ACTION PLAN

INNO Industry - Improving innovation delivery of policies within 4.0 industry in Europe.

UNITED KINGDOM
Buckinghamshire Business First

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Project:	**INNO Industry - Improving innovation delivery of policies within industry 4.0 in Europe**
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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	ü	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	X	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	ü	Other regional development policy instrument

Policy instrument initially addressed

The UK's Growth Programme (2014-2020) allocation through the European Structural and Investment Fund, ESIF (ERDF, ESF and EAFRD)

Specifically, the ESIF allocation under Priority 1 of the programme for Buckinghamshire LEP

We were initially seeking to address the locally administered Priority 1 of the Growth Programme (GP). Its objective is to invest in science, research and digital innovation and covers:

•   Increase investment in research and innovation by SMEs in sectors and technologies identified through SMART specialisation

•   Increase the number of SMEs engaged in knowledge exchange, collaborative research and innovation with HE

Locally the Buckinghamshire LEP European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy identified several issues it wished to address to improve innovation and 'smart specialisation', these include, promoting business investment in Research & Innovation; and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and Higher Education. In particular, promoting investment in networking, clusters, and open innovation through smart specialisation.

A number of issues continue to exist, and evidence highlights specific barriers that hold back SMEs from development. These are the risk and costs associated with investment in research and

innovation, access to finance and a very low level of interaction between SMEs and the universities within the county.

The improvements identified as being required were:

- Ensuring calls under priority 1 were focussed on supporting activity which enables clustering
- That funding being made available, supported growing companies with local efforts to cluster innovation activity
- To link these two improvements through the development of a digitally enabled, cluster support service funded through ERDF.

The responsible body for the ESIF was the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP), they were the producers of the evidence base and managed the local structural fund allocation.

Additional/New policy instrument addressed: The UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Following the UK's exit from the EU we are no longer part of the European Structural Fund Programmes therefore, we are now focusing on addressing a new policy instrument. The replacement for the ESIF programmes in the UK will be the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Government has committed to at least matching EU receipts through the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund, on average reaching around £1.5 billion a year. This new fund, to be launched in 2022, will operate throughout the UK and play a part in uniting and levelling up the whole country.

To ensure that local communities are best placed to benefit from this fund, a pilot programme will be undertaken called the UK Community Renewal Fund which is providing for an additional £220 million of investment in 2021-22. This fund, will help support local areas to pilot imaginative new approaches and programmes that unleash their potential, instil pride, and prepare them to take full advantage of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund when it launches.

The Community Renewal Fund aligns ideas around enterprise support / investment in local business and especially "encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential" and consequently how this might lead into shaping the Shared Prosperity Fund.

The managing authority (MA) for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), however this has recently undergone a name change and is now known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). We shall refer to the new name throughout the rest of this action plan. The fund will be administered by the local authorities - Buckinghamshire Council is the local authority for the region. The Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) is creating a new Digital Strategy for Buckinghamshire which will influence the local authority's thinking around this policy instrument. Buckinghamshire Business First is working closely with BLEP to further influence the Digital Strategy via the evidence gathered during the INNO Industry project and through weekly meetings with BLEP.

In summary, we have identified the new policy instrument as being the UKSPF piloted via the Community Renewal Fund.

We will influence the policy instrument via the evidence gathered in the INNO industry project, including the good practices shared by the INNO Industry partners, regional SWOT analysis, regional stakeholder workshops and the mapping of the current support for digitisation of SMEs.

Joint effort of regional stakeholders involved

To collect all relevant information, share good practices from EU partners, build a shared understanding of the regional situation vis-à-vis digitisation and innovation in SMEs, facilitate the joint development of actions and to build a consensus of opinion, Buckinghamshire Business First has convened 5 regional stakeholder workshops during the course of the INNO Industry project. These workshops involved members of the following regional stakeholders :

- Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- MedTech cluster
- Space cluster
- Manufacturing and High Tech cluster
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Buckinghamshire SMEs
- Private training providers
- IT organisations
- Construction sector leaders
- Universities
- Further Education Colleges
- Health and Social Care cluster
- DLUHC (formerly known as MHCLG)

SWOT ANALYSIS – United Kingdom

The INTERREG Europe INNO Industry project has significantly supported the project partners' aim to improve regional, and national policies to increase the rate of clusters that develop activities to support digital transformation.

