



# HOST

Home of Skills & Technology

## HOST Salford Social and Economic Impact Report

Salford City Council

Produced by



**IN4.0™**  
Group



Funded by  
UK Government

Delivered by IN4 Group  
in partnership with Salford City Council

April 2023 - March 2025

# CONTENTS

6	Introduction
12	Executive Summary
16	HOST Salford
26	HOST Focus on Community
38	UKSPF Programmes
42	FreelanceHER 100
50	Gametechn365
58	MWMW
66	Social Value
68	IN4 Programmes
80	Social Value
82	Salford
94	Social Value

**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

**MEDIA CITY**

**PLAY**

**HOST**  
Home of Skills & Technology





Salford City Council

# FOREWORD

By Paul Dennett, Salford City Mayor

Salford is a city built on ambition, resilience, and innovation. We pride ourselves on doing things the Salford Way, with inclusive growth at the heart of everything we do. HOST, the Home of Skills & Technology, formerly The Landing, was established by Salford City Council in 2012 as part of the development of MediaCity.

Through the Council's continued investment, HOST has evolved into a thriving innovation hub that drives skills, prosperity and economic opportunity across Salford and Greater Manchester.

This report highlights the real impact of that investment. HOST has created high-quality jobs, upskilled local talent, and attracted further investment. From supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs to leading in creative, immersive, AI, and cyber skills, it is helping people and businesses succeed in the digital economy.

With **over £22.56m in social value generated** and a **£4.58 return on investment for every £1 spent**, Salford City Council

is proving that investment in skills delivers lasting benefits. We're at the forefront of digital transformation, showing that backing people and technology builds a stronger, fairer economy.

Salford has always pushed boundaries, and our vision remains bold. By continuing to champion pioneering places like HOST, Salford City Council, in partnership with IN4 Group, is cementing our city's reputation as a leader in tech while ensuring no one is left behind.

I'm proud of what our collaboration and commitment have accomplished, and I look forward to building on this momentum to create even greater opportunities for our communities.

# INTRODUCTION

Enabled by Salford City Council's vision and investment, this report demonstrates how the innovative partnership with IN4 Group, the best of public and private sector partnerships, creates a broader legacy of **shared growth and social impact**. With roots in MediaCity, Salford, this work generates ripple effects across Greater Manchester and beyond.



Building on MediaCity's global reputation as a leading media and tech hub, IN4 has successfully operated HOST for almost five years. Home to over 250 creative and tech businesses and a vibrant community of 8,000 people, MediaCity is set to expand further with £1 billion of planned investment over the next decade.

Its national economic impact is significant — KPMG estimated it generated £277 million in Gross Value Added (GVA) in just one year

(2016), and by 2017, the city's media industry had grown to £3.1 billion — double its 2010 value.

IN4 Group is an award-winning professional technology skills provider with a unique regional blueprint that unlocks and nurtures the potential of local talent, enabling sustainable productivity and prosperity for regions, industry and communities.

This two-year report demonstrates how this regional blueprint has been strategically designed to build a

resilient society, community, and economy. By investing in skills, supporting businesses, and creating inclusive growth, Salford is shaping the future and strengthening its ability to navigate economic shifts, government constraints, and global market challenges. This approach empowers communities to remain adaptable, accessible, and strong, ensuring they are ready to thrive, even in uncertain times.



This report evaluates the outcomes of IN4 Group's activity across the Greater Manchester region from April 2023 to March 2025, focusing on how its work has catalysed innovation, skills development, and enterprise growth.

Delivered through HOST Salford — the innovation hub at MediaCity — IN4 has led a diverse portfolio of initiatives that:

- Provide affordable workspaces and subsidised costs for businesses while hosting events and supporting partners, tenants, and members
- Deliver sector-leading business, education, and skills programmes, including:
  - FreelanceHER 100
  - Gametech365
  - Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace

- Play AI
- CyberFirst MEGA Hubs
- Skills City
- MIND

- Host community engagement events to strengthen Salford's digital ecosystem and develop home-grown talent

This independently verified evaluation, conducted by Social Value Business (SVB), highlights these initiatives' measurable social and economic outcomes. It reinforces how the partnership between Salford City Council and IN4 Group drives inclusive innovation, economic resilience, and regional prosperity.



**GAMETECH** → 365



▶ **PLAY AI**

**MEGA**  
MOTIVATED EDUCATED GENERATION WITH AMBITION M1



**SKILLS CITY**

THE POWER OF  
**MIND**  
▶ MUMS IN DATA

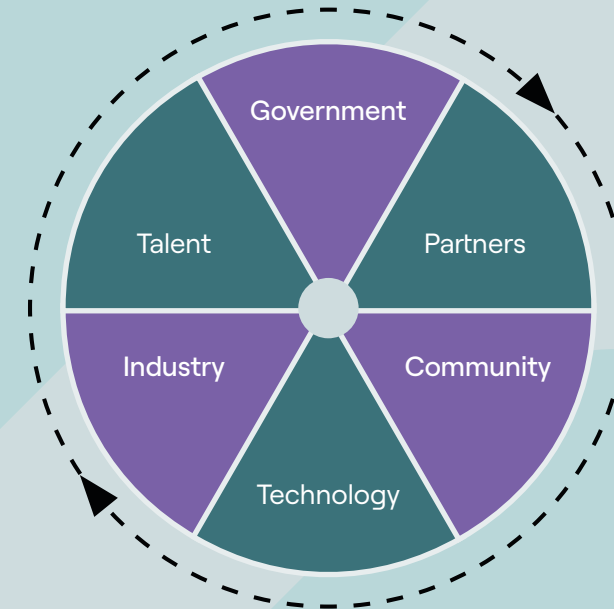
# REGIONAL PROSPERITY BLUEPRINT

## TALENT

- Skills City
- Pathways to Industry
- Gametech Professional Studio
- ELCAS

## INDUSTRY

- MWMW
- Play AI
- HOST
- Gametech



## PARTNERS

- Government Departments
- Local Authorities
- Combined Authorities
- Business Groups
- APEX Partners
- Industry Partners

## COMMUNITY

- MIND
- FH100
- CyberFirst
- MEGA Hubs

**The most impactful, proven programmes unlocking human capital to achieve sustainable regional prosperity.**



HOST's core values and DNA underpin every aspect of its work:

### Humanising

We humanise technology by thinking about citizens, not users

### Belonging

We create a sense of belonging with an inclusive community of shared values

### Culture

We redefine start-up culture by supporting wellbeing, and putting team before product

IN4 Group's purpose:

### Mission

Unlocking the potential of local talent to enable productivity through technology generating sustained regional prosperity

### Vision

Fair Access to Technology Futures



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the social and economic impact of the strategic partnership between **Salford City Council** and **IN4 Group**, spanning April 2023 to March 2025. United by a shared vision of inclusive growth, the partnership has positioned **Salford as a national beacon for digital innovation, enterprise, and social value creation**, with reach and relevance across Greater Manchester and beyond.

More than just a workplace, **HOST Salford** is a community that offers start-ups and scale-ups regular events, workshops, and community initiatives, making it a catalyst for collaboration, innovation, and opportunity.

