

Top five North West early-stage tech companies announced in Tech Nation's latest 'Rising Stars' competition

- Tech Nation announces the top five North West Regional Winners of its Rising Stars competition, recognising the UK's early-stage tech companies with the highest potential
- The 5 North West companies to be selected are Liverpool-based [THRIFT](#), and Manchester-based [Financielle](#), [My First Five Years](#), [Jyrney](#), and [RDvault](#), which span tech subsectors fintech, edtech, travel tech and ecommerce
- The North West tech sector is rapidly growing; the sector has received \$793mn in VC investment this year as of November 2021 (a 45% increase on the \$546mn received in 2020), and has created 161% more jobs compared to the previous year (141,023 in H1 of 2021, up from 53,990 in 2020)

6th December 2021: Tech Nation has today announced the 5 North West Regional Winners of its fourth Rising Stars competition, which recognises the brightest and best early-stage tech scaleups from every area of the UK. In total, 55 fast-growing tech companies from across the UK have been named this year's Regional Winners - 5 within each UK region. Previous years' Rising Stars Regional Winners have included [Selazar](#) (from Northern Ireland), [Circa5000](#) (from the North West) and [SeedLegals](#) (from London), who have received a combined £33.79mn in investment to date, demonstrating the ability of the Rising Stars Regional Winners to scale quickly, and their potential to become the UK's tech 'unicorns' (companies with valuations of \$1bn+) of the future.

These Regional Winners have been selected by a panel of over 50 judges (industry experts with extensive experience in starting and scaling tech businesses) based on their value proposition, competitive advantage, market traction, team experience and potential to scale.

This year's North West Regional Winners are [THRIFT](#), [Financielle](#), [My First Five Years](#), [Jyrney](#), and [RDvault](#). The majority of these companies hail from Manchester - the North West's largest tech hub - and they are working to transform a range of different industries, including fintech, edtech, travel tech and ecommerce.

These fast-growing early-stage tech companies have an average of 4 employees, and the majority (3 of 5) have female founders.

The North West's tech sector is growing

The success of these early-stage North West companies reflects the strength and fast growth of the tech market in the North West overall.

According to data from Tech Nation, the North West is now home to 8 tech 'unicorns' (companies valued at over \$1bn), up from 5 in 2020, and has received \$793mn in VC investment this year as of November 2021 (a 45% increase on the \$546mn received in 2020).

Tech job creation is also growing rapidly in the North West, rising by 161% in the past year (from 53,990 tech roles in 2020 to 141,023 in H1 of 2021).

This year's Rising Stars Regional Winners are accelerating the tech sector across the UK

This year's Regional Winners demonstrate that the tech sector is growing quickly across all corners of the UK.

An impressive 69% of the 55 Regional Winners are generating revenue, and 38% have at least one female founder. 27% of the Regional Finalists are Pre-Seed, 29% have no previous rounds of funding, and 36% are Seed funded. As for what's next, 49% of the Regional Finalists are looking for Seed Funding, while 34% are looking to raise Series A.

The 55 Regional Winners are a mixture of B2B and B2C and 49% have previously attended an accelerator. 73% of the Regional Winners plan to expand internationally in the next 12 months, with 58% wanting to expand into the USA.

Rising Stars' mission

Going forward, these 5 promising, fast-growth North West tech companies will continue to be supported by the UK tech ecosystem as they are inducted into the Tech Nation alumni network. This will allow the companies national recognition, greater access to networking opportunities and more opportunities to learn from other early-stage tech businesses going through a similar scaling journey.

Recognising and empowering all of the Regional Winners of the Rising Stars competition is at the core of Tech Nation's mission to fuel the growth of tech scaleups who are helping us create a stronger economy, society and future.

Quotes:

Esme Caulfield, Competitions Lead at Tech Nation, said: "With Tech Nation's Rising Stars competition now in its fourth year, it's amazing to see so many inspiring companies innovating to change our world for the better. This year, we reached the milestone of 1000 applications to Rising Stars (and surpassed it!). We had a record number of applications this year - 380 (nearly 400) - and we also saw our first applications - and our first Regional Winner - from the spacetech sector, (Elestial, from the Midlands) and agritech (Cropsafe, from Northern Ireland).

