

TECH NATION'S THREE LEADING GROWTH PROGRAMMES OPEN APPLICATIONS

- Tech Nation opens applications for three of its most established growth programmes; [Future Fifty 8.0](#), [Upscale 5.0](#) and [Rising Stars 2.0](#)
- Programme alumni include UK tech heavyweights Monzo, Starling Bank, Darktrace, Deliveroo and Skyscanner
- Ambitious scaleups continue to drive the UK's tech advantage. Tech scaleup deals delivered 80% of all tech investments in the UK in 2018 (£5bn of just over £6bn)

Today, [Tech Nation](#), the UK's leading network for ambitious tech entrepreneurs, has announced it is calling for applicants for three of the UK's most renowned growth programmes, Future Fifty 8.0, Upscale 5.0, and Rising Stars 2.0. The programmes are designed to scale and grow the next generation of UK tech businesses, with prestigious alumni including UK heavyweights Monzo, Starling Bank, Darktrace, Deliveroo, and Skyscanner.

Scaleup deals delivered 80% of all tech investments in the UK in 2018, equivalent to £5bn of just over £6bn. Tech Nation's three bespoke programmes are available for UK companies at every stage of growth, early-stage (Rising Stars), mid-stage (Upscale), and late-stage (Future Fifty) (full requirements below), to ensure the UK continues to cultivate a pipeline for the next generation of tech leaders.

Each programme offers tailored solutions to the biggest challenges facing UK companies; including access to networks and investors, hiring top talent, and expanding internationally. Since joining the programmes, Future Fifty company and Upscale alumnus Monzo has seen a 2301% increase in total funding and a 2122% increase in staff.

In 2019, Future Fifty enters its 8th year of supporting late-stage UK tech businesses as they scale up their operations nationally and internationally. Future Fifty 8.0 is now looking for the next 25 future companies in the tech economy to support them in achieving their global ambitions, creating jobs and opportunities across the UK, and inspiring the next generation of tech entrepreneurs, founders and businesses.

The 25 companies selected for Future Fifty 8.0 will receive access to; a network of over 100 alumni including Deliveroo, Farfetch, Skyscanner and Funding Circle through c-Suite roundtables; workshops led by global experts such as ASOS and Dropbox; and a dedicated Tech Nation Visa team for hiring international talent.

Upscale, designed for mid-stage companies, supports 30 of the UK's most innovative and fastest-growing tech companies to accelerate their growth. Over six months, the 30 companies chosen for Upscale 5.0 will receive 60 hours of support through seven founder-focused sessions, six senior leader focused sessions, and access to Upscale's prestigious alumni network (130 companies who have collectively raised over \$1.4bn since joining). Last year's Upscale cohort had an average of £1.5m revenue, and included the likes of OpenRent, Airsorted and OLIO.

Rising Stars, a national startup competition, brings together the most exciting and innovative Seed to pre Series-A startups from all across the UK. Supported throughout the application process, the competition culminates in a Grand Final where the best 20 companies pitch to a panel of high-profile judges, in front of a room full of investors and industry peers, for the chance to be named as one of Tech Nation's 10 Rising Stars 2.0. Throughout the competition, companies gain access to over 200 high profile investors and corporate leaders, pitch coaching and profile raising.

Programme judges include, Domin Jaquesson, VP Talent, Index Ventures, Suranga Chadratillake, General Partner, Balderton Capital, Megumi Ikdea, GM and Managing Director, Hearst Ventures Europe, Jacqueline de Rojas, President, techUK, Denise Xifara, co-founder, GMG Ventures.

The launch of the growth programmes comes one week after it was announced that investment in AI has reached record levels, with Upscale and Future Fifty companies contributing significantly to those figures. Currently the UK counts at least five AI unicorns amongst the total number of private tech companies with a valuation of \$1bn. These are Future Fifty company Darktrace (\$1.7bn valuation) and Upscale alumni Improbable (\$2bn), as well as Benevolent AI (\$2.1bn), Graphcore (\$1.7bn) and Blue Prism (\$1.3bn). Graphcore, based in Bristol, raised one of the biggest AI funding rounds of 2018, with \$200m from a consortium of investors.

