

Through the Future of Health Innovation Tournament Challenge, CAI Crowns TIMSER Its First-Ever Grand Champion

FHITC TOPGUN Finalists presented their innovations to CAI's investor community through the virtual Air Show Investor Forum



FUTURE OF HEALTH INNOVATION TOURNAMENT CHALLENGE

Bethesda, Maryland Oct 21, 2026 (Issuewire.com) - The Center for Advancing Innovation (CAI) today crowned TIMSER its first-ever Grand Champion, the first single overall winner in CAI's challenge

history. The distinction was awarded through CAI's Future of Health Innovation Tournament Challenge (FHITC).

Since its founding by Rosemarie Truman in November 2012, CAI has conducted 13 challenges, recognizing more than 200 challenge winners and launching more than 485 startups. TIMSER is the first to earn the distinction of a single overall Grand Champion.

Led by CEO Mercedes Gutiérrez Smith, TIMSER develops PREVENTIX, a clinical diagnostics platform focused on disease detection, prevention, and women's health. PREVENTIX includes blood-based approaches to cervical cancer screening designed to reduce barriers associated with traditional screening and expand access to earlier detection.

TIMSER emerged from a formidable FHITC Air Show field spanning biotechnology, diagnostics, digital health, medical technology, artificial intelligence, advanced computing, and consumer health. Over thirty investor judges with relevant expertise independently ranked the Air Show companies on investor readiness and investment potential. TIMSER finished first overall.

TIMSER also completed all 18 FHITC Flights, a year-long sequence designed to strengthen companies across financial modeling, market validation, pitching, stakeholder engagement, business planning, public credibility, investor readiness, applied AI, and the culminating Air Show Investor Forum.

By the Air Show, TIMSER reported substantial commercial traction. In its FHITC submission, the company reported deploying more than 18,000 PREVENTIX tests in Mexico in one year through hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, insurers, employers, and government programs, supported by approximately 3,000 collection points.

Through the virtual Air Show Investor Forum, TIMSER and the FHITC TOPGUN Finalists presented their innovations to CAI's investor community, opening opportunities for engagement with investors whose expertise aligns with their work.

Collectively, the Grand Champion and TOPGUN Finalists reported nearly \$18 million in funding raised or committed during FHITC's first iteration.

FHITC TOPGUN FINALISTS

Alongside Grand Champion TIMSER, the following companies presented their innovations in the virtual Air Show Investor Forum:

ACLM: Developing modular infrastructure to convert waste feedstocks into critical battery and industrial materials

Andrometa: Developing YapWorld, an AI-powered platform of digital companions for engagement, adherence, and learning across pediatric and wellness programs

Earth's Brew: Commercializing premium natural mineral water using operational wells and onsite production and packaging capabilities

GraceWell: Developing Grace, a robotic assistant supporting mobility, caregiving, and independence for older adults and people with disabilities

Isomere: Developing a noninvasive, fluorescence-based point-of-care diagnostic for Strep A and other respiratory infections

Jeeva Clinical Trials: Delivering technology-enabled patient recruitment, clinical trial execution, and decentralized research

LifelineIO: Providing subscription-based AI-enabled digital health support for consumers, clinics, and hospitals

Precedent Therapeutics: Developing intranasal treatments using repurposed and reformulated off-patent molecules for traumatic brain injury and neurological conditions including ALS

SentiMetrix: Using AI and machine learning to transform video into meaningful data for healthcare, research, and other applications

Sphere: Developing an AI-enabled pre-service revenue-cycle platform that flags insurance eligibility, prior-authorization requirements, and documentation gaps before care is delivered

ToneWell: Developing a voice-first wellness platform that uses brief voice samples to generate personalized insights and AI-guided support

VEYL: Developing a private, voice-first AI thinking partner for reflection, clearer decisions, and next steps

ViroVita: Developing programmable infrastructure for institutional healthcare workflows, post-visit coordination, and payment settlement

Vistim Labs: Providing AI brain-mapping software using EEG to support dementia evaluation