IN4 Group's mission to generate meaningful local value is embedded across all areas of its work. From talent development and workforce engagement to supplier investment and community-based delivery, the Group's integrated approach is helping to shape a **more inclusive, digitally confident, and economically resilient Salford**.

## KEY PROGRAMMES

### FreelanceHER 100

Supporting women and underrepresented groups with the skills, confidence, and mentoring to launch and grow businesses

### Gametech365

Accelerating growth for start-ups in gaming, immersive tech, and creative innovation through sector-specialist support

### Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace

Equipping senior leaders across industries with the skills to adopt generative AI and drive productivity through digital transformation

### Play AI

Upskilling early career graduates and apprentices with the latest AI qualifications while nurturing joy and confidence with tech

### CyberFirst MEGA Hubs

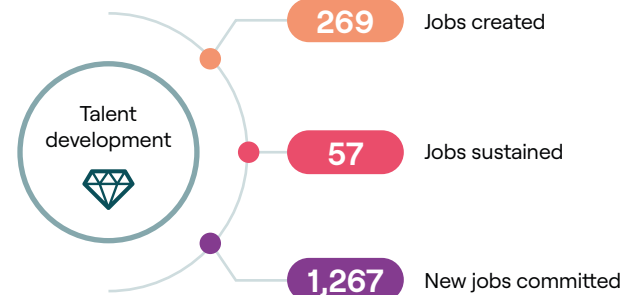
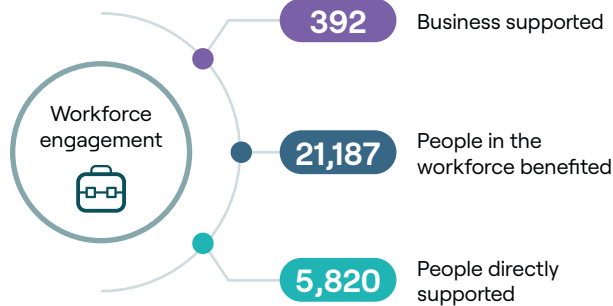
Preparing young people for careers in cyber by embedding digital awareness and skills in local schools, including an out-of-school Cyber and Esports Academy

### Skills City

Breaking barriers for underrepresented groups in tech through employer-led Skills Bootcamps designed to fast-track digital careers

# SOCIAL IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

April 2023 – March 2025



5.98%

Projected workforce growth

225

Activities delivered

£176,000

Re-invested into communities

£3.1 million

Spent with local suppliers

## SOCIAL VALUE DELIVERED

Evaluated independently by Social Value Business and aligned with the **Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM)** framework, IN4 Group's delivery has generated a projected **£22.56 million in social value** for Salford over the reporting period. This equates to a **Social Return on Investment (SROI) of £4.58** for every £1 invested.

DELIVERED VALUE: APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2025

**£22.56**  
million

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**£4.58**  
for every £1 invested

“These outcomes are more than numbers — they are evidence of a place-based innovation model that works. Salford's bold investment in inclusive growth already delivers measurable benefits: creating jobs, growing businesses, and building a future where digital opportunity is open to all.”

**Richard Dickins**

Managing Director of Social Value Business

”





# HOST SALFORD

HOST Salford is home to a dynamic community of start-ups and established businesses. It offers subsidised costs, flexible workspaces, and expert business support to drive growth and innovation and foster a thriving tech ecosystem where companies can connect, collaborate, and scale. Additionally, free events and activities provide invaluable networking and learning opportunities for the local business community.

HOST Salford supports a community of:

- 34 Partners
- 16 Tenants
- 17 Members

From one-person ventures to high-growth enterprises, these businesses benefit from a collaborative environment that removes traditional barriers to innovation.

Salford City Council

**MEDIA CITY**

## HOST offers businesses:

### Subsidised Costs

With support from Salford City Council, HOST offers below-market rates on rent, utilities, and business rates — making it an accessible launchpad for tech ventures

### Flexible Workspaces

Tailored to suit a range of business sizes, from agile start-ups to growing SMEs

### Business Support Services

Includes expert mentorship, access to funding, specialist training, and peer-to-peer networking

### Innovation Labs

Equipped for R&D in cyber security, data science, and immersive tech, fostering experimentation and applied learning

### Strategic Partnerships

Collaboration opportunities with global leaders such as Vodafone, BAE Systems, Microsoft, AWS, Cisco and The Growth Company

### Inclusive Community

A values-driven environment where diversity, equity, and accessibility are championed at every level







Through its vibrant innovation hub, HOST Salford empowers ambitious start-ups and SMEs to grow, innovate, and collaborate. From product development and grant funding to networking, talent access, and technical support, HOST's tailored business ecosystem has enabled members such as UBDS, Roke, 6point6, MyManu, Hubble Bubble, Nybble,

Croftwerk, and Kaz Laljee Digital to scale their impact both regionally and globally.

By fostering a collaborative, tech-forward environment in the heart of MediaCity, HOST has become a trusted launchpad for entrepreneurs, helping them bring ideas to life, build credibility, and unlock real economic growth.

“

“MediaCity is constantly evolving, and HOST's ambitions will accelerate our position as the home of globally recognised talent and innovation.”

**Stephen Wild**

Managing Director of MediaCity

”





UBDS, a leading digital transformation company, expanded to the North West and chose HOST Salford to establish its presence. Since then, it has experienced significant growth across its core services, including cloud and cyber advisory.

UBDS was searching for a space to support its growing operations and serve as a strategic base for its 24/7 managed service functions. The team also aimed to establish a strong regional presence in Greater Manchester and foster meaningful collaborations with public sector partners and the broader local ecosystem.

“Our presence at HOST has placed us at the heart of an ecosystem designed to foster innovation, collaboration, and meaningful regional impact,” said Diptesh Patel, CEO of UBDS. “The support we’ve received has been exceptional. The team has consistently facilitated valuable introductions across local authorities and the wider public sector, helping us

embed ourselves within the local ecosystem. They’ve also gone above and beyond to assist us in delivering events, often at short notice.”

UBDS decided to join IN4 Group’s Skills City as a programme partner, enabling it to hire interns from diverse backgrounds with unique digital skill sets to support its team. As the team expanded,

UBDS later moved to a larger office at HOST to accommodate its ongoing business growth.

“Being part of the HOST ecosystem helped us develop our presence, tap into many different areas of the local region and hire new talent. The team has connected us well, which has meant that we could be much more present in the region as a result.”

# SUCCESS STORY

From capital to catalyst: Why 6point6 chose HOST Salford

After a decade of growth in the capital, 6point6 made the strategic decision to expand north, identifying Greater Manchester as a region with a collaborative and purpose-driven digital community. The decision was also influenced by the area's strong focus and investment in talent when there was a real shortage of skills and the competition was only getting stronger.



HOST Salford and its supportive network played a crucial role in helping 6point6 quickly embed itself within the local ecosystem. When 6point6 moved to MediaCity, the business discovered it had built a larger network at HOST in six months than in

ten years in London, reinforcing its decision to choose it as the ideal site for its first hub outside the capital.

Janet Coulthurst, former Chief of Staff at 6point6, which has been acquired by Accenture, said: "The support from HOST allowed us to accelerate

being part of Greater Manchester's vibrant ecosystem, helping to catalyse even more amazing growth and innovation as leading cyber security, data and transformation specialists.