As the starting point for mutual learning and the development of actions for improvement for all the partners, Buckinghamshire Business First undertook a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) of:

- Policies for clusters and digital transformation of companies.
- Existing cluster activities to support digital transformation.

Process:

On 4th December 2019, Buckinghamshire Business First created a workshop with 17 participants representing 13 organisations across the region which resulted in the following SWOT analysis.

Strengths:

- The regional strategies which have been produced have undergone extensive consultation with the business community to reflect their needs and create an effective implementation plan to tackle some of the 'Grand Challenges' affecting the UK economy.

- The extent of Buckinghamshire Business First and its penetration into the local business community allows for a collective voice for Buckinghamshire SMEs in government consultations for policies; directly allowing them to influence the contents of strategy documents.
- Long-term financing available for regional programmes backed by regional strategies and are monitored as part of their funding programme, for instance the UK Growth programme.
- Policy documents highlight the importance of internationally-renowned sites within the region and plans to enhance these further still for the benefit of the regional and national economy.

Weaknesses:

- There is a general lack of awareness amongst senior business leads on the location and contents of the policy documents listed. As such, this leads to missed opportunities for businesses and their employees.
- There is a general lack of awareness on the appropriate funding programmes available for businesses, particularly SMEs, or of the benefits that they will provide both to the business itself and to its customers.
- Several of the strategic documents are not linked to one another, meaning that it becomes difficult to assess the overlap of opportunities.
- There is no Digital Strategy, either nationally or at the regional level, in order to guide stakeholders through Industry 4.0.
- The performance indicators for several of the policies remain unclear to businesses and do not necessarily relate to their individual goals.
- ERDF financial regulations mean that obtaining funding from this stream has been difficult, particularly for SMEs with less resources.

Opportunities:

- Brexit is creating an opportunity for a new swathe of documents to outline implementation strategies more accurately to satisfy UK business need, alongside the good practice methodology of working with European partners.
- Whilst Buckinghamshire has some co-located clusters, the digital enhancement discussed in the regional policies will mean enhanced capabilities for cross-fertilisation of ideas and disruptive technologies, through the introduction of businesses to new stakeholders and other businesses for their mutual benefit.
- The goal to create Buckinghamshire as a 'digital super-highway' or "living lab" aims to encourage businesses to use the region as a testbed for digital and new technologies.
- There is an opportunity to promote life-long learning as the new technologies will cause a significant gap in skills provision in the county.

Threats:

- Brexit has caused some disruption to how the UK collaborates with European partners and policies are still be created to overcome this. Currently, it has been evidenced that there are significant skills gaps amongst SMEs which need addressing for the adoption of the new technologies.
- Proximity of the region to London can mean that Buckinghamshire and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc are overlooked by central government funding in favour of enhancing the economies of the North (The Northern Powerhouse) and Midlands (Midlands Engine). The Levelling Up White Paper is due to be launched at end 2021, and this will articulate the new policy interventions to improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic.
- Proximity to London, Oxford, and Cambridge, combined with the cost of living in Buckinghamshire, results in a lack of educated 20-30 year olds working in the region.
- Current misconceptions of Industry 4.0 and automation mean that there is a generalised fear for employees over digitalisation and what this will mean for them. This may lead to reticence and resistance from businesses to adapt to the digital economy.

What do we want to improve?

