



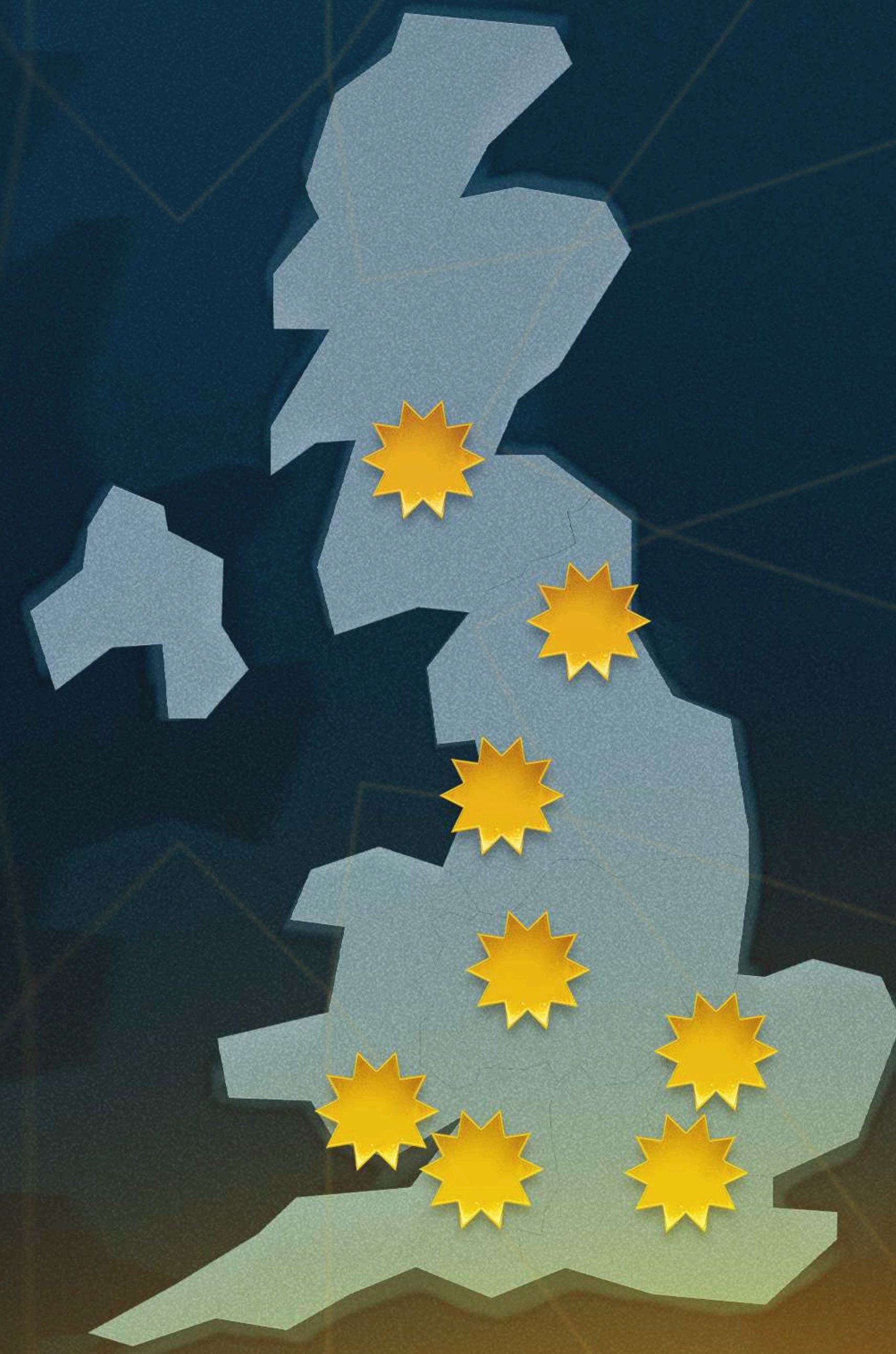
# RISING STARS OF 2025

The UK's Most Promising  
Early-Stage Tech Startups

Powered by:



Founding Partner:







# OUR PARTNERS

Founding Partner:



Partner:



Supporting Partners:



Delivered in partnership with:



# CONTENTS



## Foreword I

By Carolyn Dawson, CEO,  
Founders Forum Group

Page 2

## Foreword II

By Baroness Jones of  
Whitchurch

Page 3

## Introducing Rising Stars

Page 4

## Tech Nation's Rising Stars of 2025

London .....	11
The Midlands .....	21
The North of England .....	30
Wales & The South West .....	40
The East of England .....	48
Scotland & Northern Ireland .....	57

Page 10

## Methodology

Page 67





# FOREWORD I

Tech Nation launched Rising Stars to champion exceptional startups across the UK, maintaining the country's position at the forefront of European innovation.

From cutting-edge AI to pioneering climate tech startups, each UK region is home to flourishing tech ecosystems with their own distinct strengths – Bristol, for example, has emerged as a deeptech powerhouse, Birmingham is leading in advanced manufacturing, Leeds and Edinburgh are becoming unique centres for fintech.

We know that the UK excels at startup creation. However, UK startup ecosystems outside of London struggle to access comparable funding – London-based startups raised 7x more than any other UK region in 2024.

To unlock the full potential of UK innovation, we must ensure that early-stage ventures can thrive in every region. We must think bigger and act together to give founders the resources they need to scale world-changing companies and expand the UK's economy and global influence.

This is not just up to founders or investors, nor is the onus just on Government, Big Tech, or large corporations, to champion innovation in silos. There is an enduring myth of the 'lone founder' in tech, but success is not a solo sport. It takes a Tech Nation.

With Rising Stars entering its sixth year, we've partnered with OnetoWin to collaborate on the UK's largest prize pitch competition for B2B startups, with £3 million worth of investment up for grabs. The competition is supported by prominent backers including Rigby Group (SCC), Haatch, Wealth Club, HSBC Innovation Banking, Amazon Web Services, and the British Business Bank.

Crucially, Rising Stars is designed to break down barriers to entrepreneurship for ambitious founders with trailblazing ideas from every corner of the UK. Early-stage tech startups pitch their innovations across six regional heats, culminating in our grand finale held at London Tech Week each year.

Tech Nation's Rising Stars are products of the vibrant regional innovation ecosystems that collectively strengthen the UK's global edge. These are the next generation of tech leaders who will help define our digital economy for years to come.

Read on to discover our Rising Stars of 2025!



**Carolyn Dawson OBE**  
CEO, Founders Forum Group





# FOREWORD II

This is a nation of formidable tech talent.

Scan your eyes down this list, and you cannot be in any doubt about that – our startups grow the economy, create thousands of jobs, and improve our lives for the better.

From the augmented reality glasses turning speech into real-time subtitles, giving people with hearing loss new ways to engage with the world.

To the EdTech start-up whose users attain 20% more knowledge in half the time.

To the biotech founders swapping plastic for seaweed.

These Rising Stars continue to make the UK what we are: the strongest tech economy in Europe. The home to the third-highest number of unicorns in the world. And a beacon for investment – since this government took office, the UK has seen £200 million a day of private sector capital pour into AI alone.

But we cannot be complacent.

We cannot lose our competitiveness as a home for early-stage startups, or pretend that we are always an easy place to scale.

This government is determined to be the active partner our tech talent deserves – not a bystander. Never a blocker.

We have shown the scale of our ambition on artificial intelligence through the AI Opportunities Action Plan – committing to increase public computing power twentyfold by 2030.

We have unlocked new sources of funding – extending the Enterprise Investment Scheme, bolstering the National Wealth Fund, unlocking the £80 billion opportunity from pension funds.

And we are building homegrown skills through Skills England, and improving routes for luminaries from abroad with the Global Talent and Innovator Founder visas.

These Rising Stars are testament to the fact that innovation spans the length and breadth of the country. I am proud of the cutting-edge robotics scene in Sheffield, of the AI boom in Manchester, of the world-leading semiconductor hub in Wales.

We know, though, that funding, infrastructure and skills can still be a postcode lottery. Government must rise to meet the ambition of entrepreneurs wherever they are, with targeted support for local areas.

The startups on this list give us so much to be proud of. And initiatives like Tech Nation's Rising Stars offer them the platform they deserve.

Government must, and will, be the partner that meets our entrepreneurs at the table – so that people across Britain can benefit from the ideas they offer.



**Baroness Jones of Whitchurch**  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
the Future Digital Economy and Online Safety





# INTRODUCING RISING STARS

At its heart, Rising Stars is about recognising innovation in every part of the UK and connecting founders to the resources, networks and opportunities that can help them grow.

Rising Stars is one of the most energising moments in the Tech Nation calendar. It offers a unique opportunity to shine a light on some of the UK's most promising early-stage startups, and it provides vital visibility and access to founders who might otherwise be overlooked.

Over the last four months, we have travelled across the UK, engaging with universities, accelerators and innovation hubs, spending time with founders who are shaping the future of their regions. These visits have revealed a rich landscape of ideas and ambition, and a clear sense of how much untapped potential exists beyond traditional tech centres.

Despite this, access to capital and investor attention remains uneven. Founders outside London and the South East continue to face significant challenges in securing investment, building networks, and scaling their businesses. This imbalance is not just unfair, it affects the entire UK economy by limiting the diversity and dynamism of our national tech ecosystem. To realise the potential of UK innovation, we must ensure that early-stage startups can thrive in every region.

Rising Stars was created to help address this challenge. This year, our competition is offering more than £3 million of investment to the startups involved. We have hosted events across the country, bringing people together to celebrate innovation and build stronger connections. The journey will culminate at London Tech Week, where these founders will take to the stage and share their ideas on a national platform.

Throughout this process, we have been deeply impressed by the quality of the startups emerging across the UK. A panel of more than 50 expert judges, drawn from across investment, government, tech and entrepreneurship, helped us assess the applicants. The result is a cohort of 60 startups that reflect the ambition and ingenuity of early-stage UK tech.

This report offers a snapshot of those companies and the ecosystems surrounding them. It also includes insight into the challenges founders face and the efforts being made to strengthen regional ecosystems. What emerges is a picture of a UK tech sector that is innovative, resilient and full of promise.

We are proud to spotlight these founders and to play a part in connecting the dots between innovation, investment and opportunity. Supporting startups at this stage is not only about celebration. It is about building a more inclusive, competitive and representative future for UK tech. We hope this report inspires you to champion early-stage founders, wherever they are based, and to recognise the value they bring to our shared future.



**Chantelle Young**  
Head of Early stage programmes





**\$2.3b**

total valuation of Rising Stars  
alumni companies

**4500+**

people employed by Rising Stars  
companies

Ecosystem partners:

Delivered in partnership with:



COOPER PARRY







“At AWS we want to help startups across all regions of the UK to innovate faster, boost productivity, and compete on a global stage. We are delighted to support the Rising Stars competition to remove barriers to investment for regional tech startups, and unlock the full potential of the UK’s tech sector by supporting these all important early-stage entrepreneurs.”

**Tricia Troth**

Head of Startups, UK & Ireland at Amazon Web Services (AWS)



Rising Stars plays a crucial role in championing the UK’s most promising early-stage founders, particularly those building ambitious businesses outside of the usual hotspots. It’s a brilliant initiative that not only shines a light on regional innovation but also gives these founders the visibility and momentum needed to attract support and scale.

**Fred Soneya**

Co-Founder and General Partner, Haatch



“Rigby Group is delighted to support Rising Stars and to launch the 2nd version of One 2 Win, the groundbreaking venture pitch award of £1m. Together with six regional seed rounds, this is the UK’s largest technology venture award scheme and promises to support some of our most capable UK technology businesses.”

**Steve Rigby**

Co-CEO, Rigby Group



The British Business Bank recognises that ensuring regional entrepreneurs have access to the finance they need is vital to driving economic growth in every part of the UK. Breaking down investment barriers empowers diverse founders and strengthens the foundations of a national tech ecosystem. By supporting early-stage talent across all regions, we help create a more dynamic and future-ready economy”

**Warren Ralls**

Managing Director, UK Network, British Business Bank



We’re delighted to be involved with the One to Win competition. Supporting Rising Stars is about championing the incredible talent and innovation emerging from every corner of the UK. Regional entrepreneurs play a crucial role in driving economic growth and creating opportunities beyond the traditional hubs. Backing these early-stage businesses with the right funding and advice isn’t just good investment sense—it’s vital for building a more dynamic startup ecosystem

**Alex Davies**

Founder and Chief Executive, WealthClub







# WHY RISING STARS?

## UK-wide reach

Highlighting the most promising startups from every region

## Funding & investor access

Exclusive investment opportunities for winners, plus valuable connections for runners-up to key investors.

