



Food Systems – Application Form Guidance

This guidance document provides information to help you complete your application for the Future Industries Demonstrator Programme. Please read the guidance thoroughly and refer to the competition scope in your application.

Please contact SHIFT at hello@shiftlondon.co.uk if you have any questions about completing the application form or the application process. There will be an online information event on Wednesday 21st August 2024. Up to two people from your organisation can register [here](#).

Contents

1. What is the Future Industries Demonstrator?
2. About SHIFT
3. Our Programme Partners
4. Competition Scope
5. The Challenge
6. The Question
7. Our Approach
8. Who is it for?
9. What can you expect from the Programme?
10. Further Information on Programme Structure
11. Application process and key dates
12. Assessment criteria



1. What is the Future Industries Demonstrator?

The Future Industries Demonstrator (FID) is a mission-led scale up programme focused on supporting London-based enterprises who are working on innovative solutions to tackle the climate crisis. It focuses on the real problems that citizens face in east London and the market solutions that, with investment and tailored support, would accelerate our collective transition to Net Zero and fairer economies.

FID provides pioneering start-ups and SMEs with financial backing, as well as linking them to collaborative networks, workspaces and local knowledge resources that give them the best chance to succeed. Successful SMEs with innovative climate solutions will participate in a programme of support delivered by SHIFT and partners to bring their products to market and scale.

FID consists of:

- An open innovation challenge competition to source the capital's best innovations
- A 9-week 'Venture Creator' programme to support SMEs to scale their product or service
- A 3-month testbed exercise to demonstrate a product or service in east London¹
- 1 Knowledge Exchange and Demonstration Day

The project is part-funded by the UK government through the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#). The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business and people and skills.

¹ Testbeds are locations around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Newham that will be made available as real-world locations in which enterprises will be able to test and scale their solutions. A testbed could be a sports and leisure venue, a high street, a residential neighbourhood, a shopping centre, a market, a transport hub, for example. These locations give the opportunity for a solution to interact with multiple stakeholders, existing services, supply chains and customers/end-users.



2. About SHIFT

FID is led by SHIFT, the innovation agency with a mission to accelerate innovation that transforms how we live in cities. SHIFT facilitates access to the internationally recognised testbed at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, which innovators can use to test and demonstrate the potential of innovative solutions. Through its carefully curated ecosystem, SHIFT builds connections and sparks collaboration between startups, corporates, universities, community groups and policymakers.

SHIFT was formed in 2022 by a cross-sector partnership of public, private and academic organisations based at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park: LLDC, Lendlease, Here East, UAL: College of Fashion, Loughborough University London and UCL East.

3. Our Programme Partners

Our home boroughs in east London are Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and Waltham Forest. Our centre of gravity is the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and this is the heart of our testbed – but for this project we are collaborating closely with our Local Authority Partners to provide access to a wide variety of real-world environments for testing.

[Plexal](#) is an innovation company solving society's challenges through collaboration with government, startups, and industry. The company is closing the gap between organisations – small and large, local, and global, private, and public – and working towards a common goal: using science and technology to deliver national security and prosperity. It was founded in 2017 as the innovation centre at Here East.

[Hackney Wick and Fish Island Community Development Trust CIC](#) works with the private, public and third sectors to secure ownership of buildings and spaces in the HWFI and QEOP area for the benefit of the community. For the past two years, the CDT has been coordinating with local partners to establish a space for a circular economy hub – The Loop – made up of a cluster of businesses, academics and communities aiming to reduce waste in the area.

[University College London \(UCL\)](#) is consistently ranked among the top 10 universities in the world and is The Times and Sunday Times Good University of the Year 2024². Since 1826, it has championed

² QS World University Rankings (2010–2024), The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024.



independent thought and broken boundaries to make a positive impact in London and beyond. It was the first university to welcome students of any religion and the first to welcome women to university education. It has been innovating in higher education ever since. UCL's new campus at East Bank on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is the biggest development in the university's nearly 200-year history, giving it the scale and space it needs to find solutions to the biggest challenges facing people and the planet.

UCL East Marshgate includes eight floors of hi-tech research labs, innovation workshops, collaboration spaces, studios, a library, and a large public café. The UCL East campus is accessible, sustainable, and open to the public with exhibition areas and specially commissioned art by local artists.

UCL East's One Pool Street base, is the current host to SHIFT's Urban Frontiers Summer Showcase. Innovators involved in the Future Industries Demonstrator are showcasing their artefacts as a demonstration of the future of London.

