

Creatives For Our Future Application Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The world is facing interconnected environmental and social challenges that demand new ways of thinking, creating, and leading. With up to 80% of a product's environmental impact determined at the design stage, creativity has a critical role to play in shaping more sustainable solutions (Ellen MacArthur Foundation). Yet young creatives face significant structural barriers, from the digital divide and uneven access to opportunities to algorithmic bias that favours established artists over emerging and marginalised voices. These inequalities can limit fair pay and sustainable career pathways, making it essential to invest in and empower a more diverse generation of creative leaders (UNESCO).

In response to this urgent need, the Swarovski Foundation created the Creatives For Our Future (CFOF) programme, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships. The programme is designed to empower the next generation of sustainable leaders by harnessing the power of creativity.

CFOF is open to creatives worldwide, aged 21 to 30, working across disciplines including fashion, design, art, architecture, technology, and engineering. Applicants should be developing an owned project or product that uses creative medium to accelerate awareness, technology or solutions for sustainable development and to drive progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations.

Six selected participants will each receive a €20,000 grant, alongside an immersive week in London featuring workshops, collaborative experiences and exclusive activations. They will also join a tailored year-long development programme, including one-to-one mentorship, expert-led masterclasses and invaluable networking opportunities with leading industry professionals.

ABOUT THE SWAROVSKI FOUNDATION

Established in 2013, the Swarovski Foundation's mission is to promote sustainable livelihoods through education to reduce inequality by supporting initiatives that focus on Equity, Creativity, and Water, and through initiatives: Action Fund, Creatives for Our

Future, and Waterschool. Since its inception, the Swarovski Foundation has reached over 2 million people in 93 countries through 85 partnerships to drive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

TIMELINE



APPLICATION GUIDELINES

1. CRITERIA

- All submissions will be pre-screened based on 2 criteria:
 - **Validity:** Did the applicant submit a fully complete application and supportive documents? Is the applicant aged between 21–30? Does the applicant have a valid passport? Did the applicant submit a creative portfolio? Make sure you clear all eligibility criteria.
 - **Application Quality:** Did the applicant put in the best effort to answer all the questions? If the answers are short answers such as ‘yes’ and ‘no’ without any context or explanation, our system may disqualify your application.
- All valid submissions will be evaluated based on **6 key criteria**:
 - **1) Design and Creativity,**
 - **2) Innovative,**

- **3) Potential, Feasibility and Scalability,**
- **4) Impact Driven,**
- **5) Sustainable Development, and**
- **6) Funding Transparency.**

- **What do we mean by 'Design and Creativity':** We will determine how creative the applicant's concept, practice, or piece of (art)work is. Design and creativity are more than a medium of aesthetics and desirability – we want to see how the applicants use design and creativity for their innovations originally and unusually. The project needs to use at least one creative medium with the exception of performing arts (music, dance, theatre, and other artistic activities performed for an audience) and literature (creative writing and journalism such as novels, stories, poems, screenplays, essays, and song lyrics).
- **What do we mean by 'Innovative':** We will assess how original, fresh, and solution-focused the applicant's concept, practice or piece of (art) work is. Does it introduce something new, or does it meaningfully reimagine an existing system or idea in a way that shifts thinking or practice?
- **What do we mean by 'Potential, Feasibility and Scalability':** We will assess whether the applicant demonstrates strong potential to use the creative process to drive sustainable development, alongside a clear long-term vision for their initiative. The project's potential is also an important index. Applicants should clearly articulate how their idea could grow and adapt, and how their solution can be scaled up to create real-world impact regardless of the current project stage. We are looking to understand if the project is feasible and practical. If the project is still at the concept stage, the applicant must explain in detail how the project will grow and adapt to a broader audience and/or commercialized.
- **What do we mean by 'Impact Driven':** We are looking for innovative solutions that generate a positive social, environmental, and cultural impact. For example, your project may be diverting waste from landfills, regenerating natural resources, or reducing water pollution and consumption. It may

also focus on social impact through community empowerment or Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Applicants should explain the pathways to impact of their project, i.e. the immediate, potential short-term and potential long-term positive changes created and wider benefits to society, by sharing quantitative/qualitative data to back up their vision.

- **What do we mean by 'Sustainable Development':** Does the applicant's concept reflect an alignment or potential to align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals?
- **What do we mean by 'Funding Transparency':** How does the applicant intend to use the €20,000 grant? Is the applicant's intention for use of the grant responsible and in alignment with the programme's objectives to further sustainable development through creativity?

