

Innovate UK Fund

Largest funding agency for innovative SMEs in the UK.

Client: **Evolve Growing Solutions**, a technical consultancy focused on identifying and developing new technologies to advance the built environment and food production towards a more sustainable future. **Sector:** Built environment and Horticulture

1 Context / Challenge

Evolve had researched and identified a unique glazing material that could replace glass in greenhouses. The material provides better light conditions and can increase the overall profit margins for growers. Although the benefits are significant, commercial greenhouse builders were reserved in adopting the technology ('ETFE') primarily due to their lack of knowledge and equipment to handle plastic/ soft materials.

2 What was provided

Evolve had developed the concept for an automatic system for installing ETFE at the greenhouses' roof. The company asked then support for developing this concept further. Particularly, a business model was designed for commercialising the technology in Europe, including funding alternatives to advance the system from concept to a pre-commercial pilot stage.

3 What they achieved

The first step was to confirm the market barriers and the profile of users. Via marketing data and interviews, a partnership strategy with selected early adopters was developed for the UK and EU markets. The supporting financial plan confirmed the commercial potential with a ROI and intern return rate analysis for a 5-year forecast. This plan was the foundation for pursuing funding and grant applications.

The Innovate UK SMART Awards scheme was then identified to fund the project. Evolve then accessed the support for understanding in depth the grant requirements, getting the application written and supporting documents at best standards, and accessing independent feedback before the submission. The application was successful, providing Evolve with a £ 100,000 grant fund for advancing the installation system development. The project is ongoing until October 2016.