

# CONNECT *USA*

YOUNG ENTERPRISE NI

BOSTON-NEW YORK 2022



Funded by  
U.S. Embassy London

# MISSION REPORT

APRIL 2022



# THE PURPOSE OF OUR TRIP

Young Enterprise Northern Ireland, with support from the US Embassy, took a group of 7 young entrepreneurs to Boston and New York for 10 days.

The purpose of the trip was to support, advise and inspire these early-stage young entrepreneurs through spending time together and meeting with successful entrepreneurs and business people in the US.

Each of the entrepreneurs are at differing stages of their journeys and therefore had individual goals for their time in the US. These goals are highlighted in the following profiles.



## MEET THE PEOPLE

# REUBEN MCFEETERS,

FOUNDER @ [HOTTIES.CHOCOLATE](#)



Hotties Chocolate is a small batch, luxury, hot chocolate company based in Northern Ireland.

Our hot chocolate is made using ethically sourced cocoa beans made into real chocolate flakes making every sip that extra bit creamier and smoother.

This year we have started growing our wholesale and export side of the business, supplying catering bags to cafes and restaurants.

Goal: To explore the export potential to the US and learn from those we meet.



## MEET THE PEOPLE

# SAM LYNAS,

CO-FOUNDER @HARU



Haru is a resale-as-a-service for fashion retailers and charities. Through our custom technology and service, we handle everything from product pick up, to customer delivery.

Following a Seed Investment raise in early 2021 of £500,000 Haru is planning for a larger raise in 2022 (£2 million+) focussed on scaling our current operation to work with thousands of retailers and launch a brand offering for clothing manufacturers.

Goal: To explore further investment and understand the landscape further.



## MEET THE PEOPLE

# GABRIELLE FEENAN,

FOUNDER @KORKKI



Korkki tackles the modern-day issue of unsustainable furniture by substituting harmful MDF pieces for biodegradable cork alternatives.

Korkki aims to replace some 22 million tonnes of furniture waste that go to landfill annually with furniture that is designed to be highly sustainable, of low impact during manufacture and distribution and to have longevity in lifespan.

Goal: To explore the current landscape of sustainable furniture in the US and seeking guidance in going to market



## MEET THE PEOPLE

# LEON GIBSON,

FOUNDER @ WIN IT TOGETHER



Win It Together is a start-up that is digitising online fundraising raffles, creating upside for the fundraiser, the sponsors of prizes and supporters who buy tickets.

We're providing a secure and trustworthy method of gamifying fundraising, allowing fundraisers to increase revenue alongside penetrating new demographics that otherwise may not have a propensity to contribute or engage

Goal: To understand the current landscape of fundraising tools in the US and create a plan to launch in the US



## MEET THE PEOPLE

# AIMEE CLINT,

FOUNDER @ BOOKS BY STELLAS



Books By Stellas is a social enterprise aimed at breaking the stigma surrounding Autism and spreading awareness.

Stellas has donated over 5000 copies to schools across NI and hopes to branch their donation to the rest of the UK, Ireland and further afield. By donating these books, the impact has been astronomical, we hear from parents and teachers regularly about how kids with Autism finally feel understood but most importantly accepted in their classrooms with their peers.

Goal: To learn how to best export the books to the US



## MEET THE PEOPLE

# CHRIS HOGG, FOUNDER @ TEKTAGS



Tektags is a revolutionary way for production companies manage data on-site using mobile devices, removing the need for shared, printed information.

Tektags was originally developed for the live events industry to manage technology such as lighting, video and audio equipment but the scalable concept could benefit many other industries that need to manage on-site equipment and information.

Goal: I would be interested in speaking with entrepreneurs in the tech space who would understand how I would bring this product to market.





## MEET THE PEOPLE

# GRAHAM CURRY,

FOUNDER @ HANDICADDIEE



Handicaddie is a mobile app which is the Uber for Golf Caddying. We connect golfers to caddies, whilst offering golf clubs scheduling software. Our team of 3 have raised £45,000 to launch our app, with investment from Techstart and Invest NI.

Handicaddie is keen to explore the possibilities of working with golf tour operators in the future as well as building the largest network for golf caddies worldwide.

Goal: Speak to people who are able to advise in the sports tech industry and explain more about the potential of venture capital.



## WHAT WE DID

# BOSTON

After arriving in Boston on Saturday evening, the group enjoyed soaking up some Irish culture at St Patrick's day weekend parade.

Meetings commenced on Monday morning with Invest NI, discussing the path of a business exporting into the US. Following this, the group benefited from a LinkedIn Masterclass at Techstars. Monday was finished off with a tour of MIT's Engine tech hub.

On Tuesday the group visited UMASS to connect with entrepreneurs of a similar age and learn about the global opportunities at hand. In the afternoon, the group went to Harvard iLabs to learn about the long-term deep tech startups

The Connect USA group met up with a Boston-based VC on Wednesday morning before taking the train over to New York in the afternoon.



## WHAT WE DID

# NEW YORK

In New York, the group had a range of visits with intrapreneurs from corporate backgrounds, as well as professionals from the Startup ecosystem.

Thursday morning was initiated with a visit to KPMG where the group met with the Head of Comms for the Americas region. Following this, they met with Ian McLernon, CEO of Remy Cointreau Americas. Next on the list was Gavan Corr at Qarik Group before ending the day with a New York-based venture capitalist Mark Goldstone.

On Friday, the group was treated to a tour of Bloomberg offices before meeting with Tony Mcmanus for lunch to hear about his journey from a Belfast-based startup to leading a large team at Bloomberg. In the evening, the group met with Sean Muldoon at the Dead Rabbit to learn about being the best in the world.



## THE RESULT

Initially, the funding was awarded to enable Young Enterprise to bring young people from disadvantaged areas to connect with young people in Boston to complete a business-based activity.

However, due to the impact of the pandemic, Young Enterprise has been unable to develop the Access Enterprise programme which runs alongside community groups. Therefore, Young Enterprise requested that the funding could be used for our alumni network of entrepreneurs that has been recently set up and run throughout the course of the year.

The main benefits of the programme for the young entrepreneurs were the insight into the American mindset which offers a self-belief.

On top of this, the group developed important connections that will offer support throughout the rest of their entrepreneurial journeys.

Thank you to the US Embassy, US Consul in Belfast, Friends of Young Enterprise NI Foundation Inc, and all the hosts for their support.

