

CONVERGE

# Annual Report

2025



Empowering Academic Entrepreneurs

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# Foreword

Scotland possesses world-class research expertise and a vibrant university ecosystem. Yet research excellence alone does not create thriving businesses, high-value jobs or sustainable economic growth. What matters is getting these ideas to market and ensuring founders get the support they need to succeed.

Converge operates where academic innovation meets commercial opportunity. Serving as the vital link between academic ingenuity and viable enterprise, we offer a clear and supported pathway for researchers to transform their discoveries into real-world impact.

By identifying and nurturing high-potential academic founders at the earliest stage, we ensure that the world-class intellectual property emerging from Scotland's universities has the potential to drive tangible economic impact and societal change.



## **Our impact is clear.**

Over the past fourteen years, we have trained over 870 aspiring entrepreneurs across all of Scotland's universities and supported the creation of over 480 companies with an impressive 86% three year survival rate.

But the real measure of our success is not in the numbers alone. It is in the quality of the companies that have gone on to scale internationally, create highly skilled jobs and solve pressing challenges - from medical technology to clean energy and social innovation.

Our university partners recognise that entrepreneurship is core to their mission and future. Equally, our private sector partners understand that investing in early-stage university entrepreneurship is strategic, not philanthropic.

Looking ahead, our priority is to ensure the mechanisms through which great ideas become thriving businesses are resilient, efficient and deeply embedded. That is the future Converge is building and our role is to remain a key asset to our university partners, private sector investors and the exceptional entrepreneurs we work with.

**Polly Purvis OBE FRSE**  
Chair of the Strategic Advisory Board, Converge

# Introduction

2025 has been a defining year for Converge, marked by significant growth and a clear validation of the vital role we play in Scotland's innovation pipeline.

Over the last 14 years, Converge has become Scotland's engine for academic entrepreneurship, building a track record of success that speaks for itself. In 2025, our most successful year to date, we supported our largest-ever cohort and awarded a record-breaking £400,000 prize fund. These milestones demonstrate the extraordinary power of university innovation and an unmistakable appetite for the specialised support we provide.

This year, two landmark developments have fundamentally strengthened our hand:

- The Scottish Funding Council committed £1.26 million in multi-year funding to provide the long-term stability required to deepen our impact and to plan for the future with renewed ambition
- We signed a strategic alliance with Scottish Enterprise to supercharge innovation and entrepreneurship within Scotland's university sector. By streamlining the journey, we are removing friction and creating clearer, simpler pathways for academic founders to access vital business support



Largest ever cohort

**125**

Universities represented

**19**

Projects from Galashiels to Orkney



Biggest ever prize pot

**£400k**

Together, these developments ensure that Scotland's world-class research moves more effectively from the lab to the marketplace. Converge is no longer just a competition; we are a cornerstone of Scotland's innovation ecosystem and a strategic launchpad for the pioneers who will drive our future economy.

Adam Kosterka  
Executive Director  
Converge

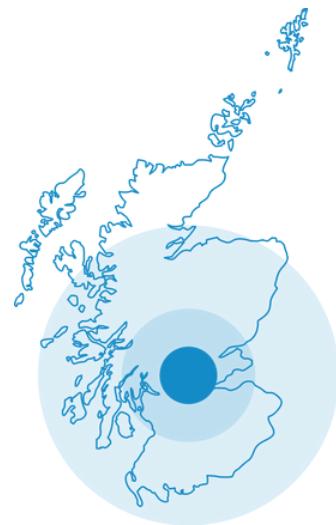
# 1.0 Converge: strengthening Scotland's innovation pipeline

We believe Scotland's universities are the engine rooms for the solutions our world needs most. Our purpose is to unlock that potential by empowering academic entrepreneurs to transform their research, ideas and inventions into thriving, sustainable and impactful businesses.

To achieve this, Converge acts as a vital pipeline creator, working hand-in-hand with all of Scotland's universities to bridge the gap between ideas and impact. By providing clear pathways and entrepreneurial expertise for both homegrown and international talent, we ensure that ground-breaking research moves beyond the lab and into the world where it can drive positive, lasting change.

Our vision is a future where every staff member, student and recent graduate across our university sector has the opportunity to see their pioneering ideas become commercial reality. By positioning Scotland as a world-leading destination for academic entrepreneurs, we are creating a premier global hub for innovation. This isn't just about building individual success stories, it's about securing Scotland's place at the forefront of global entrepreneurship and creating a positive legacy for our environment and society.

