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**ST. LOUIS MOSAIC PROJECT LAUNCHES**

**IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM**

**ST.** **LOUIS** (Nov. 20, 2014) –The ***Immigrant Entrepreneurship Program*** is the newest economic initiative to increase the number of immigrant startups in high-tech or neighborhood businesses in the Greater St. Louis region.

Last night at the regional Startup Connection, Betsy Cohen, executive director of the St. Louis Mosaic Project, announced the new program by celebrating the first-time Most Promising Immigrant-Owned Business award, zymplr, founded by Abu Abraham (originally from India) and Gabe Sant Cruz (originally from Argentina). Zymplr won both the Most Promising Immigrant-Owned award of $5,000 plus took the competition’s overall second prize of $30,000. A video of the company, which brings technology to sports equipment, is here: [zymplr Competition Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvrXPN6Y-fc&list=PLjq0LW8n9EDS00U4BRpcFZWKwobfevYmh&index=5)

In addition to the Global Talent Hiring effort from the St. Louis Mosaic Project, the Immigrant Entrepreneurship Program is the essential piece to St. Louis’ economic pie to transform the region into the fastest growing major metropolitan area for immigration by 2020, promoting regional prosperity through immigration and innovation. This program specifically focuses on immigrant entrepreneurs, as immigrants are 60 percent more likely to be entrepreneurs than U.S.-born residents. If the region added 20,000 immigrants, an additional 21,600 workers would be employed according to the” Economic Impact of Immigration on St. Louis” report released in 2012.

“The ***Immigrant Entrepreneurship Program*** helps motivated immigrants to start new businesses successfully, from high-tech and bioscience hubs (BioSTL, STLventureWorks, etc.), business incubators (CIC, T-REX, etc.), to accelerators and mentoring such as GatewayVMS and local universities” Cohen said.

The program has six components: An Immigrant Entrepreneurial Advisory Board to oversee potential foreign-born entrepreneurs and the overall program, an annual Immigrant Entrepreneur Award, a Neighborhood Business Ecosystem to provide access to funding and training, reward or sponsorship for potential entrepreneurs in international student groups, a program for High-tech Business Entrepreneurs to get connected with relevant groups in the sector, and lastly, a seasoned entrepreneur “fellow” to leverage the program in local incubators and ethnic chambers while finding and connecting foreign-born entrepreneurs with related resources for their startups.

 “When immigrants come to the United States, their goal is to perform at the best of their abilities, especially to improve the needs of humanity. That is what motivates us at zymplr”, says co-founder Abu Abraham.

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**About the St. Louis Mosaic Project:**

St. Louis aims to be a cultural mosaic because this community believes that immigrants invigorate our region, drive innovation and take us back to our roots. The St. Louis Mosaic Project’s goal is to transform St. Louis into the fastest growing major metropolitan area for immigration by 2020 and promote regional prosperity through immigration and innovation.

The St. Louis Mosaic Project was launched in 2012 in response to [**an economic impact report**](http://www.stlmosaicproject.org/resources.html), outlining St. Louis to be lagging in immigrant growth as well as highlighting the economic benefits of increasing its foreign-born population. The Mosaic Project is a regional initiative that is professionally managed by St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, World Trade Center St. Louis and a 22-member steering committee.

For more information about the St. Louis Mosaic Project, visit [www.stlmosaicproject.org](http://www.stlmosaicproject.org)