

CORTEX'S SQUARE ONE

20 23



Cortex's Square One Program fosters innovation for concept and early-stage entrepreneurs. Embracing a person-centered and holistic approach, the program equips participants with essential tools, resources, and mentorship to bring their visionary ideas to life. Proudly serving Bioscience, Information Technology, Advanced Manufacturing/Consumer Products, and Food Industries.

SQUARE ONE
Cortex's Entrepreneur Training

A letter from *Gabriela*

Gabriela Ramirez-Arellano
Vice President, Entrepreneurship



In the spirit of unity and belonging, I'm thrilled to share the incredible impact we've achieved in the St. Louis region over the past year not only through our suite of Square One Programs, but in collaboration with our ecosystem partners across the region. Cortex Square One's commitment to person-centered programming has not only fueled economic growth but has also fostered a sense of community and empowerment.

Throughout the year, we've seen remarkable outcomes:

- **Inclusive Community:** Through our core programs, SQ1 Ignite and Bootcamp, as well as workshops, networking events, and mentorship, we've created a supportive community that welcomes individuals from all backgrounds, celebrating the unique contributions each person brings.
- **Educational Empowerment:** By redefining entrepreneurship to be inclusive of workforce development, we've created an educational platform that equips individuals with the skills and confidence to thrive in today's business landscape. This investment in human capital is laying the foundation for a skilled and adaptable workforce that will shape our region's future.
- **Stronger Ecosystem:** We strongly believe in the power of collaboration to provide more holistic support to entrepreneurs. We are thankful to our ecosystem partners whose collaborative effort has resulted in a network of resources, knowledge sharing, and mutual support that amplifies the success of every entrepreneur.

As we head into 2024, let's recognize that the true power lies in our sense of community, collaboration, and shared vision for a better future. Together, we are not only building businesses; we are transforming lives.

SQUARE ONE IGNITE

A 4-week program that fast tracks the idea validation process for a successful business launch. During SQ1 Ignite entrepreneurs will validate their business idea, identify their target market, and will be introduced to the local small-business ecosystem. SQ1 Ignite is best suited for individuals in the concept stage.

FEBRUARY COHORT

- 32** Early-Stage Entrepreneurs
- 58%** Women Entrepreneurs
- 70%** Entrepreneurs of Color
- 18** Food Entrepreneurs



JUNE COHORT

- 38** Early-Stage Entrepreneurs
- 55%** Women Entrepreneurs
- 79%** Entrepreneurs of Color
- 16** Food Entrepreneurs

COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHTS

Propel Kitchens

Cortex's Square One collaborated with Propel Kitchens to expand programming to entrepreneurs in the food industry. This food track was established to address gaps in the St. Louis region's existing innovation ecosystem.

Balsa Foundation

Cortex's Square One teamed up with the Balsa Foundation to provide support to 10 Balsa grant recipients. These early-stage entrepreneurs had the opportunity to actively engage in all Square One Ignite sessions as part of the collaboration.

SQUARE ONE BOOTCAMP

A 10-week program that comprises 50 hours of comprehensive business education, industry mentorship, and networking. With a focus on the person behind the business, SQ1 Bootcamp goes beyond conventional training by focusing on empowering the entrepreneur for successful person and business growth. SQ1 Bootcamp is best suited for entrepreneurs in the early-stages of their business.



ABOUT THE 2023 GRADUATES

- 23** Graduates
- 65%** Women Entrepreneurs
- 70%** Entrepreneurs of Color

INDUSTRIES

- 2** Bioscience
- 7** IT
- 9** Advanced Manufacturing/
Consumer Products
- 5** Food

Bioscience	IT	Advanced Manufacturing/ Consumer Products	Food
Mark Rutherford Stacey Aldrich	Antonio Brazelton <i>HerbanEdge</i> Cecilia Velazquez <i>Red Latina</i> Ricardo Martinez <i>Juntos Adelante</i> Tina Pihl <i>Intentional Connections Unlimited</i> Tino Cofield <i>Wavy Technologies</i> Trevion Nelms <i>Saturn Global Solutions - Technologies</i> Anita Abdul	Mellarie Thomas <i>Tommy Wong Select</i> <i>Rajunor Ebinne</i> <i>Auva Immunity</i> Souzan Gerami <i>Tea Voila</i> Dezarae Henderson <i>Just Popped Popcorn</i> Stephen Perkins <i>Aim Realty</i> Christina Trivisonno Mary Trivisonno Taylor Burch Craig Lundin	Brianna Young <i>Around the Way Vegan</i> Ismael Wayne <i>Puddin Puddin</i> Kimberly Murphy <i>Z's Kitchen</i> Marca Rottnek <i>Food Fairy Kitchen</i> Zohra Zaimi <i>Moroccan Bits n Bites</i>

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Dynamic programs designed to cultivate and broaden entrepreneurial skills. These programs empower participants with insights into innovation, leadership, finance, marketing, and other business fundamentals. Enrichment programs are delivered throughout the year as one-time or ongoing sessions.

Ongoing Enrichment Programs include:

- One Million Cups
- VOICES
- 'Starting from Square One' at Venture Cafe
- Legal Business Clinic
- and others

Focused on accessibility for: BIPOC, LGBTQ+, Women, & International Community

One-time Enrichment Programs include:

- Headshot Happy Hour
- CreditAbility
- Sustainability (English/Spanish)
- Emprendimiento (Spanish)
- Juneteenth and Hispanic Heritage Month Celebrations at Venture Cafe
- AI Lead Magnets
- and others



ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM

Cortex's Square One program extends beyond individual entrepreneurship training, engaging in impactful ecosystem-level work. Through dynamic partnerships and comprehensive support, we aim not only to nurture individual ventures but also to cultivate a thriving environment where innovation flourishes, ideas transform into reality, and the entrepreneurial spirit propels sustained community growth.



THANK YOU

The Cortex Square One team would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to our friends, collaborators, and team for their invaluable support. Your contributions have been instrumental in advancing our mission to empower entrepreneurs and foster innovation.



To learn more about Cortex's Square One programs, please visit cortexstl.org/SQ1

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