

Tech Nation Announces 30 Companies Joining Inaugural Libra Programme To Support Ambitious Black and Multiracial Founders

- Tech Nation welcomes 30 companies to join its newest programme for Black and multiracial founders, Libra.
- Research found that all-Black founding teams received in total just 0.24% of UK VC tech investment in 2021.
- Almost half (43%) of the founders on the Libra programme are female and hail from regions across the UK.
- Healthtech, Net Zero, HRtech and Edtech are some of the key themes across the 30 companies.
- Founders will benefit from sessions delivered by established entrepreneurs, mentoring from world-leading scale coaches, and peer-to-peer sessions on fundamental growth challenges, and more.

London, 29 September 2021: [Tech Nation](#), the leading scaleup accelerator for UK tech companies, today announces the 30 companies joining its newest growth programme, Libra, which is designed to equip ambitious Black and multiracial (with Black heritage) entrepreneurs with the knowledge, tools and networks they need to scale their business in today's world.

Black and multiracial founders often face barriers to accessing VC investment which can be directly linked to racial bias, creating additional challenges to overcome in their scaling journey. In 2020, Tech Nation partnered with Extend VC and Impact X on a report - [Diversity Beyond Gender report](#) - to look at how the colour of a founder's skin can adversely affect their access to capital in the UK. The report highlighted that between 2009 and 2019, 76% of VC investment went to all-white founding teams, whilst only 23.36% went to multiracial founding teams and 0.24% went to all-Black founding teams.

Tech Nation's new Libra programme comprises Black heritage founders that hail from all areas of the UK - from the South West to Yorkshire and the North West. Almost half (43%) of the companies are led by female founders, reflecting Tech Nation's commitment to supporting underrepresented innovators that have an ambition to scale.

Key challenges that emerging tech founders are tackling

The 30 companies selected are helping to tackle some of the biggest challenges of our lifetime. Atherton Mutombwera, Zimbabwe-born and the Founder and CEO of Hutano Diagnostics, is one of five Healthtech founders leading the charge on improving global health and wellbeing through technology. With learnings taken from the 2014 Ebola outbreak, Hutano Diagnostics has created a disease diagnostic and surveillance platform for quick disease diagnosis, tracking and outbreak spread prediction.

Through the Libra programme, Tech Nation is also supporting companies helping the UK's journey to Net Zero, such as Bristol-based Voltric, which provides an electric vehicle subscription service that allows

consumers to access a range of road ready, electric cars. Other tech companies supporting the UK's journey towards Net Zero include Loopcycle, which is helping businesses to move towards a circular economy by providing a platform to boost valuable secondary product management, reuse and recovery. Similarly, Compare Ethics verifies businesses' sustainability credentials to provide a trusted source of information for consumers.

Four of the 30 companies selected are creating technological solutions to improve the recruitment process and ensure a future where talent is recruited fairly and without bias. Companies such as Manchester-based Jobseekers, which aims to become the primary and most unbiased job-search and matching engine on the internet, and Flair Impact, which uses technology to help organisations measure and build anti-racist cultures, are dedicated towards creating a better future for talented black and multiracial people working within all sectors in the UK.

Similarly, Edtech companies like Air Math Tuition are aiming to level the playing field for learning and reduce elitism in the UK education system through its online Maths education platform. It joins another Edtech company, Framework, the world's first on-demand business school. Other companies selected to join the Libra programme come from sectors including ecommerce, retail tech, lawtech, leisure, gaming and propotech.

Support provided through the Tech Nation Libra programme

Over six months, the founders accepted into the programme will each receive over 60 hours of support, benefit from sessions delivered by established entrepreneurs, receive mentoring from world-leading scale coaches and peer-to-peer sessions on fundamental growth challenges; covering topics such as raising series A, selling into corporates, scaling your operations and expanding internationally.

The programme will facilitate peer-to-peer learning and the cohort companies sharing the challenges in their own individual scaling journeys. The cohort will also be introduced to key stakeholders and decision-makers at corporates, investment firms, government bodies and others during networking events.