"Our home at HOST also helped establish our presence and begin

to grow a strong and supportive network. HOST genuinely wants to see its residents thrive within the ecosystem, and we were able to benefit from the knowledge of a team embedded and interconnected within Greater Manchester's tech community."



# HOST FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

## Gametech Campus, 3rd Floor of HOST

Backed by a strategic £340,000 investment from the UKSPF Communities and Place strand, HOST transformed its third floor into a state-of-the-art Gametech Campus in the heart of MediaCity.

Designed to open up career pathways into the multi-billion-pound creative industries, the campus supports people of all ages and backgrounds to access new skills and employment opportunities.



Over two years:



# 3,265

People have benefited from the Gametech Campus



# 174

Events hosted



Funded by  
UK Government

The interactive, immersive space has brought together global organisations, including:



University of  
Salford  
MANCHESTER

# KEY HIGHLIGHTS



Youth Engagement & Digital Inclusion



Adult Skills & Workforce Development



Creative & Tech Business Engagement



University & Academic Integration



Women & Underrepresented Groups

“

This dynamic programme of events positions HOST as both a community anchor and innovation engine —bridging gaps between industry, education, and future talent while making technology accessible to all.”

**Richard Dickins**

Managing Director of Social Value Business

”





Cyber & Esports  
Academy

## SUCCESS STORY

Manchester Esports Academy  
collaborates with Manchester City charity

The Manchester Esports Academy (MEA) is the first-of-its-kind junior professional esports education and skills programme, offering young people aged 8-16 a pathway into the multi-billion pound video game industry.



City in the  
Community

Launched at HOST's Gametech Campus by Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner – the MEA teamed up with City in the Community (CITC), Manchester City FC's official charity.

- 6-week pilot
- 20 young people from Greater Manchester
- Young carers or those from low-income backgrounds

Participants gained:

- Professional esports coaching
- Soft skills development
- Health and nutrition advice
- Careers education





“

“This pilot reflects our commitment to building education and employability pathways for city youth. We’re excited to explore how esports can create new opportunities and skills for our participants.”

**Sam Dainty**

Head of Partnerships at CITC

”





## SUCCESS STORY

Vodafone opens UK's first Edge Innovation Lab at HOST



The Edge Innovation Lab at HOST offers companies, academics, software developers, and public sector organisations the opportunity to see and test the possibilities of the next generation in cloud technology: Multi-access Edge Compute (MEC). When deployed with 5G, developers can create applications that react faster than the human brain.

Innovators in Greater Manchester have access to these technologies in the earliest stages of development. This head start creates a global centre of excellence for real-time mobile applications in the region, supporting the growth of digitally led businesses and industries in the area and throughout the UK.

“

“For digital to have the biggest impact on our lives, we need to put the technology in the hands of the people who will use it every day.”

**Maria Grazia Pecorari**  
Strategy and Wholesale Director at Vodafone

”



# HOST

## SOCIAL VALUE IMPACT

HOST Salford stands as a beacon of inclusive innovation and community empowerment, embedding social impact at the heart of economic growth. As a community anchor and innovation engine, HOST delivers a dynamic programme of events and initiatives that inspire the next generation of talent, support local enterprises, and ensure technology and opportunity are accessible to all.

Through its values-driven mission, HOST integrates innovation, digital skills, and business engagement into a cohesive ecosystem that champions diversity, equity, and local prosperity. The hub's commitment to underrepresented communities and strong partnerships across public, private, and third sectors enable real, measurable change — particularly in future-focused sectors like AI, immersive technology and esports.

This social impact is not just aspirational — it's evidenced. Following a

rigorous independent evaluation aligned with the nationally recognised Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM) standards, HOST has generated **over £7.98 million in social value**, with a social return on investment (SROI) of **£4.78 for every £1 invested**.

By creating accessible pathways into technology, supporting innovation-led businesses, and fostering inclusive growth, HOST Salford plays a pivotal role in building a fairer, more resilient and future-ready economy — regionally and nationally.

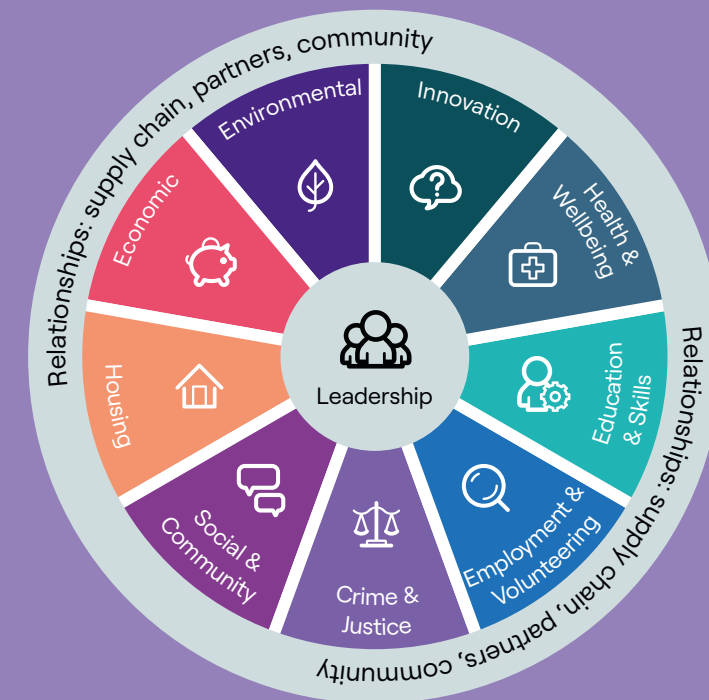


DELIVERED VALUE: APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2025

**£7.98**  
million

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**£4.78**  
for every £1 invested





# UK SHARED PROSPERITY IN GREATER MANCHESTER



Funded by  
UK Government



The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the UK Government's domestic replacement for the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF), designed to empower local areas by investing in people, places, communities, and businesses. Through this fund, local authorities are equipped to deliver tailored interventions that foster inclusive growth, innovation, and resilience.

In 2023, IN4 Group was awarded £846,900 by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) under the UKSPF's E22 strand: Support for Local Business. This investment has enabled IN4 to deliver a targeted, high-impact programme of business support initiatives designed to empower entrepreneurs, scale start-ups, and prepare the region's workforce for the future. Delivered across 15 months through three flagship programmes — **FreelanceHER 100**, **Gametech365**, and

**Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace** — these focuses on building capabilities in key growth sectors, supporting underrepresented talent, and embedding digital skills into everyday work. Together, these initiatives represent a values-led and innovation-driven response to regional needs, helping to future-proof Greater Manchester's economy by fostering inclusive entrepreneurship, immersive technology adoption, and AI-readiness in the modern workplace.



“

“Through UKSPF, we’ve been able to unlock the potential of local entrepreneurs, digital talent, and future-facing businesses. By investing in inclusive innovation and practical skills, we’re not just supporting growth but shaping a more resilient and equitable economy for Greater Manchester.”

Mo Isap  
CEO of IN4 Group



## KEY RESULTS



**201**  
Businesses supported



**208**  
Potential entrepreneurs supported



**102**  
Businesses adopting new tech and processes



**17**  
FTE new roles created



**12**  
New businesses started



# FREELANCEHER 100



FreelanceHER 100 is a flagship accelerator programme designed to support women and underrepresented groups overcome barriers to self-employment. Open to pre-trading entrepreneurs aged 16 and over across Greater Manchester, the programme offers confidence-building mentorship, practical skills training, and a supportive peer network to help individuals launch and grow their own businesses.

