



C_005d: Call for Concepts Questions and Answers Log

Procurement to identify solutions that are applicable to the commercial value chains of the textiles and clothing sector, and that contribute to reducing or eliminating manufacturing pollution and waste.

Updated: 2 December 2022

Webinar 1: 20 October 2022
Webinar 2: 24 November 2022

This document will be updated on an ongoing basis while the call for concepts remains open.

It includes

- Generic questions
- Questions posted at the information sharing webinars on **20 Oct 2022** and **24 Nov 2022**.
- Questions that have arisen in email exchanges with the SMEP Procurement team and informal meetings with the SMEP Procurement Team.

For more information on the call, see the manufacturing procurement page on the SMEP website by following [this link](#). If you have any specific questions that are not addressed in this document, please reach out to the SMEP team at procurement@smepprogramme.org.

The Q&A is arranged into the following categories:

SECTION 1: Context	3
1. General Context	3
SECTION 2: Specific questions on scope of work under current terms of reference	4
1. Submitting a concept: Who, what, when, how?	4
1.1. Basic Information.....	4
1.2. Implementation period.....	5
1.3. Geographical scope & Eligible Entities	6
1.4. Stakeholders and Partnerships.....	9
1.5. Technical Scope	12
2. Funding.....	17
3. Due Diligence (DD)	19
4. Intellectual Property (IP).....	20
5. Commercial.....	21
6. Regulatory and policy considerations.....	21
7. Product Risk Management.....	22
8. Application form.....	22
8.1. Application form: General Questions	22
8.2. Application form: Specific Questions	23
9. Reporting requirements once in contract.....	23

SECTION 1: Context

1. General Context

What is the SMEP Programme?

The Sustainable Manufacturing and Environmental Pollution Programme is funding research and related interventions aimed at reducing the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the manufacturing sector, as well as addressing some of the most pressing challenges associated with plastic pollution. Programme interventions aim to accelerate the development and uptake of solutions with potential for impact in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Who is sponsoring this initiative?

The programme is funded by the UK government's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) (UK Aid), with technical assistance provided by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Who is managing the programme?

The Programme Management Agent (PMA) reports to a Steering Committee (Programme Management Agent, UNCTAD and FCDO) and receives technical guidance from an Independent Technical Advisory Panel. The PMA comprises a consortium partnership between Pegasys, SouthSouthNorth (SSN) and the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD).

What assistance can successful applicants expect?

In addition to funding awards, the programme endeavours to offer access to technical, regulatory and IP advice and access to relevant networks.

SECTION 2: Specific questions on scope of work under current terms of reference

1. Submitting a concept: Who, what, when, how?

1.1. Basic Information

When is the deadline to submit?

Deadline for response to Call for Concepts: **Tuesday 31 January 2023**, by 13:00h00 GMT.

How do I access the Registration of Interest?

Stakeholders interested in receiving information on the SMEP Programme's procurement and funding opportunities are invited to register their interest on the online [Registration of Interest](#) (RoI) platform.

I registered my organisation on the SMEP RoI last year. Do I need to renew my registration for this call?

You only need to register once and will not be required to renew your registration for new calls. When completing an RoI (Registration of Interest), you will receive an RoI number via the email address provided.

Is there a universal template we should use to submit proposals, or are we free to submit on our chosen format/template?

The [Terms of Reference](#) for the call and an [online application form](#) provide detailed guidance to Applicants. Applicants are also invited to submit a concept pitch for which a guideline template is provided (this is available on the online application portal).

The template for the pitch is a guide. The purpose of the pitch is to give you the opportunity to illustrate the concept in your own words, using your choice of graphics and images if required. So "free form" is accommodated, provided you clearly show responses to the template themes and questions.

Will the webinar material be shared to participants?

The webinar presentation, recording as well as a detailed Questions & Answers log will be shared with all participants within 10 days.

1.2. Implementation period

Do the projects need to run for 18 to 32 months, or can they be shorter (the ToR indicates that pilots should be implemented within 18 to 32 months)?

Please design your concept in phases indicating time requirements, noting the following.

- Projects delivery may be less than 18 months
- A substantive output that meets the ToR objectives should be delivered within the first 18 months.
- Should additional scaling or refining activities follow, please indicate these in the workplan.
- Activities in total should not exceed 32 months.

We await confirmation from FCDO on the SMEP programme extension, which in turn gives clarity on the implementation period available for the concepts under this call. This will be communicated as soon as the information is available.

Do you think the time frame is enough to see the impact of the implementation?

