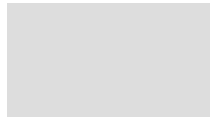
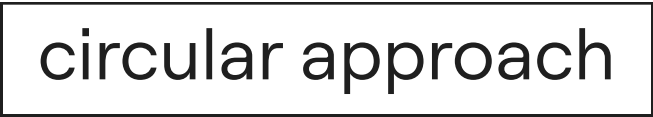





TFC Pathways

BETTER BUSINESS FOR A BETTER PLANET

THE FOOTWEAR COLLECTIVE

WE ARE TFC

 The Footwear Collective is a driving collaborative and  circular approach for the footwear industry by partnering with  leading brands, dedicated to  scope, develop, and scale circular solutions. 

PATHWAYS INTRODUCTION

■ **Change is hard, frustrating, and risky.**

The footwear industry produces 24 billion pairs of shoes annually—that's three new pairs for every person on earth. While shoes are essential for our daily mobility, they also highlight the inherent flaws of our linear economy. Resources are extracted and energy is consumed to manufacture and ship products around the world which are ultimately landfilled. We have optimized this linear model for decades, but growing concerns about its negative impacts—such as waste, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions—are demanding a shift.

■ **Systemic change is even harder. No one can do it alone.**

The future is circular. It's time to ditch the linear take-make-waste model and build global solutions that keep shoes and their ingredients in motion—not in landfills.

■ **Every journey is different but we have the same goal—so let's take the next step together.**

The shift to circularity won't be easy, but it will be easier together. It will take investment, innovation, time, and resources to make this transition and only through a shared approach will we achieve it.

■ **Welcome to the Footwear Collective, where pre-competitive collaboration drives change.**

In October 2023, our non-profit EarthDNA, Inc. founded The Footwear Collective (TFC), a pre-competitive program built to catalyze circular footwear at scale. We bring together footwear brands, retailers, academia, investors, suppliers, and other industry stakeholders to solve the challenges for circularity at scale.

■ **We turn competitive businesses into a connected human network.**

We embrace a community of champions that empower change. It is all about identifying the superpowers of humans across the different departments in organizations.

■ **Working together to build solutions across three pillars of the circular economy; materials, infrastructure, and consumer behavior.**

TFC works as a system integrator. We mobilize and create working groups across pillars driven by data collection and building a business case that de-risks the mission.

■ **We're changing the way this industry works through a human-centered transformation, resulting in higher profit margins for organizations and a better planet for all of us.**

We recognize that we need to build a footwear industry future that is better for both the planet AND for business.

■ **We've all been involved in stand-alone and high-level initiatives that don't really go anywhere. That's why collaboration, focus and direction matter.**

By aligning these initiatives, we can move away from costly, inefficient, and slow-to-deliver solutions, replacing them with smarter, more effective alternatives that drive real impact.

■ **So we created TFC Pathways. Outlining seven distinct approaches with meaningful actions that you can implement now, next, or plan for the future.**

TFC has developed the Pathways Tool, with input from industry-leading voices, to organize the ecosystem of footwear circularity initiatives and inspire action. Designed as a living document, the Pathways Tool is meant to evolve over time and we welcome your input.

■ **Let's reimagine action—no longer a fragmented journey, but a unified movement. By uniting industry players, we're building better business AND a healthier planet.**

Achieving this vision won't be easy; it demands unprecedented collaboration between everyone in our footwear ecosystem. It's time to rebuild the system—together.

■ **You are not alone.**

Join us in uniting industry players to build better business AND a healthier planet.

Join our collective journey.

