



Trust in Sustainability – FAQs

CISL Canopy and the British Standards Institution (BSI)

About the programme

Trust in Sustainability is an accelerator programme delivered by the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) in partnership with the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Now entering its third year, this year's programme supports startups using **digital innovation to build more trusted and sustainable value chains**. Participants join a three-month journey combining mentoring, collaboration, and investor engagement to accelerate the growth and impact of their sustainability solutions. In addition, there will be opportunities to explore collaborations with BSI's Sustainability Innovation Lab.

👉 [Full programme details](#)

1. Previous cohorts

Since launching in 2023, the *Trust in Sustainability* accelerator has supported ventures at the **early- to growth-stage**, typically **TRL 6+** and preparing to deploy or scale their innovations. Participants have ranged from startups completing **pre-seed and seed funding rounds** to more established SMEs expanding into new markets.

Our alumni reflect the programme's broad focus on **building trust in sustainability** including:

- **iov42**, providing distributed-ledger traceability and compliance tools to combat illegal deforestation.

- **SkenarioLabs**, provides AI-driven building analytics that help property owners and investors measure, forecast and reduce carbon, financial, and physical risk across portfolios.
- **HACE**, applying data and AI to help investors and companies address child labour in global supply chains.
- **Mattera Tech**, delivering regenerative, traceable cotton production for the fashion industry.
- **Initiativ**, building a digital platform that simplifies carbon reporting and trading for SMEs.

Across both cohorts, ventures have spanned sectors such as **agriculture, manufacturing, textiles, finance, and technology**, united by a shared goal of embedding **trust, accountability, and transparency** into the systems that underpin sustainable economies.

 [Learn more about past participants](#)

2. Eligibility and focus

In 2025, we are seeking **deployment-ready sustainability innovations** from **startups, scaleups** and **SMEs** that are developing **digital solutions to build more trusted and sustainable value chains**.

We particularly welcome applications from ventures that:

- Are at **Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6 or higher** - meaning their solutions are validated in relevant environments and approaching market deployment.
- Have completed **pre-seed or seed-stage funding rounds**, or are otherwise poised to scale their innovation.

Selected participants will join a **three-month programme** designed to refine, pilot and accelerate solutions that enhance transparency, accountability and resilience across global value chains.

3. How should a founder evaluate whether this programme is a good fit?

You should consider applying if your startup is developing a **digital innovation that helps build more trusted and sustainable value chains** - for example, by improving

transparency, accountability, data integrity, or sustainability performance across products, services, or supply chains.

This programme is especially valuable for founders and teams who are seeking:

- **Expert mentoring and support** to refine leadership skills, product–market fit, and intellectual property strategies.
- **Access to networks and markets**, including CISL’s 40,000+ sustainability community and BSI’s corporate partners.
- **Guidance on scaling**, partnership development, and funding readiness.
- **Opportunities to engage with BSI** and to explore co-creation.

Applicants should also demonstrate a **strong commitment to sustainability** and be ready to engage actively throughout the three-month programme.

The **application process is straightforward** and the **programme is free of charge**. As long as your team can commit to the key dates below, there’s nothing to lose by applying - and a great deal to gain.

- 📍 *Kick-off: 14–15 January 2026 (Cambridge)*
- 📍 *Weekly virtual sessions and monthly in-person events (Jan–Apr 2026)*
- 📍 *Demo Day: April 2026 (Cambridge or London)*

4. Are founders normally working on their ventures full time when they are part of this programme?

Most founders participating in *Trust in Sustainability* are **actively engaged in their ventures full time**, or are in the process of scaling their innovation towards commercial deployment. However, full-time commitment is **not a strict requirement**.

What matters most is that participants can **dedicate sufficient time and focus** to make the most of the accelerator - attending the kick-off, participating in weekly virtual sessions and monthly in-person events, and preparing for Demo Day.

Founders who are deeply committed to advancing their sustainability innovation and ready to engage with mentors, peers, and partners will gain the most from the programme.

5. How has the programme evolved since its beginning?

Over the past two cohorts, we've learned that startups benefit most from **tailored, practical support** that bridges the gap between sustainability ambition and market delivery.

In response, the *Trust in Sustainability* programme has evolved to strengthen:

- **Personalised mentoring and leadership development**, ensuring founders receive guidance tailored to their sector and growth stage.
- **Collaboration opportunities** with BSI's Sustainability Innovation Lab, enabling co-creation and pilot partnerships.
- **Investor and corporate engagement**, including curated introductions and a high-profile Demo Day.
- **Community and peer learning**, through CISL's 40,000+ sustainability network and Canopy membership.

As *Anne-France Kennedy (KlimateNet)* said, the programme “sets a new standard in startup support,” while *Eleanor Harry (HACE)* described it as “critical to our growth - a true community of experts, advisors and friends.”

Each year, we continue to adapt content, mentor pools and collaboration opportunities to ensure every cohort gains the most relevant, high-impact support.

6. Is there a cost to participate?

No. The *Trust in Sustainability* accelerator is **free of charge** for all selected participants, thanks to the partnership between CISL and BSI. Participants are responsible only for their own travel and accommodation costs for in-person sessions.

7. What kind of time commitment is expected?

The programme runs from **January to April 2026**, with a combination of virtual and in-person sessions.

- **Kick-off (Cambridge):** 14–15 January 2026
- **Weekly online workshops and mentoring sessions:** January–April 2026
- **Monthly in-person networking and collaboration events**
- **Demo Day (Cambridge or London):** April 2026

Founders should expect to dedicate around **4–6 hours per week** to make the most of the programme’s mentoring, training, and networking opportunities.

8. Who should I contact for more information?

If you have questions about eligibility, the application process, or partnership opportunities, please contact:

 **canopy@cisl.cam.ac.uk**

You can also find full details, key dates, and the application form at:

 [CISL Canopy and BSI’s Accelerate and Pilot Programme: Trust in Sustainability | Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership \(CISL\)](#)