



West Midlands
Combined Authority

Business Growth West Midlands

Investment Readiness



From the left, Craig McVoy (Turnkey), Luciana Gaspar Zamora (Perubien) and Laura Delahunty (Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub)

Perubien is developing functional ingredients to help those living with type 2 diabetes and to promote a healthy gut by using Peruvian crops.

Luciana Gaspar Zamora is focused on revolutionising the food industry in the UK to help manufacturers improve the nutritional value of their products by offering novel food ingredients for reformulating existing, or developing new food with health benefits.

She secured funding from a competitive Innovate UK grant (Better Food for All call) in collaboration with The Rowett Institute of the University

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of Aberdeen. The research project uses Peruvian crops such as purple corn and yacon for the development of specialised functional food ingredients for type 2 diabetes and gut health. Palatable food prototypes will be designed to showcase the versatility of the ingredients to the food and drink manufacturing sector which aim to target the development of innovative healthy foods.

Luciana joined the Investment Readiness Programme, which is being delivered in Coventry on behalf of the West Midlands Combined Authority by C&W Business Solutions, to find out more about the fundamentals of raising investment.

“This was a comprehensive programme which navigated different topics such as pitch-decks and the reasons for building a company as well as considering the risks associated with running a business,” she said.

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The Challenge

Luciana is working with the Rowett Institute – a world leader in nutritional

research – which is developing truly innovative functional ingredients from novel crops (purple corn and yacon) to help food and drink manufacturers incorporate them into foods to deliver specialised nutritional therapies and into foods as part of healthy ranges of staple foods.

While the research is being carried out, she is looking for opportunities to raise awareness of the existence of these crops and their nutritional and health benefits, as they are rich sources of bioactive phytochemicals and dietary fibre.

She added: “I have to build a team which is my main challenge because I am the sole funder. I need to create a group of people that can support the business with complementary skills, and that involves money!”

The Investment Readiness Programme is being delivered in Coventry by



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“I need to be attractive to potential employees and I need to improve my business strategy and reflect more on marketing, sales, and technical support.

“My main goal in the short-term is the fundraising to secure the necessary investment for the next steps of the business growth.”

The Experience

The Investment Readiness Programme has been split into helping SMEs identify funding routes for their business, and then providing one-to-one expert advice from specialists and experienced investors to help SMEs become investment-ready.

Luciana said: “Stage One, which was quite broad, was dedicated to understanding the basics involved and Stage Two was where I really benefited from the experience of those running the programme.

“Every week we had sessions with a specific topic, and these were held over a lunchtime which I found useful because it didn’t impact on my business activities, and the content was comprehensive and covered aspects I previously wasn’t aware of.

“The approach was practical and organised and every week we had a task to complete for the following week. Some were quite simple and others were more complex. We had an opportunity to have individual sessions to discuss them and we built up our forecasts, which was very important.”

The Results

Luciana applied for the Government’s Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme

“I found the programme really beneficial and Craig McVoy from Turnkey, who led the sessions and was my one-to-one mentor, was very good in terms of bringing real perspective to raising investment.”

Coventry businesses can register to join the programme by emailing investmentreadiness@cwgrowthhub.co.uk

(SEIS), which offers tax reliefs to individual investors who buy new shares in a company and helps to raise money when it’s starting to trade.

She explained: “We had a session about SEIS and all the requirements involved and benefits for investors.

“I needed to add a comprehensive forecast and the help I received from the programme meant I could incorporate my learnings into my application form, which was successful.

“I am now more ready to approach investors, although I can always keep improving my approach and speech and implement more recommendations from my mentor.

“I want to improve my strategy. Before the Investment Readiness programme, I had made 40 per cent progression from being in a position to reach out to investors but with all the decisions I have made following the course, I feel I’m 95 per cent there and it has really increased my confidence.

“I have been to the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh this June to meet the Rowett Research team and to promote the project and the Peruvian crops, and I’ve met the Ambassador of Peru in London to share my experience as an entrepreneur and inspire others, so these are exciting times.”

The Future

Luciana is now planning to raise the finance to fund two employees within the next year.

“Once the Peruvian functional ingredients are designed and launched, I’m planning to recruit at least five more people in the build-up,” she said.

“I have decided to look at additional options to increase the visibility of my company and create income, and to raise awareness in the UK market of the benefits of these crops, in terms of nutrition, health, their smell, and colour. I am looking to raise about £240,000 investment in the short-term.

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in terms of bringing real perspective to raising investment.

“I was able to ask specific details and discuss my concerns about the process, and he gave me detailed feedback.

“It was useful that he could talk to me from the perspective of an investor and how others might view my products and I appreciated that Craig’s feedback was both positive and negative, which I needed to reflect on my pitch-deck.”

The Coventry Investment Readiness Programme

The Investment Readiness programme is delivered by C&W Business Solutions, for Business Growth West Midlands, funded by West Midlands Combined Authority.

The scheme, which will run until March 31 2025, will provide guidance and support to SMEs to help demystify the world of business finance, covering topics including debt finance, asset finance, grants, equity, crowdfunding and angel investment.

The programme is aimed at improving the chances of securing external investment for start-ups and high-growth businesses in their early years and to help SMEs scale-up.

There are two stages – stage one is focused on business engagement, information and advice, and stage two provides mentoring support to develop an investment pitch.

Coventry businesses can register to join the programme by emailing investmentreadiness@cwgrowthhub.co.uk

The Investment Readiness Programme is available across the West Midlands Combined Authority area. Outside of Coventry it is delivered by Oxford Innovation.

CASE STUDY