

ge Link: <https://northernkentuckyusa.com/blue-north-awarded-510000-rise-grant-from-kentucky-cabinet-for-economic-development-an>

**COVINGTON, KY (July 10, 2020)** – Northern Kentucky Tri-ED and [Blue North](#), the community for startups and small businesses in Northern Kentucky, announced today that Blue North was awarded a \$510,000 RISE grant for FY21 by the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development’s (KCED) Office of Entrepreneurship.

Tri-ED launched Blue North as the brand for its entrepreneurship program and services in 2019 after it received a FY20 RISE grant from KCED to serve entrepreneurs in Northern Kentucky. With the support of Tri-ED, KCED, and the Northern Kentucky community, Blue North has been serving and connecting entrepreneurs, studying and mapping the regional ecosystem, and laying the groundwork for Blue North to become an independent organization.

On July 1, 2020, Blue North began operating as an independent Limited Liability Company (LLC) – serving the Northern Kentucky community – under the leadership of Executive Director Brit Fitzpatrick and a regional Board of Directors. Fitzpatrick was hired as Interim Director of Entrepreneurship by Lee Crume, President and CEO of Tri-ED, and named Director in October 2019.

“Throughout the last year, the Blue North team has solidified our four focus areas for our eight-county region and developed evidence-based strategies to serve the community. We’ve also actively supported our growing community of entrepreneurs through in-house services, programming and events, and by providing more than \$1 million in grant funding to other organizations in the region,” shared Fitzpatrick. “In our first nine months of operating, we had 793 touchpoints with entrepreneurs. Becoming an independent organization is a natural path for us as we scale our impact building on the successful ‘ecosystem hub’ models adopted by our peers in Louisville and Lexington.”

Tri-ED believes this is the right evolution for Blue North.

“I’m confident in Brit’s ability to lead Blue North and build on the partnerships and the foundation we’ve constructed throughout last year,” said Crume. “We believe this is a sustainable model for entrepreneurship services in Northern Kentucky. Blue North will continue to collaborate with our regional entrepreneurship and innovation community, which includes Tri-ED, Northern Kentucky University, Gateway Community & Technical College, Thomas More University, St. Elizabeth, CVG, the City of Covington, Cintrifuse, as well other counties, municipalities, universities, and organizations throughout the Greater Cincinnati region and Kentucky.”

Blue North will continue to produce scalable impact by serving entrepreneurs and the region through the following initiatives:

- Providing direct startup support services,
- Creating an Industry Advisor Board to expand Blue North’s access to large and mid-size corporates,
- Offering expanded startup resources via the Startup Support Fellowship Fund,
- Improving inclusivity and access to programming and events through the use of innovative, digital tools, and
- Increasing connections with investor and capital networks.

Blue North has identified four sectors that it will focus on leveraging Northern Kentucky’s unique strengths and assets: health care (cancer diagnostics, screening and treatment innovations), supply chain, eCommerce, and local growth (food, beverage, distilleries, spirits, and creative services).

In April, Blue North announced its partnership with the New York-based The Worldwide Supply Chain Federation (TWSCF), a global grassroots community focused on connecting the companies building the supply chain technologies of the future with their buyers who need them to stay competitive. Through this partnership, Fitzpatrick will lead the region’s first supply chain meeting chapter to grow the regional supply chain ecosystem.

“The NKY/Cincinnati region has a wealth of assets in the supply chain sector. It’s the area where we see technology and innovation playing a significant role across all business sectors, as well as in the current and future growth of our ecosystem,” commented Fitzpatrick.

Fitzpatrick also sees providing greater access to customers as key to Blue North’s impact. “Increasing B2B opportunities for entrepreneurs through collaborations with organizations like TWSCF, Cintrifuse, and CincyTech will be a win for entrepreneurs in our regional Big Cos alike.”

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“The Cincinnati region is deeply committed to building a world-class startup economy,” shared Pete Blackshaw, CEO of Cintrifuse. “We congratulate Blue North on receiving the RISE grant and we’re committed to working alongside them to facilitate fast-track connections to Northern Kentucky startups who are addressing critical needs from supply chain and ecommerce to life sciences.”

“The future is bright for entrepreneurship in Northern Kentucky,” added Fitzpatrick. “Our partnership with the Kentucky Cabinet’s Office of Entrepreneurship is critical and we appreciate their continued investment and leadership as we continue to serve our region’s innovators.”

Fitzpatrick brings a wealth of startup and leadership experience to the Blue North team. In 2013, she founded MentorMe, one of the nation’s first venture-backed SaaS mentoring startups. Before Blue North, Brit built entrepreneurship ecosystems in Memphis and led the 1804 Entrepreneur Center in Louisville, which later merged with LEAP.

Abby Ober will begin a new role as Program Director for Blue North. She has served as entrepreneurship Community Manager since January 2019. Leveraging her experience over the past six years, she oversees Blue North’s suite of in-house services and events while managing Blue North’s grant and contract reporting.

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#### **About Northern Kentucky Tri-ED**

Northern Kentucky Tri-ED serves as the primary economic development entity for Boone, Campbell and Kenton counties, providing marketing, business retention/expansion for the region. [www.northernkentuckyusa.com](http://www.northernkentuckyusa.com)

*Tri-ED’s mission is to generate, preserve, and enhance high-quality economic opportunities for Northern Kentucky and support the development of the region’s business operating environment.*

#### **About Blue North**

Launched as an independent, entrepreneur-focused organization in 2020, Blue North exists to connect, strengthen, and expand the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the eight-county Northern Kentucky region (Kenton, Campbell, Boone, Grant, Gallatin, Owen, Carroll, and Pendleton). Through in-house services, regional programs and events, digital platforms, and a connections-focused network, Blue North connects the region’s small businesses and startups with the inclusive community, education, talent, customers, and capital they need to launch and grow their ideas. <https://bluenorthky.com/>