



## **TECH NATION REVEALS THE UK'S TOP REGIONAL EARLY-STAGE SCALING TECH COMPANIES**

- 33 companies announced as regional winners of the UK's only truly national early-stage tech scaleup competition, Rising Stars
- Demand for the Rising Stars competition sees 39% rise in applications compared to 2018
- Opportunity for finalists to pitch their business in front of over 200 investors, accelerators, entrepreneurs and corporate leaders at the Rising Stars Grand Final pitching competition in London
- Competition winners to be revealed in February 2020

Tech Nation, the UK's leading network for ambitious tech entrepreneurs, has today revealed the 33 regional winners of its nationwide competition. Rising Stars represents and recognises the UK's most exciting and innovative early-stage scaling tech companies.

The UK is already a world-leader in producing successful tech companies, creating more \$1bn tech companies than any other European country and Israel. While London is undoubtedly at the forefront of global tech, the rest of the UK is also home to thriving clusters of tech innovation. The UK has six cities that are home to at least two unicorn companies - Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, Leeds, Bristol and Edinburgh.

Rising Stars, the UK's only national early-stage tech scaleup competition, is designed to help the most exciting early-stage scaling tech companies take their business to the next level and become the world-leading tech companies of the future.

The 33 regional winners revealed today were required to be at Seed to pre-Series A funding or generating annual revenues up to £1.5m. Selected by a panel of industry experts, the companies have been regarded as tech leaders within their respective regions. Following the semi-final in January, the competition will culminate in a grand final in February 2020, where the top 20 companies will pitch to a high-profile panel to become one of Tech Nation's 10 Rising Stars.

The competition's prize package has been built to significantly raise the profile of the winning companies on both a national and international level. Companies will have their profile raised throughout the competition and have access to pitch coaching to enable them to compete to the best of their ability. Furthermore, they will have the opportunity to pitch to over 200 high profile investors and corporate leaders.

Now in its second year, demand for the competition from early-stage founders has seen a 39% rise in applications compared to 2018, demonstrating the value the Rising Stars competition holds for founders at this critical stage of growth.

The judging panel of industry experts included Louise Clark, Director ConnectTVT, Mark Lyons, Investment Director, Praetura, Simon Bailie, CEO, Digital DNA and Pam Sheemar, Entrepreneur Development Manager, Natwest.

The Rising Stars competition has been supported by sponsors BDO Drive, Microsoft, Soldo, Talent Works International and TLT.

## Quotes

**Mike Jackson, Entrepreneur Success Director, Tech Nation, commented:** “The Rising Stars regional winners announced today are testament to the UK’s exceptional tech sector, and demonstrate that there are hugely exciting tech companies across the entire nation. Rising Stars is an excellent platform for early-stage scaling tech companies to build their profile as they look to scale their businesses and support the UK in maintaining its position as a world leader for producing successful tech companies.”

**Esme Caulfield, Competitions Lead, Tech Nation, commented:** “As the UK’s only early-stage tech scaleup competition, Rising Stars is an incredible opportunity for companies across the whole of the UK. We are hugely excited to shine a light on these early-stage scaleups across the nation and to support in creating opportunities for them to scale their business and one day become the UK’s next generation of tech leaders.”

**Ed Prior, Associate, GP Bullhound, commented:** “It was great to see such a high calibre of applications for this year’s Rising Stars competition. This year there was the highest ever number of entries and it is proving increasingly difficult to select just a few to go through to the Semi Finals. For many years entrepreneurs have automatically gravitated towards London when starting a tech company – however, this years applications have shown that this no longer needs to be the case. Innovative startups are being created and built all over the country”

**Anthony Rose, Founder and CEO, SeedLegals and Rising Star 1.0, commented:** “There were three reasons we entered Rising Stars. One, it raises your profile and spreads your name among other startups and investors. Two, being involved with Tech Nation is a great stamp of approval and builds trust and recognition. Finally, there is a feel good factor in Rising Stars – our staff get excited by it, and it’s interesting to take part!”

**ENDS**

## Notes to editors

### **Rising Stars 2.0 Regional Winners**

#### **East of England**

[Aitrak](#) (Holkham, Visual Optimisation) [@AitrakCo](#)

Founders: David Bailey, Michael MacMillan, Kasper Kuijpers

Aitrak is a visual optimisation solution for brands, retailers, and advertisers. It provides all the benefits of traditional eye-tracking studies, but with results in minutes, not days. Aitrak’s app allows brands, retailers and advertisers to upload, analyse and optimise their creative in minutes, without the need for special cameras, software, or study participants.