4. Competition Scope

The Future Industries Demonstrator is back with **Challenge 03 – Food Systems**. The challenge focuses on the food theme, highlighting the current local issues around food security and environmental impact, and the opportunities that come with technological advances in improved food access, production, and knowledge. We are calling on London's Innovators to address the modern challenges of food systems in our urban context, through sustainable, inclusive, and equitable solutions.

5. The Challenge

The food we produce and consume affects our lives in a multitude of ways. Food impacts our physical and mental health, it can foster and nourish our sense of community and belonging, and has a considerable impact on the environment, from production through to transportation, consumption, and disposal.

When addressing food systems, it is essential to acknowledge and highlight the pressing issue of food security both in London and across the UK. Food insecurity is a central and urgent challenge to local

communities. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated the issue, with food prices rising by 25% between January 2022 and 2024³, and food banks seeing continuous increase in demand⁴, food insecurity disproportionately affects those on lower incomes.

Meanwhile, food accounts for nearly 10% of London's consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions,⁵ with 2.3 million tonnes of food wasted across London's supply chains annually.⁶ Food production is contributing to the climate crisis while the ecosystems that support food production are themselves under threat from climatic changes.⁷

A poor diet is one of the biggest preventable risk factors for ill-health.⁸ Addressing this can bring improvements in physical and mental health, promoting social inclusion, through knowledge sharing and education. Healthier diets can help tackle obesity and other health issues relating to eating habits, which often are more prevalent in the more deprived communities.⁹ With cost of poor diets to society estimated to reach £49.9 billion per year by 2050,¹⁰ addressing this issue will provide long-term benefits to local communities as well as the wider economy.

³ Person (2024a) *Cost of living insights: Food, Cost of living insights* - Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/costoflivinginsights/food#:~:text=Although%20the%20rate%20at%20which,beverage%20prices%20rose%20by%209%25.> (Accessed: 17 July 2024).

⁴ (2023) *Food Insecurity in London*. rep. London: London Assembly.

⁵ Owen, A. & Barrett, J., 2020. Consumption-based Greenhouse Gas Emissions for London (2001–2016). <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-and-strategies/environmentand-climate-change/environment-publications/londons-widergreenhouse-gas-impacts#acc-i-60601>

⁶ ReLondon, 2021. London's Food Footprint Report. https://relondon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/ReLondon_Londons_food_footprint_online.pdf

⁷ *Global food production at risk as rising temperatures threaten farmers' physical ability to work – new study (2024)* Loughborough University. Available at: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/news-events/news/2024/january/farmer-physical-capacity-work-climate-change/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CAssessments%20consistently%20conclude%20that%20climate%20and%20livestock%20that%20are%20affected.> (Accessed: 16 July 2024).

⁸ <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0686/>

⁹ *Health matters: Obesity and the Food Environment* (no date) GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment/health-matters-obesity-and-the-food-environment--2> (Accessed: 16 July 2024).

¹⁰ Ibid



East London boroughs are some of the most active in promoting healthy, sustainable, and diverse food initiatives¹¹, but there is space for steps forward through innovative solutions.

6. The Question

How can we achieve more healthy and sustainable food systems for our communities?

7. The Approach

We are inviting innovative social and technological solutions that take a systems-based approach, addressing the challenges facing east London's food systems. We are calling for culturally and environmentally sensitive solutions, addressing and combating these challenges, while prioritising health and wellbeing for everyone in London.

Examples include, but are not limited to, innovative models of growing space, access to equipment or promotion of skills in food preparation, and novel approaches to knowledge sharing. We also want to see innovations that help limit waste from the production, transportation and consumption of food, incorporating ideas of circular economy. Solutions that pursue innovative production of food in urban environments, increase efficiency, reduce costs and environmental impact. These could be solutions around alternative food sources and alternative methods of production, and food packaging. Solutions that promote understanding of healthy diets and habits among consumers and local communities and help consumers make informed decisions.

