



Accelerating entrepreneurial success.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**LAUNCH NY HAS INVESTED \$925,000 IN UPSTATE NY STARTUPS SINCE MARCH 2016  
WITH SIX NEW PORTFOLIO COMPANIES**

*Most Active Seed Fund in Region Spurs Other Investors*

*Upstate New York, January 30, 2018* – Launch New York (Launch NY), Upstate New York’s first and only venture development organization (VDO) to provide pro bono mentoring and capital access to high-growth potential startup businesses across the 27 westernmost counties of New York State, today announced six new investments. Since 2016, the organization has invested a total of \$925,000, in over 20 of Upstate New York’s most promising companies to become the most active seed fund in Upstate New York, while also earning a designation as the only venture funding Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) deploying capital in New York State. With more than 75 applications to date and an average of more than one investment transaction per month, Launch NY is continuing its raise to fully capitalize the fund at \$5MM, by leveraging its CDFI status and appeal to investors and funders who want to support startups, to meet the significant demand for risk capital among regional entrepreneurs.

“Launch NY isn’t a typical venture capital organization, simply picking the one in a hundred good deal,” said Marnie LaVigne, President and CEO of Launch NY. “Our model of providing pro bono mentoring while leveraging our seed funding to help our clients achieve key milestones is exactly what our entrepreneurial ecosystem needs at this time in our evolution. We’re gratified to see that our resources, including deep due diligence, is already yielding more than 3.5 times our funding in investment from others, as well as amazing progress in our client companies.”

In addition to the over \$900,000 in investments from Launch NY, the organization’s portfolio companies have raised an additional \$3.1MM in follow-on and co-investments since March 2016. Co-investments took center stage in 2017, with over 10 Launch NY investments featuring one or more co-investors. In two of its most recent investments, Launch NY partnered with Z80 Labs in a co-investment in 3AM Innovations ([www.faccountability.com](http://www.faccountability.com)) totaling \$125,000 and StartFast Venture Accelerator in a co-investment in RepHike ([www.rephike.com](http://www.rephike.com)) totaling \$145,000.

“Launch NY, Z80 Labs, and StartFast Venture Accelerator share the vision of creating a support network that gets entrepreneurs on a path to success and improves the odds of growing their businesses and the region’s economy,” said Lindsay Stencil, COO and fund manager of Launch NY. “These co-investments are an example of how our collaborative work is allowing Upstate New York’s most promising companies to receive early funding more effectively.”

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3AM Innovations developed Flare™, a real-time technology that allows first responders to actively track and locate their members inside a burning building for increased safety. Firefighters wear personal sensors that report back their exact position for the commanding officer to be able to monitor the situation through an “at-a-glance” screen on their mobile device. The technology provides a greater view of the fire ground, allowing for better life-or-death decision-making.

“This co-investment from Launch NY and Z80 Labs will give 3AM Innovations the resources to integrate our hardware and optimize our user interface [UI] designs,” said Patrick O’Connor, CEO and Founder of 3AM innovations. “The timing of this investment is perfect. It will keep us on track to launch our beta product and to test our system with NYFD, the world’s largest fire department.”

“We are proud to partner with Launch NY to co-invest in this high-growth potential startup,” said Jon Spitz, Managing Director of Z80 Labs. “Whenever we get to work with partners to kick start the success of a promising new company here in Buffalo, we are meeting our mission of making our region a destination where innovative businesses and exciting new jobs can be created.”

RepHike is the next-gen platform for brands to identify and connect with their top fans. Fans are given the opportunity to be a part of their favorite brands as ambassadors. Brand ambassadors indulge in a variety of different activities including product promotion, producing viral content, and grassroots advocacy while earning cash rewards, prizes, merchandise, and more.

"We've been working with the Launch NY team for nearly one year, and their expertise coupled with investment has moved RepHike in the right direction," stated Shashank Roy Co-Founder, CEO of RepHike. "We are working with some big brands like GANT, and the investment comes at a perfect time to scale our revenue and continue creating a world-class product."

"We're very excited to be a part of RepHike's continued growth. They're a winning team addressing an important customer problem," stated James Shomar, Program Director, StartFast Venture Accelerator. "With their innovative approach, we think they're going to become a major player in the marketing industry."