Quotes

Mike Jackson, Entrepreneur Success Director, commented: “Tech Nation’s 2019 annual report revealed that scaleup investment in the UK has hit a record high, increasing by an astonishing 61% year-on-year. Nevertheless, challenges remain. For the UK to maintain its position as a scaleup nation and continue its global growth, we need to do more to curate learning opportunities and create fertile ground for even greater success in the future. These three growth programmes offer the support the tech companies of the future need, so UK tech can continue to compete on the global stage.”

Parveen Dhanda, Head of Growth Programmes, commented: “The UK tech ecosystem has evolved substantially in recent years. Since it launched eight years ago, Future Fifty companies have raised £8 billion, 9 IPOs and 30 M&As. The success of the programme’s alumni attests to the effectiveness of the UK in championing leading tech companies. Future Fifty does just that, connecting entrepreneurs with global experts and cultivating vital peer-to-peer networks, so more and more UK companies can achieve their global ambitions”

“For the UK to maintain its status as a scaleup nation, it needs to continue to cultivate the next generation of tech leaders. Upscale supports companies at what is a critical inflection point for their growth. Through workshops, meetups, and access to leading scale coaches, the programme addresses the core challenges facing scaleups in the UK.”

Esme Caulfield, Competitions Lead, commented: “Rising Stars is a competition designed to give the most exciting startups a platform to raise their profile and help them make connections. We want Rising Stars to elevate the most exciting companies from all over the UK and support them in taking their business to the next level. Last year 90% of Rising Star companies were based outside London. It’s a trend that we hope will continue this year, and we encourage all startups, wherever they are based, to apply.”

East of England

Thea Goodluck, East of England Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: “Cambridge, Ipswich, Norwich and Colchester boast growing tech industries, supported by world-class universities and increasing levels of venture capital. These programmes offer the region’s startups and scaleups the perfect opportunity to connect with experts and peers from across the country, and accelerate their growth. I would encourage all tech companies in the East of England to have a look at what Rising Stars, Upscale and Future Fifty have to offer, and apply to join an ever expanding network of UK tech’s best in class.”

Joe Parry, Founder and CEO, Cambridge Intelligence, Cambridge commented: “Upscale has

connected our leadership team to the wider scale-up community. That connection has given us great access to an informal 'help' network and a better appreciation of best practices as companies grow to Series B stage. Transformative.”

London

Eoin Marsh, London Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: “As one of the most important tech hubs in the world, London has already created dozens of household tech names, in just a few short years. With many of Tech Nation’s programme alumni based in the capital, including Rising Stars winners SeedLegals, Upscale alumni Monzo and Improbable, and Future Fifty companies Revolut and Starling Bank, it has been exciting to see how over the last few years the ecosystem has matured, without any let-up in pace. Our programmes offer tailored support for startups and scaleups at key stages of company growth, and I look forward to meeting the next generation of scaleup stars to join a leading network of industry experts and peers.”

Tessa Clarke, Co-founder and CEO, OLIO, London, commented: “Quite simply, Upscale is the best scaleup programme around. It’s an incredibly well thought-through format, and is an unparalleled learning & networking opportunity – not only for the Founders, but also for the whole senior leadership team. I can’t recommend it highly enough!”

Rhydian Lewis CEO, RateSetter, London, commented: “Being part of Future Fifty not only provides us with direct benefits, such as peer-learning, but ensures that our experiences help shape the wider scale-up ecosystem.”

Kenny Ewan, CEO, WeFarm, London commented: “Having been part of many startup accelerators, programmes and events, I can honestly say that Upscale offers something different and much more valuable to startups. The events and programme are very founder and startup oriented, well curated, and ultimately great at providing exposure to the wider startup ecosystem in the UK.”

Anthony Rose, Founder & CEO, SeedLegals, London commented: “There were 3 reasons we entered Rising Stars - it raises your profile and spreads your name among other startups and investors, being involved with Tech Nation is a great stamp of approval and builds trust and recognition, and finally there is a feel good factor in it (staff get excited by it and it’s interesting to be a part of Rising Stars).”

Midlands

Naomi Watts, Midlands Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: “Tech in the Midlands is going from strength to strength, and Tech Nation’s Rising Stars, Upscale and Future Fifty offer the region’s tech startups and scaleups the perfect opportunity to accelerate their growth. These programmes offer tailored support for different stages of company growth as well as the chance to join a powerful alumni network that includes companies such as Lincoln-based Tended, Birmingham’s VoxPopMe and Nottingham’s UNiDAYS. With Rising Stars in its second year, Upscale convening it’s fifth cohort, and Future Fifty now eight years old, I would love to see more Midlands companies than ever apply to join.”