Together, we are building a future where Scotland is a global beacon for innovation and the ultimate home for those driven to change the world.



"To ensure we capitalise on the innovation and ingenuity within our academic institutions, it is vital that we work together across organisations and across sectors to create a supportive environment for our spinouts to start-up and scale-up."

Kate Forbes, Deputy First Minister

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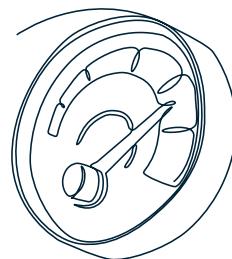
# 2.0 Converge 2025 – a year of milestones

2025 has been a year of significant achievements for Converge, for our cohort, our partnerships and collaborations. Here's how the year unfolded.

## 2.1 Programme launch – from spark to submission

The Converge year began in January with the launch of our annual programme and application drive—a dedicated period of outreach and engagement that represents far more than just an operational milestone. It is the culmination of a year-round, nationwide effort alongside our university partners to ignite a new generation of academic entrepreneurship.

Throughout that eight-week window in early 2025, our Enterprise Team was a constant presence on campus - delivering workshops and one-to-ones that engaged over 1,500 potential applicants. The result was a record-breaking 302 applications, the highest in our history. This surge in interest created a highly competitive field with an average of two applicants for every place, rising to three to one in our most sought-after categories.



### Converge Challenge

For novel business propositions with solid IP foundations, high commercial potential and scalability.



### Net Zero Challenge

For green entrepreneurs developing sustainable solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges.



### Create Change Challenge

For creative, cultural and social impact projects looking to become sustainable businesses.



### KickStart Challenge

For aspiring entrepreneurs with early-stage ideas they'd like to test, validate & prepare to launch

In 2025, we added two new “limited edition” Challenges to our portfolio:



### Hydrogen Challenge

For hydrogen projects with commercialisation potential, developed with the Royce Hydrogen Accelerator, supported by the Henry Royce Institute.

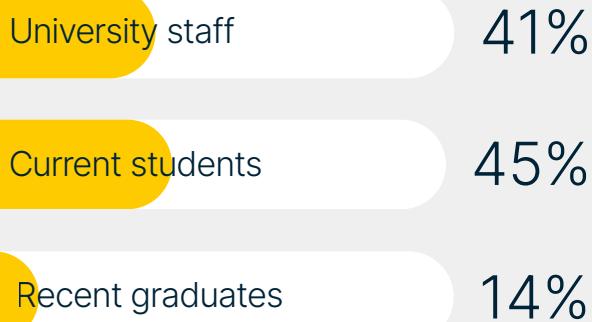


### Performing & Production Arts Challenge

For performers, producers and technicians to transform their artistic talents into business opportunities, co-designed with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

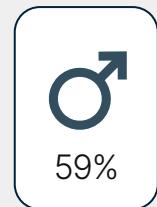
## 2025 Application Breakdown

### Applicant Status

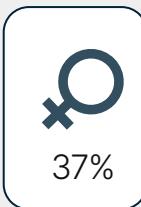


Applications Received **>>> 302**

### Application Demographics



59%



37%

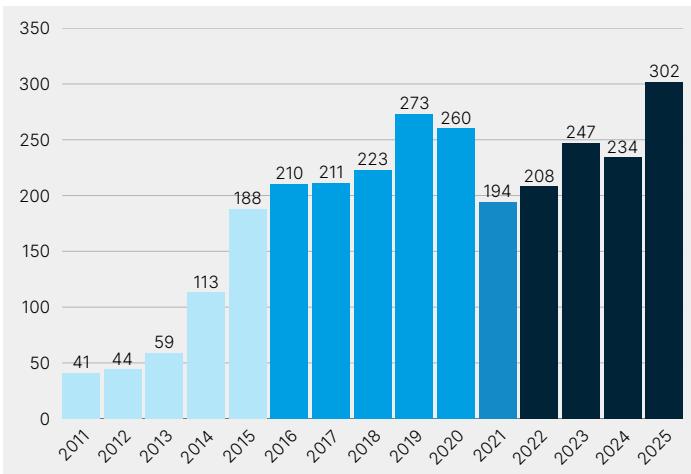
4% applicants identify as non-binary or prefer not to say

49% applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds

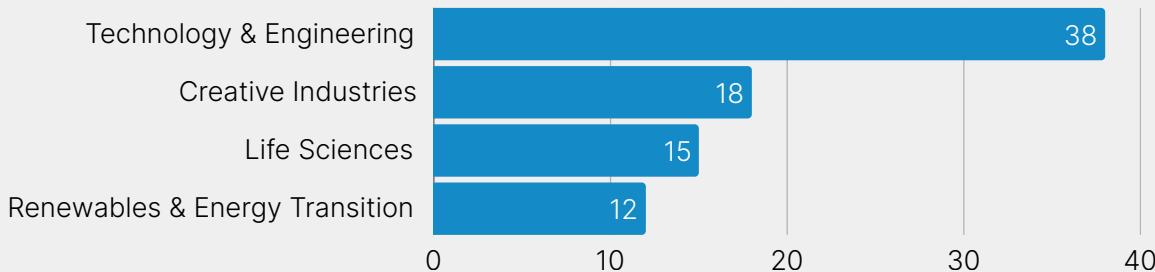
15% applicants identifying as having a disability

58% international applicants

### Applications by Year



### Top Sectors %

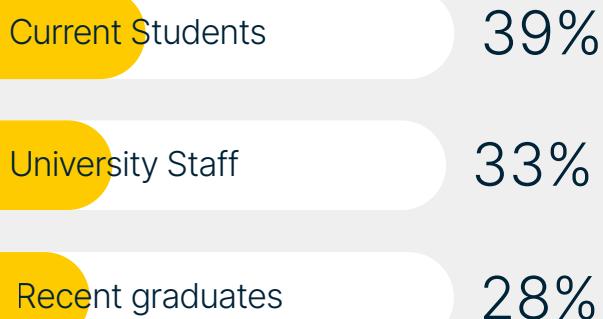


## 2.2 Our 2025 cohort

Gaining a place on the Converge cohort is a significant achievement for participants, following a highly competitive judging process that draws on the effort, time and expertise of our university partners.

The result of this exhaustive search led to a landmark result in 2025 – the most diverse cohort in our history.

### Participant Status



Cohort Size **>> 125**

### Cohort Demographics



60%



37%

### Female Participation

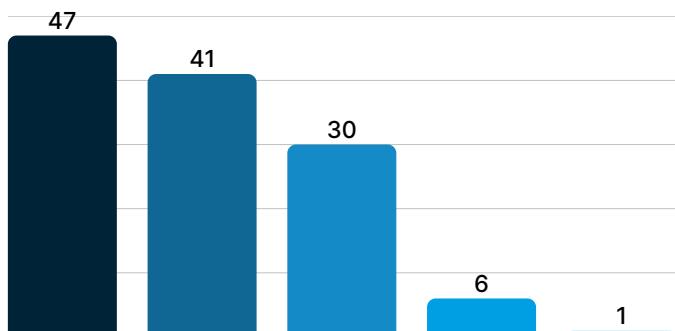


With female participation reaching 47% in 2019 and then dipping in the post-Covid years to as low as 22%, we are pleased to have seen an increase to 37% this year.

### Regional Participation

● East   ● West   ● North East

● Highlands & Islands   ● South



3% participants identify as non-binary or prefer not to say



38% participants from ethnic minority backgrounds



15% participants identifying as having a disability



55% international participants

### Venture Type

Start-up **78%**

Spinout **22%**

## 2.3 Practical training, delivered by experts

A key element of our programme is our intensive business programme – an immersive training experience bringing academic entrepreneurs from across Scotland under one roof to learn the practical mechanics of building a successful company.

Delivered by business experts with real-world experience of leading successful ventures, our training equips academic innovators with the skills they need to test and validate their business proposition. They're ready to begin their journey as confident business leaders.

### 2025 Participant Feedback



"The whole programme was beyond expectations. The connections, cameraderie and knowledge have all been a highlight. It has completely streamlined the next steps - it's taken the fuzzy picture and fine-tuned the direction."

Sam Evans, Founder, Aeroflow

“



"I really liked having to do a 3 year and 5 year cash flow - it helped us to get into the nitty-gritty, get the assumptions behind every number. We went from general vision to concrete action plan."

