



ABSTRACT

Through a new “Year of Innovation” calendar of events “pipeline” it is now possible to startup with an idea fostered from a fall event that could lead to greater than \$50,000 in capital and investments, and a plethora of other resources, for startups and business development, in just one year. This means that Alaska’s great ideas and innovations now have a clear pathway to market validation and success – right here in Alaska.

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INNOVATE ALASKA (2.0):
2016 YEAR OF INNOVATION
Building Alaska’s tomorrow, today.

Summary

A yearlong series of programs statewide has been designed/aligned to grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem, empower export and import substitution businesses to innovate, and engage the next generation of Alaska entrepreneurs. This effort, co-organized and led by economic development partnership across the state, and coined “Innovate Alaska (2.0),” reflects the collaborative efforts of a growing number of organizations, co-working spaces, and businesses and investors statewide that have come together for the shared goal of diversifying Alaska’s economic base. This is done through a “pipeline” of curated events publicized through a weekly digest calendar, which has created an increase in flow through of available financial and human capital for startups, and is resulting in useful metrics and feedback for EDO’s - all which will be accessible through a centralized “neutral” InnovateAlaska.net website [currently under construction]. Through this “Year of Innovation” calendar of events “pipeline” it is now possible to start with an idea fostered from a fall event that could lead to greater than \$50,000 in capital and investments, and a plethora of other resources, for startups and business development, in just one year. This means that Alaska’s great ideas and innovations now have a clear pathway to market validation and success – *right here in Alaska*.

For Fairbanks alone, this effort, to date, has resulted in unprecedented startup generation, with over 14 documented startup businesses, and >\$210K in capital investment to Fairbanks startups, directly resulting from 2016 Innovate Alaska (2.0) activity and collaborative efforts of the statewide EDO community. [*See Appendices 1 & 2.]

Origins

Innovate Alaska (2.0) emerged from initial efforts to take stock of existing available resources to best leverage opportunities to grow the startup business community.

As a member of AK Entrepreneur Edge, a committee comprised of statewide academic and economic development organizations, FEDC’s Tech Led Project Manager engaged economic entities across the state to improve access to startup community resources by mapping statewide events, including local and national competitions, classes, and events, in a “Year of Innovation” calendar. This led to the co-founding, and co-curating, an ongoing digest of Alaska start up-related resources, the [Alaska Startup Digest](#). The ultimate goal of this effort being, to build a local startup network sufficient to support sustainable Fairbanks-based resources to help grow startups in the Interior.

In the first quarter, through these events market-validated startups were encouraged to apply for the Launch: Alaska Pre-Accelerator, to then compete for a spot in the premier cohort of Launch: Alaska, the state’s first, and currently only, high-growth/high-return global accelerator network (GAN) model, in Anchorage, in April of 2016.

With positive participant feedback, in June the “Year Of Innovation” was re-branded as “*Innovate Alaska (2.0)*” [I.A. (2.0)] and expanded to focus upon developing three fundamental

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“legs” of support identified by key stakeholders, as necessary to seed and support the growth of innovative new business in the state. These three “legs”, in order of priority, are:

- 1) To grow the entrepreneurial ecosystem
- 2) Encourage export and import substitution businesses to innovate
- 3) Engage the next generation through K-12 outreach.

2016 efforts have focused primarily upon the first leg - growing the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

How It Works

A healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem consists of budding and existing entrepreneurs, investors, and supporting community members, including legal and accounting professionals, economic development organizations working in tandem in co-working spaces - for-profit entities offering tech resources, community and working space encouraging a collaborative working environment.

The 2016 “Year of Innovation” calendar of events established “key” startup events leading up to each of the four seasonal “cornerstone” events in which IA (2.0) partners, together with event management, work to build capacity and leverage business resources and opportunities, across each region of the state. This became the reference point upon which EDO’s are now able to focus their efforts. [Appendix 3.]

These curated events provide structured opportunities for people with different backgrounds and expertise to come together and build teams, prototype and validate products and service markets, and test drive scalable business models, while developing skills for agility and resiliency, *prior to launching*. This helps increase the odds for startup success and sustainability.

In 2016 there were 14 established “key” events in the Year of Innovation calendar, including the four seasonal “cornerstone” events listed below. Regional EDO’s are encouraged to support these events through the focusing of available resources, in collaboration with established and new networks, for corporate sponsorship, publicity, event organization/management, and other affiliated resources. They are also tasked with the accrual of data to provide meaningful metrics – both in alignment with their current priorities to meet their own objectives, while contributing to an effort with measurable greater impact.

