



AuSome GrowSome CIC, is currently being set up as a hydroponics-based Smartfarm centre for marginalised young individuals and autistic adults. We propose to set up a vertical farm combining and adapting the hydroponic technology and renewable energy source to create a local sustainable hydroponic digital farm unit. In doing so we would create a local supply of green and microgreen produce and reduce the import of food and food miles. Our Smartfarm will be adapted to suit the special needs and the marginalised population, generating food cultivation interest and health eating awareness in the special needs' population, promoting positive physical and mental health in the target population.

The idea was conceived in January 2019 and I have since researched the various hydroponics systems and visited two urban farms in UK. I have undergone basic training in horticulture and introduction to hydroponics cultivation at the College of Agriculture and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), Northern Ireland. Through urban farming in a controlled regulated environment we will grow green produce locally, all year round. I retrained from a molecular therapeutics' scientist (20 y) to Behaviour analyst with the purpose of working in social sciences and autism, due to my personal connection to autism. I completed MSc Applied Behaviour Analysis from Queen's University Belfast in 2015. I was a recipient of a Marie Curie-Cofund fellowship (2016-2018), for research in assistive technology for Autism and Intellectual disability. The fellowship gave me opportunity to make connections and develop the idea for AuSome GrowSome for which I seek support here. Subsequently, I completed the 6 week, Ulsterbank pre-accelerator program that involved online content. I won the Ulsterbank pitch award which comprised of brief mentoring support from WorkWest. I have also been awarded the Heron incentive award (£750) from the Belfast city council for this venture. I have received the 'Do It' award from UnLtd towards the embryonic phase of the business. I have been awarded the Innovation Voucher from Invest NI and I am currently working with CAFRE as knowledge provider to run some trials and optimise cultivation for one type of salad and microgreens over the next few months.

I am currently looking to collaborate with organisation with expertise in urban farming, renewable energy and sustainable food cultivation. I am interested in grants for funds, to set up phase 1 of the project which is setting up the vertical farm, obtain premises for rent, growth systems, staff and running expenses.