From revolutionising modern healthcare and disrupting the finance sector to transforming education and tackling climate change, each of these fast-growing regional early-stage tech companies is helping us improve our economy, society and quality of life. This year's Regional Winners represent the brightest and the best of UK tech and talent, and I'm excited to see what they do next."

Digital Secretary Nadine Dorries said: "These technology Rising Stars are helping us solve some of the greatest challenges of our time and creating high-quality and well-paid jobs up and down the country. Capitalising on the huge potential of tech is a crucial part of our mission to level up and we are backing businesses with pro-innovation policies and supporting people to get the skills they need to thrive."

Nicola McNeely, Partner at Harrison Clark Rickerbys Solicitors - Cardiff and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: “It is evident from the Tech Nation’s Rising Stars Regional Winners that there is a vast array of technology startups and scaleups around the UK, many of whom are operating within known Tech clusters already. Some have chosen to specifically establish themselves there or to relocate to these areas to leverage the incubator or accelerator services within those tech clusters. The ability to operate alongside like-minded businesses equips them well to leverage contacts, connections, services and expertise from similar businesses in their area. It also positions them well to sell into primes who are interested in diversifying their customer offering and adopting new innovative tech solutions.”

Drew Currie, Director of the Founder Institute - Birmingham and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: “Two of the Rising Star candidates which I judged were extraordinary! I have judged pitches previously, but these 2 were exceptional. I have written their names on a piece of paper, and sealed them in dated envelopes. On the back of their Tech Nation entry, I look forward in a few years time to opening those envelopes in front of them & toasting their success!”

Niki Haggerty-James, Ecosystem Manager at Barclays Eagle Labs and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: “I was honoured to be a judge for the fourth year, for Tech Nation’s Rising Stars programme. It seems the calibre of start-up and scaling-up businesses is getting better year on year, which is reflected in the businesses we are seeing here at Barclays Eagle Labs. When times become challenging, the best entrepreneurs see it as an opportunity to innovate and adapt. I predict exciting times ahead for this year’s cohort.”

Daniel Evans, CEO of Birmingham Enterprise Community and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: “Rising Stars aims to find the UK’s very best emerging startups and this year’s applications did not disappoint. As we look forward to the country’s recovery from COVID and the events of the past 2 years, we need our entrepreneurs more than ever. They fuel innovation and tackle the problems we face by building solutions that change the way we live, work and operate as a society. Through Rising Stars, Tech Nation is able to help showcase some of these fantastic entrepreneurs and bring attention to the work they are doing. One thing is for sure, if the quality of these businesses is anything to go by, then the entrepreneurial future of the UK is looking stronger than ever.”

Mark O’Hara, Founder of THRIFT, said: “UK tech startups are booming, especially those within the circular economy space - so it’s great that our THRIFT concept is not just considered but has been named a worthy Regional Winner. Our mission is to bring transparency to the resale market, by letting you know what any item is worth and on which marketplace, so more organisations and people can get involved in resale and avoid landfill. We are Liverpool based, that’s where my co founders, Nova, are based. Nova has been critical in raising the standards of start-up in the area and we are both very fortunate to have partnered on THRIFT.”

Jennie Johnson, CEO of My First Five Years, said: “Raising children has a profound impact on both the individual and society. We are on a mission to help parents with timely, impactful nuggets of knowledge backed by science and research that will help them notice and celebrate the little things that build up to the key achievements that become the building blocks for a child’s lifelong learning.

Assisting parents to know what's likely to be next in their child's unique learning journey and how to support their child's development through play. Giving parents the knowledge to be confident they are doing the right things, empowering them to enjoy the first five years.”

Daniel Price, CEO and Co-founder of Jyrney, said: “To have Jyrney recognised alongside so many amazing technology start ups is a great privilege. Many of these businesses were either started or pivoted during the challenging last 2 years and their place on this list is a testament to their resilience. With travel still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, but becoming more regionalised, I see the importance of integrated, low emission mobility increasing in 2022 and beyond. Our core mission is to make the world's last mile content easy to access and that's why we have developed a world class platform, that will plug into existing travel and transport systems, to provide access to thousands of mobility options. With vehicle ownership set to decline, and an increasing desire from customers to book mobility with the travel companies they trust, we look forward to connecting these applications with a global supply base.”

Laura Pomfret, Co-founder of Financielle, said: “We’re so proud to be chosen as a Tech Nation Rising Stars Regional Winner as we move from startup to scaleup in the UK fintech space. Our mission is to help women take control of their money and be financially well and there has never been a better time than the current socio-economic landscape to launch our product. Our app is the antidote to the overwhelm that women feel when it comes to finances. Our step by step money plan is supporting thousands to pay down debt, build savings and invest and build wealth for the future. Being chosen as a Regional Winner is not only a great achievement for us personally as founders, but it is a win for our loyal and inspirational Financielle community. We have been overwhelmed by the support and encouragement of the North West tech and business community. We are so proud to play our part; we all benefit from a stronger tech and investment ecosystem.”

Shoayb Patel, Founder of RDvault, said: “We’re thrilled and excited to have been chosen as one of the Rising Stars North West Regional Winners. RDvault are looking forward to the next stages of the competition. It’s great to be recognised by the judges for our disruptive platform in helping companies recover precious R&D costs in the way of R&D Tax Credits. We look forward to continuing the momentum and securing further awards, expanding our team and completing our Series A round. The exposure we’ll gain from Tech Nation will no doubt be invaluable to this journey!”

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Notes to the editor:

About the North West Regional Winners:

[THRIFT](#) - Liverpool - Ecommerce

THRIFT tells you what any unwanted or unused items are worth on the second-hand market and where they can be sold.

[Financielle](#) - Manchester - Fintech

Financielle's mission is to help bridge the gap in personal finance and inspire millions of women to

invest and build wealth for their future through education and motivational content, practical money tools and a supportive community – which can all be found in the Financielle app.

[My First Five Years](#) - Manchester - Edtech

My First Five Years creates a safe and supportive learning space for parents, to support their child's unique development. Using scientific research, and supported by many years of industry expertise, My First Five Years adapts to suit the individual needs of children through creative play.

[Jyrney](#) - Manchester - Travel tech

Jyrney is redefining how travel, transport and mobility companies access ground transport, enabling a true door-to-door experience for their customers. In a particularly fragmented market, Jyrney enables mobility as a service, bringing ground transport within a traveller's online booking tool, with visibility of total journey cost, CO2 emissions and meeting duty of care needs.

[RDvault](#) - Manchester - Fintech

RDvault has developed the world's first fully automated R&D Tax Credits platform empowering SMEs to swiftly and easily claim R&D tax incentives from HMRC. Their cloud-based platform, allows users to integrate their accountancy packages such as Xero, Sage, and QuickBooks to extract, collate and prepare all the relevant information necessary to create an HMRC compliant R&D claim.

Company photos:

Please find images of the companies' logos and founders [here](#), and of their teams [here](#).

About the Rising Stars competition:

Rising Stars 4.0 is the UK's only truly national scaleup competition, designed to be accessible to the best early-stage tech companies from all areas of the country. Entrants are supported throughout the application process, and given training and support at each stage of the competition to enable them to compete to their best ability and deliver the perfect pitch. The competition culminates in the top 20 companies being showcased and promoted to a highly curated audience of investors, corporates, influencers and the wider tech ecosystem. The judging panel then deliberate over the final 20, selecting 10 companies to be named as this year's Rising Stars, who will feature in a high-profile celebration event on 24 March 2022.

Eligibility criteria for the Rising Stars competition:

- Seed to pre-Series A funding stage OR if revenue focused, generating annual revenues below £1.5mn
- A digital tech business with a product or service to sell
- At least one active client or pilot
- Able to demonstrate market traction
- HQ'd in UK
- Company incorporated between 1-3 years
- Able to commit to key dates in the Rising Stars calendar

About Tech Nation:

Tech Nation is the leading growth platform for UK tech scaleups. 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 900 companies have successfully graduated from Tech Nation's growth programmes. Alumni include Skyscanner, Darktrace, and Monzo, as well as 3 of the UK's 7 new 'decacorns'; Revolut, Wise, and Farfetch.