The judges include: [Tom Adeyoola](#), [Daisy Onubogu](#), [Dama Sathianathan](#), [Nakai Jirira, PhD](#), [Anika H.](#), [Margaret Sheyindemi](#), [Maria Francisca Jorge \(Kika\)](#), [Blake Bower](#), [Tanya Williams](#), [Sebastiaan Bruinsma](#), [Kevin Simmons](#), [Saloni Bhojwani](#), [Audrey Handem](#), [Olivia Sibony](#), [Leo Chandler](#), [Evgeny Shadchnev](#), [Pam Sheemar](#), [Harriet Saunders](#), [Elias Suliman](#), [Lisa Lambie](#), [Kaitlin Fritz](#), [Liam Gray](#) and [Abigail Iyin Osundun](#).

D&I Toolkit

In order to help build a strong, diverse and inclusive tech sector, Tech Nation also launched a [Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit](#) in June this year. This aims to provide resources that help UK tech firms achieve maximum impact with their D&I strategies, creating positive results not only in the makeup of their workforce, but in the productivity and success of their companies. Each section of the toolkit contains

checklists, links to tools and resources, and case studies highlighting examples of companies who have enacted positive change. Continually updated, it will reflect the changing tech landscape, new D&I initiatives and companies which have already implemented successful D&I frameworks.

Quotes

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said: "It's great to see Tech Nation's new Libra programme supporting founders from a range of backgrounds and tapping into the rich depth of tech talent we have across the country. We are doing all we can to make sure people have the skills they need to work in this exciting and challenging industry."

Abi Mohamed, Libra Lead, Tech Nation, comments: "At Tech Nation, we are working to build a future where anyone with a vision and drive can access the skills and support needed to scale and succeed as a game-changing leader. We have furthered our commitment to this by launching our first programme designed to tackle some of the unique challenges faced by Black and multiracial founders in the UK.

"The 30 scaleups joining the Libra programme represent some of the most exciting, innovative, and resilient tech companies in the UK today, and are tackling some of our biggest challenges. Spread right across the UK, companies are working in global health, providing access to electric vehicles, and helping businesses move towards circular business models.

"By helping to support our future Libra alumni to reach unicorn status and beyond, we hope to play our part in strengthening the UK's position as one of the best places in the world to start and grow a business - for everyone."

Tom Adeyoola, Co-founder, Extend Ventures, and Judge for the Libra programme: "As our Diversity By Gender report starkly showed, ethnic minority founders and Black founders in particular have struggled over the last 10 years to gain access to finance in the startup ecosystem. We hoped our report would kickstart awareness and action. Only one Black female founder had raised over £1m in venture funding in the 10 years to 2019; since publishing our report in November 2020 there have been [at least 7](#).

I am hopeful that Tech Nation with this new Libra programme can help drive for Black and multiracial founders the virtuous cycle of visibility, connections, and success through the power of the cohort that we have seen in the rest of the startup ecosystem.

Having had the honour of taking part in the judging for the Libra programme, it is clear that there is a healthy and competitive pipeline of Black and multiracial founders that just need fair access to financial and social capital to succeed.

I'm looking forward to the access to finance stats in future diversity reports becoming more representative of the UK population."

Toyin James Omisakin, Co-founder and Chief Product Officer at Compare Ethics, comments: "Our founding team is being built by blackness, people with disabilities and women. Due to structural inequalities, many would say this formation is limiting. However, we see this diversity as our strength. We are excited to see Tech Nation also recognise this strength and normalising underrepresented groups into the tech ecosystem. I'm thrilled to be accelerating the impact of Compare Ethics through the support of the experts on the Libra program. I look forward to paying this opportunity forward with other founders that will greatly benefit from this programme - keeping the virtuous cycle of bridging the gap alive."

DeAnna Forbes-Sanchez, Co-Founder and CMO, Finders Force, comments: "Libra is a gargantuan opportunity for growth, alongside an equal amount of opportunity for networking, personal development and giving back. An opportunity to provide value, not just take it.

Solely making use of the resources will not be enough to reach the full potential which Libra has to offer. We must fully submerge ourselves in what it means to follow in the footsteps of other Tech Nation backed companies like Deliveroo, AO.com and Etoro. Be sure not to blink, you may just miss The Unicorn Journey of the Decade. Finders Force will see you on the other side of Libra, Class of 2022!"

