

TEXTUP

Eric Bai (Brown '15.5) and his colleagues, Hanna Oh (RISD '15) and Michelle Petersen (Brown '18) launched TextUp through Brown University's Social Innovation Initiative in 2013, inspired by the idea to use Kenya's FrontlineSMS as a model to help the homeless population in Providence connect to services.

During their social work internships, these three entrepreneurs were inspired to create this tool after seeing how overwhelmed social workers were. TextUp is an open source web app that empowers social workers to efficiently manage client engagement. The software is used by staff at homeless shelters, universities, job training programs, and other organizations that provide long-term client support.



Textup wins first prize at 2018 RI Business Plan Competition

The SEG Network Effect

The SEG Accelerator helped TextUp hone in on an initial target customer and formulate a plan to efficiently gather feedback from these users. The venture obtained fiscal sponsorship with a local community development corporation and won their first grants to kick start initial development of their software. Participating in the SEG Accelerator gave them the tools and strategies needed to plan their next steps far into the future. The TextUp team credits their connection to SEG with providing ongoing advice and resources that they lean on to fill gaps in their skill-sets.

“SEG was instrumental in beginning to equip our team with the skills we needed to transform TextUp into a full-fledged business. Without SEG’s support and mentorship, we likely would not have been able to continue forward through the trial and tribulations of seeing this idea to where it is today,” noted Michelle Petersen.

Early adopters of the TextUp software were two Rhode Island social service agencies: House of Hope and Riverwood/The Kent Center. Most significantly, TextUp is reaching social workers in seven states – the company has 16 contracts in 7 states with approximately 250 early users.

In addition to winning the overall RI Business Plan Competition, TextUp won bronze in Brown University's Venture Prize pitch competition and participated in the 2018 MassChallenge RI cohort. TextUp has been nominated as one of RI's Coolest Companies and cofounder, Michelle, has been named the first Brown Venture Founder and a Tech10 top entrepreneur.

Since working with SEG:

- ✓ Closed on 16 contracts in 7 states with approximately 250 early users
- ✓ Became the 1st student run business to win RI Business Plan Competition
- ✓ Received over \$100,000 in zero equity grants in the last year
- ✓ Hired four part time staff to bolster efforts