[Conundrum](#) (Cambridge, Industrial Autopilot) [@conundrumai](#)

Founders: Konstantin Kiselev, Victor Portnov, Vlad Mironov

Conundrum is AI-powered software for industrial companies. It oversees a whole production process and assists factory engineers in decision making, helping to reduce waste and downtime.

[Foundries.io](#) (Cambridge, Devices & IoT) [@FoundriesIO](#)

Founders: George Grey, Ian Drew, Trina Watt

Foundries.io is addressing security and device management for IoT and Edge devices. FoundriesFactory is a self-service cloud solution that provides turnkey services to develop, secure, deploy and maintain embedded IoT and Edge compute products. They enable secure IoT devices and provide lifetime software maintenance at a fraction of current costs.

Highly Commended in East of England: Robok, Pickr, Insurtechnix

## London

[ClearGlass](#) (London, Fintech) [@ClearGlassL](#)

Founders: Ritesh Singhania, Chris Sier

ClearGlass is a digital intermediary between asset managers and pension funds. It collects underlying costs and performance data from asset managers and helps pension funds decide which is the best fund to invest in for their members.

[CoGrammar](#) (London, Tech for Good) [@hypdev](#)

Founder: Riaz Moola

CoGrammar operates the largest coding education provider in Africa - HyperionDev. Through this, they source, select, train, and integrate full-time code reviewers from top African tech talent. This allows Western companies to affordably assess developers and technical team quality, whilst creating hundreds of jobs in African countries.

[Gener8](#) (London, Adtech & Marketing) [@Gener8Ads](#)

Founder: Sam Jones

Gener8 enables people to monetise their own data. They do this through tailoring the advertising that people see online and sharing the advertising revenue with them.

Highly Commended in London: Proportunity, Oncare, Taxscouts

## Midlands

[Shopper.com](#) (Birmingham, Ecommerce & Marketplace) [@shopperdotcom](#)

Founders: Sonu Bubna, Manoj Krishnapillai

Shopper.com is a community driven global marketplace for online and offline voucher codes, covering thousands of e-commerce sites. It automatically applies the best value voucher code at checkout in one click for both mobile and desktop devices.

[StaffCircle](#) (Leicester, SaaS) [@staffcircle](#)

Founder: Mark Seemann

An all-in-one culture and performance management platform, Staffcircle creates consistent connections and processes between management and workforce. It offers an integrated performance and communications experience for growing businesses, enabling the digitisation of comms, recognition, appraisals and check-ins across office and non-desk employees.

[Fluence World](#) (Birmingham, AI) [@FluenceWorld](#)

Founders: Jennifer Hore, David Hore

Fluence allows regulators to automate complex, subjective quality assurance processes, enabling them to automatically review documents based on their own values, requirements and standards. This means regulators can disseminate quality assurance in 'predictive models' through their respective industries, creating new revenue streams, improving quality and reducing cost.

Highly Commended in the Midlands: Kinnami, iScout Ltd, CarerDirect

## North East

[Apricity Compliance](#) (Darlington, Fintech) [@apricitycomply](#)

Founders: Cathi Harrison, Natalie Bell, Kim Binks

Providing compliance support to financial advisers nationwide, Apricity Compliance have a mission to bring more young people into the ageing industry of financial services. Driving the industry forward, and encouraging good practices along the way, they enable their adviser clients to do the best thing for the end users.

[Block Matrix](#) (Newcastle, Fintech) [@block\\_matrix](#)

Founders: Peter Cheyne, Peter O'Donoghue

Block Matrix's mission is to make Bitcoin accessible for everyone. With the intention of introducing Bitcoin to 1 billion new users over the next 5 years, they plan to implement this through innovative digital wallet technology, UX, merchant payment services and payment gateways.

[Starfeb](#) (Newcastle, SaaS) [@MEngineTweets](#)

Founders: Aimee Muirhead, Kieron Goldsborough

Starfeb's Marketing Engine is for every marketer who wants to plan, share and report on a platform like no other. By recording all your marketing activity in one place, and reporting on this activity in real-time, Marketing Engine lets you access everything in a visual and easy-to-analyse canvas.

