

THE GOVERNMENT-BACKED START UP LOANS COMPANY JOINS FORCES WITH THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND TO FUND GREAT BRITISH BUSINESSES

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- The Royal Bank of Scotland's Capital Connections scheme offers business customers access to the best sources of alternative finance
- The Start Up Loans Company joins six leading alternative finance companies and is the only government-backed provider in the innovative partnership with the Royal Bank of Scotland
- Line-up now includes The Start Up Loans Company, Seedrs, Funding Circle, Assetz Capital, iwoca, Together and the Royal Bank of Scotland Social & Community Capital

The Start Up Loans Company will join a handful of leading alternative finance firms in an exclusive partnership with a Royal Bank of Scotland scheme, designed to help businesses access alternative sources of finance.

Capital Connections helps SMEs access alternative sources of capital after being unable to secure traditional financial backing with no commission paid as a result of any referrals.

The Start Up Loans Company is the first government-backed finance provider to join Capital Connections. Since launching in 2012, the Start Up Loans Company has lent £318million to help more than 48,000 individuals fund their early-stage businesses, creating more than 56,000 jobs.

In Scotland, the Start Up Loans Company has provided more than £15million of funding to 2,500 business owners across the country.

Can you Escape?, an Edinburgh-based escape room, launched in November 2014 after founder Alastair Watson secured £6,500 of funding from the Start Up Loans Company. The interactive adventure game requires players to solve a series of puzzles using clues and hints to unlock the room within a certain period of time.

Alastair decided to launch the business after noticing a lack of adventure games available in the Edinburgh area. He approached the Start Up Loans Company to access the capital needed to launch the venture. After successfully securing funding, he used the Start Up Loan to install game equipment and assist with cash-flow in the early stages.

Since then, Can you Escape? has been named 'the best performing small business' by the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, as well as receiving a Trip Advisor certificate of excellence. Alastair now employs six part-time members of staff to service the business.

Alison Rose, CEO of Commercial and Private Banking at the Royal Bank of Scotland, said: "We are excited to announce that The Start Up Loans Company will be joining our Capital Connections programme. We are the biggest supporter of British businesses and in 2016 we lent almost £9bn to commercial companies and £1.6bn SMEs, an increase of 43% from the previous year.

"But it won't always be possible for us to support all our customers with our own capital and it's important that in these instances we do the right thing by helping them access other finance options. That's why our Capital Connections programme is so important to supporting British businesses, enhancing their access to the borrowing which is essential for jobs and economic growth."

Joanna Hill, Interim CEO of The Start Up Loans Company, said: “Start-ups often bring something fresh and innovative to an existing market, but they are often left at the back of the queue when it comes to accessing finance. By partnering with the Royal Bank of Scotland, we hope the Capital Connections programme gives budding business owners a second chance when they are unable to access traditional forms of finance.

“Since 2012, we’ve provided more than £15million to early-stage businesses across Scotland, with funding helping 2,500 business owners bring their start-up ideas to life. We’re looking forward to partnering with the Royal Bank of Scotland to give people a second opportunity to achieve their business goals.”

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About SULCo:

The Start Up Loans Company (SULCo) was formed in June 2012. SULCo provides personal loans for business purposes of up to £25,000 at a 6% fixed interest rate per annum, and offers free dedicated mentoring and support to each business.

The primary aim of the Start Up Loans scheme is to ensure that viable start-ups and early-stage businesses have access to the finance and support they need in order to thrive. A network of Delivery Partner organisations support applicants in all regions and industries throughout the UK. The Start Up Loans scheme is not designed to generate a commercial profit. Capital payments together with the interest are recycled to help meet our customers’ increasing demand for finance.

Free guides on a range of subjects related to starting a business are available on the SULCo website: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/free-start-up-guides/> You can find recent media coverage and press releases in the Start Up Loans Media Centre here: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/media-centre/>

The funding for SULCo is provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). SULCo is a member of the British Business Bank group. The British Business Bank makes finance markets for smaller businesses work better, enabling the sector to prosper, grow and build economic activity. Their Business Finance Guide explores finance options and the journey from start-up to growth. Access the Business Finance Guide here:

<http://www.thebusinessfinanceguide.co.uk/bbb>

Key statistics

* Since 2012, SULCo has delivered over 48,000 loans, providing more than £318m of funding, helping to back 27 businesses a day, and contributing to the creation of more than 56,000 jobs.

* In the financial year 2016/17, the scheme provided 9,431 loans with a total value exceeding £91.2m - helping to support around 27 businesses every day of the year.



* 20,319 loans have been provided to individuals formerly unemployed or economically inactive and 46% of loans provided to young people are helping those who were formerly NEET (not in employment, education or training).

* Approximately one in five loans go to residents in the UK's most deprived communities.

* The overall return on investment of the scheme is at least £3 per £1 invested.

* Loan recipients report estimated average turnover of £44,000 in the first year. For more information about Start Up Loans, please visit: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/>

**All of these statistics are gross estimates, with the exception of the return on investment numbers, and are based upon Start Up Loans CRM and externally commissioned research undertaken by Qa Research.*

About Royal Bank of Scotland:

Royal Bank of Scotland has paved the way in banking ever since it was established in 1727. From the world's first overdraft, and the first house purchase loan by a UK bank, to the first fully-fledged internet banking service and mobile banking app the bank has a history of making life easier for its customers.

The bank has commitment to retain its close connections with the Scottish communities it serves.