Sincerely,

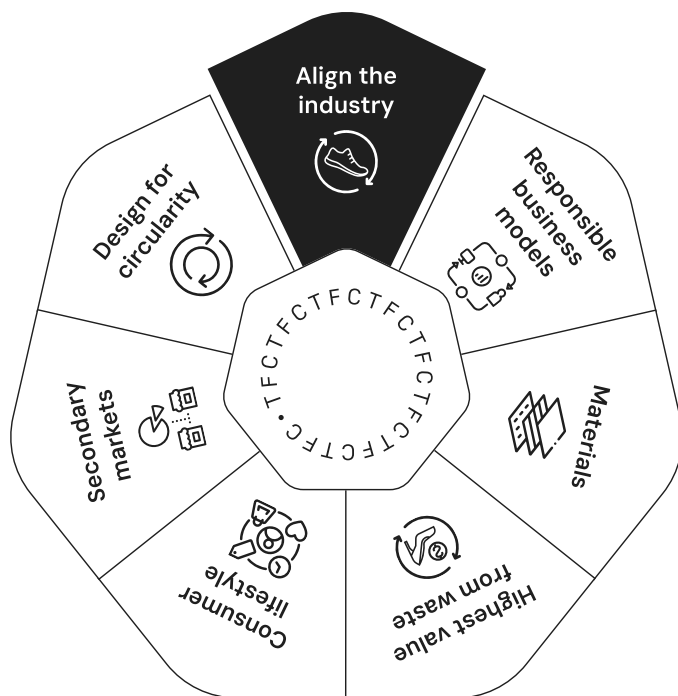
Yuly Fuentes-Medel

Founder of the Footwear Collective



WHERE TO START YOUR JOURNEY TOWARDS CIRCULARITY:

Use this as a guide for a collective journey. Different groups can work in projects at different intersections of a pathway and action based on their preferences.



THE 7 PATHWAYS

Align the industry pre-competitively to drive scale for footwear circularity

Uniting the footwear industry in a pre-competitive manner to establish shared practices, standards, and systems to end footwear waste. This requires a collaborative network and collective mindset among stakeholders to work together to adopt circularity principles in footwear production and consumption at scale.

ACTIONS ARE LABELED BY PRIORITY

ACTION 1

NOW

Establish the communication network connecting key industry stakeholders.

ACTION 2

NOW

Identify opportunities for collective action to drive efficiencies by assessing and establishing a baseline of current efforts.

ACTION 3

NOW

Communicate the impact of a collective action for circular systems, engaging key internal stakeholders & leadership.

ACTION 4

NOW

Facilitate anonymized and aggregated data exchanges across the value chain to support informed, action oriented decision-making.

ACTION 5

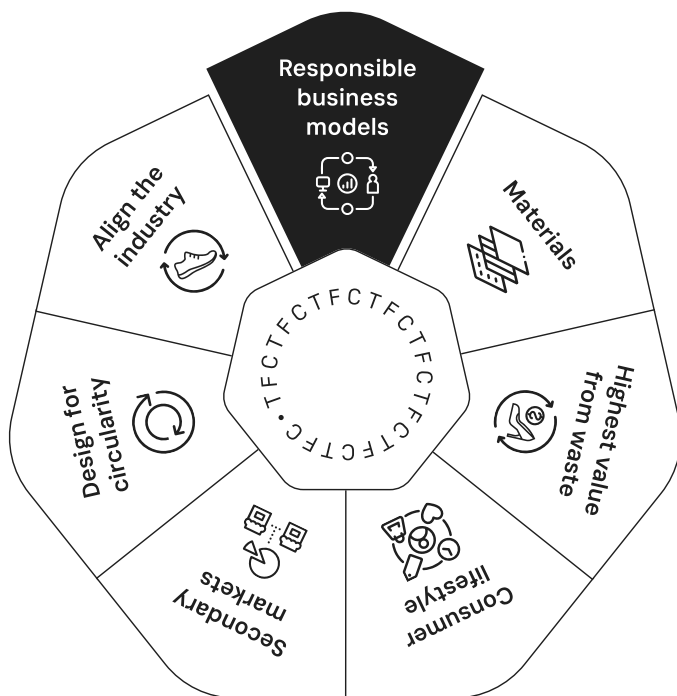
NOW

Define pathways to achieve circularity across product archetypes and establish measurable targets.

ACTION 6

NOW

Define and align on circular economy taxonomy.



THE 7 PATHWAYS

Scale responsible business models

Expand and implement sustainable business models within the footwear industry where resources are fully capitalized within the production cycle, and used in other industries or applications. Realize an affordable circular economy model through ethical practices promoting overall good business for the companies and the planet.

ACTIONS ARE LABELED BY PRIORITY

ACTION 1

NOW

Demonstrate that a circular business model driven by collective action can drive profitability.