Garance Locatelli, Co-founder, Marked

## 2.4 Inside Innovation pitching showcase

To secure investment and to build strategic partnerships, all entrepreneurs must master the art of the pitch. Inside Innovation, our flagship pitching showcase, serves as the ultimate test of clarity, challenging academic innovators to strip away technical complexity to reveal their core commercial value.

Taking place immediately after our training programme at the Everyman Cinema in Edinburgh, this was the moment where we challenged our cohort to put everything they had learned into practice by delivering a single, high-impact, 60-second pitch to an influential audience of investors, industry leaders and senior university staff.

### Best Pitch Winners:

- **Create Change Challenge:** Ana-Maria Railean with KUMA, a project preserving family stories by transforming them into private podcasts and audiobooks.
- **Net Zero Challenge:** Sam Evans with Aeroflow, building aerodynamic HGV trailers that cut fuel consumption and emissions by capitalising on empty trailer space.
- **Converge Challenge:** Michael Crichton (pictured) from TissueMetrics, a project developing sensing technologies to address the slow and often frustrating treatment cycles for millions of people living with inflammatory skin conditions.



## 2.5 Business plan creation

Following training, the programme shifts from theory to action with our cohort asked to consolidate what they've learned into a comprehensive business plan.

This competitive submission constitutes their strategic roadmap, outlining the commercial potential of their research, the immediate milestones ahead and the fundamental case for future support and investment.

As the gateway to the next phase of the Converge competition, this document proves that their idea is no longer just a concept but a solid foundation for a sustainable business with ideas evolved and assumptions tested.



## 2.6 Rigorous evaluation

### Judging panels

Our judging process is a massive collaborative effort powered by the collective expertise of the UK and international innovation ecosystem.

We draw on a diverse network of active investors, seasoned entrepreneurs, professional partners and university enterprise teams who generously volunteer their time to read applications, business plans and take part in pitching sessions.



Converge Challenge Judging Panel (L-R) Emmi Nicholl, Cambridge Angels; Aydin Kurt-Elli, early-stage investor and entrepreneur; Professor Andy Porter, Elasmogen Ltd; Sam Kremer, British Design Fund; Professor Gillian Fleming, Mint Ventures Ltd

### Judging process

This rigorous evaluation takes place at three critical milestones: initial cohort selection, business plan evaluation and then a live pitch and Q&A session in front of our panel of judges to determine our winners.

For our participants, the value of this process extends far beyond the pursuit of a prize. Reaching the final stages offers unparalleled access to an influential network, providing founders with additional training, high-level feedback, industry validation and direct exposure to the people who can help move their venture forward.

## 2.7 Awards

The Converge Awards is the definitive event in Scotland's innovation calendar serving as the premier gathering for everyone with a stake in academic entrepreneurship. More than a ceremony, it is a prestigious celebration of the collective effort required to create game-changing University-born ventures.

Hosted at Prestonfield House in Edinburgh, our 2025 Awards was the most significant to date, welcoming a record-breaking 250 guests. The evening brought together a powerful cross-section of the innovation ecosystem, from University Principals, including Professor Steve Olivier of Robert Gordon University, to industry leaders and government officials, headlined by a keynote from Converge's original founder, Dr Olga Kozlova, now Director of Innovation and Engagement at Oxford University



Underpinning this year's celebration was an unprecedented prize fund of £400,000 in equity-free cash and in-kind business support – the largest ever in our history. This substantial increase allowed us to nearly double the number of prizes awarded from 12 to 22, bolstered by the support of new partners and sponsors including the Royce Institute and The Data Lab.



The event also served as the launchpad for a landmark strategic alliance between Converge and Scottish Enterprise. Designed to supercharge innovation and entrepreneurship within Scotland's university sector, our two organisations are now committed to creating smoother pathways for academic innovators to access vital business support.

The high calibre of innovation emerging from our 2025 cohort is best demonstrated by Biosers from the University of Strathclyde which claimed the top prize in our flagship Converge Challenge category. Founded by research associates Hayleigh May and Andrew Callander, their revolutionary five-minute food safety testing technology is set to transform the global food safety industry. Their success serves as a powerful reminder of the talent emerging from Scotland's academic research base and the vital role of the Converge Awards in identifying the next generation of industry leaders.