Leo Scott Smith, CEO & Founder, Tended, Lincoln commented: “The Rising Stars programme was incredibly beneficial for us as an early-stage startup. Having the support of a nationally-recognised organisation has helped with investment and the development of our company, added credibility and increased press coverage. The Rising Stars team continue to be supportive even after finishing the programme and they still reach out to us with business opportunities. The latest of which was to put us in contact with WIRED, who subsequently invited us to exhibit at their

flagship AI event in London, for free! I would strongly recommend any young tech company to apply for the programme.”

Robert Bernarys, Director, Fertility Focus, Warwick commented: “Upscale helped us understand we’re not alone in our journey through the “messy middle” - the gap between launching and profitability. Shared experience through the Upscale network and alumni, and a willingness to be really open about challenges will equip other tech businesses in a growth phase with a knowhow and confidence to continue their success.”

North East

Jamie Hardesty, North East Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation, commented: “This callout presents a great opportunity for North East tech companies, of varying growth stages, to take advantage of. I staunchly believe in the ability and potential tech startups and scaleups possess in uplifting the prosperity of our region at large. I hope to see companies in the North East follow in the footsteps of the likes of Partnerize, and more recently Wordnerds and Paid, in taking part in such an exclusive suite of programmes.”

North West

Mo Aldalou, North West Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: “Manchester is already home to five tech unicorns, including Boohoo.com and The Hut Group, and a thriving ecosystem of tech scaleups. It’s been a pleasure to see Dream Agility, DigitalBridge, Tickr and GoodBox join Tech Nation’s programmes recently, and I hope we will see a significant rise in applications this year so that the programmes truly reflect the strength of the region.”

Carl Wong, Co-founder and CEO, LivingLens, Liverpool commented: “Upscale has given us the incredibly rare opportunity to learn from leaders and founders on how to solve the challenges we face in our business based upon their own, often very recent, successful deliveries and painful lessons. It has given us an environment where we don’t always have to say everything in our business is 100% perfect, but be honest in a supportive, confidential environment and frankly, reduce our risk of making mistakes! We feel very fortunate to be part of Upscale alumni and I expect it will continue to serve us extremely well in the coming months and years.”

Northern Ireland

Gary Davidson, Northern Ireland Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: “Northern Ireland’s tech industry has transformed beyond recognition in the last few years, and we really are in our strongest position so far. With Newry’s Da.Re, Ballyclare’s ProtectBox, and Belfast’s B-Secur, SaltDNA and Skurio having already received scaling support through Tech Nation’s growth programmes and competitions, I look forward to seeing many more Northern Irish companies join a powerful scaling network of UK tech companies and experts.”

Kiran Bhagotra, Founder & CEO, ProtectBox, Ballyclare commented: “The Rising Stars Grand Final allowed me to make good connections on the day, particularly with a VC firm and Microsoft - I wouldn’t have been able to access that audience without the competition.”

Scotland

Hazel Gibbens, Scotland Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: “Scotland already has a well-established tech sector with household names like Skyscanner and

FanDuel representing on the global stage. LendingCrowd, Administrate and MSquaredLasers are only some of the Scottish-based companies which have already taken part in Tech Nation's growth programmes. I hope that we will see more Scottish representation on the programmes this year, not only from Edinburgh and Glasgow but from rapidly growing hubs such as Aberdeen, Inverness, and Dundee."

Stuart Lunn, founder and CEO at LendingCrowd, commented: "Working with Tech Nation was of huge benefit as we take the LendingCrowd platform to the next level. Being founder and CEO can be a tough and isolated experience, so the mentoring and networking opportunities available through the Upscale initiative were invaluable."

Darren Cairns, Chief Marketing Officer at LendingCrowd, added: "It was great to participate with marketing peers in our Upscale cohort, sharing any growing pains and potential solutions. This has led to ongoing cooperation and collaboration on marketing initiatives, best practice, suppliers and latest trends and insights."