ACTION 2

NEXT

Identify strategies to include circular economy in GHG accounting.

ACTION 3

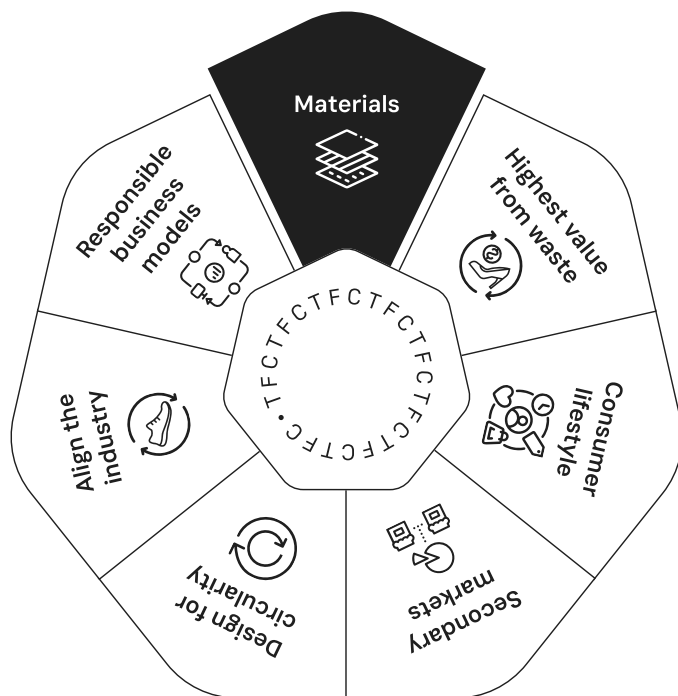
NEXT

Support and inform city, state and federal regulations and incentives to enhance the economic viability of a circular footwear system.

ACTION 4

FUTURE

Localize production, materials sourcing, distribution, take-back programs, and recycling processes to enhance efficiency and overall impact.



THE 7 PATHWAYS

Produce materials that excel in both performance and circularity

Develop materials for circularity that deliver high functionality and durability. Ensuring that materials used in manufacturing can be reused, recycled, or safely returned to the environment at the end of their lifecycle.

ACTIONS ARE LABELED BY PRIORITY

ACTION 1

NOW

Establish material standards that maximize positive impact and reduce the amount of harmful substances.

ACTION 2

NEXT

De-risk material manufacturing innovation through collective validation.

ACTION 3

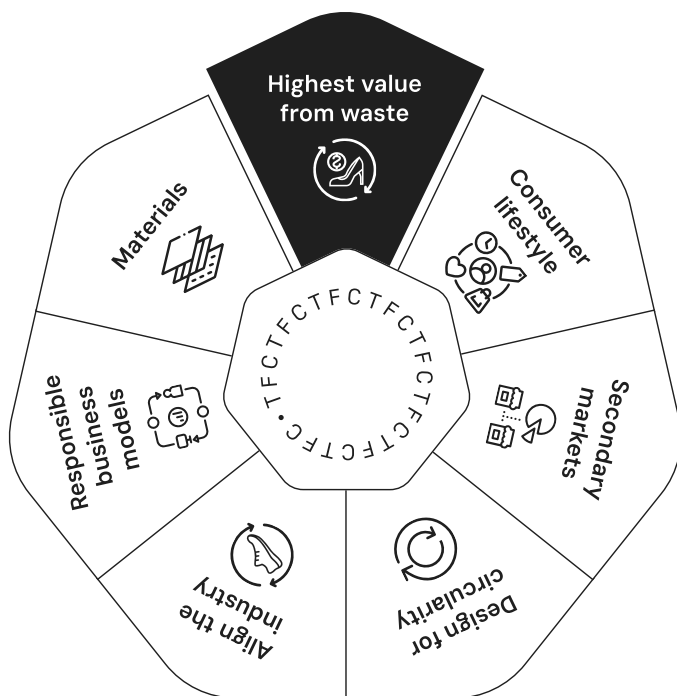
NEXT

Invest collectively to develop new materials manufacturing and processes at scale.

ACTION 4

FUTURE

Establish a transparent database of material formulations to prevent the use of restricted substances across company-wide material applications.