With a strong focus on inclusion, FreelanceHER 100 creates a safe, empowering space for participants to explore entrepreneurship — particularly those who may face additional challenges due to gender, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation.



Funded by  
UK Government



## KEY RESULTS

208

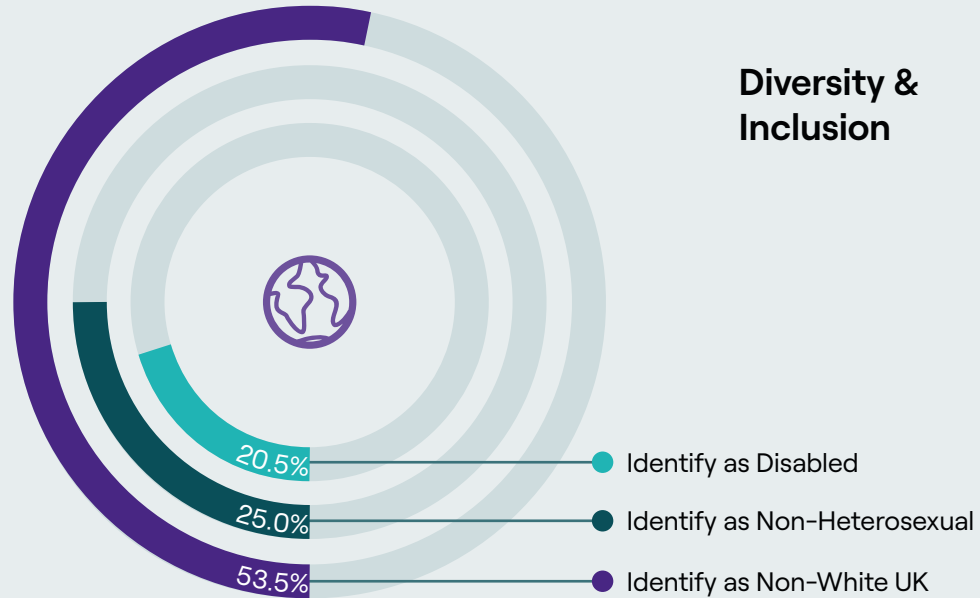
Individuals supported

12

New business starts

52

Planning to start a business



# KEY OUTCOMES

FreelanceHER 100 has delivered meaningful and measurable impact, fostered economic empowerment and built a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Greater Manchester:

In addition, all participants were offered peer mentoring courses delivered by Tanya Arturi. These courses comprise a tailored three-session series designed to deepen business development support for those ready to pursue their ideas.

## Community & Social Capital

Through mentoring, networking, and peer-led sessions, participants built strong support networks that will continue to serve them in their entrepreneurial journeys — strengthening community ties and collaborative growth

## Increased Economic Participation

The programme supported women to start or plan new businesses, helping participants take confident steps toward financial independence and contributing to the region's economic resilience

## Skills & Confidence Building

Participants received hands-on training in finance, marketing, business planning, and sales, equipping them with the practical tools to succeed as founders and freelancers

## Mental Wellbeing & Self-Belief

Many reported improved confidence, reduced isolation, and a renewed sense of purpose – highlighting the importance of mental wellbeing in entrepreneurial success

## Local Economic Impact

FreelanceHER 100 supported enterprise development across Salford, Trafford, and Bolton, directly contributing to local business creation and economic vibrancy

## Advancing Equality & Inclusion

By focusing on women and non-binary individuals from diverse backgrounds, the programme plays a critical role in narrowing gender and equity gaps within the start-up space

“

“The FreelanceHER 100 experience is both hugely empowering and pragmatically practical. Learning with like-minded individuals means the enthusiasm and passion stays high, and it really feels like you are being given every reason to fly! There is really valuable business support to be had as well.”

**Chi-chi Ekweozor**  
Founder of Attendist

”





## SUCCESS STORY

Tatiana's FreelanceHER 100 Journey: From Salford baker to aspiring cake business owner

Tatiana Mirzea, a Salford-based baker, recently completed the FreelanceHER programme delivered in partnership with Women with Wings. She was eager to explore entrepreneurship but like many others, wasn't sure where to start. "I knew how to make cakes, but I didn't know anything about running a business," she explained.

Before enrolling on the programme, Tatiana worked at Amazon while occasionally baking for friends and family. Over time, her passion for baking cakes grew as she spent her spare time creating sweet treats for family and friends and spending quality time with her daughter. "I loved baking with my daughter, and I realised this was something I wanted to do for a living, not just as a hobby, but as my business."

During the programme, Tatiana learned vital business skills and took her first steps toward making her dream a reality. "The most valuable part was when they taught us how to break things down into small goals. I realised I just need to take baby steps, which feels less overwhelming. This completely shifted my mindset."

Since completing the programme, Tatiana has invested in herself by enrolling in specialist baking courses and learning how to create

professional event cakes and chocolate bars. She's now working towards registering her business, securing a hygiene rating, and officially launching her on-demand cake business from her home kitchen, hoping to one day open her own café.

Reflecting on her experience, Tatiana said: "The programme opened my eyes to what I can do. I feel more confident now. I understand it's ok to start small, and every little step gets me closer to my goal."

FreelanceHER 100 has also helped Tatiana think about marketing her business, conducting market research, and identifying her target audience.

"I learned that I can reach people in my community and that it's important to educate my customers about the unique cakes I offer.

"I would definitely recommend the FreelanceHER 100 programme. It helps you realise where to start and gives you the courage to follow your dream."

"Before FreelanceHER 100, being a business owner was just a dream. Now, I'm investing in myself and taking the first steps to build a better future."

**Tatiana Mirzea**

FreelanceHER 100 participant



# GAMETECH365

Gametech365 is a dedicated business accelerator supporting gametech and immersive technology start-ups across Greater Manchester. Focused on driving innovation, collaboration, and commercial growth, the programme provides fully funded access to expert mentorship, peer support, and tailored workshops — fostering a thriving community of digital entrepreneurs.

Open to businesses across game design, immersive R&D, and training services, the programme is designed to meet the needs of both early-stage and scaling ventures. With a flexible delivery model combining online and in-person engagement, Gametech365 ensured accessible, high-impact support across the cohort.

**GAMETECH**365

**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY



Funded by  
UK Government



## KEY RESULTS



**32**

Businesses supported



**14**

Online workshops delivered



**11**

In-person workshops delivered



**3**

New jobs created (FTE)



**11**

Jobs recruited



**10**

New technologies adopted



# KEY OUTCOMES

Throughout the programme, Gametech365 delivered a wide range of tangible benefits to participating businesses:

Gametech365 has demonstrated the power of targeted support in unlocking innovation and building a more inclusive digital economy. As Greater Manchester positions itself as a national hub for immersive and gametech, initiatives like this continue to deliver long-term social and economic impact.