In addition to EDO involvement, each segment of the startup community is encouraged to contribute in the following ways:

- Organizations, businesses and policy professionals are invited to support the events through in-kind donations for useful prizes, and in some cases cash; advise and bring forth match funding opportunities to raise capital, become involved with local co-working space and their offerings through membership and participation, and encourage the development of new products and services for their business through the offerings in these spaces.
- Startups are introduced to co-working spaces, and encouraged to sign up for Startup

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Digest and participate in competitions, and to utilize one-on-one business resources such as those available through partners, like the Alaska SBDC and other partners.

- Public policy makers and leaders are invited to present at events, and stay apprised of early economic activity through direct interactions with the business community.
- Investors, including both social venture and venture capitalists, are invited to attend events and work directly with teams, providing valuable feedback and sharing resources as mentors, and to meet and join local investor communities to leverage opportunities for both SME and high growth business development.

The foundation of the I.A. (2.0) – Year of Innovation structure lies in four (4) seasonal “cornerstone” events – Innovation Summit (winter), Launch Alaska (spring), Alaska Startup Week - formerly Entrepreneurship Week (summer), and Arctic Innovation Competition (fall). *These events anchor the sequence by providing points of significant opportunity for emerging startups to accrue capital and investment, and are the most significant focal point for direct EDO support for maximum value impact.* [Ex. Appendix 2.]

The optimal startup cycle begins with the Alaska Startup Week, leading into the fall sequence in Fairbanks culminating at the Arctic Innovation Competition, then goes on through the Launch Alaska cycle ending with the venture capital investor pitch event, L:A’s Demo Day, the following summer. In 2016, the total amount of startup capital and investments combined exceeded \$49K. This number is expected to exceed \$60K in 2017.

The Year of Innovation calendar is circulated online, through [subscription](#) to the Alaska Startup Digest, which features other startup news, resources, and other events by location, with links for easy registration. Since beginning in January 2016, the Alaska Startup Digest has featured over 285 event listings*, including the 13 “key” events. [*Appendix 6.]

Fairbanks Results

As a result of this effort to date, Fairbanks has seen unprecedented startup generation in 2016, with over 14 documented startups and over \$210K in capital investment to Fairbanks startups, directly resulting from the 2016 “Year of Innovation” statewide sequence of startup events, and collaborative efforts of the statewide EDO community.* [* Ref. Appendix 2.]

The three key events - Hackathon, Startup Weekend, and the Arctic Innovation Competition (AIC), occur in sequence, in Fairbanks, over period of just six weeks in the fall. This change was implemented in 2015, In an effort to maximize the amount of products and services developed from IP at the University and in the local community, and to increase flow-through to the “cornerstone” UAF Arctic Innovation Competition. This resulted in a greater local flow through to AIC than in previous years, when events were not sequenced.

The 2016 “Year of Innovation” configuration took this a giant step further. Linking regional cornerstone events, made it possible to not only increase in local flow through into AIC, but also

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increased Startup Weekend Fairbanks participation in early Fall, as a result of EDO involvement in the statewide Startup Weekend Alaska in January, and subsequent sequence of events leading up to the fall Fairbanks sequence.

One example of a recent success is the Fairbanks-based business, Aquilo:

Example 1)

In spring of 2016, Fairbanks entrepreneurs from the Sam Vanderwaal and Carl France applied to the Launch: Alaska Pre-Accelerator in Anchorage in spring, formed tech business Aquilo, then won a place in the Launch: Alaska Accelerator. Aquilo's pitch to investors at the Fall Demo Day event has resulted in follow on funding in the amount of \$150K from the Alaska Accelerator Fund slated for disbursement to the Fairbanks tech business in the first quarter of 2017.

Another example, is this year's Startup Weekend Fairbanks first place team, Attently:

Example 2)

Attently is a proprietary audience attention-measuring tool using facial recognition software. After developing and validating their business idea at this year's Startup Weekend Fairbanks, Attently worked closely with SBDC to further refine their business model and incorporate, and went on to win the top \$10K prize at Arctic Innovation Competition. They are now poised to access additional capital and mentor resources through participation in the spring 2017 Pre-Accelerator program.

