

About Co-Innovate

Co-Innovate is an exciting new innovation support programme for London-based SME's. This programme is jointly funded by Brunel University and the European Regional Development Fund and will provide innovation support to 150 London-based SME's by helping them access and utilise the academic expertise within Brunel University.

Why join Co-Innovate?

Unlike larger organisations, the innovation resources of SME's are often stretched to their limits, the expertise needed to address a particular set of innovation goals are frequently only available from external resources, if at all. Co-Innovate's aim is to support SME's in their innovation ambitions by giving them the potential to access the significant knowledge and expertise within Brunel University's world-class academic community. Participating organisations will be helped to define their innovation needs and navigate the academic landscape within the university to accomplish, locate and engage with the expertise they require.

Who is eligible to join?

The qualifying criteria for Co-Innovate are simple; you need to be an SME, be based in a London borough and have a defined innovation challenge you are actively addressing. On joining, an Innovation Director will undertake an initial diagnostic with you to explore your particular innovation challenges, advise on potential sources of Brunel support, and where support is feasible, capture this in a series of recommendations for action.

What are the costs of support?

Support from the Innovation Directors is free of charge, allowing participants to identify what they require to achieve success whilst exploring the support possibilities from the academic specialisms within Brunel University. Depending on the form of support subsequently defined, participants may be able secure further Co-Innovate support without cost, but where a significant input from Brunel resource is needed, this may need to be funded. If this is the case, where those funds are not available directly from the SME, the programme may be able to help by working with the client to identify and approach potential external funding sources.

What forms of support are possible from Co-Innovate?

Support could take a number of forms from participation in a variety of specialist innovation workshops, direct input from academics, advice on innovation strategy, access to specialised resources within Brunel, or even help in identifying and applying to the many funding sources available.

Innovation workshops

Co-Innovate will host a number of specialised innovation workshops that bring together industry thought leaders, academic specialists and of course SME's themselves with the aim of stimulating thinking, providing insight into the range of academic specialisms and providing a chance to build new networks with the industry and academic specialists attending.

Direct academic involvement

Academics come from a diverse range of disciplines: user-centred design, user experience, digital design, brand and product design, mechanical and electrical engineering, computing, social sciences, business and management, supply chain and logistics, food science, and healthcare to name a few. Input from academics could take the form of light touch advice through consulting to contract research.

Access to specialist facilities

A number of specialist facilities exist within Brunel University that clients may find of value in their innovation activity for example, materials testing, rapid-prototyping, engineering workshops and test facilities.

Seeking Funding?

It isn't always obvious to smaller businesses which funding opportunities are relevant to them, simply finding out just what is available is challenging. Brunel University's RSDO office can support Co-Innovate participants directly in this area by helping them identify and apply to the many funding sources available to innovators.

Support through student placements and sponsored projects

One of the options available to participants in Co-Innovate comes in the form of student placements and collaborative projects. In a student placement, a Brunel University student would work directly inside the participant's organisation for a six month or longer period. Depending on the nature of the placement activity, clients may be eligible for funding for this activity via the TSB's KTP funding mechanism.

With sponsored projects, individual or groups of students will, as part of their studies, undertake projects to a brief developed by the sponsoring organisation. Many of these collaborative projects can be seen in the Made In Brunel exhibition and website.