Rose Hulse, Founder and CEO, ScreenHits TV, comments: "It is nice to believe we live in a fair world and that all opportunity is open to everyone, but the reality is, we don't. The VC community still does not support excellent businesses with black founders in the same way they do with companies without black founders. There is not much one can do about it, but to continue to push forward and find opportunity.

Programmes like Libra help to bridge this gap and help the leading businesses of the future have a fair and equal chance, regardless of a founder's skin tone. I support their initiative 100% and I am thrilled to be a part of their programme to help bring awareness to the challenges that black founders face in scaling their business. Together I know we will find a solution, not just for my business, but for all businesses that are overlooked for pointless reasons."

Dan Sodergren, Co-Founder and CIO, Your FLOCK, comments: "Your FLOCK are very proud to be on the Libra programme. And what this means. As we are a remote work tech startup committed to diversity and inclusion. With a multi generational and multicultural tech team.

With more than 60% of the team as POC and our board and advisors are more than 60% women. We know that one way to make a difference is to be the difference."

List of Libra programme companies:

[Air Maths Tuition](#) - London

Air Math Tuition is an online maths education platform, curating personalised learning materials and tutoring services for GCSE and A-level students. It aims to democratise education with the power of

machine learning, providing a personalised learning journey with minimal human involvement to drive costs down and make top-quality tutoring affordable to less privileged students. The company also aims to level the playing field for learning maths and mitigate elitism in the UK education system.

[Baseline](#) - London

Baseline makes it easy to identify and troubleshoot defects in serverless architectures. With Baseline's tools, identifying bottlenecks and resolving incidents is painless, and IT teams can stop aimlessly firefighting when there's an outage.

[Boxx](#) - London

Boxx is a boxing-inspired fitness brand with both a digital content platform and a physical studio. The company is currently developing 'the peloton of boxing', a connected product designed to blend in beautifully at home.

[Briji](#) - Bristol

Briji is a project management tool built for data and analytics teams to collaborate with their stakeholders so they can deliver high-quality, actionable insights, together.

[Chanodil](#) - Nottingham

Chanodil is an automated sourcing platform that helps brands build faster, leaner and more responsible supply chains. Its mission is to create the world's most trusted supply chains, offer the most responsible and innovative sourcing solutions and provide the most seamless experience for both brands and manufacturers. Through the platform, brands are matched with the required suppliers for their business and can then use the platform to communicate, share tech packs, receive quotes, request samples and manage production from design all the way to delivery - all from one dashboard while tracking all the actions in the supply chain.

[Compare Ethics](#) - London

Compare Ethics verifies businesses' sustainability credentials using patent-pending technology and ensures clear returns on investment for businesses increasing their sustainability standards. For consumers, it provides a trusted source of sustainability information.

[Definely](#) - London

Define optimises the contract drafting and reviewing process by allowing users to quickly access key information - all defined terms and references - in legal documents without ever having to leave the provision they are working on and therefore lose their context of review. Define acts as a risk management tool and efficiency software that has helped lawyers saved 30 mins to 1 hour a day when working on legal documents. Customers are some of the world's largest law firms and corporate legal teams including Allen & Overy, Barclays and Deloitte.

[Beautonomy](#) - London

Beautonomy is a marketplace where beauty content creators can monetise their expertise with

customisable products creators can design and promote, helping them to monetise their social media channels.

[Eccobell](#) - London

Eccobell is a "contactless as a service" provider, building an ecosystem of on-demand web applications using contactless technology to innovate how people access, communicate and interact with each other. The first product in the ecosystem is a "video doorbell as a service" for houses, apartments and commercial buildings, enabling anyone, anywhere to communicate with guests at just a tap. The product replaces redundant intercom systems allowing visitors to simply scan a display code outside an entrance to talk directly with residents wherever they are on any smart device or mobile.

[Finders Force](#) - London

Finders Force provides shift-booking software to connect, hire and interact with agency staff across the entire traffic management industry. The platform connects depots with quality operatives using artificial intelligence and is designed for systemising the hiring of operatives, monitoring performance stats and automating every component of staff management.

