effectively distributed to researchers who will generate actionable economic and social science insights for the benefit UK businesses.

In a world faced with the looming threat of climate change, the InterAct Network will also support UK manufacturing's efforts 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. The InterAct Network has two primary roles:

1. Develop and support the creation of an effective digital innovation ecosystem to accelerate the innovation and diffusion of Industrial Digital Technologies (IDTs).
2. Ensure that the full range and depth of social and economic science insights are accessed across the Made Smarter Innovation challenge and wider UK manufacturing sector.

[Find out more about how we're supporting MSI here.](#)

## InterAct Commissioned Research Programme

£1.35 million (at 100% FEC) of funds have been made available for the Commissioned Research programme, which is being administered through different funding mechanisms, one such mechanism being a Sandpit. The primary objective of the programme is to curate, augment, and amplify human insights from the economic and social sciences to support the diffusion and adoption of IDTs.

We encourage all of our research grant recipients to think carefully about creating outputs that provide 'actionable' insights to end users that will generate real-world positive impacts on the sustainability, efficiency, and innovation of our target sectors.

## About the Sandpit

The Sandpit will be held over the course of three days at Burleigh Court Hotel in Loughborough. It will start with an introductory session on Monday 15 May 2023 at 12.00 (midday) and close at 16.00 on Wednesday 17 May 2023.

The Sandpit will be an intensive, interactive, and free-thinking environment. A diverse group of participants will get together for the full three days. They will focus on collaborative thinking and discussion in order to develop innovative research ideas and outline research proposals, which will be presented to a panel at the end of the Sandpit.

These proposals should be carefully considered, drawing on the expertise of assembled groups and should be designed to help solve the unmet needs from industry around the creation, diffusion, and adoption of industrial digital technologies in manufacturing.

## Who can submit an expression of interest

The Sandpit is open to researchers from a range of disciplines and career stages from any UK Research Organisation that is eligible to receive UKRI funding, typically academic institutions.



Researchers should be passionate about engaging in collaborative research with a focus on developing actionable insights and informing solutions to major issues facing manufacturing and industrial digital technology businesses, both in the present and in the foreseeable future.

### How to apply

To participate in the Sandpit, you need to complete an expression of interest form and email this to [info@interact-hub.org](mailto:info@interact-hub.org).

Please make sure you fully complete the form, as this is the only information on which potential Sandpit attendees will be selected. No further documentation will be accepted.

Attendance for the full three days is mandatory, therefore please ensure this is checked and approved with your research organisations.

The deadline for applications is Friday, 17 March 2023 at 12.00 (midday).

Please note that late submissions will not be considered.

### Pre-Sandpit assessment

Applications to attend the Sandpit will be assessed by a selection panel. As a Sandpit is predicated on an ethos of innovative collaborative working, applicants must demonstrate both enthusiasm and appropriate personal attributes for cross-disciplinary collaborative research.

Attending a Sandpit can be an exciting and rewarding experience, but it does not suit everyone.

Expressions of interest will be reviewed against the following selection criteria:

- The ability to develop novel and adventurous research ideas.
- The potential to contribute to research at the interface between disciplines.
- The ability to work in a team and engage productively with people from a range of backgrounds within and outside your sector.
- The ability to explain research to non-experts.

Please note:

- We do not assess your academic publication or research track record as part of the process. We are more interested in your ability to engage creatively and constructively in a multidisciplinary environment to generate novel ideas.
- You should approach the Sandpit without a specific research project in mind. Novel ideas are co-created by Sandpit participants from scratch.
- We will select participants based on the information in the expression of interest form and will endeavour to achieve a diverse spread of participants from across disciplines, experience, and backgrounds.
- In the event of this opportunity being substantially oversubscribed as to be unmanageable, InterAct reserves the right to modify the assessment process.
- Please note that because of the large number of applications expected, we will not be able to give individual feedback to unsuccessful applicants.



## Invitation Process

InterAct will confirm selected participants by Friday, 31 March 2023.

If selected, academic applicants will be required to inform their university research office before the event that they are going to attend the Sandpit. Please be advised attendance for the full three days is mandatory.

Those selected to attend will receive further briefing documents via email before the event.

## Post-Sandpit assessment

Following the Sandpit, the outline research projects developed and presented in the Sandpit will be assessed by a selection panel. Successful groups will then be invited to submit a full proposal covering their intended activities. Proposals must be led by researchers eligible to apply for UKRI funding.

The full economic cost of a single project can be up to £108,000. InterAct will fund 80% of the full economic cost (£90,000 maximum funding).

The Research Organisations of the Lead Participants will be required to fund 20% of the full economic cost project costs (as standard).

The timescale for each project will be no longer than nine months.

The deadline for submission of full proposals is Friday 9 June 2023.

Final funding decisions will be announced Friday 16 June 2023.

Please note that attendance at the Sandpit does not guarantee InterAct funding.