## Unrivalled visibility

We amplify startups' visibility through high-profile pitch events and media exposure at the regional and national levels.







## How does it work?

This year, we've expanded the prize to include two tracks for startups across various stages:

### Emerging Stars

Pre-seed or Seed-stage startups will compete for one of six opportunities to win the Haatch regional prizes of £335,000 in investment and the chance to showcase their business at London Tech Week.

### OnetoWin






Pre-Series A to Series A startups competing to qualify for a place in the Grand Final at London Tech Week with the opportunity to win £1,000,000 in investment.

## Who can Apply?

### Emerging Stars track:

-  Headquartered in the UK
-  Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) eligible with a minimum of £200,000 allocation available
-  B2B or B2B2C
-  Technology / digital sector

### OnetoWin track:

-  UK-headquartered businesses or UK-operating businesses that are incorporated in other jurisdictions
-  Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) eligible with £1,000,000 allocation available
-  B2B or B2B2C
-  Technology / digital sector
-  Minimum of £200,000 in annual recurring revenue



## Founders Forum Group's Rising Stars Alumni include:



"We've been approached by investors who saw us in the Rising Stars campaign - usually we are the ones chasing them. Incredible!"

**Jonathan Lloyd**

CGHero



"Someone we met at London Tech Week through our Rising Stars stand ended up being one of our bigger private investors...so we are very very thankful having had that opportunity!"

**Nicola Jones**

Powdr

"Winning Rising Stars has given us access to expert support in key areas like branding and website strategy, the conversations we've had so far have been invaluable in shaping our approach."

**Francesca Cordeiro**

Novai



"Being a Rising Stars Finalist gave us a massive stamp of credibility - both externally for investors and internally for the team."

**Deidre McGettrick**

uFurnish







# TECH NATION'S RISING STARS OF 2025

The UK's Most Promising Early-Stage Tech Startups





# LONDON

 **\$691b**  
Combined Market  
Valuation

 **14.5%**  
Growth in Value  
(2020-25)

 **\$10.8b**  
VC Investment (2024)

 **114**  
Unicorns





# Entrova



Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Eyitayo Ogunmo, Abayomi Olatunji

## HQ

London

## INDUSTRY

B2B

## STAGE

Pre-seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2022

## EMPLOYEES

6

Entrova is an AI-powered hiring platform that helps companies in the Global North build and scale AI products faster by connecting them with the top 8% of vetted AI and engineering talent from emerging economies. Entrova removes hiring friction—enabling businesses to launch AI solutions cost-effectively and at scale.



# inploi



OnetoWin

## FOUNDERS

Matthew de la Hey, Alex Hanson-Smith

## HQ

London

## INDUSTRY

PeopleTech / Human Resources

## STAGE

Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2015

## EMPLOYEES

20

inploi is a UK-based software company on a mission to help employers connect authentically with the future of their workforce. Designed for large organisations in high-volume hiring sectors, inploi's platform enables world-class candidate experiences while enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of talent and recruitment teams.





# LEVRA



Emerging Stars

FOUNDERS

Bartek Ognowski, Emily Gill

HQ

London

INDUSTRY

EdTech / Academic

STAGE

Seed

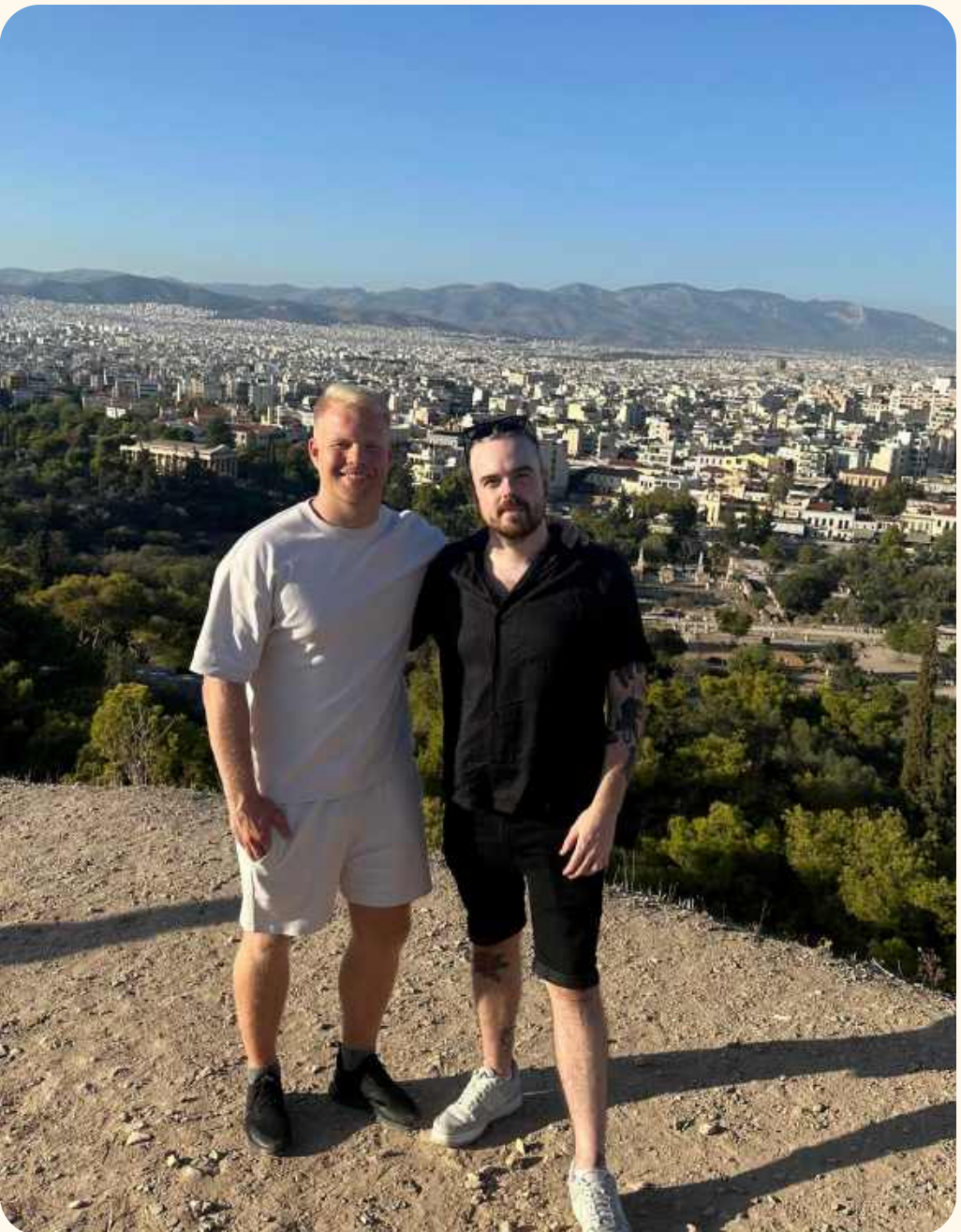
INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

EMPLOYEES

3

LEVRA is an EdTech company revolutionising workplace learning by equipping Gen Z with essential Human Skills. Its unique approach blends immersive simulations with data-driven insights to help businesses improve communication, collaboration, and retention, solving the global skills gap in the working world.



# Lydia APP UK Limited



Emerging Stars

FOUNDERS

Nok Orrason

HQ

London

INDUSTRY

B2B

STAGE

Seed

INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

EMPLOYEES

8

Lydia ensures influencers are paid what they deserve. It encourages limitless thinking, attracts like-minded people, and empowers influencers by always putting them first to make the impossible possible. The platform allows influencers to get proposals from top brands, manage partnerships, and track earnings, all in one place.





## Nativ Technologies, Inc.



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Ashish Ranjan Jha, Ahmed Ahres

### HQ

London

### INDUSTRY

Artificial Intelligence

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

2

Nativ enables businesses to expand globally by using AI to culturally adapt visual content for different markets. From marketing materials to product visuals, the technology ensures that images, videos, and graphics resonate with local audiences, going beyond simple translation to embrace cultural nuance.



## QuestPrehab



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Professor Tara Rampal, Rouzbeh Pasha

### HQ

London

### INDUSTRY

Health Technology

### STAGE

Scaling up

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2022

### EMPLOYEES

10



QuestPrehab is an AI-enabled patient optimisation platform that addresses the problem of spiralling cost of providing healthcare to an ageing population. It improves surgical and cancer treatment outcomes by reducing complications, accelerating recovery, and lowering readmissions and costs.





## Reporti



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Gracie Broom

### HQ

Dorking

### INDUSTRY

Events

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

1

Reporti is a real-time incident reporting platform that enhances safety at live events by enabling attendees to discreetly report incidents and receive immediate, tailored feedback without requiring app downloads. Its unique ability to provide accessible, actionable safety solutions aims to reduce unreported incidents, improve response times, and support event venues in meeting safety regulations.



## Synkka



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Torbjörn Maaherra

### HQ

London

### INDUSTRY

B2B

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

1

Synkka empowers technology companies to build their own integrations quicker using AI, offering full control and flexibility in customising integrations to suit specific business needs which contrasts with most competitors, who focus on selling access to pre-built integrations via SaaS platforms, limiting customisation and adaptability.





## Uhubs



OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

👤 Matt Milligan, Ash Ali

### HQ

📍 London

### INDUSTRY

🚀 SaaS / Human Resources

### STAGE

🪜 Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

🏆 2019

### EMPLOYEES

👥 10

Uhubs empowers revenue leaders to increase productivity by building teams with more 'A players'—professionals who consistently deliver 4x revenue growth. Its continuous assessment process provides data-driven insights to optimise hiring, skill development, and demonstrate the ROI of enablement initiatives.



## XRAI Glass



📍 Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

👤 Dan Scarfe, Lara Scarfe, Keith Duggar, Jacqui Press, Paul Mealy

### HQ

📍 London

### INDUSTRY

🚀 SaaS

### STAGE

🪜 Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

🏆 2022

### EMPLOYEES

👥 5

XRAI is revolutionising connectivity through cutting-edge technology. By leveraging the power of augmented reality, the innovative app transforms speech into real-time subtitles, displayed directly on smart glasses. This breakthrough enables users to engage in conversations without missing a word, enriching everyday interactions



# Trace



## FOUNDERS

👤 Joanna Auburn, Cat Long

## HQ

📍 London

## INDUSTRY

🚀 Sustainability / GreenTech

## STAGE

📊 Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

📅 2020

## EMPLOYEES

👥 14

Trace is the 'Xero of Decarbonisation'. It is building the World's largest carbon management platform and community, which leverages the skills & reach of accountants to help SMEs measure, reduce and report emissions. It is all-in-one climate reporting platform designed to help SMEs achieve Net Zero and meet regulatory or supply chain reporting requirements while actively engaging their teams.

What makes Trace unique is its focus on accountants—trusted advisors who are well-placed to lead in the growing ESG market. By equipping accountants with the tools to offer scalable climate reporting services, it enables them to support businesses in emissions measurement, reduction, risk assessment, and reporting.





### The Story

We've both had prior experience building sustainable business, and both came across the same challenges: limited resources. We recognised the need for software to help businesses take climate action affordably. So Trace was born, with a mission to help every business reach net zero using AI-powered software and a network of accounting partners.