We are currently awaiting clarification on the programme extension. Please design your work plans so that there is a well-resolved work package by October 2024. Work packages beyond this will be considered should the programme extension be accommodated. We will clarify to all stakeholders as soon as we have this information.

Is there a specific number of applications to be funded in this call?

The number of organisations to be funded by this call would be dependent on the size of the contracts. We expect between **3-6 contracts** depending on the quality of submissions and the budgets for advanced projects. [Budget available for this call is 2,75 mil GBP.]

Would more than one concept be acceptable from the same company?

Organisations are welcome to submit multiple applications. However, no more than one concept will be accepted per organisation for advancing to the proposal stage. SMEP can only contract 1 organisation per concept.

Given the COVID pandemic, should applicants limit target country visits where possible?

A strategy to pilot the solution in a COVID19 restricted environment is required, which is likely to include measures to minimise international travel or strategies to manage risks associated with possible disruptions and delays associated with international travelling.

I want to know if you can submit multiple applications/ proposals.

5

Yes, you can. Bear in mind that all concepts will be evaluated on merit and that only one concept by a lead applicant can be successful.

1.3. Geographical scope & Eligible Entities

Do you consider geographical representativeness in your evaluation? Is the application open worldwide?

Yes. Projects will be considered if they have application in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia [Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ghana.] However, the project solution can originate from countries other than the target regions. If piloting/implementation is proposed, the project must be trialled in one of the target countries.

Can an institution/private firm in North Africa apply to do the activity in sub-Saharan Africa?

Yes. Applicants may be based outside of the target region. Activities must take place in the two regions, preferably the **eight** target countries. However, projects in other countries within South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, especially where an intervention can be justified by regional considerations and/or opportunities for scaling, are eligible.

Is Sri Lanka an eligible country?

The programme will accept concepts from Sri Lanka, however you would require an implementing partner in one of the target countries. In addition, a solution can be based in Sri Lanka, but applicable to SMEP target countries. It would require a strong and robust motivation as to why the intervention can have an impact on pollution in the target regions.

Is it possible to target multiple countries in one concept note?

Yes.

Is there any country wise distribution of projects? Any maximum or minimum limits per country?

No.

Is there any option of including countries that are not in SSA and SA?

Applicants from outside the target countries may apply for SMEP funding. Applications that seek to work in a country outside the SMEP target countries are eligible, provided the intervention can be shown to have relevance (even future relevance) for challenges in the target

countries and/or the region. Please motivate the concept's impact and its potential applicability (or replicability) for neighbouring countries.

Could you clarify the position of applicants applying in their individual capacities?

Applicants may apply in their individual capacity. However, they should be aware that the current call specifically seeks to fund (amongst other criteria) entities that are able to meet the due diligence criteria of the FCDO around governance, ethical behaviour, financial stability, ability to deliver, subcontractor management and safeguarding. These are likely to be legally registered (corporate) entities compliant with the relevant national statutory obligations under the Tax and Audit authorities; examples of such entities include non-profit companies, private limited companies, research organisations, higher education institutions, etc.

We therefore encourage individual applicants to partner with a suitable, registered entity because an individual working alone is unlikely, except in very exceptional circumstances, to qualify for grant funding of this nature, or be able to meet the requirements for effective governance at the Request for Proposals stage, or for later contracting.

If you need support with identifying potential partners, please register your details on this [voluntary collaboration tool](#), that SMEP has developed to support collaboration opportunities amongst interested parties.

What kind of organisations are eligible to apply? Can I apply as a Community Based Organisation (CBO) or as a Non-Government Organisation (NGO)?

There is no restriction on organisation type. However, organisations must meet due diligence criteria and show relevant skills and, ideally, a track record aligned to the requirements of the work. Partnerships between different types of organisations will be accommodated.

Can public sector universities, and their research departments, apply?

Public sector universities are one of those institutions that are sufficiently, independently governed from government itself to be eligible. So SMEP would consider concepts from public sector universities, provided that the other eligibility criteria are met. University research departments are often well positioned to produce the evidence base for the promotion of an intervention but are often less equipped to develop feasible business cases for the uptake of the solution in the real world. SMEP would encourage collaboration between institutions and the private sector in this regard.

In reference to the University lead application, do you permit PhD students to work on the research/piloting project as part of their thesis work?

Yes, if a research institution has PhD students interested in working on this call, they are welcome to include this as part of their costs.

Can government agencies at national and / or local levels be co-partners with a non-governmental organization in focus countries?