- The creation of a Digital Strategy, both regionally and nationally, will ensure that Buckinghamshire can prepare the necessary infrastructure, skills, and connectivity to better support the digitalisation of business clusters.
- Whilst business clusters are fairly new within the region, more actively promoting their successes and capabilities should encourage other industries to consider clustering.
- Whereas several governmental policies include the building and advancement of more transport connectivity; greater appreciation is needed for digital connectivity, which can supplement transport to decrease reliance on non-green communication methods, such as car journeys to meetings.
- More work is needed to distil the large policy documents created nationally to make these more relevant and accessible for business communities.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
+ Regional strategies are developed with input from business leaders + Strong local growth hub with extensive membership + Internationally renowned businesses/sites within the area + Catapult organisations located within Clusters + Current clusters have exhibited, shared and encouraged best practices + Initial focus has been on creating positive cluster infrastructure	- Some policy documents are isolated from each other and are inaccessible - Unclear what future funding is available - No current digital strategy - Unclear how to measure "success" - Limited direct interaction with central government - Unclear which government department does digital transformation - Lack of awareness in SMEs around the benefits of digital improvement
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
+ Brexit has caused a large focus on boosting the UK economy + Cross-fertilisation of ideas across different clusters/industries + Buckinghamshire as a "digital super-highway" in the Arc + Creation of outcomes-based KPIs + Close relationship between businesses and universities + Innovation fund created from cluster business rates + Create appetite for digital	- Uncertainty following Brexit - General election - Proximity to London can discourage investment in region over other areas - Definite skills and age gap - Unclear how to spread best practice in self-managed clusters - Poor digital infrastructure in area - Local politics changes may lower the prioritisation of clusters - Business apathy towards "digital"

ACTION 1: New engagement modalities for stakeholders in the regional ecosystem

1.1 *The background*

During the INNO industry project, Buckinghamshire Business First has identified a clear and compelling regional need to support SMEs in their adoption of digital technology and highlighted the role in which clusters and the good practices shared in the project could play in addressing this need.

The project mapped the support available for businesses in the adoption of digital technology and the move towards Industry 4.0, along with the gaps in support and the barriers to adoption. This mapping is being used by business advisers to support SMEs and further inform the writing of the regional Digital Strategy. The mapping is ongoing and a simplified, high-level summary of the map of support available is shown in Annex 1. In addition, evidence is being collated and analysed from directly working with businesses to identify their needs regarding the uptake of the new technologies.

There is a broader issue around knowledge, networks, collaboration, and support that requires addressing for SMEs in order to accelerate their move towards Industry 4.0.

Of 200 Buckinghamshire businesses surveyed by Buckinghamshire Business First in 2019, the majority (76%) believed that new and emerging technologies would assist their business and improve their offerings and outputs. However, only 41% of businesses believed they were currently prepared to take advantage of these developments, and another 23% did not know whether they were prepared or not.

A 2020 report from Be the Business found that employee resistance to adopting new systems, and a lack of leadership skills to identify, scope and manage technology projects were key barriers for SMEs to adopt technology. Despite high levels of awareness of different digital tools, there is a lack of deep knowledge and a relatively limited appreciation of the value of technology to small- and medium-sized businesses.

Buckinghamshire Business First's INNO Industry project workshop with the Construction Sector Action Group characterised the current situation within this sector and identified some sector specific issues to address.

Currently, much of the technology being used is well established and not at the cutting edge of what is available. Changes to health and safety regulation has been at the forefront of digital technology adoption for construction firms to be compliant. Digital technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality are increasingly used for e-learning and health and safety training.

Soft skills such as creativity and problem-solving are needed in combination with digital skills to make best use of digital technologies. Innovation leaders or technology champions within firms are increasingly common, including at senior management level. Remote training and careers talks via webinars have enabled training providers and construction firms to expand their reach to those both inside and outside the County.

Barriers to the adoption of digital technologies that were highlighted include:

- **Costs** – Budgets are set far in advance making it difficult to invest when unforeseen events create budgetary pressures. A key example includes the recent rapid inflation of raw material prices.

- **Value chains** – Are not sufficiently integrated to support construction firms adopting digital technologies. This also extends to the client base.

- **Clients** – Each client has a slightly different system through which they operate and do business. This makes digital technology adoption a challenge.