## 2.7.1 Our 2025 award winners



### Converge Challenge Winner: Biosers, University of Strathclyde

Hayleigh May and Andrew Callander took the Converge top prize of £50,000 cash and in-kind business support for their breakthrough device FoodShield which detects deadly Listeria in just five minutes.



### Net Zero Challenge Winner: Aeroflow, University of Edinburgh

Winning the Net Zero Challenge, sponsored by SSE, with £30,000 cash and in-kind business support, was Sam Evans with shape-shifting HGV trailers that reduce drag by 33%, improving fuel efficiency and cutting emissions.



### Create Change Challenge Winner: New-Found-Hope, University of Dundee

Nathan Dudley won the Create Change Challenge with £30,000 cash and in-kind business support with his early-intervention trainer correcting toe-walking in children.



### KickStart Challenge Winner: Gestura, University of the Highlands and Islands

Gestura, led by Christopher Kaan Caudwell, are developing an AI app translating sign language to speech and vice versa in real-time using smartphone cameras. The team won the KickStart prize of £10,000 cash.

The full list of award winners in 2025 is available on our website [here](#).

## 2.8 Celebrating success



Following our Annual Awards, we hosted our Winners' Day, a first-time event bringing together our 2025 prize recipients, our partner network and the Converge Team under one roof.

Serving as an important touchpoint to build community, it gave our 2025 winners the chance to reconnect with each other, fostering the vital peer-to-peer support that young founders need to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship.

The day also introduced our winners to experts within our partner network, providing a practical setting to map out how in-kind business support could best advance their specific business goals and priorities. This direct, face-to-face interaction helps move prizes from a theoretical concept into a structured roadmap for the months ahead.

A key message of the day was that the involvement of the Converge Team does not end with our Awards ceremony. Our approach is to build rapport and to stay in regular contact with Converge-supported companies to deliver the reliable support system they need to transition from fledgling businesses into established, sustainable enterprises.

"Converge is a powerful catalyst for entrepreneurship and innovation across Scotland. By equipping university staff, students and recent graduates with the skills, confidence and connections to turn ideas into impact, it plays a crucial role in driving sustainable growth and societal benefit. A significant number of entrepreneurial staff, students and alumni at Strathclyde have benefitted from the support of Converge."

Professor Stephen McArthur  
Principal & Vice-Chancellor, University of Strathclyde

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## 3.0 Enterprise activities

### 3.1 University Support

Many are familiar with Converge as a business competition, but over the last 14 years, we have evolved to become much, much more.

Converge plays an important role in complimenting Enterprise activities delivered by individual Universities and throughout the year our team delivers a range of workshops, mini-programmes and one-to-one support for aspiring entrepreneurs.

These activities are designed and developed to meet Universities' unique needs and contribute towards pipeline creation and support for their fledgling businesses.

Many of the projects we engage with as part of Enterprise Services go on to participate in Converge programmes later on.



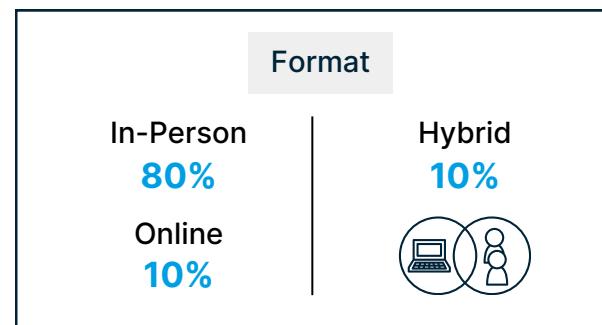
Dr Lissa Herron  
Deputy Director & Head of Enterprise



Sam Trett  
Enterprise Manager



Richard Cormack-Corrigan  
Enterprise Executive



2026 will see further expansion of the Enterprise Services portfolio, including the launch of a one-stop University Hub on the Converge website exclusively for our University partners.



## 3.2 And there's more

### 3.2.1 Microfinance Fund

In partnership with the Scottish Government, Converge delivered a £100,000 microfinance fund for academic start-ups. The initiative awarded small-scale grants to 55 early-stage, pre-incorporation university projects with two projects progressing to the finals of the 2025 Converge programme. This included CassioPeia from the University of the Highlands and Islands which went on to win the prestigious IBioIC Award at the 2025 Converge Awards. With additional funding from the Scottish Funding Council, this successful pilot will expand in 2026 to include Scotland's Colleges.