Yes. SMEP is unlikely to fund government agencies directly though.

Do you allow applications from government departments for the SMEP funds?

The contracting of a government department presents a challenge to SMEP. Our funds are from the UK government, and normally, government-to-government grants are channelled differently and involve a different level of engagement. It would be simpler for SMEP to contract a parastatal or another private actor with governance arrangements set up independently of line ministries. A government department could consider working in a consortium with another institution as a contracting lead. Such a lead institution would also need to have a direct interest in the programme and undertake elements of actual project delivery, not just sub-contracting arrangements.

Can an organisation or company with no entity registration number apply at CfC? If they are in the process of sorting this out?

Yes, in principle, this is possible. However, to be shortlisted for a full proposal, SMEP will have to be convinced of the credibility and ability of the key actors to affect the project - and that the registration and other due diligence criteria can be met in time for contracting, as envisaged for in the first half of next year. Note that the level of funding requested is relevant to the levels of compliance that you will have to meet. You could also consider working in a consortium with an institution that shares your values and provides the necessary levels of compliance within a clearly defined consortium arrangement.

As a global company with offices in multiple locations, including SMEP focused countries would it make more sense to apply via a global company than a subsidiary co. or vice versa?

This depends on your preference - the fact that you can easily cross national jurisdictions in scaling up your work is a plus and should be highlighted, regardless of whether you use your local subsidiary or a multi-national entity. You could even use an entity registered in a non-focus country (because that is where you are best placed to run the project) with a view to be applicable - or to scale to one or more focus countries.

Is it possible for a private company to apply without collaborating with another entity?

Yes, however, consider the wider aspects that should be addressed in the call, such as GHG emissions reductions and social benefits, you may wish to include parties who can enhance these aspects or the research aspects (research outputs and publications).

1.4. Stakeholders and Partnerships

What would the role of a UK partner be in this project?

Having an UK-based partner is not a requirement of the call and those with UK partners will not be prioritised over other submissions. The application lead or other members of the consortium may be based outside of the target countries (e.g. the UK or Europe). However, we do require that an implementation-orientated member of the consortium be based in one of the target countries in the broader geographic areas.

Is it possible to cooperate with international consultants specifically on the technology development areas?

Yes, it is. We do however ask that the solution is implemented / tested in the focus geographic areas.

Can a consortium be led by a Not-for-Profit organisation?

Yes, but bear in mind that the SMEP Programme will apply stringent due diligence criteria at the proposal stage, including past turnover records. At the concept stage, the focus is on the feasibility of the concept.

Uganda is an eligible country. Can we form a consortium with a partner from outside the eligible/focus countries? If yes, are there any specific conditions to consider?

Yes, you may partner with others outside of the target country. There are no conditions attached but the relevant experience of the consortium member will be reviewed during the Due Diligence period. Please refer to section 2.6 of the [Terms of Reference](#) for more clarity on collaboration.

We are working on sustainable pineapple fibre solutions in both Kenya and Bangladesh. Is it possible to submit one proposal with partners in both countries or should proposals only focus on one country/region?

We do accept concepts with implementation in multiple target countries.

In the ToR it is stated that, "Concepts may bring together different stakeholders, either as individuals or in a consortium, with at least one consortium member being based in the target country". Is it right to assume that the call requires you to partner (within a consortia) with local partners in the target country(ies)?

Yes. Please refer to the SMEP voluntary collaboration tool to assist you in reaching out to potential partners in target countries. This platform is accessible through the [Submissions Portal – Voluntary Contact Form](#).

Partnerships: Is there a preference for single-applicants vs partnerships?

Partnerships are not essential. However, collaboration (especially within the textiles commercial value chain) is encouraged if this will enhance the project's outcomes. To join a database of potential collaborators, please follow [this link](#).

It is possible to apply as a single entity. Please do consider the wider requirements of the call, for example, enhancing gender and social equity, GHG emissions reduction and developing a research framework to demonstrate the pollution benefits and the business case. Additional expertise may be needed to supplement your team's skills.

If the solution requires piloting, you are encouraged to show you have initiated discussions with potential partners at the application level. Note that applicants are not expected to have everything in place at the time of submitting a concept, and not having a formal project partner is not a reason to be excluded.

Who may submit a proposal? Can an applicant submit multiple proposals? Either as lead or co-applicant or a combination?

