

SXSW 
LONDON

1. VENTURE SPOTLIGHT: SXSW London's Start-up Competition

Venture Spotlight showcases new technologies to a panel of industry experts, high-profile media professionals, and venture capital and angel investors. Enter now for funding, guidance, and the chance to showcase on the biggest global stage this June. See **prizes** below.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Applicants should be early-stage startups that are affiliated with universities. Affiliated means to have at least one of the following relationships with them:

- At least one of the employees is a current student
- At least one of the employees is a current faculty member
- At least one of the employees is an alumni



Which universities are included in the Venture Spotlight affiliation program?

- We are looking for applicants affiliated to but not limited to:
Cambridge University, Oxford University, Imperial University, UCL, Queen Mary's, University of Manchester, Edinburgh University, Stockholm School of Economics, ETH Zurich, TUM Munich, IE University, Queen Mary's University of London, TU Delft, L'ecole Polytechnique, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad.
If you are not affiliated with one of these universities but feel your start-up is a great fit with the rest of our eligibility criteria, we will still consider your application.

Your start-up must also fit the following requirements:

- Start-up must be founded in **2021 or later**
- Start-up must have at least **£350k+** in equity funding raised to-date



As well as operate in one of the following eligibility sectors:

- **Biotechnology and Life Science:** companies that use biology to develop new products, methods and organisms intended to improve human health and society. For example, developing methodologies to manipulate the genetic structures and bio-molecular processes of living organisms e.g. CAR-T therapy.
- **Climate Technology & Sustainability:** companies that develop technologies, products or services designed to reduce Greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate climate change or help society adapt to its impact. In practise, climate tech could include areas like renewable energy, energy storage, carbon capture, sustainable agriculture, climate data and modelling, circular economy solutions and tools that help business measure and reduce their environmental footprint.
- **Deep Technology:** companies that develop advanced technologies based on some form of substantial scientific or engineering innovation. The innovations explore advanced solutions to complex challenges or issues e.g. robotics, nanotechnology, genomics and clean energy initiatives.
- **Design, AR, VR and Interactive Media:** convergence of computer science, creativity, and new media. The use of technology to create new and innovative products, services, and experiences. It encompasses a wide range of fields, including design, engineering, computer science, and the arts. With the rapid advancement of technology, creative technology has become an essential tool for businesses and organizations across industries to stay competitive and meet the changing needs of consumers.

3. PRIZES

Please note: capital for the prizes will be provided by a SXSW London Venture Fund set up and managed by Panarae, the private investment and holding company behind the SXSW London festival.

1st Place Winner:

£100k cash prize in the form of a SAFE Agreement

- Prize will be structured as SAFE Agreement (Simple Agreement for Future Equity) or an ASA (Advanced Subscription Agreement), so founders can get started without valuing their company upfront.
- 5-10% discount on SAFE/ASA option
- Use of ASA or SAFE will depend on the jurisdiction of the startup

2nd Place Winner:

£50k cash prize in the form of a SAFE Agreement

- Same terms and conditions as above

- **3rd Place Winner:**
£25k cash prize in the form of a SAFE Agreement
- Same terms and conditions as above

4. KEY DATES

A. Applicants:

- Submissions Opens: Monday 12th January 2026, 00:00 GMT
- Submission Closes: Monday 9th March 2026, 23:59pm GMT
- Applicant notified: Monday 27th April 2026

- B. Once the shortlist has been selected, SXSW London will ask semi-finalists for documentation to support our due diligence to ensure that winners can receive funding via a SAFE/ASA agreement. The due diligence will involve setting up a data room using Dropbox.

Semi-finalists will be asked to participate in:

- Pitch Preparation Webinar + Workshop – Time & Date TBD
- Final Pitch Deck Submission: Friday 29th May
- Semi Finalist Workshops: Tuesday 2nd June
- Semi Finals: Wednesday 3rd June (AM & PM) - the judges panel will select 5 finalists to move forward to the Grand Final
- Grand Final at SXSW London: Thursday 4th June (AM)

Successful applicants will need to:

- Provide supporting additional evidence for due diligence by Friday 8th May (see FAQs i/j)
- Nominate their designated “Pitcher” who must have their Pitch ready to pitch in person for the Semi-Finals and Grand Final at their allotted time.
- Ensure their Pitcher (and support team) will be available to attend a Pitch Preparation Webinar on TBD (Note there can be no more than one Pitcher per pitch)
- Submit their final Pitch Deck by Friday 29th May 2026 at 11:59PM GMT via the SXSW London Data Room.