- **Risks** – Construction firms have a desire to wait for a technology to be proven and viable before adopting it. This creates an issue whereby firms will be waiting for a counterpart to make the first move. Which slows the pace of technology adoption.

- **Awareness** – The digital skills gap is not just limited to workers but also those in senior management. A lack of awareness of the latest digital technologies available also creates a barrier for construction firms to keep up with the pace of change.

There is also a critical gap in the skills levels of the employees to support SMEs in their take up of the new technologies.

Buckinghamshire has a larger than average digital sector, with 1.3 times as many people working in the sector locally than the national average. The County is home to some leading digital technology firms (e.g., SAS software, Softcat and ESRI), but by no means to the same extent of neighbouring Berkshire. Buckinghamshire's digital specialisms include film and TV production and post production activity; computer consultancy activities and telecoms activities.

As is the case nationally, and globally, digital and technology skills are in high and growing demand within Buckinghamshire. At the 'specialist' end of the spectrum, pre-Covid, approximately 12,200 people worked in specialist digital technology roles within Buckinghamshire firms, and approximately 1,600 Buckinghamshire residents worked in such roles on a self-employed basis. At a sector level, around 14,000 people worked in the 'information and communication' sector as employees, with others doing so on a self-employed basis.

Digital skills shortages exist across a range of sectors, not just within digital technology firms. Securing and utilising digital skills and digital technology can be particularly difficult for SMEs, which are highly concentrated in Buckinghamshire. 37% of respondents to a local business survey conducted in 2019 stated that a lack of awareness of digital technologies or a lack of digital skills were the largest factors limiting the adoption of technology within their businesses.

The ability to attract digital talent can be difficult for SMEs that are unable to match the financial incentives offered by larger companies in the County and neighbouring areas such as London and the M4 corridor.

According to Department of Education's (DfE) Employer Skills Survey 2019, a third of Buckinghamshire employers struggling to recruit people with the required skills said that applicants lacked the required digital skills.

- 27% found it difficult to obtain advanced or specialist IT skills from applicants

- 15% of employers said the same for computer literacy / basic IT skills.

In addition, the survey found that a third of Buckinghamshire employers with employees deemed 'not fully proficient' stated that these employees lack the required IT skills. Both basic and advanced IT skills were identified by employers as needing development within the workforce.

Looking to the future, nearly three quarters of Buckinghamshire employers anticipated the need for new skills within their business over the next 12 months. Of these, 45% anticipated the need for new digital skills.

- 31% of Buckinghamshire employers who anticipate a need for new skills in the next 12 months anticipate a need for advanced or specialist IT skills

- 26% anticipate a need for computer literacy / basic IT skills.

Overall, the implications of the present situation in Buckinghamshire can be summarised as follows:

- For many SMEs, Covid-19 has driven the need for an early adoption of digital technology to enable them to continue operating and remain viable . Be the Business, a business support organisation, found that Covid-19 *"created three years of innovation in just three months."*

- Some businesses chose to use the 'downtime' created by the Covid-19 pandemic to futureproof through investing in the new technologies.

- Uncertainty of the economic climate due to the pandemic is likely to have acted as an incentive for individuals, businesses, and industries to accelerate gaining digital skills, adopting technology and automating production.

- Digital upskilling and adoption is likely to help the Buckinghamshire economy 'bounce-back better'

- The need for digital skills is at the heart of the UK's future skills narrative, as digital technology will continue to disrupt our work and home lives, creating both opportunities and risk.

- Within Buckinghamshire, specific innovation activity that is anticipated to expand in the future includes:

  - A new DISC (Disruptive Innovation for Space Capability) at Westcott near Aylesbury which is home to the space cluster of businesses

  - A new Innovation Hub for Health Tech in Aylesbury

  - Greater Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality involvement in MedTech and particularly in the Creative growth sectors.

  - Continued expansion of the Silverstone High Tech cluster with plans for a new R&D centre to enhance the local skills base.

- An approach that promotes collaboration, knowledge sharing, development of and access to digital skills, plus access to funding and infrastructure will be critically important and the "clusters" approach and learning from the INNO Industry collaboration can play a vital role in influencing policy going forward.