[Flair Impact](#) - London

Flair Impact is a people analytics company with a survey-based product that helps organisations measure and build anti-racist cultures. Flair Impact's mission is to create a world in which all ethnicities can thrive.

[Framework](#) - London

Framework is the world's first on-demand business school, especially made for the people building the businesses of the future. After successfully launching Founders Academy - a 9-month alternative MBA programme for startup joiners in partnership with Founders Forum - Framework is now productising their curriculum into a mobile learning experience that can scale globally.

[Happaning](#) - London

Happaning's service is like Google street view, but with video. Happaning lets you watch an event from any perspective, at any time and from anywhere in one immersive, navigatable experience.

[Herbybox](#) - London

Herbybox is a direct-to-consumer luxury herbal tea brand, with natural benefits. The company is at the intersection of herbal tea and the supplement world, offering tea that is more than just tea. Herbybox is now stocked in Selfridges.

[Hutano Diagnostics](#) - Oxford

During the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak, Zimbabwe-born founder and CEO Atherton Mutombwera was shocked to learn how many deaths could have been prevented through wider availability of diagnostics, and that across the African continent there were only 14 centralised laboratories that could diagnose Ebola, the lack of which contributed to the 70% fatality rate. In response, Hutano Diagnostics is developing a modular configurable Lateral Flow Device (LFD) platform. This platform is modular and

configurable for either single disease, or simultaneous multiple disease diagnosis, on the same LFD strip. Once developed, the platform reduces the time to LFD development in preparation for future specific disease outbreaks from 2 years to 6 months.

[ICI CARE](#) - London

ICI CARE is building machine-learning software to create personalised hair care products with natural raw ingredients. It uses plastic-free packaging, building a company that will benefit the community.

[Jobseekrs](#) - Manchester

Jobseekrs is the world's first video interactive job site that mitigates bias at the screening and sourcing stages of the hiring process with a particular focus on screening for culture fit and matching for company culture-add through a series of psychometric-type questions. The company's mission is to become the primary and most unbiased job-search and matching engine on the internet while ensuring that everyone is better engaged with and has more equal chances at all job opportunities. It also aims to further scale the platform to use cognitive data and AI to help make hiring more predictive and even less biased.

[Legal-Pythia](#) - Glasgow

Legal-Pythia uses an explainable AI, web-based software to organize, categorize and search through legal information (especially legal evidence) to find duplications and contradictions. Through these services, lawyers will have more time, increase their productivity and achieve a true work-life balance. In addition, lawyers will understand how and why the software came to certain predictions, made possible by the explainable AI.

[Loopcycle](#) - London

Loopcycle is a product traceability platform redefining the management, recovery and resale of valuable secondary products. Loopcycle aims at revolutionising the way that businesses manage, recover and resell their physical assets, driving integrity within the reuse marketplace. By embedding a unique product ID, called 'Cyclecode', the platform facilitates whole product lifecycle visibility and direct interactions between manufacturers and end-users where intermediaries control product distribution. Loopcycle is helping businesses to deliver the net-zero carbon target and move towards a circular economy while maximising their commercial value.

[NxSteps](#) - Hatfield

NxSteps is a digital healthcare solutions company focused on maximising human performance through the knowledge of biomechanics. It operates a blended economic model of both traditional product revenue and SaaS-based app-delivered technology. Its IoT-powered wearable smart insole, application and AI voice coach aids professional and everyday athletes to achieve their health and fitness goals by optimising performance whilst preventing injuries in an objective, understandable, actionable and repeatable way to ensure physical longevity.

[Optimum Health](#) - London

Optimum Health has developed Kami, a parental well being data company building a first-to-market emotion detection and digital support system solution for working parents. It has secured grant funding from Innovate UK and investment from Google, signed two pilot partners, built a 20+ client pipeline and established a distribution partnership with a group of day nurseries. It is now advancing to market with the beta product.

[Ruka Hair](#) - London

Ruka Hair's vision is to become the definitive hair brand for black women, globally. Ruka started the journey with extensions, combining a conscious, digital-first brand and community with a product refined through a scientific and user-led approach. Beyond providing textures that truly match Black women's hair textures, Ruka is completely reshaping the experience through the personalisation in the RUKA quiz, helping people texture match and find the right extensions for them.

