



The Business of  
Fashion, Textiles &  
Technology Partnership



**SME R&D Support  
Programme  
Funding Call Round 3**

**Are you running a successful business in the fashion, textiles or related technology sector? Do you have an idea that could take your company and the industry to the next level?**

**We want to hear from you.**

**The Business of Fashion, Textiles & Technology (BFTT) SME R&D Support Programme is open for Expressions of Interest (EOI).**

The fashion, textiles and technology related sector (FTT) is buoyant, innovative and multidisciplinary, informing many adjacent sectors in the wider industry. Quite literally, spanning Agriculture to Advertising. This Funding Call is looking to support Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the development of the next generation of products, services and experiences in the fashion, textiles and technology sectors - with sustainable innovation at their core.

SMEs that are already working at the developmental stages (TRL 4 and above) of testing an innovative product, service or concept prototype are eligible to apply for funding to support dedicated people and resources to take your R&D closer to market. For the project to be successful, it would benefit from specialist support across a range of fields that could be provided by the BFTT partnership, including: innovation in manufacturing new materials design & development; application of less accessible and cutting-edge technologies; novel applications of digital technologies; business model innovation.

We look forward to hearing from FTT companies, and those in the wider STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) fields interested in collaborating with the FTT sector - who would like to achieve a step-change in business trajectory.



## Who is eligible to apply?

- UK-based SMEs, with existing operations in the UK trading for a minimum of 2 years as a fashion, textiles or related technologies business. More info [here](#).
- UK-based SMEs trading for a minimum of 2 years in the FTT sector, applying in partnership with a 2nd industry partner. More info [here](#).
- UK-based SMEs that wish to advance their market position and make a positive impact in the sector through research and development of new products, services and/or experiences.

## Why should you apply?

- To access unrivalled research and development expertise from BFTT SME R&D Support Programme partners.
- To enable a step-change for your FTT business through additional funding and dedicated project resources.

**Deadline to register your  
expression of interest (EOI)  
29 March 2021**



## The BFTT SME R&D Support Programme offer

The BFTT SME R&D Support Programme is an ambitious research and development initiative providing structured support for UK SMEs looking to achieve sustainable growth through R&D. Throughout the course of three and a half years, the programme will disburse around £2.5m in funding (plus leveraged funds) to take forward up to 25 R&D projects led by SMEs in partnership with leading academic partners.

The programme provides SMEs - with a targeted range of support specifically designed to help SMEs turn bright ideas into commercially viable, sustainable and impactful propositions.

Each shortlisted applicant will be provided with bespoke business strategy and project development support to help refine their ideas and turn them into viable R&D proposals. They will then have the opportunity to pitch their proposal for an award of funding and further support, including the opportunity to be mentored by leading industry and academic partners throughout the duration of their projects.

Projects will be considered for an Award Value\* up to £150,000, for individual SME projects and up to £250,000 for [partnerships\\*\\*](#). Projects can be between 12-15 months duration.

\* The Award Value includes the costs of the Project Lead, Mentoring, Lab access and funding for other project costs.

\*\* Awards will be made subject to compliance with all applicable State Aid Regulations.

\*\*\* Providing up to 90% of eligible costs – with the remaining amount provided by the applicant as match funding.

### What is included in the Award?

1. **Dedicated Project Lead** – this will be a new half time post fully funded, to deliver the project. The new post is jointly managed between the Company and the Academic Partner.
2. **Mentoring** – the mentoring from an Academic Partner ensures that the most up to date R&D methodology can be embedded in the Company.
3. **Access** - to University labs, equipment and studio space if required\*\*\*.
4. **Funding** – up to £50,000 of the Award Value for eligible project costs including capital investment, materials, prototyping, labs and maker space, exhibitions, showcases, travel, training and consumables\*\*\*.

