**January 11, 2019 - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   
  
Civic visionaries to make pitches at Accelerate**

* Audience to vote on winners Feb. 27; tickets on sale now
* 2018 winner returns with Teen Enterprise Pop-Up Shop

CLEVELAND – Individuals with visions of creating positive change in Cleveland will pitch their ideas at Accelerate: Citizens Make Change. The fifth annual civic pitch event will be presented by the Cleveland Leadership Center in partnership with Citizens Bank beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 27, 2019, at the Global Center for Health Innovation.

**Their** [28 ideas](https://www.cleveleads.org/events/accelerate/accelerate-2019-presenters/) **touch nearly everyone in NEO and include projects that leverage the arts to improve neighborhood connections, and that address issues involving refugees, youth, and people who are homeless. Some ideas use website, podcast and blockchain technology. Presenters range from teenagers to retirees and represent a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. Visit** [www.cleveleads.org/Accelerate](http://www.cleveleads.org/Accelerate) for details.

Panels of prominent community leaders will judge preliminary competitions to select one finalist in each of six categories: Authentic Cleveland Experiences (which is a new category this year), Community Change, Economic and Workforce Development, Educating for Tomorrow, Health & Wellness, and Quality of Life. The six finalists will make their pitches to all in attendance, and the audience will vote to select the winner. **The winning pitch receives $5,000, and the five runners-up each receive $2,000.**

The event is open to the public. Tickets are on sale at [www.cleveleads.org/Accelerate](http://www.cleveleads.org/Accelerate). Since the Leadership Center launched the event in 2015, Accelerate has been a catalyst for dozens of ideas to take flight and directly impact everyone from pre-kindergarteners to senior citizens. Updates on past pitches may be found at [www.cleveleads.org/AccelerateUpdates](http://www.cleveleads.org/AccelerateUpdates).

New to the event this year is a Teen Enterprise Pop-Up shop, which was the result of last year’s winning Accelerate pitch. Tory Coats pitched his civic vision of preparing tomorrow’s business leaders today by offering them mentoring and a place to sell products they create. Last September, the teens hosted a pop-up shop in a vacant Slavic Village storefront.

Coats returns to Accelerate with teen entrepreneurs who will sell clothing, artwork and other products they have created. The Burton D. Morgan Foundation is sponsoring the pop-up shop.

“Citizens Bank is committed to helping our communities reach their potential, and what better way than to provide a platform like Accelerate where individual citizens can share visionary ideas to make our region a better place,” said Ralph Della Ratta, Accelerate Co-Chair and President, Citizens Bank, Ohio.

**In addition to Citizens, the event is offered in partnership with sponsors for each pitch category: Cleveland Clinic, Cuyahoga Community College, Destination Cleveland, Nordson,** Oswald Companies, Westfield, Oatey Co. and Thompson Hine LLP.

Jackson Lewis P.C. is sponsoring the Past Presenters Showcase, where those who pitched at previous Accelerate competitions will share the progress of their vision and how they are impacting the community.

**Accelerate 2018 by the numbers**

* 28 creative ideas
* 36 presenters
* 53% women / 47% men
* 50% people of color / 50% white
* 19% teenagers / 25% 50 and over

**Event details**

* **What: Accelerate: Citizens Make Change, presented by Cleveland Leadership Center and Citizens Bank**
* **When: Wednesday, February 27, 2019  
  5:30 p.m., Pitch category competition; 6:30 p.m., Networking reception; 7:00 p.m., Final competition**
* **Where: Global Center for Health Innovation, 1 St. Clair Avenue NE, Cleveland, OH 44114**
* **Cost: Advance sales - $35 public, $30 CLC Members, $20 Students. All tickets at the door are $40.**
* **Information and tickets**: [www.cleveleads.org/Accelerate](http://www.cleveleads.org/Accelerate). Direct questions to (216) 592-2289 or [nboyd@cleveleads.org](mailto:nboyd@cleveleads.org)
* **Twitter:** [#AccelerateNEO](file:///\\CLC-SRV2k8\CLC\Marketing%20and%20Communications\Templates%20for%20staff\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\R4F415K2\twitter.com\hashtag\accelerateneo)**,** [**@CitizensBank**](https://twitter.com/CitizensBank)**,** [**@cleveleads**](https://twitter.com/cleveleads)
* **Facebook:** [@CitizensBank](http://www.facebook.com/citizensbank)**,** [@cleveleads](http://www.facebook.com/cleveleads)
* **Updates on past presenters:** [www.cleveleads.org/AccelerateUpdates](http://www.cleveleads.org/AccelerateUpdates)

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