Highly Commended in the North East: Fair Custodian, Veritent, WotJob

## North West

[tootoot](#) (Manchester, SaaS) [@tootootofficial](#)

Founders: Michael Brennan, Kieran Innes,

tootoot is award-winning software that supports the psychological safety and wellbeing of individuals within education, sport and the workplace. tootoot provides a way for individuals to raise a concern to their organisation with complete confidentiality.

[UrbanChain](#) (Altrincham, Blockchain/AI & Energy) [@UrbanChain](#)

Founders: Somayah Taheri, Mohammad Hajhashem, Ayesha Naureen

UrbanChain develops world-leading products and services by using blockchain and AI technologies to integrate services in utility sectors, such as energy, transportation and health. They aim to transform these markets, democratise their structure, and optimise and integrate processes to reduce the costs for end users.

[Culture Shift](#) (Manchester, Tech for Good) [@reportsupport](#)

Founders: Gemma McCall, Carl Sadd, Stuart Bradley

Culture Shift's tech for good product Report + Support is a revolutionary online platform that allows victims and witnesses of any kind of bullying, abuse or harassment to report it, either anonymously or with details. The system also signposts those in need of support and provides organisations with vital information to help them tackle toxic behaviour and cultures.

Highly Commended in the North West: Dr Fertility, VoicelQ, Immersify Education

## **Northern Ireland**

[Bluesona](#) (Belfast, Fintech) [@Bluesona](#)

Founders: Mel Morrison, Denis Bourne, Oliver Ferris

Bluesona builds connected insurance solutions that deter distracted driving and incentivise safe on-road behaviour. Founded upon the principle of protection over repair, its product range encourages drivers to stay safe on the road and empowers insurers to meet the expectations of digital-savvy customers.

[Péarlaí](#) (Newry, Adtech & Marketing) [@PéarlaíLtd](#)

Founders: Peter McCaul, Jim Finnegan, Wayne McComb

Péarlaí delivers eCommerce type shopper analytics and marketing capability to shopping centre operators, retailers and brand owners. It identifies, targets, tracks and messages shoppers in real time.

[Pitchbooking](#) (Belfast, Ecommerce & Marketplace) [@PitchBooking](#)

Founders: Fearghal Campbell, Chris McCann

Simplifying the bookings process for sports facilities to help make sport accessible to everybody, Pitchbooking's platform delivers the best way to find, book, and manage sports facilities. It eliminates the administration of managing facilities, increases bookings for facilities, and helps get local populations more active.

Highly Commended in Northern Ireland: gofyt, Obbi Solutions, Oroson

## **Scotland**

[Talking Medicines](#) (Glasgow, Healthtech & Biotech) [@TMedicines](#)

Founders: Jo Halliday, Elizabeth Fairley, Scott Crae

Talking Medicines captures the digital voice of the patient, aggregating it into patterns of behaviours and commercialising it to brand managers in pharmaceutical companies through subscription access. They put patient centricity at the core of what they do, aiming to improve outcomes of medicines.

[Neatebox](#) (Edinburgh, Tech for Good) [@neatebox](#)

Founder: Gavin Neate

Tackling personal loneliness and communication, the Neatebox 'Welcome' platform removes barriers and promotes empathetic relationships between consumers and customer service teams, promoting real societal change and heralding a new age of understanding and communication.

[Drinkly](#) (Edinburgh, Ecommerce & Marketplace) [@wearedrinkly](#)

Founder: John Robertson

Drinkly is a drinks-on-demand service that promises 'chilled beers, spirits and wines to your door in one hour'. Over 650 carefully-curated drinks and snacks are available for delivery to customers in Edinburgh, Glasgow and London.

Highly Commended in Scotland: Frog Systems, Good-Loop, MyCustomer Lens

## South East

[Sparkbox](#) (Southampton, SaaS) LinkedIn: [Sparkbox.co](#)

Founders: Kevin Blackmore, Lindsay Fisher, Alex Stemler Matt Wong

Working in the retail and fashion space, Sparkbox uses machine learning to reduce stock, improve profitability, and prevent over-discounting by optimising prices. Their AI helps retail teams leverage their data, understand the impact of pricing decisions and make the most of the inventory they own.

[IMGeospatial](#) (Slough, Tech for Good) [@IMGeospatial](#)

Founders: Alexis Hannah Smith, David Charles

IMGeospatial changes the way you see the world, by changing the way the world uses data. It deploys artificial intelligence in unconventional ways to digest, distill, and disseminate data efficiently, regardless of how imperfect or vast that universe of data becomes.