South East

Elizabeth Corse, South East Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: "The South East has a long history of innovation in technology. Serelay, Open Cosmos, Latent Logic, Oxehealth, Vitaccess and many more tech companies in the South East have already gone through Tech Nation's growth and sector programmes. I look forward to seeing even more of the amazing companies in the South East being able to make full use of the Tech Nation network to not only grow locally but to scale globally."

Rafel Jorda Siquier, CEO, Open Cosmos, Oxford, commented: "Scaling up is one of the challenges that any ambitious company needs to go through. Tech Nation's scaleup programme gets you to hear the advice from those who have scaled up most successfully and those who are going through it like you."

South West

Vicky Hunter, South West Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation, commented: "From Truro to Bristol, the South West is building some of the most exciting tech companies in the world. Companies like Graphcore are putting the South West on the global tech map, while Tech Nation programme alumni such as Prezola, MoveGB, and Crowdcube are well on their way to being household names. Rising Stars, Upscale and Future Fifty offer tailored advice and support for companies at key inflection points of their growth journey. This is a brilliant opportunity for any startup or scaleup from the South West to join a powerful network of peers, and connect with experts from across the country, and I'd love to see strong representation from the region in the upcoming cohorts."

Vinnie Morgan, BookingLive, Bristol, commented: "Tech Nation brought together 30 of the most upcoming talented and hungry-for-growth tech companies in the UK. The cohort was and continues to be a hub of talent and like-minded founders who share and solve problems together. I'm delighted our c-level was part of the programme and I am looking forward to the next stage of growth."

Amy King, Co-Founder and R&D Director, People Matter Technology, Bournemouth commented: "Winning the Tech Nation Rising Stars competition helped give recognition and a boost to our business - it has helped give potential investors greater confidence to invest as well as bringing a bunch of new connections, conversations and support to help us progress. It has felt really positive to have the Tech Nation network around us to support, offer guidance and open more doors. At this

stage this is very valuable!"

Wales

Gino Brancazio, Wales Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: "Welsh innovation has never been more rapid, and the race to become Wales' first tech unicorn is well and truly on. Tech Nation's startup competition Rising Stars, and scaleup programmes Upscale and Future Fifty, offer tech companies from across Wales the chance to accelerate their growth with tailored support from industry experts and peers. With Tech Nation alumni already including Swansea's Veeqo, Caerphilly's Awen Collective and Cardiff's Delio, I hope to see many more familiar names joining the Tech Nation cohorts this year, and encourage all Welsh tech companies to take a look at the brilliant opportunities on offer."

Gary Swale, CEO & Founder, Inspirze, Wrexham commented: "It was a huge honour to be involved and get to semi-finalist stage - it really validated what we are trying to do as a business and was a good moral boost."

Yorkshire

Jem Henderson, Yorkshire Entrepreneur Engagement Manager, Tech Nation commented: "Yorkshire is home to one of the fastest growing tech ecosystems in the UK. While the Leeds Digital Festival goes from strength to strength, and new co-working spaces open, the region's tech companies are blossoming at all stages of growth. Tech Nation has already worked with the likes of the Floop, Cocoon and Carbon Performance, and I hope to see more companies benefit from the access to knowledge and experts which we provide through the Tech Nation network."

Revannth N Murugesan, CEO, Carbon Performance, Leeds, commented: "Tech Nation has been nothing short of a blessing, especially at a time when Carbon Performance was looking to expand its footprint, acquire strategic networks, and raise investments. We are very fortunate to have been on the Tech Nation Rising Stars programme alongside some of the most disruptive start-ups in the UK and are proud to be one of the finalists as well."

Ends

Notes to Editor

Future Fifty

Applicants need to have raised Series B+, OR revenue focused and generating £5m+, and be growing at a rate of approx. 50% year-on-year. Applications at the following link:

<https://technation.io/apply-now/>

Applications close - 5 November

Upscale

Applicants need to be VC-backed having raised Series A round, OR revenue-focused generating £1.5m - £5m, and be growing at a rate of approx. 20% month-on-month. Applications at the following link: <https://technation.io/apply-now/>

Applications close - 24 October

Rising Stars

Applicants need to be Seed to pre-Series A funding stage, OR if revenue-focused, generating annual revenues below £1.5m. Applications at the following link: <https://technation.io/apply-now/>

Applications close - 3 November