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Amazon Introduces the Alexa Fund: $100 Million in Investments to Fuel Voice Technology Innovation

The Alexa Fund is dedicated to empowering developers, manufacturers, and start-ups of all sizes who have ideas for how voice technology can improve everyday life

SEATTLE--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jun. 25, 2015-- (NASDAQ: AMZN)—Amazon today announced the Alexa Fund, up to $100 million in investments to support developers, manufacturers, and start-ups of all sizes who are passionate about creating new experiences designed around the human voice. The Alexa Fund—named for Alexa, the cloud-based voice service that powers Amazon Echo—is open to anyone with an innovative idea for how voice technology can improve customers' lives. Alexa Fund investment decisions will be made based on the potential for unique or novel applications of voice technology that leverage the Alexa Skills Kit or the Alexa Voice Service, which were also announced today. The Fund launches today with seven initial investments. Learn more and apply for funding at https://developer.amazon.com/AlexaFund.

"Experiences designed around the human voice will fundamentally improve the way people use technology," said Jeff Bezos, Amazon.com Founder and CEO. "Since introducing Amazon Echo, we've heard from developers, manufacturers, and start-ups of all sizes who want to innovate with this new technology. With the Alexa Fund, we want to empower people to explore the boundaries of voice technology. We're eager to see what they come up with."

Amazon also today introduced the Alexa Skills Kit (ASK), a collection of self-service APIs and tools that make it fast and easy for developers to create new voice-driven skills and capabilities for Alexa. With a few lines of code, developers can easily integrate existing web services with Alexa or, in just a few hours, they can build entirely new experiences designed around voice. For example, an Internet-connected sprinkler system can integrate its sprinklers with Alexa, so a customer can say, "Alexa, ask my sprinkler to water my lawn for 15 minutes." Read the press release: www.amazon.com/ASK.

In addition, Amazon today announced that the Alexa Voice Service (AVS), the same service that powers Amazon Echo, is now available to third party hardware makers who want to integrate Alexa into their devices—for free. For example, a Wi-Fi alarm clock maker can create an Alexa-enabled clock radio, so a customer can talk to Alexa as they wake up, asking "What's the weather today?" or "What time is my first meeting?" Read the press release: www.amazon.com/AVS.

The Alexa Fund is launching with seven initial investments:

- **Orange Chef** is a start-up that has created a new product for the kitchen called "Countertop," a mobile app that connects to an ecosystem of cooking tools such as blenders and slow cookers to measure and track ingredients placed into those devices—all powered by Orange Chef's cloud service nutrition database. Orange Chef sees an opportunity to use voice instead of a phone app in recognition of the fact that cooking can be messy and is often a two-handed operation. For example, customers can use Echo or another Alexa-enabled device while using a blender to ask "Alexa, how many calories are in this smoothie?" or, with a slow cooker, a customer can ask "Alexa, how much more barbeque sauce do I need to add to the pulled pork?"
- **Scout Alarm** is a do-it-yourself home security system provider and connected security device maker. The Scout system includes a hub, entry sensors, motion detectors and a smartphone companion app. Now, Scout is using the Alexa Skills Kit to enable customers to tell Echo or another Alexa-enabled device "Alexa, arm Sleep Mode" before going to bed or ask, "Alexa, what were the last five events?" from the comfort of the couch. With Alexa and Scout, there's no need to fumble for a control panel or app to quickly turn off the alarm—just ask Alexa.
- **Garageio** provides a system to control and to monitor the status of a garage door from anywhere. Garageio's product—the Blackbox—is designed to be simple to install and fits onto existing garage door openers. The Blackbox then connects to the garage door via the home's Wi-Fi network, and an associated smartphone app gives users control of the garage door from anywhere. Using the Alexa Skills Kit, Garageio is adding capabilities to Alexa that help a customer quickly find out if their garage door is open or if the alarm is set. For example, before falling asleep many homeowners think through whether the doors are all locked, the windows are all shut, and the garage door is closed—if they can't remember, they have to get out of bed and go check all the doors manually. Now, all it takes is a quick question to Echo or another Alexa-enabled device: "Alexa, ask Garageio, is the garage door open?" If the answer is "yes," just say "Alexa, tell Garageio to close the garage door."
- **Toymail** is creating a new category of connected toys that enable parents and children to communicate without the need for the child to be using a smartphone or tablet device. Parents can talk to a child through a toy called the Mailman that has a speaker, a microphone, and an Internet connection. They simply use the Toymail mobile app to leave voice messages that are delivered to their child on the Mailman. Now, with the Alexa Skills Kit, Toymail is enabling a grandparent to say, "Alexa, send a Toymail for Ben…I love you and remind your mom I'm bringing dinner over at 5 pm tonight. I can't wait to see you guys." In addition, Toymail is using the Alexa Voice Service to add Alexa capabilities to the Mailman—just press a button on the Mailman to say "Alexa, read a story" for the family to enjoy a bedtime audiobook together via the toy's speakers.
- **Dragon Innovation** provides a suite of products and services that help hardware start-ups and device makers go from "garage to factory" to make their ideas a reality with a framework that guides them through all stages of production—from prototype through sales. As part of the Alexa Fund, Dragon is establishing expertise in using Alexa Voice Services and the Alexa Skills Kit for new products, and is committed to thinking "voice-first" when working with their customers on new products. Dragon is working with clients to add Alexa capabilities to their devices quickly and easily.
- **MARA** is an intelligent, voice-based running assistant that provides performance data and training information during exercise, serving as a virtual running coach or personal trainer. MARA is using the Alexa Voice Service and the Alexa Skills Kit to give users easy access to information about their workouts. For example, ask Echo or any Alexa-enabled device "Alexa, how many miles have I run so far this week?" or "What has my average pace been this week?"
- **Mojio** is a leading provider of connected car solutions. The company's device connects to a vehicle's OBD-II port and extracts driving performance, on-board systems status, and other diagnostic data. Mojio uses the Alexa Skills Kit to enable customers to use Echo or other Alexa-enabled devices to ask "Alexa, do I need to get gas on the way to work today?" before leaving home or "Alexa, where is my daughter driving the car this evening?", giving them the peace of mind that the car is healthy and the kids are safe.

The Alexa Fund will invest in people and companies with a passion for how voice can improve the way we interact with everyday technology. Areas of particular interest include:

- New hardware products for inside or outside the home that would benefit from Alexa's voice interface.
- New features and functionality for Alexa.
- New contributions to the science behind voice technology, including text-to-speech, natural language understanding, and automatic speech recognition.

Innovators selected for funding will receive additional benefits beyond financial support. With established business and technology expertise, Amazon will help them take their ideas from concept to the marketplace by offering tools such as early access to SDK capabilities, hands-on development support for hardware or software, enhanced marketing support on Amazon.com, placement at Amazon showcase events, membership in AWS Activate, and more.

Alexa is the brain behind Amazon Echo, a new category of device designed around your voice. It is hands-free and always on—ask it for information, music, news, and weather from across the room and get results or answers instantly. Alexa is built in the cloud and leverages AWS to continue to learn and add functionality over time.

To share your idea and apply for an investment from the Alexa Fund, visit at https://developer.amazon.com/AlexaFund.

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