In November 2021, Buckinghamshire Business First held their high-level regional conference and INNO Industry dissemination event – The Future Tech Summit. The event took place at the world renowned Silverstone Park which is situated on the same site as the Silverstone Technology Cluster for advanced

engineering, electronics, and software businesses. Over 200 business leaders and delegates booked to attend the event during which the INNO Industry project was presented, and leading technology journalist Nikki Dean interviewed a panel of experts in 5G, Internet of Things, AI, Big Data and Cloud.

During the event, several polls were taken to gauge the latest attitude of businesses towards new and emerging technologies. The results, shown in Annex 2, highlighted the critical importance of technology to the productivity and competitiveness of businesses, the areas of current and future investment, barriers to investment and support requirements.

The event was attended by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – formerly known as Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – the Managing Authority (MA) for the policy instrument, thereby further informing future policy.

Relevance of INNO Industry / Lessons learned where and when:

Buckinghamshire Business First has participated in the INNO Industry project from the outset and as such has heard presentations and the information regarding the good practices from each of the project partners. At the project the kick-off meeting in Dobova in September 2019 and at the project meeting in Krems in March 2020, Buckinghamshire Business First exchanged experience with all INNO Industry partners and continued to collect additional information throughout the virtual project meetings in 2020 and 2021.

Of particular relevance to the challenges identified in the UK during the project and described in the background section of this action plan, were the good practices:

- **Austria – House of digitalization – https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/3734/lower-austrian-house-of-digitalization/**

- **Latvia – The Eco-system approach - https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/4166/the-ecosystem-approach/**

These good practices involved concepts of helping companies in their digital transformation by providing easy access to information, training, infrastructure and potential partners across institutions and sectors. They describe how establishing a network of "hubs" providing digital technology know-how and infrastructure and creating clusters helps SMEs facilitate technology transfer in collaborative projects.

The ecosystem approach has demonstrated a great instrument to develop cooperation between all triple-helix players to establish a united long-term vision in one sector. Ecosystems are a way of bringing together all the specific stakeholders to form a cross-sectoral cooperation platform with all the specific strengths a region might have.

1.2 Description of Action

The action will create new engagement modalities for stakeholders in the region to influence the policy instrument, ie the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Engagement will be informed by the creation of a strong evidence base around the drivers, barriers, and critical success factors to the adoption of digital technology and the move towards Industry 4.0. This evidence will shape the writing of the regional Digital Strategy, incorporating the learnings from the INNO Industry project and the good practices shared by the project partners. The Digital Strategy is being created by Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) and will directly inform the Local Authority (Buckinghamshire Council) in their administration of the new policy instrument.

Further stakeholder engagement will be in the form of a communication and launch plan for the regional Digital Strategy and via a series of round table discussions and 1:1 meeting. The priority areas identified in the evidence gathering and the regional Digital Strategy will inform the tender specifications under the policy instrument. The number of businesses benefiting from this support will be monitored.

As described previously, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is being piloted in 2021 by the Community Renewal Fund. Buckinghamshire Business First has bid for and won £728,000 in this pilot of which there is a substantial allocation to promote the advancement of digital skills particularly to businesses in the Visitor Economy, so the process of influencing the future policy instrument has already begun.

Additionally, a highly important report has recently been issued from Public Policy Projects and Anderson Strategy, entitled "Driving Digital Innovating Local Economies". Public Policy Projects (PPP) is an organisation which offers practical policy analysis and development in infrastructure, digital technology, economy, health, care, and other public services. It is also independent and cross-party, bringing together public and private-sector leaders, investors, policymakers, and commentators with a common interest in the future of public policy. This report provides a clear, structured, and evidenced approach to harnessing the power of digital innovation and practical ways of implementing it. The report has been submitted to Government and will influence future policy development.

The regional Digital Strategy will be influenced by the best practices identified throughout the INNO Industry project and by the feedback from businesses who have attended the various workshops. These learnings have in turn been provided to the PPP report by BLEP thereby influencing policy and future funding development.

