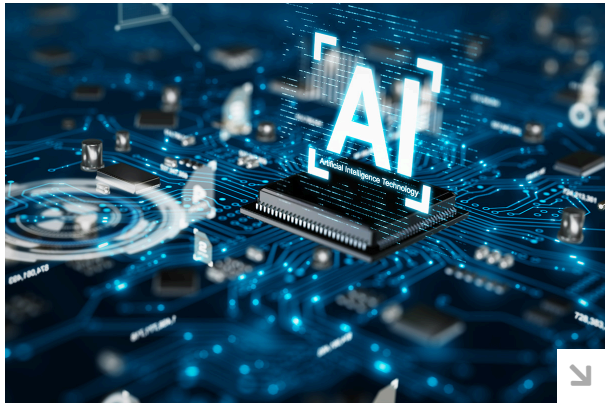
IBJ
INDIANAPOLIS
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Indianapolis tech startup Ekkobar selected for international sports tech development program

April 11, 2025 | Susan Orr



Indianapolis-based data analytics startup Ekkobar is one of 10 companies from around the world selected to participate in the Comcast NBCUniversal SportsTech program.

Ekkobar enables clients in the sports and entertainment industries to analyze social media data

in a way that helps them make better business decisions.

A television studio, for instance, could use Ekkobar's artificial-intelligence-powered platform to discover which of a show's characters are most popular with viewers. And this information could help the show's writers decide how they might use those characters in future episodes.

A sports agent might use Ekkobar to help assess an athlete's marketability; and a sponsor could use Ekkobar to determine whether a particular promotion is resonating or falling flat.

"It helps everyone make better, smarter decisions faster," said Ekkobar co-founder Amber Dodson, who launched the company with long-time friend Rhys Ryan. Dodson is Ekkobar's chief experience officer and Ryan is its CEO.

Ekkobar is one of 10 companies currently participating in the Atlanta-based Comcast NBCUniversal SportsTech program, which helps companies grow their business by working with sports and media partners such as NBC Sports, the University of Notre Dame, Comcast Spectacor, the PGA Tour and NASCAR, among others.

More than 1,600 companies applied for this year's program, which kicked off in late February and runs for six months. Ekkobar had applied two previous times before finally being accepted this year.

"It's a big deal," Ryan said of being selected.

During the program, Ekkobar is working to build a technology tool for NBC Sports, Ryan said, and the hope is that NBC Sports will become an Ekkobar customer.

Ekkobar is the only Midwest-based company in this year's cohort. Other program participants come from California, New York, Florida, Dubai, Ireland and Iceland.

Ryan, a serial entrepreneur with a background in technology, said he first came up with the technology underlying Ekkobar about seven years ago. But it was not quite the right time to launch a company around the technology at that point, Ryan said, so he turned to a few other things—including managing a big data project for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Alabama; and working for a variety of tech companies in Boston.

Dodson has a background in marketing and entertainment. She lives in Albuquerque and formerly worked as director of the New Mexico Film Office, part of that state's Economic Development Department.

Ekkobar's first product, geared towards the entertainment industry, launched last year. Its sports-focused product hit the market several weeks ago.

The company ended up moving its headquarters here after Ryan had a chance encounter with an Elevate Ventures executive at a sports business event. That meeting led Ryan and Dodson to visit Indianapolis for additional conversations with Elevate.

The two said they were impressed by what they saw in Indianapolis—the sports business resources, cost of living and business environment—and they decided to

move their company here.

“There’s a lot of access. There’s access to leadership. People want to meet you and hear what you’re doing,” Dodson said. “Indianapolis was just calling our name at the end of the day,”

Ryan moved to Indianapolis with his family in December. “We went on a hunch to come here, and I could not be happier being here.”

Ekkobar currently has seven employees, three of whom have joined the company since January.

The company’s pre-seed investors to date include Elevate Ventures and the California-based Pegasus Angel Accelerator, each of which have invested $100,000, Ryan said, along with about $600,000 from angel investors. Ekkobar is also receiving an investment from Comcast NBCUniversal, Ryan said, though he declined to reveal the amount of that investment.

“Ekkobar’s visionary leadership, cutting-edge AI platform, and its expansive potential across the dynamic sports industry deeply resonate with us,” Elevate Ventures CEO Christopher Day said in a prepared statement. “We are excited to support Ekkobar’s growth and to welcome them not only into our portfolio but also to the vibrant, innovation-driven community of Indianapolis.”

Ryan said Ekkobar will likely raise additional investment in a seed round this summer, though the company hasn’t yet determined the size of that round.