### Scaling a Company in London

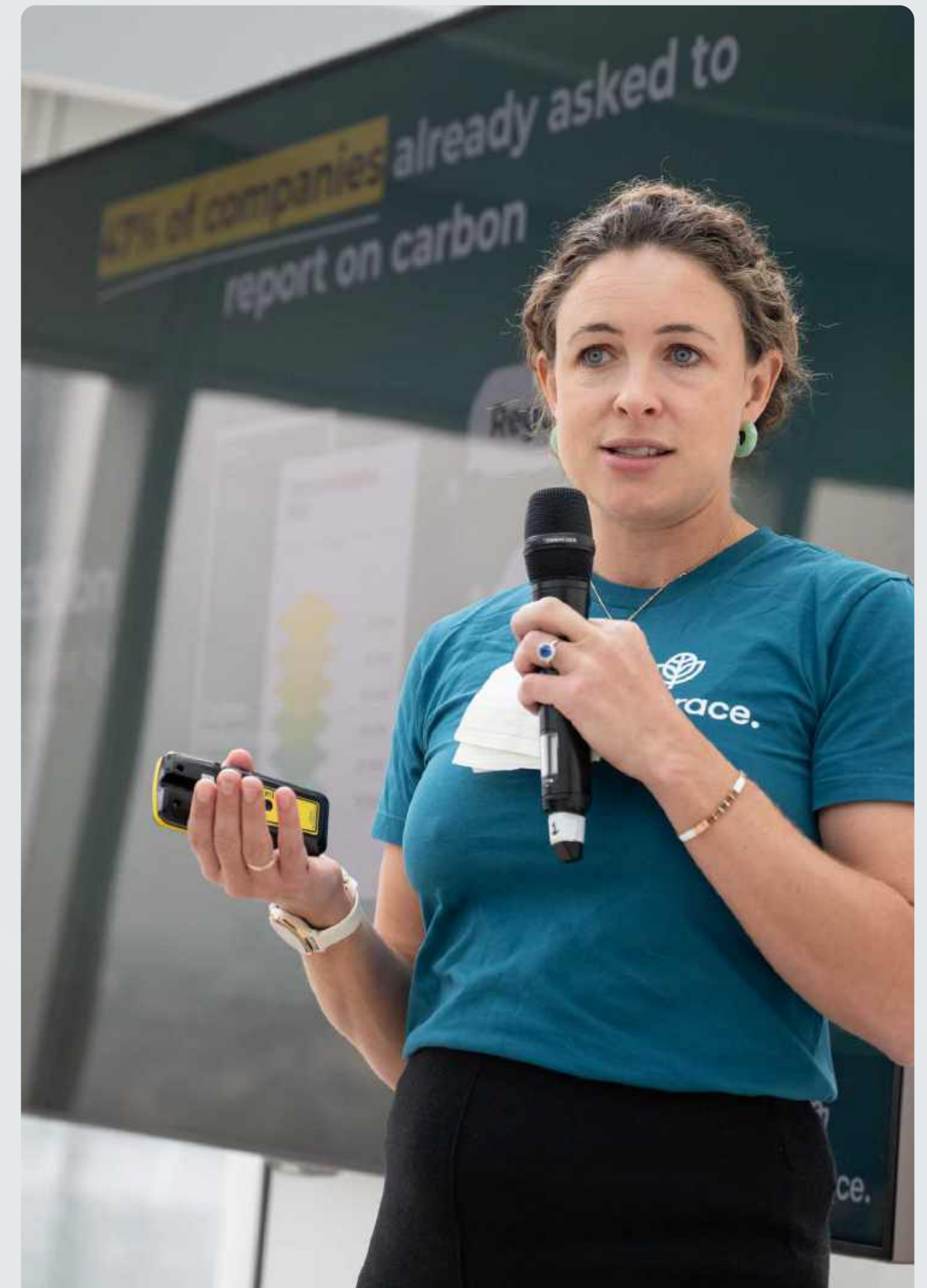
At the beginning of our scaling journey, we struggled to gain brand awareness with such a limited budget. We overcame this by creating a viral marketing loop with badging and certifications, as every Trace customer becomes a brand ambassador.

We also struggled to identify our ideal customer profile (ICP), as it's easy to try and solve for too many personas simultaneously. Talent shortages across the UK also led to difficulty hiring, particularly salespeople. We learnt that investing in senior sales people early on to create a playbook is hugely beneficial.

Increased competition from other companies across Europe also lengthened our sales cycle, which actually pushed us to innovate our product and go-to-market strategy.

### Unlocking UK-wide Growth

We would emphasize the need for better hiring support, sales mentorship, and cost-effective professional services such as help with VAT, contracts, and cybersecurity. It's also important to have access to affordable, templated resources like customer and employment agreements to help startups scale more efficiently.



**Cat Long**

Trace



# Startup Resources | London

## Funding

### Better Business Finance

Free, quick and easy access to a directory of approved finance suppliers for UK businesses.

### Funding Circle

Peer-to-peer loans for established SMEs across the UK.

### Innovate UK

Expert advice for businesses looking to commercialise new ideas and succeed in international markets. You'll get funded, bespoke support, to help grow your business.

### The King's Trust Enterprise Programme

For innovators aged 18 to 30, The King's Trust's free Enterprise programme can help you turn your idea into a reality. Provides expert-led workshops, one-to-one support, and opportunities to apply for funding.

### Foresight Group

Foresight Group are an infrastructure and private equity investment manager. Foresight invests in established companies with high growth potential. You can apply to them for equity finance of up to £2 million

### Founders Factory

Founders Factory backs visionary founders with capital, dedicated support from a team of 60+ operators, and unrivalled access to a coalition of industry leading corporate partners.



 **Rising Stars Judge**

“Celebrate every win, no matter how small — but keep your sleeves rolled up, because the real work never stops. Building a company from scratch demands grit, speed, and relentless optimism.”

**Stephanie Eltz**  
Doctify



## Network and Infrastructure

### ACAS

Advice on good practice in employment and employment relations.

### Be the Business

The UK's independent experts on small business productivity improvement, offering the most effective opportunities for you to improve your business.

### Barking Enterprise Centres

Provides access to low-cost, flexible workspace for new and existing small or medium businesses in Barking and Dagenham.

### Grow London

Network of resources and support for London-based startups.

### London Business Partnership - Property Service

A London-based programme to help businesses overcome the challenges of renting commercial property.

## Talent and Skills

### E-business Programme - Enfield, Waltham Forest and Redbridge

Advice and training to help businesses improve their use of digital tools and technology to increase their sales and grow their business. Business must be located in the London boroughs of Enfield, Waltham Forest, or Redbridge

### E-business Programme - Greenwich and Bexley

Advice and training to help businesses improve their use of digital tools and technology to increase their sales and grow their business. Business must be located in the London boroughs of Greenwich and Bexley.

### E-Business Programme – Newham, Havering, and Barking and Dagenham

Advice and training to help businesses improve their use of digital tools and technology to increase their sales and grow their business. Business must be located in the London boroughs of Newham, Havering, and Barking and Dagenham.





# MIDLANDS

 **\$19b**  
Combined Market  
Valuation

 **20%**  
Growth in Value  
(2020-25)

 **\$292m**  
VC Investment (2024)

 **7**  
Unicorns





## CUDE LABS Ltd



OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

James Alabi, Bamidele Popoola

### HQ

Birmingham

### INDUSTRY

CyberSecurity

### STAGE

Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

### EMPLOYEES

6

Cude is a pioneering cybersecurity solution that protects software intellectual property, code, and data throughout the entire project and software development lifecycle. Designed for businesses outsourcing development or collaborating across teams, Cude uses proactive end-to-end encryption, secure data enclaves, and distributed ledger technology to eliminate risks of IP theft, unauthorised access, and regulatory violations.



## Genassis



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Harsimran Singh Bajwa

### HQ

Birmingham

### INDUSTRY

Life Sciences and Health Care

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

3

Genassis is the 'Bloomberg Terminal' for Life Sciences and Healthcare — an innovative API-first startup that eliminates data silos, delivering instant, actionable insights to accelerate research, decision-making, and patient outcomes.





## Impact Advantage



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Jimmy Cockerton

### HQ

Leicestershire

### INDUSTRY

Sustainability / GreenTech

### STAGE

Pre-Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

### EMPLOYEES

7

Impact Advantage transforms the way the world measures value, empowering organisations to grow through their positive impact. It measures you're the impact you create through your employee, environmental, economic, and social impacts, using impact economics to forecast long-term effects, going beyond outputs (e.g., carbon reduction) to assess real-world impacts (e.g., improved health, agriculture, infrastructure).



## Matresa



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Mari-Carmen Sanchez-Morris

### HQ

Leamington Spa

### INDUSTRY

B2B

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2025

### EMPLOYEES

1

Matresa is revolutionising maternal health in the workplace. It helps businesses support their new and expectant mothers by providing a comprehensive, expert-guided health app that offers personalised health solutions for employees during pregnancy and early motherhood. By delivering tailored support, it empowers mothers to maintain their health and well-being.





# Neuro Notion App Limited



Emerging Stars

FOUNDERS

Josh Budd

HQ

Loughborough

INDUSTRY

SaaS

STAGE

Pre-Seed

INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

EMPLOYEES

1

Neuro Notion is developing a life management and education platform to help adults with ADHD regain control of their lives by alleviating the strain on their mental capacities. Its mission is to provide neurodivergent people with the neurodivergent tools they deserve, so they can begin to thrive, instead of just survive.



# Ride Commerce

Emerging Stars

FOUNDERS

Sreenath Rangapuram(He/Him),  
Kumudha Puram(She/Her)

HQ

Nottingham

INDUSTRY

Climate Tech, AI

STAGE

Seed

INCORPORATION YEAR

2021

EMPLOYEES

5

Ride Commerce is AI-powered ESG intelligence platform reducing carbon emissions for Scope 1,2,3 , optimizes transportation networks and supply chains for sustainability.






## SWAI Ltd




 Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

 Mehrdad Sadraei, Joanna Callaway, Behzad Rahmatzadeh

### HQ

 Birmingham

### INDUSTRY

 B2B

### STAGE

 Pre-Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2023

### EMPLOYEES

 2

SWAI is a centralised AI marketing eco-system that builds, launches, and optimises entire campaigns autonomously. Unlike fragmented AI tools that only assist with parts of marketing, SWAI acts as a team of fully trained AI marketers—handling everything from ads and content to landing pages and automation—all under one intelligent system. No agencies, no multiple subscriptions, just one AI that does it all.



## Symbiotex Ltd


SYMBIOTEX

 OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

 Dr Mattia Parati, Olivia Simpson

### HQ

 Stourbridge

### INDUSTRY

 Biotechnology

### STAGE

 Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2021

### EMPLOYEES

 3

SymbioTex is redefining both plastics and bioplastics with an innovative plug and play biomaterial made from seaweed! With a focus on the healthcare, food and personal care packaging.




# Econominds



Emerging Stars

**FOUNDERS**

 Ilisha Masaun


**HQ**

 Birmingham

**INDUSTRY**

 EdTech / Academic

**STAGE**

 Boot strapped and/or have one client or pilot

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

 2025

**EMPLOYEES**

 1

Econominds uses AI to create personalised learning experiences for users. It learns how a user learns best and uses that data to create an optimised personalised experience that reduces studying time and boosts attainment. So far, the team have seen study time fall by up to 50% and attainment boost by 20%.





**Ilisha Masaun**  
Econominds

### **The Story**

Econominds is on a mission to help democratise personalised learning to boost employability opportunities for people from all backgrounds. I started Econominds when I was 18 due to my experience of dyslexia and I wanted to ensure others didn't experience the same as me. I was kicked out of school 6 times and was on the trajectory to leaving without qualifications until I found the power of personalised learning. I left school with A\*'s, graduated at the top of my degree cohort, and built a successful career. Econominds uses AI to create personalised learning experiences for learners. It learns how you learn best and then creates a personalised pathway to help you achieve your goals most effectively.

### **Scaling a Company in London**

I started Econominds from my bedroom, and only in the past 2 years have I received support from the wider tech ecosystem. Tech West Midlands, BruntWood, and Innovate UK have been pivotal in our success by giving us networks, funding and working spaces to scale. We were chosen by the local government and Tech WM to join international delegations to raise the profile of Econominds and connect with international clients. Innovate UK's women in innovation award has also helped us with a grant to supercharge growth.

The main challenges have been navigating the fragmented system, as there are lots of small organisations trying to deliver support. We would also like to see more support for scaleups and connecting the businesses on that later journey with support networks, such as linking patrons of organisations with scaleups in those programs to be their bigger clients.

### **Unlocking UK-wide Growth**

We should be paying more attention to bootstrapped companies proving that businesses actually work when the team is agile enough to pivot till you find product market fit. Then, those businesses that are successful should receive larger cheques to supercharge growth. Obviously this doesn't apply to businesses that require a large sunk cost to start or operate, but the majority of companies can build a minimum viable product quickly and cheaply using no code or AI builders. We should be encouraging this kind of innovation more widely.





# Startup Resources | The Midlands

## Funding

### ART Business Loans

Provides loans for new and existing small businesses to create and safeguard jobs in the West Midlands.

### Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF)

Provides commercially focussed finance through Small Business Loans, Debt Finance, Proof of concept and Equity Finance funds.

### BetaDen Accelerate

Intense, rapid, and immersive business growth aimed at turbo-charging the innovative companies that are at the forefront of Worcestershire’s evolving technology cluster.

## Network and Infrastructure

### Business Assist

Providing no-cost access to knowledgeable, experienced business mentors, applying a bespoke and flexible approach to supporting businesses in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Greater Lincolnshire.

