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The Northshore's Premiere Pitch Competition Returns in 2026

STartUP Northshore Announces the Third Annual NSpire Startup Slam, Presented by Chevron

COVINGTON, LA – Today, STartUP Northshore is proud to announce that the NSpire Startup Slam business pitch competition will return to the historic Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Downtown Hammond for its third run on Thursday, January 8, 2026. Backed by renewed partnerships with Chevron as the Presenting Sponsor and Capital One as the Grant Prize Sponsor, the 2026 NSpire Startup Slam will once again provide entrepreneurs with a chance to compete for one of the region's largest non-dilutive prize packages.

Since its launch in 2023, the NSpire Startup Slam has become one of the most highly anticipated entrepreneurial events in the Gulf South, drawing hundreds of attendees and garnering national recognition, including the International Economic Development Council Gold Award for Excellence in Special Events. During its first two years, the competition has distributed more than \$170,000 in cash and in-kind prizes to local entrepreneurs which has fueled further growth, job creation, and new investment in the Northshore's innovation ecosystem.

"The NSpire Startup Slam has grown into more than just a competition. It has become a rallying point for our entrepreneurial community," said **Cenzo Caronna, Executive Director of STartUP Northshore and St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation Entrepreneur in Residence**. "Each year we see bigger ideas, bolder founders, and stronger connections forming on the Northshore. With the support of Chevron, Capital One, and our many ecosystem partners, we are not only scaling individual businesses but creating a culture of innovation that will continue to fuel the region for years to come."

The NSpire Startup Slam competition reinforces STartUP Northshore's investment in creating programs that cultivate local entrepreneurs by delivering world-class programming, networking opportunities, access to capital, and mentorship from esteemed industry leaders, investors, and founders, largely at no cost to the startups.

"Chevron is honored to once again partner with STartUP Northshore as Presenting Sponsor of the 2026 NSpire Startup Slam. We know that when local entrepreneurs thrive, entire communities benefit," said **Jeremy Haken, Chevron Senior Manager of Corporate Affairs in Louisiana**. "This competition is a powerful platform for advancing innovative ideas and helping small businesses access the capital, visibility, and resources they need to succeed. Chevron is proud to invest in the visionaries who are shaping the Northshore's future."

The 2026 NSpire Startup Slam will include a networking reception at 4:30 p.m. followed by an exhilarating live battle of innovation where rising entrepreneurs will showcase their groundbreaking ideas, connect with industry leaders, and compete for one of the largest startup prize packages in the Gulf South. The 2026 prize package is valued at more than \$100,000 and includes \$50,000 in funding through a renewed partnership with Capital One paired with wrap-around in-kind professional services.

"At Capital One, we believe in the power of small businesses to drive economic growth and build vibrant, resilient communities," said **Katharine Kay, Greater New Orleans Market President at Capital One**. "Our partnership with STartUP Northshore and the NSpire Startup Slam reflects our commitment to equipping entrepreneurs with resources to help them grow sustainably and pursue big opportunities. We can't wait to see the positive impact these startups will create on the Northshore and beyond."

The NSpire Startup Slam is open to any business with operations based in or willing to relocate to the Northshore (St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, or Washington Parish) for at least two years and actively participate in the STartUP Northshore entrepreneurial ecosystem. Startups from all industries, backgrounds, and locations are invited. The venture must be legally incorporated, have been in business for five years or less or be an existing business creating a new division or entity, and have generated less than \$1,000,000 in annual revenue in 2025. Nonprofit organizations and previous NSpire Startup Slam winners are not eligible to enter.

NSpire Startup Slam applicants will be evaluated 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.

To learn more about the NSpire Startup Slam pitch competition, STartUP Northshore, and to apply, visit www.startupnorthshore.com/nspire or contact Executive Director, Cenzo Caronna, at vcaronna@sttammanyedc.org. **Entrepreneurs can apply for the chance to compete in this live, shark-tank style pitch competition until 11:59 PM on Sunday, November 16, 2025.**

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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.

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