### Expected Outputs:

- Fully tested prototypes of FTT products, services and / or experiences
- A commercialisation plan tested with relevant stakeholders during the project
- A documented process for R&D



## What is the BFTT SME R&D Support Programme looking to fund?

The programme is open to SMEs based and operational in the UK, with strong growth, innovation ambitions, and a track record of minimum two fully operational years. SMEs can submit individual project applications or they can do so as a partnership with another complementary SME (e.g. a fashion brand and a technology SME) or a larger industry partner. More info [here](#).

Funded projects to date cover a range of FTT sub-sectors and R&D innovations, including: bio-material development; woven and non-woven textiles innovation; laser technology applications for material finishings on denim; food and metal waste initiatives; on-shoring of sustainable manufacturing; novel digital solutions to crowdsource creativity, and increase transparency and accountability in the sector.

We are particularly interested to hear from companies and cross-sector partnerships exploring the development of sustainable production & design processes, reimagining current or new products, services and/or experiences in relation, but by no means limited . .



Crowdsourcing creative platform, "Chasing Clouds", Photo by Gleeson Paulino ©AWAYTOMARS



## to the following visionary themes . . . . .

### **Manufacturing for the Future**

3D Printing, additive manufacturing, smart factories and emerging AI processes can be harnessed by FTT business to increase the both sustainability and economic productivity. Have you existing R&D that you want to build on? This might be small batch production, components, accessories or upscaling manufacturing processes in a shift to UK on-shoring of manufacture.

### **Functional and Smart Materials**

Have you existing R&D on smart materials, polymers, elastomers, nanomaterials, or nature inspired textiles that you want to take to the next level? Velcro is a famous example of nature inspired textile invention – are you working on biomimicry R&D for new textiles? Or smart materials with inbuilt sensing properties?

### **Sustainable Surface and Finishing**

Surface and finishing contain particular challenges and can be costly and unsustainable. Are you developing new ways of working with printing, laser technologies, chemicals, bonding, coatings, or dying? How can sustainable and economically beneficial techniques be used to enhance products and drive industry change?

### **Designed in Circularity**

Can you build on your existing R&D to utilise and adapt technologies for impactful applications within fashion, textiles and/or cosmetics; creating new materials and production processes that improve efficiency, quality, circularity and overall sustainability? Could you scale up your brand's Designed in Circularity – including sourcing, production, consumption, end of use and reinvention?


### **Sustainable Supply Chains**

The FTT industry has access to data throughout the supply chain to generate positive impact and change businesses. How can the sector capture in new ways, and ensure that data collected is of high quality, scrutinised effectively, and communicated in ways that drive transparency, collaboration and sustainability throughout product lifecycles?

### **Designing New Experiences**

Can technologies like virtual and augmented reality provide new reasons to visit local high-streets? Could innovations in virtual environments such as those in the gaming sector merge with design and creativity from the fashion world?





## Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

### Relevance

Project and business fit amongst the BFTT SME R&D Support Programme themes.

### Innovation

How innovative the proposed project is compared to what's already available in the marketplace.

### Impact

The proposed impact that the project will have on driving the FTT sector and beyond to become more sustainable as a whole.

### Feasibility

Is the proposed project feasible given timeframes, funding, available expertise and market positioning.



## The Process and Timeline

To express your company's interest in this programme, please complete the following:

1. The EOI form can be accessed [here](#).
2. The EOI guidance sheet can be found [here](#). This document includes a list of the questions, allowing for prior preparation if needed.

**FAQs:** About the BFTT SME R&D Support Programme and process [FAQs](#).

**Find out More:** About awarded projects to date [here](#).

**Get in Touch:** If you need more information, contact the BFTT SME R&D team: [BFTTsme@arts.ac.uk](mailto:BFTTsme@arts.ac.uk)

[Click here:](#) to submit your EOI in the BFTT SME R&D Support Programme.