**32 Greater Manchester businesses** benefited from bespoke support across diverse areas, including game development, immersive education, and digital innovation

**Start-ups gained critical insights** through expert-led workshops, mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning sessions, helping refine products and strategies

**Aspiring professionals accessed practical learning opportunities**, motivating them to pursue careers in digital and gaming sectors

**Communication and collaboration improved**, with many participants integrating Discord (introduced via the programme) into their operations to streamline workflows

**Indie studios enhanced the market-readiness** of their games through targeted content and industry-led feedback

**Immersive tech providers adopted new tools and platforms**, particularly in VR, to improve user experiences and expand product offerings

**Valuable networking opportunities** led to increased visibility, with several participants receiving free access to leading gaming industry events across the North West

**Participants reported increased industry connections**, reduced operational costs, and stronger community ties as a direct outcome of their involvement







## SUCCESS STORY

From Coffee to Meta:  
How Gametech365 helped Play XD level up

Phil Goddard, founder of Greater Manchester-based game studio Play XD, credits the Gametech365 programme as the turning point in his company's growth journey.

"I met Simon Benson from the Gametech team for a coffee and that turned into an invitation to join the Gametech365 programme, and that's when things really took off," said Phil.

Through Gametech365, Play XD joined a vibrant community of start-ups and indie studios, gaining access to mentorship, funding workshops, and industry showcases. In February 2024, the team debuted their in-house IP at the programme's

launch event — an experience Phil describes as a breakthrough in confidence and visibility.

A comment during one event led to a game-changing decision: "One of the programme leads, casually mentioned that Meta was investing heavily in indie developers. That changed everything."

By May 2024, Play XD had secured a development agreement with Meta for the Meta Quest platform — an opportunity that might never have happened

without the programme's network.

Beyond business breakthroughs, Gametech365 helped the studio grow its team through the Gametech Professional talent pipeline, leading to two successful hires: Miles, now a full-time animator, and Molly, who supports development and community engagement.

A £25,000 grant followed, thanks to a Gametech365 funding workshop and a connection to MITIH (MediaCity Immersive

Technologies Innovation Hub). "That session changed how I think about funding," Phil said.

Now, Play XD is giving back by mentoring others in the community. "Gametech365 didn't just help us grow — it helped us evolve. If you're serious about scaling, this is the place to be," he said.

Phil plans to relocate Play XD's headquarters to HOST, fully embedding in Salford's thriving innovation ecosystem.



# MODERN WORKER FOR THE MODERN WORKPLACE

Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace (MWMW) is a fully funded digital upskilling programme supporting senior leaders across Greater Manchester's industrial, professional services, and public sectors. Focused on harnessing the power of generative AI and data-driven technologies, the programme equipped leadership teams with the skills and strategies to boost productivity, streamline operations, and drive long-term business resilience.

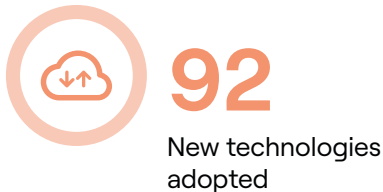
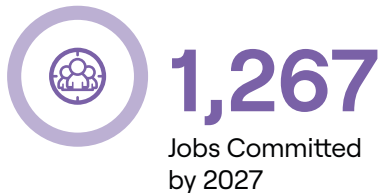
The programme played a key role in supporting organisational transformation, enhancing decision-making, and unlocking sustainable growth by enabling leaders to integrate advanced digital tools confidently into everyday practice.





# KEY RESULTS

**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR OUR WORKFORCE



# KEY OUTCOMES

Throughout the programme, MWMW delivered a wide range of benefits to senior leaders through a practical, cohort-based learning experience, resulting in lasting organisational change.

## Applied, Real-World Learning

Site visits and hands-on activities helped translate learning into action, accelerating the implementation of digital tools across business operations

## AI & Digital Strategy Integration

Practical workshops and masterclasses empowered leaders to adopt generative AI, improve data-driven decision-making, and plan for digital transformation

## Cross-Sector Collaboration

Peer networking and cohort delivery fostered knowledge exchange, innovation, and shared best practices among industry, public sector, and professional services leaders

## Tailored Mentoring & Strategic Support

One-to-one coaching enabled participants to shape bespoke digital strategies aligned with their organisational goals

## Scalable Business Impact

Reaching employees and organisations, boosting productivity, building workforce resilience, and driving digital adoption across the region

“

“The key learning for me and the outcome was the human element. It has to be the strongest it needs to be, so you need that human element to help support you. The technology is only the driver, and you must have really good data behind it.”

**Yvonne Campbell**

Transformation Programme  
Manager at Manchester City Council

”



## SUCCESS STORY

MWMW programme:  
Enhancing customer experience with AI

“Before joining the programme, AI felt like a mystery to us... the course opened our eyes to the potential of AI and how it could transform customer service and loyalty.”

### Liam Chadbond

Aerodrome Manager at Manchester Barton Aerodrome



Liam Chadbond, Aerodrome Manager at Manchester Barton Aerodrome in Salford, oversees a busy general aviation airport with a heliport, leased buildings, emergency service operations, and events of up to 5,000 attendees — all managed by a small team.

Already familiar with automation, Liam joined the MWMW programme to explore how AI could further enhance their operations.

He learned how AI can provide insights into visit history, service usage, and feedback, helping to personalise interactions and strengthen relationships.

“We realised AI could track customer interactions over time. That insight could help us tailor our approach, improving customer satisfaction.”

Although still early in their AI journey, the team plans to integrate data analysis tools to enhance client experiences.

“We’re far more informed than before. The programme gave us a much better understanding of AI’s potential.

“AI isn’t just for big corporations. Smaller businesses can benefit even more. Any business that wants to work smarter should consider this programme.”

# UKSPF

## SOCIAL VALUE IMPACT

The investment received by IN4 Group from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund's (UKSPF) E22 has enabled the delivery of high-impact programmes – FreelanceHER 100, Gametech365, and Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace – designed to empower entrepreneurs, scale start-ups, and equip the workforce for the future.

By fostering inclusive entrepreneurship, supporting underrepresented talent, and integrating digital skills into key growth sectors, these initiatives are helping future-proof Greater Manchester's economy.

The programmes have not only spurred innovation but have also driven measurable social value. Following an independent evaluation aligned with the **Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM)** standards, it was found that these initiatives generated **over £5.34 million in social value**, with an impressive **SROI**

**of £6.30 for every £1 invested.**

The UKSPF funding has unlocked have empowered leaders, entrepreneurs, and communities across Greater Manchester. By fostering digital confidence, unlocking innovation, and promoting social inclusion, these programmes are not only driving economic growth but also building a more resilient, inclusive, and future-ready business landscape locally, ensuring that Greater Manchester remains at the forefront of digital and entrepreneurial progress.

