

## **Creatives For Our Future Application Guidelines**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There will be more plastic than fish in our ocean, and 5 billion people will face water shortages by 2050. Yet, we produce 400 million tonnes of plastic waste yearly ([UNEP](#)), and 20% of water pollution comes from the fashion industry ([EP](#)). As 80% of the environmental impact of products is determined at the design stage ([EC](#)), we urgently need more sustainable practices and materials.

This is why, the Swarovski Foundation launched the Creatives For Our Future programme in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Partnerships to empower the next generation of sustainable leaders by harnessing the power of creativity.

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

Six successful applicants will secure a financial grant of €20,000 each and an announcement trip to New York, paired with a unique education programme which includes one-on-one mentorship, a series of online masterclasses and industry networking opportunities.

### **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, Water, and Creativity, and through two programmes: Waterschool and Creatives for Our Future. 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 each application clears all eligibility.
  - **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 applications.
  
- All valid submissions will be evaluated based on **6 key criteria:** Design and Creativity, Innovation, Potential, Feasibility and Scalability, Impact, Sustainable Development, and Funding Transparency.
  - **What 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 some creative medium(s) except performing arts (music, dance, and theatre) and literature (creative writing such as poetry, novels, fiction, and script).
  - **What we mean by 'Innovation':** We will see how innovative the applicant's concept, practice, or piece of (art)work is. Is the innovation

new, original, and solution-led? Or is it a game-changer for an existing system or idea?

- **What we mean by ‘Potential, Feasibility and Scalability’:** We will see if the applicant demonstrates exemplary potential to use the creative process to drive sustainable development, and if the applicant has a long-term vision for their initiative. The project's potential is also an important index; if the project demonstrates high potential to be successfully scaled up and make positive change. We need to know how the solution can be scaled up to create real-world impact regardless of the current project stage. To better 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.
- **What we mean by ‘Impact’:** We are looking for innovative solutions that generate a positive social, environmental, and cultural impact. For example, an applicant’s 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 we mean by ‘Sustainable Development’:** Does the applicant’s concept reflect an alignment or potential to align with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **What we mean by ‘Funding Transparency’:** How does the applicant intend to use the 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. However, due to the requirement to travel to the United States as part of the programme, **applicants must be able to abide by the United States entry requirements** including but not limited to visa entry and full COVID-19 vaccination. Successful applicants will be required to have a valid passport.
- **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 staff applying on behalf of a company are invalid.**
- Applicant exemptions are employees of the Swarovski Foundation, and 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.
- 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 is not aimed at financing university costs or end-of-degree projects.
- 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 stage projects, we will look at how the programme will help sustainable development.
- Applicants must have a **bank account in their name** to receive the grant of 20,000 euros. We will not be able to make the grant payment to a bank account in someone else's name due to our governance.
- 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 applicants can fill in and submit from anywhere.
- Join us for the below online question-and-answer sessions on Zoom if applicants need more information or have any questions about the application process:
  - **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 10am EDT / 3pm BST / 4pm CET**
  - **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September at 1pm PDT / 4pm EST / 9pm BST / 10pm CET**
  - **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 9am EDT / 2pm BST / 3pm CET**
  - **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 12pm PDT / 3pm EDT / 8pm BST / 9pm CET**
- 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 industry and sustainable development.
- Top candidates will be identified and invited to an online interview in November 2024. If applicants fail to reply to our invitation for an interview within the timeframe stated in the invitation email, they may lose their position.
- Finalists will be reviewed by the Swarovski Foundation selection committee and Jury one more time.
- Successful applicants will be notified by e-mail as soon as the selection is complete. Applicants are required to respond within 4 days of receiving notification of being successful to keep their position. If a successful applicant does not wish to accept the award, they must advise the Swarovski Foundation within 4 days of receiving notification. If a successful applicant rejects the award, they will forfeit the award and no substitute or alternative will be available. If possible, the Swarovski Foundation will offer the award to the next top candidate.

### 4. SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION

- **Age:** As described in the eligibility section, applicants 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, an applicant's offer will be withdrawn.
- **Language:** Applications need to be written in English. Applications submitted in any other language will be invalid.
- **Video:** This video will be one of the main assets that the selection committee and jury will use to understand an applicant's project, achievements, and goals. Please speak in English. If another language is used, please subtitle in English.

- 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 the applicant and what they do.
  - ✓ Introduce the project or product planned to develop through the programme.
  - ✓ Explain the challenge that needs solving and how the project or product is solving it: please state the baseline conditions, why and what is being solved. What is the mission behind this work?
  - ✓ Explain what the goal and future vision is for the project or product and how the Creatives For Our Future programme will help to achieve these goals.
- **Video length:** please keep it under 2 minutes. We will not watch videos over 2 minutes.
- **Video size:** please only provide video files up to 150MB.
- **Application quality:** All information gathered is relevant for us to comprehensively access and analyse – answers with little attention and effort (a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ or irrelevant answers to the questions) will be scored accordingly.
- **Creative portfolio:** Please submit a visual portfolio of creative work – both previous work and the project planned to develop through the programme. It is normally a collection of artistic/design work that demonstrates design skills, aesthetics, design styles, processes, and results. It can also showcase a personal brand, decision-making skills, and attention to detail through visual documents. A portfolio can include but is not limited to case studies, research results, and background information. What is not accepted as a portfolio includes but is not limited to a resume (CV), copy of certificates, a passport copy, and essays without any visual representation. Please make sure the file sizes are under 50MB each.
- **Confirmation e-mail:** After applicants submit their application, they will receive a confirmation e-mail from the Swarovski Foundation. Judging of entries and selection of winners will take up to 16 weeks.

## 5. 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

- Attend all events facilitated by the Swarovski Foundation including but not limited to; an in-person announcement event in New York in April 2025, virtual mentor sessions, 12+ virtual masterclasses, and other in-person and virtual networking events. There will be approximately 2 events scheduled per month that selected cohort members should attend.
- Obtain all permission, visas, permits and any other requirements to travel to the US as required in the programme.
- Inform the Swarovski Foundation and get approval if selected cohort members are taking part in or receiving funds from another programme or challenge, then sign a commitment letter.
- Share the progress of projects or products and deliver visual assets during the programme.
- Complete the project or product described in selected cohort applications – if the project changes, cohort members are required to inform the Swarovski Foundation immediately. If the grant is not used for the project or product described in a successful application, we reserve the right to have all remaining grant funds immediately returned.
- Submit the progress report in October 2025 and the final report in April 2026, including the pathways to impact their project.
- Participate in a post-programme survey following graduation to provide programme feedback.
- Selected cohort members to give consent to us to use their name, likeness, image, biography, and voice, as well as all content and materials provided to us, or produced by us featuring them in all media, worldwide, royalty-free, to promote them, their work, the programme, or the Swarovski Foundation. Selected cohort members must own all content shared with us and be available for select media requests/interviews to promote their work.
- Acknowledge that the grant funds received may be considered taxable income and selected cohort members shall be responsible for any tax payable on the grant funds.
- Accept that Swarovski Foundation may at any time, at its discretion, terminate selected cohort member's participation in the programme, including (without limitation) situations where they 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, selected cohort members will not be entitled to any outstanding grant amount that has not yet been received.