### 3.2.2 Sparking Change

In partnership with the University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City Council and North East Scotland College (NESCOL), we ran an enterprise programme funded by the UK government. Sparking Change aimed to empower residents of Aberdeen City to make a positive change in society through entrepreneurship. The programme was open to community members not currently in work, and students. We delivered five mini-programmes developed around the UN's sustainable development goals, culminating in a showcase event where participants pitched their ideas to an invited audience.

### 3.2.3 Converge Creates

The Converge Creates programme was delivered in partnership with South of Scotland Enterprise and was designed to inspire creative practitioners in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway to consider building sustainable businesses.

### 3.2.4 Pathways Forward

Converge became a proud Pathways Forward pledge partner in 2024.

This national initiative was launched in response to a landmark Scottish Government-commissioned review chaired by Ana Stewart, a prominent tech entrepreneur and investor. Dedicated to transforming the participation of women in entrepreneurship, the programme addresses deep-rooted structural barriers and encourages tangible, solution-led actions from across Scotland's private and public sectors.

As part of our pledge, we embedded mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) modules into our 2025 entrepreneurial training programmes to help early-stage founders foster a culture of inclusion from the outset. The training demonstrated how inclusion can create more robust teams, unlock a broader range of perspectives and grow more sustainable businesses.

## 4. Partnership as the foundation

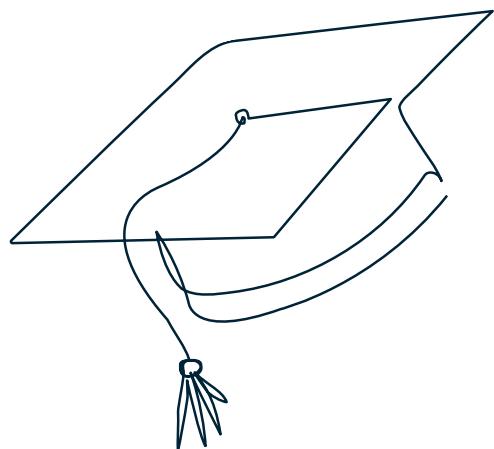
### 4.1 University partnerships

Our university partners are far more than stakeholders; they are the strategic engine behind our mission. Through their dedicated enterprise teams and leadership commitment, they actively shape our offering while providing the essential pipeline of research, innovation and talent that enables us to develop and accelerate their most promising projects.

With all 19 of Scotland's universities fully integrated as partners, Converge is a truly national endeavour. Their comprehensive participation forms the bedrock of our programme, transcending individual institutions to create a shared benchmark for entrepreneurial excellence across the country. This model ensures that high-potential academic entrepreneurs - regardless of their location or institution - are fully supported throughout their journey.

We recognise that each of our university partners has varying levels of internal resource and distinct academic specialisms. Whatever the need or academic focus - from the creative arts to the life sciences - our service is fully complementary, with our team stepping in to provide tailored help where it is needed the most. This flexibility ensures we align with each university's specific goals, creating a symbiotic collaboration that responds to institutional needs while delivering the outcomes they value the most.

By working as a unified network, we facilitate cross-university collaboration while maintaining a robust ecosystem. This strengthens Scotland's reputation for university-led innovation and ensures that the best ideas are given the support they deserve to thrive.



"Converge is a shining example of how Scotland nurtures the passion and ingenuity of entrepreneurs and innovators. It's inspiring to see such creativity and ambition emerging from our universities—transforming ideas into impact and shaping a better future for us all."

Professor Steve Olivier, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Robert Gordon University



## 4.2 New Strategic Partnerships

Our new collaboration with Scottish Enterprise will create smoother pathways for university entrepreneurs by removing barriers and simplifying the journey from idea to market. By working together, we will provide coordinated support from the early stages through to the scale-up phase.



"Scottish Enterprise is proud to strengthen its partnership with Converge through the signing of a new strategic Memorandum of Understanding this year. By combining our economic development expertise with Converge's deep university engagement, we're creating a connected pathway for academic entrepreneurs—accelerating scaling, improving diversity, and driving innovation in priority sectors.

This collaboration ensures founders have clearer access to funding, tailored guidance, and a stronger network to move from concept to commercialisation and beyond."