Concepts may bring together different stakeholders, either as individuals or in a consortium, with at least one consortium member being based in a target country, including:

- a. *Manufacturers*
- b. *Solution providers*
- c. *Research institutions*
- d. *Industry actors*
- e. *Other*

Applicants may submit only one concept as a lead organisation but may participate as a consortium partner under other lead organisations on multiple concepts. **Lead applicants must be legally registered and compliant with relevant national statutory authorities.**

It is expected that concept solutions will likely require collaboration across several value chain participants, including manufacturers, solution providers, research institutions, and industry actors. As set out in **Error! Reference source not found.** below, concepts may be submitted by individual organisations or a consortium of participants in the value chain.

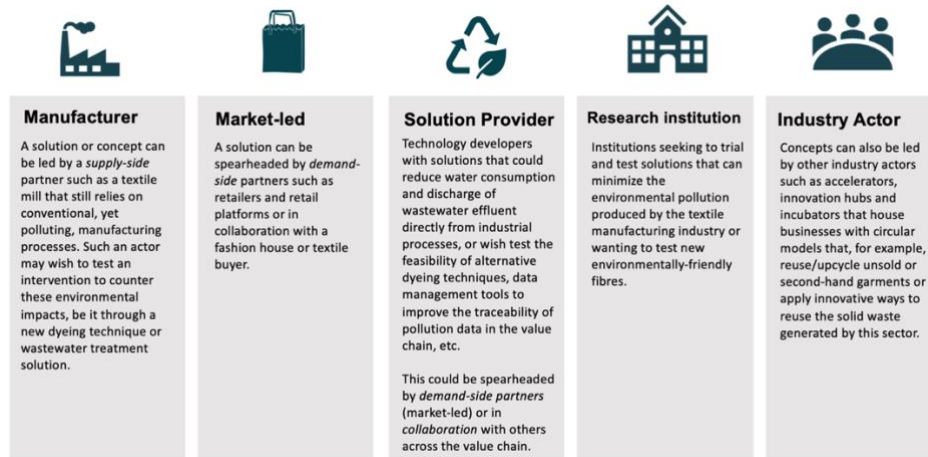


Figure 1: Value chain participants in mitigating manufacturing pollution

A lead applicant: will this organisation be named as the lead applicant if successful? Or will the consortium members all be considered equal when communicating externally? Ultimately, what is the differentiation between the lead applicant and other consortium members?

The lead applicant is named as lead and will have to undergo due diligence checks. However consortium partners will be engaged regularly and be included in project branding.

Is the voluntary collaboration tool only useful when applying as a consortium? How do I access the Voluntary Collaboration tool?

SMEP has developed a voluntary platform to support collaboration opportunities amongst interested parties. This platform is accessible through the [Submissions Portal – Voluntary Contact Form](#). The details provided through this process will be treated with confidentiality. SMEP will only facilitate introductions amongst interested parties who register their details. Please contact procurement@smepprogramme.org should you wish to share your availability to collaborate with other partners or if you wish to discuss the nature of the collaboration opportunity sought to develop a concept proposal. Note that the collaboration platform is open and visible to all parties who sign up for the platform.

Could you clarify the modes and the time available to engage with possible partners and create a consortium?

See answer above.

I am working for the Market Access Upgrade programme in East Africa, funded by EU and implemented by ITC. We will work in the leather sector and with tanneries in East Africa in the next 4 years. Any collaboration or synergies possible?

Please visit the SMEP voluntary platform that was developed to support collaboration opportunities amongst interested parties. This platform is accessible through the [Submissions Portal – Voluntary Contact Form](#). Also please complete a registration of interest to join our database in order to receive communication regarding the forthcoming Call for Concepts specific to the [Tanneries](#) industry.

Will the SMEP programme help with stakeholder outreach?

Value chain engagement is an important factor in the success of any solution, and, where SMEP parties can, they will endeavour to play a role in helping awardees to establish necessary networks.

1.5. Technical Scope

Does this call include leather in its definition of a textile?

See response below.

We understand that the current call is for the textiles sector. Is there scope to submit concept for the leather industries?

See response below.

Just to clarify then, will concepts on tanneries and leather not be considered or could we apply to calls from both launches?

You may respond to both / resubmit when the tanneries procurement is launched.

Would you consider proposals centred on tanneries/Leather, despite the focus on Textiles and Manufacturing?

The Programme notes the strategic economic importance of the tanneries sector in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and the stakeholder momentum to address the complex environmental management and human health challenges within the sector and thus aim to launch a separate Call for Concepts specific to this industry.

At present, a decision has been made to *delay* the tanneries open procurement call, due to economic uncertainties for the upcoming financial year. The sector remains a critical aspect of, and

a focus sector for, the SMEP programme. Please register your interest in this forthcoming procurement call [here](#) to be notified when circumstances change.