1. **Expression of Interest**  
Deadline: 29 March 2021
2. **Shortlisting**  
Shortlisted applications will be notified by 12 April
3. **Bespoke Support (Shortlisted Applicants)**  
Shortlisted applicants will receive bespoke support, and mentoring during a 6 week business development period (April/May 2021) to help you refine your ideas
4. **Final Proposal Submission (Shortlisted Applicants)**  
Deadline for Final R&D proposals 19 May 2021
5. **Pitch to Decision Panel**  
Final R&D proposals pitched to an experienced multidisciplinary selection panel – including Designers, Technologists, Academics, Retailers, and Journalists, end of May 2021
6. **Awarded Projects Announced**  
Successful applicants will be announced June/July 2021
7. **Projects Launched**  
Project Lead recruitment, agreement of contracts and project launch June - September 2021



Producer of noble yarns, fibres and cloth © Tengri



## How does the Programme work?

**The best people to tell you are those who have done it**



**“As a company we know we need to make major environmental strides in this decade. A programme like this makes the most of creative technical academic and entrepreneurial skills – it is a leap in the right direction. Our Project would have taken us three more years to get of the ground. Instead our R&D Goals have been matched with amazing academic partner, with funding. It is invaluable”**

**Kresse Wesling MBE  
Co-founder, Elvis and Kresse**



**“Bringing together the UAL's Digital Anthropology Lab and the expertise across the BFTT programme has enabled us to access incredible specialist knowledge which will be invaluable to develop our co-creation platform. In particular, the know-how brought in by the Project Lead and Academic Mentor, in AI and Neuroscience, will provide us with a really strong foundation to drive the innovative development of our platform forward.”**

**Alfredo Orobio  
CEO, AWAYTOMARS**



**“Since joining the BFTT Project team with UAL and Segura, I’ve implemented my years of industry knowledge to drive the development of a world-leading Sustainable Supplier Marketplace, ensuring our research and development meets the needs of buyers, suppliers and Segura themselves.”**

**Kate Wakeling**  
**R&D Project Lead, UAL**



**“Being part of this BFTT project has enabled the wealth of knowledge from UAL’s Centre for Circular Design to be practically embedded into Segura’s product development. We’ve supported both the Project Lead and Company themselves to realise their ambition of embedding sustainability into their future strategic vision.”**

**Kate Goldsworthy**  
**R&D Academic Mentor, UAL**



**“Having the resource and expertise of a BFTT Project Lead, and the strategic guidance of the Academic Mentor, has enabled Segura to achieve things we’ve previously not had the ability to do so. We’re now in a position to develop significantly impactful products for the global fashion and textiles sector, enhancing our market position.”**

**Laura Houghton**  
**R&D Company Lead, Segura Solutions**



# BFTT SME R&D Support Programme Partners

## Core BFTT Academic Partners

### University of the Arts London

Digital Anthropology Lab

*Digital fashion futures*

Centre for Sustainable Fashion

*Sustainable fashion value chain & policy*

Textile Futures Research Community

*Novel textile craft*

Centre for Circular Design

*Circular materials and systems*

Centre for Fashion Business

& Innovation Research

*Fashion industry economy and trends*

### Queen Mary University of London

*Engineering & materials science*

### University of Cambridge

*Sustainable manufacturing futures*

### Loughborough University

*Products & materials engineering*

### University of Leeds

*Sustainable textile chemistry*

### University College London

*Social anthropology*

## Industry Partners

Adapt+

Arla

ASOS

British Fashion Council

Centre For Fashion Enterprise

Christopher Raeburn

Clarks

Creative Wick

Echo

Fashion District

Greater London Authority

Here East

Holition

Jack Wills

John Smedley

Keracol

Kering

Klarna

Kukri

Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership

London Fashion Fund

London Legacy Development Corporation

Newham College London

Poplar HARCA

Selfridges

Speedo

The Trampery

Tower Hamlets

UK Fashion & Textile Association

V&A Museum

Westfield

[bftt.org.uk](http://bftt.org.uk)



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ual:



Creative  
Clusters



UK Research  
and Innovation



INDUSTRIAL  
STRATEGY