Textile Exchange’s Innovation Lab started life in 2015 as the place and space for innovators in organic cotton to come together and showcase their ideas in competition for the OCRT Innovation Award. Each year, applicants pitch their ideas live to an esteemed panel of judges (either in person or via video link) during the Organic Cotton Round Table (OCRT), and the winning project receives a cash prize and priceless publicity to help move the idea forward.

For 2017, Textile Exchange has expanded this to form the Preferred Fiber and Materials Innovation Lab, with an exciting new element added to its activities. On the day of the Round Tables in Washington D.C. (12th October, 2017), there will be a Preferred Fiber & Materials Hands-On Lab for participants to see and feel samples of a range of new and innovative preferred fibers and materials.

**PART 1: PREFERRED FIBER & MATERIALS HANDS-ON LAB**

Get up close and personal with some of the latest innovations in textile sustainability

In the field of textile sustainability, we all spend a lot of time talking and reading about new and innovative preferred (more sustainable) fibers and materials, but how often do we get the chance to see and feel them up close?

The Preferred Fiber and Materials (PFM) Hands-On Lab allows participants of Textile Exchange’s Round Table meetings on October 12, 2017 (following Textile Exchange’s annual Textile Sustainability Conference in Washington D.C.), to see and feel samples of a diverse range of preferred fibers and materials.

The Lab will offer a “show and tell” of new technologies, displaying samples from different stages of the production cycle to allow participants to visualize and better understand how raw materials, such as plastic bottles, wood chips and plants, can turn into final products like rucksacks and T-shirts. There will, naturally, be a focus on the social and environmental considerations of these technologies.

The Lab will be divided into sections for different PFMs, currently including bio synthetics, recycled polyester, man-made cellulosics and organic cotton (in line with the day’s four Round Tables), but will also feature some exciting, newly developed innovations outside of these categories.

Alongside feedstock, fiber, yarn, fabric and final products samples, there will also be learning resources such as posters, videos, and microsite previews. These will all be on display for the whole day, but there will also be presentations, demonstrations and Q&A sessions scheduled at specific times.
PART 2: ORGANIC COTTON ROUND TABLE INNOVATION AWARD

A celebration of new ideas in organic cotton

Organic value chains are hotbeds of new ideas and innovation. Textile Exchange’s Organic Cotton Round Table (OCRT) Innovation Award showcases these ideas and rewards the best of them.

The OCRT Innovation Award aims to seek out groups or individuals with innovative solutions to break through barriers to growth and discover new ways for the organic cotton community to flourish – from producer to consumer. Each year, applicants compete for the OCRT Innovation Award, which includes a cash prize and priceless publicity to help move forward the winning idea.

Launched in collaboration with Change Agency at the Organic Cotton Round Table (OCRT) in Mumbai in 2015, and returning as a highlight of the day at the 2016 OCRT in Hamburg, the Innovation Award has become an established and much anticipated part of the OCRT agenda.

How does it work?

Echoing the “Dragon's Den” TV program, which shows in many countries, shortlisted innovators are invited to pitch their idea (in person or via video link) at the OCRT in Washington D.C. on October 12. The application process for the 2017 Innovation Award opened in June and closes on August 4, 2017.

In order to apply, applicants must summarize their idea in up to 500 words. There's no fee to enter, and the criteria are wide and welcoming. Anyone with an innovative idea in organic cotton is encouraged to apply, whether already in pilot stage or simply planning on paper. Applicants are encouraged to mention how their idea supports progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Each year, all shortlisted finalists join the OCRT Innovation Award Alumni, which grows over the years to support each other in bringing new solutions to the industry.