Please refer to the Tanneries [brochure](#) for more information.

Is this call encouraging some of the R&D pilot to reduce the environmental footprint which can be replicated afterwards beyond the life of project? Moreover, can we consider efficiency improvement in the textile industry regarding coal-fired installations i.e., switching to biomass from coal or switching to solar water heating?

Yes, to both questions.

Pilots should be implemented with the intention of scaling/replication. We encourage solutions that factor in GHG mitigation, so the biomass opportunity would need to be cognisant of that.

Solutions that lead to improved efficiency and better environmental outcomes along the textiles value chain are a core component of his call. The concept should furthermore be conscious of, and possibly demonstrate, how it can produce co-benefits – both in terms of the receiving environment as well as socio-economic benefits to local communities.

Please refer to Section 2.4 of the [Terms of Reference](#) for specific call criteria to consider.

Does a solution/concept have to address all four themes?

No, it is not a requirement that all four themes need to be addressed. Concepts should create viable cases for uptake and address one of the four themes, or a combination of the themes. (A concept could very well propose a cross-cutting solution that touches on all four themes.)

Thematic areas are quite broad. Can one go for sub-components of one, two or more thematic areas as consortium?

Yes, you are welcome to concentrate on more specific aspects within these broad themes.

How about the grant size, if we are considering two thematic areas. In Terms of Reference I realized the grant size per thematic areas is GBP 250,000 to 1 Million. Could you please clarify this statement.

Grants would remain between GBP 250,000 – 1 Million, regardless of number of themes addressed.

Can we submit a cross-cutting project? For example, a project that covers Theme A and Theme B?

Yes, such concepts will be welcomed. Also, refer to the response to the previous question above.

What technologies are being offered by SMEP to reduce water consumption in the textile sector?

The SMEP programme is not offering technologies. However, you could make use of the [collaboration tool](#) if you are searching for technology providers.

Do "textiles" include fibres and fabrics used in the shoe industry?

Concepts relating to such fibres and fabrics will be considered. Also, note that SMEP is in the process of launching a separate call specific to the tanneries industry in Nov. 2022. Please refer to the Tanneries [brochure](#) for more information.

Theme 4 refers to the development of sustainable fibres from plant and marine sources. Could it be fibres from any other source? For example, using enzyme biotechnology? The objective would be to reduce the use of plastic-based synthetic fibres.

Yes, we would welcome such concepts.

Can SMEP provide more than GBP 1 million? Our project of converting waste plastic to more efficient and green diesel fuel is a flagship project but high value.

The conversion of waste plastic to more efficient green diesel does not form part of the scope of the textiles procurement call.

We are engaged in the processing of wet processing/surgical bleached cotton and interested in the installation of effluent treatment plant. Please guide us to the eligibility criteria to get funding support.

From this concise description, it would appear that the concept will be eligible for evaluation for funding. Please Refer to the [Terms of Reference](#) for specifics.

In relation to Theme B - should the infrastructure already be in existence, or are you accepting technologies to develop new infrastructure?

Either. You may propose new infrastructure or adjustments that are applied to existing infrastructure

Where concepts include the piloting of technological solutions, the SMEP programme calls for solutions between technology readiness levels (TRL) 5–9, which can be tested, trialled, and developed in the real-world context.

Is it possible to share some practical examples of TRL 5-9, especially where it relates to Theme D?

More information on the TRL categorisation can be found [here](#). In essence, it would mean that an innovative fibre which is developed in a more environmentally sustainable manner, must *at least* have undergone some testing at a small to medium scale size in order to demonstrate specific aspects of the design (Level 5), such a durability, market buy-in etc. SMEP will further consider co-funding the upscaling of such an innovative fibre even if it is already actively being commissioned in a real-world setting (Level 9).

Are applicants required to develop carbon credits?

Concepts that can show potential for GHG emissions are encouraged. If you can show value through the potential for carbon credits please provide this information in the application.

Context: FCDO receives a portion of funding based on the climate mitigation potential of the SMEP projects.

Will there be a forum or contact list created for universities and researchers to partner up with corporations?

Yes. SMEP is offering an opportunity for interested parties to register their willingness to collaborate. You can register and find a contact list of organisations open to collaboration [here](#). This list is not public and is only viewable by those that have signed up to the list.

Is there a requirement to demonstrate government support as part of the application?

We ask several questions on the local and regional context, including policy and regulatory frameworks. Government support would be advantageous.

