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**STartUP Northshore and Founder Institute–Louisiana Announce Strategic Partnership to
Expand Early-Stage Startup Acceleration on the Northshore**
New Partnership Brings Global Pre-Seed Accelerator Platform to Local Founders

Covington, LA — STartUP Northshore has announced a new strategic partnership with Founder Institute–Louisiana, one of the world's leading pre-seed startup accelerators. Through this collaboration, STartUP Northshore will serve as the exclusive economic development and entrepreneurial support organization partner for the Northshore region, supporting early-stage founders across St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parishes.

Founder Institute is a global organization that recently launched their Louisiana Chapter, led by Rick Mekdessie. STartUP Northshore partnered with them to be the exclusive economic development and entrepreneurial support organization partner for the Northshore region to run their FI Core Accelerator. This partnership enables Founder Institute–Louisiana to run up to two "FI Core" accelerator programs in the region over the next year. These intensive, 3-month programs combine structured startup sprints with expert mentorship and investor feedback to help founders validate their ideas, build scalable companies, and prepare for future investment.

"This partnership reflects our commitment to expanding access to nationally recognized resources that help entrepreneurs launch and scale their businesses," said **Chris Masingill, CEO of St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation (St. Tammany EDC).** "

Founder Institute brings a global platform and a rigorous, proven curriculum that complements our regional work at STartUP Northshore. Together, we are unlocking new opportunities for Northshore-based founders to grow strong companies right here at home."

With more than 7,500 alumni companies, 35,000+ mentors, and over \$1.85 billion raised by its graduates, Founder Institute has supported entrepreneurs in over 200 cities across six continents. Its expansion into the Northshore marks a major milestone for the region's growing innovation ecosystem.

The inaugural Founder Institute–Louisiana cohort launched on April 10, 2025, with 14 startups selected from 21 applicants. The program runs through July 17, culminating in a Demo Day where participants pitch their enterprise ventures to a global audience of mentors, investors, and startup leaders.

“Too often, Louisiana’s brightest founders feel they have to leave the state to succeed,” said Rick Mekdessie, Director of Founder Institute Louisiana,” said, **Rick Mekdessie, Director of Founder Institute – Louisiana Chapter**. “This partnership is about changing that narrative. We’re building a clear path for entrepreneurs to launch, grow, and thrive, without having to relocate.”

"The collaboration with Founder Institute further expands STartUP Northshore’s ecosystem-building efforts and complements its current suite of programming, including the IDEAinstitute accelerator, the NSpire Startup Slam, and a variety of technical assistance and capital access initiatives," said **Cenzo Caronna, Entrepreneur-in-Residence & Program Manager of STartUP Northshore**. "Founder Institute–Louisiana brings structure, accountability, and access to a global network—helping more of our local founders go from early-stage idea to investment-ready venture."

For more information regarding the FI Core accelerator program offered by the Founder Institute – Louisiana Chapter, visit fi.co/core.

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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 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 Corporation. For more information about STartUP Northshore, please visit startupnorthshore.com.

About St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation: As the economic development organization for St. Tammany, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation serves as the comprehensive resource center for business services throughout the parish. St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation’s services include business retention, site selection, workforce development, research and data services, state and local incentives,

business attraction, talent retention, certified site development, relocation support, and marketing St. Tammany. Since the organization's launch in 2018, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation facilitated business expansion and attraction announcements representing over \$291.9 million in capital investment and 2,299 new and retained jobs in St. Tammany Parish. For more information about St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation, please visit stttammanyedc.org.

About Founder Institute: The Founder Institute is the world's most proven network to turn ideas into fundable startups, and startups into global businesses. Since 2009, our structured accelerator programs have helped over 7,500 entrepreneurs raise over \$1.85BN in funding. Based in Silicon Valley and with chapters across 100 countries, our mission is to empower communities of talented and motivated people to build impactful technology companies worldwide. For more information about Founder Institute, please visit fi.co.