2. ELIGIBILITY

- The programme is only for **creative individuals, aged 21 to 30**, at the time of application and by the application deadline.
- The programme is open to residents and nationalities of all countries. As participation in the programme includes travel to the United Kingdom (TBC), applicants **must be eligible to meet all applicable UK (TBC) entry requirements, including** any visa or travel authorisation requirements. Successful applicants will be required to have a valid passport and be able to travel for the programme-related activities.
- Applicants **must** be the sole legal and beneficial owners of all intellectual property in any projects or products the subject of their entries. **Projects proposed by co-founders or by staff applying on behalf of a company are not eligible.**
- Employees of the Swarovski Foundation and the Swarovski Group, any of its subsidiaries, agents or any other business involved with the administration of this programme, or members of the households of such employees, are not eligible to apply to this programme.
- Creative categories that are **NOT** supported as part of the Creatives for Our Future programme include performing arts (music, dance, theatre, and other artistic activities performed for an audience) and literature

(creative writing and journalism such as novels, stories, poems, screenplays, essays, and song lyrics).

- The Creatives for Our Future programme shall not be used to finance university costs such as tuition fees, housing costs, etc.
- We welcome projects at different stages of development, from new ideas to market-ready enterprises:
 - For early-stage ideas, we will look for a compelling long-term vision and a convincing proof of concept.
 - For more developed projects, we will look at how the programme will be scaled up and advance sustainable development.
- Applicants must have a **bank account in their name** to receive the grant of €20,000. We will not be able to make grant payments to a bank account in someone else's name due to our governance processes.
- Applicants are not allowed to submit more than one application. All multiple entries will be invalid.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

- The application process adopts an inclusive approach, featuring an online form that you can fill in and submit from any country.
- After the open call for applications has ended, a review phase will begin. Application forms will be reviewed and scored by the Swarovski Foundation Selection Committee and Jury featuring experts in the creative and sustainable development fields.
- Top candidates will be identified and invited to an online interview between November 2026 and February 2027. If you fail to reply to our invitation for an interview within the timeframe stated in the invitation email, your application may not move forward.
- Finalists will then be re-reviewed by the Swarovski Foundation Selection Committee and Jury.
- Successful applicants will be notified by e-mail once the selection process has been completed. To secure your place in the programme,

you must confirm acceptance of the award within four days of receiving notification. Should a successful applicant decline or not wish to accept the award, the applicant must inform the Swarovski Foundation within four days of receiving notification. If a successful applicant declines the award, the Swarovski Foundation reserves the right to offer the place to an alternate candidate, at its sole discretion. No cash alternative, substitute award, or transfer of the award will be available.

4. SUBMISSION OF YOUR APPLICATION

- **Age:** As described in the eligibility section, you must be aged 21–30 by the application deadline. Please note that successful applicants will be required to submit a copy of their passport upon confirmation of the final selection, and if we determine any of the information submitted is not true, your offer of award will be withdrawn.
- **Language:** Your application needs to be written in English. Applications submitted in any other language will be invalid. Please note, that all the programming will be carried out in English.
- **Video:** This video will be one of the main materials the Selection Committee and Jury use to understand your project, achievements, and goals. Please present your video in English. If your video includes clips of media coverage, interviews, or other footage in another language, please provide English subtitles or translations where possible.
 - Make sure the video link submitted is available to view without any permissions and expiration dates. If the video requires permission or has expired before our review, the application will be invalid. We will not chase applicants for videos.
 - **Video Tips**
 - ✓ Introduce yourself and what you do.
 - ✓ Introduce the project/product/work you plan to develop through the programme.
 - ✓ Explain the sustainable development challenge that you are addressing and how you are doing it: please state the baseline conditions, why and what you are addressing. What is the mission behind your work?

- ✓ Your goal and future vision: explain what your programme goal and future vision are and how the Creatives For Our Future programme will help you to achieve these goals.
- **Video length:** please keep the video under 2 minutes. We will not watch videos over 2 minutes.
- **Video size:** please only submit one video file that is no more than 150MB.
- **Application quality:** All information submitted is relevant for us to comprehensively assess and analyse – answers with little attention or effort (e.g. a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or irrelevant answers to the questions) will be scored accordingly.
- **Creative portfolio:** Please submit a visual portfolio of your creative work showcasing both your previous creative work and the project you are proposing to develop through the programme. The portfolio should demonstrate your creative practice, processes, skills, and approach, as well as the quality and impact of your work. Your portfolio may include, but should not be limited to, project case studies, prototypes, sketches, research findings, technical drawings, photographs, renderings, products, campaigns, or other relevant background information.
- Please note that a portfolio must contain substantial visual content. Materials that will not be accepted as a portfolio include, but are not limited to, a resume/CV, certificates, passport copies, and essays without any visual representation. Individual files must not exceed 50MB in size.
- **Confirmation e-mail:** After you submit your application, you will receive a confirmation e-mail from the Swarovski Foundation. Please note, evaluating applications and selecting winners may take up to 16 weeks.

5. SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

- Examples of successful applicants:
 - **Agnieszka Doczynska (Cohort 2021):** Agnieszka, a Polish graphic designer, developed a card game aimed at teaching sign language and raising awareness of issues faced by people with hearing impairments. Her application was strong due to her

detailed plan covering all stages from production to marketing and budget. Through the Creatives for Our Future programme, she created prototypes, and educational and marketing materials for the game. She collaborated with publishers to release the game and made it accessible to organisations that support the Deaf community.

- **Joshua Ichor (Cohort 2022)**: Joshua, a Geoscientist and Entrepreneur from Nigeria, developed a water monitoring system to combat water contamination issues that caused his thyroid infection when he was growing up. With initial prototypes in place, he sought to scale the device to service larger communities, driven by his personal experience and a strong, well-planned proposal. Supported by the programme, Joshua upgraded the device to improve water quality and built a kiosk providing 50,000 litres of water daily to 10,000 people. His ongoing efforts to address water scarcity were recognised in a film produced by [BBC StoryWorks](#).
- **Noemi Florea (Cohort 2022)**: Noemi, a designer and writer from the United States, created a greywater recycling system and applied it to the Creatives For Our Future programme with extensive research, simulations, and a detailed plan, showcasing her innovative approach and scalability. Although her idea was still at the concept stage, the programme support enabled her to develop a working prototype of Cycleau, which won multiple grants and awards, thereafter, including MIT Solve and UNICEF Innovation 30. Cycleau is now installed at Governors Island in New York, collecting public use data, and raising awareness of urban water scarcity, and has been recognised by media such as Forbes.
- **Gunraagh Talwar (Cohort 2023)**: Gunraagh, an architect from Delhi, developed an upcycled construction block called Dumpcrete to address the adverse impacts of three legacy dumpsites on ecosystems and communities. Dumpcrete, crafted from legacy waste, serves as a circular construction alternative and aims to promote green-skill jobs for

marginalised communities. His application stood out due to the innovative nature of Dumpcrete and his thoughtful, holistic approach to the production process.

6. REQUIREMENT FOR SELECTED COHORT

- Cohort members are required to;
 - Attend all events facilitated by the Swarovski Foundation including but not limited to; an in-person announcement event in London in Autumn 2027 (September or October TBC), virtual mentor sessions, 12+ virtual masterclasses, and other in-person and virtual networking events throughout the programme. There will be approximately two online sessions scheduled per month that you should attend. If a cohort member misses more than 30% of the required events by the mid-programme check in, the Swarovski Foundation reserves the right to withdraw their remaining award.
 - Obtain all permission, visas, permits and any other requirements to travel to the UK (TBC) as required in the programme. The Swarovski Foundation can provide a Visa Support letter if requested, though this will not guarantee the visa approvals.
 - Inform the Swarovski Foundation and get approval if you are taking part in or receiving funds from another programme or challenge, then sign a commitment letter.
 - Share the progress of your project and deliver visual assets during your participation in the programme.
 - Complete the project described in your application – if the project changes, you are required to inform us immediately. If the grant is not used for the project described in your application, we reserve the right to have all remaining grant funds immediately returned.
 - Submit the progress report in May 2028 and the final report in September 2029.
 - Participate in a post-programme survey following graduation to provide programme feedback.

- Give consent for the Swarovski Foundation to use your name, image, biography, and voice, as well as all content and materials provided by you to us, or produced by us featuring you in all media, worldwide, royalty-free, to promote you, your work, the programme, or the Swarovski Foundation. You must own all content you share with us.
- Confirm that the project proposed for the CFOF Programme will be developed exclusively as part of the CFOF Programme and is consistent with the project described in their application.
- Confirm that any funding, grants, awards, or support received from other programmes will not duplicate, nor be duplicated by, funding from the CFOF project, although such support may be used for a separate, substantively different project.
- Use CFOF grant funds solely for the development and implementation of the CFOF project.
- Ensure that expenses covered by CFOF grant funds are not funded, reimbursed, or otherwise supported by any existing or future funding source.
- Remain actively engaged in the CFOF Programme and commit the time, effort, and resources necessary to successfully deliver the CFOF project and meet all programme requirements.
- Acknowledge that the grant funds you receive may be considered taxable income and you shall be responsible for any tax payable on the grant funds.
- Accept that Swarovski Foundation may at any time, at its discretion, terminate your participation in the programme, including (without limitation) situations where you do not meet the expectations regarding participation, engagement, delivery of materials or products, or generally display behaviour that contradicts the Swarovski Foundation's values and principles. Upon such termination, you will not be entitled to any outstanding grant amount that has not yet been received by you.