Derek Shaw, Director of Entrepreneurship and Investment, Scottish Enterprise

In March Converge signed a three-year strategic partnership with the Ventures Lab, part of the Challenges Group, bringing specialised expertise to grow Scotland's pipeline of mission-led businesses tackling social and environmental challenges.



"We are delighted to be Converge's Strategic Partner for Impact, supporting Scotland's next generation of purpose-driven entrepreneurs. We believe in the power of mission-led businesses to drive real change. Through tailored support, mentorship, and investment opportunities backed by the Scottish Government, we look forward to supporting innovators to turn their ideas into sustainable, impactful businesses."

Eoghan Mackie, Chief Executive, Challenges Group

These collaborations strengthen Converge's established strategic relationships including our longstanding partnership with SSE. As sponsor of the Net Zero Challenge, SSE provides not only financial backing but industry knowledge, guidance and networks positioning Converge as a key platform for sustainability innovation in the university sector.



## 4.3 Collaborative Initiatives

2025 also saw significant new sector-specific collaborations that broaden Converge's reach and deepen support for emerging entrepreneurs:



Co-developed a limited-edition Performing & Production Arts Challenge, recognising the commercial potential of Scotland's creative talent



Created a new, limited-edition Hydrogen Challenge, supporting founders developing hydrogen innovation solutions



Partnered to offer two new special prizes reflecting the growing importance of AI and data science to Scotland's innovation pipeline



Launched a new, limited-edition Impact Challenge, expanding support for social and impact-driven entrepreneurs



A new award seeking game-changing ideas in aquaculture, marine renewable energy, coastal tourism and other blue economy sectors that address threats facing our oceans



Our partnership with the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre provides specialist support in bioeconomy innovation.

Each collaboration brings specialised expertise and resources that enable Converge to support a broader spectrum of founders and tackle a wider range of innovation challenges.

## 4.4 Our established partner network

Converge's ecosystem is built on years of dedicated partnership. Our professional partners bring specialist expertise, mentorship and years of experience of working with new and growing businesses.

This breadth of partnership creates something powerful, where founders have access to advice, networks, and a genuine belief in their potential to scale globally. That's what makes Converge distinctive - and what drives the success of our founders.



"MBM Commercial is proud to be a long time sponsor of the Converge programme. Working together across sectors, MBM and Converge have witnessed truly exceptional talent emerge from early stage cohorts to create new high growth businesses that not only deliver huge impact in Scotland but breakout on to the global stage. Today, the list is long of successful founders recounting the early support, insights and network they gained through Converge."

Alex Lamley, Partner, MBM Commercial

## 5.0 Converge - our journey so far

### Since 2011

we have been part of the journey for founders emerging from Scotland's Universities as they take their first steps in entrepreneurship.



### We started small

with just three Universities taking part in the programme, and a cohort of 28.

### Over the past 14 years

the programme has supported 870 entrepreneurs, and the creation of 480 companies with measurable economic impact:



**£425k**

investment +

**£1M**

in grant funding raised  
by 2025 cohort post-  
programme

**£2.8M**

in cumulative prize  
money distributed  
since 2011

**£540M**

of follow on funding  
raised by alumni  
companies, of which

**£466M**

is equity investment

These figures reflect real-world impact: founders moving from early-stage ideas to viable businesses, attracting world-class investors, and building Scotland's most innovative companies.

## 6. Looking forward - 2026 and beyond

As we move into 2026, marking Converge's 15th anniversary, we are more energised than ever. We will continue to build on our successes, deepen our partner engagement, and support the next incredible cohort of innovators emerging from Scotland's universities.

The challenge is clear. The opportunity is immense. The talent is here.

## How can you get involved?



### For Universities

Converge is a community. Your involvement - from championing student and staff entrepreneurs to providing infrastructure and expertise - is essential. We invite you to deepen your engagement and explore how Converge can support your institutional innovation goals.



### For Partners

The businesses we support need your expertise, networks, and resources. Whether through sponsoring challenges, providing mentorship, or investing in alumni companies, there are multiple ways to engage. Contact us to explore partnership opportunities tailored to your strategic priorities.



### For Investors

Converge provides early access to Scotland's highest-potential university ventures. Our rigorous selection process identifies companies with strong IP, exceptional teams, and compelling market opportunities. Connect with us to discover the founders building tomorrow's breakthrough businesses.