### Tech West Mids (TechWM)

An independent not-for-profit organisation, TechWM is the voice of the region’s tech ecosystem. Their goal is to grow the region’s digital economy and establish it as an internationally recognised tech hub by supporting businesses and creating opportunities to promote the region.

### Business Growth West Midlands

FREE tailored support from business advisers, as well as programmes, training and events to help you network, learn and reach your business ambitions.



## Talent and Skills

### D2N2 Growth Hub

The University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University are working with Nottingham City Council to offer talent grants for businesses recruiting university graduates or students hired to implement or improve technology processes.

### West Midlands Digital Skills Consortium

New collaboration, led by TechWM, to address digital skills shortages in the West Midlands. Working with employers and training providers to understand the region's digital skills needs and advise policy makers on suitable interventions.

### Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire

A collaborative partnership between local employers and further education providers working to improve access to technical skills provision.

### Higher Level Skills Match Plus

Led by Birmingham City University - it's a fully funded Graduate Recruitment service exclusively for businesses trading in Birmingham. A personal Account Manager will provide an end-to-end vacancy management service to address skills gaps and boost growth in your business.

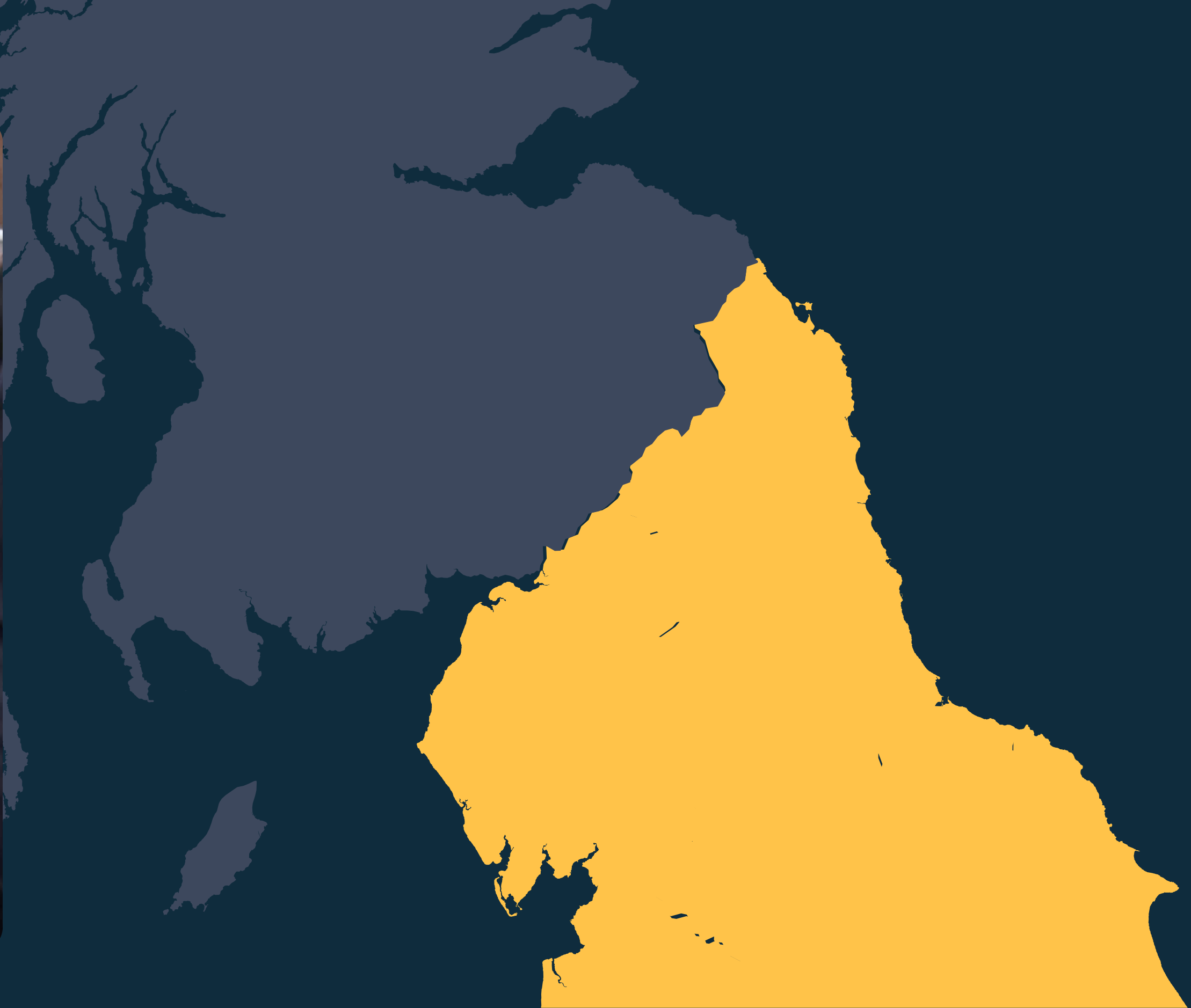
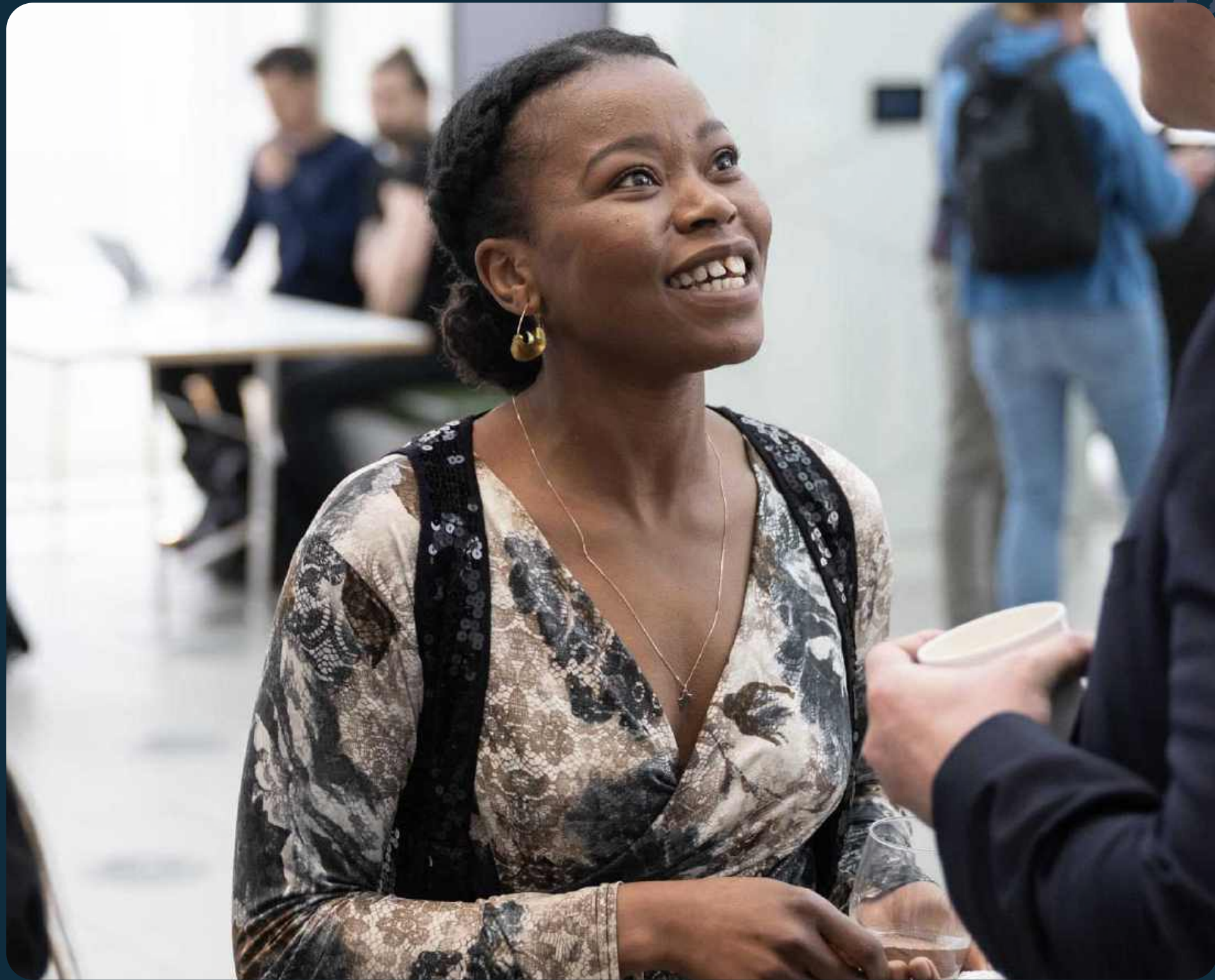


 Rising Stars Judge

“We have five top universities within ten miles of my offices which have graduate or post graduate level programmes in additive and advanced manufacturing, which is incredibly rare. Those aren’t easy skills to recruit for, but are so important and available on our doorstep - from entry level to specialised scientists and product engineers.”

**Melissa Snover**  
Remedy Health





# THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

💰 **\$63b**

Combined Market  
Valuation

📈 **4.5%**

Growth in Value  
(2020-25)

💰 **\$906m**

VC Investment (2024)

🏢 **15**

Unicorns






## DiO (Dragonfly Media Limited)



 OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

 Ade Shannon, Rick Curtis

### HQ

 Liverpool

### INDUSTRY

 Entertainment & Recreation

### STAGE

 Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2020

### EMPLOYEES

 7



DiO harnesses a multi-modal approach, uniquely integrating biometric and emotional data with a science-led understanding of human psychophysiology, to deliver unparalleled insights into audience engagement. The business transforms the creative process, empowering industry leaders to make data-driven decisions that resonate deeply with consumers across the entertainment landscape.



## Materials Information



 Emerging Stars


### FOUNDERS

 Andy Reilly, Toni Ehrig, Nick Weeks

### HQ

 Warrington

### INDUSTRY

 Engineering Software

### STAGE

 Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2024

### EMPLOYEES

 4

Materials Information streamlines materials data management across engineering, manufacturing, and sourcing, eliminating costly material decision risks and maximising data value.





# Pneumonitor



Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Isaac Orr, Clyne Albertelli

## HQ

Whitehaven

## INDUSTRY

AgriTech

## STAGE

Pre-Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

## EMPLOYEES

1

Pneumonitor helps dairy farmers prevent calf pneumonia before it takes hold, preventing permanent yield losses. By measuring the microclimate the calf experiences, inside the pen, it can prevent diseases that cost the UK and EU \$450m a year.



# PROBr



Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Dr Giovannie Jean-Louis

## HQ

Manchester

## INDUSTRY

HealthTech

## STAGE

Boot strapped and/or have one client or pilot

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2025

## EMPLOYEES

1

PROBr is a digital platform that connects researchers with diverse participants, ensuring studies are truly representative while giving communities of colour autonomy in clinical research. Researchers can easily recruit participants, collaborate with peers, and manage projects in one place, while participants can make informed decisions, track their impact on healthcare, and engage in a community.





# Raiser



Emerging Stars

**FOUNDERS**

👤 Luke Wilkinson, James Poulter

**HQ**

📍 Manchester

**INDUSTRY**

🚀 Software / Charity

**STAGE**

📊 Pre-Seed/Bootstrapped

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

🏆 2024

**EMPLOYEES**

👥 2



Raiser is a digital platform designed to take the stress out of fundraising for small charities. By combining AI-powered tools with tried-and-tested fundraising strategies, Raiser helps small charities build smarter grant applications, craft powerful messaging, and stay on top of their finances. It's like having a fundraising team in your pocket— without the overheads.



# Samey AI



Emerging Stars

**FOUNDERS**

👤 Mir Mohamed Abbas, Yash Chopda

**HQ**

📍 Manchester

**INDUSTRY**

🚀 Enterprise AI

**STAGE**

📊 Pre-seed

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

🏆 2024

**EMPLOYEES**

👥 5



Samey AI is a text to action AI assistant that helps legal and accounting teams to accomplish any task across their data and apps using simple English commands.





# SayDraft

SayDraft

Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Kenenna Chigbo

## HQ

Manchester

## INDUSTRY

LegalTech / AI

## STAGE

Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2025

## EMPLOYEES

1

SayDraft transforms contract creation into a simple voice conversation. Our AI-powered platform lets users negotiate, draft, and sign legally binding contracts simply by speaking, in over 100 languages.