THE 7 PATHWAYS

Develop systems to collect and reclaim highest value from waste

Reducing the environmental impact of currently linear materials at local and global scales by creating and implementing processes and infrastructure to efficiently collect waste and maximize its value through reuse, recycling, or upcycling.

ACTIONS ARE LABELED BY PRIORITY

ACTION 1

NOW

Identify end-of-life solution providers and pinpoint areas where intervention is needed to close existing gaps.

ACTION 2

NOW

Develop collective product take-back programs and channels that reclaim highest value.

ACTION 3

NEXT

De-risk system innovation through collective validation.

ACTION 4

NEXT

Invest collectively to bring pre-processing, sortation and recycling technologies to scale.

ACTION 5

FUTURE

Leverage/convert pre-existing infrastructure and networks to support circular economy.



Drive adoption of circular consumer habits and behaviors by strategically marketing circular footwear and empowering consumers to make more sustainable choices apart from their everyday lives.

Accelerate mass-market consumer adoption and demand for circular footwear.



Develop and expand platforms and systems for secondary markets that capitalize on the value of pre-owned, refurbished, or recycled products, enabling them to be bought, sold, exchanged, or used for repair and resale. These systems will enable material circulation across industries to ensure products maintain their value and extend their lifecycles while ultimately reducing waste.

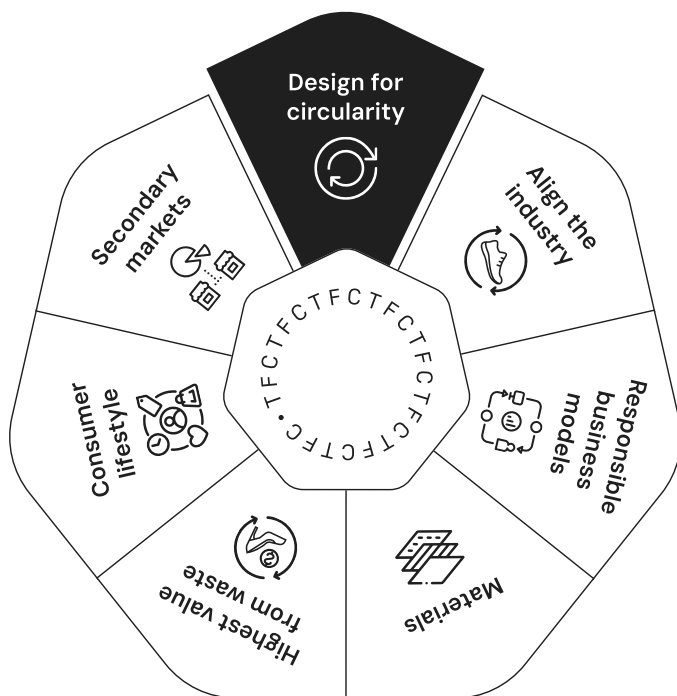
NOW

NOW

NEXT

FUTURE

Ensure effective material traceability and leverage economies of scale to drive material cost efficiencies.



THE 7 PATHWAYS

Design for circularity

Develop guidance to create products with the intention to support a circular economy by keeping materials in circulation, at their highest value, for as long as possible, ensuring they remain within the economy or safely return to the environment at the end of their lifecycle.

ACTIONS ARE LABELED BY PRIORITY

ACTION 1

NOW

Establish a common material language by defining characteristics related to aesthetics, functionality, and material recovery potential.

ACTION 2

NOW

Establish circular design & material standards for footwear.

ACTION 3

NEXT

Develop collaborative tools and curriculums to educate designers and producers on the impact of their design decisions.

ACTION 4

FUTURE

Empower stakeholders across the value chain to embrace durability practices, design for disassembly, and the use of innovative circular materials.

SUBMIT IDEA



BECOME A MEMBER



OUR MEMBERS

Have an idea for us? We welcome your voice.