[Seakr](#) (Slough, Tech for Good) [@seakrcarer](#)

Founder: Ian Rajan

Seakr Carer gives home carers the power to choose their hours, clients and income, so that they receive recognition and reward for delivering important societal good. The company vet, train and support the most trusted of carers and match them with elderly and vulnerable clients.

Highly Commended in the South East: Personal Data Management, Streeva, Percept Imagery

## South West

[Codices Interactive](#) (Truro, Digital Entertainment) [@quizkit](#)

Founders: Tim Edwards, Fernando Pombeiro

Codices Interactive provides viewers with a live interactive video platform, enabling any broadcaster to create interactive shows. Its first product is now the most used gameshow creation tool on the Twitch platform, with 1,000+ monthly active broadcasters and 300,000 unique monthly viewers.

[Filmily](#) (Totnes, Adtech & Marketing) [@filmilyapp](#)

Founders: Andy Doyle, Ian Kenny

Fans at large scale events record every moment and share it on social media and currently rights owners get little or no value from it. Filmily's patented algorithms collect content from thousands of phones, automatically learn about it through AI and edit the clips together to create branded films.

[Value Xd](#) (Exeter, Data Analytics) [@ValueXd](#)

Founders: Armen Papazian, Aleksandr Grigoryan, Akram Ojeh

Value Xd is a cloud-based analytics platform that reinvents the analytical value chain. Its platform provides a variety of tools through which businesses and investors can align their decisions with environmental responsibility and sustainable development goals, all while covering conventional analytical techniques.

Highly Commended in the South West: Blockchain Ventures, Scribeless, Service Robotics

## Wales

[We Build Bots](#) (Cardiff, AI) [@webuild\\_bots](#)

Founder: Paul Shepherd

We Build Bots delivers AI powered automation to the public sector, helping organisations deliver better, faster and cheaper citizen services. Leveraging bots, voice and conversational analytics, they help the public sector make better use of the data they collect, making it more predictive and more productive.

[Resooma](#) (Cardiff, Ecommerce & Marketplace) [@resoomahq](#)

Founder: Daniel Jefferys

Resooma is the first subscription-based, end-to-end rental platform designed around the needs of the tenant. The platform uses technology which enables tenants to search, view, secure and manage their home, taking the stress out of renting.

[Moneyshake](#) (Newport, Fintech) [@moneyshakeuk](#)

Founders: Eben Lovatt, Gavin Donlon, Jason Ellison

A car lease comparison website focused that provides a quick, easy-to-use UX experience which streamlines deals from some of the UK's top leasing brokers. Their pioneering technology is set to evolve "price comparison" to "price competition".

Highly Commended in Wales: Disberse, Simply Do Ideas, Coincover

## Yorkshire

[SeeAI](#). (Leeds, Healthtech & Biotech) [@SeeAI\\_LTD](#)

Founders: Saile Villegas, Reo Ogusu

The shortage of radiologists in the UK is causing an increase in the number of misdiagnoses. SeeAI addresses this by using AI to reduce the number of images assigned to radiologists for reporting - only sending complex images to human specialists and automatically reporting the remaining images.

[Branswer](#) (Leeds, Adtech & Marketing) [@TheBranswer](#)

Founders: Kayla Herbert, Tom Dean Knight

Branswer is a smart content writing platform that helps businesses write effective customer communications. Writing prompts give users peace of mind that they have included the right information, tone analysis measures content, and AI insights determine whether it matches brand values.

[Cooperative Innovations](#) (Leeds, Digital Entertainment) [@CoopInnovations](#)

Founders: Simon Barratt, Brian Marshall

Cooperative Innovations build, license and implement high-quality immersive development tools to create worlds to play in, explore, learn from and share with others, regardless of sector or end user.

