

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and trailblazing entrepreneurs,

Today, at Google Netherlands Headquarters, we celebrate [the DEMO DAY of the DNNL Launchpad 2023](#). This day is not just a showcase of innovation; it's a testament to the daring spirit of each entrepreneur who embarked on this 12-week journey of transformation.

Our mission at the Dutch New Narrative Lab (DNNL) is to enrich the Dutch startup ecosystem by championing the innovative power of diversity and inclusion. Inspired by [the profound findings from over 350 conversations](#), DNNL was born from [an initiative by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate, spearheaded by myself](#), together with a great team of seasoned entrepreneurs such as Jean-Marc ter Riet, Georgio Mosis and last but not least Kimberly Ofori, to tackle the pressing issues of diversity and inclusion in innovative entrepreneurship.

Today, we are not just celebrating startups; we are celebrating the realization of potential in every underrepresented entrepreneur in the Netherlands who dares to dream. [The DNNL Launchpad](#), our 12-week pre-accelerator program, stands as a testament to our commitment to bringing diverse entrepreneurial talent to the forefront, offering not just business capital, but also cultural, symbolic, and social capital that builds bridges.

Our approach at DNNL, as highlighted by Kimberly Ofori, Director of the DNNL Launchpad and Entrepreneurship Lab, is centered around the belief that strong founders build strong businesses. The Launchpad has been a

cradle for startups with robust business models, generating sales and embodying a revenue-first approach. It has created a room in a space where entrepreneurs who might not have initially seen themselves on this path joined, to solve problems that affected them personally.

In our DNNL approach we are inspired by the so-called [hero's journey: a framework to use narratives as a journey for transformation](#). As conceptualized by the American mythologist Professor Dr. Joseph Campbell, it beautifully mirrors the entrepreneurial journey. It starts with a call to adventure, leading to trials and ordeals, and culminates - eventually at the end - to a profound transformation. Our entrepreneurs have lived this journey. They embarked on their own paths, faced challenges, overcame them, and today, they return, transformed with solutions and innovations that promise to benefit society at large.

Yet, we must acknowledge the broader context as highlighted by [the OECD's "34 million missing entrepreneurs" report](#). The OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, is an intergovernmental organization with 38 member countries to stimulate economic progress and world trade, with whom we collaborate. Their report reveals the untapped potential in the entrepreneurial landscape, particularly among women, youth, immigrants, seniors, and people with disabilities. It's evident that there is an urgent need for more inclusive entrepreneurship support programmes, tailored initiatives, and policies that create a conducive environment for all potential entrepreneurs.

In closing, as we are now at the end of this part of the journey, remember my words from the Launchpad's inauguration: "The sky is not the limit. It's just the beginning." This sentiment is a beacon for all of us as we strive to break barriers and create a world where diversity is celebrated and leveraged for greater societal good.

Therefore to the founders: Your journey through the DNNL Launchpad is a testament to your resilience and creativity. You are the catalysts for change and architects of innovation. To me personally your ventures are not just businesses; they are beacons of hope and progress. Your diverse perspectives are invaluable, you offer solutions that resonate with a wider audience.

So as you step into the future, carry the lessons, connections, and confidence you've gained. The world needs your ideas, your spirit, and your leadership. You are shaping the future. Keep dreaming, keep striving, and keep making a difference.

Thank you, and let's continue to travel bravely beyond the sky!

Special thanks to the Google Netherlands team and Startup Amsterdam and our Director Entrepreneurship Lab and DNNL Launchpad Kimberly Ofori!

Sincerely,

Ruben Brave, Chairman Stichting Dutch New Narrative Lab Foundation