### For Alumni

You are the living proof of what Converge can achieve. We invite you to mentor emerging founders, support promising ventures, and champion the next generation of Scottish entrepreneurs. Your support creates a virtuous cycle of innovation.



### For Policymakers

We are committed to working with Scottish Government and other public sector partners to ensure that Scotland's innovation ecosystem receives the investment and policy support it needs to thrive.

"Converge offers investors unparalleled access to some of Scotland's most promising deep-tech and innovative spinouts. Their rigorous selection process is a proven mechanism for unearthing and validating the disruptive, future-defining businesses originating within Scotland's university ecosystem"

Paul Atkinson FRSE, Partner, PXN Group

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## Case Study 1: Biosers - from University spinout to global food safety innovator

University of Strathclyde spinout, Biosers, is revolutionising food safety. Their innovative biosensing device provides near-instant detection of dangerous contaminants like Listeria monocytogenes, cutting testing from days to minutes.

The company took the top spot at the 2025 Converge Awards, winning the flagship Converge Challenge category and £50,000 of equity-free cash plus in-kind business support. This validation has been instrumental in refining their commercial strategy, building investor-readiness and securing a coveted spot in the EIT Seedbed accelerator, positioning Biosers to fast-track market entry and scale globally.

"Taking part in the Converge Challenge has been a game changer for us. The exposure and credibility we gained have opened doors that would have been difficult to access otherwise. It has strengthened our business strategy, sharpened our commercial focus, and given us the confidence to scale our innovative technology globally. Converge really understands the challenges faced by university spinouts and provides founders with the help they need to overcome them."

**Dr Hayleigh May, Co-founder, Biosers**



## Case Study 2: E.V.A Biosystems - plastic innovation for a sustainable future

E.V.A. Biosystems, a University of Edinburgh spinout, uses synthetic biology to tackle plastic pollution. By embedding dormant microbes into everyday plastics, they create materials that self-destruct on contact with sea water.

After securing a double win at the 2024 Converge Awards - the SSE Net Zero Challenge and the Industrial Biotechnology prize - the company used its £70,000 award to bolster R&D and secure international recognition including a place in PwC's Net Zero Future50 Report. This momentum acted as a catalyst for further success, leading to an Innovate UK grant and a fundraising round featuring match-funding from Coca-Cola Europacific Partners (CCEP) Ventures. E.V.A. Biosystems is now collaborating with the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland to scale its environmental solutions for global industry.

"Taking part in Converge has supercharged our startup. The prize funding and sponsor support helped us achieve more from our R&D, while ongoing guidance and specialist connections gave us biotech and business expertise exactly when we needed it. Converge put us on the map, opened doors for us across the ecosystem and has massively accelerated our growth."

**Dr Alex Speakman, Founder, E.V.A Biosystems**



## Case Study 3: Elasmogen - scaling breakthrough technology

University of Aberdeen spinout, Elasmogen, is pioneering the development of next-generation biologic drugs called soloMERs — small, stable antibody-like molecules designed to treat complex autoimmune diseases. The company has developed a first-in-class soloMER drug conjugate for the painful skin condition Hidradenitis suppurativa and is advancing complementary assets for conditions such as Ulcerative Colitis and certain cancers, offering novel approaches where existing treatments fall short.

As a Converge Challenge runner-up from 2015, Elasmogen gained more than recognition - it entered an ecosystem that transformed its trajectory. The programme provided early-stage business training, commercial mentoring and, crucial credibility, helping the founding team refine their business plan and transition confidently from academic research to a market-focused enterprise.



"Starting a biotech felt like standing at the edge of a vast unknown - daunting, uncertain, and filled with questions I couldn't yet answer. I knew where I was starting, but not where the journey would take me.

"Enter the Converge Challenge - and with it, an exceptional team who helped me transform uncertainty into direction: building a business plan, sharpening our competitive edge, and defining our value proposition. Most importantly, they helped me believe I could do this - turning a bold idea into a tangible reality."

Prof. Caroline Barelle, Founder & CEO of Elasmogen

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This support laid the foundation for one of Scotland's most successful university spinouts, enabling Elasmogen to secure more than £15 million in equity, grant and research funding. Crucially, Converge connected Elasmogen with strategic partners, facilitating licensing partnerships across South Korea, Taiwan, the US and Canada. This success demonstrates how bridging academia and industry can transform scientific potential into a globally recognised therapeutic biotechnology company.





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