# Talkingly

talkingly ai

Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Yadvinder Malhi, Rahul Agrawal,  
Sanchali Sharma

## HQ

Cheshire

## INDUSTRY

AI

## STAGE

Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2025

## EMPLOYEES

3

Talkingly AI is a conversational AI platform that aims to build sentient web by transforming websites into intelligent, voice-enabled experiences—helping businesses convert, serve, and retain customers with human-like interaction.





# Veridox.ai




Emerging Stars


**FOUNDERS**

 Dan Sandler

**HQ**

 Manchester


**INDUSTRY**

 Insurtech / B2B SaaS / AI / Fraud Detection

**STAGE**

 Early-stage (Seed)

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

 2024

**EMPLOYEES**

 5

Veridox is an AI-powered fraud detection platform for insurers. It provides forensic analysis to detect document and image fraud, helping insurers and legal teams make faster, more informed decisions.



# Volunteero



OnetoWin

**FOUNDERS**

Ashley Staines, Kedar Kasarekar

**HQ**

Newcastle upon Tyne

**INDUSTRY**

Software / App

**STAGE**

Seed

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

2020

**EMPLOYEES**

7

Volunteero offers a volunteer management and recruitment platform for organisations like charities, local government, healthcare providers and events. Consisting of a management platform for organisations to centralise data, automate processes, mobilise volunteers, communicate and report on impact. For volunteers its a one stop shop app to get into volunteering, manage onboarding, comms, day to day activities and more.





### The Story

My background is in investment banking, but I knew I wanted to build something of my own. I launched a business allowing bars and restaurants to incentivise customers to post about them on social media. When Covid came, raising became difficult and I felt I wanted to do something with a wider social impact.

I launched Vounteero five years ago, born out of my personal experience with the volunteering sector. If you have volunteered you will know it's hard figuring out where to start, managing onboarding, everything takes ages, and nothing is centralised.

I picked up the phone to some CEOs of charities and asked about their challenges, which reinforced my view. I spoke to a friend who was a software engineer, and it turns out he does the exact same type of volunteering in Switzerland that I did and faced the same challenges. He said, 'Let's build this,' and brought in another engineer friend from university.

After about a year, we had built this volunteering tool where charities had a management side and volunteers all had the app - everything handled through the platform. I convinced the others to come full-time, and in 2022 we raised funding.

Our mission is to make volunteering simple and accessible, inevitably leading to more impact through volunteering.

### Scaling a Company in London

We operate remotely, but our only office is based in Newcastle, so naturally our early clustering of clients were there. When we first started hiring, I ended up hiring clients of ours, people who successfully implemented Volunteero.

I've discovered that there's ample talent outside of London. We're able to build a team here at a lower cost, but the talent pool is no less rich. Being in Newcastle has allowed us to offer a really strong basic salary that wouldn't compare in London.

As for funding opportunities, I've spoken to a number of North-East-focused funds and there's been a good amount of interest - especially to be follow-on investors. But we've slightly pivoted on our fundraising journey to focus on product and longevity.

### Unlocking UK-wide Growth

To encourage more growth-stage entrepreneurship I would always advise anybody that asks me: if you're choosing the fundraising route, you're always fundraising, even from the minute you launch your first beta version. Don't wait until you need funding to start engaging with investors and telling them your journey, because they've got no history on you. My first ticket that led to the entire pre-Seed round coming together was probably from one or two people that I just kept incessantly updating on my journey, whether they were replying or not.

Also, build something you're genuinely passionate about, and find a way to run your own race. I'm not looking for a quick exit, I want to build something really big that lasts. So I know what I care about, and it stops me being influenced by other things.



**Volunteero**



# Startup Resources | The North of England

## Funding

### Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub

Established in 2011, the GM Business Growth Hub was the first of its kind, which has since helped thousands of businesses to grow and achieve their ambitions. They providing funding, information, mentorship, and coaching to SMEs in the Greater Manchester area.

### AD:VENTURE

Provides free, one-to-one support, workshops, loans, and grant funding up to £10,000 to high growth businesses located in the West Yorkshire area (max employees: 249).

### Biorenewables Development Centre

Provides flexible financial support for scientists and business specialists to solve a process, material, or product development challenge. Must be based in Yorkshire.

### Business Enterprise Fund

Provides a flexible, personalised solution to help businesses in the North East of England overcome financial barriers and grow with confiden

### Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II

The Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II will build on the success of the first Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and will deliver a £660 million commitment of new funding to smaller businesses.

### Par Equity

An early-stage venture capital firm designed to support the most innovative, high growth technology companies across the North of the UK, from Seed to Series A.



"Founders in Greater Manchester are quietly getting on with building brilliant businesses. With over 1,600 startups and scaleups in the region, it's the strength of the community, willingness to share and strong peer networks that make this a great place to start and grow a company."

 **Ecosystem Champion**

**Katie Gallagher OBE**  
Manchester Digital



## Network and Infrastructure

### Manchester Digital

A dynamic membership organisation made up of a community of 400+ members, including large corporations, innovative SMEs, cutting edge startups, freelancers and leading agencies, coming together to drive Greater Manchester's tech and digital sector.

### Sunderland Software City

Supports and grows the North East tech sector by helping people explore careers, start businesses and grow their organisations.

## Talent and Skills

### Digital360 - Manchester

Events, advice and specialist workshops to help businesses with digital technology in the North West of England.

### Northern Accelerator

A collaboration between the North East's universities, Northern Accelerator is creating real-world impact from world-leading research, commercialising innovation and boosting the region's economy.

### North East Ambition

Helping businesses in the North East train their workforce and fill skills gaps.



My advice for early-stage leaders in the North is really quite simple: Start. Then don't stop. The biggest killer of businesses is not starting. The second biggest is quitting. The second thing is to act like you're building something huge. Assume from day one you're building a billion-dollar business, then behave accordingly. Finally, remember that being from the North is your superpower. Being from the North isn't a disadvantage, it's an advantage. If I ever hear "I'm not going faster because I can't raise capital in Manchester," I'll find you and beat you up with a wet fish.

**Matthew Scullion**  
Matillion





# WALES & SOUTH WEST

## Wales:

💰 **\$22.8b**

Combined Market  
Valuation



**10%**

Growth in Value  
(2020-25)



**\$32m**

VC Investment (2024)



**2**

Unicorns

## South West:

💰 **\$20.7b**

Combined Market  
Valuation



**11.5%**

Growth in Value  
(2020-25)



**\$289m**

VC Investment (2024)



**4**

Unicorns






## CloudPeek



 Emerging Stars


### FOUNDERS

 Craig Hollington, Oliver Mark Bridal

### HQ

 Bristol


### INDUSTRY

 Cybersecurity

### STAGE

 Boot strapped and/or have one client or pilot

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2024

### EMPLOYEES

 2



CloudPeek provides intelligent cloud compliance and security for SMEs; by using CloudPeek, SMEs will be able to demonstrate auditable compliance with cloud security frameworks, subsequently win the business of regulated entities and reduce the need for dedicated FTE infosec hires and/or expensive consultants.



## Everybody Counts




 OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

 Andy Ridgway, Judy Hornigold

### HQ

 Laurencekirk


### INDUSTRY

 EdTech / Academic

### STAGE

 Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2021

### EMPLOYEES

 11



Everybody Counts is an AI-powered teaching and learning EdTech platform with an aim to improve economies globally and enhance human capital. It delivers full-curriculum Math learning for Primary Grades 1-6 (ages 6-11) accompanied by machine learning-enabled predictive and retrospective analytics for teachers, schools, and governments.





# JurnyOn



OnetoWin

## FOUNDERS

Divya Prashanth, Janine Miles

## HQ

Cardiff

## INDUSTRY

TravelTech

## STAGE

Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2022

## EMPLOYEES

14

JurnyOn is the only blockchain-based and AI-driven ticketing company, leveraging its own proprietary LLM to optimize pricing, demand forecasting, and customer experience. As one of only three private companies licensed to sell train tickets in the UK, it is redefining public transport accessibility with flexible, subscription-based travel solutions.



# LabCycle Ltd



OnetoWin

## FOUNDERS

Jinghui (Helen) Liang, Colin Francis

## HQ

Surrey

## INDUSTRY

Sustainability / GreenTech

## STAGE

Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2021

## EMPLOYEES

2

LabCycle is the world's first company to recycle hazardous plastic waste from research and healthcare (service), as well as the first to create 100% recycled laboratory consumables (product). Working with public and private sectors, it is driving the circular economy of lab plastics to reduce the 5.5 million tonnes of waste annually.





# Petals



 Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

 Haroon Ali, Mohammed Hussain

## HQ

 Newport

## INDUSTRY

 Artificial Intelligence

## STAGE

 Pre-Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

 2025

## EMPLOYEES

 2

Petals is your AI-powered end-to-end data agent that automates data management and analysis. It learns your business, delivers instant insights, and saves you hundreds of thousands annually—providing medium-sized companies with top-notch data support without the high cost of a traditional team. Its goal is to simplify data so every employee can harness its power to drive growth.



# Pontiro



 Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

 Evan , Lewis, Adam, Toby

## HQ

 Newport

## INDUSTRY

 Healthtech

## STAGE

 Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

 2025

## EMPLOYEES

 4

Pontiro automates healthcare data anonymisation and enables secure data sharing, eliminating manual inefficiencies while ensuring compliance. It combines automation with advanced encryption, with a long-term vision to implement homomorphic encryption, allowing organisations to collaborate on encrypted data without compromising privacy, unlocking AI-driven insights and medical innovation.





# Stabiliti



Emerging Stars

FOUNDERS

Will Foulkes, Steve Cochrane

HQ

Bath

INDUSTRY

B2B

STAGE

Seed

INCORPORATION YEAR

2020

EMPLOYEES

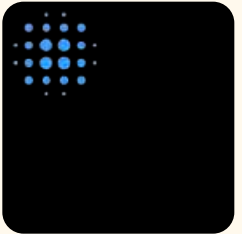
3



Stabiliti is a pioneering technology company revolutionising sustainability by embedding green initiatives into everyday financial transactions. The platform, powered by blockchain technology, enables precise, traceable, and scalable funding of carbon removal and broader environmental contributions.



# Stellar AI Labs



Emerging Stars

FOUNDERS

Israel Oyinlola

HQ

Plymouth

INDUSTRY

B2B

STAGE

Pre-Seed

INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

EMPLOYEES

6

Stellar AI Labs is reinventing the future of work. It envisions a future where digital workers and human workers collaborate to create value.



# Posterity



## Posterity

Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

👤 Jamie Green, Elliott Perry

### HQ

📍 Bristol

### INDUSTRY

🚀 FinTech / Banking / Economy

### STAGE

🪑 Pre-Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

🏆 2023

### EMPLOYEES

👥 2

Posterity is a turnkey AI financial adviser for financial institutions to serve more customers, increase revenues and remain competitive without becoming AI specialists. This helps more people access professional personalised financial advice. It aspires to evolve into a fully autonomous AI financial adviser: always on, proactive, professional financial advice for the masses.





**Elliott Perry**  
Posterity



### The Story

I was a computer nerd growing up. My whole family are Geordies from Newcastle, die-hard football fans, and I was always the one in the back room, building games for me and my friends to play. This took me into tech startups pretty much straight out of university. I had a run of companies, all very different in nature.

I then joined Streamlabs out in San Francisco, and it was when I started to earn a bit of cash that I realised I didn't understand investments properly, I didn't understand tax strategies, I just didn't have very good financial literacy, despite being a founder for most of my life. We're just not taught that stuff.

I spent the next few years speaking with hundreds of people who'd been in very similar situations and realised this is a really big problem - even people who are wealth creators struggle to hold on to and grow their money. The average age of a financial advisor is like 55, there's a huge talent shortage, and their tech stack is really quite archaic and broken.

So I embarked on building Posterity. Over the last two years, seeing the rate of improvement in generative AI, I've become completely convinced we ought to replace a lot of human service-led jobs with AI that will not only be on par but do a significantly better job and is infinitely scalable. That's what we've been building - an AI financial advisor.

### Scaling a Company in the South West

I've lived in Leicester, Newcastle, London, and San Francisco, and moved to Bristol a year ago. I already feel that the South West has a lot to offer.

There's a lot of energy here, a real ecosystem to plug into. I'm currently working out of a free incubator provided by Natwest. They support local entrepreneurs by providing a space to work and be amongst other founders, as well as putting on events and talks to encourage knowledge sharing and fundraising, all completely free.