In 2016 Startup Weekend Fairbanks saw a five-fold increase in *pre-event registration* – 25 participants registered in advance in 2016, up from 5 in 2015, and record numbers of ideas pitched and mentors engaged. [Ref. Appendix 4.] This included new entrepreneur participants from Barrow, and the UAF Active and Innovative Minds student club – each which had previously been unaware of available events in Fairbanks leading up to AIC. This year's Arctic Innovation Competition also saw a record number of submissions totaling 119 across the state. At least eight of the 20 finalists selected were the direct result of FEDC involvement in I.A. (2.0) activities. A third example from AIC, is Pandere shoes for unique feet:

Example 3)

PANDERE shoes for unique feet, an Anchorage-based startup, emerged from the statewide Startup Weekend, FEDC co-hosted and mentored in January. Pandere shoes placed 3rd and received an additional kicker prize at AIC, totaling \$4K, and then went on to win the Kaufman "1 in a Million" competition - another startup resource featured in the Year of Innovation Calendar. Pandere shoes has accumulated over \$25K in capital for their business in total, expert industry mentor resources, and are positioned to go into production in January with advance orders on the book.

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These three examples illustrate how EDO's worked together to leverage resources to have a favorable direct impact on startups not only in Fairbanks, but also across the state, through Innovate Alaska (2.0) efforts.

FEDC Project Manager's role in 2016 included participation in a total of 19 events – locally and 4 across the state, in various capacities. This included the conversion of Entrepreneurship Week into Startup Week as a coordinated statewide effort, and the introduction of Global Entrepreneurship Week locally, as well as oversight of the I.A. (2.0) collaborative effort, and the creation of the website landing page. [Ref. Appendix 4 for detail.]

Partnership

Results continue to affirm the effectiveness of sequenced curated startup events, such as Startup Weekend, emerging from Innovate Alaska (2.0) efforts since January.

In 2016, well over 60 different public and private organizations statewide partnered to make the fourteen “key” events possible. In Fairbanks, collaborators have included FEDC, Alaska Small Business Development Center, UAF Co-Operative Extension Service/Alaska SCORE, UAF Office of Intellectual Property and Commercialization, Alaska EPSCOR, and The Hub co-working space, among others. In Fairbanks, and in Alaska, IA (2.0) efforts continue to reap positive results and Project Manager will be expanding upon relationships locally in 2017 through regular meetings with stakeholders.

Partner organizations outside of Fairbanks have included the Alaska Small Business Development Center, who provided \$5K investment in Innovate Alaska (2.0) efforts, Alaska Pacific University's Hickel Endowment Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategic Leadership who continues to provide support for programming, advertising, investor and mentor networks and T.A. assistance, Juneau Economic Development Council, Haa Aani, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference, and Alaska North to Opportunity, who each continue to provide human capital and data to Innovate Alaska (2.0) collaborative efforts, and The Boardroom, The Hub and Decision Theater North who in addition to their direct contributions, have provided valuable co-working spaces and network resources for the startup community.

Innovate Alaska (2.0) effort has received recognition by the press locally through extensive KTVF 13 coverage of Startup Week, and nationally, through articles published in the Alaska Dispatch News, Juneau Empire, Fairbanks Daily News Miner, and others. [Links available, upon request.]

Going Forward

For the most direct access for users and partners, the InnovateAlaska.net website [currently under construction] is being designed to be the “go to” source for Alaska's budding

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entrepreneurs, inventors, and other members of the startup community to intersect.

The site will reflect useful metrics, such as the number of new manufacturing, tech startups and new exports, by region, and “key” event statistics reflecting the total reach and results of efforts. This info will aid EDO partners to track startup activity resulting from the “key” events, previously unavailable, in addition to providing EDO’s a direct channel to the startup community.

The site currently serves as a landing page and directs traffic to the Alaska Startup Digest. In order to obtain these metrics, a neutral statewide EDO device is necessary, and *Innovate Alaska fulfills this vital role.*

The first event in 2017 is the Innovation Summit, in Juneau, where community members will be invited to engage in Innovate Alaska (2.0) at various levels to best support the 2017 “Year of Innovation” calendar of events (currently in draft), further expanding upon the growing Alaska startup community. IA (2.0) partner, Alaska Pacific University Professor, Ky Holland, will coordinate investor workshops, and FEDC’s Tech Led Project Manager has been requested to host a startup breakout session, an introductory startup activity for S.E. participants.