Launch NY’s complete list of its six new investments includes:

- **3AM Innovations LLC**, Buffalo, NY - \$25,000 investment  
Created a patented technology to allow first responders to actively track and locate their members inside a burning building for increased safety. The technology provides a greater view of the fire ground, allowing for better life-or-death decision-making.
- **Ecoelectro**, Ithaca, NY - \$50,000 investment  
Ecoelectro is a specialty chemicals company that develops and manufactures advanced polymers for clean energy and water applications. Its technology, developed at Cornell University, has the ability to both reduce electrolyzer and fuel cell system costs by 40% and extend overall system life.

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- **Farther Farms (Natural Cuts Inc.)**, Ithaca, NY - \$10,000 follow-on investment  
A food technology company working to commercialize a sustainable processing methodology developed in Cornell University's Department of Food Science. The all-natural, proprietary process can extend the shelf life of fresh-cut produce by months at ambient temperature.
- **OrthoFit**, Ithaca, NY - \$50,000 investment  
OrthoFit is a health and safety IoT company on the mission to prevent injuries at workplaces using our smart wearables to collect worker data and our software platform to detect injury risks.
- **RepHike**, Buffalo, NY - \$50,000 investment  
RepHike is a software company whose platform provides a solution for campus and influencer marketing. RepHike's curated community of student fans is ready-to-go for brands to access and carry-out powerful, authentic marketing.
- **SimpleFund**, Buffalo, NY - \$35,000 investment  
SimpleFund is a mobile fundraising technology platform, designed to allow anyone with a smartphone and a few minutes to spare, the ability to raise money for any non-profit without having to sell anything, buy anything, or ask anyone for money.

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#### **About Launch New York:**

The mission of Launch New York, Inc. (Launch NY), a US Treasury-designated Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) is to identify, support, and invest in high-growth, high-impact companies and catalyze the entrepreneurial culture in the 27 counties comprising the western half of Upstate NY. Launch NY is a 501(c)(3) non-profit venture development organization that promotes economic development through best practices, proven activities of experienced business mentoring, and seed capital investing in order to create investment-ready companies which have the promise to create significant economic impact and jobs for our region.

Launch NY uniquely fills the gap in connecting all of Upstate's entrepreneurship resources to a pathway to success via unique proof-of-concept capital and high-quality pro bono mentoring support through eighteen experienced local entrepreneurs-in-residence and a national mentor network of 2000 industry, business, and investment experts. Launch NY was formed as a result of collaboration between private and public stakeholders in Upstate New York to create long term strategies that would foster a robust self-sustaining entrepreneurial ecosystem built on regional collaboration. Launch NY is headquartered in Buffalo and has regional co-location with partner organizations in Binghamton, Ithaca, Rochester, and Syracuse. It has served over 740 companies comprising more than 2,400 jobs since starting operations in 2012.

The Launch NY Seed Fund is a nonprofit fund, fueled by grants and donations, with all returns coming back to the fund to support investments in future startups in what is known as an "evergreen cycle." The Fund is built upon successful models of other venture development organizations in comparable areas of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and other states around the country who have used this approach for as much as two decades to drive their economy through entrepreneurship. Due to the nonprofit structure of its fund, Launch NY is able to support

entrepreneurs like 3AM Innovations and RepHike while it continues to seek capital toward its \$5M fundraising goal.

For more information, see [launchny.org](http://launchny.org).

**About StartFast Venture Accelerator:**

StartFast is a mentorship-driven startup accelerator in Syracuse, NY. Each year we invest in 5-7 software, mobile, or IoT companies & host a 3-month program. StartFast's program is a highly selective, accepting just 0.25% of applicants. We invest \$25,000 up front, with up-to \$100,000 in follow-on funding. Teams are plugged into a network of world-class entrepreneurs, investors, corporate executives, and subject matter experts to help take their company to the next level.

**About Z80 Labs:**

Z80 Labs, launched in 2012, is Buffalo's first Internet-focused technology incubator, providing entrepreneurs the ability to build new and innovative tech companies in Buffalo, New York. Startups invited to locate in Z80 Labs are given a wide array of services including office space, tech support, collaboration tools, weekly education programs, specifically-assigned mentorship teams, access to the Z80 Speaker Series, amenities, and infrastructure from local companies, as well as expert advice from renowned industry advisors. Funding for investments in Z80 startups is provided by SCP Buffalo Incubator Innovate NY Fund LP, managed by Z80 Labs, who was awarded a grant from The Innovate NY Fund, a joint venture launched by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to spur innovation, job creation and entrepreneurship across New York State.