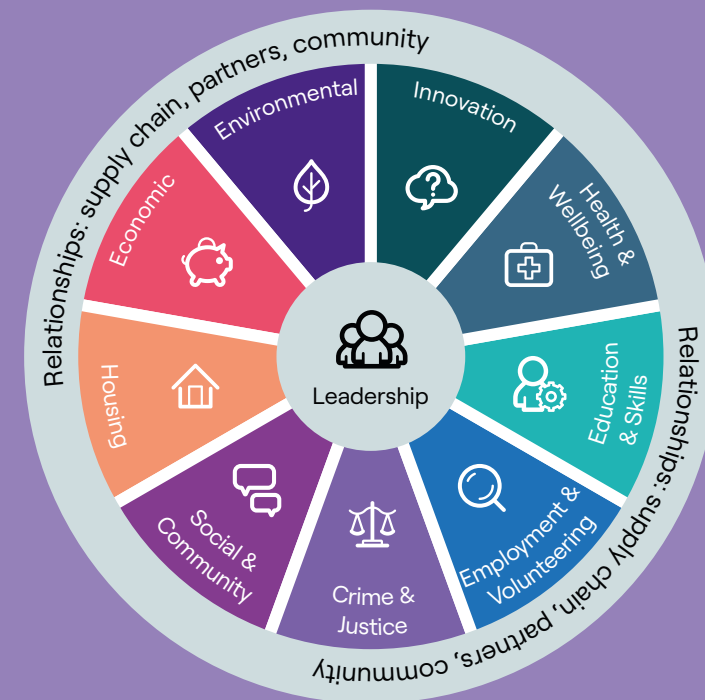


DELIVERED VALUE: APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2025

**£5.34**  
million

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**£6.30**  
for every £1 invested







## IN4 GROUP



IN4 Group is deeply committed to driving local value in Salford and the surrounding Greater Manchester area. This commitment is evident in its recruitment practices, supplier partnerships, strategic investments, and direct spending – all of which contribute to building a stronger, more sustainable community.

With a focus on creating inclusive opportunities, IN4 Group plays a pivotal role in fostering local talent and supporting economic growth.

Through its initiatives brought to the region, such as CyberFirst MEGA Hubs and Skills City, IN4 Group is shaping the future workforce, empowering individuals from diverse backgrounds to thrive in high-demand sectors like cyber security and digital technology.

By working closely with local suppliers and engaging regional talent, IN4 Group ensures its programmes benefit not only participants but also the wider local economy.



## Key achievements include:

IN4 Group's approach integrates the strength of local engagement with global reach, demonstrating how targeted investments and community collaboration can create lasting social and economic impact.

**68%** of IN4 Group's workforce reside within Greater Manchester, reflecting its commitment to nurturing talent within the community

**65** suppliers are based locally, with **£3.1 million** spent to support regional businesses

**CyberFirst MEGA Hubs** has successfully reached **1,437 students through 33 CyberFirst MEGA Days and 2 MEGA events** in Greater Manchester, and **12 schools** are currently CyberFirst recognised, contributing to the development of a skilled cyber workforce

**Skills City** continues to break barriers for underrepresented groups in tech, with **761** individuals completing training developing vital digital skills and **217** securing roles in tech





# SUCCESS STORY

Molly's journey across IN4 Group programmes:  
From graduate to games freelancer

"It wasn't just about the skills; I personally really benefitted from the overall Gametech365 community, the mentors, and exposure to employers. You don't often find yourself in an environment where employers are scouting for their next hire."

## Molly Robinson

Skills City Game Engine participant



Molly, a games design graduate, joined the Skills City Game Engine programme to sharpen her skills and connect with industry professionals. "I knew I had many skills but needed the experience and the right connections to take that next step."

During the programme, she worked on a group project with Factory International, creating a Unity-based mobile app to support creatives with their finances. More importantly, she discovered the Gametech365 community, which gave her access to mentors, employers, and peers with similar goals.

Molly found an internship opportunity with IN4 Group and quickly secured a three-month role developing a VR game in Unity for Ithra by Aramco. "The internship gave me the confidence to see myself as a professional, not just a student."

Through the internship, she was introduced to the FreelanceHER 100 team. Although she hadn't planned on freelancing, the programme gave her the knowledge and confidence to succeed.

"I really enjoyed being a part of the FreelanceHER community. The finance session was the most useful for me; it gave me the practical skills to be a sole trader, and the community was amazing."

A key turning point came when IN4 Group connected Molly with Phil at Play XD, who hired her as a freelance Community Manager and Developer. "I

fell into freelancing almost by accident, but I quickly realised that I loved it; I just needed to learn how to do it properly."

Now working as a freelancer, Molly reflects on the journey that took her from job-seeker to industry professional: "My goal was to come out of the Game Engine programme with a job. I'm so pleased to join the Play XD team; without the programmes, I would not be where I am today."

"If you're looking for more than just training, a community that pushes you forward and mentors that support you throughout your journey, this is where you need to be."



## SUCCESS STORY

CyberFirst MEGA Hubs

CyberFirst MEGA Hubs aims to ensure a sustainable supply of diverse, high-quality talent for the UK's future cyber workforce. By equipping young people with essential digital awareness and skills, the UK Government seeks to empower them to pursue careers in tech.

### Moor Park High School receives over £390,000 in-kind grant from IBM to bolster cyber security preparedness

Moor Park High School and Sixth Form were awarded an in-kind grant of £396,113.50 from IBM. The grant was created to help schools proactively prepare for and respond to growing cyber-attacks worldwide. The faculty and students will also benefit from free AI and cyber security training through enhanced access to IBM SkillsBuild.

Moor Park High School and Sixth Form is already a CyberFirst-recognised school. It was selected from hundreds of applications from schools across the globe and is collaborating with IBM Service Corps volunteers.

George Walker, Teacher of Computer Science and CyberFirst Lead

for the school, said: "CyberFirst MEGA Hubs has allowed us to develop a comprehensive cyber security curriculum, combined with hands-on learning experiences, ensuring that our students are well-prepared to tackle the challenges of the ever-evolving cyber landscape."

"The education sector requires a very dynamic security posture due to the variability of threat vectors it needs to manage. The availability of these grants can be a game-changer for schools seeking to boost their cyber resilience," said Troy Bettencourt, Global Partner and Head of IBM X-Force.





“

“At IN4 Group, we are incredibly proud of our achievements — from rapidly growing our workforce and establishing ourselves in a new region to increasing engagement, forming new partnerships, and expanding our activities. CyberFirst has played a key role in our journey, enabling us to reach new audiences, enhance our reputation, and attract further economic investment into the region.

We’ve built upon CyberFirst with MEGA Hubs, developed our own bursary award, and, most proudly, helped Moor Park High School secure vital investment from IBM, one of our key partners.”

**Lauren Monks**

Director of Strategic Services at IN4 Group







## SUCCESS STORY

Unlocking potential:  
Emma's path from Skills City to cyber security

Skills City aims to transform talent diversity and unlock opportunities in tech; co-ordinated from HOST Salford, Skills City is a pioneering digital skills powerhouse dedicated to breaking barriers for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

Emma Bateson, 30, from Salford, has multiple sclerosis and graduated from the cyber bootcamp at Skills City. She started an apprenticeship at IN4 Group as a cyber technician and then gained a new job at a leading cyber security business.

"On the first day, I felt

nervous, and as a disabled woman going into tech, you sometimes don't know how it will be taken. However, when I walked into the classroom, I was met with kindness and support, which continued throughout my time on the Cyber Skills Bootcamp. The lessons covered various technical topics such as physical

and offensive security and encryption techniques.

"I also learned soft skills such as communication and teamwork, and even presented to the skills minister. The experience boosted my confidence and encouraged me to overcome the mental barriers I had before the

course, helping me see my potential and strive for success.