Aside from a supportive network, the availability of investors is difficult. This isn't just felt regionally - the difference between the UK and the US is stark, so there is that conscious limitation when choosing to build a company here. Luckily, the UK is seen as a fintech leader across Europe, but our main challenges are likely to be regulatory.

### Unlocking UK-wide Growth

What I've seen work really well in the US is successful founders giving back to the next generation. I think that's why Y Combinator is so successful and why Silicon Valley, more broadly, is incredibly successful. It's had this compounding effect of multiple generations of people who have had some degree of success and then passed it on in the way of investment, being an advisor, or opening doors more broadly.

If we want the UK to be a best-in-class ecosystem, instead of leaving for the US and then doing that over there, we have to do that here. So if I'm successful here in the UK, the hope would be that I can pass that on to fellow UK entrepreneurs. I've been a mentor at a number of startup accelerators, incubators, and startup initiatives here in the UK, and that is something that I would very much like to do moving forward



# Startup Resources: Wales & The South West

## Funding

### Business West

Provides a range of business growth programmes to help businesses based in the South West start, succeed and grow.

### SWIG Finance

Loans for new and growing SMEs in the South West of England

### Development Bank of Wales

Provides sustainable, effective business financing for Welsh companies with strong social, ethical and environmental standards, as well as real commercial promise.

### Foresight Group Wales

Equity Finance up to £5 million for Wales-based businesses with potential for high growth.

### Cardiff Capital Region

Partnership of 10 councils transforming the economy, business landscape and potential for inclusive prosperity across South East Wales.

## Network and Infrastructure

### Tramshed Tech

On a mission to connect tech, digital, and creative businesses with the spaces, support and skills they need to succeed. Their aim is to establish Wales as a global hub for tech innovation, where every founder can find the connections, capital, and community they need to build high growth tech companies.

### TechSpark

techSPARK is the not-for-profit Bristol & Bath growth network working to spark new ideas and collaborations, facilitate knowledge exchange, and upskill from the back-room to the boardroom.

### Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme

Grant contribution to pay towards upgrading business broadband to a high-speed capable connection.

### Low Carbon Dorset

Provides free energy-saving advice and grant funding to help local organisations reduce their carbon emissions and save on energy costs.

## Talent and Skills

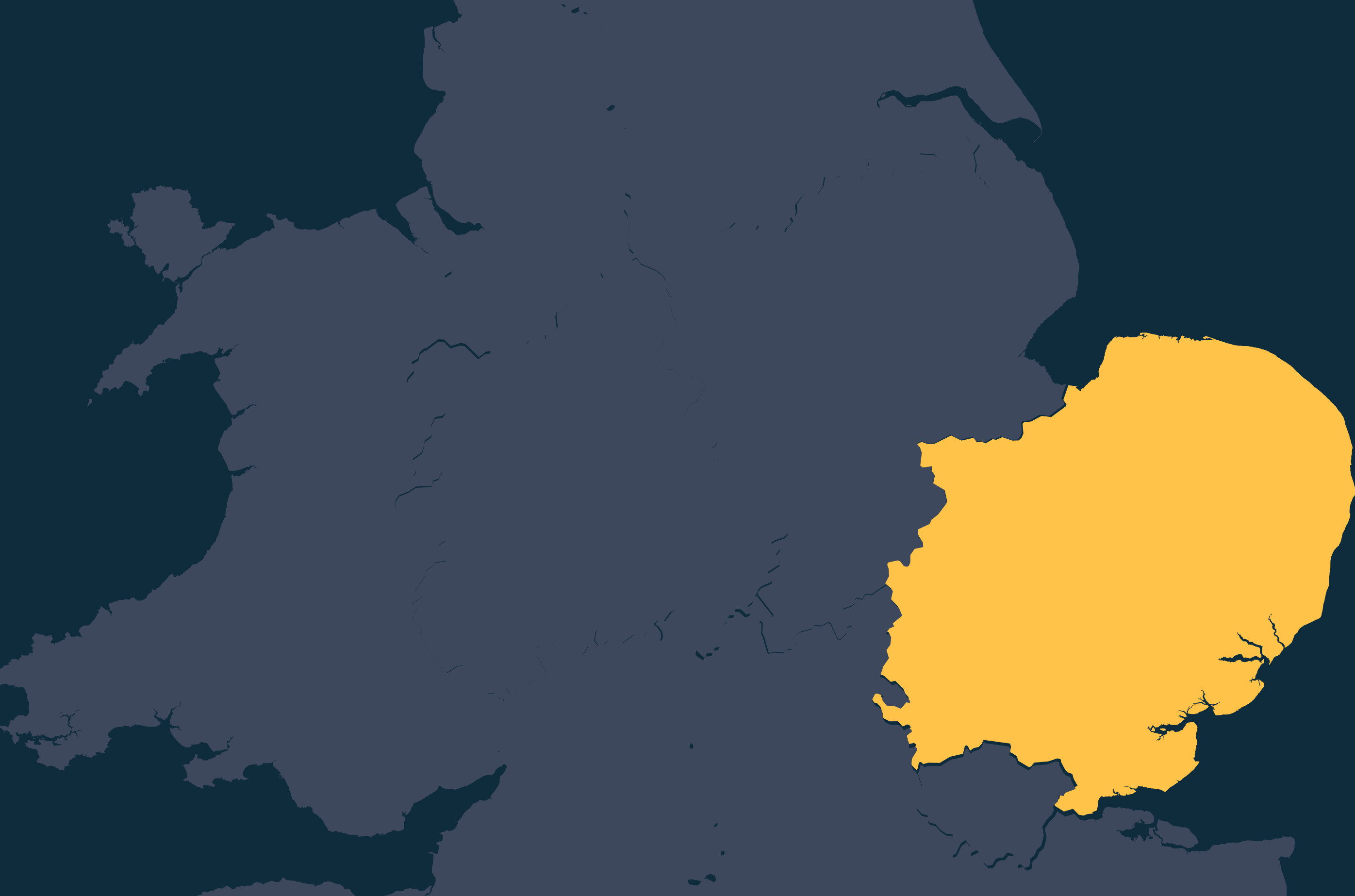
### Made Smarter West of England





Support and potential grants to help manufacturing SMEs in the West of England adopt Industrial Digital Technologies (IDT) to enable their development and growth.





# THE EAST OF ENGLAND



 <b>\$227b</b> Combined Market Valuation	 <b>18%</b> Growth in Value (2020-25)
 <b>\$1.5b</b> VC Investment (2024)	 <b>10</b> Unicorns





## Appally

appally

Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Ed Brown & Lillie Jamieson

### HQ

Didcot

### INDUSTRY

Health Tech

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

3



Appally is the AI-powered platform making workplace accessibility scalable, proactive, and truly inclusive—unlocking hidden talent.



## Decima2

DECIMA2

Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Dr Torty Sivill, Alexis Monks

### HQ

Oxford

### INDUSTRY

Artificial Intelligence

### STAGE

Pre-Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

### EMPLOYEES

2

Decima 2 is on a mission to make AI more trustworthy, and is now revolutionising marketing through a GenAI platform for synthetic A/B tests. Its goal is to entirely replace A/B testing with synthetic experiments through its causal generative AI.





## EnginuityAI



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Richard Heggie (CEO),  
Christoph Geiser (CTO)

### HQ

Cambridge

### INDUSTRY

SaaS

### STAGE

Pre-Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

2

Enginuity exists to unlock the commercial potential of the world's untapped innovation. It helps R&D companies make better use of what they've already invented — by connecting intellectual property (IP) with real-world market demand.



## DataWollet



OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

Jen Lothian, Luke Hope

### HQ

Waterlooville

### INDUSTRY

Data / Analysing

### STAGE

Pre-Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2022

### EMPLOYEES

2

DataWollet has built the first consumer centric data wallet, making sharing data as easy as paying with Apple Pay, so no one misses out from better products and services due to onerous or intimidating forms. Its use of cutting edge privacy and data tech and AI means it is all done autonomously-no manual data entry





# Ovartix



Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Dr Stasa Stankovic,  
Prof Eva Hoffmann, Anna Murray

## HQ

Cambridge

## INDUSTRY

Biotech

## STAGE

Pre-Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

## EMPLOYEES

4

OvartiX is a women's health drug discovery startup harnessing large-scale human multi-omics data, proprietary 2D and 3D human cell engineered ovarian models to identify and develop next-generation therapeutics for female reproductive disorders, such as infertility, polycystic ovarian syndrome, early menopause etc.



# Payment Guru Ltd



Emerging Stars

## FOUNDERS

Tony Berry

## HQ

Sevenoaks

## INDUSTRY

FinTech / Banking / Economy

## STAGE

Pre-Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

2023

## EMPLOYEES

1

Payment Guru brings together the best of breed in payments, tipping and data. It uses Smart Tipping - a single transaction allowing payments to be made on card and avoiding NIC taxes to business and staff, unifying any data set across their business, improving their efficiencies, with the ability to then add enhanced payment data.





## sAlnaptic Limited



OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

Dr Rajeshwari Iyer, Kavitha Ravindran

### HQ

Cambridgeshire

### INDUSTRY

EdTech / Academic

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2020

### EMPLOYEES

4

sAlnaptic's AI model automates the marking of free-text responses, helping teachers save time while ensuring students receive accurate and consistent feedback. Marking written responses is time-consuming and subjective. sAlnaptic's AI model evaluates answers with human-level accuracy and provides qualitative feedback to help students improve. Real-time insights allow teachers to identify learning gaps and adjust their teaching accordingly.



## Xampla Ltd



OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

Alexandra French,  
Marc Rodríguez Garcia

### HQ

Cambridge

### INDUSTRY

Sustainability / GreenTech

### STAGE

Series A

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2018

### EMPLOYEES

34



Xampla is the creator of Morro materials, materials that eliminate the world's most polluting plastics and which seamlessly integrate with existing processes, from manufacturing equipment through to end-of-life compatibility with standard recycling streams. It is the world's first, fully biodegradable, plastic-free alternatives for a range of products, which over the next five years could replace up to 25,000 tonnes of plastic.



# Atheni.ai



Emerging Stars

**FOUNDERS**

Louise Ballard, Mackenzie Howe

**HQ**

Hartfield

**INDUSTRY**

PeopleTech / Human Resources

**STAGE**

Pre-Seed

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

2024

**EMPLOYEES**

2

Atheni.ai is pioneering AI literacy with the world’s first Dynamic Upskilling Engine, providing hyper-personalised, real-time AI skills coaching to bridge the critical gap in AI adoption. Its USP is an AI-powered, personalised skills accelerator that ensures AI moves beyond dabbling to full adoption, making it a practical, integrated tool in daily workflows—unlocking AI’s full 300% productivity potential while addressing the 74% failure rate caused by people and processes, not technology.





## The Story

Mackenzie and I didn't initially set out to set up an AI company. We met in 2008 and stayed in touch over LinkedIn. We came together two years ago, faced with the same problem. I realised that the skills of the future are not the skills that we are being traditionally taught, and she had done a masters in human capital and seen the same.

AI is the biggest thing happening to all of us, and we're woefully unprepared. CTOs and the tech industry suggest anyone can simply pick it up, but currently, getting any real value out of AI without proper guidance is quite difficult. We've got Ferrari-level technology with bicycle-level skills - and yet everyone is going to have to become AI literate.

We launched some workshops but received feedback that after several weeks, participants hadn't really progressed. We realised if we could package up my communication skills and Mackenzie's behavioral science and human capital knowledge - into an AI engine, we could effectively replicate a personalised learning experience of having someone sit beside you, guiding you step-by-step up the adoption curve.

So we built Atheni, like your AI sidekick. It's not another tool - it's the missing navigation layer that makes AI work for real people. It understands your specific needs, orchestrates the right tools for your workflow, and delivers personalised training, use cases, and ideas - all in flow. We're not a course, not a chatbot - we help you become confident and capable with AI while simply doing your job, without disruption.

## Scaling a Company in the East of England

The South East is a fantastic centre of innovation, accessible to innovation centres like Cambridge via direct trainline, progressive and well connected. We're building a different type of business - one ready for the future of work and it suits our need to do things differently - we're two mums with six kids between us, we work flexible hours, we have AI agents working for us, a student doing his degree, and a tech team in Europe. We're representing a multi-generational working future.

One of the biggest challenges for female founders is raising money, which is what we've just been doing for the last few months. It's really difficult in the UK. We are doing something which hasn't existed in this format before, so you need people with imagination who don't just put you in a box.

