



DAVID STOCK

Leave a Nest is now hoping to reproduce this success in the UK. Maekawa is concerned about the impact that Brexit might have on UK-based scientists, who could lose significant sources of funding from Europe. British scientists have a history of pioneering achievements, he says, including understanding the double-helix structure of DNA and creating Dolly the cloned sheep.

It was Maekawa's admiration for such achievements that led him to study in the UK. Now Leave a Nest UK's mission is to create a structure that allows more world-changing science and technology to come out of Britain. "This is a huge matter for me," he says.

This will be a busy year for Leave a Nest UK, with three goals. First, Leave a Nest is launching a grant scheme for UK-based scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs called the LNEst Grant. The £3500 award is for people aged under 40 with a promising

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idea, and successful applicants can spend their money any way they wish. "Usually, funders require that grant be spent on specific things like travel," says Maekawa. "We didn't want to restrict it – in theory you could spend it on ice cream, and that would be fine."

The team is also planning a hyper-interdisciplinary conference – an event for UK universities, entrepreneurs, companies and government to get together and share their ideas. Leave a Nest has been running such events in Tokyo for years. The UK event is scheduled for September.

Third, the company is running a TECH PLANTER competition in the UK in October.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

To find out more about Leave a Nest:

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Ask Leave a Nest UK president Shohei Michael Maekawa a question at
gpd@lne.st.jp

Those with ideas for world-changing technologies will have the opportunity to pitch to a panel of judges. The winners will receive all the same training, networking and funding opportunities, as well as the technical help to build prototypes for their designs.

There will also be a cash prize of around £1600 for the winning team. "We accept teams at any stage of development," says Maekawa. "We believe that greater diversity is better for our real-tech ecosystem." Judges will be looking for teams that can demonstrate a novel, practical idea that might just change the world, says Maekawa.

Oli Pinch, training manager at UCL Innovation and Enterprise, who attended the talk, says: "It's a really interesting idea. It's quite unique in a way, because it's an accelerator that's not looking to get intellectual property."

Those who don't enter for the prizes are still welcome to join the Leave a Nest community. "We are always open to people who have ideas and want to become members of our network," says Maekawa. The team is opening a "virtual" UK office next to University College London, in the city's heart.

In the meantime, anyone who is interested can sign up for the events and competitions at Leave a Nest's website or Facebook page (see above). Maekawa has high hopes. "Let's change the world together! There are many ways to work with us," he says. ■

More at: <https://en.lne.st>