

Three South West women win £50k to develop innovative products

A tech-infused children's book and a breastfeeding clothing range are among the products being developed by female entrepreneurs in the South West who have won funding to scale their businesses.

Three businesswomen from across the region have received £50,000 as winners of Innovate UK's 2021-2022 Women in Innovation Awards.

In addition to the grants from the Swindon-based government innovation agency, the winners will also get a package of mentoring, coaching and business support including help to find investors and with funding applications.

Innovate UK EDGE South West will allocate an innovation and growth specialist to each award winner, who will help them to transform their research and ideas into tangible market value.

Innovate UK launched its Women in Innovation programme in June 2016 to address an under-representation of women engaging with its services. The organisation said since then the number of women-led applications for its grants had increased by 70%.

Indro Mukerjee, chief executive at Innovate UK, said: "While access to finance is one of the biggest barriers to women successfully innovating in business, we are also aware that we must increase the diversity of role models in business and innovation if we are to inspire and attract more innovators.

"Through engagement with schools, regions and local and national media, the Women in Innovation programme promotes our award winners as relatable role models that challenge

stereotypes and can inspire our next generation of innovators.”

**Dr Ying Lia Li, Zero Point Motion,
Bristol**



Dr Ying Lia Li, founder of Zero Point Motion.
(Image: Innovate UK)

The academic is developing motion tracking and navigation

hardware that brings high-performance sensors found in aeroplanes and spacecraft to consumer devices.

Dr Ying, last year's winner of the Institute of Physics' Clifford Paterson Medal, said sensors found in cars or smartphones can generate errors when GPS signals are weakened, causing difficulty with positioning.

Dr Ying said: "I knew that to improve navigation and stabilisation, the market needed new sensor technology, but still at chip-scale size,"

"Our inertial sensors will be 100 times more sensitive than those inside your phone. Imagine ultra responsive AR/VR headsets, and increased precision in robotics."

Philippa Doyle, Bshirt, Devon

The Torquay-based mother of two – along with co-founder Lisa Lessware – has developed a circular business model for their venture's clothing service, which rents garments made from recycled materials and designed for pregnancy bumps and breastfeeding.

Ms Doyle said: "Running a business that supported breastfeeding mothers was something I felt very passionate about. I felt I could really make a difference to thousands of women in similar circumstances.

"Winning this award feels like the culmination of my journey as an entrepreneur and as a mother."

Victoria Forrest, VIKA, Bristol



Victoria Forrest, founder of VIKA.

(Image: Innovate UK)

The award-winning designer has produced conceptual books and brand designs for artists, photographers and publishers for the last 15 years.

Ms Forrest has now created an augmented reality book, titled 'Where is the bird?', which is designed to inspire the use of British sign language in deaf and hearing families.

Each of the book's pages contains an illustration that triggers animations, together with a video demonstrating the sign language for that word.

Ms Forrest, who used sign language to communicate with her hearing son from an early age, said: "I want to raise awareness of deaf languages and culture to improve integration between deaf and hearing communities,"

"The book's videos will bring a static silent page to life, allowing deaf and hearing children to become more engaged with books and reading."

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