The report forms a key part of the evidence base for action and has clear recommendations for the role Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships can play in digital innovation. These include a step by step approach involving appointing a digital navigator / champion, creating a local government strategy, assessing the wider digital environment, engaging with business leadership, creating a toolkit and creating a digital forum.

The writing of the regional Digital Strategy and the activities described in this action plan will be financed by Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) and Buckinghamshire Council. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will fund future programmes in the region with tender specifications influenced at a regional level.

Step 1 : Evidence gathering

The creation of a strong evidence base will inform the writing of the regional digital strategy and thus influence the policy instrument.

The evidence has been gathered from a variety of sources and builds on the existing evidence that has been compiled during the INNO industry project. This existing evidence includes the UK regional SWOT analysis, insights around clusters, good practices from the partners presented during the project, the business survey on drivers and barriers to adoption of digital technologies and feedback and insights gained through regional stakeholder workshops and round table discussions.

The INNO Industry project has newly identified in a post COVID world the need to re-map the support available for businesses in the adoption of digital technology and the move towards Industry 4.0. This mapping has started and continues to be completed, it is being used by business advisers to support SMEs and will further inform the writing of the digital strategy. In addition, evidence is being collated and analysed from directly working with businesses to identify their needs regarding the uptake of the new technologies.

Evidence will also be gathered from university research including that of the University of Buckingham's new School of Computing and Centre for AI. This will also include research on the wider implications of the use of technology including the ethics of use with respect to the workforce and cyber physical systems.

Step 2 : Write the regional Digital Strategy

Buckinghamshire Business First is working with the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) to write the Digital Strategy for the region. The strategy will build on the learning from INNO Industry project, including the good practices and insights around clusters, and the evidence gathered in Step 1 of this action plan. Buckinghamshire Business First regularly meets with BLEP to provide the business case for future activity. To demonstrate the importance of this, BLEP have recently created and recruited for a new position of Digital Strategy Manager for BLEP to lead this process.

The writing and publishing of the regional Digital Strategy for Buckinghamshire sits in the context of the writing and publishing of wider national strategies. The UK Innovation Strategy was published in July 2021 and sets out the government's vision to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035. The Innovation Strategy is guiding the creation of strategies for specific, key technologies – the UK Hydrogen Strategy (published in August 2021) and the National Space Strategy (published in September 2021) for example.

The national Digital Strategy is being led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and is due for publication late 2021. The completion and publication of the Buckinghamshire regional Digital Strategy will follow the publication of the national Digital Strategy to ensure alignment between the two. The regional Digital Strategy will align with the national strategy but with a sharp focus on local priorities, thereby influencing the direction of funding for projects in the region.

The aim is to raise aspirations / inspiration in digital technology and clusters in the first instance and to then provide support for businesses in adoption of the technology and effective use of the technology.

Step 3 : Communication and dissemination activities

Buckinghamshire Business First facilitates a group of stakeholders with responsibility for promoting digital knowledge and awareness, the support available and monitoring / measuring progress in adoption

The Digital Strategy will be publicised across a range of communication channels to ensure the maximum reach and the strongest stakeholder engagement and influence of the policy instrument. The strategy with be published on the BLEP website.

"Digital Champions" will be recruited with responsibility for promoting digital knowledge and awareness, support available and monitoring / measuring progress in adoption is identified as being key to successful roll out.

A series of communication events will be scheduled to promote and disseminate the strategy.

Buckinghamshire Business First will organise 1:1 discussions with key stakeholders and build on this with roundtables and meetings with key sectors and cluster groups.

All these activities will maximise the impact of the project learning on the new UK funding measures.

1.3 Players involved

Apart from Buckinghamshire Business First, the following players have been involved in the development of the action and will be involved in its implementation:

- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – formerly known as Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – the Managing Authority (MA) for the policy instrument
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) – responsible for the national Digital Strategy
- Buckinghamshire Council (Local Authority) – responsible for administering the policy instrument
- Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) - creating the Digital Strategy for Buckinghamshire
- Stakeholders from across SMEs, industry clusters, IT organisations and education centres across Buckinghamshire.