Partners often default to conventional wisdom 'saying this is how it's been done before', but AI is completely tearing up the rulebook. Just like you can build a website on Squarespace in 20 minutes today, you can build a whole business and test it by using AI tools. You don't need to learn how to code; you just need to know how to apply the code. That's a different skill set.

It's also a cultural thing to a certain extent. It's about saying 'yes' rather than saying 'no.' We've been fortunate to have investors who immediately recognised our vision - one committed after just a single conversation, without hesitation or conditions, because they intuitively understood what we're building.

## Unlocking UK-wide Growth

Firstly, investors need to start actually funding female founders, not just talking about it.

We wouldn't be wasting our time with this venture if we didn't see a real problem with AI adoption. Every single SME I work with is eager to harness AI, recognising its potential to transform their business, and strengthen the UK economy as a whole. But they face a critical barrier - where to start, which tool to get, who to train, or how to do it.

Tech businesses aren't addressing this - they assume users will naturally gravitate to tools like ChatGPT and intuitively know what to do with it. In reality, most people don't have the time to learn how to use these platforms on their own and when they experiment with the limited free versions, are underwhelmed, and dismiss AI's potential entirely. Atheni.ai is here to change that and to deliver the ROI to business.



**Louise Ballard**  
Atheni.ai



# Startup Resources | The East of England

## Funding

### FSE East of England Regional Growth Loan Schemes

These schemes are available to established businesses based within the East of England. The schemes help support eligible businesses that can show strong growth potential and have a medium to long-term funding requirement to deliver that growth.

### Scale Up New Anglia

A support programme for ambitious small businesses with potential for high growth in Norfolk and Suffolk

## Network and Infrastructure

### Enterprise South

Provides opportunities for businesses based in the South East, from exclusive events and networking to business advice and mentoring, all aimed at driving success.

### Norfolk & Waveney Enterprise Services

Advice, workshops and loans for those looking to start a business and businesses trading less than 2 years in Norfolk, Suffolk and London.

### Cambridge Tech Week

Brings together world-leading experts, innovators and investors to fuel growth across the tech ecosystem, establishing Cambridge as a key place where global tech comes to meet.

### Innovate Cambridge

Has a mission to make Cambridge the most impactful innovation ecosystem in the world. Ensures that Cambridge's science, innovation, and business communities have what they need to be successful through a partnership with 200+ organisations and Charter Signatories, and 500+ key stakeholders.



## Talent and Skills

### Productivity East

The University of East Anglia's Productivity East is a regional hub for engineering and technology. It enables businesses in the region to work alongside the world-class researchers and students to discover practical solutions to current and future challenges.

### The Digitech Centre

Provides cutting-edge digital skills for people looking to pursue careers in information and communications technology. DigiTech is now the principal home for undergraduate, apprenticeship and postgraduate computing provision at the University of Suffolk.



 Rising Stars Judge



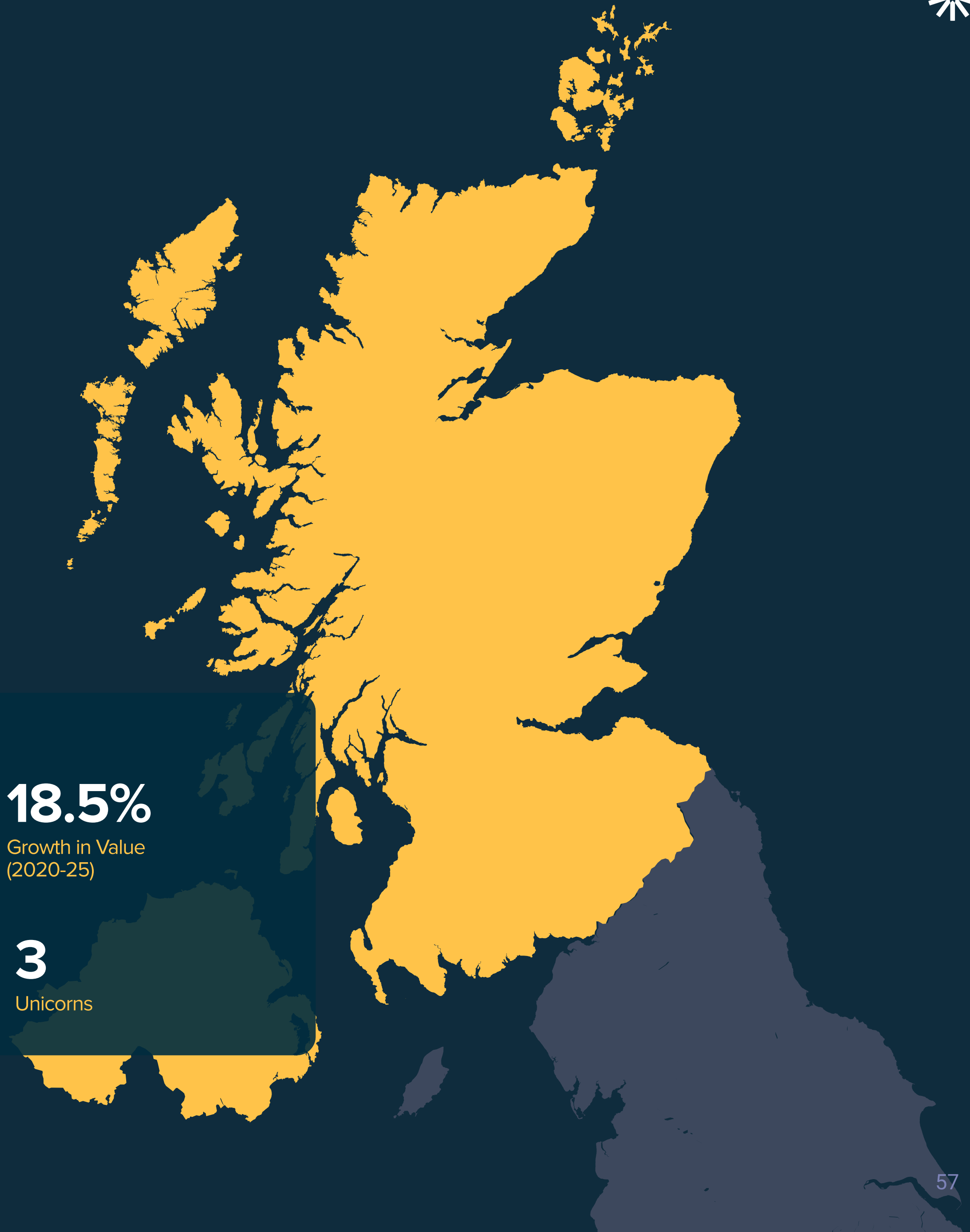
"Recognise that there is no straight path to success. Take the time to understand who your ideal customer is and the problem you're aiming to solve. Be prepared to test your ideas, embrace setbacks as part of the journey, and stay open to learning. Most importantly, trust in yourself and have the conviction to keep moving forward."

**Katy Wigdahl,**  
Founder and CEO, Speechmatics





# NORTHERN IRELAND & SCOTLAND



## Northern Ireland:

 **\$3.8b**  
Combined Market  
Valuation

 **9%**  
Growth in Value  
(2020-25)

 **\$84m**  
VC Investment (2024)

 **0**  
Unicorns

## Scotland

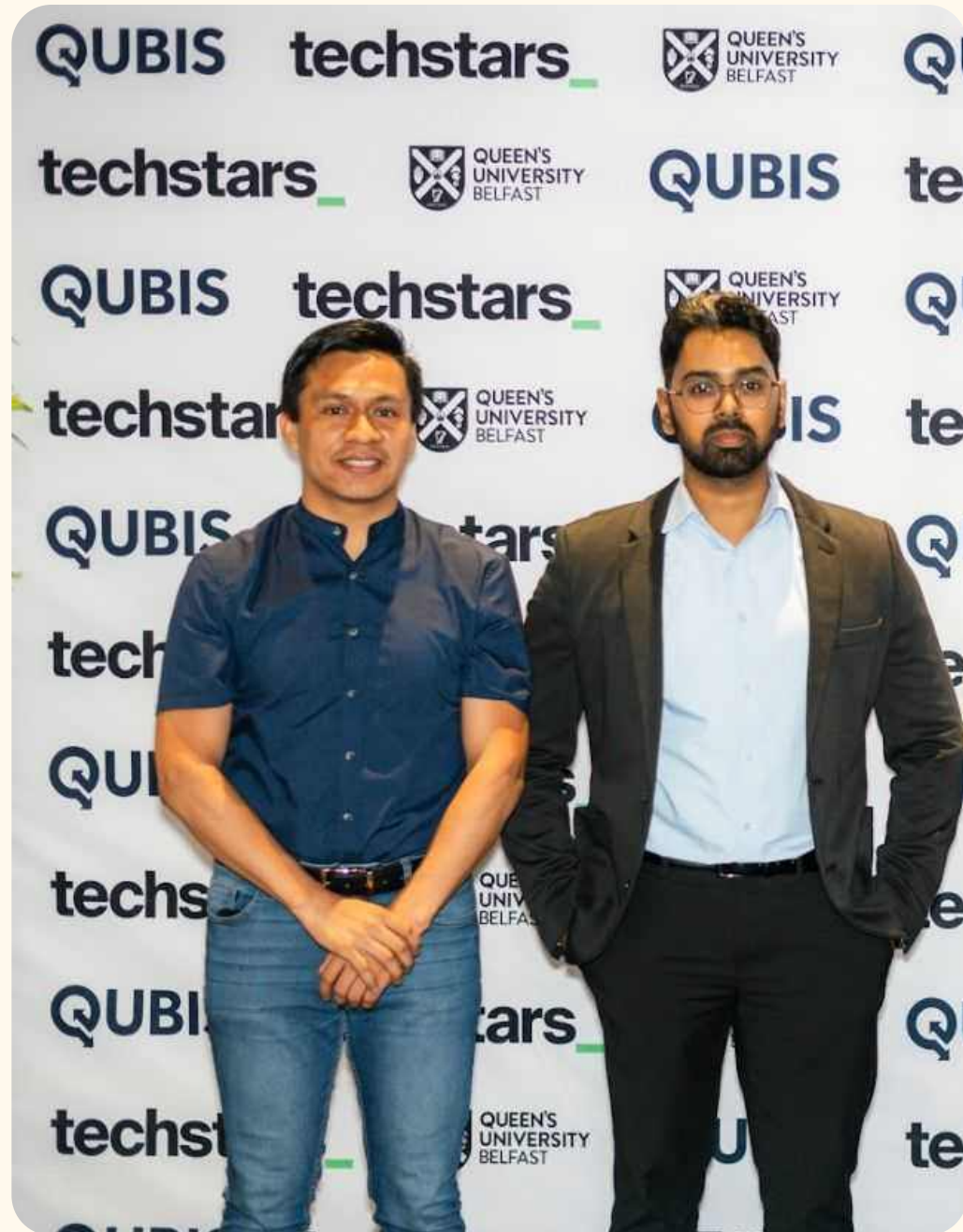
 **\$21.6b**  
Combined Market  
Valuation

 **18.5%**  
Growth in Value  
(2020-25)

 **\$660m**  
VC Investment (2024)

 **3**  
Unicorns





## AIMA OPEX LTD



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Asem Mohammad, Dr Noe Yungaicela, Yash Goyal

### HQ

Kilkeel

### INDUSTRY

Industrial Tech / Manufacturing

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2012

### EMPLOYEES

1

AIMA uses industrial intelligence for operational excellence. Its cloud-based ML-AI platform transforms manual, resource-intensive workflows into intelligent, automated processes, enabling manufacturers to reduce errors. It reduces inefficiency costs by 30% and accelerates net-zero compliance 2x faster.



## DeepMiner



OnetoWin

### FOUNDERS

Duncan Hart, Áine Uí Ghiollagáin

### HQ

Banchory

### INDUSTRY

Data / Analysing

### STAGE

Boot strapped and/or have one client or pilot

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2017

### EMPLOYEES

7

DeepMiner is harnessing its power to revolutionise decision-making. It transforms data from an overwhelming burden into a strategic advantage. Built by a team of six in Scotland, DeepMiner's AI-driven platform simplifies complex data landscapes, into meaningful and actionable insights for public and private sector organisations.





## Foresight



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Dr. Steven Brennan, Jonny Campbell

### HQ

Belfast

### INDUSTRY

RegTech / ClimateTech / Enterprise SaaS

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

2

Foresight helps manufacturers protect revenue and supply chains by automating chemical regulation monitoring. It links policy changes directly to products, materials, and operations - powering a new era of proactive, AI-driven regulatory risk management.