Could an applicant submit a concept that includes more than one solution for a sector or context? In this case, project delivery would include evaluating or testing the feasibility of more than one solution before piloting, or even piloting more than one solution.

This could be accommodated up to a point, and each solution proposed should already be tested and technically feasible. The aim of the proposed additional testing would be to find the optimum solution in a particular context in terms of preparing the final business model. It will need to be well motivated with contextual information on feasibility. (While SMEP aims to advance feasibility, we seek concepts that have a good chance of commercial success and market uptake).

Can we submit an idea, or must it be a proof of concept? Would concepts to advance technologies lower than TLR 5 be considered? If our concept is at about TRL 5+, does this mean TRL 4 concepts are valid entrants and if we only move up one TRL level does that count?

The more developed (and robust) the idea, the more likely it is to be selected. Any TRL below 5 will need strong motivation as to how the concept will progress rapidly up the TRL. The programme aims to implement solutions, so solutions that require extensive and time-intensive research and development might not be favoured.

I am interested in Theme D: I have a start-up company dealing in banana fibre research and innovations. Is there any support for start-ups?

We are interested in start-ups and are flexible on Technical Readiness (TRL) levels - early TRL is welcomed as well as later levels (in terms of scaling up). Our mandate also includes seeking investment sources for projects.

The SMEP Programme will apply stringent due diligence criteria, including past turnover records. Start-ups may need to collaborate with organisations and agencies with an established track record and may have a better capacity to meet FCDO supplier requirements. At this stage, the focus is on the feasibility of the concept.

Any existing bootstrap start-up eligible for the program funding? We are looking for funds to upscale.

Motivation regarding why the start-up should be funded can be included in the concept. The SMEP Programme will apply stringent due diligence criteria, including past turnover records. Start-ups may need to collaborate with organisations and agencies with an established track record and may have a better capacity to meet FCDO supplier requirements. At this stage, the focus is on the feasibility of the concept.

We understand that industry-wide uptake potential is a critical element – should this uptake already take place during the project, or can the project only focus on a pilot of which insights will be shared at the end of the pilot?

Ideally, this should be addressed within the implementation period. If this is not possible, then explain and provide context on the proposed strategy for uptake, key data points, existing stakeholder agreements, etc.

If I am able to solve water efficiency and pollution/effluent levels within a theme, can I submit that concept note?

Yes, we would welcome a concept that can address these challenges.

Would you consider finding a micro recycling factory from scratch as part of an inch long operation looking to get into recycling textiles into new products for different sectors?

In principle, yes. To be considered please let the criteria in the [Terms of Reference](#) guide your concept.

Here we are taking textile industry to the level of manufacturing - while women to do value addition stages like stitching to make products. Women are more involved at stitching stage of clothes.

It is equally important to us to see GESI considerations from top management through to the factory floor. All levels are important to consider and add additional value to the proposal.

2. Funding

Could you clarify the minimum budget that SMEP will consider?

There is no minimum grant size but applicants should anticipate that the transaction costs of grants under £50,000 may militate against the selection of applications for less than that amount unless exceptional circumstances prevail. The applicant can demonstrate with some confidence the likely impact and scale of such support.

Can the funding also be used (partially) toward capital expenditure?

Capital expenditure is accepted if it is towards piloting or research activities. **It will not cover routine replacements or machinery upgrades.**

Can these funds be used to develop the idea from a scientific point of view, like experiments and so on, that can be transformed into business in the future?

You need to show that there is a real potential for uptake. The timing of the delivery will determine the answer. We aim to support implementation / trialling in the real-world context.

The UK Treasury has recently announced blocking non-essential overseas aid payments. Will the SMEP funding be affected by this decision for both current and future projects?

SMEP has a budget committed for the 22/23 financial year. We do not anticipate a budget cut-off, although this is a possibility with donor funding. Applicants will be advised of any budget uncertainties.

When will the decision on funding be taken?

The decision-making process for selecting concepts from the launch of the open call to proposal development and ultimate selection is anticipated to take between 5 to 6 months. Funds will be released against a phased project plan over the 2023-2024 period, against agreed milestones.

Does the grant have specific things that they are linked to (conditions)?

The concept should comply with the objectives of the call as outlined in Section 2.4 of the [Terms of Reference](#).

Need to know the broader evaluation criteria and weightages for concept?

The concept should comply with the objectives of the call as outlined in Section 2.4 of the [Terms of Reference](#).

Could you please clarify expectations around levels of co-financing?