1.4 Timeframe

The pilot of the new policy instrument, the Community Renewal Fund, started in Q4 2021. The national Digital Strategy will be published in late 2021 and the regional Digital Strategy will follow closely after this. The new policy instrument, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will launch in 2022.

1.5 Costs

The costs for writing the Digital Strategy for the region will be met by Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The stakeholder consultation and communication activities will not result in any costs to the project.

1.6 Funding sources

As previously stated, the costs for writing the Digital Strategy for the region will be met by Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

1.7 Monitoring

In the original project application form, Buckinghamshire Business First's proposed self-defined performance indicator was the number of clusters involved in the cluster regional network. This is the key indicator that will be monitored in Phase 2.

A second indicator will be the number of tendering opportunities for clustering and supporting the digital innovation agenda published.
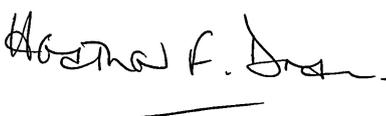
25 / 01 / 2022

Heather Dean

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ANNEX 1 - Simplified, high-level summary of the mapping to date of support available for businesses in the uptake of digital technology

	Support	Online Learning Courses	Interactive Workshops	1:1 Mentoring	Access to Funding	Collaboration / Networking	Product Research & Innovation Expertise	Testing Facilities	Access to new markets
Business Support	BBF Growth Advice		x	x	x	x			
	Digital Boost	x	x	x					
	Help to Grow - Digital	x	x	x		x			
	Google Digital Garage	x							
	Microsoft Learning	x							
	UK Gigabit Vouchers					x			
	Be the Business Digital	x							
	Skills Toolkit	x							
	Technation	x	x	x		x			
Universities	University of Buckingham School of Computing and Centre for AI			x		x	x	x	
	BNU Aylesbury Digital Innovation Hub					x			
	South Central IoT Bletchley								
	The Open University - Openlearn	x							
	BNU Challenge Lab			x	x	x	x	x	
	Royal Holloway University Digital Innovation Lab			x		x			
	Cranfield University Digital Innovation Hub			x	x	x	x	x	
Innovate UK / UKRI / KTN	Smart Grants / Grant Funding			x	x				
	Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)			x	x		x		
	Manufacturing Made Smarter				x	x	x	x	x
	4Manufacturing				x	x	x	x	x
	i3P				x	x	x	x	x
	Immerse UK				x	x	x	x	x
	Innovate UK Edge								
	Horizon Europe				x				
Manufacturing Technology Centre	Manufacturing Support Service			x	x	x	x	x	
Catapults	Digital Catapult			x	x	x	x	x	x
	High Value Manufacturing (HVM) Catapult			x	x	x	x	x	x
Clusters	Westcott Space Cluster				x	x	x	x	x
	Silverstone Technology Cluster				x	x	x	x	x
	Stoke Mandeville Health & MedTech Innovation Cluster				x	x	x	x	x
	Pinewood Studios Story Futures Creative Industries Cluster				x	x	x	x	x

ANNEX 2 – Future Tech Event results of delegate polls on new and emerging technology

Do you think that new and emerging technologies will improve your business offerings and productivity?

Yes
98 %

No
0 %

Don't know
2 %

Are you investing in any of the technologies below?

Internet of Things
27 %

5G
18 %
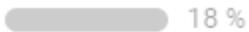
Artificial Intelligence
35 %

Big Data
27 %
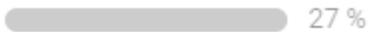
The Cloud
77 %

Cyber Security
58 %
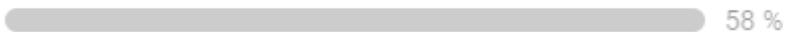
What are the barriers to you investing in Future Tech for your business?