"Both these skills, plus the immense support from Raytheon and IN4, have helped me enter a career I never thought I could have ended up in, but I'm in now. It's taken me beyond my wildest dreams."



# IN4 GROUP

## SOCIAL VALUE IMPACT

IN4 Group is committed to delivering lasting, positive impact in Salford and Greater Manchester by driving local value through its recruitment, supplier partnerships, strategic investments, and spending.

This commitment is central to fostering a stronger, more sustainable community and contributing to the region's economic growth.

Through its programmes, such as CyberFirst MEGA Hubs and Skills City, IN4 Group is not only preparing the workforce for the future but also empowering individuals from underrepresented backgrounds to succeed in high-demand fields like cyber security and digital technology.

By focusing on inclusivity and local engagement, IN4 Group is helping to build a more resilient economy.

This investment in people and place has resulted in a social return on investment (SROI) of **£3.84 for every £1 invested** and has generated over **£9.25 million** in social value, highlighting the tangible benefits of IN4 Group's work.

By integrating local engagement with a global vision, IN4 Group demonstrates how targeted investments and strong community partnerships can create long-term social and economic impact.



DELIVERED VALUE: APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2025

**£9.25**  
million

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**£3.84**  
for every £1 invested





# SALFORD

IN4 Group's commitment to Salford is embedded in everything it does — from strategic investments and supplier partnerships to workforce development and inclusive innovation. At the heart and focus of IN4's operations, Salford continues to benefit from a wide-ranging programme of activities designed to support businesses, empower individuals, and strengthen the regional tech ecosystem.

Salford City Council

Delivered at HOST Salford through flagship programmes such as FreelanceHER 100, Gametech365, Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace, Play AI, CyberFirst MEGA Hubs, and Skills City, IN4 Group has created a powerful, place-based model for social and economic impact. These initiatives collectively champion digital inclusion, immersive tech adoption, and equitable access to opportunity.

**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY



Funded by  
UK Government



## SALFORD RESULTS



**108**

Businesses supported



**3,506**

Workforce reach



**2,105**

People supported



**25**

Jobs Created



**9**

Jobs sustained



**208**

Jobs Committed (future growth)



**5.95%**

Projected Workforce Growth



**182**

Activities Facilitated



**£2.9m**

Supplier Spend



Funded by  
UK Government

**GREATER  
MANCHESTER**  
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

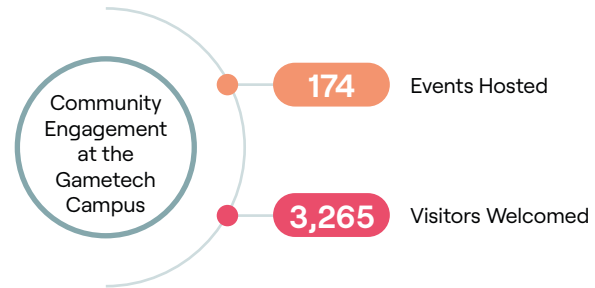
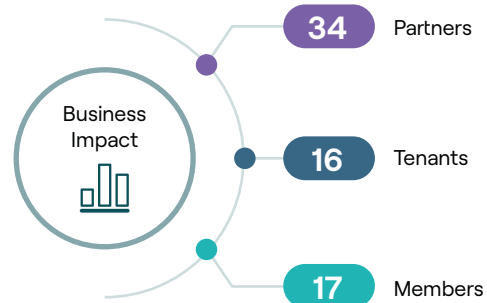
Early data shows participating businesses have experienced turnover increases of up to 50%, demonstrating the tangible economic benefits driven by these initiatives.

To ensure clarity and transparency, the results demonstrated are

Salford-specific based on activities delivered through HOST Salford, UKSPF and IN4 Group, avoiding duplication with additional outcomes achieved within IN4 Group's pledge to the Salford 3-Year Business Plan (April 2023 – March 2026).



# HOST SALFORD



54.3%

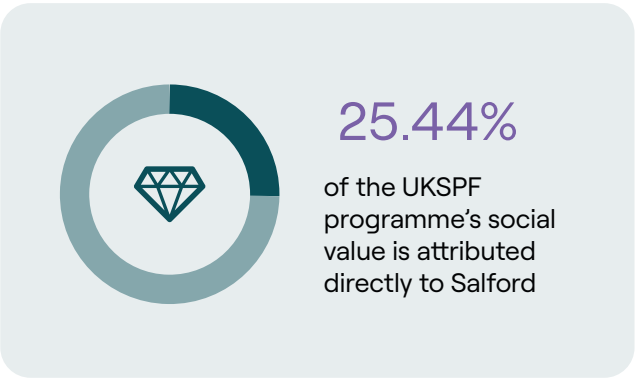
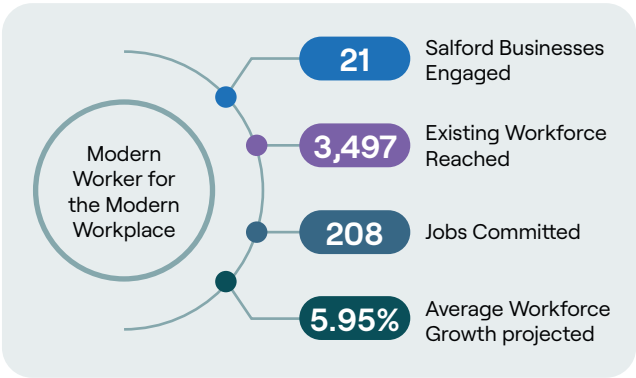
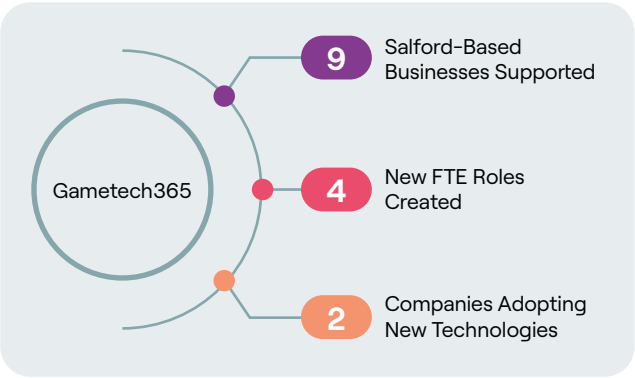
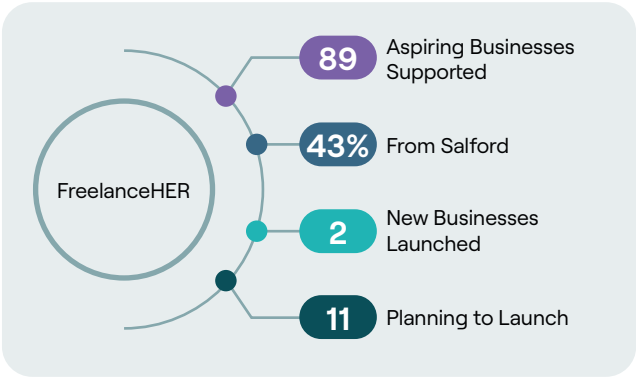
of all social value generated through HOST Salford is directly attributed to Salford residents and businesses



