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Three of the Northshore's Top Startups Advance to 2026 NSpire Startup Slam
Live Pitch Event Returns January 8 with Over \$100,000 in Cash and In-Kind Support on the Line

- **Finalists chosen to participate in the Northshore's premiere pitch competition, the 2026 NSpire Startup Slam.**
- **Event takes place Thursday, January 8, 2026 at Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Historic Downtown Hammond.**
- **Reception begins at 4:30 pm. Program begins at 6:00 pm.**
- **Tickets are free and open to the public. Registration link below.**

COVINGTON, LA – STartUP Northshore has announced the three finalists who will compete at the 2026 NSpire Startup Slam. This award-winning premier pitch competition on the Northshore features local entrepreneurs vying for a prize package of cash and services valued at more than \$100,000. The live showcase, presented by Chevron, will take place at the historic Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Downtown Hammond on Thursday, January 8, 2026, with a networking reception at 4:30 pm and the event kickoff at 6:00 pm.

The finalists selected to compete in the live competition are as follows:

- **BRUH. Skincare** delivers accessible, no-nonsense skincare for men with products that make routines simple and clear. With names like “BRUH. wash your face” and “BRUH. you need to moisturize,” the brand removes confusion, offers high quality formulations, and brings the performance of premium products to a straightforward, guy friendly experience.
- **WSPER** provides next generation safety technology with reliable, hardware-based panic buttons and IoT sensor systems that deliver verified alerts and faster first responder engagement. Their ecosystem of wearable devices, environmental sensors, and automated cloud workflows solves the industry’s biggest failure point: panic buttons that fail when urgency matters most.
- **InService Inc.** modernizes public safety with an assistive intelligence cloud platform that replaces outdated CAD and RMS systems and brings real-time, CJIS-compliant operations to law enforcement. Their multi entry, land and expand approach helps agencies adopt the platform quickly, generate fast initial revenue, and scale into full system integration.

“Every year, the NSpire Startup Slam shines a spotlight on the founders who are shaping the future of our regional economy,” said **Russell Richardson, President and CEO of St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation**. “Their passion and ingenuity inspire all of us, and their success demonstrates what’s possible when entrepreneurs have access to the right support, mentorship, and connections. STartUP Northshore has become a catalyst for that growth, and we’re proud to support them as they strengthen our talent pipeline and fuel long-term economic opportunity.”



The three finalists will pitch their business to a live audience and a panel of judges at the 2026 NSpire Startup Slam for one of the Gulf South's largest prize packages complete with \$50,000 in cash funding, provided by Capital One, as well as high-quality in-kind services valued at over \$50,000. The in-kind service package is designed to equip finalists with resources that support every stage of business growth. This includes business advisement services from **The Bernard Group** and **MCDS, LLC**; marketing and branding strategy from **Ninety by Three, LLC** and **PERK Social**; startup legal, business, and intellectual property consulting services from **Arena Collective**; accounting and bookkeeping consultation from **OfficeOps**; business card and sign printing services from **Mele Printing**; a one-year founding membership to **Palette Northshore**, a workspace community for entrepreneurs; and memberships to the **St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce** and **Tangipahoa Chamber of Commerce**.

Following two rounds of a rigorous application and review process, the three finalists were selected to advance to the main stage after pitching to a Finalist Selection Committee made up of local business leaders from across the region. As the finalists prepare to take the stage, each startup will receive one-on-one professional pitch coaching from **Abbey Lovett, CEO & Founder of Pathos Coaching** and a three-time national champion speaker.

The finalists will be evaluated by a panel of judges on core criteria including concept and business model, market viability, scalability, traction, investment readiness, presentation skills, as well as the ability and commitment to generate a significant positive impact on the region.

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The 2026 NSpire Startup Slam judges panel includes:

- **Caitlin Hunter**, Lead Stakeholder Engagement Advisor, Chevron
- **Katharine Kay**, Greater New Orleans Market President, Capital One
- **Josh Fleig**, Chief Innovation Officer, Louisiana Economic Development
- **Chris Meaux**, Founder and CEO - QiMana Inc., Chairman of the Board - Mallard Bay Outdoors
- **Kyle Kent**, President, Kent Design Build, Inc.
- **Davorio Stevenson**, Executive Venture Partner, Boot64 Ventures

This pitch competition represents STartUP Northshore's commitment to and investment in building programs that support local entrepreneurs and cultivate the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. The organization delivers world-class programming, networking opportunities, access to capital, and mentorship from esteemed industry leaders, investors, and founders at little to no cost to the startups.

"The NSpire Startup Slam is a powerful reminder of the talent, vision, and community support that fuel our region's growth," said **Ginger Cangelosi, Executive Director of Tangipahoa Economic Development**. "Tangipahoa Economic Development is proud to partner with STartUP Northshore to



welcome audiences from across Southeast Louisiana to Downtown Hammond for this signature event, where the bold entrepreneurs who are shaping the future of our region take center stage.”

NSpire Startup Slam will include an exhilarating live showdown to be held at the historic Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Downtown Hammond on **Thursday, January 8, 2026, with a networking reception at 4:30 pm and the event kickoff at 6:00 pm** Rising entrepreneurs will showcase their groundbreaking ideas, connect with industry leaders, and compete for a robust prize package.

Admission is free and open to the public. Registration is encouraged and available online at <https://startupnorthshore.com/nspire#register-for-nspire>.

The 2026 NSpire Startup Slam is made possible through the financial support and partnership of our presenting sponsor, **Chevron**, and our grant prize sponsor, **Capital One**. Additional funding partners include **St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation**, **Tangipahoa Economic Development Foundation**, **Washington Economic Development Foundation**, **Hancock Whitney Bank**, and the **Northshore Community Foundation**. Special thanks to our media partners at **Northshore Media Group** and **The Times Picayune | NOLA.com**, as well as our photography and videography partners at **Advidly**.

About STartUP Northshore

STartUP Northshore is cultivating a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem through strategic partnerships with leading organizations in the startup community, including the Louisiana Small Business Development Center at Southeastern Louisiana University and The Idea Village, to deliver first-class programming for entrepreneurs and second-stage companies. STartUP Northshore is supported by a regional collaboration among St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation, Tangipahoa Economic Development, and Washington Economic Development Foundation. Through this initiative, the next wave of local entrepreneurs from all three parishes gain access to immersive education, dynamic networking opportunities, and mentorship from industry leaders, experienced founders, and capital investors - all delivered on the Northshore. STartUP Northshore is managed by St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation. For more information about STartUP Northshore, please visit startupnorthshore.com.

Media Contact:

- Cenzo Caronna, *Entrepreneur in Residence and STartUP Northshore Executive Director*
- vcaronna@sttammanyedc.org | 985.590.0045 | www.startupnorthshore.com

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