Funding
74 %

Knowledge/ Skills
60 %

Inspiration
18 %

Infrastructure
28 %

Cyber Security
8 %
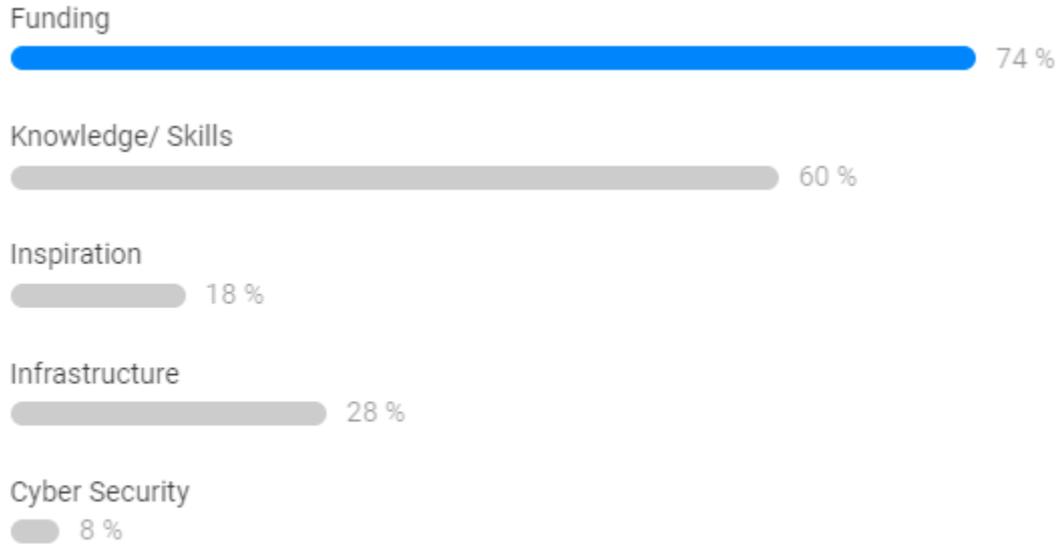
Where would you like more support for your business?

Funding
63 %

Knowledge/Skills
70 %

Inspiration
25 %

Infrastructure
16 %

Cyber Security
25 %
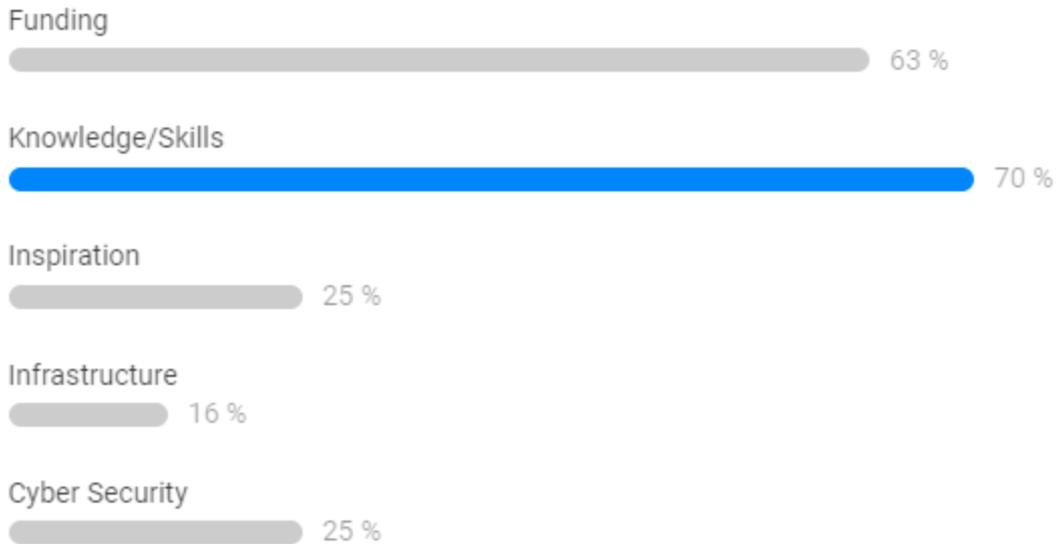
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