## GoLLM Limited



Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

Daniel Shorr, Vinay Sudhakaran, James Varga

### HQ

Edinburgh

### INDUSTRY

Artificial Intelligence

### STAGE

Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

2024

### EMPLOYEES

2

GoLLM provides D.A.V.E., an agentic AI survey analyst, enabling organisations to instantly extract insights from diverse survey data—customer satisfaction, market research, employee engagement, and more. By automating analysis and report generation, D.A.V.E. cuts costs and time by 80% or more, delivering faster, deeper, and more actionable insights than traditional methods.






## Out N About



 Emerging Stars


### FOUNDERS

 Annabella Cuenca Goddard,  
Bryan Uwanaka

### HQ

 St Andrews


### INDUSTRY

 EventsTech

### STAGE

 Pre-seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2012

### EMPLOYEES

 2

Out N About is a platform built to tackle loneliness among university students by transforming digital interest into genuine, real-life connections, with a mission to ensure that no student has to navigate campus life alone. It matches students with events and like-minded peers, replacing endless scrolling with authentic, off-screen connections.




## ProfessorMe



 Emerging Stars

### FOUNDERS

 Dr Kate Smith, Daisy McConville


### HQ

 Edinburgh

### INDUSTRY

 EdTech / Academic

### STAGE

 Seed

### INCORPORATION YEAR

 2023

### EMPLOYEES

 2

ProfessorMe is an EdTech business creating AI-enabled learning and training products for all sectors. It offers 'Professor Dynamo', a multilingual AI professor that personalises learning through academic-produced videos and podcasts, covering topics like essay writing, exam prep, and time management. With a subscription, students and universities receive tailored support to enhance academic success. It has also invented lip synching tech to enable many learning developers and training programs to create its own 'Professor Dynamos' with its own content.





# RideScan



Emerging Stars

**FOUNDERS**

👤 Shivoh Chirayil Nandakumar

**HQ**

📍 Edinburgh

**INDUSTRY**

🚀 Artificial Intelligence

**STAGE**

📊 Pre-seed

**INCORPORATION YEAR**

🏆 2024

**EMPLOYEES**

👥 3

RideScan provides AI-driven independent insights into robot health and performance, enabling manufacturers to detect hidden anomalies and optimize reliability. By ensuring safer, human-supervised autonomy, it helps industries reduce downtime, improve operational efficiency, and build trust in autonomous systems.



# Stamp Free



## FOUNDERS

 Hugh Craigie Halkett

## HQ

 Edinburgh

## INDUSTRY

 Artificial Intelligence

## STAGE

 Seed

## INCORPORATION YEAR

 2018

## EMPLOYEES

 10

Stamp Free uses AI patented tech to allow postal customers to send parcels, letters & returns just by using their phone – stamp or label free. Customers can use a postal or retailer app to ship, or go AppFree and send parcels via WhatsApp or other social media channels.





**Hugh Craigie Halkett**  
Stamp Free



### The Story

I'm not from the postal industry but like everyone, I get what a pain it can be to send a parcel, a letter or an online return - the idea for Stamp Free came from having to drive several miles in the pouring rain to buy stamps just to post a couple letters. I thought to myself, how can I ping an email or a WhatsApp message in a split second, yet am driving miles to buy some sticky labels - it all felt very 19th Century. I use my phone for everything, I must be able to use it for sending parcels and letters too. So the idea of using a phone so people could send parcels and letters was born.

At Stamp Free, our two main products are Label Free & AppFree. With Label Free you can ship a parcel using a handwritten code. After paying for the shipment through an app, you're given an eight-character code which you write on the parcel – you then take a photo which AI validates the postage and ship in the normal way. Our handwritten code is effectively a handwritten barcode.

Our other product AppFree allows you to ship a parcel just by using WhatsApp, or another social media channel on your phone. Instead of having to use an unfamiliar postal app, you just use the social media channel you use everyday. That's what we call App Free, because you're not having to download postal apps. It's all bundled together into customer convenience for sending parcels and online returns. And the beauty of it is, is not only does it work with our Label Free product, it works with every single shipping solution everyone uses today, be it a barcoded label or a qr code on a phone.

### Scaling a Company in Scotland

Historically as a country, per head of population, Scotland has invented more everyday items than any other country on the planet. Today we are no different, innovation and entrepreneurship is in our blood. In addition, Scottish Enterprise does an incredible job supporting fast-growth companies. As a Scottish company Stamp Free has benefited hugely from their input, advice and grant funding support.

The beauty of Stamp Free's patented AI technology is that is relevant to everyone on the planet with a smartphone as we are all sick of the hassle of sending parcels and returns printing off parcel labels or queuing at post offices or having to use unfamiliar postal apps. Being relevant to everyone is why Stamp Free attracts both investors and customers.

### Unlocking UK-wide Growth

In the UK, founders who have successfully exited at a decent level from companies need to be really involved in the funding infrastructure. And having links, particularly from a Scottish perspective, with West Coast (US) investors is important. In Scotland, what is worth 10 million pounds over there is worth 2 million or 1 million here - so there's a real opportunity for investors both in this country, but also for Silicon Valley centric investors to get on their virtual bikes and come and invest in Scottish tech. At Stamp Free we have benefited from having a Silicon Valley based VC who invests exclusively in Artificial Intelligence.

We need to get those West Coast investors over here and not have them thinking, 'I'm not investing anywhere except Silicon Valley.' We live in a global economy and technology does not recognise geographic borders. Silicon Valley investors need to be equally open-minded, but it is up to UK Founders to get their attention.



# Startup Resources | Scotland & Northern Ireland

## Funding

### The Scottish National Investment Bank

Provides patient (long term) capital to businesses and projects throughout Scotland to support the development of a fairer, more sustainable economy.

### Techstart Ventures

Gives funding to innovative companies based in Scotland at an early stage of development. You can apply for equity finance of up to £2 million.

### Scottish Venture Capital Fund

Invests in high growth potential, early-stage companies from start-up/spin-out, seeking funding to develop innovative products/services/business models and/or create or develop new markets.

### Scottish Enterprise

Offers R&D grants to help with research and developing a new product, process or service – or significantly improve an existing one – can offer a range of support to help with project costs and financing your research.

### UMi Debt Finance Scotland Ltd

An employee-owned business in Coatbridge (Scotland), you can apply to them for loans of £25,000 to £250,000.

### Scottish Edge

A funding competition aimed at identifying and supporting Scotland's innovative, high growth potential entrepreneurial talent.

### Business Loans Scotland

Business Loans Scotland is owned by Scotland's local councils. You can apply to them for loans of £25,000 to £250,000.



# Network and Infrastructure

## Techscaler

A programme for creating, developing and scaling tech startups. It connects Scottish-based startups with expert industry operators and experienced mentors, teaches world-class playbooks and courses, and hosts spaces and events for founders to come together.

## Foras

Supports high-impact, scalable startups with global ambitions. Includes running international, immersive programmes across the world, around key conferences and driving investment and talent to the UK using Scotland as a launchpad for global growth.

## Fintech Scotland

Supports the growth and success of fintech enterprises across the country. It nurtures an inclusive community of forward-thinking SMEs and builds meaningful collaborations with key partners in finance, technology, academia, and government, championing innovation and progress.

## Business Gateway

Provides information and support for businesses based in Scotland, including mentorship, webinars, events, business toolkits with resources information.

## Catalyst

An independent, non-profit science and technology hub focused on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in Northern Ireland. Provides everything that innovators and entrepreneurs need to reach higher and succeed faster.

## ScotlandIS

A membership organisation for Scotland's digital technology industry - working with members and partners to support the wider digital transformation of business and society.

## Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme

Grant contribution to pay towards upgrading business broadband to a high-speed capable connection.

## Mid South West Region Net Zero Transformation Programme

Support including carbon reporting software, expert workshops, and tailored decarbonisation plans to help SMEs in SW Northern Ireland reduce carbon emissions and work towards their net zero goals.

## Edinburgh Innovations (UofE)

Part of The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Innovations works to help organisations by connecting them to world-leading research, expertise and facilities.

## Codebase

Based in Edinburgh, CodeBase builds better startup ecosystems by connecting founders and their teams with governments, local authorities, corporates, investors and academia to increase the number of successful businesses.

## CivTech

A Scottish Government programme that brings the public, private and third sectors together to build things that make people's lives better.

## The Data Lab

On a mission to create the world's most impactful data and AI community: one where cross sector conversations, creativity, and collaboration ignite and sustain the sparks of ground-breaking ideas, products and societal advances.



## Talent and Skills

### Northern Ireland SME Productivity Booster

Provides a road map for SMEs in Northern Ireland to increase productivity whilst delivering the skills that will see them achieve this goal. It aids in the development of better working practices, increased competitiveness, and economic growth.

### Northern Ireland Upskill Programme

Offers opportunities for businesses to retrain and upskill their staff by taking advantage of a range of free accredited courses. The training will be delivered by the local further and higher education providers in Northern Ireland.



 Rising Stars Judge



"Founder based collaboration and support networks are stronger today than I've ever experienced. This latest cohort of Rising Stars are delivering growth, impact and creating high quality jobs. No complaints, no reasons 'why not' or 'why it's all too hard'. They're getting it done. Started regionally, recognised nationally and preparing to scale globally."

**Callum Murray,**  
Amiquis





# METHODOLOGY





**Rising Stars applicants submitted a written application form as a first stage of the selection process.** The Rising Stars 2025 application covered key details about each startup, including company stage, team bios, traction, market opportunity, and funding. Applicants were also required to submit a two-minute video pitch, outline their business model and goals, and share why they believe their startup is a strong contender for the competition. We invited companies to present a comprehensive overview of their business in the application.

All applications were reviewed by a panel of judges from across the UK. The Rising Stars judging pool consisted of leading founders, investors, and innovation experts from across the UK's tech and startup ecosystem. They looked at the following areas and scored founders based on what they've achieved, but also their potential.



### Engaging Pitch

How well have they communicated their idea, USP, and their inspiration for starting their business? How compelling was their pitch?



### Potential to Scale

The judges assessed the growth potential of the application. How well does the business demonstrate its potential to scale in terms of market opportunity, growth plans, and team capabilities?



### Value Proposition

The judges assessed the viability of their proposition. Have they clearly articulated a solution to a pressing market need? Does their business model make sense? Do they have a defensible moat (IP, network effects, strong customer stickiness)?



### Demonstrated Traction

The judges assessed the startups traction in the past 6-12 months. Have they achieved significant milestones (e.g. successful pilots, initial revenue, customer growth, etc)? Do they have initial traction from investors?

Once all applications were scored, an initial shortlist for each region was determined through a two-step process:



first, by identifying the highest average scores from the online judging,



second, through a qualitative review conducted by the Tech Nation team in collaboration with representatives from Haatch, Rigby Group, and Wealth Club.

The shortlisted startups were then invited to a Pre-Meet Call with the Rising Stars team and representatives from Haatch. This session followed the format of an investor screening call, where each startup pitched and participated in a Q&A. It provided an opportunity to dive deeper into each company, going beyond what was included in their written submission. At the premeets, companies were scored and further shortlisted to select the regional finalists for each region.





## 🔗 Regional final judging

At the Regional Finals, a live panel of judges listened to each startup quickfire pitch followed by Q&A with judging panel. Judges deliberate off stage and decide on a winner based on the criteria below:

- **Product-Market Fit**

How clearly does the startup solve a real, validated problem?

- **Market Opportunity**

How large and accessible is the target market, and how well is the startup positioned to capture it?

- **Business Model Viability**

How compelling and scalable is the startup's revenue model?

- **Team Strength**

How strong is the founding team?

- **Traction and Momentum**

What evidence is there of user adoption, revenue, partnerships, or other traction?

- **Vision and Differentiation**

How clearly does the startup solve a real, validated problem?

- **Pitch Strength**

How effectively did the founders communicate their story, solution, and ambition?







Powered by Founders Forum Group, Tech Nation is the leading platform for tech insights, growth support and talent, supporting ambitious founders and their teams with the access and knowledge they need to scale successfully.

Explore our programme portfolio on the right...

Join us on this journey  
**technation.io**



Powered by:







Events & Networking



Education



Services



Investment



Philanthropy



Content



FOUNDERS  
FORUM  
GROUP

OUR PARTNERS



As our community grows, Founders Forum Group continues to expand via incubation, investment, acquisition, and partnership.

We welcome collaborations with individuals, organisations, and governments who share our mission in promoting entrepreneurship and *driving positive change through technology.*