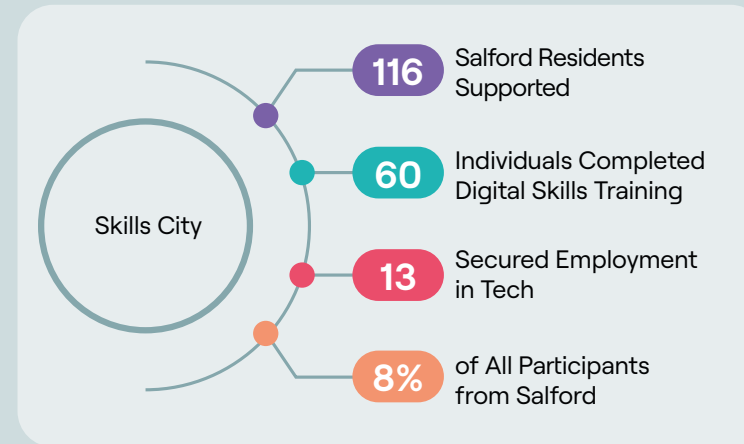
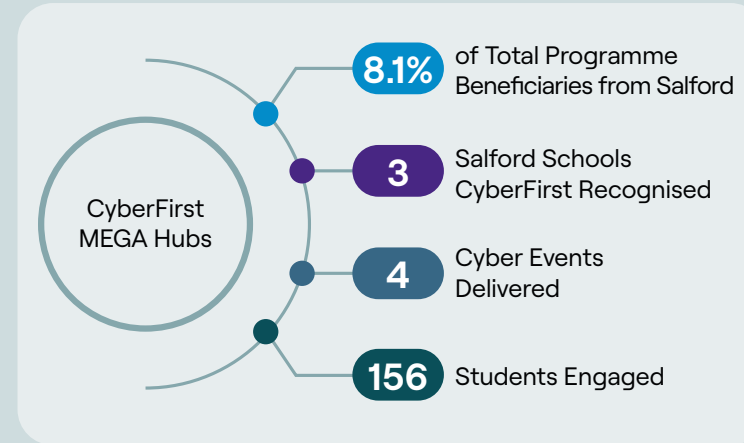




# UKSPF E22 PROGRAMME DELIVERY



## IN4 GROUP'S DIRECT ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO SALFORD



By embedding innovation, equity, and skills into the fabric of its operations, IN4 Group continues to shape a more resilient, future-ready Salford – where local people, communities, and businesses thrive together.



## SUCCESS STORY

Driving automation and opportunity in Salford:  
Ola's time on the MWMW programme

Ola Bachabi, founder of Salford-based Data Analytics & Consultancy, juggled multiple roles with limited capacity to scale. With ambitious plans, including an expansion into agriculture, he needed smarter tools to save time and cut costs.



With support from the MWMW programme, Ola moved from OneDrive to SharePoint and introduced Microsoft Copilot, automating time-consuming admin and freeing him up to focus on growth.

"Through the programme, I learned about tools that help me automate document sharing and communication. What used to take me hours can now be done in seconds". "Now I have more time to focus on bringing in new people and growing the business. Automating processes has been a game-changer."

Ola's mission extends beyond tech. Inspired by his non-traditional path, he's determined to open doors for others in Salford.

"I want to bring in people who don't have experience in the field and give them a chance; that's how I started.

I want to pass that on, help others get their foot in the door and learn hands-on."

Looking ahead, Ola plans to scale further by migrating to AWS while preparing for major projects like digitising documentation for the Ministry of Justice in Congo.

"We're moving everything to the cloud. AWS will save us money and help us access data securely from anywhere," said Ola.

He encourages other businesses to embrace digital transformation. "Any business can benefit from this. AI helps you work smarter and create more opportunities for yourself and your team. That's why programmes like MWMW are so crucial — they support non-tech businesses in understanding what's out there and how they can save themselves money and time."

"Before joining the Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace programme, I did everything myself and wrote code to automate tasks from scratch. The programme showed me tools that save time, cut costs, and allow me to focus on growing my business and creating opportunities for others."

**Ola Bachabi**  
Founder of Data Analytics  
& Consultancy

# SALFORD

## SOCIAL VALUE IMPACT

The collective impact of IN4 Group's flagship programmes at HOST Salford – including FreelanceHER 100, Gametech365, Modern Worker for the Modern Workplace, Play AI, CyberFirst MEGA Hubs, and Skills City — has delivered significant social and economic value throughout Salford.

The evaluation, conducted in alignment with the Social Value Quality Mark (SVQM) standards, projects that IN4 Group's initiatives have generated **£8.5 million** in social value within the **Salford region** during the 2023–25 financial years.

This equates to a Social Return on Investment (SROI) of **£5.33** for every £1 invested, with further growth anticipated as programme outcomes mature.

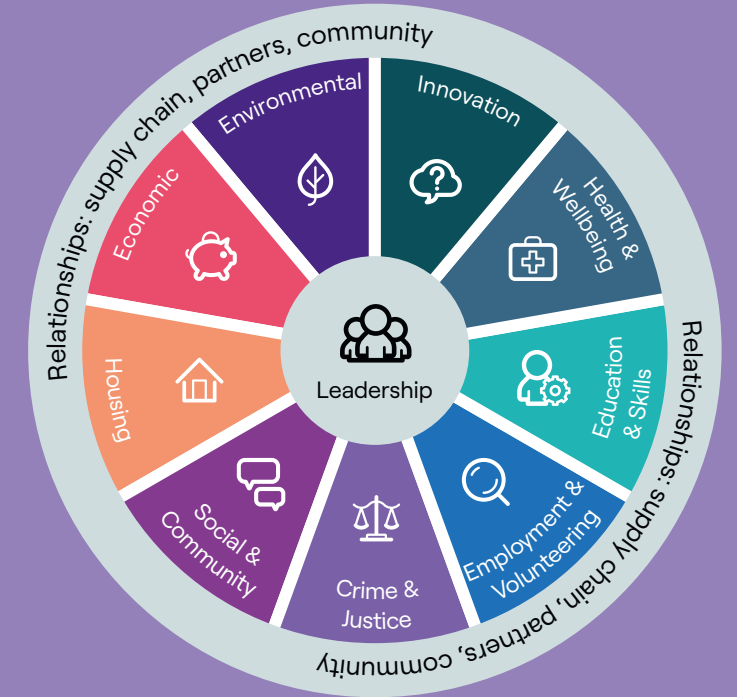


DELIVERED VALUE: APRIL 2023 - MARCH 2025

**£8.5**  
million

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**£5.33**  
for every £1 invested







“

“These findings highlight IN4 Group’s commitment to delivering meaningful impact, fostering inclusive opportunities, and driving long-term prosperity across businesses, individuals, and communities in Salford.”

**Richard Dickins**

Managing Director of Social Value Business



## CONTACT US

HOST Salford  
Blue Tower  
MediaCity  
Salford M50 2ST

0161 686 5555  
info@hostsalford.co.uk  
hostsalford.com

X @HOSTSalford    @ HOST\_Salford  
in HOST Salford    f HOST Salford



Home of Skills & Technology



Salford City Council



Funded by  
UK Government



# HOST

Home of Skills & Technology

Salford City Council

## HOST Salford Social and Economic Impact Report

Produced by



[www.socialvaluebusiness.com](http://www.socialvaluebusiness.com)