Co-funding is not a requirement but is welcomed. Applicants are asked to disclose co-funding in the CfC application. Where co-financing is part of an applicant's motivation, in-kind contributions do count.

Co-funding is anticipated in a later phase of the project. Would SMEP have an interest in the governance?

We would expect clarity on how the different funding streams would be used and the appropriate governance around funding.

Must the funding be used for academic research, or can it be applied for a commercial pilot project?

Funding can be used for commercial piloting, but specific conditions would be attached to this, ensuring that the piloting research is set out in a manner that gives a basis for a clear research outcome and that outcomes are adequately documented. The applicants would also need to ensure that they qualify for the quantum of funding. Please refer to Section 3 and 4 of the Terms of Reference.

Can the funding be given to 3 collaborating countries?

Yes. The geography of the project may include more than one country.

Can the funding be used for all Capex?

Capital expenditure is accepted if it is towards piloting or research activities. It will not cover routine replacements or machinery upgrades.

Can the grant money could be used in buying machines for production

See answer above.

will you consider the projects for funding which includes construction activities? e.g., training centre, expansion of factory, etc?

Unlikely. Only if this is an innovative interventions or allows for piloting of a solution.

At the concept preparation stage, there is no need of financial proposal. Right?

It is a very high level outline of budget requirements. The details are provided at proposal stage if you are shortlisted.

Is the funding coming as debt or equity? If debt, what kind of interest rates are we talking about ? Is there a grace period associated with the repayment?

This is grant funding. There is no repayment required.

3. Due Diligence (DD)

What are the due diligence requirements and what does the process involve?

Due diligence acts to ensure that contracted parties are fit and proper counterparties and is an important aspect of all UK Government procurement. A three-step due diligence process will be in place for this call:

- 1) Before responding to the Call for Concept, prospective bidders will submit a **registration of interest which includes elementary due diligence**.
- 2) Proposers whose concepts are **shortlisted for a Request for Proposal** will undergo standard due diligence across a range of risk-related areas to ensure that they satisfy FCDO procurement stipulations.
- 3) If proposals are selected to advance for **contracting**, further due diligence will be undertaken on the proposer and the proposer will be subject to periodic review.

Regarding the DD point "Clean audit for 3 years" - can an applying business be younger than 3 years?

This might be possible in exceptions so long as you can provide sufficient assurance and safeguards around spending UK tax-payers funds. We will likely require extra checks and balances and /, or you could consider partnering with a more established institution.

You are welcome to talk us through your institution before you submit your concept. The SMEP Team is committed to publicly sharing information that has been communicated on a one-to-one basis, for transparency and fairness.

How would you handle projects that require permits?

The permitting and regulatory context is relevant. Please provide additional information in the concept submission application if these present **risks** at this stage (delays or uncertainties). Alternatively, please show that you have (or can reasonably expect to get) the necessary licenses.

Assuming that your proposal is advanced, we may **contract you in a phased approach**, with **permitting or licencing as a milestone** (noting that you are expected to conclude the project within 18-32 months from early next year). Ideally, you would start the permit application process immediately, and we would be pleased to see your co-finance commitment to the realisation of necessary permits.

How much emphasis is on the final decision regarding the financials and business stage? Do start-up vs mature businesses have a better chance based on risk profile?

Yes, we welcome start-ups. There are due diligence criteria, though, and you may need a more established entity to lead the application. At this stage, the focus is on the feasibility of the concept.

4. Intellectual Property (IP)

How will Intellectual Property (IP) be protected?

Applicants will be asked to describe the relevant Intellectual Property (IP) status and whether IP restrictions will have a bearing on the research and development project outcomes. It is recommended that applicants do not disclose proprietary information and data in their concept submissions.

Bear in mind that the objective of the SMEP programme is to introduce successful solutions widely across sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Downstream partners of FCDO are generally expected to comply with standard FCDO contractual requirements relating to IP. **The principle is that the funding is public money; therefore, concepts cannot be privately owned.** Applicants are referred to the standard terms of the contract, which are summarised very briefly below. Applicants should highlight any concerns relating to IP proactively, to enable SMEP to address these and ensure the protection of the interests of its suppliers (and to resolve IP questions on an equitable and commercially appropriate basis).

In summary:

- Existing (pre-contract) IP remains the exclusive property of the respective parties;
- IP created as a result of a project funded by FCDO, including by sub-contractors or downstream partners, belongs to FCDO, but the supplier is granted full license to utilise the IP to fulfil its obligations under the contract;

Note that commercial information, trade secrets or intellectual property shared in the Project Concept or Proposal will be treated confidentially, will not

be disclosed beyond the SMEP team, and will be deleted once the evaluation process is complete.

