



Swarovski Foundation looking for next generation of creative leaders in sustainability with €20,000 grant



- The Swarovski Foundation's Creatives For Our Future programme, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, is now accepting applications from young creatives accelerating sustainable development.
- From fashion and art to engineering and technology, the programme has supported 27 sustainable innovation projects to date.
- Successful candidates will secure a grant of €20,000 each, along with a training programme including one-on-one mentorship and industry networking opportunities.

The Creatives For Our Future programme, which seeks to identify and accelerate the next generation of creative leaders in sustainability, is now open for applications until 09 November 2026. The programme is run by the Swarovski Foundation in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships and offers winners mentorship from industry leaders and a €20,000 fund.

The programme is open to young creatives worldwide, aged 21 to 30, from a multitude of disciplines including fashion, design, art, architecture, and engineering. Successful applicants should be working on an original project or product that uses the creative process to drive awareness, technology or solutions for sustainable development and drives progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations.

To date, the programme has supported 27 projects in innovative design, founded and initiated by young creatives who have ground-breaking ideas for addressing the world's sustainability and development challenges. The programme has enabled them to develop and scale their projects - either with funds to build on their research, or through mentorship and networking opportunities to unlock new directions.

Previous winners say the programme is crucial to their success:

Aurelie Fontan, a designer and innovator who founded Regen Ink, a regenerative colour system that transforms polluted land into a source of natural pigments for textile printing, says: "I believe that to replace the dye industry's reliance on harmful petrochemicals and water-intensive processes, we must harness nature's innate ability to clean our soil while simultaneously creating beautiful, sustainable products. With guidance from the Swarovski Foundation's Creatives For Our Future programme, I have expanded my research from lab-scale validation to a real-world manufacturing pilot, currently collaborating with The Level Collective and Halley Stevensons to create the UK's first fully plant-based, plant-printed backpack."

Mangesh Kurund, an architect specialising in bio-integrated design and developing bioreceptive materials for kinetic architectural facades, says: “To create sustainable, future-ready cities, we must move beyond carbon-intensive conventional materials and explore materials that can contribute to both thermal performance and environmental regeneration. The Swarovski Foundation’s Creatives For Our Future programme has supported me in advancing my bioreceptive material through successful prototyping and thermal testing, while building key industry relationships and exploring pathways for its integration into existing facade systems. Prototype testing has demonstrated surface temperature reductions of up to 20°C under specific conditions compared with conventional materials. I am now preparing to take the research from material-scale prototypes to a pilot-scale facade demonstration, where its performance can be evaluated under real architectural and environmental conditions.”

Moemen Sobh, a social entrepreneur working with sustainable textile-based shading systems and a cross-sectoral digital product passport, says: “Through empowering transparency across global supply chains and providing sustainable infrastructure to vulnerable communities, we can mitigate the impact of extreme heat while enabling a circular, data-driven approach to environmental responsibility. The Swarovski Foundation’s Creatives For Our Future programme has been instrumental in the expansion of my initial fashion-focused digital product passport into a multi-industry tool that integrates life cycle assessments for carbon emissions, while simultaneously scaling my textile technology to provide critical cooling infrastructure for refugee communities globally.”

Maika Nakaoka, Head of Creativity at the Swarovski Foundation, says: “Since launching Creatives For Our Future in 2021 in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, we have remained committed to supporting emerging creatives as agents of positive change. What started as an effort to address the barriers amplified by COVID-19 has evolved into a thriving community of innovators and changemakers advancing new approaches to social and environmental challenges through the power of

creativity. Having received more than 2,000 applications from 92 countries and supported 27 cohort members across five cycles, the programme demonstrates that creativity is a powerful driver of sustainable development and positive impact.”

Lucie Brigham, Chief of Operations, UN Office for Partnerships, says: “Design has the power to translate bold ideas into innovative, sustainable and inclusive solutions. Through Creatives for Our Future, we are proud to support a new generation of creative leaders who are harnessing their talent not only to imagine a better future, but to actively shape it.”

