# ESCALATOR ACTIVITY GUIDANCE

The Escalator Model is not intended to be a fixed journey from school to Higher Education and CPD but instead it is designed for people to be able to progress to a higher level of digital skills whatever skills they already have.  Its purpose is to promote discussion and engagement.  It has a function in ensuring people from the region can access good jobs that will be created in the City's/Region's most important growth sector(s).

The Escalator approach will almost certainly be unique to each partner (sub) region as although the basic digital skills needs and provision will be similar – at the higher end - the regional smart specialisations will differ and therefore the qualifications/skills needed at higher levels will be different.

## STEP 1. Identify the smart specialisation/escalator 'theme'

The Escalator should look at what particular Digital Skills are really critical for the region.  This will necessitate examining the region's Smart Specialisation priorities.  Each city/region will almost certainly only have a number of major employers and sub-sectors that are crucial to its future success.  Logically policymakers will be seeking to ensure these remain successful and grow.  Therefore you need to:

- Identify which sector(s) these are for your City/Region
- Choose the most important sector where digital skills are going to be critical to future success
- This is now going to drive the theme for your Escalator and especially the higher level qualifications and CPD elements
- The lower skills levels will be quite generic – around basic digital skills and digital literacy

## STEP 2.  Confirm the geography for your escalator

Logically you should be looking to ensure your important growth sector is one that local citizens can gain access to at different skills levels.  Therefore the Geography is important and should reflect a travel to work area.  Also you need to recognise that any actions and changes to policy will need to be practical in that geographic level – so a fit to local education governance is ideal.  If this is not possible then the recommendations will have to be taken forward by stakeholders and partners working collaboratively.  More so than if a policymaker/committee can implement change directly.

## STEP 3 Map the digital skills 'pipeline' in your chosen region and identify escalator 'steps'

Your Escalator Model will include all levels of academic and vocational learning and this will include a particular focus where gaps currently exist.  Include education provided from school age to the workplace and include academic and vocational qualifications at all levels.

- Identify existing provision
- Identify existing education providers

You will also look at and identify/map activities around:

- Raising young peoples' awareness, interest and attainment in digital skills and associated careers
- Raising universities awareness and engagement in the role of digitalization in the educational processes
- Identifying where there are digital skills gaps in the workplace via interviews/workshops/surveys at employers (then later (Step 4 and onwards exploring mechanisms to fill these)
- Seeking to ensure computing and ICT is delivered across a region's schools
- Models of workplace assessment for digital skills weaknesses

- Community delivery of digital skills to ensure digital inclusion
- Ensuring growing access to vocational (apprenticeships) and academic courses in digital skills at school and 16-18 levels
- Encouraging placements and internships opportunities in the digital sector
- Encouraging retention for those taking digital qualifications

## STEP 4. Map the policy landscape for education and skills delivery in this geography

Ensuring that residents in each of the regions involved can benefit from the growth of its most important sectors is an important part of the 'Escalator' concept. We envisage, based on existing experiences that the Escalator includes elements both of traditional digital inclusion whilst also recognizing the sector you have chosen has real potential for jobs growth in good quality, well paid careers. You will:

- Engage with your own (sub) regional governments to build relationships with the policymakers who will be critical to implementing the recommendations from the work. Identify where policy will need to be changed and who can do this.
- Engage with other core stakeholders who will be critical to driving developments in this area (employer representative groups, local government etc.)
- Engage with the main training and education Providers to establish what they may be already doing and where there are problems that are getting in the way of delivery of new courses and qualifications.

To help establish if the escalator is the right approach for your region and theme – you should map and compare the use of the Digital Escalators with similar innovations in their region. This will be achieved through:

- Engaging with the policymakers and education/training providers as above

This Step (4) will necessitate a large number of interviews and potentially the use of online surveys.

## STEP 5. Create your own new (sub) regional escalator model

This should be a model or diagrammatic representation - rather like the Exeter Data Analytics Escalator Model depicting:

- The different levels of education and training
- The types of education currently happening and who is providing them
- Other regional initiatives designed to grow skills in this area

## Step 6. Present your findings including Recommendations for filling skills gaps

You will need to present your findings and the new Model to those responsible for filling the skills gaps and who can theoretically work together to ensure the Model is taken forward.

## STEP 7. Write up the Activity

This Work Package will culminate in a report detailing your experiences. It will include recommendations for other Escalator or similar models seeking to fill skills gaps. *A template will be provided for this report.*