



Building a skilled workforce by creating alternative pathways
for driven people seeking careers in technology.

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Top Kansas City Professionals & Community Leaders Named to LaunchCode's Kansas City Regional Board of Advisors

KANSAS CITY- [LaunchCode](#), a nonprofit providing free job training and placement in web and software development, today named an inaugural Kansas City Regional Board of Advisors that aims to boost the number of local training opportunities and create greater economic impact in 2021 and beyond. Nearly two dozen business and community leaders from the Kansas City region are joining the effort to expand access to job-focused digital skills and meet growing local tech workforce needs.

Opening more doors to digital careers is crucial in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Employment in the local food service, hospitality, entertainment and arts industries was reduced by almost half in the first two quarters of 2020 while thousands of tech jobs sit unfilled in the region.

"I believe LaunchCode's mission is and will continue to be essential as Kansas City looks ahead to the future and our workforce becoming increasingly digital," said Candice Brooks, Director of Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute. "As a new member of the Board of Advisors, I'm proud to be a part of that mission and look forward to seeing the impact LaunchCode makes on our region in the coming years."

"We're living in a time of tremendous opportunity, but there must be accessible pathways towards careers in technology in order to seize those opportunities," said David Mitchell, VMLY&R Chief Technology Officer. "For VMLY&R, taking on LaunchCoders has had a tremendous impact on our culture and the way we think about hiring in the modern age. That's exactly why I'm proud to be named to the Board of Advisors and advocate on behalf of LaunchCode's mission."

Thanks to anchor support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, LaunchCode has provided free education to nearly 800 aspiring technologists since 2016. Graduates

have been placed into paid apprenticeships and jobs with leading companies like VMLY&R, Commerce Bank, the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, as well as area startups including PayIt, RFP360, TopBox and others.

Serving on the Board of Advisors are top executives from local companies, leaders from community organizations and foundations, workforce strategists and equity advocates including:

Jake Akehurst
Program Director,
Technology Training
JCCC

Tom Herzog
Chief Operating Officer
Netsmart Technologies

Zoraya Rowlands
Diversity, Equity,
and Inclusion Manager
JE Dunn

Brian Anderson
Chief Technology Officer
NIC

Geoff Jolley
Executive Director
LISC

Daniel Silva
President & CEO
KCK Chamber of Commerce

Adam Arredondo
Chief Executive Officer
Startland

Emily McVey
Vice President, KC Animal
Health Corridor
KCADC

De'jon Slaughter
Business & Community
Advocate
Turner Construction

Candice Brooks
Director
Bluford Healthcare
Leadership Institute

Rachel Merlo
Community Impact Manager
Google

Leigh Anne Taylor Knight
Executive Director & COO
DeBruce Foundation

Mara Cohara
Partner
Lathrop & Gage

David Mitchell
Chief Technology Officer
VMLY&R

Ryan Townsend
Chief Technology Officer
RFP360

Wendy Doyle
CEO
United WE

Tracey Osborne
President
Overland Park Chamber
of Commerce

Sherry Turner
President
One KC for Women

Amanda Graor
Chief Innovation Officer
MARC

Mario Potts
Sr. Client Alignment Executive
ECCO Select

Pedro Zamora
Executive Director
Hispanic Economic
Development Corp.

Gillian Helm
CEO
Literacy KC

Clint Robinson
AVP & Director of State & Local
Government Affairs
Black & Veatch

[Headshots and bios for the Kansas City Regional Board of Advisors found here.](#)

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