VK Digital Health: Developing a telediagnostic platform integrating telehealth visits, remotely operated diagnostic tools, and digital health data collection

Additional information and company websites are available on the website below:

[FHITC Grand Champion and TOPGUN Finalists](#)

Rosemarie Truman, Founder and CEO of CAI, said, “When we launched FHITC, we said there would be many outstanding companies, but only one Grand Champion. One year later, TIMSER earned that distinction. Mercedes and her team combine scientific innovation, commercial traction, persistence, and an extraordinary commitment to improving women’s health. They kept climbing through the tournament, and the external judges sent a clear signal that TIMSER rose to the top.”

Dr. Cody Locke, Chief Innovation Officer at CAI, said, “Real investors with relevant expertise, not AI, selected CAI’s first-ever Grand Champion. Through FHITC, we challenged entrepreneurs to demonstrate the persistence, discipline, and execution needed to build successful companies. Those who advanced to the Air Show earned the opportunity to present to investors who understand their industries. TIMSER rose to the top of an exceptional field of entrepreneurs. Every one of our TOPGUN Finalists has the potential to make a positive impact around the world.”

Mercedes Gutiérrez Smith, CEO of TIMSER, said, “Being named CAI’s first-ever Grand Champion is an

honor for TIMSER and for every woman who deserves access to dignified and timely cervical cancer screening. PREVENTIX was built to bring science closer to women. FHITC challenged us to strengthen not only our technology, but the company around it. We are excited about what comes next.”

Building on CAI’s challenge-based accelerator, FHITC organized its work into Formation, Commercial, and Pilot-in-Command Flights. The format challenged companies to strengthen entrepreneurial execution and investor readiness before culminating in the virtual Air Show Investor Forum and independent investor rankings.

The value of FHITC to participating companies extends beyond the Grand Champion distinction. Stefaniya Barabanava, Founder of Sphere, said, “Founders challenge each other’s thinking. Then the CAI team comes back with detailed evaluations that make you look at your own logic again, sometimes from an angle you had completely missed.” James Hamet, CEO of Vistim Labs, said, “CAI’s platform challenges founders to build not just innovation, but durable, scalable healthcare companies.”

Truman added, “FHITC is the next evolution of CAI’s proven challenge-based accelerator. It challenges entrepreneurs to build investor-ready companies and connects them with investors qualified to assess their potential. TIMSER is our first Grand Champion. It will not be our last.”

FHITC continues beyond its first cohort, with rolling entry open worldwide. CAI will name a Grand Champion for each future cohort. The tournament welcomes innovators building high-growth companies that advance human health or performance at the intersection of frontier sciences and advanced computing, including artificial intelligence, high-performance computing, and quantum technologies, with applications in biotechnology, medical technology, genomics, synthetic biology, and related fields.

FHITC offers three ways to participate. Entrepreneurs can form new companies or join existing startups. Advocates, including scientists, clinicians, engineers, operators, and investors, can recruit, mentor, advise, judge, or potentially invest in companies; they can gain access to previously recorded Air Show Investor Forum pitches. Interns can help CAI build in-house startups. Participants benefit from targeted entrepreneurial skill-building, CAI’s accelerator webinars, and opportunities to engage with its research and investor community. To enroll in any of these three roles, participants must submit CAI’s Confidentiality Disclosure Agreement (CDA) at <https://form.jotform.com/CAIStartups/cda>.

ABOUT CAI

The Center for Advancing Innovation (CAI) is a global public-private partnership and nonprofit dedicated to accelerating technology commercialization to ignite entrepreneurship, strengthen the economy, and maximize the potential of promising inventions. CAI’s award-winning challenge-based accelerator, rigorous evidence-based due diligence, and capital-efficient lean management models serve to hyper-accelerate high-performing startups. CAI has launched 485+ startups that have collectively raised more than \$3.3 billion and created 3,400+ direct jobs.

Learn more at www.centerforadvancinginnovation.com and about FHITC at <https://bit.ly/fhitc>.

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