If unsure, please address questions or concerns to procurement@smepprogramme.org.

Does all project data need to become open source? Some insights that will be derived might be of strategic value to protect our business.

Please refer to the answer above, as outlined in section 4.2 of the Terms of Reference, addressing concerns around intellectual property.

Will the submitted and/or accepted proposed concepts be made public?

Once SMEP has made final selection, via the Request for Proposal stage, the selected concepts will be made public.

What is the level of commitment you require from brand owners included within proposal concepts? Is there any obligation on brand owners to maintain commitment to the proposed concept?

Commitment is preferred, but SMEP accepts that these aspects cannot be contracted and that the priorities of 3rd parties may change. For this reason, memorandums of agreement would be considered favourably.

5. Commercial

How detailed should the business plan be?

During the call for concepts phase, the business model should be described (simply) in response to the questions provided. Information on business feasibility will be developed further at the proposal stage.

6. Regulatory and policy considerations

What is meant with respect to the concept “aligning with regulatory requirements”?

This depends upon the solution under consideration. For example, if the solution is intended for packaging, then food contact regulations may need to be fulfilled.

What is meant with respect to concepts “aligning with policy interventions”?

Some solutions may require a supportive policy framework, such as economic instruments (e.g., incentives, taxes, and levies). Applicants are asked to discuss this in the application process.

7. Product Risk Management

*With the ongoing Ukrainian war and the uncertain future, is there assurance that a funded proposal won't be abandoned before completion? [For example, a **force majeure** contract clause.]*

FCDO, and its funding, is not exempt from these global uncertainties. Please note that the funding contract to successful grantees stipulates that the validity of the agreement is dependent on the continued existence of the foundational contract (between FCDO and the Project Management Agent), and the continued availability of funding for the SMEP programme.

Please also bear in mind that it is Government development aid money, which is subject to priority budgeting. Nonetheless, SMEP has remained a priority spend for FCDO. Should an extreme situation force the cancellation of funding, the programme will endeavour to honour costs incurred up to a certain point. To mitigate this risk, we urge you to define your concept and outcomes for work packages very clearly. This will assist us with proactively planning for the funding phase and the release of funding. In the event that funds are no longer available for SMEP projects, such detailed work packages can assist us in scaling down the interventions responsibly.

What product is risk information expected?

Proposed solutions to manufacturing pollution must not create other issues (externalities); therefore, the ramifications of the deployment of the proposed solution and/or system (including its manufacture, use and end-of-life management) should be carefully considered.

Do I need to undertake a full Lifecycle Assessment?

No, this is not a requirement.

8. Application form

8.1. Application form: General Questions

How do we access the link for submission?

Please find all links available [here](#).

On the concept application form, is it possible to save and exit and come back to the question at a later stage?

You can leave your application and return to it via login on this [link](#) to continue or amend it. Contact procurement@smepprogramme.org if challenges are encountered.

Are letters of support necessary at this EOI stage - or just a statement that we have them?

A statement that you have support is adequate at this stage.

Do you only accept concepts in English?

Yes, in English only.

Are SMEP documents available in other languages?

Unfortunately, not, we are not able to do a full translation. However, we would be able to set up a call to discuss documents. Please contact us at procurement@smepprogramme.org.

8.2. Application form: Specific Questions

In the funding section of the terms of reference, reference is made to co-funding.

Please indicate sources of co-finance and ballpark figures. Note that co-finance can also relate to in-kind contributions. These could also be relationships or agreements useful in achieving the programme's objectives.

What level of feedback/engagement can be expected during the call phase?

The PMA can engage with bidders regarding content for clarification during the duration of the call. This would be on a one-to-one basis or during open dialogue in the form of a webinar. Note that if the engagement results in the surfacing of an issue of general interest, the SMEP PMA may publish the issue. The PMA's engagement will be documented to avoid any misperceptions regarding unfair engagement.

How can one get assistance with strengthening the proposal?

The PMA is here to assist. Answers to any questions will be included in this Q&A document. Private information will be withheld, but the question details will be shared. Please contact procurement@smepprogramme.org.

9. Reporting requirements once in contract

What are the reporting requirements throughout the duration of the project?

Reporting will need to cover activities and their results. Funds would be disbursed as needed; requirements from last disbursement would need to have been met before the next payment. We would have regular reporting intervals - which will be made clear at the proposal stage.