The development of the second and third “legs” in 2017, encouraging new products for export, and growing the next generation of Alaska entrepreneurs, respectively, will provide a vehicle for regional EDO participants to further business retention and expansion efforts and K-12 stem activities. Together these legs support the foundation upon which ***the Alaska of tomorrow can begin, today.***

In 2017, the coordination of Innovate Alaska (2.0) activities in 2017 is expected to continue to rotate between the three main regional EDO’s, FEDC, AEDC/APU & JEDC, with contribution from the state, and smaller regional EDO’s as available – particularly for the coordination of the Alaska Startup Week in July. The Alaska Startup Digest is also seeking additional curators, to join Tech Led Project Manager, APU Professor Ky Holland, and UA’s Gianna Holtz in the generation of the weekly startup publication.

Going forward, in order to maintain the basic administration of IA (2.0) will continue to require dedicated support for following baseline activities, as follows:

- Completion the design of the website (tentatively slated for APU Business School TA)
- Program oversight (currently FEDC & APU)
- Monitor the metrics .xls and updating website (currently FEDC)
- Maintain templates, event structures and registrations, pwds, etc. (currently FEDC & APU)
- Provide reports (currently shared)
- Coordinate calendar and supplemental events (currently FEDC, AEDC, APU & JEDC)

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To *grow* Innovate Alaska (2.0) will require additional resources. There are a number of options to do this.

As this “pipeline” becomes a tangible value creating entity, it can then be leveraged with additional financial resources to generate revenue streams that in return support the process in a more sustainable manner. The next steps in this process involve further exploring sustainable opportunities. These can include: working directly with accredited investors, or utilizing new crowdfunding options, to create matching funds for seed grants to establish a fund to support further “cornerstone” efforts. This could also potentially involve engagement of short term grant-funded options, to establish and grassroot systems supporting economic development in regions which target specific demographics to maximize the reach and impact of these resources, though a more sustainable funding model is ultimately necessary for continued growth.

Appendices

Master data document:

[..\TLD\2016 AI20 YOI results - FEDC REPORT.xlsx](#)

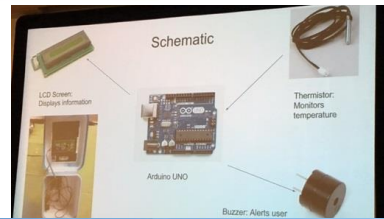
1. Fairbanks Businesses Formed from 2016 IA (2.0) Efforts
2. 2016 YOI Results Summary for FBX & Total Statewide
3. Year of Innovation Calendar of 13 “Key” Events, including 4 seasonal “Cornerstone” events (in bold) & Previous years comparison
4. Year of Innovation Calendar of Events Detail
5. 2016 Alaska Startup Digest event listings

Innovate Alaska (2.0): 2016 Year of Innovation

January –
December 2016



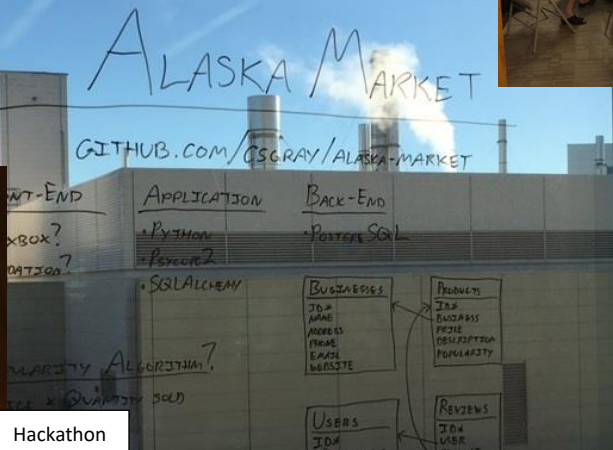
Attently @ AIC



Alaska Dream Machine @ The Hub



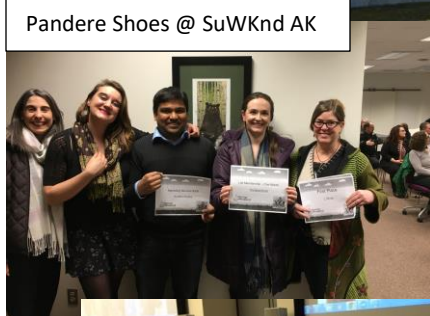
Innovation Summit 2016



Hackathon



Startup Weekend Fbx 2016



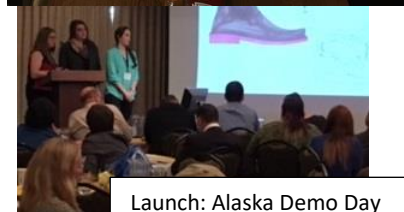
Pandere Shoes @ SuWknd AK



ASRA Dream, Design, Do!



Startup Weekend Fbx 2016 @ The Hub



Launch: Alaska Demo Day