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

Entries for this year's programme are open from 09 September 2026 to 09 November 2026 (23:59 GMT) at <https://creatives.swarovskifoundation.org/>. Successful applicants will be notified and announced publicly in April 2027 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. To download any additional promotional materials on the CFOF launch, please visit: [Communication Toolkit - Dropbox](#).

The spokespeople below are available for interview:

- Creatives for Our Future alumni 2025/26
 - Aurelie Fontan (UK)
 - Mangesh Kurund (India)
 - Moemen Sobh (Egypt)

- Maika Nakaoka, Head of Creativity at the Swarovski Foundation
- Lucie Brigham, Chief of Operations, UN Office for Partnerships

For any remote or broadcast interviews, please contact Oliver Jupe at oliver.j@89up.org or +44 7788261573.

ABOUT CREATIVES FOR OUR FUTURE PROGRAMME

Creatives For Our Future builds on the Swarovski Foundation's commitment to advance creative talent to drive positive change through collaborations addressing social and environmental issues. The cornerstone of the Swarovski Foundation's work is the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations, in turn these goals are the anchor for Creatives For Our Future.

The programme leverages the Swarovski Foundation's position to combine investment and education with a stakeholder network crossing borders and industries. It harnesses young creatives' unique critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in this pivotal era. Creative expression is a vehicle for evolution – not only for concepts and products but also for changes in thinking and behaviour.

To find out more, visit: creatives.swarovskifoundation.org

Key programme dates:

- **9 September 2026** - Applications open
- **9 November 2026** - Applications close
- **April 2027** - Cohort selected and informed: Successful applicants for the fifth cycle of the Creatives For Our Future programme will be selected by the Swarovski Foundation Selection Committee and notified by email in April 2027.
- **Fall/Autumn 2027** - Cohort publicly announced. All successful applicants selected for the fifth cycle of the Creatives For Our Future programme will participate in the London trip (location TBC) and attend the announcement event in Fall 2027. This event will serve as a significant milestone in the programme, offering participants a

unique opportunity to engage with global leaders, network with fellow creatives, and showcase their work on an international stage.

- **Fall/Autumn 2027** - Grants awarded, mentors paired and educational masterclasses begin: The fifth cycle of the Creatives for Our Future programme is set to officially commence in Fall 2027. At the start of this exciting phase, each successful applicant will be awarded a €20,000 grant to support their creative projects. Additionally, they will be matched with a mentor who has experience in a similar creative industry, providing valuable guidance and support. Furthermore, the programme will kick off with a series of online educational masterclasses designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their creative endeavours.
- **September 2028** - Online graduation: The cohort will conclude their participation in the Creatives For Our Future programme. To mark the end of this transformative journey, they will take part in a virtual graduation event where they will present their completed projects to their peers and programme advocates, celebrating their achievements and the impact of their creative work.

ABOUT THE SWAROVSKI FOUNDATION

Established in 2013, the Swarovski Foundation brings focus to Swarovski's historical commitment to philanthropy by supporting charitable initiatives to achieve positive social and environmental impact whilst driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Its mission strives to promote sustainable livelihoods through education to reduce inequality by supporting initiatives that focus on Equity, Creativity, and Water, and through two signature programmes, the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool and Creatives For Our Future. The Swarovski Foundation is a member of the United Nations Fashion and Lifestyle Network, an initiative of the United Nations Office for Partnerships.

To find out more, visit: swarovskifoundation.org

ABOUT UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR PARTNERSHIPS

As the global gateway to the United Nations, the UN Office for Partnerships' mission is to convene and co-create essential partnerships and programmes, as well as manage catalytic funding to accelerate solutions to keep the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

To find out more, visit: unpartnerships.un.org

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

To find out more, visit: sdgs.un.org/goals