Highly Commended in Yorkshire: Checklate Media, Additive Automations, Calbot

## Competition judges

- Andrew Dean, Director, We Are Nova
- Brian Corcoran, Founder, Turing Fest
- Briony Phillips, Associate Director, Engine Shed
- Calum Forsyth, CEO and Founder, Seedhaus
- Carwyn Edwards, Co-Founder, North Wales Tech
- Dan Pritchard, Managing Director, Astley Media

- Darren Upson, VP Small Business, Europe, Soldo
- Ed Prior, Investment Banking Associate, GP Bullhound
- Elaine McKechnie, Business Development Director, Oxford Innovation
- Emmi Nicholl, Deal Sorcerer, Cambridge Angels
- Etienne Picocchi, Management Consultant
- James Merryweather, Investment Manager, KM Capital
- James Parton, Managing Director, The Bradfield Centre
- Julia Robertson, Head of Startups & Scaleups, Soldo
- June Angelides, VC, Samos Investments
- Kathryn White, Innovation Manager, Impact Lab @ Exeter Uni
- Laura Stuffins, Director, BDODrive
- Lori Anderson, Director, Creative Dundee
- Louize Clarke, Director, ConnectTVT
- Mark Dowds, Founder, Ormeau Baths
- Mark John, Co-Founder/Director, Tramshed
- Mark Lyons, Investment Director, Praetura
- Mark Sykes, National Head, BDO Drive
- Mark Traynor, Partner, TLT LLP
- Matt Hyde, Founder, FinTech Wales Awards
- Michael Dickinson, Investment Manager, Launchpad
- Miceal O’Kane, Partner, Ignite
- Naomi TImperley, Co-founder, Tech North Advocates
- Neil Purcell, CEO & Founder, Talentworks International
- Niki Haggerty-James, Manager, Barclays Eagle Lab – Cardiff
- Nina Searle, Partner, TLT LLP
- Oliver Hammond, Associate, Fuel Ventures
- Pam Sheemar, Entrepreneur Development Manager, Natwest
- Rachel Burdis, Tech Specialist, Economic Development Gateshead Council
- Richard Abrahams, Founding member – Raise, PWC
- Richard Charnley, Investment Manager, Northstar Ventures
- Richard Godfrey, CEO, Rocketmakers
- Sam Michel, Founder & CMO, Chinwag
- Samantha George, Director, Thames Valley, BDO UK LLP
- Sarah Tulip, Director Of Operations, Software Cloud Limited
- Simon Bailie, CEO, Digital DNA
- Simon Jacobson, EMEA SMB Segment Lead, Microsoft Advertising
- Steve Pette, Co-Founder, Ormeau Baths / Central Working
- Stuart Clarke, Festival Director, Leeds Digital Festival
- Tim Robinson, COO, Tech East
- Tracey Johnson, Director, Enterprising Barnsley
- Volker Hirsch, Partner, Amadeus Capital

### **Application statistics**

- Demand for the Rising Stars competition sees 39% rise in applications compared to 2018
- 365 applications completed - up from 263 last year
- 62% of all applications were from outside London

- 30% of applicant companies have a female founder or co-founder
- 43% of applicants are first time founders
- Average age of company applied - 2 years
- Average number of employees - 4
- All regions have witnessed an increase in the number of applications completed, with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland seeing the number of applications double

### **Regional Winners statistics**

- Average age of company - 2.2 years
- Average number of employees - 6
- 33% of companies have a female founder/co-founder
- 30% of regional winners are first time founders, 35% of regional winners are second time founders, 35% of regional winners are serial entrepreneurs
- Regional winners represent a range of sectors include Adtech, AI, Ecommerce, Fintech, SaaS and Tech for Good.

### **Prize package**

Built in response to the challenges which are faced by companies at this stage of growth, the prize package aims to significantly raise the profile of the winning companies on both a national and international level:

- Facilitated introductions to investors and corporates
- Pitch training and coaching by Sunderland Software City
- Opportunity to pitch your business in front of over 200 investors, accelerators, entrepreneurs and corporate leaders
- Tech Nation content campaigns
- Induction into the Rising Stars alumni network
- Speaking and thought leadership opportunities through the Tech Nation network
- Business plan diagnostic, delivered by accounting and business advisory firm, BDO
- Employer Attraction Analysis by Talent Works International
- Microsoft ad word credits and Azure credits
- Subscription to Soldo, a pre-paid business expenses card and one year free Xero subscription via Soldo.
- Free subscription to TLT LLP's LegalSifter tool to support with contractual issues

### **About Tech Nation**

Tech Nation is the UK's leading scaleup network for entrepreneurs. Its mission is to empower tech entrepreneurs to grow faster through knowledge and connections through running growth programs and developing digital entrepreneurship skills through its visa scheme for exceptional talent and through insights from reports, including the annual Tech Nation Report. [Technation.io/report2019](https://technation.io/report2019)