5. ADVISORY BOARD

Our international judging panel of experienced experts and investors so far includes:

- Adam Flannigan, Deep Tech Investor, Creator Fund
- Ana Barajasic, Investor, Connectology
- Anastasiya Sybirna, Life Science Investor, F-Prime
- Andrew Rubenstein, Founder & Investor, Showering Capital
- Alasdair Thong, Founder & Investor, Selvedge Ventures
- Dr. Ben Miles, Co-founder, Empirical Ventures (Health Tech)



- Charles Sekwalor, Founder & Investor, Movemeback & The Continent
- Chris Corbishley, Managing Partner, BNVT
- Dorothy Chou, Director of Policy & Public Engagement & Angel Investor of Deep Mind
- Dinika Mahanti, Partner, Cherry Ventures
- Eli Krieger, Venture & Growth Investor, Lansdowne Partners
- Junkai Zhu, Life Science investor, Early Bird Ventures
- Lee Lindley, Biotech & Deep Tech Venture Investor, Mercia Asset Management
- Leigh Brody, Life Science Investment Manager, Albion Capital
- Martell Hardenberg, Partner, Antler
- Perman Jorayev, Deep Tech Investor, Amadeus Capital
- Phillip Scholz, Investor & Partnerships, EWOR
- Richard Oakley, Deep Tech Investor, Oxford Sciences Enterprises
- Simon Turner, Life Science Investor & Partner, Sofinnova Partners
- Tom Lambert, Investor & Partner, Local Globe
- Will Wells, Deep Tech Investor, Speed Invest
- Yasmin Siraj, Life Science & Biotech investing, BackedVC

We are in the process of recruiting more judges so will be adding to this list.

6. FAQs

- **Is there a cost to enter the competition and how much?**

No, there is no cost to applying to SXSW London Venture Spotlight.

- **How many entries can I submit to SXSW London Startup Competition?**

There should be one application per start-up. If you have two start-ups that you would like to be considered, you should submit two separate applications.

- **Should my company include a video about our product or service for the online submission process?**

It is optional to include a video or demo video in your entry, but we would advise that the clearer or more supporting evidence you provide, the stronger your application will be. We would recommend including a video recording of your pitch alongside your most recent pitch deck (please make this no longer than 3 minutes maximum).

- **How will I know if I have been selected to participate?**

If successful, applicants will receive an email confirming they have been selected to participate in SXSW London Startup competition, with the date and time slot of their Pitch Round. Successful applicants must also ensure their nominated Pitcher is available in person to pitch for both the Pitch Round (Wednesday 3rd June 2026) and for the



Grand Final (Thursday 4th June 2026). All finalists for the Grand Final will be announced at the end of the Pitch Rounds on Thursday 4th June.

- **What documentation will be required for the data room for the semi-finalists to provide ahead of the festival?**

We will ask for the following documents to be supplied as part of due diligence process.

- **Legal & Corporate Registration:**

1. Certificate of Registration
2. Business Registration Number (BRN) / Company Number
3. Articles of Association & Memorandum of Association
4. Proof of Registered Business Address
5. Certified Company Structure Chart

- **Financial & Banking Information**

1. Bank Account Verification Letter
2. Tax Identification Number
3. Recent Financial Statements (Audited, if possible)
4. Company Financial Projections
5. Proof of funding

- **Compliance & Governance**

1. Business Licences & Permits
2. Compliance Certificates (ISO, GDPR etc.)
3. AML & KYC Compliance Documents (including for Founders and Directors)
4. Capitalisation Table i.e. List of Directors & Shareholders
5. Operational & Contractual Documents

- **Key Contracts & Agreements**

1. Corporate Overview Presentation
2. Evidence of Intellectual Property (IP) Ownership

- **Additional Due Diligence**

1. Credit Reports & Business Credit Rating
2. Online & Applicable Public Records Information Search

If you are not able to supply all the above documentation, you can still take part in the semi-finals, but it may impact your due diligence score which will be included in the judging criteria. We will share more details on what is required out of the above documents, but the following documentation must be supplied by Friday 8th May 2026 (two weeks after being notified that you'll get in).



- **Will I receive a registration to SXSW London if I am selected as a semi-finalist?**

Yes, semi-finalists will receive two (2) complimentary festival passes for SXSW London 2026. At least one of these complimentary registrations must be assigned to the Pitcher presenting at the event. You will also get exclusive access to two or more workshops focused on supporting startup operations.

- **What happens if I don't get selected?**

We value every potential participant no matter where you are along your journey. If you aren't selected, we encourage you to attend SXSW London 2026 and/or apply again next year. All entrants will receive a special coupon to register for an industry badge to attend SXSW London 2026 at the early bird rate.

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