8. Who is it for?

We believe that innovation requires a holistic, systematic approach that considers the complexity of how various aspects of our food systems are interconnected. We are inviting innovative social and

¹¹ *Good food local: The London report (2024)* Sustain. Available at: <https://www.sustainweb.org/good-food-local/london/?m=0&b=0&y=2024&t=1&v=0> (Accessed: 23 July 2024).



technological solutions that take a systems-based approach, addressing the challenges facing east London's food systems. We are looking for novel social and/or technological solutions that are beyond ideation. They will understand their market and end-users or have had some initial commercial success and have shown potential to scale their solutions. At minimum, to qualify you need to:

- Be able to clearly articulate how your solution aligns with the theme question and challenges as outlined above.
- Have validated the 'need' for your solution and show initial traction.
- Your solution is at least an early-stage prototype or minimum viable product. We are looking for solutions that are beyond ideation.
- Your solution may have already had some initial commercial success but needs support to scale, or pivot to a local context market.
- Be a London-based, and London registered enterprise and employees must be eligible to work in the UK. Please note, we are targeting businesses that are based in the London boroughs of: Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest (50% of our total cohorts). The programme is open to businesses based elsewhere in London.
- Be a small or medium sized enterprise (1-249 employees). You can be for-profit or non-profit but you must qualify as an [SME](#).
- You must be an established business with a business bank account.

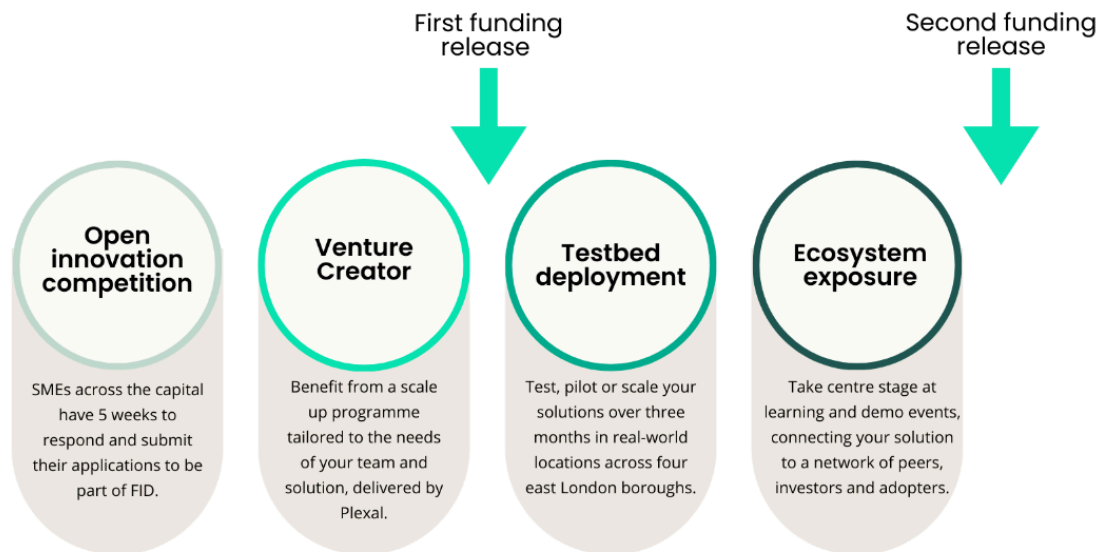
We encourage applications from businesses whose ownership or senior management is likely to be underrepresented. These include people of Black, Asian and global majority backgrounds, disabled people, LGBTQIA+ people, and women.

9. What can you expect from the Programme?

In this five-month programme, you will have direct access to an extensive pool of resources to scale your business and build valuable connections. Support is tailored to the needs of your team and solution.

The four key elements of the Programme are:

1. **Open Innovation competition:** SMEs across the capital have 5 weeks to respond and submit their applications to be part of FID.
2. **Venture Creator:** Enterprises will go on a bespoke and uniquely designed scale-up programme, delivered by Plexal to design your scale-up plans, taking early-stage solutions to validated products in an accelerated cycle of 9 weeks.
3. **Testbed Deployment:** Enterprises will receive project management support from SHIFT to test, pilot or scale their validated solutions in real-world locations at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and in the four neighboring boroughs; Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest.
4. **Learning and events:** Knowledge Exchange workshops and the opportunity to present at a Demo Day will foster peer-to-peer learning and connect enterprises with a wider network of investors, enablers and adopters.



In addition, enterprises will receive:

- Up to £20,000 grant to supplement scaling plans, subject to participation in Programme activities and approval of testbed proposal.
- £5,000 budget to support testbed activity



- Access to free co-working space at Plexal
- 1:1 coaching with a UCL specialist in circular business and connecting into wider UCL expertise.
- Benefit from [The Loop](#); a hub for circular economy businesses in and around Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, providing affordable workspace and specialist support.
- Benefit from free SHIFT membership and its free ecosystem benefits. You can apply to become a Member [here](#).

