



Start2 Group Launches STRIDE Ventures, Powered by NSF, to Accelerate Breakthrough Innovation in U.S. Technology and Manufacturing

CAMBRIDGE, MA, November 17, 2025

Start2 Group, Inc. today announced [STRIDE Ventures](#), a new initiative funded by the [U.S. National Science Foundation Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships \(NSF TIP\)](#) to advance breakthrough innovations that reinforce the U.S. technological leadership, economic security, and industrial resilience.

By supporting the translation of high-potential research into deployable solutions, STRIDE Ventures aims to strengthen the nation's capacity to leverage emerging technology to address critical challenges. Through targeted funding, expert guidance, and strategic partnerships, STRIDE Ventures will foster the development of scalable technologies, accelerating radical innovations to market.

Tech Metal Transformation Challenge: Building a Resilient U.S. Metals Supply Chain

The first investment of STRIDE Ventures will be the Tech Metal Transformation Challenge, which provides funding and support to accelerate the development of breakthrough technologies that strengthen the U.S. supply chain for critical and strategic metals.

These metals form the backbone of modern industry powering energy systems, defense technologies, advanced manufacturing, and the digital economy. Yet access to many of these essential materials remains highly concentrated in a few producing regions, leaving domestic industries vulnerable to geopolitical and logistical disruptions.

The Challenge calls for bold, interdisciplinary innovation integrating biological, chemical, and physical-mechanical processes to close this gap. Competing teams will design and demonstrate end-to-end prototype systems capable of extracting, converting, and reintroducing metals, including those from complex domestic waste streams, into high-performance materials that meet advanced manufacturing specifications.

The Tech Metal Transformation Challenge represents a shift in strategy, from dependence on traditional extraction pathways toward an innovation-driven model for domestic materials security. By developing processes that can transform secondary and unconventional sources into functional metals, the program aims to build a resilient foundation for current and future industries.

Structured as a multi-year, three-stage program, the Challenge is modeled after and running in parallel to Germany's [SPRIND Tech Metal Challenge](#) and will advance breakthrough innovations from research and development to market validation to scale-up and deployment, supported by tiered funding and guidance from a panel of experts. SPRIND is the



German Federal Agency for Breakthrough Innovation that sponsors innovation competitions to find the most effective approaches and solutions to grand, hard problems.

“Through STRIDE Ventures, we’re creating a platform where innovation meets implementation, ensuring that breakthroughs in science become tangible industrial capabilities,” said Annika Pierson, CEO of Start2 Group, Inc.

“Critical minerals are the foundation of technologies that power our economy and national security. NSF’s investment in the Tech Metal Transformation Challenge addresses this urgent need while also enabling new models of innovation—connecting researchers and entrepreneurs to real-world challenges and accelerating breakthrough solutions to market,” said Erwin Gianchandani, NSF Assistant Director for TIP.

About STRIDE Ventures

STRIDE Ventures is a national platform for breakthrough innovation, launched by NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (NSF TIP) and Start2 Group. It supports bold, milestone-driven efforts to translate emerging technologies into real-world capabilities that advance U.S. competitiveness and resilience. By minimizing bureaucracy and maximizing momentum, STRIDE empowers teams to move fast, take risks, and deliver impact where it matters most. STRIDE Ventures looks forward to building a community of experts, startups, investors and more. To stay updated on news and events, you can join the STRIDE Ventures [mailing list](#).

About NSF TIP

The NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (NSF TIP) seeks to engage all Americans in accelerating critical and emerging technologies to advance U.S. competitiveness. The directorate partners across sectors to advance three strategies – accelerating critical and emerging technology, expanding the geography of American innovation and building a competition-ready workforce. For more information about NSF TIP, visit [nsf.gov/tip/latest](https://www.nsf.gov/tip/latest).

About Start2 Group, Inc.

Start2 Group is a global innovation leader taking startups to the next level in development and commercialization. As a premier startup ecosystem partner, Start2 Group serves as the destination for startups, governments, investors, and corporations to shape and scale ventures with growth potential. Start2 Group operates in key markets across the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, shaping the future of innovation on a global scale.

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