[ScreenHits TV](#) - London

ScreenHits TV is a streaming video aggregator app that provides audiences with a single place to stream across their new and existing services. ScreenHits TV is addressing the current fragmentation and subscription fatigue challenges in this new and exciting world of app TV. It creates a one-stop guide to search libraries across platforms and live online TV without switching platforms or signing up for new services. The service is particularly relevant given that 2020 was the year when global subscriptions for streaming services passed 1 billion.

[Shwap](#) - Exeter

Shwap is a software solution to help fashion, homeware and lifestyle retailers monetise the secondary market of their products, and earn revenue from products they've already sold. Shwap's technology leverages peer-to-peer resale in order to give the UK's 200,000 retailers a means to monetise the secondary market of their products without incurring operational costs. Shwap developed software that retailers can integrate into the e-commerce stores, or point-of-sale systems that enables Shwap to identify and then manage the lifecycle of products as they move between different owners. Using this software Shwap has created a frictionless resale platform that creates product listings in real time as users shop.

[Talley](#) - London

Talley provides a safe space to share experiences by anonymously connecting members on-demand, via in-app audio conversations, to everyday people (trained Listeners) who have experienced or are overcoming the same challenges as those members and can empathise with them. Talley aims at being the first line of defence enabling users to address those day-to-day emotional distress issues (e.g. anxiety, depression, loneliness, toxic relationships, grief) which may lead to severe mental health problems if left unchecked.

[ThrillXR](#) - London

ThrillXR is a gamified virtual world for digital fashion. With gaming and blockchain technology, ThrillXR created a virtual world for fashion retail. Users can visit this virtual world via a PC or VR headset, enter

3D versions of real stores with other users and buy the digital version of real clothes for their avatars. ThrillXR is backed by Epic Games, creators of Fortnite, and mentored by Unity, Rise (Microsoft for startups) and the University of Cambridge Innovators for sustainable fashion.

[Trapar](#) - Edinburgh

Trapar connects customers to quality local transport operators. It gathers comprehensive requirements and shares these with vetted operators. In this way, Trapar can provide quality assurance for customers and efficiency for operators.

[Voltric](#) - Bristol

Voltric is a mobility-as-a-service provider dedicated to making the growing demand for all forms of mobility practical, sustainable and efficient. The all-inclusive electric vehicle subscription service allows consumers to access a range of road-ready, electric cars all for one price per month without the concerns of managing insurance, tax, MOT and everything needed to get onto the road.

[White Label Loyalty](#) - Leeds

White Label Loyalty believes that loyalty is broken and makes it the company's mission to fix it. 75% of loyalty programmes fail because they are built as one-size-fits-all, are not data driven, do not involve no personalisation and mostly only reward based on transactions. Instead, the company offers a data-driven technology platform that helps businesses increase revenue and retention by understanding, predicting and influencing customer behaviour.

[Your FLOCK](#) - Manchester

Your FLOCK is a SaaS platform that uses data and science behind what motivates people at work to enable teams to be more productive and engaged. Your FLOCK is working on machine learning-driven software that helps managers coach their teams by providing users with activities tailored to their motivations and designed to help them be more 'in-sync' and work more effectively as a team.

Notes to the Editor

About the programme

To qualify for the Libra programme, companies must be at Seed to pre-Series A funding stage (or, if bootstrapped, max AR below £1.5mn). At least one of the founding team members must also self-identify as black (British/African/Caribbean) or multiracial with black heritage. The company must be headquartered in the UK and demonstrate market traction and an ambition to scale.

About Tech Nation

Tech Nation is the leading scaleup accelerator. Tech Nation fuels the growth of game-changing founders, leaders, and scaling companies so they can positively transform societies and economies. We provide them with the coaching, content, and community they need for their journey in designing the future. Tech Nation has years of experience facilitating and helping UK tech companies scale, both at home and abroad. Over 30 cohorts and 950 companies have successfully graduated from Tech Nation's growth

programmes. Alumni include Skyscanner, Darktrace, and Monzo.