10. Further information on Programme structure

Applicants will need to confirm that they are available to:

- Participate in Venture Creator sessions delivered in-person at Plexal HQ in Stratford. Each week there will be a half-day workshop. The Venture Creator sessions are due to begin on 10th October 2024 and due to conclude 5th December 2024.
- Be available for 1:1 mentoring sessions with UCL specialists.
- Attend and make the most of our Knowledge Exchange workshops and Demo Day.
- Commit to deploying your solution on a testbed site(s) in east London for a minimum period of 3 months.
- Participate in a Monitoring and Evaluation exercise, in collaboration with SHIFT.
- Successful applicants will be required to report on progress and impact following completion of the 5-month programme cycle.

What does the Venture Creator involve?

Delivered by Plexal, the 9-week Venture Creator programme will provide your business with hands-on support to develop and test your solution in east London. You'll leave the programme with a compelling testbed proposal and an agreement with a local testbed partner to utilise testbed funding.

The Venture Creator programme will be delivered in-person over 9 weeks at Plexal HQ in Stratford, east London. Each week there will be a half-day workshop with content aimed at challenging and improving



your solution. The workshops are designed to help you answer critical questions that will ensure the success of your testbed, including:

- Local challenge validation: who do I need to speak with to develop a detailed understanding of the local context for this challenge?
- Solution-fit: how does my existing solution fit this local context? What requirements are needed and are iterations necessary?
- Partnerships and testbed sites: Where will I test this solution? What other local partners need to be involved to make this a success?
- Testbed operations: What health and safety, permits, licenses or planning permissions do I need to gain?
- Measuring impact: What impact will my solution have on east London, and how do I measure it?

Throughout the programme Plexal, SHIFT, and partners will provide mentorship and connections to relevant local stakeholders to unlock new opportunities for your business in east London.

A clear project owner should be nominated from your organisation to attend each week's half day workshop in-person, however other colleagues are welcome to join these as well. Your wider business will also have the opportunity to engage with the programme through a series of online sessions that bring together wider groups to share learnings and opportunities.

Plexal will also offer innovation facilities for the duration of the programme, including up to 2 hot desks for each company to use, affording cohort members the opportunity to co-locate in east London with close access to local partners, testbed sites, and the support team at Plexal team.

The Venture Creator is due to run from 10th October to 5th December 2024.

11. Application process and key dates

- Stage 1 Online Registration and Application: Opens Monday 5th August.
- A guidance webinar will be held on Wednesday 21st August 2024, 11:00-12:00 online. You can register [here](#).
- Stage 1 Online Registration and Application: Closes Sunday 8th September.



- Stage 2 Interview: Shortlisted applications will be invited to present their proposal and why they should be progressed. These interviews will be held online. Assessors will be able to ask the applicants further questions. The highest scoring applicants will be selected to join the upcoming Future Industries Demonstrator Cohort. Interviews will take place 19th and 20th September 2024, subject to change.
- Selection: We aim to notify all applicants by Monday 25th September 2024.
- 5 SMEs will be selected for the Programme. All SMEs who were interviewed will receive detailed feedback and advice on their application.
- Programme start: 10th October 2024.
- Venture Creator end: 5th December 2024.
- Knowledge Exchange and Demo Day: 19th February 2025, subject to change.
- Programme end: 31st March 2025.

12. Assessment criteria

Eligible applications will be evaluated using the assessment criteria below.

- **Solution clarity:** Provides a clear and concise summary of the solution, including core technology, process, or model.
- **Innovation:** Outlines innovative features or unique value propositions and showcases a good understanding of the market landscape.
- **Impact:** The proposal demonstrates alignment to the Challenge and the Question.
- **Growth potential:** The solution is scalable and responds to an identified unmet growth area in the local market.
- **Organisation suitability:** The organisation and team members have relevant experience and expertise to deliver the solution as part of the Programme.
- **Practicality and readiness for testing:** Presents well thought-out plans for testing the solution in real-world settings and formulates testable hypotheses along with a robust testing methodology.

Guidance on key items to consider in your application form responses are included underneath each question. Applicants should also include supplementary materials such as a short pitch deck or demo



videos if you feel that this will give assessors a better idea of your organisation and solution, but this is not a requirement for the application and points will not be deducted if these items are not included.

Delivery partners:



Supporting partners:

