

# The Ireland Funds Business Plan Competition

## UPDATES FROM OUR ALUMNI

THE IRELAND FUNDS RUNS AN ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION. BY ENGAGING WITH THIRD-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS AND FOCUSING ON EARLY-STAGE ENTREPRENEURS, THE COMPETITION PROMOTES THE SKILLS NEEDED TO DEVELOP INDUSTRIES, ATTRACT INVESTORS AND, ULTIMATELY, CREATE JOBS.

THE IRELAND FUNDS BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NDRC, WAS FOUNDED BY SAN FRANCISCO-BASED IRELAND FUNDS AMERICA BOARD DIRECTOR, BILL MCKIERNAN OF WSM CAPITAL, LLC. PARTICIPANTS HAVE A CHANCE TO WIN CASH PRIZES AS WELL AS ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS AND MENTORSHIP.



# Where Are They Now?



## KIDS SPEECH LAB 2018 WINNER

*“As first-time entrepreneurs, participating in the Business Plan Competition gave us the tools to critically analyse our business plan and gave us the confidence to fully commit to the business.”*

Kids Speech Labs is the first digital health platform for children's speech and language development. They are using speech recognition and artificial intelligence (AI) to develop objective bench-marking and intervention applications for children's speech skills, enabling parents and clinicians to identify speech and language delays as early as possible. Their goal is to be the first stop for all stakeholders as a child begins to communicate, to ensure that no child misses out on the interventions they need to develop communication skills that are so critical for future development.

Since winning The Ireland Funds Business Plan Competition, Kids Speech Labs has secured private funding as well as the highly competitive H2020 SME instrument phase 2 grant. These allowed the team to develop a prototype application which has generated one of the largest datasets of children's speech for a clinical application. They are more than half way through raising a seed investment from private investors and Enterprise Ireland, and plan to kick-off development of their first product in Q1 of 2020.

## SAFECILITY

### 2018 THIRD RUNNER-UP

*"The Ireland Funds Business Plan Competition taught us how to validate an idea and how to make sure we were building what customers wanted. We pivoted mid-way through the six-week program due to our customer discovery findings and Safecility is what emerged. We wouldn't be here without the Business Plan Competition. Since 2018, our customer base has grown, turnover in 2019 is 10 times 2018, we have developed patentable technology and are leading the way in automated, smart building safety testing and compliance globally. The Business Plan Competition was the best start for our company and has helped us to stay focused on what customers want."*



Safecility helps to build safer communities through technology. Their sensors and automated emergency lighting system allows for wireless testing of key life safety equipment in buildings, savings thousands of man hours per year. This helps landlords to automate legally required safety testing, ensuring required fire-safety and life-safety testing is carried out. The software manages compliance for estates at scale helping their customers deliver safer homes

Since coming third in the 2018 Business Plan Competition, Safecility has grown to a team of 6 based in Dublin and has clients in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The company has secured innovation funding from the EU H2020 programme and the European Space Agency. Current customers include Limerick City and County Council and Vivid Homes—a UK Housing Authority. In 2020 Safecility plans to expand into the UAE and Singapore.



## JUMPAGRADE

### 2018 FINALIST

*"The Business Plan Competition helped connect jumpAgrade with a host of philanthropic funders which will play a significant role in meeting the social focus of our organization"*

JumpAgrade is an online service that helps second-level students build their confidence and prepare for exams. Now in business for its third academic year, jumpAgrade has revolutionized private tutor services making them available to students from the comfort of their own home. It takes the hassle out of tutoring, allowing students to work at their own pace online with support from top level private tutors.

JumpAgrade was founded on the mission to make personalized feedback accessible to all students, regardless of ability, location or background. They work with organisations, local companies and university access programs to help make sure students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access support through the tutors that work with them. In a twelve-week jumpAgrade program working with a group of students from eight different DEIS schools in North Dublin, there was an average grade increase of 11.5%, with 85% of those students reporting an increase in confidence in their chosen subject.

Since participating in The Ireland Funds Business Plan Competition, jumpAgrade was a finalist in the Google Adopt A Start-up Programme and was chosen as winners of the Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Award. JumpAgrade is quickly becoming the most recognized provider of private tuition to second-level students across Ireland and has plans to scale to international markets.

## MACHINE EYE

### 2018 INNOVATION AWARD WINNER

*"The Ireland Funds Business Plan Competition acted as a springboard for Machine Eye, moving forward with greater energy and enthusiasm, and a knowledge that what we were doing was working. It also provided great connections, some of whom have opened massive doors for us."*

Machine Eye is an innovative safety device for use on tractors, plant, and heavy machinery. It provides protection against accidents involving machinery for operators, bystanders and everybody on the farm. Machine Eye views the future and when an accident is imminent it automatically takes control, pre-emptively isolating or halting the machine to remove risk protecting operators, families and livelihoods.

Since winning the Business Plan Competition Innovation Award, Machine Eye has won both the Investor Pitch and the Health and Safety Award at the 2018 National Ploughing Championships, one of the highest platforms in the agricultural industry. The company now has full-time employees and is developing at a great pace. It has also led to great personal success for founder Brendan Digney who won Union of Students Ireland Student Entrepreneur of the Year and Queen's University Belfast Student Entrepreneur of the Year. He was also an Institute of Directors Student Director of the Year UK finalist.



## #IrelandFundsBPC

The Ireland Funds Business Plan Competition 2020 will take place in Dublin on June 23, 2020



## SEAMLESSCARE

### 2019 THIRD RUNNERS-UP

*"There were clear steps that helped us to focus on what is most important for our project, from defining the problem we are addressing to effective customer discovery, every session was relevant and useful."*

The seamlessCARE platform supports the continuity of care for anyone in a hospital, nursing home or other care setting through a video-based care planning system that enables carers to take photographs, record videos and make notes to communicate the needs and preferences of each individual. It also offers a range of innovative features that maximize support for people with intellectual disability, complex needs and degenerative conditions. SeamlessCARE data analytics provides insights into patterns of care and a unique tool translates a set of sounds made by non-verbal people so that every care provider can understand a range of their vocalizations.

seamlessCARE recently received a prestigious Commercialisation Fund award from Enterprise Ireland. They are about to begin 18-months of research and development that will culminate in the launch of seamlessCARE's pioneering care planning platform. With potential partners already lining up from seven countries, seamlessCARE is well placed to improve the lives of care recipients, health care professionals and family carers all over the world.