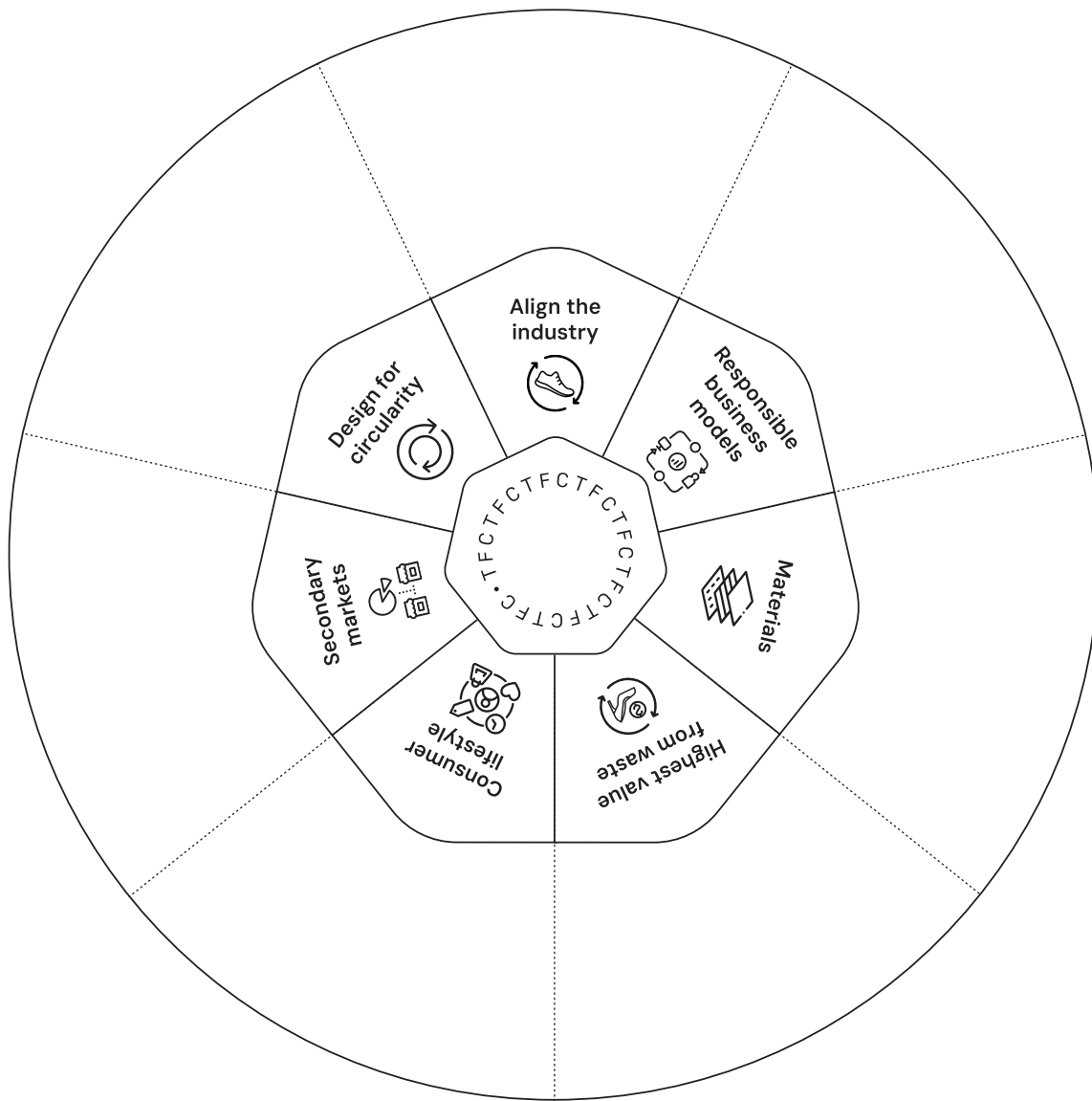
If you have an ongoing project or project you want to share with the Footwear Collective, please feel free to share. We are keen to learn more and explore collaboration!

Join us on this journey towards a better future.

Join us in building a circular future for footwear through collaboration. The tiniest action from you can lead to big change. Together, we can drive the transition to a world that values our people, the planet, and continuous progress. If you are interested in our work, we welcome you to be a part of it.



How many actions is your company participating in?



MORE NOTES:

TFC Pathways | Version 1.0

January 2025

WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU TAKE NOW?

Align the
industry



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Responsible
business
models



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Materials



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Highest value
from waste



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Consumer
lifestyle



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Secondary
markets



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Design for
circularity



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